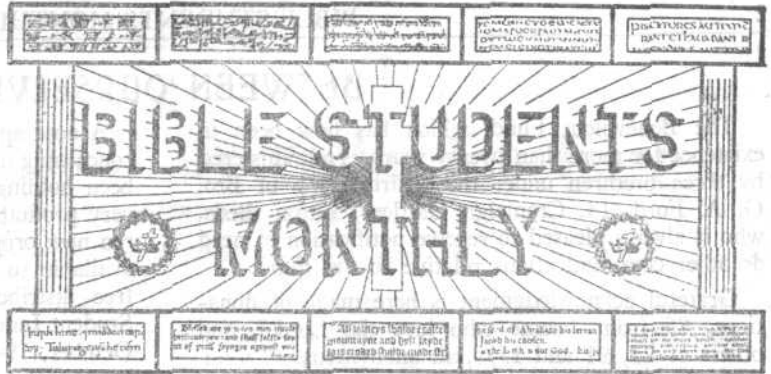




Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ.



Vol. 25, No. 1

JANUARY, 1948

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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.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has now been in existence for more than twenty years, is administered by three brethren under the chairmanship of Bro. G. A. Ford, 13, Cranleigh Gardens, Luton, Beds, who is always pleased to receive notification of need or other communications relative to the Fund.

Grateful acknowledgment is here made of donations, £5 from "some who love the Lord", and others of £2, £1 and 15/-, all anonymous.

* * *

Another issue of "Millennial Message"

"*Millennial Message*" No. 2 is published this month and a copy is enclosed with this issue. The appearance of No. 1 a year ago aroused a great deal of interest and for some months there was a brisk demand for supplies. Reports came in from all over the country telling of the brethren's appreciation of this means of witnessing to the incoming Kingdom. Now it is hoped that No. 2 will be found equally acceptable. "*Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season.*"

It is possible to supply at somewhat lower prices than before. "*Millennial Message No. 2*" will be sent carriage paid at 50/- per 1,000, 6/- per 100, or 1/- per doz., and brethren are warmly invited to make use of this means of service.

* * *

During the first three months of this year special parcels of well-known booklets and tracts will be made available to the friends at a specially low rate, considerably less than the original cost of printing, with the dual object of encouraging the friends to get these into circulation, and making space available for new stocks. Each parcel contains 27 booklets, 50 pamphlets and 50 tracts, as follows:—

- 3 *Golden Future*
- 3 *Jacob's Trouble*
- 3 *Lucifer Prince of Evil*
- 6 *Parables of the Kingdom*
- 6 *Promise of His Presence*
- 6 *From a Prison Cell*
- 50 *Millennial Message No. 1*
- 50 Assorted pamphlets, Nos. 11 to 19.

This parcel will be sent for 10/- post free, representing about half the cost of the above items if purchased separately, and it is hoped that friends desiring to avail themselves of this opportunity will do so speedily. The booklets are useful for handing to interested people and the pamphlets ideal for enclosing in letters. "*Cast thy bread upon the waters, for it shall return unto thee after many days.*"

A note appeared in these columns some time ago concerning a Bible study research group that has been holding meetings in Wisconsin, U.S.A., on a very profitable and satisfactory basis. These brethren now propose to make the results of their studies available to a wider circle by the publication and free distribution of a leaflet entitled the "Bible Student Inquirer". No. 1 of this publication, dated October, 1947, has come to hand and is written in an appealing and straightforward style. This issue is in the nature of an introductory number; subsequent issues are expected to take up various subjects of Biblical interest which should find appreciative readers in this country just as in the U.S.A. For the sake of those of our readers who may be interested in this new venture it may be noted that issues will be sent as published if request is made to: Bible Student Inquirer, Johnson Creek, Wis., U.S.A.

* * *

There will be found enclosed with this issue a sample copy of the news sheet being published by friends at Redwood City, Calif., U.S.A., as described in our December issue. Brethren who are interested in this effort will probably like to write direct to these friends for inclusion on the mailing list; the sheet is free.

* * *

Announcement is made that the usual Easter Convention at Warrington is being planned for 1948. Further details will be published as they become available; in the meantime friends desiring to reserve accommodation or make other enquiries may write the Convention Secretary, Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington.

* * *

Gone From Us

Sister G. M. Saidler (*Dunoon, Scot.*)

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

BOOK REVIEWS

Jesus—the Babe born to be King. Victory Press, Clapham Crescent, S.W.4. 1/3.

This is an excellent 16 page children's book, size 5 inches by 8 inches, tastefully printed in full colour with illustrations on every page and thick paper cover. The story is that of the coming of Jesus, told in a masterly fashion, free from sentimentalism on the one hand and "modern" tendencies on the other. So many children's books are considered by our friends as not really suitable; this is one that can be warmly recommended for the little ones (up to 10 years). From Welling, 1/6 post free.

The Plowman Shall Overtake the Reaper

A PARABLE FOR OUR TIMES.

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

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

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

"The little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." (Psa. 65. 12-13.) And to crown this sunlit vision of the future the Lord stamps it as a revelation of the End Time by telling his prophet *"And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof . . ."* (Amos 9. 14.)

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

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

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

But this has been a spiritual work, a service designed to reach the spiritually minded and show to them more plainly than before that "High Calling in Christ Jesus" that is the great pre-occupation and purpose of this Age. Whatever may be one's personal convictions regarding the Gospel Age "Harvest" in a dispensational and theological sense, it can hardly be denied that in its practical outworking it has proved to be a movement of Christian people of all denominations into a condition of closer personal relationship to their Lord and an enhanced appreciation of their High Calling. That is a rather important point. Although the preaching of the earthly Kingdom, "Times of Restitution of all things" has occupied so prominent a place in the activities of ourselves and people like us it is a noteworthy fact that the effect has been almost entirely to the deepening of the spiritual life of those who have yielded themselves in consecration to the heavenly calling, having no expectation of, or desire for, the earthly calling. This is significant; it shows that during the "reaping" our Lord has been primarily concerned with the members of the Church.

But as the Age passes on to its end a new feature develops. The end of the Church's career in earth is at hand, the glorification of the last members

becomes imminent, and yet it cannot be that God leaves Himself without a witness on earth. He has never done so in all recorded history. Clearly there must be some who have gained an understanding of the Divine Plan and whose hopes and aims are directed, not towards the heavenly, but towards the earthly phase of the Kingdom. And as the spiritually minded ones "decrease" so must these earthly heralds of the new Day "increase". Their work is not that of reaping the harvest of this Age; rather that of preparing the ground for the next. And as the reaping tails off to its end so the breaking up of fallow ground for Millennial work will begin to come into operation, and the message of the Kingdom be directed more towards its earthly aspect. And here is where the "ploughshare of trouble", as we have called it, will also do its work; for the breaking up of the "field" preparatory to the work of the new Age is not only to be done by preaching and witnessing, it is also to be done by the trouble upon the nations and the evident failure of all men's schemes for reform and reconstruction. In fact, it may be more correct to think of the ploughman as picturing the general trouble that is upon the nations, and the sowing of seed as the Kingdom message that will be proclaimed consistently until the end of all opportunity to preach, when the world passes into Armageddon. And there is no doubt that in the very near future men's hearts are going to be ploughed as never before.

It is established that the Church must be completed and glorified some time before the end of the trouble. There is a period, the length of which we do not know, between the close of the Church's experience in the flesh and her revelation, with her Lord, at the establishment of the Kingdom, a period which, perhaps, includes the "marriage feast" of Revelation 19, and the presentation "before the presence of the Father with exceeding joy". The ploughing, then, goes on for some little while after the reaping has ceased. This "harvest" of the Age evidently had its commencement over a century ago, and progressed until it became a mighty work. The ploughman of trouble first became evident toward the closing years of last century, say fifty years ago, and by now is rapidly overtaking ("coming near" is the literal Hebrew meaning) the reaper so that the reaping work is being steadily reduced and diminished by the pressure of the general trouble on the nations. Is not this true to the facts? Every tendency of the day is to the suppression of interest in spiritual things and even such Christian activity as is still manifest in the world is directed much more along the lines of earthly expectations than of heavenly. The widest field of endeavour yet remaining to those who seek to gather the spiritually minded

ones to closer relationship with the Lord lies, not with the mass of men generally, as was once the case, but in the Christian systems where, here and there, may be found some who still yearn for the heavenly things, survivors of a past generation, themselves largely out of touch and sympathy with this present world, last grains of wheat in this, the final hour of the harvest.

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

But there will still be those who are "scattering the seed"; continuing the message of the coming earthly Kingdom, and calling men to "seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger" (Zeph. 2. 3.) Even though the Church be gone, God will still have His witnesses in the earth, and the signs of the approaching catastrophe may be by then so evident that there may be not a few that will stop and listen to the message of the Millennial reign. But the treader of grapes will by then also be coming very near; with the completion of the gathering of the harvest of the earth it will be the turn of the vintage (Rev. 14. 18) and the One who treads the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 19. 15) will be coming forth to that dread work. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" cries the prophet (Isa. 63.). The answer leaves no doubt as to the identity of the One who will both bring to the dust the evil systems of the earth and set up His own glorious Kingdom in their place. The time of Armageddon, of "Jacob's Trouble", of the last uprising of evil against the incoming forces of the Kingdom of righteousness, will have come, and the vintage will for a time press against the sowers of seed and bring their work to a temporary standstill. There will be one short, sharp time of trouble in which it will seem as if all the powers of righteousness have been silenced and crushed to the earth; but it is at that moment that God arises from His place to intervene in earth's affairs, and from the moment of that intervention that we are to date the Kingdom established in power.

It is from this point of time that the mountains will commence to "drop" new (sweet) wine, the true and health-giving doctrines and teachings of

the Kingdom. "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2. 3.) The old doctrines which have been characteristic of the "vine of the earth" will have been done away; Satan will be bound and no longer able to influence mankind for evil; the great institutions of man which have oppressed and enslaved so many will have been utterly destroyed, and every vestige of man's former rule have passed away. This will be the "mountain" in which the Lord will "make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25. 6). And the wine of that Kingdom will be abundant and free. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." (Isa. 55. 1.) That is the "sweet wine" which the "mountains" will "drop down" in that day.

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

In the mariner's compass there are compensating magnets to deal with opposing elements. The Apostles and Prophets are our compensating magnets.

GOOD-TIME CHRISTIANS

A Thought for the Month

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

(Esth. 1. 5-6.)

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

That is the position of the good-time Christian. We in our fellowship, like many others, stand in grave danger of degenerating into a community of such. The world is becoming such an ugly and unsympathetic kind of place that the temptation for us to withdraw into our own circle and enjoy ourselves in our own way was never stronger. And it seems so obvious a way of being "in the world but not of it", especially when we are getting on in years and continued disappointments and disillusionments remind us that the placid backwaters of study and meditation on the river of Divine Truth do not rock the boat so much as the turbulent main stream of evangelism and witness. After all, we reason, we are older than we were twenty, thirty, or forty years ago. The Devil is always very solicitous about our advancing years and counsels us not to strain our failing powers too much. And so there are meetings at which the faithful gather together to listen to "a very lovely song of one that hath a very pleasant voice, and that can play well upon an instrument" (see Ezek. 33. 32) and after the service to shake hands and congratulate one another on the good time they have had. The pity of it all is that there is such sincerity and real love for the Lord manifested in this; there is no denying the thoroughness of the consecration to God and the desire to be true copy-likenesses of His Son. That is not the issue at all. The real trouble is that having secured our own assurance of heavenly glory we fail to remain imbued with the passionate longing to bring others into the same happy condition. "I am become all things to all men" said Paul "if I might by any means save some." And that devoted Apostle was able to say, after a life-time spent serving His Master, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel". It is essential that we have our conventions, our gatherings, our Bible studies and our fellowship. These things are the breath of life to us and they play an important part in our spiritual development. But do not let us use them as a

means of escape from the solemn obligations resting upon us of being lights to, as well as in, the world. Do not let the wealth of good things that we enjoy at the Lord's table so dull our senses that we do not realise our responsibility of ministering these same things to others outside. The Christian faith is a missionary faith; the Christian group that ceases to evangelise eventually ceases to exist. Whilst it can be argued that such must be the ultimate fate of the Church in the flesh before the Millennial Kingdom can come, it must also be pointed out that our Master has not entrusted us with the task of ending the Church's earthly career; that is something He has reserved to Himself. A soldier is expected to be prepared to die for his country if and when necessary, but his true duty is to avoid death as long as possible and keep himself in such condition that he can inflict the maximum of damage upon the enemy before he does have to yield up his life. And is it so very different in the Christian Church? Is not our Lord best pleased with those who, like Gideon's band, are constantly on the alert, in their drinking of the waters of Truth, for the first appearance of the enemy that they might be ready to leap up and engage him in mortal combat? Else why are we bidden to emulate the Roman soldier and stand, arrayed in the complete armour of God, ready to suffer hardship and sacrifice, that we may please Him who hath called us—to be a soldier?

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

Our storehouse should never be so scant that we cannot spare a smile.

Like Precious Faith

A NEW TESTAMENT STUDY

The apostle Peter addresses his second letter to those who are already in the faith; in that faith which is alike precious to the writer and his readers. Each of them has received and absorbed the truths of the faith and has had those experiences in the life of faith as to speak of it as being precious. Experiences differ in all cases and therefore the faith is not precious to all for the same reason, nevertheless all will be able to give some personal reason why they prize the faith, and it would form a good basis for a testimony meeting. Think of a few of the reasons why we value the faith: it is prized by some because of its logic, its justice and wisdom: or because it portrays a merciful Creator who purposes to benefit all His creatures: or because all the efforts of Satan to erase it from the earth have failed: or because the human channels through whom it came sacrificed their lives in its service and gained no material advantage thereby: it is precious to some because though they have fallen seven times they have risen again and intend to go forward undismayed: and it is precious to some because in the words of the hymn "it satisfies their longings as nothing else could do". The apostle himself had very precious and personal reasons why he prized the faith, for he had had contact and visual sight of our Lord himself and such experiences as he had on the mount of Transfiguration would always be specially treasured by him. True, we do not have such experiences to-day as Peter had, and maybe we do not have his difficulties and trials in Christian service. But, whatever our reason for prizing the faith once delivered to the saints, Peter is writing to us.

It will be found profitable to read Peter's second letter straight through in order to find what circumstances prompted him to write, and at the same time we shall see how anxious he is for the welfare of his readers and the precious faith. We immediately note that the epistle divides itself into three sections in agreement with the chapters. It is sometimes said that the division of the Bible into chapters is a man-made expedient, but in this letter the divisions are ready done by the writer. An encouraging first chapter is followed by a severe denunciation of false teachers and their associates, and that is followed by the warning that the day of the Lord will surely bring judgment and dissolution, and will not tarry. And we are not a little sorry as we read

that fully a third of what begins as a most persuasive epistle is occupied in warning. There can be only one reason for it—Peter is guarding the precious faith! Although he is writing to those informed in the faith, he foresees that from their own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, even to denying the Lord that bought them. (2 Pet. 2. 1.) To combat this falling away Peter urges his readers to heed the sure word of prophecy, which is the basis of the precious faith.

We note as we read both epistles of Peter that he is partial to the use of the word PRECIOUS to describe salient points of the Christian faith and they show to us how the faith which we have been called upon to affirm is indeed precious—precious to God the giver and precious to us recipients. Let us consider them. There is one thing which stands out as the foundation of the Christian Faith and is not to be found in the creeds of other religions and that is redemption by ransom-atonement. Opponents of the Christian faith in redemption by blood-atonement (within and without Christian communities) say that the idea of one dying sacrificially for others is repulsive to reason and savours of the practice of pagans in sacrificing animals or humans to pacify their gods. There is nowadays increasing numbers of those who deny this basic teaching of Christianity; and the teaching of evolution and the notion that man can save himself is responsible. Contrast with this, the exactly stated truth of redemption made by Peter in 1 Pet. 2. 24. As the day approaches the number of disbelievers shows up in marked contrast to the few who still follow the old paths. And by this reasoning we could say that the faith is precious to the faithful because fewer nowadays believe, but that is not the sense of Peter's words, for the faith is valued by the holders irrespective of number of adherents.

The truth of atonement by sacrifice is given by the apostle Peter in one of his "precious" texts in 1 Pet. 1. 18-20. The standards of men, silver and gold, may seem to men to be enduring, but for the purpose of redeeming mankind are in comparison with their true redemption price, corruptible or perishable. To Peter one price alone can redeem us, "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot". Even the blood of a lamb has accomplished more than silver and gold, but that is surpassed by the blood of Christ,

"who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" for this very work. These references to silver and gold, and a lamb, would remind readers of this epistle of how Israel were redeemed in their early national life. They would remember the half-shekel ransom which every man had to give upon being numbered unto the people (Exod. 30. 12-13) which in turn was used to make parts of the tabernacle fittings, the pillars, sockets and hooks. Thus the tabernacle tent, itself used for atonement, had as its foundation the redemption money which had redeemed the men of Israel. (Exod. 38. 24-31.) And they would recall the great event which made them a people, the Passover, when the slain lamb saved the firstborns directly and the nation indirectly at the Exodus. It may be that Peter's words here are specially addressed to those Jews who though they knew of that early redemption, through the traditions of the fathers failed to realise their need of true and complete redemption, not only from those traditions which were the basis of their manner of life, but also from that one original condemnation which penalised the whole race. They failed to see their need of eternal redemption knowing themselves to be the chosen of God and thinking themselves secure in their traditions and history. We should remember that these things happened to Israel for types or figures by which they would look forward to future and better redemption and national deliverance; for Paul speaks of the things which happened unto them for ensamples and are written for our admonition. Let us not read Paul's words as that these things were intended for their admonition and are types only to the Church. It was the object of those types that Israel should look forward to the better, rather than that the church should look back to the type. These seem to be the reasons why Peter speaks of our redemption as being "precious", and the longer we live the more do we believe the adjective to be appropriate.

Peter begins the second chapter of his first epistle with an appeal to lay aside all deceptions, etc., and come as new-born babes to the Word. He says, in effect, leave the old way of life now that you have been redeemed by the precious blood (no more a slave to the traditions or "vain conversation" than is a babe) and come to the word and to the Word. Come to Him, the living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious—and who has not? Peter's remarks about the stone disallowed by those masters in Israel who should be helping to build the temple of the Lord, recalls the Lord's parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matt. 21. 33-46) in which He spoke of Israel's rejection of Messiah and the letting out of the vineyard to those who

would render the householder its fruits. The rulers in Israel blinded by their traditions, argued about the first advent mission of Jesus, and finally rejected Him as Messiah or even as a prophet, and belittled those works which proved Him to be the Sent of God, and so lost the honour of being united with Him in the spiritual house; and that honour was given to them who in time past had been "no people", and had not obtained mercy, but are now the people of God (v. 10)—people who know Him to be precious.

Within the context of Peter's words we shall see that the living stone is precious to the Father and to the believer. He is precious to God because He is His only begotten Son who He gave as man's redeemer, and He is precious to the believer because He is the foundation of all we believe and hope for. The Son having finished the work given Him to do, becomes the foundation, the sure foundation of all God's purposes and temple, when exalted in the resurrection. He was in every sense "a tried stone" or as Rotherham's footnote to Isaiah's words (ch. 28. 16) puts it "a stone, tested itself and testing others". The apostle Paul also quotes these words of Isaiah (adding other quotation) in Rom. 9. 32-33 to explain that Israel stumbled at the rock of truth. The cause of their stumbling was virtually the same as mentioned by Peter. He says, they followed after the law of righteousness (v. 31) or went about to establish their own righteousness (ch. 10. 3); that was the "manner of life" that Peter would free them from, but how could he when the traditions of the fathers blurred their vision? Both apostles knew that Israel stumbled at the cross of Christ; that which should have been "precious" to them.

Let us note in Peter's quotation of Isaiah's words, one of those fortuitous happenings which show the integrity and charm of the Scriptures. The name Isaiah means the Salvation of Jehovah, and it is Isaiah who makes this prophecy of salvation using the figure of the stone. Simon the son of Jona was given the name of Peter (which is by interpretation, a stone), and it was he who made the wonderful pronouncement of Jesus being Messiah. This being so, the words of Isaiah would instantly appeal to Peter, and these he takes to prove that the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in Christ. We have a complete cycle of truth in this fragment of the Bible—from Isaiah (salvation) to the stone: from a stone (Peter) the truth of salvation by teaching Christ when quoting the prophet. (See also Acts 4. 10-12.) And all this gives us a very personal reason why He is precious to Peter. What a foundation rock of truth for Peter himself! What a consolation throughout his life would this precious truth be!

Also in ch. 2 is revealed that those who believe Him to be precious may also as living stones be built upon this foundation into a spiritual house and priesthood—a precious truth indeed! It was intended to be true of Israel, but they stumbled at the stone (Rom. 11. 11) and through their fall this salvation is come to the Gentiles. And the precious truth that Gentiles would inherit in the church equally with faithful called Israelites (Eph. 2. 20-22) was itself a trial of faith to the Jews at the first advent period. Sometimes, we who were Gentiles, may think ourselves to be unworthy of such high honour and a trial of faith arise therefrom. This may be why Peter refers to “the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1. 7). There is another precious truth—the ending of the long trials of the church when it is revealed with its Lord at His second advent. And in v. 8 we have in glowing

words the church's regard for Him who to them is precious. In these words are covered all the relationships we have to our Saviour, all our hopes and treasure.

With these thoughts in mind we turn to Peter's other precious text—2 Pet. 1. 4, feeling that the great and precious promises whereby we might be partakers of the Divine nature must refer to those rich prospects that he has mentioned in the first epistle, chapters 1 and 2. These surely are the ingredients of the precious faith (or as a companion epistle has it “the faith once delivered to the saints”); these are the truths we know and have helped our establishment in the present truth (2 Pet. 1. 12); these are precious items of the faith we must remember (2 Pet. 1. 13); these are the truths which Peter wished that after his decease we should always have in remembrance. And the particular aid to memory that he has given us are his epistles. These things, to him, were precious, and will continue to be so to those of like faith.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A SERIAL STUDY
IN 1 COR. 13. 13.

Part I. The “other” things.

Before we can estimate at its true value the Love of which Paul writes in this sublime chapter, we must consider for a little while some of “the other things” with which he contrasts it in the course of his argument. We shall find that this Master-grace is not only a greater thing than faith and hope—the two particular virtues mentioned in our text—but a greater thing than all the occult mysteries with their complex organisations, which for many centuries had formulated and laid down the ways of life for countless millions of the earth's misguided population. We shall also find it to be a greater and more excellent thing than that immature and mechanical way of life prevailing in the Corinthian and other Churches in those very early days prior to the writing of those letters and Epistles which together comprise our New Testament.

In a word, the scope of Paul's argument throws this heaven-sent Grace into sharp contrast with all those occult and idolatrous influences which had moulded the customs of the various sections of the human race; had instituted their many ways of life, and which, because of the hold it gave them over the masses, were held in great esteem by the intellectual princes of that ancient world. It is only when we can make allowances for all that old-time prophecy had meant to some; the “Occult mysteries” to others, and the practices of Stoic self-

immolation to still others, that we will be able to appreciate, as Paul appreciated it, what this marvellous heavenly gift will mean to men, when, at last, it comes to replace them all.

Behind all these “other things”—the systems of prophecy, of the mysteries, and of self-immolation—stood the great problem of God and the Universe, and of man's relationship thereto. To the unenlightened heathen mind, whether cultured or untaught, this besetting problem was ever the great enigma of their lives. With them, as with men of modern times, there was always a riddle of the Universe, deep, elusive, and difficult to solve.

Many speculating minds sought to understand how a First Great Cause—which all admitted there must be—could have created an order of things in which the sensuous and servile qualities of men predominated so extensively. Men found themselves scarcely separated from the brute, bound with tendencies to lust and vice, unable to escape from the “pull” of a self-centred life. Why were they fettered in this way? Why could they not rise above this environment? How had this state of things come to be? Had the Prime Cause (or Causes, if more than one) definitely and deliberately made it so?

Many and various were the speculations voiced by numerous enquiring minds, and many were the theories attempting to explain this riddle of the

Universe. Some attempted to explain it by asserting that two antagonistic deities existed side by side—a good one and an evil one—and that all the evil in the world had been introduced by the evil god, with whom the “good” deity was at constant war—the one producing storms, gales, cyclones and all other disastrous things, while the other was responsible for the sunshine, bounteous harvests and life-giving water springs. “How” they asked “could one all-pure, all-good God form a world whose substance and inhabitants were so replete with such evil properties, and so many evil things?”

The only solution they could see was that there must be two opposing Gods—the one responsible for the good in life, the other for the bad. This solution was not stated quite so simply as that, but was dressed up in high-sounding speculative terms, so that to the uneducated there was always something of mystery attending it.

Others sought to answer in another way. The First Great Cause projected from Himself spiritual entities called Aeons or Emanations; these also, in turn, projected other Aeons or Emanations. With each succeeding projection the original divine element became weaker and less pure, so that, in course of time as the lower ranks of angels were projected they became able to deal with the chaotic matter in the universe; shape and make it into this terrestrial world, and people it with sensuous man.

Thus the gap between the Great First Cause and man was deep and wide, and many were the speculations as to the “how” and “why” it had been brought about. Specific claims to know these secrets were made by certain presumptuous minds whose special claim it was to have been thus entrusted with this “knowledge” by the gods. An air of deep mystery pervaded all this “*gnosis*”, separating men who “knew” from those who did not “know”.

In other lands mysteries associated with priest-craft and idol-worship claimed to hold the secrets of the gods. Stories of the exploits of the fallen angels in their clandestine relations with the daughters of men (Gen. 6: 2.) both before and after the flood (see Num. 13: 34, for reference to the “giant” offspring of the illicit contact—same word “*Nephilim*” as in Gen. 6: 4.) were invested with abstruse meanings, and embodied in a vast system of “Mystery”. Double meanings to words gave rise to both an inner and an outer explanation of these mysteries—the inner or “esoteric” explanation being for the priestly “initiate” alone. From this source came all the idolatrous systems of Babylonia and Canaan.

That Paul has all these ancient systems of mystery in his mind is evident from the recurring references

he makes to the idol system with which the Corinthian brethren had had contact in those former days, before they received the truth. In Chapter 8. 1, he introduces his line of contrast between the “*Gnosis*”, and the “*Agape*”, and informs us that possession of the “*Gnosis*” alone would result in vanity and conceit in the individual, while possession of the “*Agape*” would cause a sound foundation to be laid upon which a solid superstructure could be reared. Continuing he says “. . . there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many and lords (*baals*) many”—a sure indication that he has the many heathen systems under review.

Again in Chapter 10. 20, he says “. . . the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils (demons ‘*daimoniois*’) . . .” (See also v. 22). Furthermore, the use in Chapter 13. 2, of the two words “*musterion*” (mystery) and “*gnosis*” (knowledge) affords the strongest evidence that Paul was taking a very wide survey of the heathen world, with all its ways of life. Even though the word “*musterion*” was a word in general usage to denote things peculiar to a trade (or profession)—trade secrets we would call them to-day—the special circumstances of those days would invest it with a more specific meaning than that. Trades and professions were dedicated to the gods, and specific knowledge of the trade was interwoven with specific knowledge of the god.

Paul’s use of these terms shows that he is contrasting “the way of life” purpose by God with all the many ways of life associated with the many gods, and with the many philosophic answers to the unsolved riddles of the Universe. He will yet show that “the *Agape*” alone can provide the answer to this other-wise insoluble enigma.

In this analysis Paul also sees the system of the fire-worshiper who gave his body to the flames, not to be burned to death, but to have it callosified (made callous or insensitive). “Fakir” practices like this abound in some eastern lands to this day. Great merit—sainthood—was considered to flow from this method of burning sin out of the flesh.

Additionally, with his eye on the stickler for Jewish orthodoxy in the Corinthian Church, Paul introduces the Jewish way of life into his analysis, and visualises the “explainer of the Prophecies” at his work. To the ardent Jew—as a member of a people separated unto God, the old-time prophecies contained the very word of God Himself in answer to the universal enigma—they contained the sum and substance of all essential knowledge needful to understand men’s relation to the First Great Cause. And he who could, by great subtlety

of argument bring down the high things—the mountains—to the level of the human mind was accounted great indeed in his people's esteem.

Here then in these varying contrasted things, Paul has compiled a summary of the greatest and most revered institutions known to the peoples of his day. Among the Corinthian brethren were some who had had contact with (and some degree of knowledge of), one or more of the systems on his list and would be able to evaluate Paul's line of contrast much better than we can do to-day. To us these things are merely historic echoes from an ancient past; to them they had been the living factors imposed upon them by heredity and environment—rounds of life from which they had not as yet entirely broken clear.

But, though we cannot judge these contrasts as they could, we should try, at least, to understand that all these cults and systems (of every sort) had been for them the only channels of present satisfaction and of future expectation in that dark period of the world, both for the life that now is, and for the enshadowed life that lies ahead. The dim pleasures of Elysium, or Nirvana, and every other conception of final bliss had been to them the only climax to these several ways of life that they had lived for.

In this list of contrasts we are brought face to face with universal things, the daily round and common task for nations and for men, from the cradle to the grave; also with the vast superstitious systems which had moulded both nations and men and made them what they were. We should also realise that apart from the new heaven-sent Way which Paul was setting forth there was no road out, no way of escape from the age-worn groove into which they had been born; in which they were fated to live, till life was done. Life's deeper things were mysteries indeed, riddles concerning the universe, riddles concerning the First Great Cause, and riddles of even humankind itself.

With all their supposed philosophic knowledge and their myriad mysteries what advantage did they gain? Death still reigned supreme, evil still ran rampant without check, tyrant rule stalked the earth, and priestly craft still bound the minds of men, even of their noblest and best. Where was their driving power, and to what end could they lead, save into deeper darkness and hopelessness? The nations were indeed without God and without hope in the world. Even the Jews, by tradition, had made void the Word of God, and the Light was about to pass them by, and leave them also in a darkness deeper than theretofore.

Against all this flotsam of thought and practice Paul sets forth one thing—*The Agape*! Were I

able to reveal every mystery—so he says—explain every prophecy, feed all the poor everywhere, mount the purifying pyre, or even charm the earth with angelic wisdom or Homeric eloquence all this would avail me nothing if I lacked the *Agape*. It would but add to the world's clanging din, out of which no good had yet come; out of which no good could ever come world without end. Generations would still drag their weary way to the tomb, groping through the darkness without one ray of light.

Not from the mystery-mongering of conceited men, not from far-fetched solutions of ancient prophecy, not from Stoic or humanitarian activities could that which is "perfect" come. There is but one power that can lead to that desired end—that Power is "*The Agape*". Not by self-effort can that "Perfect" estate be attained. It can come only by the help of God. And it is that "Helping Hand" which Paul sets over against all these "other things".

God has purposed to bring in a "way of Life", which, because it is the "Way of Love" will be superior to all these "other things", and thereby reveal the answer to the riddle that has baffled human-kind for all the ages past. It will, in itself, be the explanation of the Purpose that has had all the ages for its development. It will show why men, by searching could not find out God, and why through the dark centuries they were left to guess and speculate about the Great First Cause, about the Universe, and about themselves.

(To be continued)

GLOSSARY

of little-known terms and names appearing in this issue.

Elysium. The Greeks' and Romans' idea of the place inhabited by the blessed after death, thought variously to be in the Canary Islands or in the interior of the earth.

Homeric. After the style of the great Greek poet Homer, 8th century B.C.

Nirvana. The final end of the believer in Buddhist religion, the state attained when all earthly desires and passions have been completely suppressed.

Stoic. Adherent of a system of philosophy which arose in Greece about 300 B.C., aiming at cultivating wisdom, justice, courage and discretion.

"For HE is our Peace." (Eph. 2. 14.)

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

THE GOLDEN AGE

*When memory of battles
At last is strange and old
When nations have one banner
And creeds have found one fold.*

*When the Hand that sprinkles midnight
With its powdered drift of suns,
Has hushed this tiny tumult
Of sects, and swords and guns,*

*Then hate's last note of discord,
In all God's world shall cease,
In the conquest which is service,
In the Victory which is peace.*

PRAY UNCEASINGLY

Importunity is of the essence of prevailing prayer. Never stop praying. At dawn, with David: at noon, with Daniel: at midnight, with Silas: in sorrow, as Hannah: in sickness, as Job: in childhood, like Samuel: in youth, like Timothy: in manhood, like Paul: in hoar hairs, like Simeon: in dying, like Stephen.

FISHERS

The fishermen disciples of Jesus must have been startled when their Master said to them "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men". They must have suddenly realised that their earlier training had not been in vain. They would be able to make use of their experience as fishers in far different waters. Henceforth they were to catch men. What we are apt to overlook is the fact that before the Master gave them a promise, He laid down a condition. Before they could be fishers of men, they must be prepared to follow Him.

Perhaps this offers an explanation of why we have so often failed in the past. We have been eager to be fishers of men, but we have not paid sufficient attention to the necessity of following Christ, not only wherever He may lead, but in His own life, and in His own methods of work.

LOVE

"Seeing that we are all ordained to be citizens of the one Everlasting City, let us begin to enter into that way here already by mutual love." (Old Elizabethan prayer.)

A CHRISTIAN HOME

What a home ours would be if Christ were actually dwelling in it, interesting Himself in all our affairs, sympathising both in our sorrows and in our joys, directing us in all our difficulties, speaking to us, too, of things transcending this life, telling us of the heavenly inheritance for which He is preparing us, and bidding us to be of good cheer? What an atmosphere of heaven would pervade our homes! What holy strength would come to us from that Divine companionship! What peace His presence there would bring, and what a separation from all earthly things, and how heavenly minded we would become! What a hushing there would be of all those tones of anger, irritation, selfishness, and uncharitableness!

IN HIM

You cannot study the New Testament with any prayerful attention without discovering that every single blessing you enjoy as a Christian is yours simply because you are in Him. It is all stored for you in Christ; because you are in Him everything is yours, and until we are in Him nothing is ours. Oh, to reckon upon our union with Christ!

OUR HIGH PRIEST

It will help us greatly to think of Jesus as our High Priest, "made like unto his brethren"; that His own experiences of temptation qualify Him to be a sympathising listener. It encourages us to think of Him as "in all points tempted like as we are", as One who suffered being tempted; therefore able to succour them that are tempted.

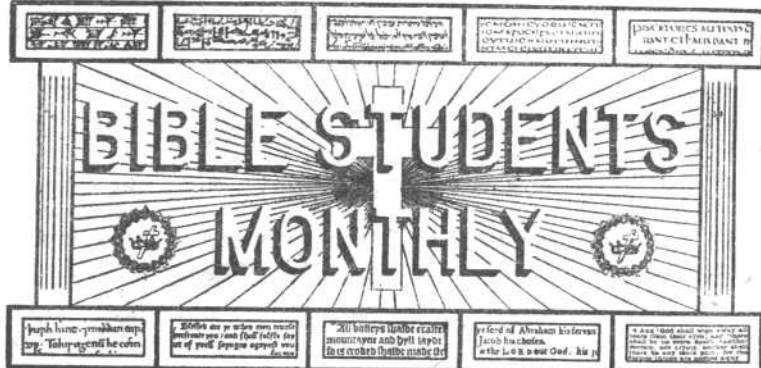
This thought of the tempted but victorious Christ makes the secret place of prayer a place of trustful rest to a weary traveller's heart. How comforting to speak to such a Lord, so infinitely holy and yet so tender, our Judge, our Saviour, our King and High Priest, who is able to read us thoroughly and therefore able to sympathise. We can go boldly to such a throne and find it not merely a throne of justice but a throne of compassion, a throne of grace.

THE FATHER

To find the Maker and Father of this universe is a hard task; and when you have found him it is impossible to speak of him before all people. (Plato.)



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



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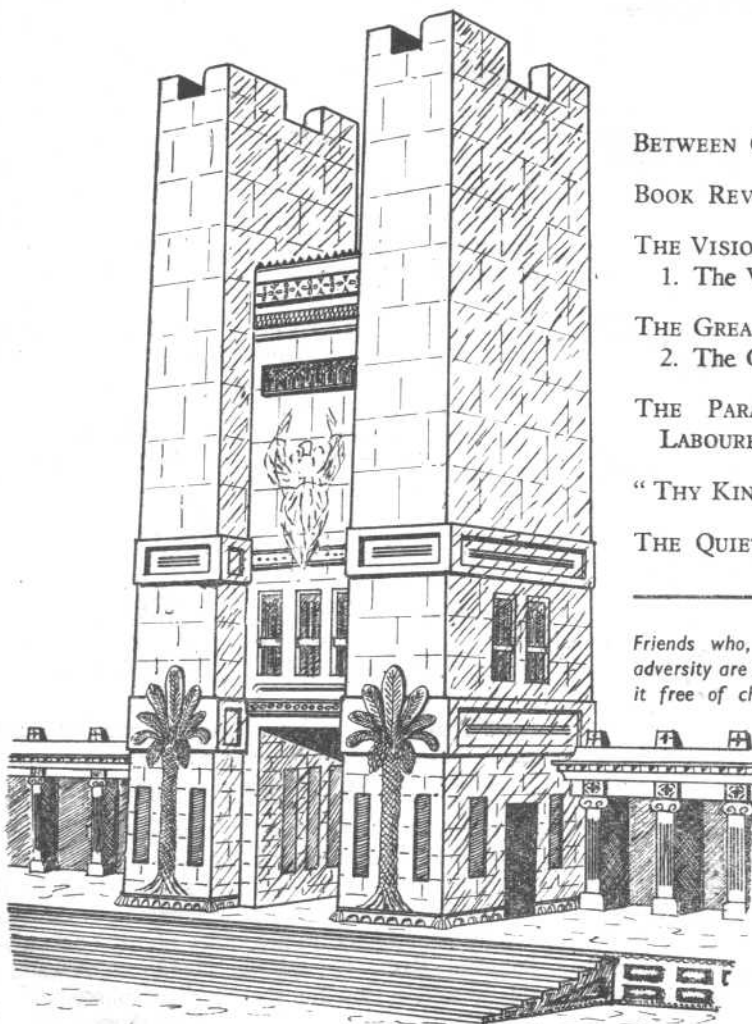
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Friends at Dewsbury write: "The first Quarterly United Home-Gathering of the Doncaster, Sheffield and Dewsbury brethren was held at Dewsbury on Sunday, 30th November.

"There was a goodly number of brethren present representing many Northern classes. The morning session was addressed by Bro. Sharman (Forest Gate) and Brother gave many helpful reminders of God's care over His people in the past and how this same unfailing care is over all the followers of Christ to-day. Lunch was followed by helpful testimonies and the afternoon address was also given by Bro. Sharman, many beautiful points on prayer being expressed. After tea and fellowship, Brother C. Spilsbury (Warrington) gave the closing address from Paul's letter to the Philippians, showing Paul's standards for the Christian life. After a hymn the day was closed with a prayer of thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for a happy day of fellowship rich in spiritual blessings."

* * *

The Manchester Bible Students' Council have opened this year's activity with plans, in co-operation with the Bury class, for a public meeting at Bury on 7th February, the speaker being Bro. A. J. Lodge and the subject "World Crisis—the Divine Purpose". Plans are being made for a similar meeting at Stockport and the Council are prepared to co-operate with any friends who would like to hold the same kind of witness in their own town.

* * *

The following books are temporarily out of stock in the Bookroom. Announcement will be made as soon as they are again available:

In Green Pastures.

Fulfilled Prophecies that prove the Bible.

Rebuilding Palestine according to Prophecy.

* * *

Arrangements are in hand for a Convention of Bible Students during August Bank Holiday week-end, 1948, at Conway Hall, London, sponsored and arranged by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes. All enquiries to the Convention Secretary, Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * *

Announcement is made that the usual Easter Convention at Warrington is being planned for 1948. Further details will be published as they become available; in the meantime friends desiring to reserve accommodation or make other enquiries may write the Convention Secretary, Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington.

A final committee meeting in connection with the pilgrim visit to Great Britain of Bro. J. T. Read was held on November 29th, and the Balance Sheet was examined. In submitting this account of a very successful pilgrimage, the committee would like to record their thanks to Bro. J. T. Read and to all the brethren who, by their ready response and help, made the visit so successful.

We believe that Bro. Read symbolised what is expected of a serving follower of the Master; certain of his Father's faithfulness, able to give a reason for his hope, and untiring in the desire to serve. His message was accepted and appreciated by all as from the Lord, and its effect was to unite the brethren in the bonds of love.

Bro. Read made upwards of eighty visits and travelled extensively in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The committee unanimously decided that the balance of the money subscribed for the purpose of this pilgrim visit be held by the Treasurer and Secretary, Bro. R. Walton, to be used in the event of a similar visit being possible in the future.

Bro. Walton will be interested to hear from friends and classes who would like to associate themselves with such an invitation to the P.B.I. to send a brother for another such trip when times are favourable.

Your brethren in the Master's service,
Bro. R. WALTON (Sec. and Treasurer).
Bro. S. A. COULING.
Bro. A. O. HUDSON.
Bro. A. J. LODGE.

* * *

Gone From Us

✦

Sister Girdlestone (Rugby), December.

✦

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

BOOK REVIEWS

Through the Land of Babylonia (L. T. Pearson).
Marshall, Morgan and Scott. 72 pp., 3/6.

A neat little book, bound in paper board, by the author of "Through the Holy Land". It describes a quick tour of the ruined cities of Mesopotamia—Babylon, Kish, Ur, Nineveh and so on, and is chiefly noteworthy for the excellent photographs—20 full-page ones—of the ruins of those cities. It is an interesting introduction to the romance of archaeology for those who would like to know more about that romance but are deterred from the more "learned" books. Not stocked at Welling.

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 1. The Voice of the Prophet.

Joel lived about eight hundred years before Christ, probably in the early part of the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah. He was a southerner, a Judean, and all his prophecy is cast against the background of Judea. He was a countryman, too, not a city-dweller, as is evidenced by the wealth of allusions to country life in the three chapters of his short prophecy. Vine-dressers and husbandmen pass across the stage; vines and fig trees, pomegranates, palms and orange trees stand erect in the background against a landscape of cornfields and pasture lands. This was the world that Joel knew, in this framework he set his prophecy, and from it he took his allusions and symbols.

Joel was very nearly the first of the prophets. Amos and Jonah lived just a little later and Hosea perhaps twenty years earlier. But Hosea was not one of the men who saw in vision the glory of the coming Kingdom; he was more concerned with the sins of Israel of his own day, and so Joel was the first of that long line of seers, ending with Malachi, who saw in vision something of the glories to come and recorded what they saw in never-to-be-forgotten words. Malachi lived five hundred years later than Joel. During all that time the voice of prophecy was hardly ever silent, and when at last, with the death of Malachi, the Holy Spirit ceased to speak with the authority that was the peculiar characteristic of these Hebrew prophets the foundation had been well and truly laid for all that men in after times were to learn concerning God's good plans for the last conflict with evil and the setting up of His Kingdom on earth.

Isaiah, who began his lifetime of prophecy and statesmanship something like sixty years after Joel, must have owed much to the earlier prophet. Isaiah's prophecy contains much that is found in embryo form in Joel. Isaiah's doctrine of the "remnant", that was carried forward into the New Testament and furnished Paul the Apostle with one of his greatest themes, has its origin in Joel. The restoration of the earth in the "times of restitution of all things" so wonderfully and fully described by Isaiah, is first hinted at in Joel. And the eloquent descriptions of Armageddon, the day of God's rising up to judge the evil things of the earth, and His establishing a Kingdom of everlasting righteousness, the constant theme of prophetic Scripture from Isaiah to Revelation, have

their commencement too in Joel. This obscure countryman, notable neither for wealth or rank or talent, unused to city ways and the society of the learned and cultured, a man of the people and a man of the soil, was the first to be blessed by the Most High with visions of the Last Days. And because this short prophecy is thus the fountain-head of all subsequent revelation concerning the Time of the End it is of surpassing interest to all who would discern the "shape of things to come".

Characteristically, we know nothing of Joel's antecedents, only that he was the son of Pethuel, and no one knows of whom came Pethuel, of what tribe he was, or where he lived. The message was all-important, and Joel's own identity of no importance. He just announces, briefly, "*The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel*" and then plunges into his message. That it was a message from the heart none can doubt; the words are burning, white-hot, given forth with urgency and fire. One has the impression of a youthful zealot like John the Baptist, crying his message with such intensity that the people were compelled in spite of themselves to stop and listen. "*Hear this, ye old men*" he cries "*and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?*" An arresting opening to the message, that. He had something to tell them that had not been known in past generations; a new thing in the land, to which they must give earnest heed, a thing unheard of by the wise men of times gone past.

"*Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.*" A master of psychology, this Joel. He has not yet broached the subject of his message, nor even given any hint as to its nature. Many of the prophets announced their God-given authority in their opening breath and plunged into their message with the next. Not so Joel; he means to get the interest of his hearers first. And how subtle the appeal to their knowledge of the Mosaic Law! It was an obligation in Israel that Divine Truth be passed on from generation to generation by the teaching of the young. Had not Moses commanded them, saying "take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen,—but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Deut. 4. 9). In much later times the

people were taught to sing the noble strains of the 78th Psalm "he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments . . ." What a wonderful conception of the eternal truth of God, handed down from generation to generation, preserving alive the healthful influence of a strong religious faith within the nation; and what a condemnation upon our own times when this Divine injunction has been all but universally ignored, with the dire results manifest to-day on every hand among the young!

But now the listeners are waiting to hear what the prophet has to tell them. Is it a message only for them, or does its scope take in sweeps of time and space outside the limits of their own lives and homes, extending into all the earth and even to the end of the world? From the first few words, tremendous though they be, it would seem not, for they appear to relate to nothing more world-shaking than the imminence of a great plague of locusts in Judea, and that, although always a grievous calamity, hardly needed the intervention of a prophet of God.

"That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."

The Hebrew words refer to four varieties of the many different species of locust, the *gazam*, the *arbeh*, the *yelek* and the *chasil*, the first being distinguished for its voracity, from whence it was called the "biter", the second for its swarming multitudes, the third for its propensity for licking up and consuming all in its path, by reason of which it was called the "licker", and the fourth for plain unadulterated destructiveness. One might almost think that here is a covert reference to God's "four sore judgments". It is surprising how often the number four is associated with Divine judgment in the Scriptures. Not only are there the well-known four horsemen of Revelation, and the four winds of Revelation 7, but there are also the four horns of Zechariah 1. 18 and the four beasts of Daniel 7. In these latter two instances, at least, the symbols describe agencies which are like Joel's locusts in that their mission is to execute judgment upon Israel, and yet, again like that dread visitation that appeared before Joel's eyes, will one day be turned back and permit the favour of God to come upon a chastened people. That truth is brought forth very plainly in Ezekiel 14. 21-22 "Thus saith the Lord God;

How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant . . ."

The opening verse of the prophecy, therefore, gives a picture of the utter desolation of the land by a great plague of locusts. It was a vivid picture and a very familiar one to the people of Joel's day. Many travellers in Eastern lands have written descriptions of the terrible havoc caused by the millions of flying insects; no better symbol of devastation and ruin could be selected. This 4th verse of chapter 1 implies that the plague has come and gone and now the land is utterly ruined; the following verses describe the lament that goes up from all quarters, from the people and the priests, the merry-makers and the workers, merging into a national cry of distress rising up to God; but there is as yet no evidence of repentance. Chapter 1 closes with a people bowed down in trouble but not as yet prepared to come to God in repentance that He might heal them.

It is difficult to decide whether in this 1st chapter Joel is referring to a literal plague of locusts or to a great calamity that is about to fall upon his nation and of which the locusts are a symbol. Probably the latter is the right interpretation. There would hardly seem to be necessity for employing a prophet of God to foretell a natural visitation which was a fairly common sight and occurred every few years anyway; it is more likely that this is the beginning of Joel's developing prophetic sense, that sense which by the time he reached his third chapter had stretched out into the far distant future and shown him Armageddon itself—"multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision". But there is no hint in this first chapter of his seeing so far; the visitation to which he refers here must be one that was already very near, to be fulfilled on his own people in consequence of their own apostasy. It is a reasonable conclusion that under the figure of the locusts Joel was seeing the series of invasions under Shalmaneser and Sennacherib that resulted in the carrying away captive of the "Ten Tribes" and a goodly number also of the people of Judah, and later on, under Nebuchadnezzar, who completed the devastation of the land. It is significant that just as Joel saw four species of locusts, each eating up what its predecessor had left (vs. 4) until nothing remained, so the Scriptures speak of four great military conquerors who came, one after the other, into the land of Israel and Judah, and left nothing. Shalmaneser V of Assyria (2 Ki. 18. 9) came first, about sixty years after Joel prophesied. He was followed by Sargon II (Isa. 20. 1) who actually captured Samaria. Next

came the famous Sennacherib whose host was destroyed outside Jerusalem (Isa. 36 and 37) but who nevertheless did subdue the ten-tribe kingdom and take many captive. Finally, a century later, came Nebuchadnezzar, who took the remaining people of Judah away to Babylon. The four waves of locusts had done their work and this part of Joel's prophecy was thus fulfilled.

It is the consciousness of this imminent catastrophe that gives the prophet's message its initial urgency. "Awake, ye drunkards, and weep" he cries (vs 5) "howl, all ye drinkers of wine, . . . it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion . . . he hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree . . ." His first call is to the pleasure-seeking multitude, the heedless ones that had forsaken their covenant with God and turned to the interests and distractions of the moment. In the midst of their revelry destruction had come; the ruthless Assyrian soldiers would break into their houses and bring to an end their pleasant feasts. Isaiah saw something of a very similar nature when he proclaimed "Woe . . . to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower . . . Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one (the Assyrians) which as a tempest of hail, a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth . . ." (Isa. 28. 1-2). It is impossible not to perceive the analogy with conditions in the world in our own day, when men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3. 4), and to realise that judgment, inevitably, must come, just as it did a century or so after the days of Joel. Is there not in our own times a repetition of the days immediately before Israel's final disaster, when "the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy." (2 Chron. 36. 15-16.)

The completeness of the catastrophe is shown by the reference to vine and fig tree. The vine was a symbol of the people of Israel (see Isa. 5. 7 and Jer. 2. 21 "the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel"; "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed") and the fig tree a symbol of the same (Jer. 24); and they both alike are wasted. Small wonder that the prophet calls for a lament; the voice of the bridegroom and the bride has been stilled, the holy and glorious nation has been humbled to the dust, and even Joel has not as yet seen what is to be the outcome. He can do naught else but call to sorrow and mourning and wait upon God

to know what He will do. The Lamentations of Jeremiah, written to express the grief of the nation at the same calamity, had its seed also in this prophecy of Joel, calling to mourning and lamentation nearly two hundred years before the event.

(To be continued)

Next month's instalment treats the remainder of chapter 1. Joel still sees no further into the future, but he is led to take one great step forward. He raises the lamentation from a cry of hopeless self-pity to a cry to God. There is still no hint of repentance—that comes in chapter 2—but his call to the nation to bring their troubles to God was itself a stage in the developing understanding of the Divine Plans which led him at last to see, and describe, the last great day when God will deliver all men from their thralldom to sin and death.

"Be Not Weary in Well-Doing"

The greatest temptation to discouragement and loss of zeal is the failure to see great outward results from one's work for the Lord. A form of service that is steadily expanding its scope and drawing increasing numbers into its orbit, that brings to its ministers the vocal and written appreciations and plaudits of an ever increasing number of people, that seems to be "making the grade"; this is a service in which it is easy to continue with good heart. But when it means steadily working away year after year, knowing that the work is of God, knowing that the humble in heart and poor in spirit are thankful for it, but gathering no outward evidences of prosperity, this is that which tests one's tenacity and sincerity of purpose. John the Apostle was left to die in obscurity, the friends and companions of earlier days long since passed away, his life work apparently a failure, false doctrines and teachers disrupting the Church—but his last thoughts, enshrined in vision, have become the Church's immortal heritage, and the lonely old man, dying forgotten on that deserted island in the Aegean Sea, is the best-loved of all the writers of the New Testament. He, being dead, yet speaketh.

Do you recall the story of how Napoleon's army on one occasion was demoralised, and the general ordered the drummer boy to sound the retreat? The little fellow straightened up with pride and said, "Sir, I don't know how to sound a retreat—I never learned—but I can sound a charge." He sounded the charge. The army rallied and was victorious. It overcame at last. With Christ on our side the final victory will be ours.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A SERIAL STUDY
IN 1 COR. 13. 13.

Part 2. The Charismata.

Between those former days when the Corinthian brethren worshipped at the idol's shrine, and these later days when Paul wrote to them these searching words, these converts to the Christian faith had been endowed with extraordinary supernatural powers. They had been invested with "gracious gifts" (*charismata*—1 Cor. 12. 31). They are also called "spiritual gifts" (*pneumatikon*) in Chap. 14. 1. The possession of these gifts enabled them to do and say many things entirely outside and beyond the range of their natural capacities. They were intended to be a source of help in their witness-bearing before their former friends and relations in the early days of the Church's establishment.

The use of such supernatural powers was not an entirely new feature in their lives, for they would have seen and heard the heathen priesthood exercising similar powers many times. Supernormal exhibitions of occult power were of frequent occurrence in the worship at the shrine—while the pronouncement of cryptic oracles, or the infliction of the most terrible taboos, under demonic influences, were but regular features of the priesthood's daily functions. To produce impressionistic effects upon the worshippers' minds black magic (of many kinds) was employed, while other features of the black arts were used either to restore to health or to blast with death such individuals as the priest might choose. Men have been known, so historians say, to wilt and die forthwith under the priestly curse.

We are told by competent authorities that occurrences of this sort took place in every land where a demon-inspired priesthood held sway, hence these at Corinth would be no exception to the rule.

But in those former days these brethren had been no more than observers and witnesses of these Satanic happenings. None but the priesthood with their acolytes had been thus endowed. While therefore the sight of these happenings was really no new thing in their lives, it was most surely a new experience entirely for themselves to be endowed and equipped with such supernatural powers. And in that endowment lay its danger to themselves. Ingrained as that way of life had been from their infant days, into the very fibres of their soul, every act and experience, every word and thought had been tinctured through and through with occult influence. When passing over into the Christian Church these Corinthians seemed to have brought much of this early heritage along with them. They had not all

cut entirely clear from its entangling influence. Some of them still attended at the idol shrine, and sat with family and friends at its festive board. With them they still partook of the "offered" meat, while others scrupled not to lend themselves to immorality. Seemingly, for some of them, the "pull" of the newer faith was yet too weak to neutralise the fascination of the ancient shrine.

And yet there was some "pulling power" in the new faith. They came at the appointed times to the place of fellowship and mingled with other communicants of like mind. It was at these times that the new influence came to rest upon them. It was in this place that the heavenly "*Charismata*" enabled them to speak without premeditation or other preparation in their own or foreign tongues. Some were accorded ability to interpret a "foreign tongue",—and make it of use and service in the general ministry. Others were given insight into an ancient prophecy, which was then communicated to all for the common good. Others had ability conferred to heal the sick or work minor miracles.

Thus, within the limitations of their own ecclesia, these one-time heathen worshippers were endowed with supernatural powers. And, in that they lay outside the range of their own natural abilities, they were, in this sense, akin to those of their former priests, though intended for nobler ends. With men inclined to be wholly good—men like Paul and Peter and the whole Apostolic band—these "*charismata*" could be of untold benefit, both to the recipient himself and to the wider circle around him, but with men not yet cut clear from evil things and evil ways, they could well be a source of great danger and immense difficulty. With men such as these in the assembly other "powers" also invaded the place where they were "come together in the name of the Lord". Under demonic influence some one or more had openly said "Jesus is accursed" (1 Cor. 12. 13) a state of things which Paul assured them was not promoted by the Holy Spirit of God in their midst. Perhaps also from the same source came the unyielding reluctance to give place to another speaker who may have had a "leading" from the Lord at the same moment of time. In this way the occasion which should have been devoted wholly to Divine worship became reduced to a noisy babel of conflicting sights and sounds.

The bestowment of these "gifts" was intended first and foremost to stand as witness that the Most High was in their midst. Any stranger entering in among them at these times ought to have been convicted by the earnestness and sincerity of each and all, "in consequence of which the secrets of his own heart would be disclosed (by a confession of penitence) and then falling on his face, would worship God and declare that God was really in their midst (1 Cor. 14. 24-25.) In addition to this witness to the stranger, the exercise of these "gifts" was intended for the edification of all. (1 Cor. 14. 3 and 26.)

Unlike ourselves in these later days, they had no completed New Testament available with its clear outlines of redemptive and moral truth, and such copies of the Old Testament as they may have had were not easy to understand, hence they stood in need of heavenly aid to enable them to conduct their ministry. Thus, a flash of insight here into the meaning of a promise or a line of reasoning there regarding the purport of a prophecy might be a means of broadening out the foundation of their hopes. Or again the reading of a Psalm might help to deepen the devotion of the hour. In all things Paul sought to have them look upon the whole assembly as though they were members of a human body, of which no member could say to a fellow-member "I have no need of you". He desired them so to conduct their services that all might be edified, choosing rather to have them speak five simple words in their own native utterance than ten thousand in an unknown tongue.

The object therefore behind these "gifts" was that of leading them apparently into a new way of life. And yet, under the circumstances then prevailing it could not be a perfect way, for there were tares among the wheat. Not every member of the ecclesia could be accounted to be "in Christ". From the very inception of the Church's history there has always been a Church within a Church or (to turn the statement round—and the statement then is just as true) a Church outside a Church. Always there have been more Christians there in name than Christians in fact. As seen by Scripture there has always been a greater company that has loved moral goodness and just dealing than has loved the way of sacrifice. Out of the myriads who have been attracted by the Gospel story not every one has been called of God to become conformed to the Image of His Son, and of the many that have been "called", only the "few" will come through as the elect of God. The eye of man has seen the whole assembly of the Church visible, the Eye of God alone has seen the faithful core within. For this reason alone the assemblies in the ecclesias, in the early Church (or now) could never claim to constitute the "perfect"

Society—that is to say, the Society in which the "perfect" way of life could express itself.

That general statement, true of the whole Church of this Gospel Age, was particularly true of the Corinthian Assembly. From its very inception it was greatly handicapped by the influence of the old-time tradition and environment. Heathen worship was always a divided thing—there were "gods many" in the land, each god claiming its own particular following. The Corinthians were well accustomed to think of as many sects and cults as there were gods. This was the outlook they brought over into the Christian Church, and did not scruple to range themselves in divided companies, behind this leader or that. Again, they had looked upon frequent scenes of impurity in the heathen festivals without undue concern. They also brought this state of indifference and unconcern over into their congregational life to work great havoc in their midst. The failure to make a clean break from the old way of life gravely jeopardised any prospect of making the new "way" a success.

But even with the best of them, and under the best conditions possible it seems obvious that no really new way of life could have been introduced by the use of the "Charismata", seeing that, in the main, they were mechanical gifts operating from without, upon hand and eye and brain, enabling the recipient to do and say certain things which lay outside the range of natural capacity—a kind of supernatural obsession from outside themselves, producing effects for which they themselves were only, in part, responsible. And the fact that some among them laid themselves open to demonic control—as is evidenced by some one or more of them saying "Jesus is accursed"—greatly complicated the situation for the whole assembly. A counterfeit obsession by the evil powers—a state of things which few seemed able to detect or correct—produced consequences in their midst far from good or desirable.

In any case, the influence of the evil powers had showed itself too strong to be corrected by the heavenly gifts, as their divisions, their indifference to sin, their readiness to "go to law" proved most unmistakably. Even their very "love-feasts", with which their usual gatherings terminated, had degenerated into seasons of drunkenness and gluttony.

These were sad scenes in a Christian Church, and make grievous reading even when lightly sketched. And the Corinthians were not the only Church in this tragic plight as reference to Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles will show. The Church at Corinth stands before us in the nature of a window, through which we may view the state of many congregations in those early days, shackled and fettered as so many of them were by the heathen influence of former days.

What then was effected among them by the "Charismata"? Were there no good results therefrom? Yes, indeed, there was great good where the heart and motive of the recipient was pure, but to produce praiseworthy effects the heart must first be pure. The mere possession of a "gift" did not by itself purify the heart.

What was the real purpose of the bestowment of these "gifts"? The answer is—it was to show the need of some better thing! Taken in their widest sense, these "gifts" were endowments of an enabling Power—Holy Spirit Power—accorded to believing men to assist them in their witness-bearing to the new faith, and to call attention to the changes that were being introduced in the earth. But a dispensation of "Power" alone was not enough to purify and sweeten hearts so super-saturated with sin. The hosts of wickedness under Satanic control could also dispense wonder-working power to their representatives, enabling them also to perform prodigies before

men. And, being what he was, man would respond more readily to the evil display than to the good. The great and all-essential purpose behind the bestowment of these "gifts" was to show the need for the dispensing of "something" which God alone possessed—a "something" not possessed by any evil power—a "something" that would penetrate below brain and hand and eye, and win response from the deep discerning qualities of the heart. Mere "power" that operated from outer sources upon eye and hand and brain was not enough; it must be the deep call of One great Heart—able and ready to help to the uttermost—to every other heart which had come to know its need of help. There is but one attribute that is ample enough for this great task; it had its source in God.

For a little while therefore God gave the lesser "gifts"; which were destined in due time to pass away, to show to men, (even to believing men) their need for a more excellent thing.

(To be continued)

The Parable of the Vineyard Labourers

Some reflections on the story in Matt. 20. 1-16.

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

therefore, and by then it was becoming apparent that some sound instruction was necessary; so Jesus told this story of the man who hired labourers to work in his vineyard and what happened to them at the end of the day.

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

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

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

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

The disciples must by now have been wondering toward what this story was leading them. They were of the working classes themselves, and they had no illusions about the characters of employers.

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

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

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

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

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

Evidently from the fact that the parable is given in consequence of the disciples' question regarding their future reward for their present sacrifice, it has reference to the spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God in the next Age, the Millennial Age, when the Church of Christ, glorified and associated with Him in the spiritual realm "beyond the Veil" will have ceased from their labours in the vineyard of this Age and appeared to receive their "hire", the "reward" of their consecrated walk before Him. The householder, of course, is the Lord Himself, going out to find disciples who will serve His interests in this world. His "going out" thus continues during the whole of this Gospel Age, from Pentecost until the setting up of the earthly Kingdom, but the third hour, sixth hour, and so on must refer, not to the early, middle and late centuries of the Age, but to stages in the lives of individuals at which the call comes to them. Quite obviously no one has laboured from Pentecost until to-day, for life does not last so long. But some there are, and such there have been at every point of time throughout the Age, to whom the call came in youth or early life, and who heard and obeyed the call and laboured zealously and faithfully until old age ended their labours. These are they who were sent into the vineyard "early in the morning". Polycarp, the saintly Bishop of Smyrna, was one such. Coming to Christ as a young lad, his proud boast when they led him forth to martyrdom was that he had served Christ for eighty-six years, and his Lord had never failed him. But others receive the call in middle life; these are they who respond to the householder's invitation at the third or the sixth or even the ninth hour. And some are already in the evening of life when they give themselves in whole-hearted surrender to the Lord Christ; they come in at the eleventh hour but the Lord has work for them to do and a work to do in them.

There is another aspect in which this parable is true to life. The complaint of some of the labourers was that they who had "borne the heat and burden

of the day" had attained but the same reward as others whose work had been much lighter and, in their view at any rate, less effective and less important than their own. "These last have wrought but one hour" they said—one can almost sense the contemptuous tone in which they said it—"and thou hast made them equal unto us"—we who have done so much for you. And there are those to-day, and have been in past days, among the Lord's followers, who contrast their own greater opportunities and privileges, their own more prominent service and grander achievement, with that of more humble or less talented fellow-believers, and consider that on account of these things they should receive a greater and more prominent position in the Kingdom. The twelve disciples had the same idea. "*There arose a strife among them, which of them should be the greatest.*" From this aspect the eleventh hour workers are those whose abilities and opportunities, from the natural or physical point of view, are least; the early workers those to whom much has been committed. And as the Lord Himself said in another place, He will require from each one in proportion to the talents He has bestowed—but the ultimate blessing of immortality and association with Him in the Kingdom is the same for all.

It comes down, then, to this; that faithfulness in the least counts for as much in our Lord's sight as faithfulness in much. The tongue-tied, diffident brother in the back seat can do as much, in his way, in the Master's vineyard as the eloquent platform orator or the golden-tongued evangelist, and reap the same reward. The hard-working sister who finds the doctrines of the faith so difficult to master can render as effective service for the Lord she loves as the live, keen-minded one who always seems to be so knowledgeable and certain of herself, or always has so much spare time to go around doing good works. God hath set the members in the Body as it hath pleased Him, and appointed to each one his or her own particular duty, some prominent, some obscure; and because all these various duties are of equal importance in his sight, however they appear to man, the outcome is the same for all.

So it will be, then, when at last the hope of every true believer is realised, and the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" has become an accomplished fact. We shall meet our fellows and our companions of the pilgrim way, those that have gone before us into the glory land, the saints and martyrs and prophets and apostles of earlier times, and we shall find that we are all equally citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, thinking no more of station or rank,

of preferment one above another, but all rejoicing together in the wondrous companionship and overlordship of Christ our Head, the heavenly Bridegroom. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace." The "penny" which each one will receive is the prize of eternal association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Kingdom, and before the presence of the Heavenly Father; and, associated with that for the duration of the Millennial Age, the inestimable privilege of working together with the Saviour for the conversion of the world.

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

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

absolute equality of citizenship. Each will seek the welfare of other; all will be servants of all, and in that blessed relationship, hallowed for all time by One who Himself came to serve and minister, will enter into their reward.

"Thy King cometh unto thee"

This comment upon a very well-known text was written by George Gilfillan (born 1813, died 1878) a writer who became minister of School Wynd Church, Dundee. The illustration is one that brings vividly before the mind our own position as "men that wait for their Lord" (Luke 12. 36).

"'This Gospel of the Kingdom' I am told in Matthew, 'shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come'. I never read these words without remembering a spectacle which I, in common with thousands of others, saw, and which none that saw it can ever forget. It was when Her Majesty, the Queen, (*Queen Victoria; Ed.*) visited the Scottish metropolis in 1842. Scarcely had the twilight darkened into night, than from every hill surrounding that most magnificent of cities, there seemed to rise simultaneously a crest of fire. Each mountain lifted up into his hand a torch; and from Berwick to Fife, and Fife to Stirling, the great Firth was at once illuminated. It was a witness, a token to the land that its sovereign was near. It was a token, too, to the approaching vessel, far out at sea, that all was ready for her reception; that loyalty had gushed out into these flaming signals. Thus, when the Gospel beacons, from California to Japan, are fully lit, it will be a witness, a token to earth, that the end is approaching, and a signal to heaven for the preparation of the chariot, the harnessing of the steeds, the furbishing of the thunderbolts, the gathering together of all the elements, the witnesses, and the victims, of that great day of God Almighty. Our part, meanwhile, is surely to go forward, and to light up from land to land the signals for this great and blessed Advent."

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

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

DIVINE HARMONY

"They tell us that in Pisa's old cathedral
All noises, harsh and loud—
Grating of ponderous doors, shrill tones, the tramping
And murmur of the crowd—
Are caught up, softened, harmonised and blended
Within the lofty dome;
Then echoed back in one great wave of music,
Sweet as a dream of home.
"So all the harsh notes in life's mingled music:
The burden and the woe;
The stroke that almost snaps the quivering
The loss that grieves us so; [heartstrings,
In heaven's o'er-arching dome of perfect wisdom,
Power and love, shall be
Gathered and blended in Divinest marvel
Of matchless melody."

THE POTTER

Just as the potter, however skilful he is, cannot make a beautiful vessel out of a lump of clay that is never put into his hand, so neither can God make out of us a vessel unto his honour unless we place ourselves in his hands. We, who have heard the call of our God to a life of entire consecration, must come out from the world and be separate. "Be not conformed to this world," Paul says. (Rom. 12.2.)

GRACE

Have you a difficult temperament? Well, if you have you will require more grace; but the answer is, "He giveth more grace" You will not exhaust the reserves and resources of grace. *God never yet made a temperament which He could not sanctify.* God never yet saved one of His children whom He could not fill with the power of the Holy Spirit and make sweet and gracious and lovable and attractive.

ZEAL

There is much implied in the expression, "*Re-deeming the time*"—more than merely using the time profitably. It has the thought of buying back the past years by means of a right use of the present. God would have us profit by past neglect, failures, and mistakes. He not only mercifully averts, through the blood of Christ, our sad results in judgment, but through a deeper acquaintance with the value of the cross of Christ and the humbling retrospect of the past, we are enabled to spend and be spent in His service.

RISEN AGAIN

The soul's life is Christ Himself (Col. 3.3). There are no sunny joys, no sweet flowers, no songs of the birds of praise, apart from Him—not in the mere remembrance of Him, nor yet in wistful admiration of Him, the Rose of Sharon, but in the reception of Him, the risen, living Lord of life, to dwell and live His life at the centre and root of our beings. To do this for His redeemed ones He rose, so that "as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom 6.4). When Christ died He died our death—He bore the penalty due to us sinners: when He rose from the dead, it was to bestow His life on us. So that this secret of new life lies not in the renovating and improving of the old, but in the infusion of that which is new, a fresh breaking in of life akin to the life of God, exhibited in Christ's earthly life, bringing this springtime to replace the once hard-bound winter of the soul.

ROYAL DAINTIES

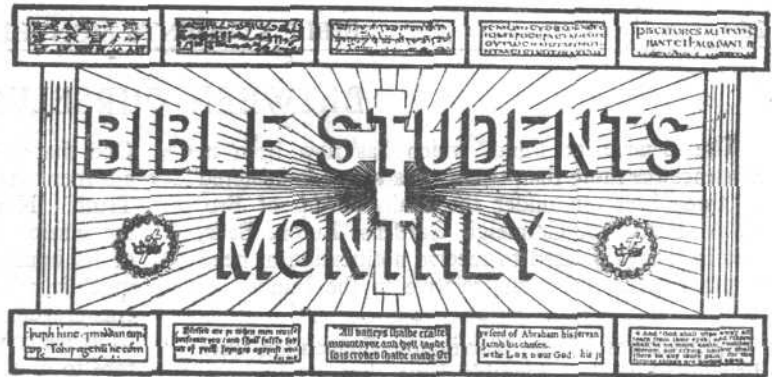
There are many "royal dainties" in the record of Jacob's blessings upon his sons. For instance, Joseph was to be "a fruitful bough." What made Joseph so "fruitful"? He had the prerequisites to successful fruit bearing. He had perfect connection with God. Christ says, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Are you "a faithful bough"? Are you yielding "royal dainties"? Joseph's hands were "made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." What memories as we think of Jacob's mighty God strengthening him and making him strong "as a prince"! When he became a prince he was counted with nobility and could "yield royal dainties."

DIVINE LOVE

It is not sufficient to know God's will, to have visions, to speak in tongues and proclaim the Gospel and the return of Christ—without having love for God and for all His creatures. Therefore let us pray to-day to God for love, for the gift of sympathy for those who suffer, and for the power of unselfish service. All other gifts will then be granted us. May God give us the highest which He has, which He Himself is, whereby we can become one with Him, for "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 John 4. 16).



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



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MARCH, 1948

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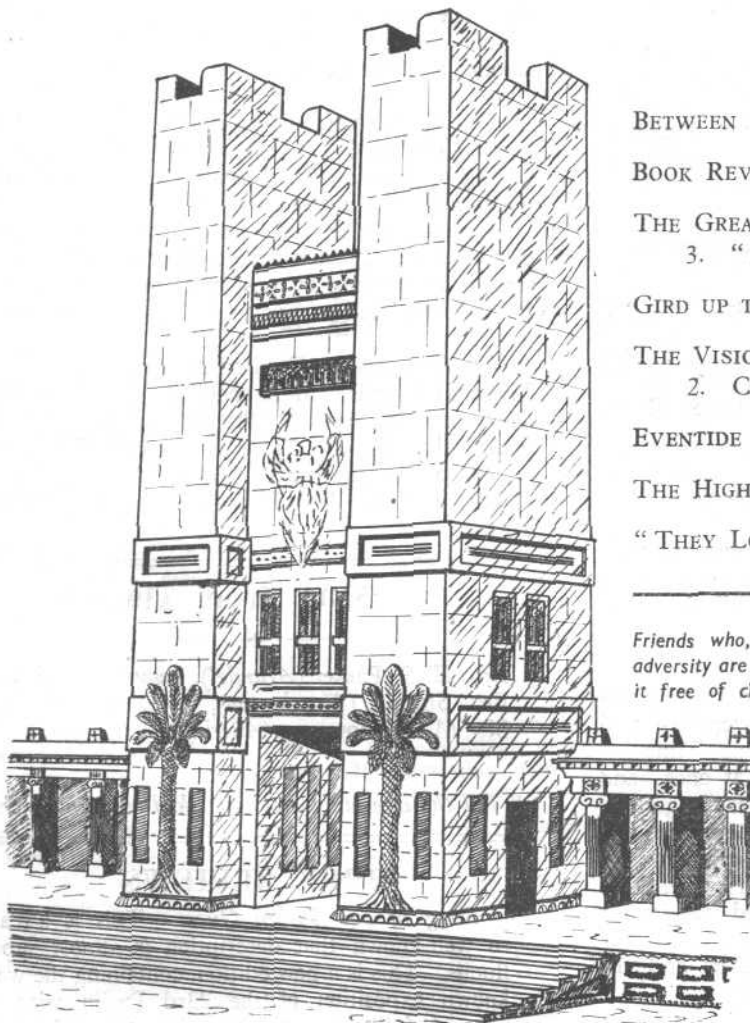
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has now been in existence for more than twenty years, is administered by three brethren under the chairmanship of Bro. G. A. Ford, 13, Cranleigh Gardens, Luton, Beds, who is always pleased to receive notification of need or other communications relative to the Fund.

* * *

Programmes of the Warrington Convention were distributed in last month's issue, but copies may still be had upon application. It will be appreciated if brethren applying for accommodation will state precisely the day of arrival and departure, and whether hotel accommodation is or is not acceptable. Attention to this request will save the brethren who arrange the accommodation a great deal of trouble at the last minute. All communications relative to Warrington Convention should be sent to the Convention Secretary, Bro. C. Spilsbury, 94, Heath Road, Penketh, Warrington.

* * *

Arrangements are in hand for a Convention of Bible Students during August Bank Holiday week-end, 1948, at Conway Hall, London, sponsored and arranged by the Central London, Forest Gate, Putney, Welling and Windsor classes. All enquiries to the Convention Secretary, Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * *

Thursday, April 22nd, is the date upon which it is appropriate to celebrate the Memorial this year. Brethren all over the country will join together on that evening to give testimony to their unity as one family, and to their appreciation of the privilege of "suffering with Him" that they may be "also glorified together".

* * *

Two new features are introduced to readers this month. The first, under the title "Eventide" will appear on alternate months to the "Quiet Time"—since space does not allow for both at once—and is especially intended for those who are beginning to "get on in years" and perhaps more than the more youthful are "straining their eyes for the tarrying day" as the well-known hymn has it. This little devotional series will, it is hoped, persist for some while at least in the columns of the "Monthly" and be a means of comfort and encouragement to many of our brethren.

* * *

The other feature is intended more for the students among us. Many saintly men in times gone by have written and spoken about the theme that is so dear to our own hearts, the Kingdom of

God that is to be set up on earth and under which all men shall be brought to a knowledge of the Truth. None of these men saw the subject with the clarity that is possible to-day when the signs of its imminence are so patent to all, but there is much in what they did say that can be not only an encouragement but also a matter of real interest to us as we continue our studies. It is proposed therefore to give, each month, for a while, short extracts from such writings bearing particularly upon this subject, from present times back to the very beginning of the Age. The title of this series will be "They looked for a city". Our present understanding is built very largely upon the studies and labours of these men.

* * *

Here is a request. Does anyone possess a second-hand Volume 2 of "Reprints" which they are willing to dispose of? A complete set recently sent out to a brother overseas who had long been longing to possess a set arrived without the second volume of the series. If such a volume is available, please send it to Welling by post and state price desired for the same, and payment will be sent by return.

* * *

The next quarterly united meeting of the North Midlands friends will be held in the Town Hall, Dewsbury, on Sunday, 18th April, when it is expected that Bro. J. Y. MacAulay of U.S.A. will be one of the speakers. All details from Mrs. E. Thurman, 1, Fir Parade, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks.

Gone From Us

Bro. H. S. Parker (*Arundel*), January, aged 71.
Bro. Sinclair (*Warrington*), January, aged 64.
Sis. M. A. Bowman (*Anerley*), January.

✱

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

BOOK REVIEWS

The Song of our Syrian Guest. This is already so well-known that description is almost superfluous. This is a new edition, containing the well-known exposition of the 23rd Psalm with 13 superb full-page photographs of Palestinian pastoral scenes illustrating the text, and handsomely bound in green cloth boards with title blocked in gold. A good devotional gift book. In stock at Welling, 3/3 (75 cents) post free.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A SERIAL STUDY
IN 1 COR. 13. 13.

Part 3. "If I . . . have not love."

It might seem, at first sight, in a casual reading of the Apostle's words that all the "other things" here contrasted with Love were nothing more than items in the list of spiritual gifts imparted to the members of the Corinthian Church. To one was "given . . . the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge . . . to another faith . . . to another the gifts of healing . . . to another the working of miracles, to another interpretation of tongues". (1 Cor. 12. 8-10.) Of this list Paul singles out the "tongues, the prophecy, the knowledge and the faith" for comparison with the *Agape*. But he also goes outside that list, and brings into the comparison one thing which was never a feature of Church life and experience either in Corinth or elsewhere. No follower of the Lord was ever taught to give his body to be burned. That was always an abomination in the sight of God. The inclusion of even this one feature of heathen practice is a sure indication that Paul was not restricting his survey merely to the "*Charismata*". Additionally, as already indicated, his inclusion of the "*mysterion*" and the "*gnosis*" proves beyond question that his mind is travelling over a wider field. That being so, a wider meaning is also given to "the tongues"—"the tongues of men and angels". These are not merely the mechanical utterances of men in a state of ecstasy, while under immediate control of the Holy Spirit, but utterances of the noblest kind, such as even angels might bring.

For many years conceited men had been claiming they held solutions to the universal mysteries: during that same period able men had charmed the ears of their contemporaries with language of great beauty and excellence. Of these able men Plato and Aristotle are outstanding examples—Plato writing of things religious and poetic, while Aristotle wrote in a more scientific way. Again, a speaker of rare excellence addressed himself in such a way to the Greeks that his speeches were preserved and to-day find acceptance as models of all that a good speech should be. From these men came some noble thoughts, expressed in words of great beauty and charm. These were but three of a greater number whose works contributed each its quota to the "glory that was Greece".

Paul had been censured by members of the Corinthian Church—men who had previously

acquired acquaintance with the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, and the linguistic charm of Demosthenes—for the sparcity of his philosophy and the poverty of his language. He had entered in among them "in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. 2. 3). He had shunned the use of "enticing words" arising from man's wisdom. He made no claim to be heard because he spake with "tongues of men and angels". He had determined not to be enmeshed in their tangles of philosophy, but to know one thing only while in their midst—and that should be "Christ and Him crucified". That Gospel he had preached, and that Gospel had been believed by some of them. (1 Cor. 15. 1.)

Having been judged at the bar of philosophy and eloquence by these philosophic critics, Paul, with consummate skill, turns the tables upon them and assures them indirectly that the things they had doted upon were of no greater value than the sound emitted by a sheet of brass when struck by another metallic substance. Plato and Aristotle with all their compatriots had only filled the air with sound, with the clanging din of controversy. And throughout the long years, to this very day, the din of battle between the romanticists—the Platonists—and the realists—the Aristotelians—has continued to fill the air with the mere sound of clanging brass. How sharp is the irony therefore, and yet how beautifully tempered is its sting when Paul turns back upon his human-minded critics to say "Though I (should) speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not '*Agape*' I (too) am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal". Applied directly to the "enticing" sons of Greece the barb would have made a rankling sore, applied to himself the shaft went home but left no wound.

Seen in this light the philosophic wisdom and classic eloquence of Greece may be subjected to a more searching analysis than the Corinthian brethren ever dreamed of. And to the ancient philosophy we may add that of all the intervening years. In this summarisation of the world's philosophies, and of its golden speech, no word of disparagement is intended here. The Dantes and the Chaucers, the Miltons and the Shakespeares, with all their literary companions of every clime and tongue, have left to the world a great inheritance. Without their inspiration the world would have been a poorer

place. Their spate of thought, embosomed in their flood of words, has helped to open channels from the jungle to the university. And when to the flash of genius the touch of simple faith could add its sanctifying influence the gain to men has been great indeed.

Had the purpose of Almighty God been merely to embellish human character surely these are the men to whom the task might have been allocated. If culture alone could have brought in the "perfect state", these, together with the sweet singers of Israel, could have been the Divine instruments to that end. They have ennobled thought, and refined speech; they have sifted motive, and analysed intent, and thereby helped human-kind to think on nobler things. But when all is said that can be said, it fails to meet this old earth's deepest need. It educates the mind but cannot renovate the heart. The polished surface may conceal corruption within. Beneath the shining veneer may be dry-rot of the soul. The thing that Paul has to place against the world's philosophies is not a mere compendium of thought; not a galaxy of lovely words, but the Mighty Helping Hand of God. The purpose of his ministry was not to embellish the mere minds of men, but to appraise men of a Sacrifice for sin. He knew a secret which the philosophers had failed to learn. They knew not how to vanquish sin and death. Despite all their wise(?) philosophy, sin reigned throughout the world, and death continued to reign by sin, and nothing they had done, or might hope to do, could lift this burden from Adam's race. But Paul knew and understood that there was something better far than all the hopes and dreams and fears of little men that would eradicate sin, overcome death, and make a way for that which is "perfect" to come.

Considerations such as this show that Paul is not setting forth "The *Agape*" merely as a growth or adornment of Christian character, but as the vital redeeming and moulding power that can accomplish that which all the world's wisdom and philosophy has failed to do. That the world's superstitious systems have failed to inform and elevate its millions, needs not to be stressed; it is but too obvious. But that its best philosophers and sweetest singers have also failed is a truth that does need driving home. And that there is but one Heavenly attribute that can accomplish all that is required to set men up on the "perfect" plane needs to be stressed with might and main over and over again.

But before we venture to analyse that supreme attribute there is one more phase of human activity to consider. The world's philanthropists and humanitarians—those who bestowed their goods to feed the poor—have been a band of noble men.

"Give to the poor" was the text imposed by Jesus upon the questioning nobleman. "The poor ye have always with you" said the Master, and an open door has always faced the world's philanthropists. But what have they done to mitigate the world's necessities—to meet its incessant needs? A moment's satisfaction may have followed the opening of their hands—and all honour be to them for the gracious act—but with the setting sun the need has imposed itself again. The houses run by Charity may start a thousand—or a hundred thousand—on the rungs of life, but what are they among the teeming millions of the world? The fortune of a Rothschild is but as a crumb when measured up against a world's dire need. We need not over-stress the obvious—but simply reiterate the words of Paul—"though I give all my goods to feed the poor . . . and have not love, it profiteth me nothing".

Here is a conclusion deep enough to make men think. "If I . . . have not love, I am nothing . . . it profiteth me nothing." Without "The *Agape*" all activity, all philosophy is as nothing and profiteth nothing! Surely we can see here that Paul is speaking from a different stand-point than that of this present phase of human life! Many of these things have counted for "something" when measured up against man's present transient fleeting life. There have been seasons of enjoyment and periods of relief, resulting from human-kind's best attainments. But measured up against the restoration of all that the "perfect" man once lost, and the life that he then will know, what are all the hopes and fears, the dreams and aspirations of all the world's sagest philosophies though couched in the world's sublimest words? Just "nothing"—and profiting nothing!

Again we have to say that only a "Something" that can seep down into man's sin-soured heart can meet the universal need. Only help from God is adequate to sweeten and restore the heart and the affections it can twine around the hand of its Restorer.

Brother Ford has requested a little space in which to render a short report of his stewardship over the Benevolent Fund. A considerable number of parcels of food and clothing, received from overseas, have been distributed among the brethren. This, says Brother Ford, has been a joyful service, and the Lord's blessing has attended what has been done. On the financial side the contributions from the brethren have been very heartening and the letters of appreciation from those receiving aid are in many cases very touching. They all wish their deep gratitude conveyed to those dear brethren making this work possible by their sacrifices. Bro. Ford's own joy in the service continues unabated.

GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND AN EXHORTATION

Though written so long ago, the above words of exhortation lose none of their force to us. They were penned for the instruction of the whole Church, down to the end of the Age. The introductory, "Wherefore," refers us to the glorious hope of our high calling, and of the necessarily severe measures required to fit us for our exalted inheritance, as mentioned in the preceding verses. Peter would have us appreciate what it is to be called with such a high calling—to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. (Verse 4.) He would have us know that, if faithful, we are to be made even "partakers of the Divine nature," and that we are to be joint heirs with Jesus Christ, of all things. (2 Pet. 1. 4.)

As the spirit of God draws our hearts into closer fellowship and sympathy with the Divine mind, the value of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is more and more fully realised, until there glows in our hearts the same holy enthusiasm that so filled the hearts of the apostles. And only when our hearts are thus warmed and our minds thus awakened, are we prepared to understand the Apostle's "Wherefore," upon the inspiring comprehension of which depends our ability to heed the earnest exhortation which follows.

If our hearts are not duly inspired with this hope—if we have begun to esteem it lightly, or to forget it, or to think of it as an idle tale—to heed the counsel of Peter, here given, will be impossible. If, therefore, we realise that a spiritual lethargy has to any extent been creeping over us, imperceptibly numbing our spiritual senses, so that the truth is losing its inspiring power upon us, our first duty is to betake ourselves to prayer and to communion with God and His Word, that its sanctifying power may be realised.

"Wherefore," then, you that discern the prize of your high calling, and who are endeavouring to press along towards the mark, "gird up the loins of your mind"—as in the illustration; strengthen and fortify your purposes and efforts; renew your determination; redouble your diligence; cast aside the weights of unnecessary worldly cares; increase your zeal; and, as the Apostle Paul also urges, run with patience the race set before you. Run, not like one who is merely beating the air, but like one who has a purpose in view, and who, in desperate earnest, is determined to make his calling and election sure. (Heb. 12. 1; 1 Cor. 9. 26.)

Having thus "girded up the loins of your mind" for a long, steady and determined effort, he further counsels,—“Be sober:” do not allow yourself to

become excited and under the spur of excitement to exhaust all your spiritual vitality in a very short time, and then to suffer a relapse into coldness or discouragement; but thoughtfully to consider and prepare for a long and patient endurance of all the discipline and trial of faith and patience necessary to prove an overcomer and worth—of the blessed reward promised "to him that overcometh". The race before us is not one to be run by fits and starts, but by "*patient continuance*" in well doing. Soberly, thoughtfully, we are to weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and to gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly we must apply our minds and hearts to the instruction of the inspired Word of God, availing ourselves also of such helps—of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions—which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently we must submit ourselves to all the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, we must devote our consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

Such a sober view of the situation fortifies the mind against discouragement, and enables us, as the Apostle suggests, to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ". Such a sober view keeps Reason on the throne of our minds. And Reason says, the Divine call to joint-heirship with Christ clearly implies eligibility to the exalted office; the Divine promise clearly ensures Divine grace to enable us to fulfil the conditions; the Divine provision for my justification, by faith in the precious blood of Christ, releases me from condemnation to death; and the righteousness of Christ, imputed to me by faith, fully supplements all my weaknesses, so that before God I stand approved in Him. Sober Reason also says, the directions given in the Scriptures to those who would run the race are clear and explicit, and make plain every step of the way to those who are truly and fully consecrated to the Lord. The examples of the Lord and the Apostles shine on the pathway with a moral lustre and glory that cannot lead us astray. If we walk in their footprints we will assuredly reach the same goal.

Therefore in this sober view of our high calling and its privileges, and the abundant resources of Divine grace, let us not be discouraged or overcome in any way, but let us hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 2. Call to Repentance.

"God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17. 30.) That challenging declaration was flung out to the world by Paul on Mars' Hill nearly a thousand years after Joel had spoken, but here in Joel's prophecy there is the seed of that later exhortation. In this first chapter the listeners to the prophet's impassioned words are being carefully led from the lower plane of dire lament at the troubles that are coming upon them to the higher one of repentance and dependence; repentance for the sin that has caused the trouble and dependence upon God for recovery from that trouble. In the first part of the chapter, up to verse 12, the lamentation is a purely self-centred one; there is no indication of any thought of appealing to God. In the latter part of the chapter the lament does move to a higher stage in that the cry of woe and despair is taken into the sanctuary of God and ascends up before Him, even although there is still no hint of true repentance.

"Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth." This picture of the betrothed maiden who loses her affianced husband before the actual marriage has taken place might very well be a subtle allusion to Israel's loss of her God ("thy Maker is thine husband"; Isa. 54. 5) because of her unfaithfulness, before she had attained the full glory of her destiny. Israel had broken the covenant; that is why this trouble was coming upon her. That truth is further stressed in the succeeding verse (vs. 9) "*The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord.*" Suspension of the Temple offerings was the gravest and most heart-searing of all the afflictions that could come upon the nation. It meant that the covenant had fallen into non-observance, and all the gracious promises of God were null and void. No wonder that, as Joel said, "*the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn*". The ecclesiastical dignitaries of every age have been quick to bemoan the breakdown of their institutions and organisations and ritual even although they may have tolerated for far too long the social evils and religious abuses which may have led to that breakdown, and the priests of Joel's day were no exception to the rule. Be it noted, however, that the prophet, even in the act of denouncing their unfaithfulness, acknowledges their Divine office; he still calls them "the Lord's ministers". Like Jesus in after days, maintaining

that the scribes and Pharisees occupied Moses' seat, although He reproved and denounced them, Joel honoured the Divine ordinance.

From the work of God that has broken down the prophet turns his bitter gaze to the work of man that also has failed him. "*The field is wasted, the land mourneth,*" he cries. "*The corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.* BE YE ASHAMED, O YE HUSBANDMEN; HOWL (cry woe) O YE VINEDRESSERS, for the wheat and for the barley." He puts the blame where it rightfully belongs; all men are jointly responsible for the catastrophe. Men of the world, husbandmen and vinedressers, have been neglectful of their duty to their God just so surely as have the priests, and the work of their hands has failed them just as that of the priests has failed. The disaster is universal; the vine, the fig, the pomegranate, the palm tree, the apple (this is really the orange); all the trees of the field are withered, says Joel in vs. 12, "*because joy is withered away from the sons of men.*" That last phrase is the climax of his first message to the people. Disaster, utter and complete, is come upon them and there is a great, nation-wide, universal cry of distress and woe rising upon the air. Like Jeremiah in later days, witnessing the final calamitous scenes of the whole series of troubles which Joel in his day was only beginning to foresee, they "beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light." They "beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled." They "beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger." (Jer. 4. 23-26.) And so it was that Joel, in his masterly handling of this unfaithful people, showed them the utter ruin and desolation of all their world and their own impotence to remedy their undone condition, before he began to turn their minds to their true Healer and Saviour, God.

Is this one pointer to us for guidance in our own preaching to the world around? Do we tend to paint a rosy picture of the blessings God has in store for man before we have shown man how utterly he has ruined and destroyed the heritage God gave him at the first? Is it not right for us, as it evidently was with Joel, to lay proper stress at the first upon this fact, that man has proven unworthy of

his privileges, unable to govern himself, and unfit to be allowed any longer to desecrate God's creation with the abominations of his inventing. Truly to-day, as in the land of Judah at that far-off time, the vine, the fig, the pomegranate, the palm, the apple, all the trees of the forest, are destroyed; and joy is fled away from the hearts of men. Surely at this point we, like Joel, should begin to turn men's minds, not only to the golden days of promise, but first of all to the need for repentance.

"Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests . . . Lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God . . . Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord" (vs. 14). This is the first step toward Divine salvation, the gathering of the people, the elders, the priests, all together into the house of God to cry unto Him. The power of corporate worship to elevate the spirit and inspire the heart is well known; consciousness of the Holy Spirit's presence in a prayer meeting of believers is an experience which many know; who knows what power for cleansing and reformation may not reside in the gathering together of a concourse of people, joined in the knowledge of a common distress or common danger, to cry unto God in their trouble and so be led to prayer for relief and deliverance. It was when Israel, apostate and captive as they were time after time in the days of the Judges, "turned unto the Lord, and cried unto him in their trouble" that He "heard them and delivered them out of their distress". Joel knew that, and his first impulse was to bring his people face to face with their God and bring them to that condition of heart in which God could bless them.

Verse 15 to the end seems almost to represent the prophet's impassioned appeal to the people gathered within the precincts of the Temple. The injunction of verse 14 has been heeded; the countrymen have left their vain watching of their blasted fields and dying herds, the pleasure-seekers their wine, the priests their conning over the dead law and their interminable discussions of legal points, and all have come together to hear the voice of the prophet. The ringing tones echo through the building and pierce into the ears of the people standing in the courts. "Alas; alas; alas; the day!"—so the Septuagint has it; woe, three times repeated. "The day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come." Later on in his message Joel has wonderful words of comfort and cheer for this people; he is going to paint at the last a gloriously sunlit picture of the time when God turns His face toward His people again, and pours out His Spirit upon all flesh. He will talk of new wine and

milk in abundance, flowing waters and fertile valleys, and conclude with the heart-cheering promise "the Lord dwelleth in Zion". But not yet! Here at the first his message is like the one that came to Ezekiel, one of "mourning, and lamentation, and woe". The Day of the Lord is at hand, and it is to be a day of destruction.

Now this is not that Day of the Lord with which we as Christian students are so familiar, the Day in which God brings this world into judgment and causes it to pass away with a great noise, and the elements to melt with fervent heat, that He might build in its place a new heavens and a new earth (2 Pet. 3. 10.). It is not the day of which Isaiah speaks in his 34th chapter, the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion (Isa. 34. 8.) It is not the day that Joel himself talks about in his second chapter (Joel 2. 31), that great and terrible day which is to be heralded by great wonders and signs in the heavens. The prophetic vision which came to Joel later on has not yet shone through to him; he still sees no farther forward than the next century or so; and the day of the Lord, as a destruction from the Almighty, which he announces to the gathered people in verse 15 of chapter 1 is the day of judgment, of tribulation, of disaster, which began with Shalmaneser of Assyria and ended with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, a day that witnessed the downfall of both the Houses of Israel, the captivity of all their people, and the extinction of the Davidic line of kings, in obedience to the Divine decree "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is, and I will give it to him" (Ezek. 27. 27). For the moment, this is all that Joel sees, and this the burning message that he strives to impart to his listening people.

"Is not the meat (food) cut off before our eyes," he pleaded, "joy and gladness from the house of our God?" Mark how cleverly he allied the natural and the spiritual. How like the condition in our own land to-day! For these several generations past our people have been steadily drifting away from God; His house in every place is neglected and deserted; even our traditional regard and friendship for the "people of the Book", the ancient people of promise, has suffered measurable eclipse on account of modern political re-arrangements and developments. And is it no more than a coincidence that our very food supply is threatened to-day as never before? When in all historic time did men speak soberly of the possibility of actual starvation in these islands? That is what is happening to-day, and in that we have but a repetition of Joel's own experience. "The seed is rotten under their clods" he says "the garners are laid desolate,

the barns are broken down, for the corn is withered" (vs. 17.). All this, because Israel has left the Lord her God, renounced His covenant, and taken every man his own way. What a sermon for to-day could be preached on these few verses; the language of the Holy Word so eloquent and so fitting to our present condition that it hardly needs expounding.

So Joel comes with a mighty sweep to that which was in his heart all the time. Perhaps by now he had got the people with him; perhaps it was as speaking for them, and on their behalf, that he, as it were, turns to the Almighty and pours out his heart before Him, "O Lord, to thee will I cry; for the fire hath devoured the pastures . . . the beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up. . . ."

There he stops. There is no entreaty, no supplication, no request that the threatened doom be averted. Perhaps already he sensed that the canker had eaten too deep, that it could only be burned out with fire. Perhaps he distrusted himself too much to make request for a specific deliverance. He confessed his peoples' sin and cried unto God, not for deliverance, not for comfort, but that *God might hear*. Did he realise that if but God would bend to earth and listen, there would be no further need for distress—for the Judge of all the earth would surely do right? Like Isaiah, in the days of Sennacherib, taking the haughty invader's insolent message into the Temple and laying it before the Lord, and thereupon going out to await the Lord's good pleasure, so did Joel turn the people's faces to God, call His attention to them, tell Him of the sorry pass to which affairs on earth had come—and then quietly stand aside to await, in faith and confidence, the salvation of God.

If this book is a poem, this is the end of the first stanza. If it is a history, this is the end of the first episode, the gathering in the Lord's house. If it is a prophecy—and it is surely that—this is the point at which Joel's vision ceased to be circumscribed by the time and space of his own day and his own people. Was it the intensity of his supplication that opened his heart and mind to greater things and showed him the re-enacting of these scenes on a grander and vaster scale in distant ages yet to be. Did thus his wondering eyes take in the dim and shadowy outlines of Armageddon itself? It would seem so, for the opening words of chapter 2 breathe a new spirit and a deeper intensity. In that chapter we are translated at once into a setting of deeper shadows and more intense colours, a movement much more rapid, hastening onward at increasing pace until it merges into the maelstrom of trouble with which the world shall end, and ending, find its destiny.

So chapter 1 of Joel's prophecy is a picture in miniature of the greater trouble. It had its fulfilment in Joel's own day and the times immediately following; but it served to quicken his mind and draw for him the outlines of things that must one day come to pass, and the Kingdom of peace that is to succeed that last trouble of all. And because that is so, the principles enshrined in this first chapter are applicable to the nations to-day as surely as they were applicable to Israel in the days of Joel.

* * * *

It is in chapter 2, to be discussed next month, that we are taken in great strides out of the day of Joel and brought into our own day, the focal point of prophecy, when the Lord rises up to fight for His people as when He fought in times of old.

He was sharpening some pencils, a red one, a blue one, a green one, a yellow one, and some lead pencils. When he had finished, there lay tiny piles of coloured dust and some powdered black lead. The colours showed up startlingly clear in the sunlight. He idly shook the paper on which those tiny piles lay and all the dust coalesced together into an even sprinkling across the sheet; but still the tiny grains of red, blue, green and yellow shone out brightly amidst the black powder, making a variegated mosaic of pin points. Then he drew his finger across the page, rubbing the grains together. And now all the colour had disappeared, only an ugly greyish smudge showing where the coloured grains had become overpowered and absorbed by their too intimate contact with the black.

So it is with the Christian in the world. Mingled with our fellows, like the coloured grains among the black, we can shine out brightly so long as we are *in* the world and not *of* it. We can be separate although intimately associated with them in the affairs of daily life; and by our association with them we can bring brightness into their lives, and make the world a better place. But if we become infected with the spirit of the world then our colour is overlaid with their black, and there is nothing left but the drab smudge. It is only when we maintain our separateness from the world in our association with them that we can fulfil our mission of being lights in a dark place.

* * *

There are many varieties of Bible Students, and the theory is that they are all students of the Bible. The term is properly applied to any one who is a student of the Scriptures, and who diligently applies the mind to the acquirement of the knowledge set forth in the Word of God, with the purpose in view of developing the mind and spirit of the Master.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."



"Come ye apart . . . and rest awhile"; so spake the Master to the tired but eager men who stood around Him that special day. What a time they had had since He had sent them out two by two! How they had been paired off for this service we cannot know, but two by two they had journeyed forth and passed through many cities and villages of Israel, calling on men and women everywhere to repent, to confess their sins, and look up to God for help and understanding for their day. What a spate of stories they had to tell of men who had received them well, of others who had scorned their words and rejected their appeals. And of the suffering souls from whom they had cast out demonic spirits, and of the ailing folk they had anointed with healing oil and made them well. (Mark 6. 7-13.). But, oh dear! Why did the thronging passing crowd press them so? Why must they intrude just at this hour? Why could they not have the Master's ear for once undisturbed?

Did some slight gesture of impatience or resentment show upon their face, or in that effort to retain, or even to regain their bodily equilibrium? We cannot say. But Jesus had seen it all, and understood right well how eagerness and resentment might walk hand-in-hand.

Noting all these little movements He said to them, "*Come ye away into a quiet place by yourselves and rest awhile.*" (Mark 6. 31.) Boarding a ship anchored near at hand, they found, upon the rippling waters of the lake, the quiet hour they desired to unload their well-stored minds and hearts. And surely Jesus listened patiently and interestedly to all they had to say, turning first to this, then to that member of the eager company.

How true is this little episode to the throb of life for you and me in our little crowded day. Perhaps we too may have been seeking to find some hearing ears, or to pour the oil of gladness into some burdened heart. And perhaps our words have been received with gratitude, or perhaps—a more saddening experience—they have been laughed to scorn, or rejected with a superior curl of the lip. In any case this thronging world with some one or more of its many toys comes thrusting in—the daily Press, the Radio, the business tie, the family ailment or

the common task—so that we cannot get the opportunity to unburden our hearts as we would. We have wanted to tell Jesus all about the episode—how we had been overjoyed or saddened by the experience, but ever as we sought to frame our prayer some pressing thing would thrust itself upon our service and attention, and prevent us from reaching the Master's ear.

Oh, then, for that power to hear, in our inner ear, the Master's words "*Come ye apart . . .*"! How beautifully the poet has caught the spirit of our Master's watchful eye and loving care.

*"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile
Weary, I know it, of the press and throng;
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust of toil,
And in My quiet strength again be strong.*

*Come ye aside from all the world holds dear,
For converse which the world has never known;
Alone with Me, and with My Father here;
With Me and with My Father, not alone.*

*Come, tell Me all that you have said and done,
Your victories and failures, hopes and fears;
I know how hardly souls are wooed and won;
My choicest wreaths are always wet with tears."*

We cannot go with Jesus to ride the ocean's wave for privacy, nor may we always have another quiet room where we can retire to be alone with Him, but there is a secret of retiring into a place apart which we may learn if we apply ourselves thereto; each child of God is a living temple of God—he has within his heart—in the inner man—a sanctuary of the soul.

According to his consciousness of these deeper realities will that sanctum of his soul take on the sense of an actuality, and in proportion thereto become a retiring place in which to meet the Lord. The old Quaker practice of retiring inwards to the Holy Light was along the right lines. No spoken words would necessarily escape the lips, but communion, both sweet and strengthening, resulted therefrom. So with us, the more momentary inward turning to the Lord, the unspoken trembling prayer, and the "aloneness" with Him is complete.

Never for a moment let us think that retirement, at any time, by day or night, is time or labour lost.

We need it all the time, for

". . . the journey is too great
And ye may faint beside the way, and sink;
The bread of life is here for you to eat,
And here for you the wine of love to drink.
Then, fresh from converse with your Lord, return,
And work till daylight softens into night;
The brief hours are not lost in which ye learn
More of your Master and His Rest in Light."

With every passing day and year the need for this "alone-ness" with Him grows more vital to our stability in grace. As we move onwards into the earth's darkest night, happy they who will know by constant experience that secret Place where Jesus waits to hold tryst with them—to hear their recitals of love's labour applied, or to speak His comfort to their souls.

Go ye then, apart . . . and rest with Him!

THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

A glorious vision of long ago.

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called 'The way of holiness'; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and 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, 8-10.)

Isaiah's first book of prophecy closes on this word. His second book, which starts at chapter 40 and continues to the last chapter of the prophecy, was written at a later period in his life and reflects the clear understanding of the Divine Plan which had come to him in consequence of a life-time spent in pondering the ways of God and submitting to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In between these two books, there is a little section (chaps. 36 to 39) of history dealing with the wonderful events of the reign of King Hezekiah—the shadow returning on the sundial, the destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem, and so on. These few verses at the end of chapter 35 therefore are important; they stand as the climax and sequel to all the visions of judgment and of blessing that occupied the thoughts and the pen of the prophet during the first twenty years or so of his ministry.

It is for that reason we apply this 35th chapter to the Millennial Age and the conditions under which life will then be lived. It is that Age to which the prophet has been looking all through his prophecy. Now and again, as in the 11th and 12th and 25th and 32nd chapters, Isaiah breaks out into short, glowing descriptions of the Millennial reign of blessing, but in the main his burden is that of the disaster to which human mis-rule will first bring the world, and the retributive judgment which will

come upon it in consequence, culminating in the breakdown of this present world order in Armageddon and the swift action of God in setting up His Millennial Kingdom in its place that He might bring the blessings of life and happiness to "whomsoever will" of all men. It is not until Isaiah reaches the end of his prophecy here in this 35th chapter that he draws that eloquent pen-picture which because of its appealing beauty has become to us the Millennial chapter.

The "Highway of Holiness" is the term that is used to describe the course of mankind in the Age yet to come. It is contrasted with the "Broad Road to Destruction" which is being followed by men in general to-day, and the "Narrow Way" which symbolises the progress made toward the Heavenly Kingdom by the disciples of Christ in this present Gospel Age. The "Highway of Holiness" is the road of the future.

Isaiah, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, evidently had in mind the idea of a straight, level road leading directly up to and into the Holy City, "whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord" (Psa. 122. 4). The word itself means a raised-up, built high road as distinct from the country lanes or pathways. Our modern arterial roads, driven straight through hills and across valleys, are good illustrations of what Isaiah meant. And along such a high road, pressing forward with all haste, he saw a great company of people, the redeemed of the Lord, travelling towards the Holy City with songs of praise on their lips and everlasting gladness in their faces. Exactly the same picture is given us in the Book of Revelation (21. 17) where the ransomed multitudes of humanity have the opportunity of coming up to the gates of the city and passing inside, leaving behind them for ever all their uncleanness and defilement and

sin. That is what Isaiah says "the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those". It is intended for the unclean, but they will no longer be unclean when they have traversed its length and arrived at the shining portals. The cleansing will be effected as they go forward. It is something like this that is meant by the reference in Rev. 22 to the River of Life proceeding out of the Throne in the City, and "in the midst of the street of it" the Trees of Life, the fruit of which was for food and the leaves "for the healing of the nations". The River comes out from the City to meet men; the Highway goes up into the City to take men there; and the Trees of Life line both Highway and River so that the ransomed peoples might receive healing and life as they progress more and more into the Divine likeness.

The resurrection of the dead is implied in the statement that "sorrow and sighing shall flee away". It is impossible to picture the living nations alone enjoying this blessed state and not wishing to have their departed loved ones to share it with them; it is likewise impossible to accept the words as meaning what they say if human death is to continue through the Millennial Age as it does now. This prophecy can mean only one thing: that at the beginning of that Age the death sentence is abolished by virtue of the Ransom for All (I Tim. 2. 5-6) given by our Lord on Calvary, and that in consequence all the dead will return to conscious life upon earth and together with the living nations enjoy a full opportunity of entering into eternal life by willing acceptance of the Lord Jesus. Only the wilfully sinful, who will not accept the opportunity proffered, and decline to come into harmony with God's ways, will pass into the death from which there is no awaking.

In later times, after Isaiah had been gathered to his fathers, there was a magnificent high road in the great city of Babylon, a road that may even have existed in Isaiah's own time although it attained its greatest splendour under the famous King Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel. It is possible that Isaiah, who seems to have seen much of the future glories of Babylon in prophetic vision, did see something of Nebuchadnezzar's great "Processional Way", the "*Aibur-shabu*" as it was called, as Daniel saw it in reality over a hundred years later. If in fact he did so see it, one can imagine him contrasting that ornate pagan road with the pure holy way crowded with its throng of pilgrims progressing to Zion. Nebuchadnezzar's road, leading from his splendid palace to the mighty Temple of Bel, the god of Babylon, was level and straight, raised up above the streets of the city, a built up causeway just like Isaiah's Highway of

Holiness. It was constructed of beautiful white limestone along its centre, with coloured stones on either side, flanked by walls adorned with the carved figures of lions throughout their length, white lions with yellow manes and yellow lions with red manes, on a background of vivid colour. Could that be one reason why Isaiah said of his Highway "No lion shall be there"? On the great feast days colourful processions passed along that road of Nebuchadnezzar's, coming out from the palace which Daniel knew so well, through the Gate of the goddess Ishtar, a structure something like our Marble Arch, but much bigger and adorned with six hundred sculptured lions, bulls and dragons, then right across the industrial quarter of the city where perhaps the sad Jewish captives looked on with feelings of revulsion and despair, past the great Tower, whose top seemed to reach unto heaven, one of the tallest of buildings ever erected by man, and so at last into the glittering Temple where Nebuchadnezzar had put the holy vessels from Jerusalem (Dan. 1. 2), where the eight huge bronze serpent-dragons guarded the entry. That was a highway symbolic of the pomp, the materialism and the sin of this world. Of all its pageantry and all its splendour not a vestige now remains—its very site is a ruined and weed-strewn waste, a habitation of jackals and owls. But Isaiah's Highway of Holiness is yet to come. Its glory is one that will endure for ever, and its travellers, pressing on with songs and gladness, will find that it leads them surely and safely home.

The proper motive in Bible study is the same motive which impelled the Son of Man to go forth on His mission in behalf of suffering humanity. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." There is the motive supreme for the study of the Bible. In the Scriptures you find stated those principles of righteousness. In them is located directions for the righteous course of action. There is related the inspiring examples of others who loved righteousness and hated iniquity, which examples are set forth for our emulation and encouragement. With this motive spurring one on into the pages of the Book of books, Bible study is not just a religious duty. It is a recreation, a delight, a vocation, and is well described by the Psalmist in the words, "... his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate (study) day and night." All such are Bible students indeed, not merely in name, but in truth and in fact.

("Bible Student Inquirer")

Faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.

"They Looked for a City"

Extracts from the writings of men who believed in the Millennial Kingdom.

Dr. John Cumming was born in 1807 and died in 1881. He was a devout student and writer on prophecy, although his views on the book of Revelation would be considered sadly out of date to-day. In 1832 he was appointed minister to the National Scottish Church in Covent Garden, London. The following extract from his writings shows how expectation of the coming Millennial Age was based upon the Scriptures, and held, a hundred or more years ago.

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

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

"And when I think of the time when He does come, I can scarcely realise that glorious Sabbath which will overspread the earth, that noble song which will be heard when the saints shall sing together '*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts*'. What a flood of beauty, magnificence and glory will roll over this now shattered orb, like the countless waves of an illuminated ocean, illuminated by Christ, the great central Sun, around Whom all

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

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

Remember the twofold limitation of our spiritual vision. "Through a mirror in a riddle" (1 Cor. 13. 12). We do not look upon the heavenly truths themselves but upon a reflection of them; and that which we see itself needs interpretation. (*Westcott*)

* * *

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



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

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Joseph and his brethren
were sold into slavery
in Egypt.

When we are sold into
slavery we must not
lose heart.

All things shall come
to pass which are
written in the book of
Daniel.

God of Abraham has
chosen Jacob his
people.

God is with us and
will be with us
forever.

Vol. 25, No. 4

APRIL, 1948

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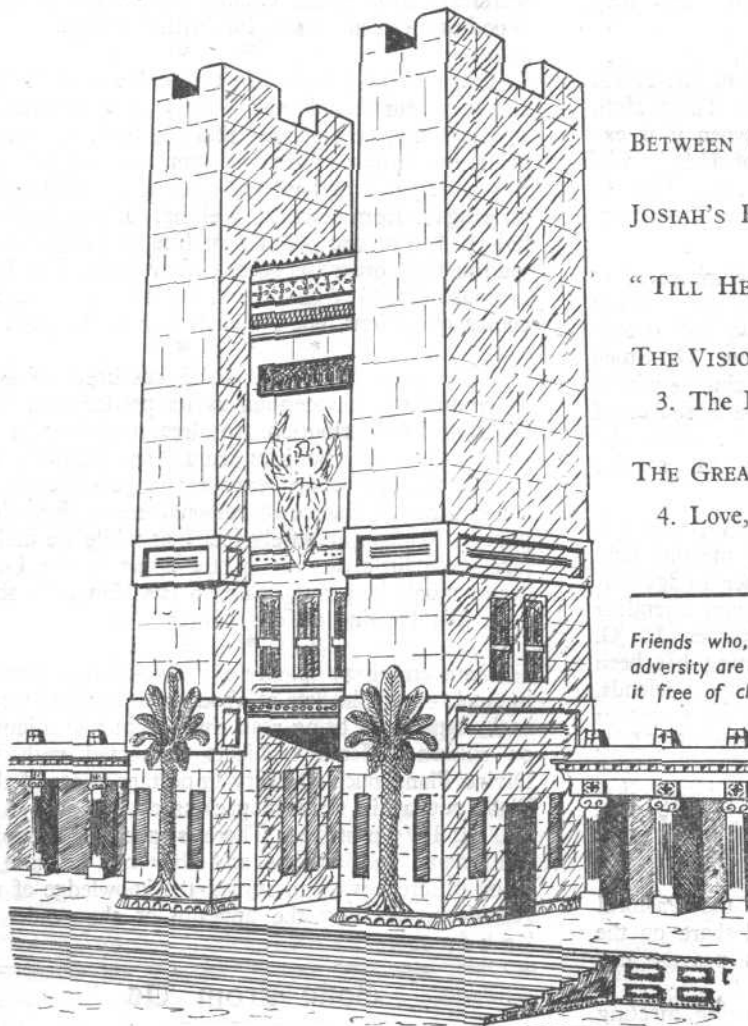
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has now been in existence for more than twenty years, is administered by three brethren under the chairmanship of Bro. G. A. Ford, 13, Cranleigh Gardens, Luton, Beds, who is always pleased to receive notification of need or other communications relative to the Fund.

* * *

Thursday, April 22nd, is the date upon which it is appropriate to celebrate the Memorial this year. Brethren all over the country will join together on that evening to give testimony to their unity as one family, and to their appreciation of the privilege of "suffering with Him" that they may be "also glorified together."

* * *

The next quarterly united meeting of the North Midlands friends will be held in the Town Hall, Dewsbury, on Sunday, 18th April, when it is expected that Bro. J. Y. MacAulay of U.S.A. will be one of the speakers. All details from Mrs. E. Thurman, 1, Fir Parade, Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorks.

* * *

A new weeknight meeting has been commenced at Sheffield, and friends in that vicinity who would like to join with this effort may have full details on request of Bro. W. R. McNerlen, 32, Stone Grove, Sheffield 10. All will join in sincere wishes for the new meeting, that it may be a source of strength and profit to those who have taken the initiative and those who will become regular attendants.

* * *

The friends of the Manchester area report encouraging results following the public meeting held on 7th February at Bury, when Brother Lodge was the speaker, a number of interested ones attending the follow-up lecture given by Brother E. G. Roberts. Now a further similar meeting has been arranged in conjunction with the Stockport friends, to be held at Stockport on 24th April, the speaker in this case being Brother J. Y. MacAulay of U.S.A.

* * *

As previously announced, we are advised that arrangements are being completed for the United London Convention at August Bank Holiday week-end.

It is hoped that a brother from the Pastoral Bible Institute, Brooklyn, U.S.A. will share on the programme, if arrangements for his passage can be made.

It is proposed that the Sunday evening meeting at the Convention should take the form of a public witness address on the theme of our Lord's Second Coming and the resultant establishment of His Kingdom being the only solution of the world's increasing problems.

Further details will be made known later. Suffice it to say now that this will afford opportunities for service for many of the brethren to share in spreading the glad tidings of the Kingdom.

All communications should be addressed to the Convention Secretary, Brother F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * *

The friends at Forest Gate announce a Baptismal Service, to be held on Whit Sunday next. Brethren who would like to avail themselves of this opportunity are requested to write the Forest Gate Church secretary, Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex, for further details.

* * *

The devotional book "*In Green Pastures*" is well known to our friends and usually in some demand. It was announced recently that the book was out of print, but a new edition has appeared sooner than was anticipated and we are now able to fill orders once again from stock at Welling. The price is, as before, 4/6 or one dollar post free and friends may send in their orders as soon as they wish. The book consists of 243 pages, cloth bound, and contains choice quotations, one for each day in the year.

* * *

"*Millennial Message*" No. 2 has been accorded as enthusiastic a reception as its predecessor. The fruits of its distribution are already obvious in the form of sundry enquiries from "the public", and several friends report encouraging experiences in consequence of their own personal use of these little papers. We can all surely feel that while we undertake these little services in the spirit of the Lord, desirous only of giving praise to His Name, we shall have His blessing on our efforts.

* * *

There are always plenty of "Two-minute Tracts" in stock—small leaflets of about four hundred words each, capable of being read through in two minutes, on sixteen different subjects connected with the Divine Plan, touching every important phase of that Plan, put up in assorted packets of 100 at 1/6 or 1000 at 10/6 post free. There is space for stamping local name and address and they can be used in many different ways to spread the knowledge of the Kingdom, whetting the appetite of the reader to "ask for more".

Gone From Us

Sis. Whetton (*Tamworth*) December.

Bro. W. Sharples (*Bury*) February.

Bro. F. D. Brown (*West Calder, Scot.*) February.

* * *

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



JOSIAH'S PASSOVER

The story of a great cleansing



It was in the eighteenth year of the reign of good King Josiah that the great Passover was kept—the most memorable Passover that Israel had known since the day of his entering into the land. “Surely there was not holden such a Passover” wrote the historian “from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah” (2 Kings 23.22). It was a famous Passover, one to be remembered and preserved in tradition and exhortation throughout their generations. There had been some seven hundred Passovers celebrated since the invading hosts had crossed Jordan and built the stones of Gilgal, but this one was the greatest. What was there about it that made it so noteworthy?

Perhaps it was the freshness and enthusiasm of the whole thing. The story in 2 Chron. 35 reads like that of a revival in nineteenth century England. Faith in Israel had fallen to a very low ebb. The days of Hezekiah had long since passed—he had been dead for about seventy-five years. Judah had suffered under the sway of two idolatrous kings, Manasseh the son of Hezekiah and Amon the son of Manasseh. Under those two men the knowledge and worship of God had languished and died. The idolatrous religion of the surrounding nations had been set up in its place and the people had, in the main, readily accepted the change. Manasseh had erected the symbols of Baal worship all over the land and images even in the Temple itself: he it was that first gave to the Valley of Hinnom its evil reputation, and caused his son to pass through the fire to Moloch. When Josiah came to the throne, as a young lad, the land and the people was steeped in wickedness and the word of the Lord was silent; there was no open vision.

Now it was when King Josiah was twenty-six years of age that he became seized with the desire to rebuild and repair the Temple of the Lord, which had evidently suffered seriously from neglect and consequent decay. Exactly ninety years previously that Temple had been the scene of a mighty deliverance in Israel. Sennacherib the Assyrian had lain encamped with his army, outside the walls of Jerusalem, demanding unconditional surrender. Isaiah the statesman-prophet had gone into the Temple and laid the insulting letter before the Lord, pledging the faith of King and people that God would deliver. . . . and the angel of the Lord had gone forth that night, and slain in the camp

of the Assyrians an hundred and eighty-five thousand men: and Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land, there to meet death by the assassin's dagger. Thus was Jerusalem delivered. But all that was ninety years ago, and the people who had rejoiced in that great thing were now asleep in the grave, and their sons and their grandsons no longer believed that such things could be, and they bowed down before Baal and Ashtoreth and Moloch and delighted themselves in the abominations of the heathen—until Hilkiah found the Book of the Law among the Temple treasures.

It was finding that book of the Law that brought about the great reformation and the great Passover. Josiah had ordered the restoration of the Temple. It was whilst bringing out of the treasury the silver that was stored up therein, wherewith to meet the cost of the work, that Hilkiah the High Priest discovered a greater treasure still, the Book of the Law of Moses. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe to take it to the king.

Hilkiah was the High Priest but he had not known that this treasure was in his keeping. To what depths must the priesthood and the Temple service have sunk! Quite evidently the old injunction that the Law was to be recited in the ears of the people and taught to the children had not been honoured for a long while past. The consternation that was evoked when the contents of the Book were made known to Josiah a little later reveals that the Law of Moses was in general unknown to Judah at this time. It had been forgotten, and with it the ceremonies and ritual of the Day of Atonement, the Passover, and the feast days must have fallen into disuse. Probably Hilkiah knew that such a book had once existed; maybe he had heard his grandfather and predecessor in the priestly office speak of some such thing; and there may have been a vague tradition that a copy had once reposed somewhere in the Temple archives. But he had never seen it and was probably much more concerned with the “modern” religious thought of his own day. There seems to be something of awe in his tones as he says to Shaphan, surely in hushed words “I have found the Book of the Law in the House of the Lord”. And Shaphan took it to the king.

Shaphan was much more indifferent. He merely remarked to Josiah “Hilkiah the priest hath given

me a book". It meant nothing to him; just an old book found in the recesses of the Temple, and probably hopelessly out-of-date. It was perhaps with a feeling of boredom that he began to read it before the king. But the effect upon Josiah was immediate and decisive. He realised at once that his ambitious plans for the rebuilding and rededication of the Temple counted for nothing in God's sight without a deeper and more important thing, the existence of which had not until now even occurred to him. The Temple was but the outer shell; without the worship and service of a consecrated people, conscious of its own weakness and shortcoming, but confident in the saving power of God, the beauty of the restored Temple would be as ashes and its sacrifices an abomination in the sight of God. In the midst of his schemes for the restoration of the Divine Sanctuary in the sight of all Israel, Josiah heard the terms of the Divine Law, and he rent his clothes.

Just so, it may be, do we, in the midst of all our planning and scheming, activity and service for our Master and our brethren, all our preaching and witness to the world, come up suddenly against the essence of the Divine Will for us, and realise that all these outward things are of no account in His pure sight unless we have first made our hearts right with him. The will of God for us is, first of all, our own sanctification, and it is after we have started on that consecrated walk that He leads us to opportunities of outward service for Him. It is the consecration that hallows the service, and not the service that vitalises the consecration. "*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices*" asked Samuel of Saul "*as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*" The question comes down the ages and rings in our own ears, with its answer "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice". Happy are we if, like good King Josiah, we can realise the situation directly the word of the Lord falls on our ears, and act, swiftly and decisively.

Josiah did not content himself with rending his clothes. Repentance is a necessary preliminary to justification and no progress can be made until that first step has been taken, but it is not a condition in which to linger. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation" says Paul in 2 Cor. 7.10, and unless there is that tangible fruit of repentance, and a speedy fruit at that, the repentance is not very genuine. So Josiah called his ministers of state and his court attendants, and sent them speedily to enquire of the Lord's will for him at the hand of one who could rightfully claim to speak on His behalf. They seemed to know where to go: they made their way to Huldah the prophetess, who, for all that the information we have is very scanty, seems to have been of some repute and held in some respect. Her words leave us in no doubt as to the forthrightness

of her own allegiance to the God of Israel. Her reply was framed in terms of the strongest condemnation. Albeit there was a word of approval for the king's own personal condition of heart before God, the old lady made it plain that Israel as a nation must suffer the inevitable consequence of its sinful way. Judgment must needs come upon them before times could be better. "*Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place and shall not be quenched.*" (2 Chron. 34.25)

Here is a principle that applies in our own day also. Again have men—the whole world of so-called "civilised men" this time—forsaken God their Creator and Sustainer, and rendered homage to gods of their own creating, to works of their own hands. In the midst of the distress and trouble which that course of action has brought upon them we proclaim the coming of a new and better order, the Millennial Kingdom, in which evil and lawlessness will be put down with firm hand and all men walk in the light of the glory of God and in the peace of His laws. But before this roseate picture can become a reality there must first be judgment upon the world for its wrongdoing. The Lord Jesus is to be "revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1.8) before He comes with clouds, glorious in the retinue of His saints, and all the people of the earth join in that great mourning which is at once the evidence of their realisation of His Advent and the sign of their repentance. God waits to bind up the broken-hearted and give liberty to the captives, but nothing now can avert that Divine judgment under which the last vestiges of the rulership of "this present evil world" will pass away, never to return. And in our witnessing and preaching we should remember that. Not only must we, as Paul on Mars Hill, declare that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and like Peter at Jerusalem, speak of the coming pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, but we must also, like that faithful old prophetess in the dim long ago, pronounce the inevitability of Divine judgment on this world, to burn out its evil as by fire, to consume the defiling images and symbols and sweep clean the corruption off the land. It is only when God has thus devoured all the earth with the fire of His jealousy that He will be able to turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon His name to serve Him with one consent (Zeph 3.9).

The king's decisiveness did not fail him. Unwelcome as the news of the coming desolations of Israel must have been to his ears, he nevertheless

took the only course that could be right with God. He summoned the elders and the people, gathered them together, with the priests, in the Temple, and there, in the presence of the God of Israel, he caused to be "read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord". There was to be no further excuse for ignorance. All Israel was to hear the Law read, and the authority of no less a person than the king himself lay behind the injunction to heed the words. And then the king drove home to all the seriousness with which he regarded the position. He "*stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book*" (2 Chron. 34.21). That was a mighty thing to do! Josiah stood before his subjects, openly confessing himself to be a breaker of the Mosaic Covenant and worthy only of its curses because of his shortcoming, and then solemnly and formally made a covenant between his God and himself that he would in future keep the words of the Law as a true son of Israel. He publicly repudiated his own past sin, his nation's sin, and espoused afresh the holy calling of the chosen nation. It was a great thing to do, and it was the only thing. Thus was he able to call all Israel to pledge themselves to follow his example; so he "caused all Israel to stand to it" and the people entered once more into the covenant made with their fathers.

It was in that strength that Josiah proceeded to the logical end of his reform. He went straight from the making of the covenant to a great sweeping away of the idols and the images from the land. The thoroughness and speed with which he conducted that campaign of destruction is shown more clearly in the parallel account in 2 Kings 23. Up and down the land he went, breaking down images, grinding them to pieces and scattering their dust to the winds; defiling the sacred places of the idolatrous religions, turning out their priests, demolishing their buildings, desecrating their sacred symbols and smashing their works of art, until nothing was left of paganism in all the land from Bethel to Beer-Sheba, and the land was cleansed.

And it was only after all that, after the king had shown the sincerity of his repentance by his determination to be clean in God's sight, that he came to the Passover!

The greatest of all Israel's Passovers was that held by King Josiah after his reformation work was done, and it was the greatest, not because it was organised and directed by a king, but because it was inspired by a man who had become clean in the sight of God. Just as the ancient Hebrew

women used to take their lamps and sweep out every corner and cranny of their houses, the night before the Passover, that not the slightest trace of leaven might remain in their homes, so did King Josiah with resolution and ruthlessness seek to sweep out every trace of personal and national uncleanness in the sight of God, that his Passover might be truly acceptable to the Most High.

There is the challenge for us! We approach another Memorial season, another day of coming together in a ceremony which goes to the very roots of all that we hold most dear. "Till He come!"—we repeat the words and cling to our faith that the time will not be much longer delayed and the angel of deliverance come to us and to all the world. It is in that Memorial ceremony that we gain much of the strength to sustain us for another year of pilgrimage, the resolution that is to support us as we go forth to witness to His Name and His Truth. How can we make it a Memorial such as has not been known in all our past experience? "So let a man examine himself!" come the solemn words of Paul to us, "and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup". As did Josiah, so let us, approaching this season, stand to our covenant with our God, and renew it in the sight of our brethren, go forth to cleanse out of our hearts all that stands between us and God, all that divides us from our brethren, with ruthlessness and determination rooting out everything that savours of the world, the flesh and the devil. And being thus cleansed, thus zealous for the righteousness of God, thus filled with the Spirit, we can come with our brethren to partake of the feast and feel its life-giving influence entering into and permeating every fibre of our being. This wine is life, said our Lord to His disciples—*My life, given to you. This bread is My flesh, given for you.* Can these things do aught but revivify us to greater works than ever before and a closer following than ever before, *if we are clean*? One there was at the first Memorial who was not clean, and he had no part or lot at the fellowship of that table. But to those who did share in the broken bread and poured out wine, *because they were clean*, there came a union in fellowship which lasted as long as life itself, and inspired them to go forth as one family to turn the world upside down for Christ and His Kingdom. And they did turn the world upside down!

May we, then, at this season, remember King Josiah and his Passover, and how he prepared himself for that Passover by first becoming clean in the sight of God and removing out of his kingdom those things that did offend and cause iniquity. Let us prepare for our Memorial in like manner, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

"Till He Come"

AN EXHORTATION TO IOSELF-EXAMINATION

If ever there were words vibrant with hope and longing, an expression of all the heart's deepest convictions and fervent expectations for both Church and world, surely these are those words. "*Till He come!*" In those three syllables is summed up all for which Christ's disciples have stood throughout the centuries, the fellowship and the witness, the self-denial and the consecration, the endurance and the suffering. All has been because *He*, once, so long ago, promised that at the end of days *He* would come again, and receive us unto Himself, that where *He* is, we might be also.

That is not all. Our desire for the "gathering unto Him" is not—or should not be—dictated by selfish reasons, the hope of merely personal salvation and deliverance from the distresses of this world. It is only natural that like the few pious ones of Ezekiel's day, those who "sigh and cry for the abominations" of man's world should earnestly desire the coming of the better world, the heavenly, "wherein dwelleth righteousness". But we who have been instructed these many years in the principles of the Divine Plan realise that God is not working just for the taking away from an evil world of a small elect of righteous ones that *He* might leave the world to its evil, but rather the coming of Divine power to that evil world that His righteous ones may convert and transform it into an abode of harmony and peace. If we go to be with our Lord Jesus and enter the presence of His Father with exceeding joy it is only that we may be present with Him in the great work of restoring to righteousness all the families of the earth. That is why Jesus comes again. That is why the words of hope written aforetime for our comfort are not "*Till we go!*" but "*Till He come!*"

So many in past ages have failed to realise that difference and in consequence have become self-centred, bigoted, concerned only for their own eternal interests and caring little or nothing for those of humanity in general. They forgot that our Lord came "to seek and to save that which was lost". They did not heed—or perhaps never really understood—the fact that God did not create man upon the earth in vain; that even although He foresaw the fall into sin He had made provision for the recovery of "whosoever will" from that sin and the eventual restoration of the human race to the Divine likeness. Men became so pre-occupied with the theology of the Church's salvation and the golden prospect of the heavenly city that they overlooked the promise of another salvation and the

creation of the green fields and sparkling streams of an earthly paradise. And so, whilst they still paid lip service to the hallowed words "*Till He come*" the thought that was really in their minds was "*Till we go!*"

Was this one reason why the Apostle Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, brought these words into such close association with the Memorial? "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup" he said "ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come". The Memorial is a time when we come together to commemorate, not only our Lord's death for us, but also His death for the world; not only the privilege we have of association with Him in present sacrifice and future service, but also His intention to give life and human perfection to all men in due time; not only our fellowship together as one family, as fellow-heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant, but also our future service together as able ministers of the New Covenant. And because these things require for their accomplishment the long awaited Second Advent of our Lord in glory and power, the predominant thought in our celebration together is always "*Till He come!*"

This prayer is not fulfilled when *He* comes for His saints. That is only one phase of His coming. After that—how long after we do not know—*He* comes again with His saints for the setting up of His Kingdom and the blessing of all the world. It was for this, as much as for the other, that *He* died. It is this, as much as the other, that is shown forth year by year in the ceremony of bread and wine. It is not until this has taken place that it can be said *He* has "come" in the sense which Paul intended when he wrote the words.

We can then with perfect propriety continue to breathe the prayer when we come together, quite irrespective of our personal convictions, as to the time when our Lord's Second Presence can be said to have become an accomplished fact. Whether His coming for His saints is an event now in the past or still in the near future, it is undisputed that *He* has not yet "come" in the glory of the Kingdom to rule over the nations, and until that event has also taken place and the world is no longer in ignorance it cannot be said that *He* has fully "come". So we may celebrate, still looking for the fruition of all our hopes, still watching for "His appearing", still waiting for Him to change the body of our humiliation into conformity with

His glorious body. As we share together in the symbols that tell us of all these things we can still breathe toward heaven the reverent words "Till He come!"

There is much that is disappointing and saddening and unsatisfactory in our daily lives and it is easy to let the mind dwell on the future glories that are promised the faithful ones and hope fervently for their speedy coming. But the world also is groaning and travailling in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and their distress is far greater than ours, for they have not the hope that we have, no knowledge or expectation of future deliverance, nothing but a dull despair that sees no avenue of escape from the oppression of this world's evil. Where we can lift up our hearts to heaven and rejoice, knowing that deliverance draweth nigh, they can only "look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness". So that we ought to take thought for the world more even than for ourselves, and manifest to them something of the hope that fills our hearts, and show them that we really believe it. And one way in which we can all do something toward this is by the manner in which we keep the Memorial of our Lord's death together. It is a witness and a testimony, not only to our own brethren, but to all men, that these things are true and will surely come to pass. As oft as ye do this, said Paul, ye do *shew forth* . . . That "shewing forth" extends beyond the circle of the brethren to all who know and see that such things are being done. They will see, and glorify God.

That is not to say that the annual observance of the Memorial, as a ceremony or a service, is itself so noted by those outside that it becomes a powerful witness. That ceremony is probably the least outwardly noticeable of all that takes place in our fellowship and service together. It is the day by day conduct of our Christian communion together, which is symbolised for us in the Memorial service, that is the effective witness and of which men will take notice. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "They took note of them, that they had been with Jesus, and had learned of him." "They may see your good works, and glorify God in the day of visitation." It is the manner in which our professed beliefs and our spoken message works and operates within our own fellowship and our dealings with our own brethren that will persuade the world of its truth. No amount of preaching that "God is Love" will impress our hearers if we have not love one toward another. It is of no use expounding John 3.16 if we ourselves are not also found to be "giving" of our best and dearest that others might

be saved, nor of talking about the One Who came to be a servant and serve mankind if we show no disposition to serve them too. Our lives must match our profession and our own fellowship become a miniature, within present limitations, of what the Divine Kingdom on earth will be in the future Age; and then we can reasonably expect men to listen. We can then say with confidence "See; this is what the Lord's death has done for us. It can do the same for you".

It is in some such way, it may be, that we may interpret this "shewing forth the Lord's death till he come". It is not the only meaning; undoubtedly the ceremony of bread and wine is testimony, a "shewing forth" between the participants that they continue to share the same faith and hope in the fundamentals of our faith and the promise of the Kingdom. But none of us would want to restrict that "shewing forth" to one day in the year, and not many of us would want to confine it within the bounds of "the elect". We are, most of us, ambassadors for our Lord Jesus in this world, and we want to manifest His Name and His message and His saving power in such a way that, if it be possible—as one day in the future Age it will be possible—"all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God." And so we can take this exhortation into our daily lives and make the communion of our fellowship, the Christian brotherliness that should exist between all of us and knit us into one family "in Christ"; the outward evidence to all the world that Christ's death has indeed borne fruit, giving assurance of greater fruits yet to come. We are a kind of first fruits of His creatures, the Apostle assures us. There are to be after fruits. In our daily lives we can "shew forth" the nature of those after fruits which are to be the result of our Lord's death but cannot be seen in their reality "until He come".

Let this then be our Memorial resolve, that, casting aside all that makes for disunity and unbrotherliness, and scrupulously respecting each other's convictions in those matters of our faith and practice which do not violate the fundamentals of the faith, remembering that as servants we each stand or fall to our own Master, we may become a community united in our fellowship, persuaded of the truth of our message, possessed with a sense of the urgency of the times in which we live and the imminence of the Kingdom. Let us justify within ourselves the famous saying attributed to Tertullian sixteen centuries ago "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" With that resolve in our minds and hearts we can come together to eat of that bread and drink of that cup in full confidence that thus we are shewing forth our Lord's death "till He come".

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 3. The Lord's Great Army

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain . . . for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand." (Joel 2. 1).

This is the second stage of the prophecy, and Joel's spiritual vision is becoming keener; he begins to see farther into the future. The language employed in the first part of this chapter is still fitting to the plague of locusts which formed the opening theme of chapter 1. but the words and terms used are so much stronger and more pointed as to leave little room for doubt that under the figure of the locust swarm a great and devastating invasion of Israel's land is depicted. *There is no resisting the oncoming hosts; even the sun and moon withdraw their light, and no defence which the people can offer will be of any avail. The day of the Lord, great and very terrible, has come, and who can abide it?*

At this crisis (verse 11) the prophet points to a way of escape. Turn ye to the Lord, he cries, and repent, for He is gracious and merciful. Who knoweth but that He will turn and deliver? It is while the people are considering this message that the second alarm comes (verse 15). The enemy is now at the gates and the crisis is upon them. *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly."* The appeal to God for deliverance becomes a reality; priests and people make common cause in supplication and in the spirit of true repentance. Every ordinary occupation and preoccupation is suspended and the entire nation comes together in sincere and heartfelt prayer to God.

And God turns! From that point the danger begins to lessen. *"Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people."* (vs. 18). He goes forth like a man of war and drives away the alien invader, returning then to His own people and beginning to bless them in basket and store. All that they have lost is restored to them, and they know at last that He is their God and is dwelling in their midst. And at that point the prophecy merges so definitely into the events of this Gospel Age Time of Trouble that there is no mistaking the application, for here is where we have the promise, quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, that God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and deliverance, absolute and complete, will be the portion of those who call upon the name of the Lord. Verses 21-32 of this chapter have never yet been fulfilled in the

history of Israel; their realisation lies in the future; and this is a guide to us in our interpretation of the entire chapter. At this point Joel saw, in vision, *into this time in which we ourselves are now living.*

Now the first part of the chapter had its first fulfilment soon after Joel's own day, when the northern armies overran Israel and Judah, and took the people captive, leaving their land desolate. But the thread of prophecy ran its course only as far as verse 14, and there stopped, *because the people did not repent!* The completion of the prophecy was postponed for many long days because of that fact. Came a day when Israel was afforded another opportunity; the Prince of Life Himself was amongst them, the nations again were threatening them, and again the thread of prophecy ran to verse 14, *and stopped again.* They "knew not the time of their visitation" and *they did not repent.* Once more their house was left unto them desolate. Now, to-day, after these many years, the cup of suffering of God's ancient people is filling to the brim. As in the past, *their enemies hem them in on every hand; once more the Lord's great army stands ready to execute judgment.* But this time the prophecy will run on to its full end, for this time *Israel will repent,* and in faith and confidence look to God for deliverance. We must look at this chapter therefore as having its beginning in the days of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and its ending in our own day, the day of Israel's final deliverance.

"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand" (vs. 1).

What is this "day of the Lord" to which reference is so often made by the prophets? It is nearly always associated with judgment. It is the day of reckoning, of retribution, the time when the evil harvest of this world's sowing has to be reaped. *There was a day of the Lord to come to Israel because of her waywardness just as there is a day of the Lord to come to all the world because of its wickedness.* Here in Joel the especial application is to Israel; the time of judgment was about to come upon them and nothing could save them from its impact, although repentance and faith would bring them through it, saved "so as by fire." And it is a long day too; this "day of the Lord" began with the taking of the Ten Tribes, and then, a little later, the Two Tribes, into captivity, and it is to last for

twenty-seven hundred years, until the time of "Jacob's Trouble," yet future. It endures thus long because it can only end with Israel's repentance, and Israel has not yet repented. So it is that the exhortation in vs. 11-14 "*Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart . . .*" stands as an impassable barrier to the completion of the prophecy, until Israel's blindness is turned away as described by Paul in Rom. 11.23-26. Well might Joel cry the urgency of his message and call for a trumpet in Zion, for the day of the Lord whose coming he pronounced as imminent was to commence little less than a century after his preaching.

"A day of darkness and of gloominess" he cries "*a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains*" (vs. 2). That last phrase is badly translated; the thought behind it is that of a stormy dawn when, instead of the light of the rising sun, there are masses of black thunderclouds banked along the mountain-tops, blotting out the daylight. As said Isaiah "In that day . . . if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof" (Isa. 5.30). Zephaniah, also, saw "a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities . . ." (Zeph. 1.15-16). As Joel himself said later on, the sun and the moon were darkened, and the stars had withdrawn their shining, and above all men there hung the sable curtain of Divine displeasure.

Against this black background the prophet sees the advancing army. "*A great people and a strong*" he cries in affright "*there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be after it, even to the years of many generations*" (vs. 2). In the advance guard Joel saw the Assyrians of his own day, marching relentlessly to the despoiling of Israel's fair land. Close on their heels he could, perhaps, see the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, coming a hundred and fifty years later to overturn the Kingdom of Judah and bring the royal kingship to an end. Behind them, more dimly, maybe he could see Greeks, and Romans, and Persians, and Arabs, and Turks, all the forces of the Gentiles that were destined to oppress Israel down the ages and despoil their heritage continually. And it might even be that the vision of the prophet, supernaturally sharpened, saw, up against the darkness itself, behind all the others, the shadowy outlines of that greatest oppressor of all, the mysterious King of Daniel II, and those forces of the north which are described in Ezekiel 38, the last of all these locust waves which are appointed to ravage Israel. All these are legions of the Lord's great army which He has sent to execute His word and all these have played or will

play their part in executing the Divine judgments upon that stiff-necked and wayward people that, marvellously, becomes God's own people of faith at the last.

The history of the ages is sufficient to reveal how true it has been of this great army that, to quote the words of vs. 3, "*a fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.*" The rest of the passage, up to vs. 9, is a vivid description of the havoc wrought by a ruthless invader and although commentators almost invariably apply it to the devastation wrought by locusts and point to the fitness of almost every sentence to that application, it remains true that the passage is even more fitly referred to the capture of a city by a hostile army, and when taken in relation to the following verses describing Divine intervention for the people's salvation, quite certainly to Gentile nations that have harried Israel in the day of her adversity and will be smitten by God in the day of her prosperity.

This section, from vs. 4 to vs. 9, tells of the invasion, from the first sight of the coming enemy on the far distant hills to that dread moment when the defenders, pressed back into their last stronghold within the city, behold with fear the ruthless soldiers climbing in at their windows and battering down their doors. So has it been, and will be, in Israel's long history; the enemy has continually advanced more and more closely to their total destruction until in these last days it seems as if they are appointed to utter extinction and nothing can save them.

"*The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run*" (vs. 4). Here the alarmed watchers on the city walls discern the first signs of the attack, the dust clouds raised by the hoofs of the galloping horses and the following war chariots. The movements of those agile steeds may be observed before the outlines of the lumbering chariots behind them can be discerned. But not for long, for "*like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array*" (vs. 5). The chariots are now in view, bumping and rattling over the rocky ground and precipitous slopes. The likening of the advance of this host to a sheet of flame eating up the dry stubble of a field as it advances at rapid pace is very apt.

Now the invaders have reached the city walls. "*They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks*" (vs. 7). They have stormed the walls and forced their way into the city, and the desperate

defenders have retreated to the shelter of their houses; but to no avail. Their relentless enemies follow hard upon their heels. *"They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief"* (vs. 9). This is the supreme crisis; the foe has besieged and taken the city and has appeared at the house doors to satiate his lust for pillage and ravage. Zechariah saw that same picture when he spoke (in Zech. 14) of the city being taken, and the houses rifled, and some going forth into captivity. In Zechariah the statement is made that at that crisis the Lord will go forth and deliver His people, but without indicating just why that deliverance comes about. Here in Joel the reason is stated; it is because the people, at last, repent and turn to the Lord their God in faith, and so He delivers. But let Joel tell the splendid story in his own unhurried way.

"The earth shall quake before them. The heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (vs. 10-11).

This is what the prophet sees in his vision, the utter disruption of all the normal course of nature in consequence of this calamity that has come upon the city and the people. This can be nothing else than a symbolic foreview of the Last Days, and so Joel must have understood the vision; no ordinary military invasion could justify the use of such extravagant language. Here, at this point, perhaps, his prophecy passes definitely into the sphere of the times in which we live, the times of the last great trial of faith upon God's earthly people. Later in his prophecy (chap. 3.16) he sees the issue more clearly and says "the heavens and the earth shall

shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel." Isaiah saw something of the same thing when he said "I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger" (Isa. 13.13). and again, more fiercely, "the earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage . . ." (Isa. 24.19-20). This is the time that the Lord rises up to judge the earth—but first of all He judges His own people Israel. That is the explanation of the strange word in vs. 11, the word that refers to this savage concourse of barbarian invaders as the "Lord's great army" and their camp as "His camp." The only possible explanation is that He is using them as a means of judgment, His means of testing and purifying Israel. As with Pharaoh of old, He has called them that He might display His glory by them, and when they have served His purpose to that end, pass upon them, in their turn, the judgment they too have richly deserved. So Ezekiel, speaking of much the same thing, says "I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog before their eyes" (Ezek. 38.16).

So will the crisis come upon re-gathered Israel in the latter days. In former times they failed under the test, and they went into captivity. But they will not fail this time!

* * *

The remainder of Joel's prophecy tells how. It is a story of repentance and deliverance, and it reveals something of the principles which will operate to establish the people who are to become the nucleus of the earthly Kingdom.

(Next month's issue continues the story)

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A SERIAL STUDY
IN 1 COR. 13. 13.

Part 4. Love, the bringer of perfection

CONCLUSION

The main proof that Paul is not merely contrasting the *Charismata* in their various forms with the inward grace of Love (as this comes to be reflected in the various acts that make up a Christian's life) is found in Paul's statement in verse 12. Here two phrases are found which indicate, for the faithful foot-step follower of the Lord, that all imperfection and present indefiniteness is at an end. He will there see the realities of the Divine Plan "face to face",

and will "then know even as he has been known". By whom has Paul been known while here on earth? Was he merely stating, that he hoped, one day, to be fully understood by those brethren, such as the Corinthians, who had so grossly misunderstood him and his work? Not a bit of it. At the very moment when the Corinthians misunderstood there was another place where he was fully known and fully understood, by Someone whose know-

ledge of all things pertaining to the Plan had then come to the "full". That Someone was his Lord. He knew Paul through and through. Paul hoped, one day, also to attain to such understanding that he too would "know" to the same degree, as his Lord had known him. But to "know" as he had been "known" would imply that he was both "like" and "with" his Lord in the heavenly glory. Then he would have reached the vantage ground of being "face to face" with the Divine realities that had thrown their shadows backward into his earth life, where he had seen them as an indefinite reflection in the mirror of the Word in these present misty circumstances.

In some way therefore, this preview of that perfect state must tie up with his contrasts between Love and the 'other things'—the mysteries, the "*gnosis*" and the tongues—to give 'sense' and direction to his argument. Each one of these "other things" had stood for a 'way of life' for countless millions of the world's inhabitants. But Paul claims that the 'way of Love' would be the better way—a more excellent way. And yet to the common view of man that more excellent way is not apparent yet—it is not yet made manifest. Darkness still reigns over the minds of men, and binds them to the 'other things'. Only to the spirit-enlightened mind of Paul, as he looks forward to the future day, has that Way of Love any semblance of reality, and even then he sees it but "in part". But the big jump forward of his mind to that future day, when all preparation begins to give place to the "*teleion*"—"the perfectness", which is to be the climax and culmination of all the long preparatory work of God—shows that he is really contrasting the whole Plan of God—and Love, the motive force of the Divine Plan—with the spirit of priest-craft or culture-craft which had been the animating force of all these human institutions. Men had tried to explain the problems of the Universe, the mystery of God, and the riddle of human life, and had become inextricably entangled in their webs of philosophy. God Himself would, one day, explain all these complicated enigmas of life and existence, and bring light out of this present darkness and gloom, and show men where they were wrong in their reasonings. By that happier day Paul would have arrived 'face to face' with the Divine realities and would then 'know' even as he had been known, and that which was 'perfect' having come for him, it would then begin to ripple out to all the dark places of the earth, and cause the knowledge of the Glory of God to be known by all.

While it is true there is the present activity of Love in the hearts of God's consecrated children, (as part of the preparatory work leading up to the

'perfect' state,) running through Paul's mind, it is more in the nature of a second line of argument lying parallel to his main line of reasoning. While also it is more excellent to have the Love of God dwelling in the heart than to be enmeshed in the mysteries of men, or even to be engrossed by the 'charm' of human 'tongues', this can only be considered as preparatory to, and anticipatory of, the 'perfect' state, and of the 'face to face' completeness that belongs to the better day. It is of Love as the solver of life's mysteries, not as a mere display of its minor graces in the lives of the saints, that Paul is mainly speaking, though the second strand of the argument is woven in and out here and there in the whole pattern of his reasoning.

The crux, therefore, of Paul's argument is that the Love of God will succeed in doing what all the artifice (good or bad) of a thousand generations of men has failed to do. We must not fail to appreciate the magnitude of Paul's greater argument because a minor one is intertwined.

What then will the Love of God do for men, and how will it accomplish its task? That would be a long story to follow through from its beginning. The 'giving' of His Son to be man's Redeemer from sin—the story of that sacrificial life,—His death and Resurrection, and His long "henceforth expecting" period before He could come to man's relief, are all parts of that wonderful story.

The comparison must begin with man awakened from the dead, and with the present embargo barring the outflow of the Love of God withdrawn.

First then, in contrast with the superstitious institutions of men, *God will cause knowledge to abound*. Only 'the few' were the initiates in the human way of life, the 'many' being kept purposely in ignorance of the supposed facts of life. But in God's better way even the least among men will know and understand all the deeper knowledge hitherto wrapped in mystery. There will be no necessity for one to ask his brother 'knowest thou the Lord', for all will know Him from the least to the greatest of men. God will remove the superstition and the ignorance by making known the truth.

Then the language of THE TRUTH will reach the hearts of men. Unlike the influence of the cultured tongue (or pen) it will not merely entrance and embellish the *mind* of man—(that is of the few who were able to absorb it in the days gone by)—but will reach the deeper seat of affection in the heart. God will write His Law upon the tablets of the human heart, and will thus reach inwards to the very centre of each individual life, and as "all" are intended to know the Way of Love, so likewise *all* the hearts of men are thus to be reached by the

Spirit of God. The contrast opens therefore by understanding replacing ignorance, and by 'all' becoming recipients thereof, instead of the 'few'.

Further God will restore to man his dignity. The ancient human ways of life dragooned and regimented men en masse. The idol worshipper was not asked to decide if he agreed to or approved the system to which he belonged—there was no option left to his choice. For the least demur the penalty was death. Compulsion surrounded him on every hand constraining him to yield obedience as his fathers, and his father's fathers, had done.

The Way of Love will meet him as an individual. God will tell him he is free—a freeman of His wide domain. He will be free to choose, the object of his own desire. This he never was under the old system of idolatry. There he had no more liberty than a beast of the fields.

This is not the place to discuss the fundamental facts relating to the freedom of the human will. Suffice it here to say that God intended the will of man to swing free within such limits as would ensure to man the opportunity to live accordant with righteousness. Only if man choose to live unrighteously would his free will clash with God's sovereign right to dictate. It is an honour great beyond all earthly comparison that God should assure man that he is free to make his choice. It shows what confidence the Creator still has, or will then have in man's integrity and responsiveness to His own persuasive influence. Love will draw by its own power of moral suasion, and God knows there is that in man, when released from superstitious thralldom, that can respond to its attractive 'pull' and swing into alignment with His own righteous desires. Love will be 'long-suffering'—in that it will wait the length of at least one hundred years even if some wayward creature should choose to say "No" to the Divine overtures. It will wait a whole Age if there is the feeblest affirmative response.

Love will be 'kind'—it will have help to give and assurance to bestow. It will encourage faltering steps, and handle gently 'broken reeds'. Love will not chide man too harshly for inherited weaknesses, but will remind him what Redemption has cost. It will believe the best, hope for the best, and wait while the battered affections grow strong again. It will cleanse his wounds, and pour upon them 'Good Samaritan' oil and wine, and take care of him till he is strong again. Then Love will ask "Will you live with Me, and permit Me to enjoy your company as I want you to enjoy Mine?"

As the knowledge of all that Love has done to restore this "*teleion*"—this perfect state—increases, the age-old mysteries will be explained. Who was the Great First Cause that created this mundane world with all its possibilities? Was there One or were there many Gods engaged upon this task? Was there a Good God and an evil god in eternal conflict over sunshine and storm? They will not again need to ask. Why did God seem always so hard to find behind the perplexities of life? They will learn that sin had been the barrier. They will have learned to know that death was death, and if inflicted again will be eternal death. They will have learned that man, although made to be monarch and caretaker of this world was not an immortal soul. Thus all the riddles of the Universe will be solved and Love, the outflow of the very heart of God, will have come into its own.

From the Fountain of eternal good, will come forth the Attribute that will have played a Creator-Father's part, and have linked together in one happy universal family every creature that His Hand has made whose choice it was to live in that happy home.

In this gladsome Paradise Paul will have found himself "face to face" with all these great realities—he will "know" as he was fully known—and for him, as for countless myriads besides, that which is "perfect" will have come. The "Way of Love" will have become the "Way of Life" for every willing soul. Surely it is "the most excellent Way!"

Some other day we will think upon the minor argument, and note how all the virtues mentioned blend themselves into Love.

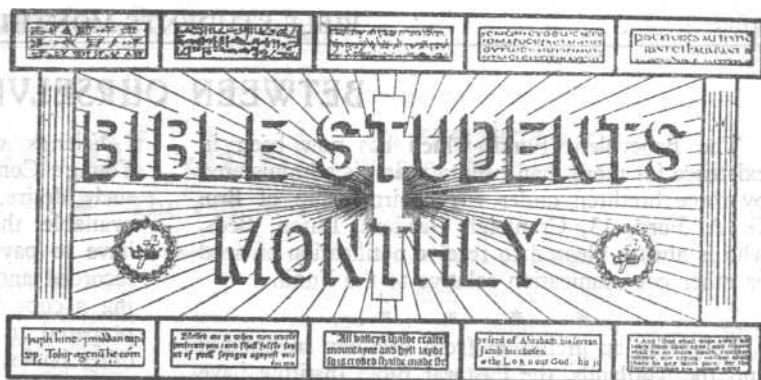
THE END.

Here is a valuable guide to the understanding of Scripture, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth". It is found in the "Coverdale Bible", printed in 1535. Miles Coverdale prefixed to his translation certain "Rules for Reading the Bible". Here is what he says:

"It shall greatly helpe to understande Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or wrytten, but
 of whom,
 to whom,
 with what wordis,
 at what time,
 where,
 to what intent,
 with what circumstances,
 considering what goeth before,
 and what followeth."



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



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MAY, 1948

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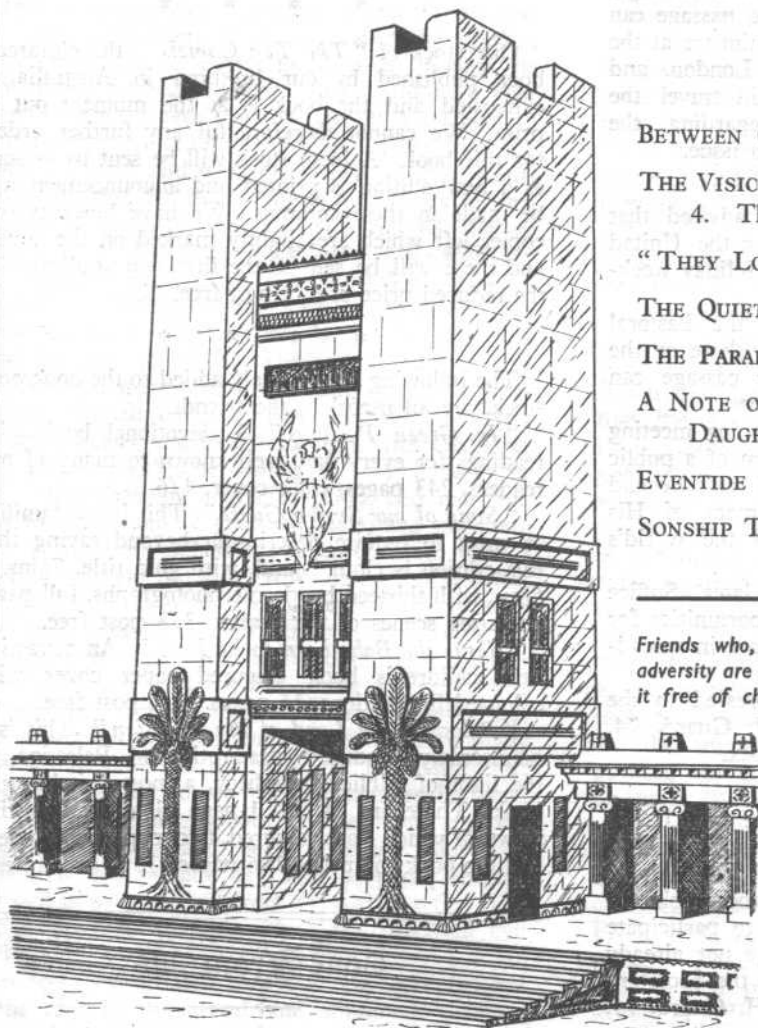
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has now been in existence for more than twenty years, is administered by three brethren under the chairmanship of Bro. G. A. Ford, 13, Cranleigh Gardens, Luton, Beds, who is always pleased to receive notification of need or other communication relative to the Fund.

* * * *

Following an invitation from brethren in London and the Midlands, the Pastoral Bible Institute have advised that Brother John T. Read, whose ministry last year was so much appreciated, will visit this country again this year for a pilgrim tour amongst the brethren. Provided that a suitable passage can be secured, he will arrive in time to minister at the August Convention at Conway Hall, London, and during the following few months will travel the country. Further announcement regarding the arrangements will be made in our next issue.

* * * *

As previously announced, we are advised that arrangements are being completed for the United London Convention at August Bank Holiday weekend.

It is hoped that a brother from the Pastoral Bible Institute, Brooklyn, U.S.A., will share on the programme, if arrangements for his passage can be made.

It is proposed that the Sunday evening meeting at the Convention should take the form of a public witness address on the theme of our Lord's Second Coming and the resultant establishment of His Kingdom being the only solution of the world's increasing problems.

Further details will be made known later. Suffice it to say now that this will afford opportunities for service for many of the brethren to share in spreading the glad tidings of the Kingdom.

All communications should be addressed to the Convention Secretary, Brother F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

* * * *

The friends at Forest Gate advise that it has been found necessary to change the arrangement for the Whitsun Baptismal Service to Whit Monday instead of Sunday as mentioned in these columns last month. Friends who would like to participate in this service are asked, if they have not already done so, to communicate quickly with the Secretary of the Forest Gate Church, Bro. F. H. Guard, 74, Princes Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex.

(In connection with the above notice, friends are advised that there is no intention of arranging a Baptismal Service at August in connection with the Conway Hall Convention.—Ed. B.S.M.)

Friends who desire to obtain a second-hand Young's Concordance are invited to write and state such desire. From time to time one becomes available, the price varying according to what we have to pay to obtain it. Requests so received are recorded and applicants given the option of obtaining a copy as one becomes available. We are also prepared to record the names of friends desiring other books, such as Berean Comments, etc., which are difficult to obtain to-day, and in all such cases option of purchase is given whenever a copy comes to hand.

* * * *

Our stock of "*The Ten Camels*", the children's book published by our brethren in Australia, is exhausted and the book is at the moment out of print. We cannot therefore fill any further orders for this book. A fresh stock will be sent us as soon as a new edition is printed and announcement will be made in these columns. We have however two copies left which are slightly marked on the covers and these will be sent to the first two applicants at the reduced price of 3/3 post free.

* * * *

The following books, lately added to the bookroom stock, are all useful to the friends.

"*In Green Pastures*" A devotional book with readings for every day, well known to many of our readers, 243 pages, cloth cover, 4/6.

"*Song of our Syrian Guest*" This is too familiar to most to require description beyond saying that this edition is cloth bound, with gold title, 7½ ins. x 5 ins., with thirteen handsome photographs, full page, depicting scenes of the Psalm. 3/3 post free.

"*Jesus the Babe born to be King*" An attractive little children's book, coloured paper cover, with coloured illustrations, 16 pages. 1/6 post free.

"*Palestine the Land of my adoption*" This is a handsomely produced description of Palestine in the light of Biblical prophecy, a most suitable gift book. There are 24 full 1-page plates of Palestine views, of which 4 are coloured, two maps, good index, and the book comprises 196 pages. 13/3 post free.

Gone From Us

Bro. C. J. Sears (London) March.

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

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 4. The Cry of Faith

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and repenteth Him of the evil." (Chap. 2.12-13.)

This is a wonderful invitation—wonderful because God has at this very moment allowed the heathen executors of His judgment to come in amongst the holy people to ravage them. God could have kept them at arm's length, but no, He allowed them to come as it were into the city and right into the people's houses, and it is then, when all hope seems at an end, that He invites the afflicted ones to turn to Him in sincerity and faith and He will deliver them. "Who knoweth" cries Joel "if He will turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him?" Evidently Joel himself was one of such who did know that God would so do, for in the preceding verse he has stated his conviction that God is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. Jonah, half a century later, used precisely the same words, when remonstrating with God over His leniency with the Ninevites. "I knew", he says, "that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth thee of the evil. Wherefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life away from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4.2.) Strange that one prophet should exhort his people to repentance because God is merciful, and another should reproach God for His mercy to people who had repented; but we are just as inconsistent in our own profession and our walk before God in many ways. Both prophets really sought the same end; they both wanted to see righteousness exalted and evil destroyed, and to both of them evil and the Assyrians were one and the same thing. And even so late as this present day men have not learned that evil is not banished from the earth by the mere destruction of one nation which has practised evil things.

So Joel's exhortation here was one to repentance in the face of threatened and imminent disaster. As the chapter is followed down to verses 20 and 22 and onward, it is seen that the exhortation must have been heeded, for here, at last, is the evidence of Divine deliverance, full and complete. The northern invaders are driven into the wilderness

and destroyed, the land recovers from the ravages that it has suffered and brings forth its harvests once again, there is a great restitution of all that was lost, and, most wonderful of all, Israel is converted and turns to the Lord in sincerity (verse 27.). And the question immediately springs to the mind—has this part of the prophecy had its fulfilment?

As the pages of history are scanned, the answer must be "No!". Never yet has there been a time in Israel's history when by any stretch of the imagination such things as these could be said to have been true. When at any time has it been that "I will no more make you a reproach among the nations" (2.19.)? From Joel's time to our own day they have been a reproach and derision. From Joel's time to our own day they have been the spoil of the nations. And when was it true of any alien power that has ever invaded the Holy Land that God has revealed Himself to their destruction, led them into the barren wilderness of the Dead Sea and made them a wonder and an astonishment in their end? When has God ever restored to Israel the years that the great ravaging powers have taken from them, restored to them all that they have lost, and given them to eat in plenty and be satisfied? And when, above all things, has it been true that Israel has known and acknowledged that God is dwelling in her midst, and has put her trust in Him, and never again been ashamed (2.26.)? The signs of such a wonderful national conversion have never been manifest; to-day they are more lacking than ever. The only logical interpretation of this passage is that it refers to a time yet to come, and when that fact is realised it is easy to see that these events are the immediate predecessors of the promised pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh spoken of in verses 28-32.

At verse 12, therefore, Joel's mind has passed completely out of touch with his own day and its dangers, and entered into the then far distant day of which his own was merely a picture in miniature. From verse 18 the verbs are properly in the past tense. "Then the Lord *was* jealous for his land, and he *had* pity on His people" etc. Joel was seeing, in vision, the result of the sincere repentance and pleading with God described in verses 15-17, when the priests, the ministers of the Lord, wept between the porch and the altar, calling upon God to deliver. Evidently, therefore, he saw something that represented to him the stirring events of the

Time of the End, when the greatest invader of all time would be hammering at the portals of the Holy Land "to take a spoil and to take a prey".

It is significant that in verse 20 the phrase is "I will remove far off from you the northern army." Israel's enemies of Joel's own day—Assyrians, Scythians, Babylonians—came from the north, down the great highway that ran from Carchemish on the Euphrates, through the Plain of Esdraelon, the literal "Armageddon" of the Bible, down into Egypt. But after the Babylonians there were no more invaders from the north, until the Time of the End! Greeks and Romans came from the West; Persians and Saracens from the South; Mongols from the East; Arabs from the South; and in more recent days, Britain from the West. It is not until that mysterious King of Daniel 11, the "King of the North", comes upon the scene, that Israel is again afflicted by a "northern army". And that is still future, even though by all present political indications, it may be a very imminent event.

If it is true, then, that by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Joel is now seeing in vision the events of the last great conflict in the end of this Age, we do well to stand by his side and endeavour to see the same things in the same way. There is a striking correspondence between this chapter and those of Ezekiel 38-39 and Daniel 11. In each of these passages the invader comes from the north and enters the Holy Land, attempts to ravage the land and its people, is met by the rising up of God Himself, and comes to an ignominious end. The fame of the happening goes out to all the world, and not only Israel, but all men, know that Divine power is manifest and supreme at Jerusalem once more. In all three accounts the place of the invader's defeat and destruction is given as between the two seas, the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. "I will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea (Dead Sea), and his hinder part toward the utmost sea (the Mediterranean)". So says Chapter 2, verse 20. "I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea" (Ezek. 39.11). "He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas—yet he shall come to his end." (Dan 11.45.)

What is the significance of this three-fold testimony? What are the associations connected with this district around the Dead Sea that it should be chosen by three prophets, each speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to symbolise the overthrow of the last great power to rear itself against the incoming Kingdom of God?

History records two stirring events of which that district was the scene. One is the destruction of

Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Abraham, and the other the miraculous deliverance of Jehoshaphat and his people from the Moabites in consequence of their faith in God. Are these the pointers for us? Is this a hint that the destruction of the hosts of Gog and Magog will come about, not by the people of God defending themselves with earthly weapons, but in consequence of calm faith in God and His rising up to defend them? That seems to be the consistent testimony of Scripture. "At that time shall Michael stand up" says the revealing Angel to Daniel. This second chapter of Joel becomes eloquent in that case. The last great invasion, the last onslaught of the powers of evil against the regathered holy people and the Kingdom of which they are to be the nucleus, will be that in the face of which the people are in the attitude of heart depicted in verses 12-17 of chapter 2, a condition of repentance, of supplication, and of faith that God can, and will, deliver.

If this be so, that is the sign we must look for in the at present unhappy so-called "Holy Land". The gathering of the northern host, who is to "enter into the countries" and "overflow and pass over" as Daniel 11 tells us, is obvious enough in these post war years. But the "land of unwallled villages" of Ezek. 38, where the people dwell in prosperity and security, is not yet discerned. Evidently there is more water to flow under the bridges before all is ready for the climax that is described in these prophecies. But time is marching on with great strides toward their fulfilment. We must take the lesson of Joel 2.12-17 to heart, and wait for its fulfilment in reality.

Just in passing, be it noted that in Joel, as in Ezekiel and Daniel, it is the power of the North that is depicted in the role of the great aggressor. The "king of the South" is mild and insignificant by contrast. In Daniel 11, the King of the South seems to disappear before the climax of the chapter is reached; in Ezekiel, where the same power appears to be depicted by the "merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof" (Ezek. 38.13) the part they play is a very passive one; it does not seem that they approve the Northern invasion, and equally that they are not in a position to do much about it. And in Joel they do not appear at all. Is this an indication that at the very end the power of the South has weakened to such an extent as to be no longer one of importance? All this still lies in the future, and we cannot be dogmatic, but such questions, viewed in the light of current developments in the earth, are interesting.

But now the prophecy passes on, beyond the great invasion, "Jacob's trouble", and the great deliverance, and into those early years of the Kingdom when the Lord will "reign in Zion, and before

his ancients, gloriously". "Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice—the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength" (verses 21-22). These verses are reminiscent of Isaiah's "Millennial" passages, and well they might be, for they refer to the beginning of that same blessed day. The Time of Trouble is over, the Kingdom has been set up, the presence of the King proclaimed to all and sundry, and the law of the Lord is going forth from Zion. Appropriately enough Joel sees all this in terms of the restored and renovated earth, and rightly so, for one of the first evidences of "restitution" will be the greater fruitfulness of the earth itself, providing food for the soon-to-return multitudes of the dead. Hence come verse 23. "Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month." The Vulgate turns the first phrase "the former rain moderately" into "a teacher of righteousness", and on this basis some have found in this verse a prophecy of the coming of Jesus. In the century prior to the First Advent there was a movement, or "sect", among the Jews which looked for such a "teacher of righteousness" to precede the "Last Day" and the pouring out of the Spirit, and the expectation thus aroused did much to cause men to be "in expectation" as is stated in the Gospels. But it is not likely that Joel did prophesy thus; his picture is one of the fields and crops, and in this verse he is likening God's treatment of Israel at the End Time to the regular succession of the seasons. The first expression really means "rain in just measure," and the three "rains" after that, the three stages into which the agricultural year was divided. First, in October, came the "rain", the heavy downpour which softened the dry ground, and made ploughing and sowing possible. Then, from December to February, the "former rain", or as the Hebrews called it, "sprinkling rain," continuous light rain that encouraged steady growth. Lastly, in April and May, the "latter rain" that refreshed the ripening wheat and crops.

What a vivid picture of this trial and trouble upon Israel, and its outcome! First, the "heavy rain" of intense trouble that ploughed men's hearts and made possible the sowing of Divine seed; next, the "sprinkling rain" of Divine care and deliverance, and the early processes of Kingdom work calculated to bring Israel into conformity with the new laws and lead them to a condition of harmony with the Kingdom arrangements. Finally, the "latter rain" that finished the ripening work in their hearts and made them full citizens of the Millennial Kingdom. This is a finely-drawn picture of the providences of

God descending upon men "like the gentle rain from heaven".

And the result? "The floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil" (verse 24). Millennial abundance is to follow immediately, and the cry go out to all the nations "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters—come ye, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55.1).

"And I will restore to you"—precious promise—"the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you" (verse 25). If this "great army" does in fact embrace all Israel's oppressors through the ages, there may be more than a coincidence in this selection of four out of the many species of locusts with which the country was so often afflicted. Moffatt gives the variants in clearest language—he renders "the lopping, the swarming, the leaping, the devouring locusts". The *gazam*, the "loppers", might very well picture the first great world power, Babylon, which "lopped" Israel from their land, and took them into captivity; the *arbeh*, the "swarmers" (cankerworm) could equally well picture the overspreading might of Persia, which, although it did restore Judea and Jerusalem, did so only as part of its campaign to subdue and cover all the nations of Western Asia. Quite appropriate is the application of *yelek*, the "leapers" (caterpillar) to Greece, the nation that is pictured in Daniel 8 as a tempestuous he-goat coming against the ram (Persia) with such fury as seemingly not even to touch the ground in his mad onward rush; and of course the epithet of "devourer" (the *chasil*, palmerworm) is very fitting to Rome, the fourth, and, in its derived successors, the greatest of Israel's oppressors. And God is going to restore to Israel all that these have devoured. No wonder that Peter at Pentecost associated this prophecy with the Times of Restitution of all things, spoken of by all the prophets from the beginning.

So Israel will be delivered at the last, and "eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of . . . God . . . and never be ashamed." (verse 26-27). Joel in his haste has run a little too far forward; in the next verse he has to come back somewhat and talk of the Spirit that is to be poured out upon all flesh; for the present he is absorbed in his vision of the deliverance of Israel, and for a moment has forgotten the rest of the world. The rest of Joel's prophecy is taken up with what happens to them and Israel's mission of conversion, and in order adequately to deal with that aspect of his message, he has to go back and tell of the same time of trouble from the standpoint of the Gentile nations.

(To be continued)

"They Looked for a City"

The testimony of past ages
to Millennial belief.

Dr. Thomas Chalmers, one of the greatest of Scottish preachers and theologians, was born in 1780 and died in 1847. He was the founder, and became the first Moderator, of the Free Church of Scotland, which came into existence in 1843. Well versed in the scientific thought of his day, he championed the integrity of the Word of God and saw clearly that it promised a restitution of all things. The following extracts are from his writings on 2 Pet. 3.13.

* * * *

"While we attempt not to be wise above that which is written, we should attempt, and that most studiously, to be wise up to that which is written. The disclosures are very few and very partial which are given to us of that bright and beautiful economy (*world system*, Ed.) which is to survive the ruins of our present one, but still somewhat is made known, like every other Scripture, profitable both for doctrine and for instruction in righteousness.

"In the new economy, which is to be reared for the accommodation of the blessed, there will be *materialism*; not merely new heavens, but also a *NEW EARTH*. And, as distinguished from the present, which is an abode of rebellion, it will be an abode of righteousness. It holds out a warmer and more alluring picture of the Elysium that awaits us, when told that there will be beauty to delight the eye, and music to regale the ear, and the comfort that springs from all the charities of intercourse between man and man, holding converse as they do on earth, and gladdening each other with the benignant smiles that play on the human countenance, or the accents of kindness that fall in soft and soothing melody from the human voice. We hail the information of our text, that after the dissolution of this earth's present framework, it will again be varied and decked out anew in all the graces of its unfading verdure and of its unbounded variety. In addition to our own direct and personal view of the Deity, when He comes down to tabernacle with men, we shall also have the reflection of Him in a lovely mirror of His own workmanship.

"But though a paradise of *sense*, it will not be a paradise of *sensuality*. Though not so unlike the present world as many apprehend it, there will be one point of total dissimilarity between them. It is not the substitution of spirit for matter that will distinguish the future economy from the present, but the entire substitution of righteousness for sin. It is this which signalises the Christian from the

Mohammedan paradise—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, and the glories of a visible creation seen with bodily eyes, are excluded from it, but that all which is vile in principle, or voluptuous in impurity, will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterised. There will be both heavens and earth in the next great administration, and with this speciality to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heavens and earth 'wherein dwelleth righteousness'."

"As I was paying heed to what was profitable, some writings came into my hands which were too old for Greek ideas, and too divine for Greek errors. Thus was my soul instructed by God, and I understood how pagan teachings lead to condemnation, whilst these teachings abolish the bondage that prevails throughout the world, and free us from a plurality of rulers and tyrants innumerable. They furnish us not with something which we had not already received, but with something which, thanks to errors, had been lost."

Thus wrote Tatian, an Assyrian, and one of the most brilliant pagans of the second century, speaking of his conversion to Christianity. It is worthy of note that, coming to the Old Testament (the writings to which he refers above) and the teachings of the Christian church, he realised how different were these principles from the Greek philosophy which held premier place in the world of that day, and, too, that acceptance of this new way of life brings freedom from the bondage which is upon men. Said Jesus: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; and again, "If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed." There was not much liberty in the Roman world, and that freedom in Christ which is the portion of all who become His by full surrender to His way of life stood out in sharp contrast to the condition of those who still sat "in darkness and the shadow of death."

* * *

"The universe is not a steel gauntlet, hard and inflexible. It is a silken glove. And what is more wonderful still, it is a silken glove with the hand of God in it" (*Prof. Cairns*).

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

DELIVERANCE

*Still o'er Earth's sky the clouds of anger roll,
The curse of sin lies heavy on her soul.
Yet shall she rise—though first by God chastised—
In glory and in beauty then baptised.*

*Yea, Earth, thou shalt arise; thy Father's aid
Shall heal the wound His chastening hand hath made.*

*Shall judge the proud oppressor's ruthless sway
And burst his bonds, and cast his cords away.*

*Then on thy soul shall deathless verdure spring;
Break forth, ye mountains, and ye valleys, sing!
No more your thirsty rocks shall frown forlorn,
The unbeliever's jest, the heathen's scorn.*

*The sultry sands shall tenfold harvests yield,
A greater Eden deck the thorny field.
E'en now we see, wide-waving o'er the land,
The mighty angel lift his golden wand.*

*Courts the bright vision of descending power,
Tells every gate, and measures every tower;
And breaks the tardy seals that yet detain
The Lion of Judah from his destined reign.*

(Bishop Heber 1783-1826)

STILL SMALL VOICE

The voice of the spirit is low, and can be heard distinctively only by the New Creature, created anew in the image of its glorious Lord. It is always a "still, small voice," easily lost amid the clamour of the noisy world, but it must be heard, for by it, the first-fruit of the land of glory, we behold the New Creation, and the promise of unspeakable joys and glories yet future, though we still sojourn in a world where Satan's seat is, and where all is old and full of decay and corruption.

LITTLE THINGS

"Some small trifle of daily routine; a crossing of personal preference in very little things, accumulation of duties, unexpected interruption, unwelcome distraction. Yesterday these things merely fretted you and, internally at least 'upset' you. To-day, on the contrary, you take them up, stretch your hands out upon them, and let them be occasions of new disgrace and deeper death for that old self-spirit. You carry them to their Calvary in thankful submission. And to-morrow you will do the same." —Bishop of Durham.

ZEAL

There is something so quietly consistent, so steadfast and sure, about a glow that is maintained. Let us not ask nor seek the sensational. Abraham Lincoln used to tell a story of a boat that plied the Mississippi which had such a big whistle that every time it was blown they had to stop the boat to get up steam. That is typical of a good deal of Christian experience and enterprise. There is the creation of tremendous enthusiasm which manifests itself in one terrific blaze of glory which just burns itself out. For us, please God, the steady, spiritual glow.

THE CROSS

"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 this 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.

HOPE

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

TRUTH

*There are great truths that pitch their shining tents
Outside our walls, and though but dimly seen
In the grey dawn, they will be manifest
When the light widens into perfect day.*

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Jesus had nearly finished telling His disciples how they, or their successors, were to recognise the imminence of His Second Advent. A long series of signs had been unfolded to them as they sat together on the Mount of Olives, signs which manifestly required fervent expectation and constant watchfulness if the joy of realisation was to be attained. Jesus had not given them any indication as to whether His return was to be expected in their own lifetimes or not; He had, in fact, said that He Himself did not yet know "of that day and hour". Only the Father knew, therefore it was incumbent upon all who would not be taken by surprise "at his appearing" to be watchful. "*What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch*".

In order to emphasise that injunction Jesus gave a set of five parables, each one drawn from a different sphere of life but all designed to inculcate, from their various viewpoints, the need for watchfulness. The five are, first, the parable of the days of Noah (Matt. 24.36-42; Luke 17.25-37); second, the parable of the goodman of the house (Matt. 24.43-44; Luke 12.39-40.); third, the parable of the faithful and evil servants (Matt. 24.45-51; Luke 12.42-58); fourth, the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25. 1-13); and fifth, the parable of the talents (Matt. 25. 14-30). There are in fact two more parables of watchfulness, one being that of the man taking a far journey (Mark 13. 34), which may be merely another version of the parable of the talents, and the other, that of the men awaiting their lord's return from the wedding (Luke 12. 36-38), which is very much akin to the story of the ten virgins and may owe its inspiration to the same source. Jesus may have told both stories on the same occasion and one been preserved by Matthew, the other by Luke.

The lesson that is common to all these parables is watchfulness. "*Watch, for ye know not what hour your lord doth come.*" In a very special sense this watchfulness is necessary at the end of the Age, when the time is at hand for the fulfilment of "all things written". That this particular parable is intended to be of special application to the time of the Lord's union with His Church at His Second Advent is clear from the opening word "*then*". "*Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.*" When is this "*then*"? It is necessary to go back into the preceding chapter for the answer. It is at the time when verse 37 has become true and the statements

of verses 38-51 apply. *As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood . . . and so on; "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened . . ."* Although the principle of watchfulness is one that has been sustained throughout the Age, the setting of the parable, that of the bridegroom returning to his house after the marriage at the bride's home, is one that renders it especially appropriate to the time of the "marriage of the Lamb", and there is no doubt that Jesus intended it to be so received.

What then did Jesus have in mind when, in the course of a quite long discourse enriched with a number of eloquent illustrations on watchfulness, He looked round upon His circle of hearers and told them that the Kingdom of Heaven in *that* day, the day of the Second Advent, would be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. First must be considered the manner in which Jewish marriages were conducted in the time of our Lord. The actual ceremony was performed in the house of the bride's father, the bridegroom being escorted thither accompanied by a triumphal procession consisting principally of his men friends. After the marriage had been solemnised there was a ceremonial meal which formed an important part of the proceedings and which was continued until nightfall. Then the bridegroom, accompanied by his bride, set out for his own home, at the head of a joyous procession. In the meantime—and this is where this parable has its place—the female relatives of the bridegroom, and their friends, had assembled at the bridegroom's house awaiting the news that he had set out on his journey back. If the celebrations at the bride's house had become protracted, as was possibly often the case, they may have had to wait for several hours after dark before the expected message arrived: "*the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him*". The waiting girls and women then set out with their torches to meet the oncoming procession, and so returned to the bridegroom's house, upon which the wedding feast commenced, a feast which in more ancient times was kept up for seven or even fourteen days, although in our Lord's time it was usually restricted to three.

To disregard an invitation to such a feast, or to be late for its commencement, was considered an unforgivable insult. There is an allusion to this fact in the parable of the marriage of the king's

son (sometimes called the parable of the wedding-feast) in Matt. 22. 1-14. The failure of the "foolish virgins" to be ready at the critical moment placed them in the same category as the man who, for whatever reason, failed to don his wedding garment. They all, with him, were excluded for ever from the privileges and joys of the feast.

Apart from this parable the only clear allusion to this marriage procedure that is found in the Scriptures is in the account of Jacob's marriage to Leah. That story, as recorded in Gen. 29. 21-27, shows that the seven days of the feast followed the actual marriage. A more detailed account of the same custom is found in the Apocrypha, the Book of Tobit, a book which dates from only a few centuries before the Lord's own day and therefore probably reflects fairly accurately the manner in which the ceremonial was performed in His day. In chapter 20 of Tobit there is the account of the marriage of the Israelite youth Tobias to the Israelite maiden Sara, and of the fourteen day wedding feast that followed the ceremony. And another reference, not so detailed but evidently having the same basis, is that which is enshrined in our Lord's own words "*ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he shall return from the wedding*".

So the ten virgins in their waiting may very well be likened to the Church in the flesh. The great event to which they were looking was not the arrival of the bridegroom at the house of the bride's father to claim his bride, but the return to his own, or to his father's, house, with his bride, for the wedding feast. If this reaches anything, it is that our minds should be directed, not so much to the moment of the return of our Lord from heaven to gather His saints, but to the heavenly wedding feast which follows the union of Christ and His Church, the entry into the Father's presence and the "shining forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father".

"While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." There was nothing blameworthy in this—provided that they had made all necessary preparations so that when aroused by the call they could immediately go out to meet the coming one. But some had not made their preparations. They had not been careful to secure a sufficient supply of oil for their lamps. These "lamps" were in reality torches, a mass of rags soaked in oil and tied to the top of a long stick or pole. They were kept alight by pouring oil every now and again over the mass from a vessel which was carried. With these torches they escorted the bridegroom, and it was this "torchlight procession" which was the reason and purpose of their vigil.

And the foolish virgins missed, not only the triumphal reception of the bridegroom, but also the joys of the subsequent feast! This is the climax of the parable. Even whilst the call was fresh in their ears and their more prudent companions were setting out to meet the coming one they found themselves without oil. There had been plenty of time to have accumulated a sufficient supply, but now, at the last moment, they were without, and their hastily lighted torches, quickly lapping up that with which they had originally been soaked, were already "going out". There was only one thing that could be done; haste to the sellers of oil—it might be an unusual proceeding to knock up the shopkeeper in the middle of the night but probably the occasion would be held to justify the proceeding and anyway business was conducted on considerably more informal lines in those days than at present—and hope to be back in time to meet the procession before it arrived at the bridegroom's house. They were evidently unfortunate in their quest—perhaps the shopkeeper was not very accommodating after all and they had to wait until early morning before he would open for business—for when at length they did arrive back the feast had been in progress for some time and . . . the door was shut.

The unbelievable, the incredible, thing had happened. They were too late; they were outside. The story tells that they knocked for admission, but—although it does not say so—probably without any real hope, for they knew the custom, and it was doubtless without surprise that they heard the fateful words "I know you not".

That is the end of the parable. It closes on this note of finality. Whatever happened to the foolish virgins afterward, one thing is crystal clear. They never entered the wedding feast. Their omission debarred them for ever from those joys. And, turning to His disciples, pondering over this simple little story, perhaps familiar to some of them in their own experience, Jesus drove home the lesson He wanted to impress. "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh*".

To-day, that injunction is more than ever vital. In the early years of our Christian walk, especially when the movement with which we may have been associated was prosperous and thriving, it was easy to be zealous and active in the Master's service, alert to observe every sign of fulfilling prophecy and eager to absorb more and more of the knowledge of the Truth. In later years there is a growing tendency to take things for granted, to slip back into the comfortable condition of the so-called "established Christian", and regard the promise of His coming as of less importance than was at

one time thought, or at least to be still a long way off. One tends then to forget that the Father is very busy even now calling out of the nations a people for His Name, selecting and training individuals for the mighty work of converting the entire world in the next Age, and that if we aspire to be included in that company and be assigned to that service we cannot afford to relax our vigilance one iota. If the final call, when it comes, finds us unready, it will pass us by, and by the time we have gathered to ourselves our lost zeal and faith and endeavoured to make up for lost time, it will be too late. The door will be shut; the "marriage of the Lamb" an accomplished fact, and the "General Assembly of the Church of the First-born" a completed body. Whatever may then happen to us in the future, to whatever sphere of life and activity the Divine providence may assign us, it will always be true that we have missed the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, because we were unready.

The call is one to enter with the Bridegroom into the marriage feast. We have the opportunity now to prepare ourselves for that entry and we must also remain alert that we hear the call; but because

the Lord is choosing individuals, the call itself comes to us as individuals. We must not think that it comes to all of us at the same time, nor that we must all hear it and interpret it in the same way. Neither does our hearing and reception of this call depend upon our head knowledge to an undue degree; for the Lord is looking primarily for qualities of the heart. It is needful that we are made aware of the significance of the times in which we live; without that we are likely grievously to err in our reading of the Divine Plan and Will for us. It is important that we hold a clear understanding of the object and the manner of our Lord's return; else we shall be deceived by looking for the wrong thing even although we are looking at the right time. But above all things we need to attain and maintain that Christian maturity of character, that inflexible resolve to do and dare all things for Christ, that resolute enmity towards all the manifestations of evil that now surround us, that stamp us as being "of Christ", that proclaim us as being "His". Thus, when the call comes, we shall not only know Him; He also will know us; and with joy and triumph we shall both meet Him in the way, and enter in with Him to the marriage.

A NOTE ON THE STORY OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

It is interesting to notice that the word used for "sleepeth" in the account of Jairus' daughter is one that in the New Testament is never used to indicate death; always to denote natural sleep. It is *katheuso*. The word which is used in the story of Lazarus—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him out of sleep" is *koimao*, which is used often as a synonym for death beside its normal meaning of sleep. Thus Acts 13. 36 "David fell on *sleep*", I Cor. 15. 20 "Christ . . . the first fruits of them that *slept*", I Cor. 15. 51 "We shall not all *sleep*", I Thess. 4. 14 "Them that *sleep* in Jesus", are all from *koimao*. It is this latter word which passed into Latin as *cæmetorium*, from which we get our English word *cemetery*—place of sleep. It would appear that no real evidence exists in the Gospels for the common impression that Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He Himself said "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth". It seems probable that she was in some kind of trance or coma, and that our Lord awakened her from it. The friends and neighbours, convinced that the girl was dead—for they "laughed him to scorn" when He said that she was not—would probably not believe anything else but that He had in fact raised her from the dead. Hence

Jesus cautioned them not to make the incident generally known, a caution they promptly rejected.

This view is supported by the Aramaic words used by the Lord. "*Talitha cumi*" is said to have been the usual greeting by which a mother roused her child in the morning, and means "Little girl, I say to you, arise". It would seem therefore that whereas in the case of Lazarus our Lord used the word that commonly could mean death, and then "said plainly unto them, Lazarus is dead", in the case of the synagogue ruler's daughter, He equally definitely stated that the maid was not dead, only sleeping, and used the word which could only denote that fact.

It is a pleasure to send parcels of tracts for general distribution free of charge to brethren who do not feel able to buy and will see that they are judiciously used. If postage can be sent with the request, that is sincerely appreciated, but even if not it is still just as much a pleasure to send the literature. State the quantity that can profitably be used. Do not be reluctant to ask; our Master will see to it that provision is made for just so long as it is His will that this opportunity remains open.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



"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 now 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 women-folk 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 insinuated Himself 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 inborn 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 a 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."

But the Lord awaits the invitation to enter in and be our abiding Guest. He will not thrust Himself upon us unsolicited. He "waits" to be gracious—but He awaits our solicitation.

"In life, in death, O Lord abide with me"—be that our "evening" prayer.

"SONSHIP THROUGH THE SPIRIT"

Jesus' revelation to the Jews, that He was the Son of God, brought persecution and finally the Sanhedrin's false death-sentence. Therefore we may expect similar treatment by faithfully following the footsteps of our Elder Brother. Let us not be ashamed of our sonship, for it is God who has begotten us to a lively hope, eventually to partake of His glory (1 Pet. 1. 3; Gal. 4. 7; Rom. 8. 17). Such sufferings will perfect our characters and develop those qualities which will enable us to dwell with our Divine Father. Through all our trials, His paternal care will be found to be more tender than that of any earthly parent.

God's children are distinguishable by the spirit of love which motivates their lives (Rom. 8. 14). The "babes in Christ" feed on the milk of the Word—the basic truths—and by use of their God-given gifts grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him. The fruits of the Spirit are enlarged within their hearts and manifest begettal as New Creatures. Slowly, by self-denial and submersion into God's will they are crystallised into His likeness and if faithful to their consecration vows, will stand eventually in His presence.

The members of the Divine family have two main obligations, other than to God and to Jesus. Those who have given their all to the Lord and whose beings are permeated with His Holy Spirit are our brothers and sisters and vitally need our help and fellowship. There is only one family of God and only one Father (Eph. 4. 3-6) and those who truly love our Heavenly Father will affectionately accept all such as their brethren, and gladly dwell in unity with them.

Daily contacts bring a further duty of witnessing to our Father's love and truth. We should find joy in our Master's service, and be ever ready to tell others of God's truth.

Thus, brethren in Christ, spare no efforts to reach that marriage of the Lamb, when the whole spiritual

family will be united. While making your own calling and election sure, others need your fraternal fellowship, so arouse yourselves to further zeal in the Father's work, and soon you will receive, as the sons of God, an abundance entrance into the Everlasting Kingdom.

(Young Bible Students' Messenger.)

SOME LAST-MINUTE NOTICES

The friends at Yeovil announce a Home-Gathering to be held on Saturday and Sunday, June 5th and 6th, in Manor Lodge Schoolroom, Hendford, Yeovil. Bros. Batchellor, Burge, Holmes and MacAulay will speak. Further details from Bro. W. F. Fox, 34, St. Michael's Road, Yeovil, Som.

* * *

The Manchester Bible Students' Council are planning public meetings in the near future at Ellesmere Port, Altrincham, Heslingden, Rochdale and Manchester, to follow the one arranged at Stockport for 24th April. Friends who are interested in these efforts may have further details on request from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

Further to announcement on first page of this issue regarding the coming visit of Brother J. T. Read, it can now be made known that our brother expects to arrive in this country on 30th June next and remain until the end of October. Plans for his tour through the country are being drawn up and friends desiring inclusion in these plans may make application as soon as they please. No little group is too small for a share in our brother's ministry. The arrangements are in the hands of two brothers from London and two from the Midlands, as was the case last year.



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

BIBLE STUDENTS MONTHLY

JUNE 1948

Vol. 25, No. 6

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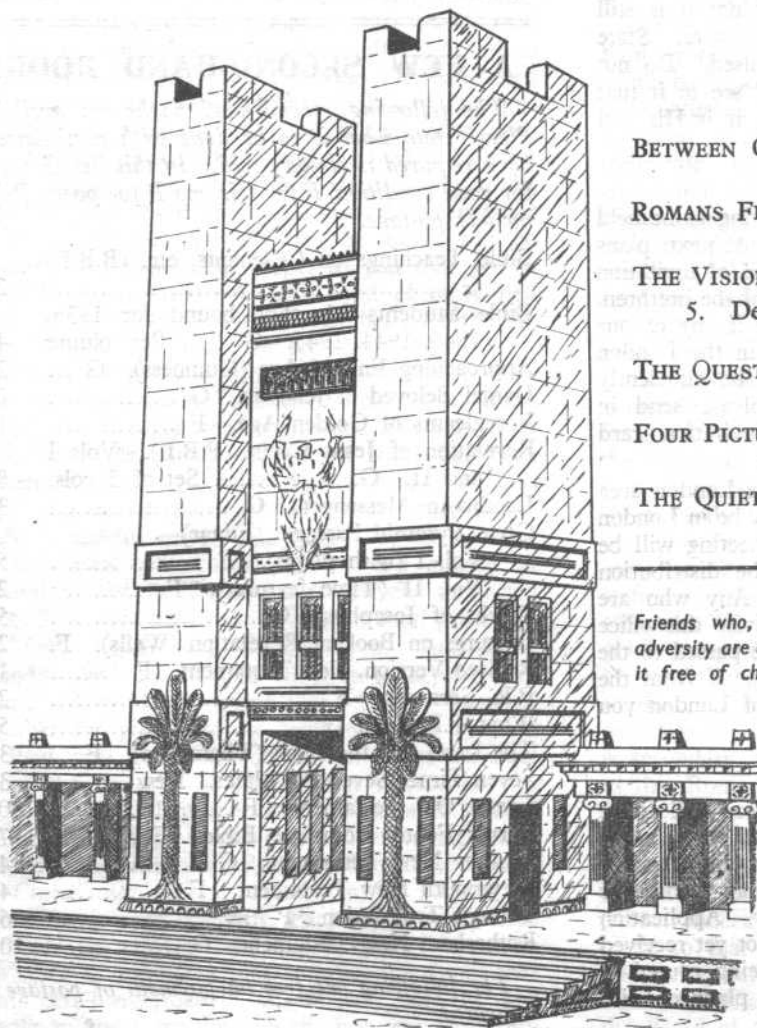
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Melbourne, Australia.



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

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Benevolent Fund, which has now been in existence for more than twenty years, is administered by three brethren under the chairmanship of Bro. G. A. Ford, 13, Cranleigh Gardens, Luton, Beds, who is always pleased to receive notification of need or other communication relative to the Fund.

* * *

It is a pleasure to send parcels of tracts for general distribution free of charge to brethren who do not feel able to buy and will see that they are judiciously used. If postage can be sent with the request, that is sincerely appreciated, but even if not it is still just as much pleasure to send the literature. State the quantity that can profitably be used. Do not be reluctant to ask; our Master will see to it that provision is made for just as long as it is His will that this opportunity remains open.

* * *

In connection with the public meeting to be held at Conway Hall on Sunday, 1st August next, plans are being made to send personal cards of invitation by post to friends and acquaintances of the brethren, who may be interested. To this end if any of our readers have knowledge of anybody in the London area who they think will quite likely be sufficiently interested to attend the meeting, please send in their names and addresses. The invitation card will then be posted direct to all such.

The help of all friends both in the London area and those from the provinces who may be in London during the two weeks prior to the meeting will be very welcome in connection with the distribution of leaflets announcing the lecture. Any who are able thus to help are requested to advise this office to that effect and their names will be passed to the brother who has this work in charge. If from the provinces please state in what part of London you will be staying during this period.

* * *

It is expected that Brother J. T. Read will arrive in this country at the end of June and leave at the end of October. He will gladly visit any class or group of friends who would like to avail themselves of the opportunity of his ministry. Application should be made at once if you have not yet received any notification by post that he is being routed to your district. A list of visits so far planned, with dates, will be found in the July issue.

* * *

We acknowledge with sincere appreciation the receipt of an anonymous donation toward the work, at the end of April

Friends who desire to obtain a second-hand Young's Concordance are invited to write and state such desire. From time to time one becomes available, the price varying according to what we have to pay to obtain it. Requests so received are recorded and applicants given the option of obtaining a copy as one becomes available. We are also prepared to record the names of friends desiring other books, such as Berean Comments, etc., which are difficult to obtain to-day, and in all such cases option of purchase is given whenever a copy comes to hand.

A FEW SECOND-HAND BOOKS

The following second-hand books are available. Please state what is to be done with remittance if book required is already sold. In this list G stands for good condition, F for fair and P for poor. Prices include postage.

Bible Teachings on Covenants, etc. (B.B.I.)	
G	2/-
Bible Students Monthly, bound for 1939, 1940, 1944, 1945. G	Per volume 4/-
Approaching End of Age (Guinness). G ...	2/6
Daniel Beloved of Jehovah. G	2/6
Foregleams of Golden Age. F	1/9
Revelation of Jesus Christ (P.B.I.). Vols I and II. G.	Set of 2 vols. 8/6
Laodicean Messenger. G	3/6
Great Pyramid Passages (Edgar)—	
Vol. I (with plates). F	5/-
Vol. II (Time features). F	2/3
Works of Josephus. G	5/-
Lectures on Book of Revelation (Wells). F.	2/-
Revised Version, New Testament. F	1/6
P.R. Sermons. F	2/6
What P.R. said. G	5/-
The Land and the Book (Thompson). F ...	3/6
Seven Times Seven Postulates. New	3/6
Leeser Old Testament. F	10/-
Ferrar Fenton complete Bible. F	7/6
Moffatt New Testament. G	4/6
Weymouth New Testament. F	4/-
Young's Translation. P	6/-
Rotherham New Testament. G	10/-

The following are free on payment of postage as indicated.

Cruden's Concordance (including Apocrypha), large size, 1/-; Divine Plan; Time at Hand; Thy Kingdom Come; Review of Doctrines; Hour of His Judgment (Wilson); Harp of God; Pilgrim's Progress; 9d. each.

Romans Fifteen; Four

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Usually the apostle Paul wrote his epistles to Christians with whom he was already acquainted, and that knowledge aided him when he wrote to them and heard of their difficulties, their failings, their gains and their hopes. The position was quite different when he wrote to the church at Rome, for though he may have personally met one or two, he had not met them as a community and had to rely on reports he had heard of them. He had heard well of them, for their faith was spoken of throughout the world (Rom. 1.8), and it may have been that having heard of their faith he wished to meet them face to face. Being a Roman it was to be expected that Paul desired to visit the metropolis of the world, but that was not the reason why he wanted to "preach the gospel to you that are at Rome" (Rom. 1.15). A close bond of unity tied Paul to the Roman church even before they had met, so that he longed to see them (Rom. 1.11) and purposed to visit them after he had once more seen the brethren at Jerusalem (Acts 19.21, Rom. 15.24/25). We can readily imagine how this unity had been made. Some strangers of Rome had been present on that memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2.10) and would return to their home city with the truly wonderful news. And later they would hear of the great persecution against the church at Jerusalem with which Saul was actively connected (Acts 8.1). Then they would hear of Paul preaching the faith which once he destroyed. And later, Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome (Acts 18.2), and that decree "worked together for good" for it resulted in the meeting of Paul with Aquila who would no doubt tell Paul about the brethren at Rome. But a year or two elapsed before they met and at times it seemed unlikely that Paul would ever reach Rome; but a greater power than civil Rome or Satanic opponents of Christianity was at work. On his journey to Jerusalem for the last time, Paul called at Ephesus and told the church there that he went "bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there." On arrival there he was gladly received by the church, but was promptly apprehended by the Jews. And yet, while they were conspiring his death, the Lord told Paul that he would bear witness at Rome. So that, throughout the protracted proceedings at Jerusalem and Caesarea he knew that he would surely see the church

at Rome before he had finished his mission, and that may have been in his mind when he ended his examination before Festus by appealing to Caesar. And Festus unwittingly furthered the cause of Christianity by answering "Unto Caesar shalt thou go" (Acts 21.12).

We may therefore assume that the letter which Paul wrote to them at Rome contained many things which he hoped later to be able to deliver in person, and naturally he hopes that the epistle will stir up their minds and give encouragement in the meantime. In all probability the ecclesia at Rome comprised both Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles predominating due to the edict of Claudius. With that in mind it may appear that the words of the heading "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" is far too sweeping an assertion, for many Christians have been taught that the Old Testament is mainly for the children of Israel and that only such fragments of prophecy and the Psalms which have the approval of the established churches should be held as applicable to the Christian church. At least these words of Paul have disposed for all time of that notion: but even allowing that there is much more for Christians in the Old Testament than was at first supposed, can it be that "*whatsoever* written aforetime" is for us? Yes, it is even so; and Paul gives an example of this in I Cor. 9.9/10 where he reasons that an item of the Mosaic law relative to the care of lower animals was in fact full of teaching for us and that the law concerning animals is secondary to its Gospel age application! And in this Roman letter Paul is as good as his word, for when writing this letter he makes copious reference to the Old Testament, and all with the object that we who were Gentiles might obtain HOPE. True, not all quotations speak of hope, (some, indeed, tell of condemnation) but all are made so that the cumulative teaching removes all uncertainty of mind and gives eternal hope and comfort, being built upon that solid rock of truth, the Word of God. We who are not of Jacob may well be astonished that the law, the prophets, and the psalms, written by holy men of God and guarded so jealously through the centuries by the Jews find their primary fulfilment in promoting hope within us who once were aliens from the

covenants of promise. And yet it is not so surprising, if we recall that to those very prophetic writers was revealed that they were ministering those things to us (I Pet. 1.12); and that when such faithful men as Daniel asked for further enlightenment upon the visions they were recording, it was said to them that the vision was for an appointed time and that at the end it would speak; or that it was sealed till the time of the end. In agreement with this our Lord said to the disciples that many prophets and righteous men had desired to see the things which the disciples saw and had not seen them (Matt. 13.16/17). Blessed were the eyes which saw at and since the First Advent; blessed because the One in whom so much prophecy centred had come; blessed because further additions to the Word of God confirming and amplifying the old writings were to be made; and blessed because the opening up of the prophetic word would give hope and joy to many hearts. Our Lord began his earthly ministry by quoting some words of Isaiah and adding "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears". Further prophecies were fulfilled during His life and by His death; and thus He laid the foundation for Paul later to say that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we . . . might have hope".

With this introduction in mind, let us proceed, not in detail, through the Roman epistle noting how by Paul's references to supposedly Jewish Scriptures, the Gentiles as well as Israel obtain enduring hope, remembering that other words of Paul (Eph. 2.12) mention that the Gentiles were void of hope in the days when Israel had the promises and blessings of God. To us, void of hope, Paul reveals a prospect beyond our dreams; and to those Jews who also accept Messiah he gives a far better hope than was generally held by that nation. By his quotation of and reasoning upon the Old Testament he gave to us the comfort of the Scriptures—an essential ingredient of hope—and to Jewish believers he gave proof that what they might have thought was new and doubtful had in fact ample support in their old prophecies. And then, what Jew would ever be able to say that the Christian doctrines are man-made if they prove themselves to be of God by quotation from the Old Testament?

The early chapters of Romans are not so full as the later in quotation from the Old Testament and such as are made do not in themselves give ground for hope, for after the customary Pauline introduction he gives a deplorable picture of Gentile degradation and surety of coming judgment. But one verse from the prophet Habakkuk gives a ray of encouragement and is a foundation of Paul's gospel. The words "the just shall live by faith" which when made by the prophet were proleptic,

find their best application in the Christian age, and whilst not in themselves conducive of hope suggest to us that there is in spite of the depravity to which man has fallen, a path along which we may all travel to life, and thus faith becomes the basis of things hoped for. (Heb. 11.1). The words of condemnation in the section of the epistle ending at ch. 2.16 are mainly descriptive of those outside Israel and on the whole the Jewish reader would agree with the apostle's observations; but, proceeding further we note that the section which seems to end at ch. 3.20 is largely condemnatory of the Jew. We see even that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through the Jew (which Paul proves by words from the prophet), and the section reaches its culmination in words from the Psalms that "there is none righteous, no not one" and that all the world has become guilty before God. And so Paul answers his own question "Are we better than they" by showing all, whether Jew or Gentile, to be under sin and therefore under condemnation. And in all this reasoning the Jew who boasts himself in his law and the prophets cannot raise remonstrance because Paul confirms his thoughts by quotations from their own writings! We might think from the apostle's letter so far, that very little has been said that gives either Jew or Gentile the hope they need. However the epistle does not end there, nor do the quotations; but Paul has certainly relieved us of any hope we had in ourselves. And thus having no standing before Him we must perforce look to Him trusting that in mercy He will provide the way of escape. And now "that every mouth is stopped" we can the better listen, and providing that we do listen to the words of the apostle and the supporting words from the prophets we shall find our God willing to give the ground for hope that we need. Paul then introduces a new factor in his train of thought—the righteousness of God; and upon it rest the hopes of all creatures to His mercy. All no doubt realise that God was by no means obligated to grant benefits to a world which His own justice had condemned because of its sin; but providentially for us all He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth but is anxious that they should turn from their wickedness and live; and being true His mercy can intervene when His law condemns. This may be seen in the section of the epistle beginning at ch. 3.21, where the righteousness of God without (or apart from) the law is manifest, and (as we expect to find in this epistle) is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Yes, His mercy has provided the way of escape. He has declared His own righteousness in mercy without abrogating or circumventing His own law, by regarding as justified the sinner who has faith in Jesus. The having of faith is not a ground

of claim to justification—it is simply that it pleases Him to justify him who believes. And this, says Rom. 3.21, exhibits the righteousness of God—His own eternal righteousness and goodness in providing this grace for believers; and that righteousness which is ours in justification. And Paul attests that this is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Is justification, then, to be found in the Old Testament? It most certainly is—let it never be said that it was first revealed by Paul! In the chapter which follows, Paul refers to two great men of the past, Abraham and David; dissimilar but both men of faith. Before the enactment of the Mosaic law, it was said that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen. 15.6). If it be suggested that Abraham lived a pastoral life miles apart from the turmoil of life and was always near to God and that therefore his case is not a suitable example to those of active life living among men of the world, Paul gives another example of justification in David whose life was fraught with all the dangers and snares of life. Many times had David fallen; just as many had he risen again with regrets for his failings. Thus he knew the gracious gift of God in a different way to that of Abraham. We should hardly expect Abraham to say, but it rings Davidic, that “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”. (Rom. 4.7, cited from Psalm 32.) Not all Christians will readily follow Paul’s reasoning in the fourth chapter of Romans, but they will note that though the early chapters speak of condemnation, it holds out a prospect of release through the righteousness of God. All may know the blessedness of sins forgiven, for so is the grace of God; and that blessed knowledge will prompt hope within. And thus Paul is working towards one of the objects of his letter to those he had not met; and already can be surmised the questions he will meet when at last he reaches Rome; and possibly he is anticipating the points that could arise in their discussions when he pens the succeeding chapters.

The next four chapters contain but few quotations from the Old Testament, but are the steps we tread in pursuing the apostolic argument toward full hope in Christ. Within the fifth chapter is the fundamental truth that all descendants of Adam were condemned in him and all are covered by the death of Christ, and that when we were without strength and unable to help ourselves God commended His love towards us in that Christ died for us. And from this gift will be seen that the love of God encompasses all, and so we who have obtained hope for ourselves ensuing on justification will note with gratitude that there is hope also for

all mankind in that Divine provision. Much of the sixth chapter is in the form of question and answer—just the sort of question the Roman church will ask among themselves when they read the early chapters. The freedom from condemnation which we Christians enjoy does not give liberty to live unrestrained, and Paul finds great cause for thankfulness in that, free from Adamic condemnation we became servants, even slaves, of righteousness; thus concluding within ourselves that because God has graciously justified us, the least we can do is to become His servants. Still further reasons for hope and joy are found, in that becoming servants of righteousness we find that it leads unto holiness, and that the outcome of righteousness is everlasting life. Thus the righteousness imputed to us, is not only a starting point but also a goal; and all due to the grace of God. This gives hope indeed—what else can result from such cogent reason of the great apostle! But another query will be made by the Jewish Christians in Rome and Paul must dispose of that—how could they be free from the condemnation of the Mosaic law under which as Jews they were bound. Paul himself had been, as touching the law, a Pharisee; and he answers the question by supposing his own struggles to keep the law and his failure in spite of all. He proves the law to be good, but himself and therefore others to be sold (just like a slave) under sin. If there were no conclusive answer to his question in ch. 7.24 there would be no hope even for the best of striving men; but the answer of v:25 completely disposes of the question and leads to further hope and exultation in the eighth chapter. This chapter, though giving few confirmatory words from the Old Testament is full of hope—the new hope, the complete hope of the gospel church. In previous chapters Paul has said very little about the work of the Holy Spirit within the church, but having answered problems of law and sin, and established the righteousness of God, he can proclaim those church truths he revels in. When at long last he meets the church at Rome he will declare to them their standing in Christ, their sonship, their election and their hope; and this chapter is a foretaste of what he will then proclaim more fully. What discussion this chapter will have among them! What hope and joy and confidence will be theirs in the meantime, and what points he will have to amplify when he comes! Most Christians are acquainted with the closing verses of chapter eight, though they may not comprehend the fulness of the unanswered questions—“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemneth? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” until they understand and value the earlier verses concerning sonship.

This transcendent chapter ended, Paul reverts to thoughts of his own nation—he has great heaviness of heart because they do not appreciate these glorious hopes. Much of the chapter is in question and answer form—just the sort of questions a critical Jew would ask about election and the entry of the Gentiles into the special purpose of God. To deal with such Paul makes abundant reference to Hebrew scriptures, and he knows no Jew can gainsay them. Israel's faltering is still before him in chapters ten and eleven, and again he quotes from their own writings. The crux of Israel's backwardness may well be expressed in the words of Rom. 10.3, and is related to the righteousness of God which Paul had mentioned earlier. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God, and were occupied in the hopeless task of establishing their own righteousness. Had they but received the truth of Rom. 10.4, that Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, their useless struggles would have ended and they would have fully enjoyed the hopes and promises of chapter eight. Paul revealed to them the greatest of hopes, but they seem unable to yield their old standing in Jacob, their legal standing in Moses and the belief (true in time past) that they were the only chosen people of God. Paul ends his appeal to his own nation in the eleventh chapter by an ascription of praise to that God who in wisdom and love had devised all this wonderful purpose embracing all Jews and all others; and then further appeals to all to surrender (Rom. 12.1/2) whatever advantages they have for the new prospects in Christ. It was far easier for the Gentile to yield to this appeal, for he had so little in which he could glory; but the Jew was in a great predicament, for he was called upon to surrender his hold on the favours of God in Jacob and Moses, for the favour of God in Christ.

The apostle having almost finished his doctrinal teaching, in the closing chapters adds sundry admonitions whereby all, now that they have a new hope, may know how to live within and without the church. None of these commandments will be found to be grievous; many of them seem to be rules of conduct restated from the Mosaic law and therefore will be approved by the Jewish members of the church. But noticeable in the fourteenth chapter is the care with which the Christian must consider the weakness of fellow-members even in small things and even when he knows that his own position is correct and theirs weak. Thus the new relationship in one body is emphasised by the members having the same care one for the other. All have the one great hope in Christ—God has received the weak as well as the strong. The strong cannot forge ahead without the weak; and he himself lags

behind if he thinks he can. In fact, the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, not pleasing themselves, (Rom. 15.1); thus proving themselves to be joint holders of the hope. Then follows the one example of He who pleased not himself, which introduces us to the words with which we began and on to further quotations from the Old Testament to repeat that all Gentiles, though they may not be embraced in the special purpose of God, will nevertheless join in the praise to God, and under the reign of the root of Jesse return to peace with God in the earthly kingdom. And so within this message to the Roman brethren Paul has completely revealed that the plans of God cover all mankind and that there was ample proof of this in the old writings which the Jew had treasured. Thus does he commend the new Christian message to all in Rome whom as yet he had not seen. And until he reaches Rome, he urges that the God of hope will fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they abound in hope. (Rom. 15.13). This epistle, complete in itself, gave to the Roman friends a grand foretaste of what they will hear, when in the words of v: 29 "I come to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ".

God is the greatest giver because He is the greatest lover. Love delights to give. Christ is God's greatest gift. In fact, in giving His beloved Son, He gave with Him every treasure of heaven.

All is in Christ, and He is ours. He has bound Himself to the human family with a tie that will never be broken. He is our Elder Brother. He still counts Himself "the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star". (Rev. 22. 16.) In Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead. Out of that abundance and "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4. 19) all our needs are to be supplied.

Christ came to earth to enrich our lives. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. 8. 9.) All the power, wisdom, and grace of God are placed in Christ and through Him are promised to us. Jesus said: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do." (John 14. 13). In the next chapter He emphasises the same promise: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15. 7).

* * *

"God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas, but for scars in the battle of life."

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

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 5. Deliverance in Zion

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Chap: 2.28-29).

"Afterward"—after what? Plainly this pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh follows the deliverance of Israel and their whole-hearted acceptance of God; it is, therefore, the Millennial outpouring that is referred to. Then why did Peter, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, claim the fulfilment of this prophecy in his own day? "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" he said (Acts 2.16-21). The answer is that Peter believed the time of the Kingdom to be immediately at hand; and, what is of importance, none could justly say it was *not* at hand at that moment, for if Israel had accepted the message of the High Calling as a nation, and so entered into that for which their two thousand years of training had been preparing them, the work of the Gospel Age would have been ended in one generation and the Millennial Age been ushered in. Even although the foreknowledge of God perceived that Israel would not enter in, that only a remnant would believe, and that the call therefore must go to the Gentiles, with all the long extension of time which that entailed, it must needs be that Israel have the opportunity. And so Peter was right in applying the prophecy to his own day—until Israel had rejected the call. From then on, the prophecy was deferred, and is still, waiting for the full end of this Age to come.

Does any part of this passage refer to the Gospel Age? It would hardly seem so. It used to be thought that the "servants and handmaidens" upon whom the spirit is to be poured "in those days" represented the Church of this Age; but there is a manifest incongruity in referring to the Church as "servants" in the same breath in which others are spoken of as "sons". Peter's quotation from Joel is not word perfect; he says "it shall come to pass in the last days" whereas the Hebrew of Joel has "it shall come to pass *afterward*" and the Septuagint has *meta tauta* "after the same things". And the promise is two-fold. The Spirit is to be poured out upon "all flesh"; that is a universal outpouring which can only be true in the Millennial

Age; and as an additional glory the "sons and daughters" shall prophesy, the young men shall dream dreams, the old men see visions, and the servants and handmaidens, lower far in status than the free born people of the land, are to share in the out-pouring—even to the extent of prophesying also, according to Peter in Acts 2.18. The reference is undoubtedly to the regathered "Holy Nation", restored Israel, converted and purified, taking up their place in the Millennial work. It may be that the "sons and daughters" are the lineal children of Jacob in that nation, and the "servants and handmaidens" the Gentile "strangers" who have joined themselves in that day. Isaiah (44.5) speaks of these; they are men and women from other nations, who after the completion of the Church have joined themselves to the earthly nation and become by adoption members of the earthly seed of Abraham, their faith and devotion having been thus rewarded with a part in the Millennial work of that earthly seed, under the direction of the then glorified Church. The 56th chapter of Isaiah, and Ezek: 47.22-23, probably refer to the same thing.

Isaiah 32, that well-known Millennial chapter, is helpful here. Verses 9-14 describe Israel's period of disfavoured, cast off from the purposes of God, until (vs.15) "the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and . . . the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever". Zech. 12.10 also speaks of the spirit of grace and supplication being poured upon the house of David at the Time of the End; there are in fact quite a number of such references all going to show that this universal outpouring takes place at and after the time of Israel's conversion, and not before. The prophecy therefore must find its fulfilment after the Time of Trouble and after the Kingdom has been established.

"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions".

This is a glowing picture of a nation completely and unreservedly devoted to the service of God, and free at last to take up that service in its fulness. That nation is the newly constituted people in the Holy Land which will have fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel. Their God has come forth out of His place to defend them; their enemies have been turned back and will never again have power to afflict or distress

them; the time for world-wide proclamation of the Truth has come, and the Holy Spirit, coming down in the form of the ministrations of the glorified Church, is through that regathered nation to be poured out upon all flesh. This association between the work of the Church and the bestowing of the Holy Spirit is shown in the words of Revelation 22:17 "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come and whosoever will may come and take of the fountain of the water of life freely". In the joy and exultation of this knowledge, and the zeal of this service, the whole of that "holy nation" will respond and manifest all the characteristics of God-given revival and evangelical fervour. The sons and daughters will prophesy of the future; the old men will dream dreams of the future; the young men will see visions of the future, and all those prophesying and dreams and visions will be related in the ears of all men the world over that they might know what are the laws and standards of the new Kingdom, and what are the glories that await the willing and obedient, both during the Millennial Age and at its end. Prophecies, dreams and visions are all associated, in the Bible, with the emotional stress and the more than usually sharpened spiritual insight that accompanies the close of an Age and the opening of the next; this verse refers without a doubt to the tremendous wave of evangelical fervour that will possess the delivered nation when the Kingdom is established in power and they commence, at long last, to fulfil their historic destiny of being a people to give light to the Gentiles, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

The next two verses (30-31) are retrospective. Joel has gone back a little to look at the signs which will herald this long-awaited day of the Spirit's outpouring. "*I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come*". These words take on new significance when we find that our Lord used the same symbols to describe the signs of His Second Advent; evidently the same events are referred to and the signs of the imminent Millennial reign are the same as the signs of our Lord's return.

"*And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call*".

This verse touches some important truths. There are at least three momentous words in it—"who-soever", "deliverance", and "remnant". But to understand their significance we must take them

backwards. Before asking the identity of the "who-soever" who are to be delivered it is necessary to know what is the deliverance promised. Before understanding the nature of the deliverance we must enquire into the identity of the "remnant" through whom that deliverance is to come. And so we are brought face to face with one of the most intriguing doctrines of the Old Testament, the doctrine of the "remnant".

It was Joel who first introduced this theme. In later years the Holy Spirit used Isaiah to dwell upon it and show how God would preserve a "remnant" to keep alive His work and carry it on as one world merged into the next; and others of the prophets, notably Micah, caught something of the same idea. But the seed of it all is here in this word of the earlier prophet. "Deliverance" for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" is to be in, and come by means of, the "remnant whom the Lord shall call". And this remnant is closely associated with Mount Zion and Jerusalem.

Isaiah and Micah, both living later than Joel, between them can explain this word. "It shall come to pass in that day" says Isaiah "that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return unto the Mighty God the consumption (consummation) decreed shall overflow with righteousness" (Isa. 10, 20-22). This is the first point to observe. The "remnant", those that escape, both from the corrupting influence of the Gentile world and the evil hosts of Gog and Magog, will be a purified people, trusting wholly in the Lord. This is therefore a converted people, dwelling in the land and ready to God's hand as an instrument for His purposes. This is confirmed by Micah, who says (4:6-7) "In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out . . . and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation, and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion even for ever." The glorious destiny of the purified nation is clearly shown in these words, and their beneficent mission to all the people of the earth is equally clearly shown in the next chapter. "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass." (Micah 5:7). It is true that in the next verse the same remnant is said also to be among the nations as a lion among the beasts of the forest, an evident reference both to the position of leadership assigned to that nation in that day, and also to the fact that it will be a nation that tears down and destroys all opposition to its rule.

It is interesting to notice that quite a number of reputable translators give a personal meaning to the

deliverance that is said in this verse to reside in Zion and Jerusalem. Thus Rotherham says "*In Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be a delivered remnant*" and Leeser, Revised Version and Variorum "*in Mount Zion and Jerusalem there shall be those that escape*". Here again there is clear evidence of a wonderful deliverance of God's ancient people taking place at the time when God is about to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Isaiah crowns this particular theme by declaring "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles" (Isa. 66.19). This is the great mission of regathered Israel, and this the work to which they are called when the Millennial Age has begun. In a literal sense they will be Divine missionaries to all the earth, and their rulers, the resurrected

"Ancient Worthies", princes in all the earth, requiring and receiving the obedience of all men.

So the vision of Israel's triumph closes, and gives place in Chapter 3 to another and parallel vision of the Time of the End; but this time the prophet is looking, not on his own people and the effect of the Time of Trouble upon them, but upon the Gentile nations and the manner in which the Time of Trouble affects them. Instead of seeing a restored and renovated homeland in which the sons of Jacob praise and serve the God who has delivered them, he sees the marshalling of angry hosts determined to fight God. But the end is the same, and chapter 3 closes, as does chapter 2, in the "afterward of peace" of the Millennial Kingdom.

(To be continued)

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

What is the "sin that doth so easily beset" of Heb. 12.1?

The picture is that of a race in which the runners are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses"—spectators. Seeing then that we are in such a race and in full view of the spectators, let us, says the writer to the Hebrews, lay aside every unnecessary garment and encumbrance that we may be the better able to run with agility and endurance. But beside laying aside "every weight" there is something else we must lay aside. Various translators call it "the close-girding sin" (*Diaglott*), "the easily entangling sin" (*Rotherham*), "the closely besetting sin" (*Young*), "the sin which doth so easily cling to us" (*R.V.*), "the sin that clings about us" (*Twen. Cent.*), "sin with its clinging folds" (*Moffatt*), and "the sin that so readily entangles our feet" (*Weymouth*). This last one is that which is most in harmony with the picture, and is the best rendering of the words "doth so easily beset"; for the Greek expression really means something that "skilfully surrounds so as to prevent or retard running". When the "every weight" of the cares and distractions, the good things and the honours, of life have been cast aside in order that we might devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the Christian calling, and we have counted all things well lost in order that we may win Christ, and be found in Him, there still remains sin, clinging as it were around the feet of the runners so as to hinder their steps. If in any individual life there is one form of

weakness that has especial power, then that can quite easily be a "sin that doth so easily beset", retarding the onward progress of that individual in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is not likely that the writer to the Hebrews had in mind any particular sin; rather that he is exhorting each one of us to give special diligence to the casting off of that one failing which we, inwardly, realise is likely more than anything else to be a serious hindrance to our onward progress in the way of the Lord.

SOME LAST-MINUTE NOTICES

The friends at Sheffield announce a Home-Gathering to be held in that city on Saturday and Sunday, 26-27 June, with a Public Lecture on the Saturday evening. Full details may be obtained from Bro. W. R. McNerlen, 32, Stone Grove, Sheffield, 10.

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The two books on fulfilled prophecy, "*Rebuilding Palestine according to prophecy*" and "*Fulfilled prophecies that prove the Bible*" which have attracted so much interest among our brethren and in consequence quickly went out of stock, are now in good stock again at Welling and orders can be filled by return. The books each contain a fine set of photographic illustrations and are intensely interesting. The price is still 2/- each post free.

FOUR PICTURES

A dissertation on 1 Pet. 2.1-5

There are four pictures presented to us in these five verses, each representing a different aspect of our new life in Christ. The idea of the new life was introduced by the Apostle in the previous chapter, verses 3 and 23, where he says that we were begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus and born again by the Word of God. The pictures are progressive, the first dealing with the laying aside of the things belonging to the old life, like discarded clothing, the second the individual growth and development of the new life, the third dealing with our corporate life in Christ and the fourth with our mission of service and sacrifice.

The first picture deals with our attitude to the old life. *"Wherefore laying aside malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speaking . . ."* Peter exhorts. This is one of the many indications in his two epistles that Peter was acquainted with the writings of Paul. The same figure is used as in Ephesians and Colossians where Paul speaks of our attitude to the old life as being like the discarding of old and unworthy garments. "Put off" Paul says "concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt, and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness". The Bible likens all man's own righteousness to filthy rags and points to the provision made in Christ for a complete change to spiritual attire. It speaks of the robe of righteousness, the garments of salvation and such beautiful things to put on as bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience and long suffering. Accepting God's provision in Christ we may wear instead of malice goodwill, instead of guile and hypocrisies, simplicity and sincerity, instead of envies, generosity of spirit; and evil speaking will be discarded for speech that is good to the use of edifying, ministering grace to the hearers. Of all the evils mentioned evil speaking is perhaps the one to which we are most prone. Let us remember *"we none of us know one another and oft into error we fall, then let us speak well of each other or speak not of others at all"*.

The second picture deals not with the discarding of the old life but with the development of the new. *"As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye might grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."* Those to whom Peter wrote were probably young in the faith, but the principle illustrated here is applicable to all stages of Christian growth and development. As

nature has provided in the mother the natural food for the child, so God has provided in Christ all spiritual sustenance for the believer. The infant craves for its natural food and finds therein not only that which satisfies its need but also that which ministers to its growth and development. In like manner the spirit-begotten child of God longs for that which can only be found in Christ. Sometimes he tries to satisfy his longings with other things, philosophies, creeds, doctrines or it may be even with worldly things. Life's experiences, however, will eventually bring him to the point where he will cry *"I've tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but ah their waters failed! None but Christ can satisfy, none other name for me"*. Only in complete dependency on the Lord as the child on the mother can the Christian not only find satisfaction but also the means of growth and development. This utter dependence on Him our Lord illustrated in His parable of the Vine and the branches, saying "Apart from me ye can do nothing".

The expression "if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" would better be rendered "Since you have tasted". The apostle is not suggesting any doubt in the matter. Since they had tasted, that is, had had an experimental acquaintance of the grace of God, they should desire to increase more and more in the knowledge and love of Him. The fullest possible experience of the love of Christ which any child of God can enjoy here below is however only a taste as compared with that which shall be revealed. *"Oh Christ, He is the fountain, the deep sweet well of love, the streams on earth I've tasted; more deep I'll drink above. There to an ocean's fullness His mercy doth expand . . ."*

We now come to the third picture. While each child of God must grow and develop as a separate and distinct personality, as an individual branch in the Vine, he nevertheless has a relationship to maintain with regard to his brethren in Christ. The third picture shows this corporate life which we enjoy as parts of one whole. *"To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious; ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house."* Peter's name must have been to him a perpetual reminder that he was a living stone. It was given to him on his first coming to Christ at the very beginning of our Lord's ministry. John and Andrew were the very earliest disciples and Peter came next. Andrew we are told, first findeth his own brother Simon and brought him to

Jesus. Looking on him Jesus said "Thou art Simon the son of Jonas; thou shalt be called 'Cephas' (Greek—Peter) which is by interpretation 'a stone'". Peter seems to see in this an illustration of that which is true with regard to all the elect of God, for all were called to be living stones. Almost certainly the Apostle had in mind the second momentous occasion when the Lord referred to his new name. It was at the time of his great confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God". In reply the Lord had said, "Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my church". This implied that he was one of many stones necessary to the building of the church of God. Unlike Peter we do not get a new natural name when we come to the Lord, nor do we occupy the same position of importance in the temple of God. Nevertheless like him we are called to be living stones. "To whom coming"; in his use of this expression Peter was probably reflecting on that never-to-be forgotten first meeting with the Lord when he got the new name. In like manner do we often look back to the time when we first came to Him in the fulness of our self surrender. Perhaps the Lord gave us also a new name then in conformity with our characteristics, a new name which will be confirmed and revealed when as overcomers we get the symbolic white stone upon which it is recorded. A heap of stones is not a building but the master builder sees how it is possible for those stones to be made into a house and how the various shapes and sizes can best be utilised. Coming to the master builder of the spiritual house we undergo His scrutiny as Peter did. He notes our shape and size and texture and assigns us a place in His spiritual temple. Although not all prominent like Peter, every stone, even the humblest, is necessary and is an object of the same painstaking care on the part of the master builder. It was in connection with Peter's great confession that the Lord had for the first time foretold His coming sufferings and death. This may have been in His mind when He said "disallowed indeed of men but chosen of God and precious". The Lord is still rejected and by the world disowned and His true church shares in His rejection. It will not be long now, we believe, until the stone which the builders rejected will be made the head stone of the corner, and the Church, glorified with her Lord, will constitute the tabernacle of God amongst men when He will dwell with them, when He shall be their God and they shall be His people.

The fourth and last picture is that of the Priesthood. "A holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ". It must have been difficult for Peter and the early Jewish believers to get their minds adjusted to

appreciate what were the antitypes of the ceremonial features of the Law still being enacted in their day. At the very centre of the religious and national life was the temple with its priesthood. Morning by morning and evening by evening the priests were offering the daily sacrifices on the altar in the court and burning incense on the golden altar in the Holy. Not any one could be a priest; only those who were called of God through their descent from the family of Aaron. Only this specially favoured class could offer sacrifices acceptable to God. Only they could go into the Holy and Most Holy. Under these circumstances it was natural that the typical priesthood should be objects of the deepest veneration and respect. It would not be easy for the early Jewish disciples to grasp the thought that the true priesthood were the humble followers of the Lord, that only they were qualified to offer the sacrifices that were acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, and that only they had the right of entrance into the true Holy places. That the Lord was a priest was one of the first things impressed upon the early disciples as a result of the collapse of their hopes at His crucifixion and death. "Ought not Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory" was the question the Lord put to them after He rose from the dead and the question which he answered so convincingly from the Scriptures. They could now see that for three and a half years, as the great High Priest, the Lord had been offering Himself in sacrifice on their behalf. Since they were called to partake of the suffering as well as the glory, a thing they did not at first understand, it followed that they too were called to be members of the priesthood and to offer sacrifice as Jesus did. These consisted not of the animal sacrifices ordained in the Law but consisted of a full self surrender to the will of God. "I beseech you therefore, brethren," Paul says, "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service". "By Him therefore" he says again "let us offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." This implies more than lip service to God. It means the same as "in everything give thanks" and implies a life so surrendered to the will of God that like the incense coming into contact with the fire, all of life's experiences, pleasing or painful, dark or bright, will yield a sweet fragrance of loving submission, thankfulness and praise to God.

The period allotted for the sufferings of Christ is nearly over. May the thought that the glory to follow is so near at hand stimulate us to renewed zeal as members of the Holy priesthood in offering those sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

BEGIN THE DAY

*Begin the day with God !
He is thy Sun and Day !
His is the radiance of thy dawn;
To Him address thy lay.*

*Sing a new song at morn !
Join the glad woods and hills;
Join the fresh winds and seas and plains,
Join the bright flowers and rills.*

*Sing thy first song to God !
Not to thy fellow men;
Not to the creatures of His hand,
But to the glorious One.*

*Take thy first walk with God !
Let Him go forth with thee;
By stream, or sea or mountain path,
Seek still His company.*

*Thy first transaction be
With God Himself above;
So shall thy business prosper well,
And all thy day be love.*

(Horatius Bonar.)

LIGHT

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

REFINING

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night, spices smell best when bruised, young trees root the faster for being shaken and gold looks the brighter for scouring. Such is the condition of all God's children. They are most triumphant when most tempted; most glorious when most afflicted; most in the favour of God when least in man's and in their own. As their conflicts, such are their conquests, as their tribulation, such their triumphs. They live best in the furnace of persecution.

HIS VOICE

Whose "voice" is the most attractive to you—the voice of God, coming it may be, from some uncouth, perhaps common vessel? Or is the voice of human intelligence, the cultured but unchristian

voice, the siver-toned voice of human "show," the voice that draws your undivided attention. We read of those who "know His voice" (John 10.5.)

PRAYER

The greatest force God has set loose on earth to-day is the power of prayer. No special schooling is required to learn the technique of this power, only yielded hearts willing to be burdened that they might invoke it . . . Do you find yourself pressed in on all sides with no time to be alone with the Lord. Take an hour anyway and see how He can multiply the minutes needed for other duties. Many things we may regret in our lives, but never shall we regret the hours spent in prayer. They are vital to our growth in Christ; and without them we cannot hope to serve God aright, no matter how full our days may be with Christian labour. If we could learn this truth and set ourselves to use the power of prayer that God has placed at our disposal, we should see mighty changes in the Church of Christ and great advance in the work committed to the Church.

HIS WORD

Keeping His words means more than merely exercising faith in the Plan of God. It embraces the thought of hiding them in our heart, making a resolute application of them to our life and needs, praying for grace and guidance that the teachings of God's Word may become a part of our lives; in other words, a sincere transfusion of it into every act and motive, that our lives may reproduce it, trusting in Him for power to practice it toward our brethren and the world, yes, even toward our enemies. This is the real purpose of the indwelling of God's Word in our hearts, that its fullness of blessing in Christ be first realised, then its precepts followed. Thus we live in the power of them.

OUR PRAYER

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

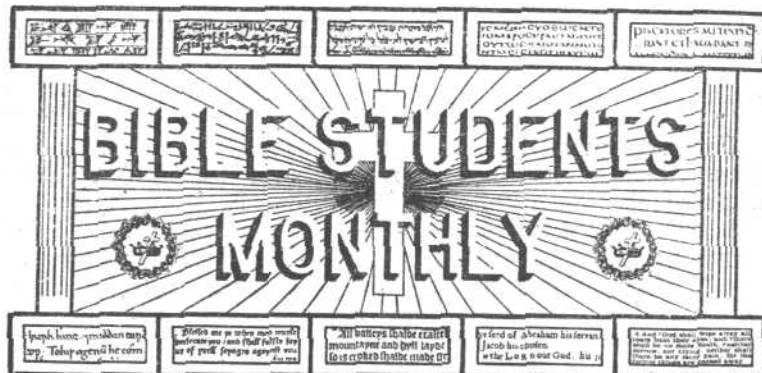
Jeremy Taylor.

TO-MORROW

*God is in every tomorrow,
Therefore I live for to-day,
Certain of finding at sunrise
Guidance and strength for the way;
Power for each moment of weakness,
Hope for each moment of pain,
Comfort for every sorrow,
Sunshine and joy after rain.*



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



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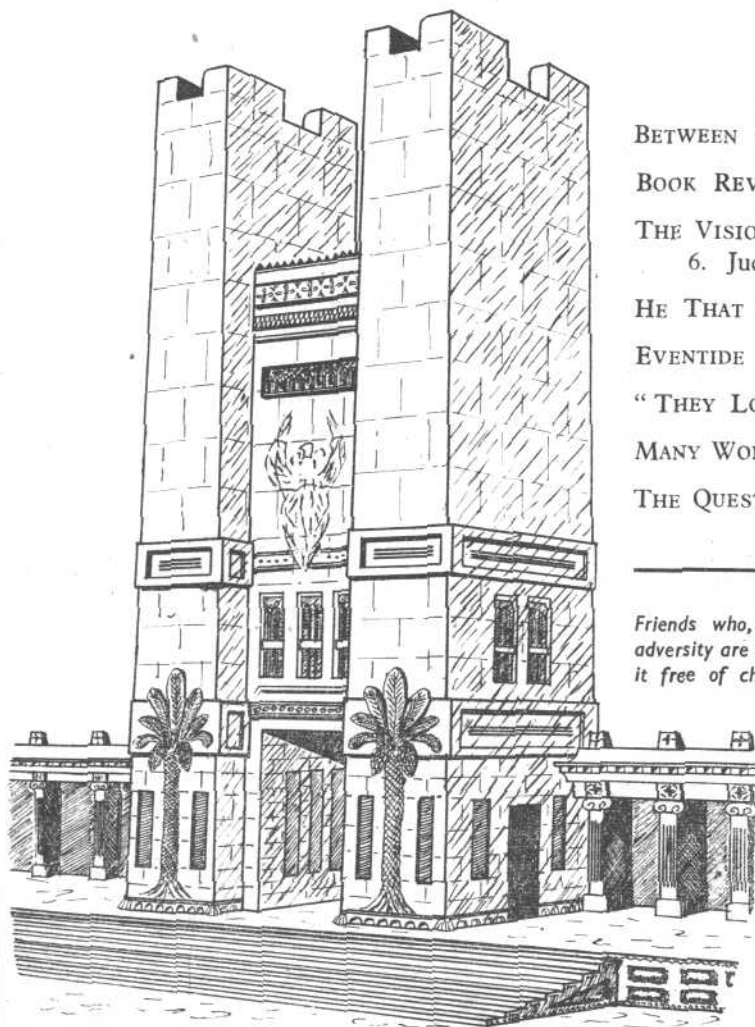
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

For many years Bro. G. A. Ford, assisted by Bros. Absalom and Boyce, has supervised the administration of the Benevolent Fund. Bro. Ford feels that the time has come for the active work to be in other hands, and as from 1st July, 1948, therefore, the Benevolent Fund will be in the charge of Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Bro. Ford will continue to serve as an adviser, as will also Bros. Absalom and Boyce. As from this date, therefore, all communications relative to the Benevolent Fund should be sent to Bro. Allbon and not to Bro. Ford.

* * *

It is a pleasure to send parcels of tracts for general distribution free of charge to brethren who do not feel able to buy and will see that they are judiciously used. If postage can be sent with the request, that is sincerely appreciated, but even if not it is still just as much a pleasure to send the literature. State the quantity that can profitably be used. Do not be reluctant to ask; our Master will see to it that provision is made for just so long as it is His will that this opportunity remains open.

* * *

The Manchester Bible Students' Council advise details of their mid-year programme. The following public meetings are, D.V., to be held:—

17th July. Altrincham (Bro. J. Barber).

21st August. Rochdale (Bro. A. J. Lodge).

(In co-operation with Bury class)

18th or 19th September. Manchester

(Bro. A. J. Lodge).

It is hoped that in connection with the 18th-19th September meeting at Manchester there will be an "Assembly of Witness" on the lines of previous years. Further details of any of these meetings may be obtained from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs.

* * *

Friends who require accommodation in London during the period of the August Convention at Conway Hall are requested to notify their requirements as soon as possible to Bro. G. H. Jennings, Grove House, Roding Lane South, Ilford, Essex, giving full details. Accommodation in London is difficult to arrange at short notice and it will be a real help, therefore, if those who have not yet written will do so at once.

* * *

Will friends please note that the prices of certain American books have recently been increased. The two devotional books, "Streams in the Desert" and "Springs in the Valley," are now 12/- each post

free, and the well-known children's book, the "Bible Story Book," is now 17/6 post free. These prices supersede those shown in the October, 1947, price list.

BRO. J. T. READ

Bro. J. T. Read, of U.S.A., will commence his tour of this country with the following appointments:—

- July 3-5 Forest Gate.
 - 6 Putney.
 - 7 Central London.
 - 8 Windsor.
 - 9-12 Rugby and Warwick.
 - 13 Oxford.
 - 14 Stroud.
 - 15 Gloucester.
 - 16-20 Cardiff and district.
 - 21 Bristol.
 - 22-23 Parkstone.
 - 24-26 Yeovil.
 - 27-29 Portsmouth and Eastleigh.
 - 30-31 London Convention.
 - Aug. 1 London Convention.
-

BOOK REVIEWS

The Story of Jericho (Garstang). Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 8/6.

It may not be true to-day, as it was two generations ago, that every schoolchild knows the story of the Fall of Jericho by heart; it is still true that every Bible student is intensely interested in the event which marked a decisive point in the history of Israel. This book, written around the excavations and discoveries which, something more than fifteen years ago, revealed to human eyes the city that had lain concealed since the day Joshua captured and burned it, is a most interesting account. The history of the city is traced from its foundation before the time of Abraham to its overthrow by Joshua, its rebuilding in the days of Ahab and its final disappearance in the days of Isaiah. (The Jericho Christ knew was built on a new site some distance away.) Much of the book is taken up with descriptions of the excavators' methods and of the "finds". One of the achievements of their work here was the light shed upon an old problem—who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus and what was the date? The 200 pages of text are well illustrated by numerous line drawings and 36 photographic reproductions of relics found and views of the excavations. Altogether a worth-while book and a handsome gift.

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 6. Judgment upon the Gentiles.

The third chapter of Joel's prophecy is so well known a passage, and so often read and quoted in studies relating to the end of the Age, that it seems almost superfluous to engage upon a detailed exposition of its verses. It is without doubt the "key-chapter" to all that the Scriptures have to say concerning Armageddon. The short, terse, but vivid description of the nations feverishly arming themselves and coming together to the final conflict, only to meet the might of the Lord, rising up out of Zion to destroy them, has no parallel in any other Biblical book. It is a summary of the more detailed explanations given by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and John in the Book of Revelation. It is unhesitant in its assertion of final and conclusive victory for the powers of righteousness and it closes the prophecy on a note of finality. After all the troubles and disasters Joel has seen, he declares triumphantly that, at last, "the Lord dwelleth in Zion".

The chapter has four sections. First of all, in verses 1-2, God asserts His intention of bringing to a head all the smouldering opposition to His ways on the part of the Gentile nations, in that day when He sets His hand the second time (Isa. 11. 11) to recover the remnant of His people from the four corners of the earth. "*I will also gather all nations,*" He says, "*and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land*" (vs. 2). That word "plead" does not bear the meaning we usually attach to it in these modern days, that of imploring or beseeching. It means literally "to enter into judgment with" and is used to describe the Lord's calling the peoples to account before Him. Thus we have Isa. 66. 16 "By fire and by sword will the Lord *plead* with all flesh", and Jer. 25. 31 "the Lord hath a controversy with the nations; He will *plead* with all flesh; He will give them that are wicked to the sword", and Ezek. 38. 22, "I will *plead* against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him . . . an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone". This latter Scripture is referring to the fate of "Gog's host", another prophetic view of the same event that Joel is now describing, and this is the effect of the "pleading" to which the Lord refers in Joel 3. It is a judgment which comes

upon the peoples whose deeds merit judgment, and according to the inexorable laws of Divine creation, that judgment must surely come.

The scattering of Israel among the nations, and the "parting" (or dividing) of their land, are perfectly well known and understood by students already. The land has been repeatedly divided and re-divided, as one great Gentile empire has succeeded another. The people have been repeatedly driven into captivity and scattered into far countries at the will of every great military conqueror who may have brought them under his dominion.

First were the Assyrians, who took the northern kingdom, the "Ten Tribes", captive, and settled aliens in Samaria and Galilee. Then came the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar, driving Judah and Jerusalem away and leaving the land desolate. The partial restoration under the Persians was never a real restoration; the people were in subjection to a Gentile power and the land was politically divided into provinces ruled by rival governors. The Greeks drew fresh lines of demarcation and the Romans altered these in their turn, kings of the north and kings of the south marching and counter-marching across the hills and valleys, bringing distress and disruption continually upon the unhappy people. Even after the great dispersion during the half century following the capture of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, and the ending of the national existence of the chosen nation, Persians and Arabs and Crusaders and Turks made havoc in the Holy Land, creating and destroying petty provinces and kingdoms, ruling for a space from fortresses and cities until the sword of a stronger compelled the weaker to loose his hold. The twentieth century has seen no interruption of the process; to-day, the land promised to Jacob and to his seed for ever is divided between half-a-dozen Arab states amidst which the tiny portion conceded to the sons of the patriarch maintains a precarious existence. The land has been divided by the enemies of Israel, and to the time of writing remains divided.

It is against this background that the prophet goes on to declare the sins for which the Gentile nations are being called to account. This is the second section of the chapter, from verse three to verse eight. The whole picture is that of a people taken captive and sold into slavery at the whim of its captors. They have done so carelessly, never

dreaming of retribution. But God has not been indifferent. He has taken note of all that has been done, and now through His prophet He says: "Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things, . . . BEHOLD, I will . . . return your recompence upon your own head; and I will sell YOUR sons and daughters . . ." (vs. 5-8). This is, of course, a symbolic statement. There could be no literal selling of Gentile slaves to the Sabeans, for that people no longer exists; they passed out of existence many centuries ago. And it would be difficult to find any place in the Divine Plan and its outworking for such an excursion into petty slave-trading on the part of the Most High. The picture is that of retribution, the operation of the Divine law "what a man soweth, that shall he reap". These Gentiles have ruled over the seed of Jacob, spoiled their goods, and occupied their land, for many centuries, unrighteously. But during all that time God has been planning for an earthly Servant Nation that is to rule on earth at the end—just as He has during this present Gospel Age been developing for Himself a heavenly Servant Nation, chosen from amongst men, that shall rule them from the heavens at the end. And when the time comes for the law of the Lord to go forth out of Zion, it shall be that all men will find themselves brought under the righteous rule that is to be administered by the once despised slaves who were sold and scattered over the earth. "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls", said Isaiah, "and their kings shall minister unto thee . . . for the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish . . ." (Isa. 60. 10-11). "In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all the languages of the nations . . . of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying 'We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you'". (Zech. 8. 23). It is a familiar story; the Scriptures are full of it from Isaiah onwards; perhaps the Gentiles to whom the message has been witnessed for so many long years have grown so accustomed to it that they do not believe that God will really rise up to judgment and break their power over this long-suffering people. They have been able to spoil them and harry them and destroy them unchecked for so many generations. If God cared at all He would have done something about it long ago; it is not likely that anything so drastic as these prophetic enthusiasts are talking about will happen now. . . .

"PROCLAIM YE THIS AMONG THE GENTILES! PREPARE WAR, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up. Beat your ploughshares into swords,

and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say 'I am strong'. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations . . . come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: FOR THERE WILL I SIT TO JUDGE ALL THE NATIONS ROUND ABOUT". (vs. 9-12).

Like a thunder-clap does the prophet's declaration burst upon the ears of the heedless ones. God is not unmindful; God is not mocked; and now he has suddenly risen up to judgment and the time of retribution is come. The nations are to gather together and it is to be for the last time; when this Day of Assembly has passed there will no longer be any nations, for the kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. "At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations."

This is Joel's final vision, and the most glorious. It seems almost as if it has burst suddenly upon his consciousness, as though at verse 9 all the glimpses and partial views of the coming Day of Trouble, all the pictures of devouring locusts and marching soldiers, ruthless invaders and terror-stricken defenders, weeping husbandmen and praying priests, have suddenly fused together into a clear and vivid picture and Joel sees, resplendent in the light of the glory of God, a regathered and repentant Israel, standing confident in the power of God, waiting the last great conflict of this present evil world, waiting the rising up of God to their defence, anticipating the overthrow and dispersal of their enemies. And as they thus wait, and the evil powers of earth begin to gather for the assault, an assault which according to Ezekiel 38 is expected by them to be one committed upon a helpless people "to take a spoil and to take a prey", the voice of the Lord rings out, loud and clear, commanding the angry hosts to come to the valley of their judgment and the valley of their doom.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat! What is the mystic meaning of those words? Why is it that the mighty hosts of the Gentiles are to be gathered into the Valley of Jehoshaphat and that Valley becomes then the scene of their defeat and judgment?

The Kidron valley, between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, is sometimes—but not in the Scriptures—called the "Valley of Jehoshaphat". and both Jewish and Moslem tradition has it that here is to take place the Last Judgment. But Joel was not thinking of the Kidron Valley—he was thinking rather of the Wilderness of Tekoa in Judea down toward the Dead Sea where there had been a memorable deliverance of Israel in the days of King Jehoshaphat fifty years before Joel's own time. The armies of Moab and Ammon had invaded Israel; it

seemed as though all were lost, but under the leadership of their God-fearing king the people placed their trust and faith in God for their defence and went out to meet the invaders, unarmed, with their priests leading the way, and singing the high praises of God. And God delivered them! The story is related in 2 Chron. 20, and it is one of the rare instances in which Israel did rise to the height of faith and reaped the reward of faith.

Verse 13 changes the picture. The hosts have gathered in the fatal valley and to the prophet's excited mind they appear as masses of grape-laden vines, full to bursting, awaiting the gathering and the vintage. "Put ye in the sickle" he cries "for the harvest is ripe . . . The press is full, the fats (wine-vats) overflow (with the juice of the crushed grapes) for their wickedness is great". This symbol of the winepress is used elsewhere; in Revelation 14. 19-20 there is the same allusion—"And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city . . ."

It is here that we are enabled rightly to place these happenings in the times and seasons of the Divine Plan. Verses 15-16 tell us that at this juncture, when the nations have gathered together and have been, as it were, "reaped" and "cast into the winepress", "the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel". These are the signs of the Second Advent, and of the establishment of the Kingdom in power; the gathering and the reaping lead up to this culmination. The incitement to war, the turning of all the arts of peace to purposes of conflict, the federating of weak nations into allegedly strong unions, the framing of treaties and agreements and pacts of mutual aid against real and fancied

aggression, all this, carried to the extent to which it has been carried in recent years, constitutes a clear fulfilment of this prophecy and a definite indication of the imminence of that "darkening" of the sun and moon and "shaking" of the heavens which in Matt. 24 is given as the immediate herald of the manifestation of the returned Lord in glory to all mankind. That is a late stage in the succession of events which constitutes His presence; the gathering of the Church and its union with Him "beyond the vail" takes place before this, and may well have occurred before the nations have completed their assembly in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. If, in fact, this "winepress" feature, when the Lord will "roar out of Zion", is to result in the immediate deliverance of His earthly people in the Holy land and the almost immediate commencement of Millennial work, as verse 18 seems to indicate, then it must logically follow that the Church will have been gathered some time previously, and therefore before Armageddon is fought out around the land of Israel.

"So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no stranger pass through her any more". (vs. 17.) That is the outcome; the Gentile hosts have come up for judgment and have been judged; they have undertaken their last assault against the citadel of God's righteousness and been repulsed, and their power has been broken for ever. Israel has returned wholly and completely to the Lord her God, and the stage is fully set for the Millennial Kingdom.

This is virtually the end of Joel's prophecy. The remaining few verses carry the story forward into the Millennial Age, but they are set rather by way of contrast to the dark days which have occupied the prophet's attention for so long. He has seen the time of distress and oppression wax to its zenith, and disappear as in a moment by the power of the Lord, and in the confidence of that hope he is well content.

(To be concluded)

"This is my command, that ye love one another even as I have loved you." This is surely some of the "much fruit" which the great Husbandman is looking for. Beloved, let us try in all simplicity and honesty to translate this language into the daily doings in our homes and daily conduct that all men may see that we are living with Jesus and learning His ways. Let our tempers be under the rule of Jesus. Let the gentleness that refuses to take offence, that is always ready to excuse, to think and hope the best, mark our intercourse with all. Let the love that seeketh not its own, but is ever ready to wash

each other's feet, or even to give its life for them, be our aim. Let our life be one of self-sacrifice; ever seeking the welfare of others be our joy. Let us yield ourselves as obedient learners to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By the grace of God, the most commonplace life can be transfigured with the brightness of heavenly beauty, as the infinite love of the Divine nature shines through our frail humanity. Beloved, let us praise God; we are called to love as Jesus loves, as God loves. Then let us with fresh faith accept the blessed injunction, "Abide in Me, and I in you . . . Abide in my love."

HE THAT OVERCOMETH

A discourse on the principles of
Divine salvation.

The subject of man's eternal destiny has been argued repeatedly, by both tongue and pen, from the standpoint of Divine Love. Time and again the zealous advocate of God has stressed, with intense emphasis, the words of Holy Writ that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to save the world from its sin, and that in that sacrificial death of the Worthy Lamb the Love of God was "commended" to each and all. (Rom. 5. 8.)

The operation of that Divine Love is a matter of such certainty to the accepted child of God that he finds it a never-failing source of comfort and assistance in his journey through this world. Because in himself he is so certain of this love, it is his joy, by voice and pen, to labour day and night to place before his fellow-men the proofs which mean so much to him concerning this great Love.

To his dismay he finds that men, in the aggregate, are not prepared to accept his evidence so fulsomely as he accepts it himself. He has to admit, when viewing world-matters reflectively, that he is attempting a colossal task in seeking to persuade men that God is Love. It is most difficult to prove, in the light of human history, that the relationship of God toward men has really been one of love. Men have suffered unmitigated hardships all through the centuries, but Heaven has not intervened. Tyrants have waded to their thrones through seas of blood, and streams of tears, yet no restraining hand has reached down from the skies. War, disease, decay and death have rampaged throughout the world, but not one finger has been moved actively to allay the unceasing agony. Human history has been the story of nature red in tooth and claw. To crown this tale of woe and misery, twice within this single generation the world has been deluged again with blood and tears, on a scale unparalleled, as millions of her choicest sons have paid for man's un wisdom with their lives. "If your God is a God of love as you say He is" the realist replies "why does He sit idly by and see this unceasing waste of life and limb? If He really is as loving as you say, why do we not get some of His love to-day? Some love to soothe the widow's tears, to hear the orphan's cry; to satisfy the hungred pangs? Why is He mute and dumb and unconcerned in the presence of such dire human need?"

Spite, however, of the world's failure to understand, God is indeed a God of Love, and the Cross

of Christ truly was, the token and proof of that Love. But why is it that the realistic mind of the day does not understand the truth and fact of that Love? Why does it not see that the gift of Jesus was an act of the profoundest Love, and that God intends, at last, to wipe away every tear? Why cannot the realist see what is so obvious to me?

The answer is: because the Love of God is under interruption; that there is a barrier in the way, and an embargo upon its operation! It cannot operate outside the small circle of faith. It cannot bless those who cannot believe! To those who are "of faith" it is a blessed reality. But to those who are in unbelief it is a grave unreality. The Love of God is like the sun on a dark or misty day. Its rays do not come through because of the obstruction that intervenes. The Heart of God, like the glowing sun, may be radiating its beams all around, but they do not reach to man because a dark obstruction is in the way. Were the Love of God coming through to this sad world unobstructedly, man would not be subject either to the freaks of nature, or the inhumanities of man. Typhoons, tidal waves, lightning-bolts and other so-called "Acts of God" would not occur; neither would the lust or cruelty of man run riot as it does.

Why is it then that this radiating Love (which would mean much more to man than the genial sun can mean) cannot come through into his life, and fill that life with health and wealth and peace? Why must man dwell continuously under cloudy skies, and languish ever amid death-dealing mists?

To this the answer is that man is under condemnation. The reign of sorrow, pain and death is the outcome of the Adamic sin. By that sin "judgment came unto all men unto condemnation". The disapproval and displeasure of God rests upon the entire race (John 3. 36. Eph. 2. 2-3). That is because God's relationship to the human family is not that of the tender Father, but that of the unbending Judge! His attitude is that of the Law—the Eternal Law—the Law whose terms were broken when Adam sinned. As the promulgator of that penal decree—"dying thou shalt die"—God stood forward as the representative of the Justicial machinery applying that Law. In a brief word, it is because God has never reached the relationship of Creator-Father to the race, that His Love

cannot filter through. It is because He is still the "Judge" that His attribute of Justice bars the way to His attribute of Love. Even in the later releasing decree (subsequent to Calvary and based on Another's righteousness), God still adjudicated as the Judge; more than that, even the sanction needed to permit a vicarious substitute to replace the man who sinned was a sanction by the good grace of the Judge.

In the capacity of Judge, God must condemn all sin, and all sinners too. He must maintain the claims of Law, even if the sinner has to lose his life. The strong emotions of Creator-Love must be held subservient to the claims of Creator-Judge, otherwise Universal righteousness could not prevail—all of which means, that God must esteem righteousness above the life of any guilty wayward individual, or of every individual in case of need.

During the whole term that God must maintain the relationship of Judge, there can be no direct exhibition of His Father-Love. ("The Church of Christ, accepted in the Beloved", is an exception to this rule, because of its special standing in Christ, and is outside the range of this argument.) That is why God's appeal to the restored multitudes of men, after the Millennial Kingdom is withdrawn, can be stated as it is found in Rev. 21. 7.

Sonship and the enjoyment of Father-Love lies beyond the period of that judicial test, for those who overcome. Not until that test is complete can the Love of God have its full, free, unobstructed play upon the lives of men. Throughout Millennial days Christ Jesus will be the King, to whom all men will have access. Such judgment as is then exercised will be administered in His Name. Within this period it is *He* that overthrows all enemies. Authority is entrusted to His care, because the Creator-Judge could not be lenient to fallen men. With His righteousness spread above them as a shield—a "*Kaphar*" or covering—Christ can deal forbearingly with the follies and frailties of men, rewarding their penitence again and again—an application of the seventy times seven latitude, in case of need—so long as that penitence is real and sincere. But while Jesus reigns and administers corrective Judgment, God is still behind the cloud. His emergence therefrom, while men are weak and immature, would lay too great a strain upon their disability.

Only when the Millennial heaven and earth have fled away does the Creator-Judge come forth to call the redeemed and restored multitudes to His bar. But at His coming forth He is still the Judge—still, as in Edenic days, the searcher of the heart. The evil that has been restrained throughout Mil-

lennial years will be loosed again, to prove and probe and test the fidelity of every man.

Before the test begins, the Judge presents the issue fair and square so that all may know and understand what they will be called upon to do. "He that overcometh" says the Judge "shall inherit all things; I will be his God (his all in all) and he shall be my son, but for the fearful (the craven-hearted to the test) and the . . . their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone . . ." (Rev. 21. 7-8.)

In his capacity of Universal Judge, the Almighty God has had need, from time to time, to condemn and destroy wicked men. It has been needful for Him to apply the penal measures of the Law. Nothing that we can say on the redemptive side can mitigate the fact that, when Justice so requires, God can destroy human life without mercy. Jerusalem, in her overthrows is the most forceful example of this readiness and capacity to inflict destructive punishment on those who incur excessive guilt. But there are many other instances on record in His Book, where God has not hesitated to slay. Yet, on close scrutiny, none can say He slew unjustly or maliciously, or without a cause. Sometimes He slew "as He saw good"—as "Divine Wisdom" saw good, presumably to prevent moral decline reaching total depravity. Some whom He slew openly avowed themselves as His enemies; others were slain for presumption and rash temerity. Even from the tribes of Israel He slew some who transgressed; in other instances their death was accomplished at His command. Gloss the matter over as we will (by reference to His Love and to the Cross of Christ), the fact remains that God does not scruple or hesitate to deprive men of life when occasion so requires. When told of certain Galileans whom Pilate had slain, Jesus said "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all Galileans, because they have suffered these things? . . . Or those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13. 1-5.)

Jesus saw in this slaughter and apparent accident the hand of God, and warned the equally offending Jew to whom He spake, what would overtake them all if they hesitated to repent. They did not repent—in due time, Rome mingled their blood with their sacrifice, and threw down their towers upon the wretched multitudes. "Ye shall also likewise perish" said the Master, speaking in Jehovah's name. "Be not afraid of them which

kill the body but are not able to kill the soul" said Jesus to His disciples as He sent them forth as sheep among wolves, "but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna". (Matt. 10. 28.) "One only is the law-giver and judge, even He who is able to save and to destroy" said James (4.12). "Able to destroy"! Yes! God has ample power to kill and also strong enough intent, when impenitence has reached its destination.

So long, therefore, as Almighty God has need to undertake the functions of a Judge, so long must men take heed not to act contrary to His Law. It would be dangerous for any man to presume too greatly upon Divine clemency—he may not know when to stop. After a time he might not be allowed to stop. Hearing, he might hear, and not be allowed to understand; seeing, he might see, and not be permitted to perceive, as was the case with Jerusalem.

Let no one seek to build doctrine and expectation solely on the Love of God. Justice and judgment, not Love, nor mercy, are the foundations of His Throne; Law, not sentiment, is the basis of all order and righteousness, and God is the upholder both of Justice and the Law.

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things;

I will be his God and he shall be My son" stands as invitation and warning too. It will not be mere child-play to win the right to live eternally. The difficulties will be immense, the opposing factors will be strong; the dangers may be great. Some may show a craven heart, some may love and make a lie; some may break every moral restraint, and in such riot make it hard for another to overcome. But *overcome they must*, if they are to win the Love of God and enter into life.

Will the Judge upon the great white Throne, be as severe as His warning indicates? God never breaks His Word, be it now to bless, or be it then to curse. If wilful men, with memories of a great redemption behind them, presume to challenge God's authority and rebel against His Law, they will find the Judge inflexible and austere, as He utters again the decree "ye shall surely die".

Only for those who overcome has He promised Home and Love and Life—they will be His sons for evermore! For those who do not overcome there is no promise of Home nor Love nor Life—they will never be His sons, nor will He ever be their God—their "all in all". It is a solemn thought to know that He whose Love was the main-spring of the great Plan can also be, to those who bar His way, a destructive and consuming fire.

OPPORTUNITY OF SERVICE

Arrangements for the public meeting in London in connection with the August Convention are now well in hand. There is opportunity for all who wish to assist in making this meeting known. Friends who are in a position to help with the distribution of handbills are requested to write Mr. D. Nadal, 35, Palace Gardens, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, stating whether they can join one of the parties operating in London, and if so, which district, or alternatively stating how many handbills they will take and distribute personally at their own convenience, again stating in what district they will distribute same. This distribution should be during the last two weeks of July.

A personal invitation card which is adapted for posting to likely-to-be-interested people is being prepared and will be sent to all whose names and addresses are sent to Bro. R. Keleher, 12, Buckingham Road, South Woodford, E.18, for that purpose. Friends living in the provinces as well as those in London are invited to take advantage

of this opportunity and to notify the addresses of their own relatives and acquaintances in the London area who are likely to be interested or encouraged to attend by means of such a postal invitation.

There are also to be invitation cards which may be handed directly to anyone likely to be interested. Any of the brethren may have a few of these cards for their own use. Please apply to Bro. Keleher for these also.

*And finally, Sunday, July 25th, has been set apart as a special occasion of united prayer for the Heavenly Father's blessing on this effort. On that day it is hoped and expected that all the London classes participating in this witness will, at the commencement of their various evening meetings, cause their thoughts thus to ascend together. Perhaps in other parts of the country too the brethren will bear up the efforts and the hopes of those who have been instrumental in arranging this witness. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much!"

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



How restful and serene was the Master's heart. Nothing could disturb its peace and trust in God! Look at His quiet confidence at the close of that searching day when He said to "the twelve", "*Will you also go away?*" The crowd had ebbed away dissatisfied, and now only these twelve stood near Him. Would the searching words He had spoken prove too "hard" for these to hear and understand?

Only yesterday He had fed the hungry multitude. He had given them satisfaction in an hour of need. Out of a handful He had created more than enough. "*Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world*" was the verdict that passed from lip to lip. Like Moses, whose words they had in mind, He had provided bread in the wilderness.

With hunger appeased, approving tongues began to talk. "*This is the man we need for our King*"—this was the conclusion of all. Only Jesus' adroit withdrawal from amongst them frustrated their plan (John 6. 15). Now they had found Him in Capernaum again, but instead of breaking bread He drew the deeper moral of the occasion yesterday for them. He told them that He was the "bread of God"—of which, if they would eat they would have life indeed within them. With yesterday's repast in mind they eagerly exclaimed "*Lord, give us this bread*".

In response Jesus said "I am that bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger. He who believes in Me shall never thirst".

In conversation and discussion the Jews pondered over what He said. Taking up the theme again in their synagogue (John 6. 59) Jesus amplified the former utterances, and said that the Bread which God would give would be His flesh, and the "drink" would be His blood. (vv. 52-58.)

A hard saying indeed! How could it be done? "Bread and fish religion" they could well understand, but food for the deeper nature was too hard and abstruse. He was not after all the man to be their King! And so with scornful lip, they turned away and went back to their drab way of life, while He was left with none but the "twelve" attending Him. Was Jesus unduly perturbed at this? Not a bit of it. Enthusiasm, created by "loaves and fishes" was not the kind He had

come to create. He wanted men who were ready to take up a cross and follow in His steps.

It was not an easy thing for Jesus to watch them depart, for He knew what the end of this would be. The Man of Compassion who could feed them with bread perforce had to stand, but, because of their unbelief, watch them begin to drift towards the rocks of doom. The trends of thought which led them soon to take His life, had already set in—and, in due time led them also to clash with the might of Rome.

Jesus stood among them as the "Gift of God", yet notwithstanding that, there was nothing He could do to save them from that impending crash. No word nor act of His could change the trends of self-interested religious thought. It was not easy thus to stand beside the quickening currents and watch them accelerating down the rapids to their final plunge—and be Himself at peace and unperturbed! Only a heart at rest in God, and in His promises, can look forward from the darkening scenes, and know that an "afterwards" is provided for in which the broken hearts, beyond the cataract, can be hushed to quietness and sanity again.

We too have that same experience again to-day. Another generation, amid the closing scenes of another age, with that same fateful inability to believe, is rushing with quickening impetus to its final plunge, and we, who know the gift of God, stand powerless to avert the inevitable. No effort of either tongue or pen can turn aside the deep-drawn tide that bears our generation on its crest. What of ourselves? Does it sap our peace of heart and mind? Have we learned, like Jesus did, to leave our people—with our own loved ones, perhaps in the midst—to the Hands of God? It is a lesson still not easy to be learned, to have to stand on-looking and see the fateful drift, down the steepening rapids, yet unable to lend a hand. Day by day we see and feel the cold reaction to God's Gifts in Grace. Everywhere, the wide world through, awakening nations say "give us bread, give us fish" here and now—not in God's way! Whether the channel be democratic or totalitarian, the sequel is the same. The Son of God is not wanted either as the Bread of God or as a sacrifice for sin!

But if we would know the peace which in His

day kept the Master's heart at rest, we must also bide within the Sovereign Will of God, knowing, the while, that His Way is the best. At close of day, let us therefore retire for a little while with Him to permit the fret and worry from the world's cold callousness to subside. Has this been a day of worry and perplexity? Let the "blood of Jesus whisper peace within". Have we been "by thronging duties pressed"? "To do the will of Jesus—this is best."

Perhaps our path has had "sorrows surging

round"! "On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found." Have we "loved ones far away"? "In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they."

Let us leave them there, assured that Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers—and that He is on the throne!

"It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace."

"O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and
He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."

"They Looked for a City"

The testimony of past ages
to Millennial belief.

Alexander Pope was a noteworthy English poet, born 1688 and died 1744. A Roman Catholic by faith, he was responsible for some outstanding poetic compositions. The following lines, inspired, it will easily be seen, by Isaiah 35, give eloquent testimony to the Millennial hope that must have possessed some men in his day, two hundred and fifty years ago:

"No more shall nation against nation rise,
Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
Nor fields with gleaming steel be cover'd o'er,
The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more;
But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
And the broad falchion in plowshare end.
Then palaces shall rise; the joyful son
Shall finish what his short-lived sire begun;
Their vines a shadow to their race shall yield,
And the same hand that sow'd, shall reap the field.

The swain in barren deserts with surprise
Sees lilies spring, and sudden verdure rise;
And starts, amidst the thirsty wilds, to hear
New falls of water murmuring in his ear.
On rifted rocks, the dragon's late abode,
The green reed trembles, and the bulrush nods.
Waste sandy valleys, once perplex'd with thorn,
The spiry fir and shapely box adorn:
To leafless shrubs the flowery palms succeed,
And odorous myrtle to the noisome weed.
The lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,

And boys in flowery bands the tiger lead;
The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.
The smiling infant in his hand shall take
The crested basilisk and speckled snake,
Pleas'd, the green lustre of their scales survey,
And with their forked tongue shall innocently play.

Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise;
Exalt thy towery head, and lift thy eyes!
See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;
See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,
In crowding ranks on every side arise,
Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend!
See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings

And heap'd with products of Sabeian springs!
For thee Idumea's spicy forests blow,
And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow.
See Heaven his sparkling portals wide display,
And break upon thee in a flood of day!
No more the rising Sun shall gild the morn,
Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn:
But lost, dissolv'd in thy superior rays,
One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze
O'erflow the courts: the Light Himself shall shine

Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine!
The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away!
But fix'd His word, His saving power remains:
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns!"

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

* * *

A fish in the Thames—afraid of perishing? A mouse in a granary—afraid of starving? All things are ours, and above all "My grace is sufficient for thee."

MANY WONDERFUL WORKS

AN EXHORTATION

Coming at the climax of a sermon unparalleled in all the recorded sayings of Jesus Christ, that reference to those who sought entrance into His Kingdom by virtue of their words and works has formed the subject of many a homily. With a very ready unanimity we join together in condemning the man who puts his trust in the arm of flesh and brings the fruits of his own works as an offering to the Almighty. Here in no unmeasured terms the Saviour of all men denounced the mental attitude which had made the Pharisees what they were in His day—a class of men who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. The awful results of that self-blinded egotism were manifested when they crucified the Prince of Life, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. Thus does the evil bring forth its bitter fruit—the husk of an outward righteousness as fair to the casual eye as the whited sepulchres to which Jesus pointed; but concealing a corruption and a defilement as nauseous and repugnant to the All-seeing One as ever the contents of those same whited sepulchres were to the Jews.

Is it because, like Isaiah, we see the glory of the Lord and wish straight away to be used as His messengers that we so easily fall victims to the temptation of engaging in outward activities for their own sake rather than the inward work of the heart, to which all external things are but handmaidens. Just as a church in the shell which houses a congregation of worshippers and has no lasting value in itself, so also must the whole fabric of our earthly fellowship and service ever remain but an avenue of means of which we can feed and build up each other with the realities of Divine Truth. And yet just as in a church there is an altar which symbolises the presence of God, so in every form of Christian activity and service springing from the efforts of sincere and loving hearts, there is always manifest the Spirit of Christ—the material erection becoming in very truth an agent of Divine things.

Still must be remembered that truth enunciated by Paul in saying “*we know that if this earthly house of our dwelling place be dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*”. So must it be with all our fleeting arrangements and organisations; all those things which minister to the needs of the saints while in the flesh, but which must necessarily vanish away when their work has been done. Not one of these

“mighty works” goes with us into the eternal light of the Divine Presence—for their purpose will have been served, and amply served, in the ministry to the saints here below. That Church, founded at Pentecost upon a hope and conviction which had its anchor in things unseen, developed and multiplied by means of the unremitting toil of saintly men and women who counted not their lives dear unto them, and who in lives given up and sacrificed on the altar of service found a richer and fuller and nobler life even here amidst the imperfections of the earthly state. Paul in organising new communities of believers; Timothy setting in order the things that were wanting; the seven first deacons administering the serving of tables; in all of this we do not see the frantic building-up of a vast and imposing edifice which would absorb the thoughts and energies of all believers and dissipate those energies in a useless beating of the air. What we do see is the serious and solemn administration of a sacred trust left by the Master Himself, He who knew only too well how the heart left to theorise and meditate upon His message without the broadening influence of service for others must inevitably become self-centred and egotistic. We see thoughtful and zealous men and women full of the Spirit and of wisdom, rejoicing not only in the intellectual satisfaction of a clear knowledge of the Truth, but also in the abundant opportunity of manifesting the influence of that knowledge by their works and activity among their brethren and neighbours. There can be little doubt that the early years of the primitive Church were years of ceaseless activity. “*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*”. The wonderful growth of the Christian community was due as much to the burning zeal of those who went forth to propagate the new faith as to the readiness of a sinweary world to listen with hope to the message of Him who should come.

But in all of this the early Christians thought little of their own personal relation to the organisation they were building. Sufficient that this marvellous fellowship which was coming into being was steadily making progress through every stratum of society. Sufficient that the name of Jesus Christ was becoming increasingly familiar to those who met on the Sabbath day throughout all the cities of the Dispersion. Sufficient that the words of Jesus “Ye shall be witnesses unto me—

to the uttermost parts of the earth" were having a glorious fulfilment. Of their own place in these things they thought not at all, but, like saints of earlier times, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and a more enduring substance.

Let us take to ourselves the lesson they so nobly taught. Let us all in our activities and arrangements, our organising and building, ever remember that all these "mighty works", desirable and even necessary as they are to-day, are not intended to endure for all time, to be jealously guarded and handed down to posterity. They are for the needs of the moment, for the promulgation of the Word of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ—UNTIL we all come, in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the full stature of the Anointed One.

Happy is the brother or sister who can touch lightly these things of this earth, realising their place in the leadings of the Good Shepherd, thankful for their provision, and yet without regret or repining seeing them wax old and vanish away when their period of usefulness has passed.

So doing, we shall not be of those who, at the end, must needs claim their wonderful works as their only recommendation for entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom. If our building has been with the gold, silver and precious stones of the eternal truths which are revealed to us by the Holy Spirit of God, and if we have so learned Christ that the failure of all material supports and defences leaves us "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" then indeed we shall not be of those to whom will come the sad, regretted words "I never knew you. Depart from Me".

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. What answer can be made to the assertion sometimes heard that the universe is gradually "cooling off" and "running down" and that so far from this earth becoming a Millennial Paradise it must one day become too cold to support life in any form?

A. Perhaps the best answer is the remark with which Sir James Jeans, himself an eminent scientist, closed his book "The Mysterious Universe." "Who knows" he says, "how many more times the stream of knowledge may turn on itself? With this reflection before us, we may well conclude by adding, what might well have been interlined into every paragraph, that everything that has been said, and every conclusion that has been tentatively put forward, is quite frankly speculative and uncertain. We have tried to discuss whether present-day science has anything to say on certain difficult questions, which are perhaps set for ever beyond the reach of human understanding. We cannot claim to have discerned more than a very faint glimmer of light at the best; perhaps it was wholly illusory, for certainly we had to strain our eyes very hard to see anything at all. So that our main contention can hardly be that the science of to-day has a pronouncement to make, perhaps it ought rather to be that science should leave off making pronouncements: the river of knowledge has too often turned back on itself."

In point of fact twentieth century scientists are very divided in opinion as to whether the universe is or is not "running down" as was thought by their predecessors of an older generation. The nature of the physical processes going on in the stars is even now only very imperfectly understood,

but it is surmised that the stars are in reality vast chemical laboratories in which the energy necessary to keep the universe going is produced on the one hand as fast as it is dissipated on the other. If this finding proves to be justified there will no longer be any conflict in this respect between science and the Bible.

But those who are instructed in the Divine Plan know that the whole visible creation was brought into being by God, not as a temporary measure, but as a permanent part of His work. When God viewed what He had made He pronounced it "good". All the stars we see in the sky belong to our own "universe" or "star-city", of which our own sun is but one of the smallest stars; there are known to be at least four million more "star-cities" like ours, far away in space and only to be very faintly discerned by the world's largest telescopes. It would be a very feeble imagination that cannot perceive evidence of a great design in the creation of this vast assemblage of heavenly bodies; to think that God will use only this one planet earth, and for the temporary use only of men as we know them, and then to sweep the whole array into oblivion is almost ludicrous. Perhaps the most fitting comment that can be made on the question is that science tells only of what it can see and understand of the Creator's handiwork; the Bible reveals God's intentions for the future, and because its Author is God Himself its statements, even if hard to accept in the light of present human knowledge, can be received on that account as absolutely true. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." (Rev. 4. 11.)



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

BIBLE STUDENTS' MONTHLY

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

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The friends at Yeovil report a profitable time of fellowship and uplift at their Home-Gathering held on 5-6th June, at which a goodly number of brethren gathered to hear Bros. MacAulay, Holmes, Burge and Batcheller discourse on themes of interest. A Baptismal service was held at which several symbolised their consecration to the Lord.

* * *

Sheffield held a gathering on 26-27th June, a feature of which was a public meeting on the Saturday night. The results were very encouraging to the brethren who had made the effort, a good audience attending to hear Bro. Lodge speak. An unusually large proportion of those attending indicated their desire to "follow up" what they had heard, and the friends feel that the effort has been richly blessed.

* * *

Two new issues in the series of illustrated leaflets are now ready. No. 203 "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand*", which appears in this issue of the "*Monthly*", is designed to stress the call to repentance and show how only by way of repentance and a turning to a new way of life, and therefore by whole-hearted surrender of one's self to God, can His approval be found in this Age. The other, No. 204, entitled "*The Sure Word of Prophecy*", is a short outline of the importance of prophetic teaching in the Scriptures, especially as related to a correct understanding of the times in which we live, and is intended for use with people who may question the validity of Biblical prophecy. Both these leaflets are printed in green and black, illustrated with line drawings and photo reproductions, and form dignified pieces of literature for use in witness work. It has been made possible slightly to reduce the price of this series of leaflets, and all numbers (201 "*The Bible the Book for to-day*", 202 "*The Dawn of a New Era*", as well as these two new ones,) are now available at 1/- per dozen or 6/- per 100 post free, assorted as may be desired.

* * *

Current events in Palestine render our booklet "*Jacob's Trouble*", well known to most of the friends, of more than usual topical interest. This booklet is probably the most detailed exposition of the subject that has appeared in print among our friends, and it can be of considerable use at the present time when the eyes of the world are turned upon the conflict at present going on in the Holy Land. "*Jacob's Trouble*", it will be remembered, deals with the Scriptures referring to the regathering of Israel and its final deliverance, and stresses that the people's ultimate possession of the land will not be in consequence of successes with material arms

and carnal weapons, but of submission to, and faith in, God. It is God who will at the end come forth to deliver. The booklet includes a one-page map showing the territory promised to Abraham and his seed. It is timely now to use this theme as a means of witness to those around us, and with this idea in mind it has been decided to make available half the existing stock of "*Jacob's Trouble*", at especially cheap rates in order to encourage all who will to make use of them in their work while the theme is timely.

The style set aside for this purpose is the one bearing the old blue printed cover. The quantities that will be supplied have been chosen to obtain the maximum advantage of postal rates and are as follows, post free:—Parcel of 15 copies, 4/-; Parcel of 30 copies, 7/-; Parcel of 90 copies, 16/-.

Single copies of "*Jacob's Trouble*" will still be supplied in the blue and white illustrated art paper cover at 10d. each post free, for brethren needing single copies for themselves.

Bro. J. T. READ.

Appointments during August.

- 1-2. London Convention.
 4. Walthamstow.
 5. Anerley.
 6. Welling.
 - 7-9. Ipswich.
 10. Peterborough.
 - 11-13. Downham Market.
 - 14-17. Nottingham.
 - 18-20. Atherstone.
 - 21-23. Coventry.
 24. Leicester.
 25. Blaby.
 26. Kettering.
 - 27-30. Lincoln.
 31. Warrington.
-

Gone From Us

+

- Bro. D. F. Murray (*Dundee*) May.
 Sis. J. Ainsley (*Wallsend*) May.
 Bro. R. King (*Paisley*) June.
 Bro. T. Hall (*Bromington*) April.
 Bro. D. A. McLeod (*Swansea*) July.

+

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

God Our Saviour

AN EXPOSITION
OF 1 TIM. 2. 4-6

With the increasing number of churches dependent upon his care, Paul found himself obliged, at times, to depute some of his authority and over-sight to other men, in whose integrity and trustworthiness he had every confidence. One of these men, near and dear to the ageing Evangelist, was "Son Timothy".

To prepare and equip this young lieutenant for these responsibilities, Paul sent him the first letter that bears his name. Timothy was but young in years in comparison with many over whom he would be called to preside, and on that account likely to be despised because of his youth. On his young shoulders responsibility was laid to "set things in order" in the Church gatherings, as well as to administer necessary discipline upon obstinate and wayward offenders both in Church affairs and in their outside public demeanour. Though Timothy may well have known the methods of Paul's own procedure in these things, it was an advantage to him to have, from the Apostle himself, this letter of authority and guidance, for it placed him, during Paul's absence, in a position in the Church second only to Paul's own.

In the Church assemblies were men of many kinds. Some of them were of Jewish birth, with all the touchy sensibilities peculiar to their race. Many were of heathen origin, and before the Gospel attracted them were brutal, rough and uncouth. Some of them were cultured men according to the standards of Greece, then prevailing. Together they would make a motley crowd, with interests almost as varied as their faces varied. It would be no easy task for Timothy (or others taking this oversight) to keep a state of peace within the assemblies, or to impress upon them the need for a pure and upright life.

Among the items of advice given to Timothy were those found at the beginning of the chapter from which we have taken our text. *"I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity."* (V. 1 and 2 R.V.)

This may seem unusual advice to our point of view to-day, but in a day when disregard of the reigning monarch was a dangerous thing, it was expedient that such advice be tendered for the peace and welfare of the community. Most heathen peoples would pay their regards to the Imperial bust; only

the Jews, as a rule, would dare to disregard the Emperor's claims. For this disregard they were punished very frequently. While the Christian communities were not under the Law, and needed not to scruple over the second commandment, even they could not offer worship before Caesar's effigy. But Imperial resentment could be tempered and softened by causing it to be publicly known that they were praying to their God for the welfare of the Emperor and his government. All legally permitted religious systems were expected to pray to their respective gods for the blessing of their God upon the Empire and its Emperor. Paul's advice to Timothy was that this practice should be encouraged and practised publicly—not because it needed those prayers to persuade God forcefully to interfere in the affairs of the nations, but that they should not incite or aggravate the Imperial petulance unduly. God's control over the affairs of the nations would go on, Christian prayer or no Christian prayer, and influences from the higher sources had gone out at times, in earlier days, and curbed or modified royal and Imperial proclamations, and could do so again.

Proceeding, Paul says *"For this (public prayer) is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, himself man, Christ Jesus . . ."*

In these words, some Christians claim to find warranty for the eternal salvation of all men everywhere, saying "if God wills it so, it will be so—for none can thwart the working of that Will." Is Paul speaking of an eternal salvation in these words, to be accomplished for them in an Age to come, and not in this present Age? Let us see.

Paul says, as the ground and reason of his assertion concerning the salvation which God wills, that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men . . ." Was there anyone in Paul's day who said that there was more than one God? Indeed yes! That there was but one God was a belief peculiar only to Christian and Jew. Every other nation, people and tribe, the wide world through had its god or many gods. Greece, Egypt and Rome numbered them by hundreds—each with its own province and attributes. For what purpose did the peoples approach or appease these myriads of gods? To protect them in danger; to give victory in war; to provide food and all necessities, and act, in all cases, as a watchful dispensing

Providence—in a brief word, to give them their daily bread, in peace and quietness of life.

Did any claim that there was more than one Mediator between the high gods and men? Yes, assuredly! This was a belief gaining greater currency every day, against which Paul warns Timothy at a later stage of his advice (Chap. 6.20-21.) More particularly Paul combats this thought in his letter to the Colossians. Heathen philosophers had claimed that there were many intermediary ranks of intelligences between the highest authority (whatever its name may be locally) and the level of brutish carnal man. Some initiates into these things claimed inner knowledge (*gnosis*) of these ascending and descending ranks, and by their activities some of these thoughts had invaded the Colossian church (Col. 2.8-20.) Heathen religions had many of these intermediaries, of which the lower interceded for their devotees before the higher, and the higher before the highest, till their prayers eventually reached the pinnacle of all power. For what did they intercede? For food, for raiment, for home, and homeland—for all those things that made up the round of life. The god who was accounted the dispenser of these things was their Preserver and Saviour. The intermediary who interceded on their behalf was their patron deity, and to both of these higher powers their crude reverence was expressed.

Paul had made contact with this pantheon of gods previously, notably at Athens, where among its numerous altars he found one inscribed to "an unknown God" (Acts 17.22-31.) Eliminating the whole hierarchy of these intermediaries, Paul told them "He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being".

Again at Lystra Paul had contact with a rude people which reacted immediately to his kindly act, (the healing of the impotent man) by naming the Apostles Jupiter and Mercury, (two among many of these intermediaries) before whom they would have done sacrifice. In his amazement and horror at such an unexpected consequence, Paul told them these things had come about because God had suffered the nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, though they worshipped and invoked their many gods, through their numerous intermediaries, it was not these gods but the Living God—the God who made heaven and earth—who had fed them. "*He did good, and gave you from heaven, rain and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness . . .*" (Acts 14.8-18.) God had sent His sun and rain upon both the just and the unjust, and had preserved the nations alive through the centuries. God had been, and still was, the Saviour of men—the Preserver and Maintainer of such life as there was in these rude barbaric times

of ignorance. It was to dispel some of this ignorance that Paul had been sent among the nations, to teach them that "*though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords (intermediaries) many . . . to us there is one God, the Father; of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord (one intermediate) Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we (made nigh to God) through Him.*" (1 Cor. 8.5-6.)

If God is thus the Provider and Saviour of all men through the bounties of all natural resources, we may easily understand a later reference to these self-same things when Paul says "*we trust in the Living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.*" (1 Tim. 4.10.) To the believer there was a 'plus' or 'special' factor. Something was common to believer and unbeliever alike; but something else was 'special' to him that accepted the message of the Living God. The whole creation was His charge, but saints were His peculiar care. The knowledge that the nations needed (whereby they might be saved) was that there was but one God—the Living God—and one Mediator between God and them, Himself having been (not a minor god) but a Man—a Man Who had given Himself a Ransom-price for all.

Timothy was being sent by Paul into Macedonia—a province in which the very notions against which he had apprised Timothy prevailed. Timothy was therefore fore-warned and put on his guard against what to expect when he arrived at his journey's end, and also what he ought to do to guard against giving unnecessary offence to the fickle susceptibilities of those exercising authority there.

That the Christian church should pray for power and opportunity to dispel the darkness of superstition in king and peasant alike in this present Age is readily understandable, but that they should pray to-day for the salvation of the unbeliever to be accomplished in the age to come (centuries ahead) is too hard to accept. The salvation open to all who could believe was a salvation from the darkness spread by the god of this world into the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ—a privilege open to all who had ears to hear, and to this end, instead of longer permitting the ages of gross darkness to run on unchecked, God had commanded all men everywhere to repent, to-day, for otherwise, if they did not repent, they would surely be judged in the Age to come by that man whom He had ordained and raised from the dead. No salvation other than this is indicated by Paul's language to Timothy. It is not a salvation that is universal; it is not a salvation that is eternal, apart from individual acceptance and belief.

The key to the right understanding of this reference to God our Saviour, who willeth that all

men should be saved, is found in that little word 'one', twice repeated, applied by Paul to both the Living God, and to His worthy Son. It implies, by comparison, the many gods of the heathen nations around, which, to the darkened minds of these people, were their protectors and Saviours. The salvation which God willed for them was their deliverance from the superstitious reverence paid to all these varying grades of gods, so that they might know Him as the one Universal and Living God—the provider for all men—and approach Him through Jesus Christ, His Well-beloved Son.

How apt is the statement of Paul to the Thessalonians (natives of the very country to which Timothy was being sent)—“... ye turned unto God, from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess. 1.9-10, R.V.) In so doing, the Thessalonians had become participants in both the ‘common’ and ‘special’ salvation, a privilege then open to all the nations and peoples everywhere, who would heed and obey the call of God to the Light, as the Thessalonians had done.

MORE ABOUT THE STORY OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

A reader, commenting on the short “Note on the story of Jairus' daughter” in the May issue, questions the accuracy of the statement that the word rendered “sleepeth” is never used in reference to death, and says “I would strongly suggest the contrary to the B.S.M. exegesis”. Since others may feel the same, the following study of the subject is presented for the consideration of all interested.

* * *

We have three versions of the story of Jairus' daughter, by Matthew, Mark and Luke respectively. This allows points of possible doubt to be examined by comparing what the three writers had to say on such.

When Jairus approached the Lord, he said, according to Matthew, “my daughter is even now dead”, and to Mark “my little daughter lieth at the point of death”, while Luke, telling the story, says “she lay a-dying”. Mark's Gospel is the earliest and to that extent the more likely to have preserved the truest memory of Jairus' actual words on that occasion. It is evident, however, that the girl was considered to be as good as dead if not actually so: perhaps Jairus had set out to come to Jesus fully expecting that he would not return to see her alive, and that the power of Jesus alone could restore her. “Come and lay thine hand upon her” he implored, “and she shall live”.

Whilst he was away, some change took place in the child's condition, for according to Mark (10.35) “While he yet spake (to Jesus) there came (from his house) certain which said “Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?” The girl was conscious when Jairus left her: he hoped that Jesus could restore her to health before life finally flickered out. When she relapsed into unconsciousness after his departure his servants sent after him saying in effect “Too late; she has died”. It seems that they, believing in Jesus' power to

restore the desperately sick to health, did not know or believe that He could also give life to one that was dead.

Jesus, hearing the words, said to Jairus (John 8.50) “Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole”. That expression is more consistent with the idea of a restoration to health than a restoration from the dead. There can be no doubt that Jesus, although He had not yet seen the child, by virtue of His Divine power was already quite aware of the exact position.

So He went to the house. So far we have no reason to believe that the child was dead apart from the evidence of those attending her and who had sent the message to Jairus. They may or may not have been mistaken. They honestly thought she was dead; but in such circumstances people have oft-times been mistaken, and this child may very well have lapsed into an unconscious state that could pass into death later on.

A careful comparison of the three accounts shows that Jesus entered the house with at least Peter, James and John, and encountered first the professional mourners and the family friends, who were weeping and wailing according to custom. It was to these that He made the remark “Why make ye this ado, and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.” And they laughed Him to scorn, Luke adding the remark “knowing that she was dead”. Ignoring the laughter, Jesus passed on into the inner room where the girl was lying, allowing only “Peter, and James, and John, and the father and mother of the maiden” to accompany Him, and there for the moment we must leave them while we consider that last remark.

“The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth.” The three evangelists give the same words: there is no difference. That fact points to a very vivid impression left on the memory of those who heard,

and who passed on what they heard so that in after times the Gospel writers should record the words. Matthew would probably have been there in the outer room: Mark, possibly. We can take it that Jesus did speak those exact words. And what did they mean? What were they intended to convey? They were all under the impression that the girl was dead, and they were weeping therefore. "Do not weep" said Jesus "for she is not dead, she is only sleeping." It is true that death is spoken of metaphorically as a sleep, because it is to be ended by a resurrection, an awakening to life in the last day: but the mourners in Jairus' house knew that as well as we do. They had no need to be told that death was a sleep. And if that was the sense in which Jesus used the term "sleep" He would not have committed the inaccuracy of saying "the maiden is not dead but sleepeth", for, in that case, she *was* dead, even though death be a sleep. He would more properly have said, "The maiden is dead, but death, remember, is but a sleep" as He did do in effect in the later case of Lazarus.

But what reason is there for thinking that Jesus intended other than the plain everyday meaning of the words He used? So far we find no evidence to suggest that the child was dead beyond the impression that the mourners had. Jesus corrected that: He said "the maiden is not dead". "And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead" (Luke 8.53).

This is rather more definite. So far, of course, no physician had certified her to be dead: only the people in the house had come to that conclusion: but they were so certain that when Jesus declared the opposite they were incredulous. It is only Luke who adds the words "knowing that she was dead". "Knowing" in this verse is the Greek *eidotes*, meaning to perceive by any of the human senses, i.e. by sight, sound, touch, etc. In other words, their "knowledge" was based on the physical evidence: it "appeared" to them that she was dead and the word "knowing" would more correctly have been rendered by our "perceiving". So far as they could discern, she *was* dead: but they were not infallible. They could but go on appearances, and Jesus could see deeper than they.

Now as to the word "sleepeth". It is the Greek *katheudo*, and in no case where it appears in the New Testament does it signify other than natural sleep. (Its occurrence in 1 Thess. 5.10 'whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him' is held sometimes to indicate a reference to death: but it has first to be established that Paul is talking of death here. Up to this verse he is certainly talking of another kind of metaphorical sleep, the bemused condition of slothful believers: 'let us not sleep as

do others'.) Anyone may confirm this for himself. The places where *katheudo* is used are

Matt. 26.40, 43/ 8.24/ 9.24/ 13.25/ 25.5/ 26.45.

Mark 4.38/ 4.27/ 5.39/ 13.36/ 14.37, 40, 41.

Luke 8.52/ 22.46. Eph. 5.14. 1 Thess. 5.6, 7, 10.

The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, does use the word *katheudo* to refer to the dead, on some occasions, but usually in the sense of their *lying-down* in the grave, and hence the word is often rendered "lie". It is also used for "lie down" in other connections. Here are a few examples.

Psa. 88.5 "Free among the dead (nekros) like the slain that lie (*katheudo*) in the grave.

Dan. 12.2. "Many of them that sleep (*katheudo*) shall arise."

Gen. 28.13. "The land whereon thou liest"

2 Sam. 12.3. "And lay in his bosom".

2 Chron. 12.16 "Rehoboam slept with his fathers".

From all the evidence then, it does seem that no reason exists for thinking that our Lord meant anything else than His words implied. The mourners' belief that the girl was dead, although natural under the circumstances, was wrong. She was not yet dead: and taking her by the hand the Lord said to her "Little girl, arise". It was at that point that His healing power was exerted and the miracle performed. The dying child came back from the shades, the disease from which she was suffering was cured in an instant, her spirit came again, and she arose and walked straightway. Practical as ever, Jesus instructed that she be given something to eat. The expression "her spirit came again" is the natural one that would occur to the mind of those witnesses who saw the processes of life re-commence in the still form.

There is in the Bible no promise of grace in advance of the need. God does not say He will put strength into our arm for the battle while we are in quiet peace and the battle is yet far off. When the conflict is at hand the strength will be given. He did not divide the Jordan's waters while the people were yet in their camps, nor even as they began to march toward the river. The wild stream continued to flow as the host moved down the bank, even until the feet of the priests had been dipped in the water. This is the constant law of Divine help. Many Christians worry because they cannot see the way open and the needs supplied far in advance of their steps. Shall we not let God provide and have faith in Him?

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

TRUST

*If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all thy ways,
He'll give thee strength whate'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days;
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that nought can move.*

*Only be still, and wait His leisure
In cheerful hope, with heart content
To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
And all-discerning love have sent;
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who chose us for His own.
Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving;
So do thine own part faithfully.
And trust His word—though undeserving,
Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted Him indeed.*

HEAVENLY WISDOM

The time will come when many who are highly esteemed amongst men for their wisdom will be seen to have been foolish, and many who are now esteemed fools for Christ's sake and for the Gospel's sake, will be seen to have been truly wise in choosing the heavenly things, and in being willing to surrender the earthly things for the attainment of the heavenly; because it is impossible to serve God and Mammon.

LEARNING

We have wonderful need of learning of Christ. There are things in the New Testament that Christian people have got to learn, and they cannot learn them anywhere except from the Lord Jesus. You cannot learn history except from God. You may know who reigned a few years ago, but it is God only Who tells us how the world began, and how sin entered into the world, and how salvation comes.

LIVING IN HEAVEN

In a deep sense it is possible for me to be living in heaven, even while still on earth. My heart can be resting in the peace of heaven; my mind seeing by its light; my soul drawing strength and inspiration from that other world. I shall feel increasingly that that is the world to which I really belong, and that the things of that world matter most to me.

SYMPATHY

Although we are not of the world, we are very definitely in it and cannot avoid being affected by its troubles. And this condition, it seems to us, is just as it should be. The closer we approach to the likeness of our Lord, the deeper must become our sympathies with poor stumbling, blinded mankind, and the more intense must become our longing to see it delivered from the bondage of corruption and ushered into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. In proportion as we become imbued with the sympathetic, compassionate spirit of Jesus, to that same extent are we impelled to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with the sad-hearted. As for shutting our eyes and our ears to the sights and sounds that attend the passing of an old and the birth of a new order, in order that we may concentrate exclusively upon the working out of our own individual salvation, such a course would seem to us to be the very opposite to that spirit which their fellowship with the Lord engenders in the hearts of his followers.

PRAYER

He that is much in prayer shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most that is busiest in this, which is our traffic with Heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence. He that sets oftenest these ships of desire, that makes the most voyages to that land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven on earth.

HE IS ABLE

*Fierce and dread the tempest gathers,
Dark clouds drift across our sky,
All around suspense and tumult,
Waves of trouble rising high.
But our trust is in Jehovah,
Who the wildest storm canst still;
God has promised to deliver—
He is able, and He will!*

*Day by day fresh suffering threatens,
Anxious thoughts of peril near,
Grief and pain of separation,
Loss of all we hold most dear,
Yet amidst the sharpest anguish
Perfect peace our hearts can fill
God has promised to deliver—
He is able, and He will.*

The Vision of Joel

AN EXPOSITION OF
THE BOOK OF JOEL

Chapter 7. The New Wine of the Kingdom

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the House of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." (3.18.)

This verse is full of Millennial imagery, the wine and milk of the Kingdom, and the River of Life. These symbols are found elsewhere in the Scriptures, separated. Here they are found combined. Here is our authority for linking them together in point of dispensational time and proclaiming to all and sundry that in that day, when the River of Life commences to flow again from the sanctuary of God, there will be wine and milk—the deep truths and the elementary truths of the Divine Plan, the things by which men may approach unto God, and enter into communion with Him, as well as the things by which men may learn to live their earthly lives acceptably and in conformity with His laws—without money, and without price.

It is Ezekiel to whom we are indebted for the clearest view of this Millennial river. Out from the Sanctuary that symbolises the Divine Government on earth during that Age (Ezek. 47) he saw a stream emerge, waters that rapidly widened and deepened as they pursued their onward course, until they became a mighty river, too wide and too deep to pass over. They flowed down into the Dead Sea, and healed its barren waters, so that fish could live; and upon the banks of that life-giving river grew every kind of tree whose fruit was good for food and whose leaves were potent for healing. Fitting symbol, this, of the life-giving influences that will flow out from the administration of the Lord Christ and His glorified Church "in that day". Small wonder that men will cry "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (Isa. 25.9.) To Ezekiel, the vision was as a restoration of man's lost Eden home; he saw once again the mystic river that watered the garden, and the Trees of Life in the midst of the garden, lost to mankind for so many weary centuries, now restored before his wondering eyes.

Zechariah, in a later day, saw the same thing. Like Joel, he saw it in connection with, and immediately following, Israel's spectacular deliverance from their enemies. He had stood and watched (Zech.

14) the investment of Jerusalem by the hostile forces, and the Lord go forth as when He fought in the day of battle, and the disruption of those forces by the power of that going forth. And then he had seen the living waters come forth out of Jerusalem—not a perennial winter stream to be dried up by the summer's heat, but a sparkling river bearing fertility and life to every thing and every one within its reach all the year round; "*in summer and in winter shall it be.*" So these three prophets joined together in giving testimony to the means by which God will in the coming Age bring life and health to the nations, so that the Revelator, centuries later, was able to revive their vision in his own words. When, in his turn, he came to close the last book of the Bible with his inspired description of what God will do at the end, he saw "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb—on either side of the river, the tree of life—and there shall be no more curse." (Rev. 22.1-3.)

The "*valley of Shittim*", as the translators have it, is the "Valley of Acacias." (*Shittim* is the Hebrew word for acacia, as students of the Tabernacle will remember.) The Valley of Acacias was the name given to the terraces on either side of the Jordan, for a considerable distance above its entrance into the Dead Sea, which in ancient times (and to some extent in modern times also) were thickly forested with acacias. There is a striking parallel with Zechariah's vision here, for he also sees the river of life issuing forth toward the "east country"—this same district—and thus finding its way by means of the Jordan into the Dead Sea. One cannot help feeling that both prophets saw the same thing in vision, and described it each in his own words, and one wonders, is it possible that they did each enjoy a foresight of a literal stream that is to flow thus, "in that day"—without in any way deprecating the symbolic interpretation of the passage, which to us is in any case the more important?

In the natural picture, the flowing of the great "fountain"—not just a single spring; the Hebrew *ma'an* means a collection of many springs gushing forth a great quantity of water at one place, as in the "fountains of the great deep" in the story of the Flood in Gen. 7.11—and its consequence in the rivers of Judah all flowing with waters (Joel 3.18) would, of course, result in abundant harvests of grapes, and consequent wine, and ample pasturage

for flocks, and consequent milk. No wonder then, that Joel says the mountains would "drop down" new wine—so heavily laden with prolific vines would they be—and the hills flow with milk, so rich in flocks and herds would they be in their turn. All this is due in the first place to the River of Life flowing out from the house of the Lord. That then must be why Isaiah cries out so triumphantly (55.1) "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters—come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." It is in this chapter that the spiritual application of the material illustration is so clearly seen, for Isaiah goes on to say, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you—"

That is the call of the Millennial Age. That is the work of the Millennial Age, to offer the symbolic wine and milk to all men, without money and without price, and exhort them to "listen" and "hear", that their souls may live.

The insistence that all this is "without money and without price" may quite reasonably be taken as an indication of the abundance of wine and milk that the living waters will have brought forth. It will become as common and free as the air we breathe, and the sunshine which warms us. That, at any rate, will be true of the wine and milk of the Millennial Age.

At last the prophet turns his reluctant eyes away from the fair vision, and looks upon something else.

"Egypt shall be a desolation" he cries, "and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land." What kind of Millennial Age is this, that witnesses prosperity and life on the one hand, and desolation and death on the other? Has God His favourites after all, and are Egypt and Edom to be punished eternally for their oft-times misguided and ignorant opposition to the children of Judah?

Certainly this verse cannot be literally fulfilled, for neither Egypt nor Edom now exist. (The Egypt of our own day is, racially, a different people altogether.) Both nations went into oblivion many centuries ago. And there, of course, is the answer. In that day when Israel shines forth resplendent, purified and converted, as God's earthly missionary nation, the Egypt and the Edom who persecuted them in the days of their weakness, will not, as nations, be there. The nations that cried "let us cause them to cease from being a people on the face of the earth" have themselves ceased to exist as nations (of course the individuals composing those nations will share in the general resurrection and trial for life which all men will enjoy in that day,) but Israel, whom they oppressed, is enthroned forever. That is the Divine decree, and who shall say that it is not a just decree? "Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed,

for,
The Lord Dwelleth in Zion."

THE END

SUCH AS I HAVE

When the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple expectantly asked alms of Peter and John, how his heart must have sunk within him as he heard the first words of the reply, "Silver and gold have I none". They might be going to offer him words of comfort and advice, but what he needed was money, the only practical avenue of help he could foresee. Yet the "such as I have" that Peter was able to give far exceeded anything within the hopes and expectations of this life-stricken cripple, changing his despair and disappointment into abounding joy and praise to God. And all men glorified God for this miracle of healing, for the man was above forty years old, and had been crippled from birth. God had granted him, not the thing he had asked, but more than he had ever asked or thought.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

BETHESDA

Every spiritual movement, awakening and stirring up faith in its hearers, subsides after a time, often in a few decades. The waves become smaller, the activity gradually lessens and finally ceases. The Pool of Bethesda is again quiet and motionless as before. High hopes which led to sacrifice and work of self-denying love have lost their force. Enthusiasm wanes, the joy of service tires and soon faith itself weakens. Only a few remain in the joy of their first love.

Any artificial agitation of the waters, by the will or work of man, can never lead to anything. It must be an angel or messenger of God who comes to bring movement to the waters. Once such a movement has been exhausted, those who are blind or lame or paralysed must simply wait until another movement comes to bring anew the hope of healing.

(Jerusalem)

The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand

AN OUTLINE FOR THE NEWLY INTERESTED

It was at a time of crisis like the present that one of the most singular figures of history came to the front. John the Baptist was a man of obscure parentage, the son of a priest, brought up in a country village and never moving more than a hundred miles from his birthplace. But his influence upon world history and the fates of nations has been tremendous. The principles he enunciated, the moral teaching he expounded; above all, the startling declaration which formed the chief burden of his message, all have been proven true, gloriously true or tragically true according to the notice men have or have not taken of them, throughout all centuries since his day.

He was born two thousand years ago, and was executed by a tyrant whilst still a young man. He was thirty before he came into the public eye, but within six months he had an entire province of the Roman Empire waiting on his words. His short-lived appearance prepared men for the coming of the greatest teacher the world has known—Jesus of Nazareth! But the impetus of that forward move which accompanied the birth of Christianity has spent itself, and now the world we know faces an even greater crisis than that which destroyed Judea two thousand years ago.

But the same message can save us! Human nature has not changed since those far off days; the evils from which we suffer are due to the same human failings and weaknesses; it needs but a re-examination of the message proclaimed by John and its application to ourselves and our world to produce the same results. The message of the Baptist is the message for every man and woman to-day!

What is that message?

Expressed in twentieth century English, it is simply:

*Turn from evil;
Believe the good news; for:—
Kingship from above is imminent.*

Does the world need such an appeal?

The effects of society's disease are manifest. Crime, vice and immorality are rampant and increasing. Respect for law is vanishing; the most elementary rights of the weaker are habitually denied them by the stronger. Fundamental qualities such as self-denial and generosity are discounted as signs of weakness; selfishness, self-seeking and greed are

exalted in their place. Honour in business and political life has given place to intrigue, bribery and corruption. The social fabric is undermined by laxity in the marriage relationship, dishonesty in daily life and excessive addiction to debasing pleasures and diversions. Twenty-year-old boys shoot policemen and gangs of children rob houses. A dry rot permeates society and causes grave concern to all serious observers. And the question comes "Why?"

The peoples of earth—speaking now more particularly of the so-called "civilised" peoples—have renounced God and in the main no longer acknowledge His supremacy. The moral principles of the Bible have been cast aside and many men take whatever course their inclinations, desires and passions dictate. There is no real belief in judgment to come, or even in the certainty or likelihood of retribution for their crimes. Therefore many indulge themselves according to their fancy without thought of the consequences to themselves or their fellows.

But the Bible still proclaims the basic principles of creation: that which is evil cannot endure; it may subsist, uneasily, for a time, but it must eventually pass away. It bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. That is why St. Paul says in one place "the wages of sin is death" and Ezekiel in another "the soul that sinneth, it shall die", and St. Peter, referring to the order of things instituted by man upon earth, speaks of a heaven and earth of evil repute, which now exists, being destroyed as by fire and replaced by a new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The operation of this Divine law implies retribution, judgment, and so a secondary maxim is propounded: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap".

The world is reaping a bitter harvest of its own sowing. The ills from which we suffer have their origin in the things we or our fathers have done in times past. There is no escape; it is inevitable that the world should enter into this period of judgment and suffer the calamities that must come upon it. It is futile to blame God. We were created with ability to govern ourselves along lines of benevolence and equity, but we have elected to take the easier way and must find for ourselves that it leads only to destruction. God means to save; He does not will that His purpose in creation should be frustrated; but men must learn their lesson first.

Now although there can be no universal deliverance from the judgment of this world, there can be, and is, individual deliverance from the state of mind and way of life that has led to this state of things. That is the first step. Multiplied a thousand, a million, ten million fold, it will bring world judgment to an end and usher in an eternity of peace. But it can only be attained by means of repentance.

The word "repentance" is associated with the emotional fervour of nineteenth century revivalism, conjuring up visions of the old-fashioned "penitent form" in mission halls and impassioned appeals to leave one's sins at the foot of the cross. Now this does enshrine a fundamental principle, but it is not the whole meaning of the word. To "repent" means to change the mind, to repudiate a previous course of action, to enter upon a new way. Applied to men and women conscious that all is not well with the world in which they live, nor with themselves, it means to consider what there is in one's own way of life that is out of accord with the principles of rightness, and to resolve that those things shall be banished and a new way of life adopted, a way which shall have as its object a due acknowledgement of the supremacy of God, and the well-being and happiness of one's fellows. Since no such resolve can be put into effect to any appreciable degree without close attention to the examples and precepts of Jesus Christ, it follows that such repentance must of necessity involve belief in the efficacy and integrity of His teaching and acceptance of His leadership in life.

This of itself is not enough. Many have sought to model their lives after the example of great philosophers and teachers, becoming powerful influences for good in consequence; but they have not banished the evil that is in the world, and nothing short of the elimination of evil can solve the problems which distress mankind. The intellectual acceptance of Jesus and His message involves something more than any other teacher demands. Jesus claimed to have come from above, from God, to bring His world-saving message. He declared the necessity of His death as a man in order that men might be saved, and also His intention of returning again to earth after the lapse of a pre-determined period of time—during which the seed of His teaching was to germinate and spread among the nations—to complete His work of abolishing evil and bringing all men into fellowship with God. If Jesus is to be accepted as a reliable guide to a new way of life all this must be accepted too. If He was mistaken in this theological and eschatological aspect of His message, forming as it does the whole framework within which His ethical teaching is set and upon which that depends, then He was a misled and completely deluded man

and no leader in whom men to-day, with the problems they have to solve, can afford to repose confidence.

Jesus was not mistaken! He came, as He said, from God. He is, as He claimed, the Son of God, and in His Divinity He is supreme over all created things, and will come again in the glory of that Divinity, a glory not perceptible by human sense but none the less real, to finish His work on earth. There can be no physical or intellectual proof of all this, for these are matters transcending human values and means of measurement. The proof comes *after*, and not before, the repentant individual has "turned" to serve God. Having accepted Christ, not only as a guide to conduct and instructor in morals, but a personal Deliverer from sin and the effects of sin, he becomes increasingly conscious of a new and different sphere of understanding which advances satisfactory and convincing proofs not capable of demonstration by the materialistic arguments of every day.

Repentance, then, *does* involve coming to Jesus in submission as to a Master and leader. It *does* involve claiming Him and accepting Him as a personal Saviour and subordinating one's whole life and interests to His service. The object is not merely that one may be "saved from the wrath to come". God does not look with approval on people whose sole desire is to save their own skins, and advance their own interests. The world has seen too much of that already. Rather should one come to God in dedication of life to be used by Him in the further reclamation of the world from evil. It implies service, and it implies hard work. The day set aside by God for this purpose is the still future Millennial Age, during which all men, including the returned dead, will be taught the ways of God and be led to choose between good and evil, and decide their future destiny for themselves. Nevertheless there is much that can be done in this present day, before God breaks through into human affairs with His promised Millennial Kingdom. That is why the repentance and dedication to Christian service of any man or woman has an immediate effect upon the prevalence of evil. It is one more blow struck for right dealing and right living, one more influence making for peace and rectitude in the affairs of men and nations, leading immediately to some mitigation, however slight, of the troubles that now afflict mankind.

This then is God's call. "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things*". (Acts 3; 19-21).

Will you do this? Will you, in the privacy of your own heart, give yourself unreservedly to the Lord Jesus Christ, in full repentance of the past and complete acceptance of His death suffered on your behalf? He will guide your next step; it will be into a new and fully satisfying way of life that will

bring you personal happiness and content, and make you a unit in the force that is going to abolish evil and bring in everlasting righteousness.

This article is available in leaflet form. See announcement on first page of this issue.

HIS WAY IS BEST

Whatever may be our reward, those of us who have consecrated our lives to do the Will of God realise, in the closing hours of this Age, that His over-ruling is most necessary for the development of our Christian characters. Being "not of this world" (John 17.18.) although we still remain here and in a state of imperfection, we know that transformation has to take place, that adjustments have to be made. Just as a growing child we have to reach maturity, continually progressing until we become acceptable to God.

We then look to Him as our teacher, for many lessons have we to learn. The rough edges have to be removed, until we attain the brightness of diamonds, as He will accept nothing under perfection. Looking into our hearts He can detect any weakness that we may have, also the strong points, and He knows just how to apply tests which will bring about changes in us and strengthen our former weaknesses.

Watching over us with His infinite mind and His vast and immeasurable foreknowledge, He can manoeuvre us into such positions that the results

are sure to prove effective and pleasing and satisfy His purpose.

In our prayers we remember all those of kindred mind and meditate upon their upbuilding. God understands and can see their needs, that some of us need to acquire more patience and to become more tolerant, others to possess more love and care for those of like mind, or perhaps it may be grace, or to inherit meekness, (*"Blessed are the meek."* Matt. 5.5.) while others need to endure all kinds of temporary disappointments, others to learn to forgive those who trespass against us, and still others, to place more faith and trust in Him.

Being blessed with this guidance, which is incomparable, we become conscious of the fact that He can foresee all things, and is therefore many moves ahead of us.

So if we acknowledge our Heavenly Father in all His ways, we shall find we are being shaped day by day more in the likeness and in the spirit of Him we serve, and that always, His way is best.

(Young Bible Students Messenger)

TREES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In their changeable beauty trees possess a peculiar advantage over all other forms of vegetation. Though they are always ornamental, yet, whether viewed alone, or seen in wild sylvan masses, they look the loveliest in Nature's decay. Fair are the woods in spring, when first their leafy boughs unfold the bright and exquisitely tender verdure of a new life. Fairer still they seem in the deep beauty of their summer foliage, with its tints of richest green, extending cool and inviting shades and filling the air with the soft sweet music of their rustling leaves. But fairest by far are the trees in the fall of the year. Well has it been said, "As the golden Autumn steals over the forest comes the period of its richest glory; that in which the painter revels, vainly tasking his palette for its imitation; and though these bright hues are the tokens of decay, the foliage has a glory in its approaching dissolution unknown to it in youth and vigour." Then the birch shines one mass of burnished gold. The beech is resplendent with brightest tints of orange. The "ensanguined dogwood" after a purple stage passes into the most

intense crimson. Many rich brown hues adorn the oak; the maple family assume a splendid mantle of variegated colour; while, in addition to these

"A thousand tints

which Flora, dressed in all her pride of bloom, could scarcely equal, decorates the groves."

Thus is it in the life of a believer. It is brighter and more lovely towards the close.

"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

He may truly take up the language of the Apostle: "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." Bright as he appears in the springtime of conversion, or in the summer beauty of developed Christian character, it is in the autumn hours of approaching decay that the child of God is seen in his fairest colours. His last days are his best, for then his departing spirit seems to receive a hallowing foretaste of the glory it is about to enter.

(Selected.)



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

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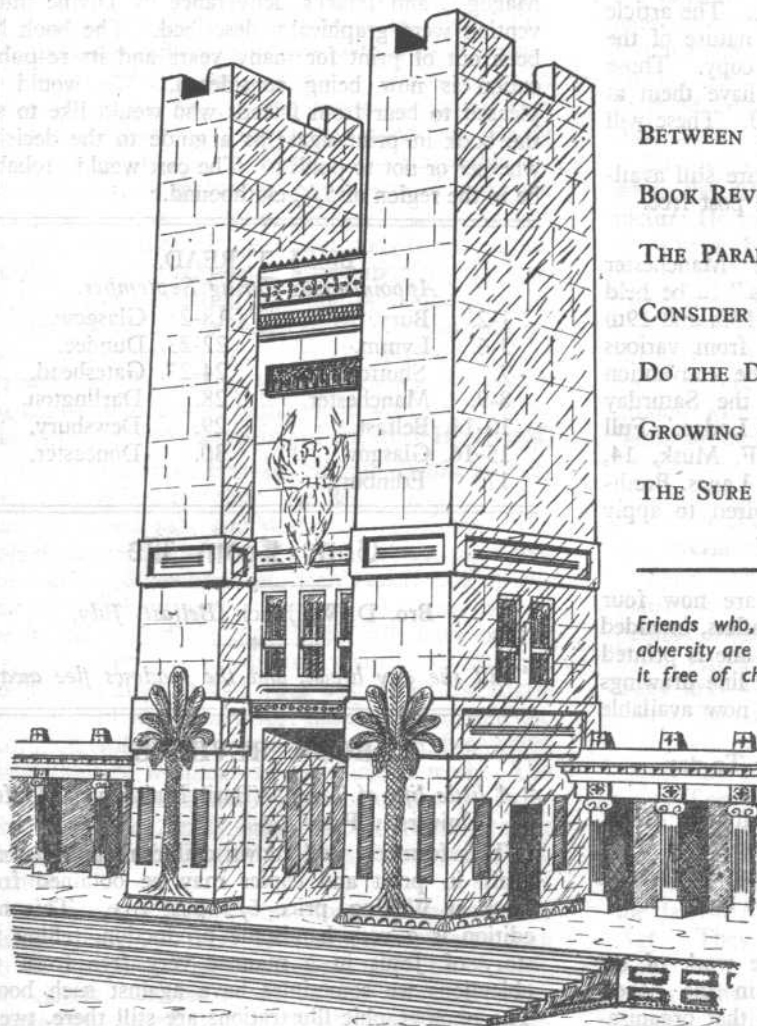
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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



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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BETWEEN OURSELVES

We would acknowledge with sincere appreciation the gift of 10/- from a North Midlands town, accompanied by the request that acknowledgment should be made in these columns.

* * *

Part of the article "*Do the Dry Bones Live?*" on page 103 of this issue is from the booklet "*Jacob's Trouble*", which was first published some years ago and is very appropriate to the events of the present time. As announced last month, a substantial portion of the stock of this booklet has been made available at especially reduced rates to encourage its widespread use at this time. The article in this issue gives a fair idea of the nature of the book to those who have not seen a copy. Those desiring copies for distribution may have them at 4/- for 15, 7/- for 30 or 16/- for 90. These will be in the old style printed blue cover.

Single copies in the new art cover are still available at the normal price of 10d. each post free.

* * *

Announcement is made by the Manchester Council of an "Assembly for Witness" to be held in that city on Saturday and Sunday, 18th and 19th September. A number of brethren from various parts of the country will address the convention sessions, and the public lecture on the Saturday evening will be given by Bro. A. J. Lodge. Full details may be obtained from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rossendale, Lancs. Brethren requiring accommodation are desired to apply for same at as early a date as possible.

* * *

As mentioned last month, there are now four numbers in the series of illustrated leaflets, intended for use as volunteer literature. Each one is printed in green and black and illustrated by line drawings and photo reproductions. The titles now available are as follows:—

No. 201. The Bible, the Book for To-day.

No. 202. The Dawn of a New Era.

No. 203. The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

No. 204. The Sure Word of Prophecy.

They can be supplied, assorted as may be desired, at 1/- per doz., or 6/- per 100, post free.

* * *

Friends who are interested in the work of the Jewish Christian Community and in the paper, "*Jerusalem*", will like to know that that organisation is holding its Autumn Conference at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1, on Sunday, September 12th, at 2.30 and 5.30 p.m. Arrangements have been made for the provision of tea

between the sessions. The progress of the Community's work will be reviewed and the general situation discussed. Anyone who wishes to attend will be welcome, and it is desired that all such notify their intention to Mr. H. Panteny, 79, Rams-gill Drive, Eastern Avenue, Newbury Park, Essex.

* * *

Some of our readers will remember the poetic work, written and published many years ago by the late Bro. W. H. Pepworth, entitled "*The Coming of the Kingdom*", in which the regathering of Israel, the descent of the hosts of "Gog and Magog", and Israel's deliverance by Divine intervention were graphically described. The book has been out of print for many years and its re-publication is now being considered. We would be pleased to hear from friends who would like to see the book in print again as a guide to the decision whether or not to publish. The cost would probably be in the region of 5/-, clothbound.

Bro. J. T. READ.

Appointments during September.

1-2.	Bury.	18-21.	Glasgow.
3-6.	Lymm.	22-23.	Dundee.
7.	Shotton.	24-27.	Gateshead.
8-9.	Manchester.	28.	Darlington.
10-14.	Belfast.	29.	Dewsbury.
15-16.	Glasgow.	30.	Doncaster.
17.	Edinburgh.		

Gone From Us

✱

Bro. D. W. Black (Belfast) July.

✱

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

BOOK REVIEWS

"*A little life of Jesus*" (Basil Matthews). Oxford University Press, 6/-.

This formerly well-known children's book is once again in print and copies may be obtained from stock at Welling, price 6/9 post free. This new edition is a very handsome production, telling the story of Jesus in a manner very free from the objections we sometimes have against such books. The photographic illustrations are still there, twelve of them, and an innovation is a coloured plate for frontispiece. The book consists of 204 pages, bound red cloth, gold blocked, with coloured dust wrapper. A good present for children of 8 to 14 years.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAG-NET

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew contains six of Jesus' parables, none of which are recorded by any of the other Evangelists. Two of these parables, those of the Sower and of the Wheat and Tares, are recounted at length, together with our Lord's explanations of them; two more, those of the Leaven and the Drag-net, at not such length and in one case without explanation, and the remaining two, those of the Treasure hid in the field and the Pearl of great price, with such brevity as to suggest that Matthew has contented himself with merely a passing reference to them. The few words given to these latter two must surely not represent all that Jesus said about them, for as they stand they hardly tell a story at all. It might very reasonably be thought that, as spoken by Jesus, each of these six word-pictures was as fully detailed as is the second of the series, that of the Wheat and Tares. Quite possibly, too, Jesus gave an explanation to each one, as He did in connection with that particular parable. In the absence of any record of such explanation we have to discern for ourselves the purport of the Master's words, judging of His meaning by seeking an explanation that is harmonious with the symbols He employed and the setting of the story He related.

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

The physical picture which forms the substance of the parable must have been common-place enough to the disciples. Fishers themselves, several of them, or closely associated with the fishing activities carried on around the Sea of Galilee as the remainder of them must have been, they would all readily have entered into the Master's thoughts. So often had they themselves assisted in just such an operation, going out in their boats to extend the great net

over a wide stretch of water and coming steadily toward land, sweeping into the confines of their net all living creatures in their path. Then the strenuous task of hauling the heavy net, with its living load, out of the water and up the beach to a place where they could sit down and begin to sort their catch. With what satisfaction and delight would they watch the growing pile of good fish in the baskets; with what contempt toss the worthless ones down the beach toward the water, not caring whether they went back into the lake or not, so quickly were they forgotten and the attention turned to those better specimens that were the objects of their quest.

But Jesus introduced a new set of ideas even while the disciples' minds were still busy with the picture He had drawn for them. Not the close of a day's work, but the end of an Age! Not fishermen, but angels! Not the casting back into the sea, but into a furnace of fire! These symbols belong to an altogether different range of thought; the simple story was, after all, only a means to an end; now they must perforce turn their attention to another background with which they were at any rate equally familiar, the knowledge and instruction that had been drilled into them from childhood concerning the coming Day when God would rise up to make an end of evil and evildoers, and usher the righteous into everlasting bliss.

There are four main elements in the brief explanation given by Jesus, and to understand the parable aright we must enquire what these elements stood for in the Jewish minds of the disciples. They are:—

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

The disciples knew nothing of that three-fold "end of the Age" which is so familiar to New Testament students to-day—the respective endings of the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age and the Millennial Age. They knew of one Age only, the Age in which they lived, and which they believed was to be brought to an end by the appearance of the Messiah and His holy ones, His angels, the destruction of all the wicked in a furnace of fire, and the exaltation of all the righteous to reign on earth with Him forever. That was the orthodox expectation of Jewry at our Lord's Advent; it had been

so for several centuries previously, and when Jesus explained this parable in these terms that is how the disciples must have understood it. The drag-net pictured the Messiah's gathering all people before Him for judgment, the casting into the furnace on the one hand and the gathering into vessels on the other pictured the final fate of the wicked and eternal salvation of the righteous. Viewed thus, the parable shows, in a general sense, the work of God amongst mankind during the Messianic reign, ignoring the fact that there was first to be the selection of the "Church". The disciples, at that time, were quite unaware that there was to be any such special feature of the Plan. That knowledge came, in its fullness, only at Pentecost.

It is important to a right understanding of the parable to realise that our Lord is here speaking of the final destruction of the incorrigibly wicked. His reference to the "angels" casting the worthless into a "furnace of fire" is conclusive on that point, for that particular allusion was one that must have been very familiar to his hearers, well versed as they were in the religious literature of their day. Although that literature was not of Divine authority as is our own New Testament it was nevertheless held in high repute amongst them and almost served them as the New Testament serves us. In this literature there are frequent references to the casting of the wicked into the furnace of fire, and of judgment executed by the returning Messiah and His "angels", or messengers. Perhaps the most well-known of such passages is the one quoted in part by Jude from the Book of Enoch. *"The Holy Great One will come forth from his dwelling, and the eternal God will tread upon the earth, and appear in the strength of his might from the heaven of heavens; . . . and there shall be a judgment upon all; but with the righteous he will make peace, and will protect the elect . . . and behold! he cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly, and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."* (I Enoch 1. 1-9, Jude 14-15.) This passionate belief in the certainty of Divine judgment is expressed more eloquently in the Book of Enoch than anywhere else, and it is most probably from this source that Jesus drew the illustrations for many of His parables. *"The holy Lord will come forth with wrath and chastisement to execute judgment upon earth"* cries the unknown writer *"and they shall be cast into the judgment of fire, and shall perish in wrath and in grievous judgment for ever"* . . . *"Woe to you,*

ye sinners, on account of the words of your mouth; in blazing flames burning worse than fire shall ye burn . . ."

But we should expect to see this parable in more detailed and possibly more accurate form than did the disciples, for we have the advantage of a much more detailed knowledge of the ages and dispensations marked out in the Divine Plan. That period of time which to the disciples was one Age, terminated by the "Last Day" and the destruction of all evil, has to us become three Ages, known generally as the Jewish Age, terminated by the ending of Jewish national existence forty years after the Crucifixion; the Gospel Age, terminated by "Armageddon" the Second Advent, and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom upon earth; and the Millennial Age, terminated by the destruction of the incorrigibly sinful and the bestowal of everlasting life upon all of redeemed and perfected humanity. The Parable of the Drag-net refers to the end of an Age, but to which of these three Age endings does it apply?

The expression "end of the world" (*aionos*, age) refers sometimes to one and sometimes to another of these Ages. Thus Heb. 9. 26 *"Once in the end of the world hath he (Christ) appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"* refers obviously to the end of the Jewish Age, the time of the First Advent. So also must 1 Cor. 10. 11 *"They are written for our admonition (the early Church) upon whom the ends of the world (ages) have come"*. At the other extreme we have 1 Cor. 15. 24 *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father"* referring undoubtedly to Jesus' surrender of His Millennial kingship at the close of His Mediatorial work, at the end of the Millennial Age. Then there are such words as Matt. 24. 3 *"What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?"* and Matt. 24. 14 *"This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness, and then shall the end come"* clearly, whether the disciples realised the fact or not, applying to the end of the Gospel Age and the time of the Second Advent. To which of these three Age-endings shall the judgment of the Drag-Net parable be applied?

The nature of the story may afford an indication. It is a picture of the taking of fish, and fish in large quantities at that. The "fishers" are the angels, the "holy ones" who appear with the Messiah in returning glory. The general setting therefore would seem to be after the Second Advent has taken place, when the "angels" are equipped and qualified for their work. But who are these "angels" who appear so often in association with

the returning Messiah at His Second Advent? The word, of course, merely means messengers; to the disciples, who knew of no Divine messengers save the glorious beings who constantly wait on the presence of God, the words of Jesus could only conjure up visions of celestial visitants coming with Him to do His work. It could only have been after Pentecost that they realised the great truth that they themselves, if faithful, would be among that triumphant company that is commissioned to do the work of God upon earth during the next Age. This is an important matter. It is sometimes suggested that the angels of the heavenly courts are referred to in passages such as this; but how can this be so? Is not the Church, glorified and made like her Lord, "as he is", to enjoy this work and privilege? Do we not know that "the saints shall judge the world" . . . and shall even judge angels? The "holy ones" who at our Lord's Second Advent and throughout the entire thousand years of His Mediatorial reign are executing all His work for and amongst men, will be the "called, and chosen, and faithful" of this Age, raised to the glory of spiritual being, resplendent in their celestial bodies. To men on earth, of course, they will be as angels; angels of the highest possible order, the constant companions of the Lord Himself.

The universal gathering of the drag-net, therefore, well symbolises the world-wide work of the Millennial Age, and the use of fish as a symbol of humanity in the mass is appropriate and Scriptural. "*Man also knoweth not his time*" says the Preacher in Eccl. 9. 12 "*as the fishes that are taken in an evil net*". God is said to "make man as the fishes of the sea" in Hab. 1. 14, and Amos 4. 2 has a somewhat similar allusion. And more impressive, because nearer home, is the well-known expression of Jesus in Matt. 4. 19 "*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men*". It may well be concluded, therefore, that the towing of the drag-net through the sea pictures such a work in the future

day, and its being brought to shore, with the consequent separation of good and bad fish, the final judgment upon each individual man and woman as to their worthiness of everlasting life or meriting of eternal death.

Now what is the furnace of fire? Is it a refining and a purifying fire, from which that which is thrown into it will be taken, cleansed and perfected? Or is it a consuming fire, burning until all that has been cast into it is consumed into ashes and is as though it had never been? Clearly the latter. There is no suggestion that the worthless fish are subjected to some remedial treatment that renders them acceptable and fit for use after all. They are already beyond hope of being put to any useful purpose, and they are cast out to be destroyed, utterly and without hope. Here again is another pointer to the interpretation of the parable. It is only at the end of the Millennial Age that what might be termed the "wastage" of God's creation suffers the penalty of its failure to come into harmony with the Divine Will and reach up to the Divine ideals, and in consequence is utterly consumed by that fire which is kindled of God's wrath and burns unto the lowest depths (Jer. 15. 14). This is the fire of Divine condemnation on sin and sinners, and just as, in the picture, the fishermen cast the worthless fish away only when it was clear it could serve no useful purpose, so in the Age which God has appointed for the reconciliation of "whosoever will" among all men, none will be lost eternally until it has been abundantly demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt that the continued conscious existence of such could bring nothing but misery to themselves and to others. None will be cast out until God has exhausted every power at His command to bring them into harmony with those laws which are both the rules which God has ordained for life and the principles by which alone life can be sustained. And that, said Jesus, is what the Kingdom of Heaven in the next Age is going to be like.



Consider the Lilies

Some reflections on Jesus' words in Matt. 6. 28



Many and varied are the precious lessons taught by the Master during His earthly ministry, and they never grow old. To the true disciple of Christ they are ever new, ever fresh. Whether He taught by the seaside or on the mountains or by the wayside, as He walked and talked with His chosen Twelve, His words of wisdom and grace come to us vibrant with meaning, pulsating with life, full of strength and power, cheering, encouraging and blessing our hearts.

To the people whom the Master generally addressed, the matter of providing for the necessities of life was a very important one. He rarely had the very rich amongst His audience, generally the poor; and the poor in Palestine and other Eastern countries found it very difficult to obtain food and clothing. In many parts of the world to-day, especially in India, there are people who scarcely ever go to bed without going hungry; and to these

the necessities of life are a very important consideration.

Our Lord Jesus indicated that this was so in His time, saying that the important consideration with most people was, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" They were anxious and worried. "After these things do the Gentiles seek," said the Master. Their object in life was to procure food and raiment. That was the burden of their prayer. And even the Jews, though professedly the people of God, had not learned implicit trust in Him, but were to a large extent grasping after the material things, seeking chiefly worldly gain rather than the true riches. Our Lord said that His disciples were to realise that God knew what things they had need of before they asked Him, and should rest fully content in the matter of what God would provide them respecting their temporalities. Jesus wished them to be sure that God would so supervise their interests that they should not be in want of anything really good and needful to them.

This seems to be the whole lesson that our Lord was inculcating in bringing in this illustration from nature—"Consider the lilies of the field". It was a forceful reminder that the things of the Kingdom were the things of paramount importance, and that in seeking these things first, they might have the assurance that all needed earthly things should be theirs.

What is it that we are to consider about the lilies? "How they grow!" What does this mean? Jesus Himself answers, "They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these". That is, the lilies grow in a very reasonable way; they develop grace and beauty, and are adorned in robes of loveliness without putting forth unnatural, unusual stress or effort. They are not worried about growing. The lily does not wake up in the morning and say, "Now, I wonder if I can make another quarter of an inch to-day. I wonder if I shall be able to grow as fast and to look as beautiful as that lily over there; and I wonder what people will think about me". It simply assimilates what it can absorb from the earth, and from the atmosphere what God has provided for it there. It does not say, "I think that I shall go to another place, I cannot grow here", but it does the best it can wherever it happens to be.

The lilies of Palestine to which our Lord referred were not the flowers that we term lilies, but were of another plant family, and a very numerous species, growing everywhere. Those who are accustomed

to the flowers of Palestine point to a common reddish flower which they think was meant by "the lilies of the field".

Our lesson, then, as New Creatures, is that since we have given our hearts to the Lord we are not to be worried, anxious, about the things of the present life. Nor are we to be over-anxious regarding our spiritual growth. We are simply to do our best, and trust the growing to Him. But we are to be particularly engaged respecting the things God has promised us as New Creatures in Christ, that we may make our calling and election sure and attain to the glories which our Father has in reservation for those who love Him. If we give our attention to these things, the Master assures us, the Heavenly Father will so supervise our affairs that we shall not lack any necessity of a spiritual kind or of an earthly kind. He will give us whatever of spiritual blessings and of temporal blessing we need as spirit-begotten children of God that we may finish our course with joy.

We are not to interpret our Lord's words to mean that we are to neglect our proper duties in life; that He would not have us do any more spinning or toiling than the lilies do; that He would not have us labour with our hands and our brains in order to care for our family or home. Surely not, for these things are inculcated in the Word of God. Here, evidently, He is merely impressing us with the thought that while we are doing to the very best of our ability in harmony with the surroundings and conditions which God has provided for us, we are not to be worried. We are to be as free from anxious care as are the lilies, to be fully content and to look up in faith to our Heavenly Father, expecting and accepting His providential care and overruling in all our affairs and interests.

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soil, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable, temporal needs can be better obtained, He can arrange for it. He knows just what is good for us, best for us, temporally and spiritually. It is our part to look for His leadings, not attempting to take the helm into our own hands, nor concluding that the Lord will never change our conditions. If it is best for us that they shall be changed, He will change them, if we trust in Him; and surely, if we are His children, it is His will that we desire not our own! We are to be perfectly restful under whatever conditions or circumstances we find ourselves, restful in the thought, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him". (Matt. 6, 8.)

Will this not mean sometimes strong tests of faith and endurance, if the conditions of our lot are painful and hard to bear? It may be such; but if the Lord's providence does not for a time offer a way of escape, we may be sure that the test will prove one of the "all things" that will work out our good, if we submit sweetly to His will and wait for Him to point out a different way, if it shall seem best to Him. Let us as lilies of His planting bloom for the glory of our Heavenly Husbandman.

While Jesus tells us that we should ask, "Give us this day our daily bread" this is not a specification of what we would prefer to have in a temporal way. We are not to specify things that would be most pleasing to our palate. We are to leave that part to Him. We are merely to acknowledge that we are dependent upon Him, that we are waiting on His providence and will accept those things which

His Wisdom provides as proper for us in connection with the instructions of His Word.

So on we go, growing daily, happy and content in God, and preparing for the Kingdom; for Christians who cannot learn now, under present conditions, to trust in God, would probably not be able to learn this lesson under other conditions. Present conditions are especially helpful, indeed, for those who would cultivate trust, dependence upon the Lord. In this respect we see that the poor have an advantage over the rich; and it was those who were poor, like the lilies of the field, that our Lord Jesus was addressing in the words of our text. And it is to those who are poor in spirit, who realise their own impotency, who long for the rest and peace that Jesus alone can give, who come to Him for this rest, that all the Master's gracious promises and lessons of wisdom, comfort and instruction are given.

Do The Dry Bones Live?

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESENT EVENTS IN THE EAST?

The rapid succession of significant events in and around Palestine since the end of the war is of intense interest to all students of the Scriptures. God has promised that He will send for fishers and hunters to gather His earthly people into the land of their fathers. The fishing and the hunting has been going on now for a long time but still the land is not the home of a peaceful and prosperous nation, ready to God's hand for His purposes. At what point in prophecy do we stand to-day? Is Jerusalem still "trodden down of the Gentiles"? Will the new State of Israel frame its policies in accord with the ways of God, and so link its destinies more surely with that which is to come? Will it, on the other hand, become merely one of the "kingdoms of this world" and so have to give place to a better order of things that will more fully justify the high hopes with which Zionism, fifty years ago, first set out upon its troubled career?

We cannot yet answer all these questions. We do know that God cannot use a people unless that people is devoted and consecrated to His service and maintains implicit faith in Him. Nothing of that is at present to be seen in Palestine. And the land is not yet free! The Western powers have not relinquished their hold, even though British forces have been withdrawn and the Mandate has been terminated. UNO is as much a part of the

Gentile power as any Western kingdom or country, and UNO has Palestine in ward at the moment. And at this very time British officers are leading Arab legionaries into action against American citizens piloting planes on behalf of Israel. Trade is slowing down, war rages openly or secretly through the length and breadth of the land, and no man's life is safe. This is not the situation presented by the prophet Ezekiel when he described the happy state of the peaceable and contented nation against which the forces of Gog and Magog are to advance at the end. And so there is evidently a further stage in the development of these things, and we must continue to watch.

Thoughts such as these bring to the mind the fourth chapter of "Jacob's Trouble", first published in 1942, and which assumes added significance in the light of the events of 1948. Perhaps the reiteration of part of that chapter here will arouse and intensify the interest that is at least dormant in the hearts of all who are looking for great things in the Holy Land, and who know that some of the most convincing signs of the "End Time" will be associated with that part of the world.

Canaan—the land of merchants! Back in the far recesses of the past, behind the curtain of the centuries, there are seen dim shadows of that

ancient land where Babylonian, Egyptian and Cretan met to exchange the produce and the manufactures they had gathered from the widespread lands of their own continents. Here in this little strip of lowlying seaside country the trade of Asia, Africa and Europe was mingled, five thousand years ago. In consequence, the name "Canaan", originally meaning "the lowlands", acquired a new significance, so that "Canaanite" came to mean a merchant or a trader. As far back as history goes, we read of the land which in later times became the home of Israel, a place of trade and barter, a mart to which the eyes of all the world were turned. It was only some three hundred years ago that the rise of Western European influence deprived the "meeting place of three continents" of its proud position, and world trade came under the control, successively, of Portugal, Holland and England. It is not surprising, therefore, that Divine prophecy at least hints at a restoration of world trade in that centre from which it has been conducted for the major part of human recorded history. That hint is given in the 38th chapter of Ezekiel. "Thou shalt come", says the prophet, addressing the forces of the north quarters, "into the land that is brought back from the sword . . . to take a spoil, and to take a prey . . . upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, *which have gotten cattle and goods . . .*" (Ezek. 38. 8-12.) This regathered people will be the Holy Nation, settled peacefully and confidently in the Promised Land. The prophet pictures them as waxing exceedingly prosperous in all desirable things, this very prosperity exciting the envy of their enemies.

There are two remarkable statements in this chapter regarding the Holy Nation. One is that they are prosperous in temporal things, and the other that, despite the menace of their enemies, they repose complete confidence in the power of God for their deliverance. This reminds us that the blessings promised under Israel's original covenant with God were conditional upon complete trust in Him and in His power to give them the land, and scrupulous endeavour to keep His laws. "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit; and your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely" (Lev. 26. 3-5). This was the ideal, but Israel never reached it. Because of continued apostasy, they were at length entirely dispossessed of that good land which the Lord God had prepared for them.

This verse in Ezek. 38 pictures a time, therefore, when the Holy Nation has entered into possession of the land in complete faith and trust in God, and is prospering in material things in consequence. In a sense this is a commencement of Millennial work, although the Millennium proper will have not yet begun. The final test will be still in the future, with the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven when He "reigns before his ancients gloriously".

Verse 8 of Ezek. 38 contains two significant statements regarding the land: "In the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them". The original word for "brought back" is *shub*; the land is *turned back* from the sword. That for "brought forth" is *yatsa*; the land is delivered in the sense of emerging from a condition of restraint into the freedom of a wide, open space. (Compare the usage of *yatsa* in Ezek. 47. 8 as applied to the river of life spreading outward into the Dead Sea.) These two expressions indicate that the Promised Land will be freed at last from the curse of the sword, which has lain upon it for so many centuries, and delivered from the thralldom of the nations, the Gentiles. Jerusalem will no longer be trodden down of the Gentiles; the new nation will at last enjoy sovereign rights in its own land.

In this description of the land's prosperity Gog is depicted as saying: "I will go up to the land of unwallled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land" (vs. 11-12).

This reference to the "land of unwallled villages" means much. It is the name given to the land by Gog's host. It shows that from the viewpoint of the militant nations of that day the land is utterly defenceless. In Canaan's early days its cities were "walled up to heaven" (see Num. 13. 28 and Deut. 1. 28), and these walls rendered the capture of the land a hopeless proposition to the ten spies who searched the land at the time of the Exodus. In later days Israel maintained the walls around their settlements for defensive purposes, but besides these walled towns and villages there were also the "*perazoth*", rendered in Esther 9. 19, Deut. 3. 5 and Jud. 5. 7 as "open villages", and here in Ezekiel as "unwallled villages". These villages were incapable of resisting an enemy, and when

war came their inhabitants fled for refuge to the nearest walled town. Ezekiel's picture shows that in the day to come there will be no material defences at all in the land, but a more certain defence will have taken their place, "for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. 2. 5). Speaking of this very time, that of the establishment of the Holy Nation, Isaiah says (60. 18): "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise", and again (26. 1): "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: *We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*". The significant thing, therefore, about this invasion is that the enemy, seeing no evidence of material defences, will conclude that the Holy Nation is in fact defenceless, and will be an easy prey. Upon the other hand, the nation itself will be supremely confident in the power of God to deliver without the assistance of man-made defensive or offensive weapons.

This people will be rich in goods and material wealth. The word for "cattle" in vs. 12 and 13 is not *behemoth*, signifying domestic cattle as such, but *migneth*, meaning valuable property purchased or acquired in any way. To the pastoral people of Bible days cattle constituted the chief source of such wealth, hence the term came to stand for cattle equally with material wealth. Similarly, the word rendered "goods" is *ginyan*, meaning "that which is acquired", so that both words carry the thought of possessions obtained through trade—for which the Jews at least are renowned to this day.

Is it possible then for us to probe into the apparent motives behind the onslaught of Gog's multitude, to discern in somewhat clearer fashion the nature of that onslaught. From this short stanza in Ezekiel 38 it would appear that the primary motive is jealousy of the prosperous condition of the Holy Nation, and determination to destroy it from the face of the earth. The sad history of Israel, ever the prey of their persecutors, would seem to be repeated here. The sequel to the story, in chapter 39, shows that not only is the primary purpose of Gog's host frustrated, but the host itself is utterly vanquished, and in the upshot all men come to realise that Divine favour is upon this apparently defenceless people, and that it is in fact invincible. "I will send a fire upon Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord—and I will set my glory among the nations" (heathen) (Chap. 39. 6 and 21). The war is carried into the enemy's camp with a vengeance, and, despite their overwhelming

display of military force, they themselves are not only utterly defeated, but eventually brought to the knowledge of God.

This brings into view another aspect of the conflict having roots deeper than mere greed for material plunder. We have been made accustomed in these days to the expression "a war of ideologies". Men who use that term mean that beneath the outward conflict there is a deeper struggle between the supporters of rival systems of government, Fascism, Communism, Democracy. So here there is revealed a conflict of ideologies. The host of Gog stands armed in battle array against the Holy Nation, not only that it may possess itself of that nation's land and goods, but also that it may utterly crush this new kind of national government which declares its allegiance to God and challenges the evil institutions of the other nations of earth.

The Holy Nation stands for Divine principles in national government. It upholds the standards which will go into full effect in the Millennial Age, and will have already begun to put them into limited operation. True to His Word, God therefore blesses this people in consequence, in basket and in store, and the nations of the world will not be slow to realise the fact. Whilst the world around is falling into chaos and ruin, the nations rapidly approaching that final collapse which marks the utter end of the kingdoms of this world, God's own people will be setting a standard to which men may turn, and will already be reaping the reward in the prosperity of their national life. The attitude of the nations of the world to this development is eloquently set forth in the noble phraseology of the Second Psalm: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure". Something like this seems to be indicated by the picture in Revelation 19, where a great confederacy is arrayed against the Rider on the White Horse, and is utterly overthrown. The nations of this world, standing obstinately by the principles of greed and selfishness and all unrighteousness, will fight to the bitter end; but all their armed might will be of no avail against Divine power when the time has come for God to act.

* * *

Can these things be related to the events of today? Is there any evidence that this gathering of the Holy Nation to its destined home is under way? Is the present prosperity of Palestine a commencement of that "dwelling in unwallled villages",

happy in the possession of cattle and goods, which is described in Ezek. 38?

Quite evidently the essential features of the prophecy are not yet in process of fulfilment. The people now dwelling there do not conduct their daily life in perfect confidence and reliance upon God. The Gentile nations have not yet realised the impending challenge to their own standards and systems which is to come from that land, and the "evil thought" of Ezek. 38. 9 has not yet found expression in the councils of Gog's host. But we may safely conclude that out in that land there are to-day the beginnings of things that will eventually blossom forth into the full maturity of the "land of unwallled villages".

Three main conditions must be met before it can be said that the time spoken of in Ezekiel 38 has come. They are:—

First: The Holy Nation settled in the land and enjoying complete control of the entire territory promised to Abraham, from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates.

Second: That Holy Nation manifesting complete faith in and dependence upon God, ordering its national life in conformity thereto, and having forsworn all material weapons of war.

Third: An era of temporal prosperity in that land unequalled anywhere else, and its rise to a prominent position in the sphere of world trade.

What we have seen since 1918 does not meet the requirements of this prophecy. The Jews who have gathered there are a mixed people, in that whilst some have returned in faith and are believers in the promises, many have no religious faith at all, and have returned in a purely nationalistic spirit. There is no general appreciation as yet that God is going to use that land and its people in the outworking of His plan. The temporal prosperity prophesied is a far greater thing than that which is evident to-day, and is built upon different principles. The activity of to-day is based upon normal commercial enterprise, and that must in due course give place to an activity directed by a consciousness of Divine power working in the nation's affairs.

In the political rearrangement following the recent war we may well expect to see another step taken on the road which leads to independence in the Near East, just as the settlement of the 1914-18 war delivered these same countries from the Turkish power and set them on the way to modern development. Likewise, we may be able to discern in the commercial rearrangements which will also come about a diversion of trade which will progress side by side with the new political set-up, and reveal to the world the nucleus of a new national power

in that place. Most important of all, we must expect that the experiences through which both Jew and Gentile are now passing, and must continue to endure whilst these dark days persist, will cause some to realise the Divine call to give themselves to the creation of a people of God, a holy nation, in the land then so definitely being opened up. The regathering of Israel in faith and with supplication, eager to learn of the Lord and zealous for the honour of His Name, will be the signal that the day has come for men to speak, with meaning, of the "Land of unwallled villages".

Growing Old

*This frail old shell in which I dwell
Is growing old, I know full well—
But I am not the shell.*

* * *

What if my hair is turning grey?

Grey hairs are honourable, they say.

What if my eyesight's growing dim?

I still can see to follow Him

Who sacrificed His life for me

Upon the Cross of Calvary.

What should I care if Time's old plow

Has left its furrows on my brow?

Another house, not made with hand,

Awaits me in the Glory Land.

What tho' I falter in my walk?

What tho' my tongue refuse to talk?

I still can tread the Narrow Way,

I still can watch, and praise, and pray.

My hearing may not be as keen

As in the past it may have been,

Still I can hear my Saviour say

In whispers soft, "This is the way."

* * *

The outward man, do what I can

To lengthen out his life's short span,

Shall perish and return to dust,

As every thing in nature must.

The inward man, the Scriptures say,

Is growing stronger every day,

Then how can I be growing old

When safe within my Saviour's fold?

Ere long my soul shall fly away,

And leave this tenement of clay.

This robe of flesh I'll drop, and rise

To seize the "everlasting prize"—

* * *

I'll meet you on the Streets of Gold,

And prove that I'm not growing old.

The Sure Word of Prophecy

The place of prophecy in
Christian faith and belief

This modern world has little interest in the prophecies of the Bible. Their strange phrases and settings seem to be so divorced from reality, and their frequent insistence upon such themes as sin and judgment do not find responsive chords in men's hearts to-day. Therefore ordinary people are very generally quite unaware of the treasury of literature that does exist in the writings of the prophets or of the light those writings throw upon current happenings. Past events have their bearing upon the present; it is an old adage that "history repeats itself" and it is only when one comes to the Bible with the sincere intention of finding out what it has to offer by way of solution to the problems of the present that one realises how much is lost through unfamiliarity with "all that the prophets have spoken".

It is necessary to deny most strongly the assertion often made nowadays that the Hebrew prophets were not seers of the future, but merely men who saw, and exposed, the evils of their own days and declared the inevitable outcome. It is true that they did act as such teachers and instructors, expounding the principles of Divine government, ever reproofing sin and corruption, and calling men to repentance and a better way of living. They certainly did do this and in many instances were persecuted and killed by those whose antagonism they had aroused. But the term "prophet" had a wider significance than this. It denoted a man closely in tune with the Holy Spirit so that his spiritual faculties, more acutely conscious of "other worldly" things than were those of ordinary men, perceived something of God's plans and intentions for the future. Very imperfectly at times, but none the less assuredly, such men caught glimpses of the great events in world history which were to characterise the slow development of human experience, and its culmination in the time of Divine intervention that is to save the world from the consequences of its own folly and sin. The prophecies of the Bible give abundant evidence that the Holy Spirit did reveal to these men something of the future. In many instances the fulfilment of such prophecies is recorded in some other and later part of the Bible; in other cases the fulfilment came in post-Bible times and appears on the pages of histories; whilst yet others still await fulfilment. There are striking examples of Old Testament prophecies, regarding the Coming of Christ to earth, known to have been written down more than five centuries before He came. For this reason many

people were in expectation of His coming at the actual time that He did come. The Prophet Isaiah described the details of the fall of Babylon with considerable accuracy nearly two hundred years before the event; Daniel outlined the succession of the four great empires, of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome when as yet Persia was only in the infancy of its power. Less spectacular examples than these are to be found without much difficulty; however it is, and by whatever power it is, that God sees into the future as men look back into the past, and reveals something of what He sees to His chosen messengers, it is impossible for us from our limited knowledge to say; but that He does so is indisputable, and the instruction regarding events of our own time and of future days that the Bible gives us is not to be lightly regarded or dismissed as unworthy of consideration.

The principal theme of Biblical prophecy is the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is not confined to the heavens; a very important phase of it is that which is to be established upon the earth. Although Jesus Christ came into the world to live amongst men and to die for man, a historic event that took place nineteen centuries ago, He has not yet completed His work for humanity. After the present interlude of two millenniums, which is for the development and completion of the Christian Church, He comes again to establish a world-wide Kingdom, in which all that is evil will be systematically eliminated, so that disease and death will become things of the past. This is the subject upon which the prophets spent their eloquence; "*times of restitution of all things, spoken of by all God's prophets since the world began.*" (Acts 3: 23). That Kingdom, say the prophets, will satisfy man's every good desire and will establish the reverence and worship of God in every human heart. "*It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us*" (Isa. 25. 9). The earth will yield its increase; the deserts will be made fertile and the waste places productive. "*The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose*" (Isa. 35. 1). In that earthly paradise not only the living of the generation that witnesses the coming of the Kingdom, but also the dead, restored from the grave, will find space to live and abundance of occupation, conditional upon their giving heed to the laws of God that will then be promulgated for mankind's benefit, for "*out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord . . .*" (Isa. 2. 3).

But the prophets also dwell upon a more sombre theme, the inevitability of a great Time of Trouble, coming upon all the world in consequence of its own sin and selfishness, and which is immediately to precede the establishment of the Kingdom. This Time of Trouble is described in the Bible under various names, of which perhaps the most familiar to the man in the street is "Armageddon". It is a time in which human institutions and forms of government break down and disappear; in which society dissolves into chaos, to be saved from utter disaster only by the hand of God. It is to be characterised by disastrous wars, famines, and pestilences on a world-wide scale, and it is to occur at a time of wide-spread irreligiousness and decay of faith in God. *"Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong . . . and let the nations come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there will I sit to judge the nations"* (Joel 3. 9-12).

Thoughtful men for several generations past have interpreted the general trend of world history as pre-saging a great change. Christian students have seen in these things clear evidence that the Time of Trouble is upon us, and the Kingdom therefore imminent. It is true that some rather unreasonable enthusiasts have brought a certain amount of popular discredit upon this expectation by announcing the spectacular ending of all things upon certain set dates, but nevertheless there is serious ground for sober anticipation of the coming Kingdom within the immediate future. And this conclusion is not based merely upon political events and the increase of the extent and scale of wars; it is based upon something much more portentous.

For the past three hundred years the white races have been exploiting the world on a scale unparalleled in previous history. During that period, in consequence of scientific research and mechanical invention, the population of the earth has increased by leaps and bounds. Two hundred and fifty years ago this planet was the home of five hundred millions of human beings. A century later the number had doubled; the population was a thousand millions. To-day it is twenty-three hundred millions. Concurrently with this the unrestrained spoliation of the earth's natural resources, due to commercial greed much more than to the effects of war, is making the production of food for these millions an increasingly serious problem. Sir John Boyd-Orr, the famous food expert, declares that the human race faces death by starvation. Although it has been reliably estimated that the earth, properly cultivated, is capable of supporting four times as many people as

now inhabit it, the misrule of man has reached a stage where even those who are now alive cannot properly be fed. The inevitable outcome, if God does not intervene, is world-wide famine, consequent widespread disease and pestilence, and wholesale death by starvation.

Apart from the pestilence which can be caused by food deficiency, it is now well within the power of men to launch plague and disease upon such a scale that all the resources of medical science will be quite inadequate. There is no need to dwell upon this aspect of the matter in detail; the daily papers do so, often. But can there be any doubt, in the light of recent events, that some men would not hesitate to loose such scourges upon humanity if by so doing their own interests or desires would appear to be served?

The scourge of war, and the increasing frightfulness of war implements, is another factor characteristic of this time. War will play its part in this "Battle of the Great Day": that is also clear from the words of the prophets.

It is with confidence, therefore, that the events of to-day are held to fulfil many of the dark sayings of the Old and New Testaments and to constitute evidence too clear to ignore that the Kingdom of God upon earth is at hand. Man's extremity will be God's opportunity. From the day of man's first fall into sin, many thousands of years ago, the human race has followed an increasingly downward course into degradation and death. It has nearly reached the end of the way; without God it must inevitably destroy itself from the earth. But God created man for a great purpose and He is pledged to fulfil that purpose. *"As truly as I live"* He has said, *"the whole earth shall be filled with my glory."* That is a prophecy none may dispute, because it has been given by the Most High Himself and what He has declared will surely come to pass. The day of earth's darkest trouble will be turned into the day of earth's rejoicing. Men will come up out of the fires chastened and subdued, but thankful in heart that, after all, God has cared; God has delivered. It is the object of Bible prophecy to convey that assurance to us now.

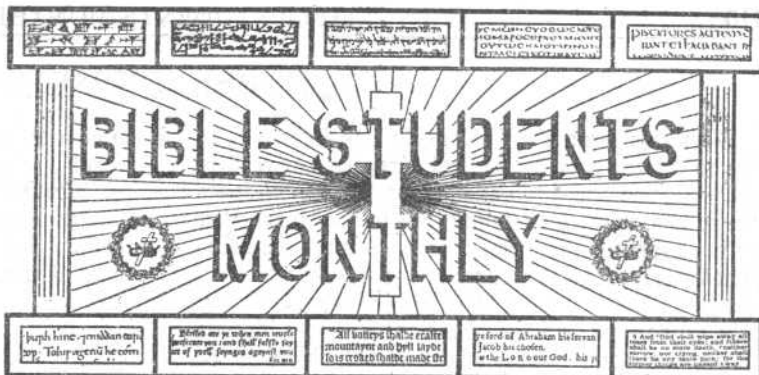
This article is available in leaflet form—see notice on first page of this issue.

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.



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



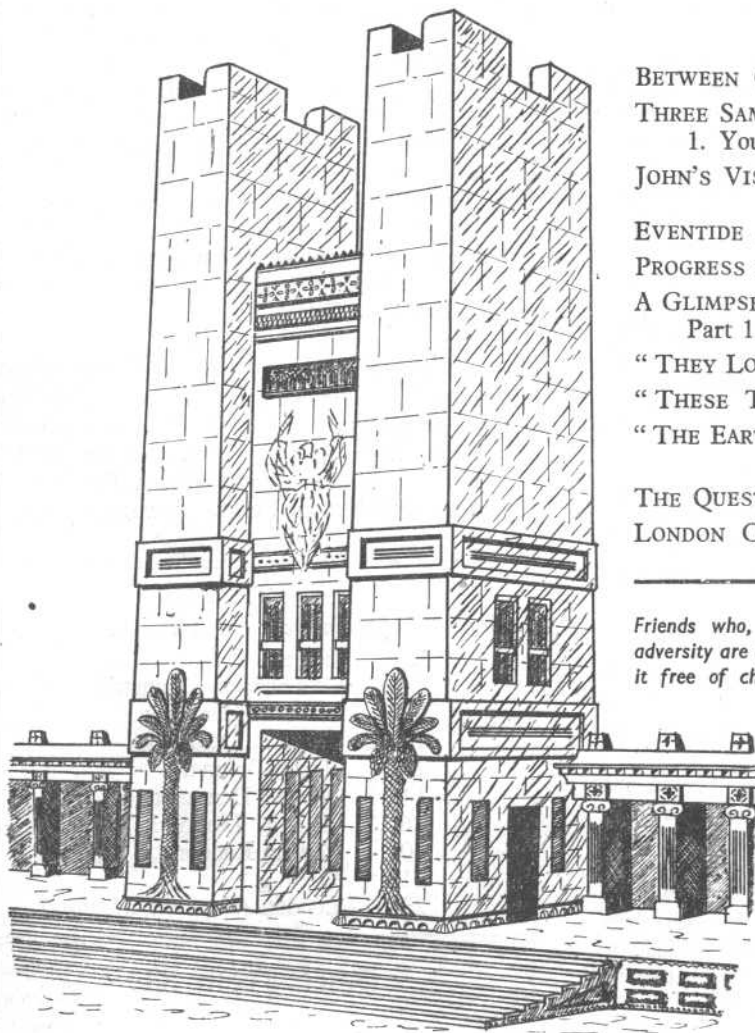
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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



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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BETWEEN OURSELVES

With this issue the "*Monthly*" is increased in size to sixteen pages. We feel sure that our readers will welcome the additional items for which space can in consequence be found, but it does mean that we need more subscribers in order to meet the additional costs involved. There is one way in which all who wish the "*Bible Students Monthly*" well can help. Just send in a list of the names and addresses of brethren (and others) whom you think might be interested in having it for themselves. We shall check to see that they are not already readers, and if not, send them a sample copy. We have in recent months added to our list quite a few who have been out of touch with the brethren for a while and have welcomed this means of coming in contact again; it may be that by sending in such a list of names you will be an instrument of good and the means of grace and help to one who, unknowingly to you, stands in need of encouragement in the way. Do not defer; sit down just as soon as you can and let us have all the names you think may be helped by the ministry of the "*Monthly*".

* * *

We in England have been enjoying the ministry of Brother J. T. Read for the past three months, and all who have appreciated his loving service will be glad to know that he is to visit our brethren in Denmark for a few weeks before returning to America. He will be accompanied on his tour of the Danish classes by Brother Carl Luttichau, well-known to many in this country, and there is no doubt that all the friends on this side of the North Sea will join in an expression of Christian love and greetings to our brethren in Denmark.

* * *

A new series and two new features have their commencement in this issue. On page 117 will be found the first instalment of a new "outline for the newly-interested" entitled "*A Glimpse of God's Plans*". This series, written by a brother in the North of England, will spread over the next three issues and if it seems to be appreciated by the friends will be reprinted in booklet form for use in public witness efforts and in other similar ways. It will be a great help if brethren will write in with their judgment as to whether this series would in fact be useful for such purposes; this enables us better to judge the wisdom or otherwise of publishing.

With the coming into being of the Jewish State the minds of most of our readers will be turned toward that land and some day-to-day record of what is going on there will doubtless be of interest

to all who expect great things in that quarter of the world in a time soon, we trust, to come. "*Progress in Palestine*", therefore, will appear each month so long as it seems profitable, noting what is happening in the Land of the Book and to the present inhabitants of that land.

Since there are great things happening also in the rest of the world to-day, and we are interested in these things because we look for a coming Kingdom that is to bring true peace upon earth, and many of these things are signs of that coming Kingdom, we propose for a time at least to note significant matters occurring in the world of men under the heading "*The Earth Trembled—and Shook*". Students of the Scriptures will have no difficulty in recognising the allusion, and will know that here is no gloomy prophecy of the "crack of doom", but a joyful looking forward to a "day of light and gladness such as earth has never known". We would like to know to what extent both of these new features are appreciated by readers, and are ready to read all your letters on the subject; even although our replies may be very brief, we shall value your considered opinions none the less.

* * *

Dewsbury friends announce a Home-Gathering on Sunday, 24th October, in the Liberal Club, Bond Street, Dewsbury. Visitors are asked please to bring own food; a cup of tea will be provided. Programmes and details from Miss A. Rothery, 139, Westgate, Cleckheaton, Yorks. A warm welcome to all.

Bro. J. T. READ.

Appointments for October.

1. Sheffield.
 - 5-8. Copenhagen, Denmark.
 - 9-10. Aalborg, Denmark.
 - 11-12. Aachens, Denmark.
 13. Viborg, Denmark.
 - 14-15. Odense, Denmark.
 - 16-17. Esbjerg, Denmark.
 20. Central London.
 21. Welling.
 23. London (*Farewell Meeting*).
-

Gone From Us

Sister Charity Evans (*Neath*) August.

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

THREE SAMUELS

Three stages in the life of a great man :
YOUTH—MANHOOD—OLD AGE

Part 1—Youth.

"And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision . . . And the child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli."

(I Sam. 3. 1.)

They were dark days in Israel, those days when the lamp of God was going out in the Temple of God, and the vision had become to all as a book that was sealed. It was a day of old men, a day in which the inspiration and fervour of youth had been lost in a timorous and apathetic old age. The leaders of the people, who for the time they had known the God of Israel and His mighty power should have administered their charge with the maturity and mellowness of character that a lifetime of service in Divine things can give, had become spiritually blinded, and their eyes were darkened, and they knew not that the holy and royal nation was already a long way from the covenant God had made with their fathers. The Judges had ruled Israel for several centuries; in the first days of the settlement in the land, immediately after its conquest at the time of the Exodus, they had been upright and noble men, men of insight and determination, men who went in the power and strength of God, and who prospered accordingly. But the rule of the Judges had grown old, and the stirring days of Joshua and the Conquest were as far away from them as the days of Queen Elizabeth and the Spanish Armada are to us now; and as remote in the minds of leaders and people. So the nation languished, and fell under the power of its enemies, the while judges and priests alike accepted the privileges and emoluments of their respective positions and ignored their obligations.

The time was ripe for a change. In one more generation there were to be kings in Israel, with all of the glory and power, patriotic fervour and national pride—and all, too, of oppression and misery—that the rule of kings involves. But the change had to come; the old system of rule by judges could no longer serve the multiplying interests of the developing nation, and the Judges were doomed. But in their passing, and before they passed, God raised up one who should be the glory of the old order and the guiding star of the new—Samuel, the last and the greatest of the Judges.

He was such a small boy, this child whom Hannah, in the love and adoration of her heart, had brought to the sanctuary to serve the Lord God for ever. None could have guessed then that he was

destined in after days to guide the nation through one of the most perilous times of its career. Probably very few of the people knew that he was there at all; he must have spent much of his time in the priests' living apartments attached to the sanctuary, employed in the performance of trivial menial duties for the High Priest, and—who can doubt it?—learning with assiduity everything about the laws of God and His dealings with His people Israel that the aged Eli was able to teach him.

So the years rolled by, and Israel departed farther and farther from the Lord. The child would be about six years old when his mother brought him to the sanctuary. He could not have been less than fourteen when the great thing happened. And in all those intervening years he was laying the foundations of his future life of service, in the quietness and seclusion of the sanctuary, storing up in his receptive mind the details of his people's history, of their covenant with God and their holy calling, of God's promises and intentions with respect to their future, and His determination that one day evil should be done away and all the earth filled with His glory. So the principles of truth and justice, of love and mercy, became embedded in the boy's character and moulded his outlook, even although as yet he had no opportunity to learn anything of the outside world where those principles were so universally despised and disesteemed.

So it came to pass, one quiet night, when the countryside around Shiloh was bathed in the silver light of the moon, sailing serenely across the heavens, that the light of the seven-branched lampstand in the Holy of the sanctuary flickered uncertainly as the lamp wicks tried unavailingly to extract the last scanty drops of oil from the vessels. It was the duty of the priests to keep that lampstand trimmed and filled so that the light should burn perpetually. But they were neglectful of their duty, and Eli, the old High Priest, was too apathetic either to see that they performed their task or to reprove them for not doing it. And as it flickered, casting huge and grotesque shadows on the walls and ceiling of the Holy, there came from behind the Vail, from where the Ark of the Covenant reposed in solitary splendour within the Holiest of all, a Voice.

"Samuel!"

The lad was not asleep. He was laid down in his place, in one of the little apartments that flanked the sanctuary. Perhaps he was pondering over the

things he saw and heard every day, puzzling over the apparent inconsistency of that which Eli was teaching him and the manner in which Eli and his sons conducted their sacred mission. Maybe he was thinking of the things he in his turn would do for God when he was grown up and able to engage in the service of which, more than anything else, he wanted to be a minister. He might have wondered how it could come about, for he was not a priest and could never be a priest; he was not of the family of Levi and only those who came of Levi could be priests. And yet he wanted to serve his God with all the ardour and zeal of his young heart. Surely there could be some way! The need was great; he realised that now. He had seen something of the state of Israel's affairs in the incidents that took place in and around the sanctuary itself, and gleaned some understanding of the position from the offerers who came from time to time with their sacrifices. He wanted so badly to serve; he was only a lad, but surely there was something he could do. Surely God could make use of him somewhere—

"Samuel!"

He sat up, listening. The voice had been soft, but clear. It seemed to have come from the sanctuary itself, but of course that could not be. No one would be in there at this time of night and even if they had they would not have called him. He was not allowed to enter where only priests might set foot. It must have been Eli, in need of some small service. He rose and went softly into the High Priest's apartment. The older man seemed to be asleep.

"Here am I; for thou calledst me." He had to speak twice to gain the other's attention. Eli sat up. It was a few moments before he could take in the situation.

"I called not, my son", he said. "Lie down again."

Obediently, the lad returned to his place and lay down. His thoughts went back into their accustomed channel. The night was very quiet and the hour was late, but he was not tired. His mind was alert, active.

"Samuel!"

Roused from sleep for the third time, Eli looked grave. This was no ordinary thing. The lad was not given to idle fancies. He had evidently heard something. Dim memories of his own youth, when he himself had been in closer touch with God than he seemed to be nowadays, filtered into his mind. Perhaps—if an angel had spoken to the lad—

"Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It was with beating heart that the boy went back to his place and lay down, eyes wide open, ears alert. So the Voice *had* come from the sanctuary, after all. And It had called him; the Voice of God had called him

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

* * *

The gray light of dawn was filtering in and revealing the outlines of his simply furnished room. He must go presently and open the outer doors of the people's court, for some would be there with sacrifices which they required offering to cleanse them from petty uncleannesses and defilements. And then he must tell Eli. He feared to do so, for he revered the old man and it was a staggering blow to learn that his teacher and mentor from childhood had passed under the judgment of God; must be deprived of his priesthood, his family to remain under Divine interdict for ever. He had never dreamed that such things could be, but now he realised that there was such a thing as Divine judgment. It was a sobering thought; his teacher and instructor had failed him; his idol had feet of clay. He must find another guide, another leader. Where should he find him? Where should he obtain the guidance he knew that he needed that he might be fitted to take up the work of God.

And then he remembered the voice from the sanctuary.

* * *

How often, in years much nearer to us than the days of Eli and Samuel, have the old men failed to measure up to the greatness of their privilege, and forsworn the zeal, the faith, the largeness of vision and the spirit of progress which characterised their early youth, and so failed the younger ones who have looked up to them as fathers in the faith. The cumulative disappointments and disillusionments of mounting years, no less than the instinctive desire to protect what one has built against the disintegrating effects of time and change, often produces in the outlook of the elder in the way, an attitude the complete antithesis of that which characterised his early days. Where once he sought to blaze a new trail through the unknown country that lay between him and his and the heavenly Kingdom, he now seeks but to wall round the little preserve he has made for himself. Where once he looked to the future with eyes of eager anticipation he now looks back over the past with thoughts only of retrospect. Where once he followed the leading of the Spirit, blowing where it listeth, he now wants only to protect the circle of Truth which he has drawn through the years from any fresh incursion of that same Spirit. And so, unconsciously perhaps, not realising what he does, he resents the

freshness and zeal of the younger generation, fails to sympathise with their characteristic impulses and immature understanding, and as often as not succeeds in driving them away from the life of service and faith that could have been theirs had right guidance been given them. Thank God that it is not always so amongst us; that there are some, advanced in the tale of earthly years, who have attained a mellowness and maturity of Christian character which gives them to look with kindly and understanding eyes upon those who must needs pick up the torch of Truth from their own failing hands and carry it onward to greater heights. Their own early zealous activity and ardent minds, denied full exercise now because of advancing years, finds its satisfaction in the encouragement of their sons in the faith, and in understanding counsel to those who are seeking to follow in the way they themselves walked these many years since. There is no need for the story of Eli to be repeated in our day; no need for the lamp of God to burn dim in the Temple of God. Eli and Samuel can so easily walk and work together in loving understanding and harmony, each contributing that for which he is

fitted; the younger, action and tumultuous zeal; the elder, maturity of thought and quiet counsel in the things of God. In such manner may we all play our part in maintaining the radiant light of Divine Truth in the world, and pass, at length, beyond the inner Vail in the quiet satisfaction of a covenant with God fulfilled to the end. *"I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith."* There is no need for our younger ones to be disappointed in their elders as was Samuel in Eli.

The boy had learned a great lesson. Henceforth his instruction, heretofore at the hand of an earthly minister, was to come from God Himself. A great step forward had been taken. He was no longer a "babe" in the faith; no longer imbibing only the "milk" of the Word. Upon this morning when Samuel opened the doors of the House of the Lord with the consciousness of that midnight revelation in his mind, he saw all things become new. The child Samuel was no more; henceforth he was a man, a man destined to be a power for God in Israel.

Part II next month, tells of Samuel the national leader.

John's Vision of the New Jerusalem

A MEDITATION ON
REVELATION CHAPTER 20

He sat on the mountain, a lonely old man, bereft of all save memories of a long life spent in the service of Christ, and as he sat, there arose before his wondering eyes a marvellous vision, a vision of the Holy City, descending out of Heaven to settle for ever upon the earth. In his vision he got to his feet, descended the mountain, and went into that Holy City and saw all its wonders, and the glory of his experience has been written in golden letters with jewelled capitals at the end of the book that bears his name.

The panorama of history had already been unfolded to John in vivid imagery and he had been carried in Spirit into the Age of peace and righteousness. Now he was to experience the final revelation, that of the restoration of Eden and all that was lost when man, because of sin, was expelled from Eden. It seems as though Rev. 21. 1-8 is the seer's own introductory synopsis of the actual vision which is recorded in detail from 21. 9 to 22. 5. He had just witnessed the pictures of Millennial judgments which occupy chapter 20 and now he was to view further aspects of the same Age. He was to see the coming of men into reconciliation with God, their healing of body and mind, and their entering into an eternal inheritance of righteousness and peace. Even the very landscape

was changed. In exultation he cried *"I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . . and I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem . . . and I heard a great voice out of heaven saying 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.' And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away"*. (Rev. 21. 1-4.) So an angel came to him, and took him into the city, that he might see for himself what God was doing.

The old city of Jerusalem had been destroyed, twenty years previously. All the golden hopes that it was soon to become the city of David's greater Son, from which He would rule the earth in righteousness, had been shattered. *Uru-salim*—City of Peace—named in almost prehistoric times after the ancient Semitic god of peace, had never really been a City of Peace; nearly always one of strife and blood. But now he saw that the golden promises of the prophets were true words indeed, even although their fulfilment must wait for the ending of a world, the passing of the heavens and

earth in which he and his fellows still lived. The New Jerusalem would come to earth to be the true City of Peace, and then all would be fulfilled as God had promised. So he gazed upon its shimmering beauty, with its great and high wall marking it out foursquare, the length even as the breadth, and followed with his eye its gleaming buildings, terrace upon terrace, tier upon tier, up and up, until they reached the central buildings, so high above the outer wall that the height of the city appeared to be as great as its breadth, and as he gazed he rejoiced in spirit.

And now, following the angel, he had reached the wall, a towering wall, one hundred and forty-four cubits high, more than half the height of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, a shining precipice of brilliant green jasper. Green is the Millennial colour, the colour of fields and forests, for the desert is to blossom as the rose, and trees grow in the wilderness, and those who pass into the Holy City pass into a fair land of smiling meadows and sparkling streams. Nature will come into her own again and the squalid erections of men be done away. But how to effect an entrance? John gazed upon that two hundred feet height of rampart, twelve times twelve cubits, built upon the twelve foundations gleaming like precious stones, in each foundation the name of an Apostle. He looked upon the twelve lofty gateways with their two-leaved doors of pearl. His memory raced back to earlier days when as a lad he had sat at the feet of doctors and rabbis and learned of the twelve portals of heaven out of which the sun emerges, in every month a different portal, returning at night that at dawn it might emerge again. From those twelve portals, said the rabbis, the angels come forth from the presence of God to execute their commissions on earth—and now he himself was seeing with his own eyes twelve just such portals out of which the blessings of God were to come like the sun rising each day and travelling in his strength. Twelve was the number of perfection; and only those who are perfect, righteous, undefiled, may enter into the Holy City; all that is unclean and that defiles must forever remain outside.

Now he was inside the city. Following his guide, the revealing angel, he had passed through the lofty gateway with its attendant guardians and was standing now in the street, the "broad place" or central square of the city, a street that shone like gold and reflected the light like glass. It was not that the sun was shining; John knew how bright the Palestinian sun could be at noonday but here there was no sun visible in the clear heavens. And yet the light was radiantly brilliant, a light that touched the surface of the ground so that it shone like

burnished gold. He knew, without being told, that it was the light of God, Who giveth light and life, the light of the One Who dwells between the cherubim, shining out from His place and overpowering the light of the sun. So John lifted up his eyes to where the Temple ought to be, there on the summit of Mount Moriah—but here in his dream city of Jerusalem there was a difference. There was no Temple! Long and earnestly he pondered over the meaning of the enigma. The Sanctuary that for many long ages had made Jerusalem what it was, a place of prayer for all peoples—to have no place in the city that shall be at last? To what could men look when they came before God in reverence and adoration? And as if reading his thoughts, the revealing angel turned and looked up toward heaven, and into John's mind there came the memory of words spoken long ago—it seemed a long time ago now but the memory was as fresh as if it had been only yesterday. "*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*" Ah! there was the answer. What need of a Temple made with hands in that glorious future day when all men would know God as a Father and come to Him in sincerity and confidence, with no sacrifices but those of praise and thanksgiving? The material building which for so long had represented God to the multitude would wax old and vanish away; God Himself would be the Temple, and the day would certainly come when the true worshippers would neither in the mountain of Samaria nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, for all would know Him, from the least unto the greatest, and come before Him without need either of priest or vail to separate their sin from His holiness.

A touch of vivid green, away there in the centre of the broad place, set startlingly against the sheen of golden buildings and glitter of precious stones; a green that was not the green of jasper, or of beryl, or of emerald. He looked again; there were trees, trees bearing rich fruit, and between and beyond them the glint of light upon water. He went towards them, and as he drew near beheld a place where was the Throne of God, and from that Throne, quietly, gently, but in abundant volume, came the glowing waters of a crystal river.

And as he took his stand upon its banks and looked down into its limpid depths, the vision of the city faded from his sight, and left him, standing upon the river's edge, looking out into a mighty distance, a vista of lush meadows and far-away stately mountains, a view of redeemed multitudes returning to Zion, returning to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. And that is how John saw the vision of the River of Life!

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



The day must have been one of considerable strain for Jesus. A great grief lay heavy on His sensitive heart. The Messenger "sent before His face" had been spitefully put to death because he had dared to rebuke royalty for a flagrant sin. Hearing the sad news, the Lord withdrew into a place of solitude there to ponder and pray. The crime had made a deep impression upon His mind, and He needed quiet and seclusion to think this tragic happening out in the light of His Father's providential permissiveness. A man devoted to the holy life had been stricken down by wicked hands, and Heaven had not interfered to stay the cruel blow. The daring act contained a presage and a warning to Himself, for if resentment and blood-guiltiness began to flow they might yet become a raging flood which would engulf His own and His disciples' lives.

Desiring greatly to reflect on this permissive attitude of the Shepherd of Israel towards this act of violence to a member of His flock, Jesus had withdrawn from active work to this desert place, there to give Himself to prayer. But it was not yet to be as He desired. The madding crowd had sought Him out, and intruded itself into His grief and solitude. It was a hungry crowd—and the day was far spent! Taking the scanty store of food at hand, He blessed and brake and fed the improvident multitude. The ample repast ended, He then constrained the little band of weary disciples to take ship and go away over to the other side of the lake, reserving for Himself the unthankful task of dismissing to their homes the still excited multitude. *"And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into the mountain apart to pray, and when even was come He was there alone."* (Matt. 14. 22-23.) Alone!—alone with His grief! alone with His God! for now was come for Him the hour and the opportunity for prayer! No human ear was near to hear and transcribe for us those words of prayer, but of this we may be sure, those eager lips would speak in words, direct and simple, the anguished intensity of His sorrowing heart. With the one example of His spoken prayer (John 17) before our minds we can well believe how His words would well up from the stricken depths of His

sympathetic soul, seeking to know why this black deed had been done in Israel, and what it might yet portend. For four full centuries no prophet of God had arisen in Israel, and now, alas! the first to present himself with inspired lips had been foully done to death! Would the wayward nation never learn to turn its callous heart to God? Would He come and smite the land with His curse?

The great tragedy had brought the Man of Sorrows to the place of prayer unattended—alone. What a sight for angelic hosts to see! Did they bend down to hear what He would say? That we know not—but this was a scene they had never seen before, and even they, as well as He, had need to learn the deeper, darker things of Providence. Surely they watched the Man of Sorrows in His grief!

What an inspiration here for needy men to find! Here was the Son of God, come to earth to be the Lamb of God, casting on another mightier arm the load of grief that seemed so hard to bear, and taking to His soul, in return, the soothing balm which the Disposer of events could give, and growing calm and confident again thereby. If He, who more than any other Son of God was daily His Father's dear delight, needed thus to pray, and in this way to be re-assured and comforted, how truly vital, to lesser souls than His, must be this thing called prayer. And surely, if He, pure and sinless beyond reproach, in His hour of grief and pain, thus found consolation for His stricken soul, how vitalisingly potent is this act of prayer!

What is this thing called prayer? Just the simple act of telling God about it all; just the elementary mood of trusting Him to set the wrong thing right; just the humble unaffected attitude of resignation to His over-ruling Will. Just that—but in this act of prayer (whether uttered or expressed) the praying soul is ushered into the hallowed presence of the Most High God, and God bends down to listen to the words or groans of His suffering child, then deigns to soothe and comfort, and to answer in His own way the ardent plea. Audience with God—yes, just that, an audience that deepens into confidence and communion with Him! It was just that when Jesus was alone with God in the mountain's solitude!

We too have our days of grief and pain, when tidings come which make us sad. We also have our days of blank defeat with scarce a single hour of victory won. We look around and hear creation's incessant groan—and groan, in turn, because we cannot give their burdened souls relief. Lives there one among us who never feels the ploughshare of sorrow and remorse cut through his soul when frailty within, and world-suffering without, confronts him? That is just the time for prayer! That is just the object of prayer! That is just the theme for prayer! The need and the privilege co-exist together—the one fully commensurate with the other. When the need is deep so also is the privilege. And when both need and privilege call us thereto, how sweet the hour thus spent!

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls us from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.*

When therefore the pressing throng can be sent away, let us go at eventide into our mountain solitude and be there alone with God in prayer—opening up before Him all the deeper burdens of our heart.

And should the eventide of life be drawing on apace let that stand as an hour of greater need for being much alone with God. It is in these declining years that we need to seek the keeping power of prayer. As the mental aspects of our faith press with less insistence upon our minds, the need for that simple type of heart-assurance increases day by day, and prayer—fervent simple prayer, is the ever-present means to keep the anchor “grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love”. When the “even” is come, be much alone with God in prayer!

*Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
Thy wings shall my petition bear
To Him whose Truth and Faithfulness
Engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His Face,
Believe His word and trust His Grace
I'll cast on Him my every care
And wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.*

PROGRESS IN PALESTINE

A record of current happenings
in the Holy Land

“The establishment of the State of Israel is the answer to two thousand years of prayer and the beginning of a new epoch in Jewish history. The vision of Theodore Herzl and the sacrifice of generations of pioneers have brought about the fulfilment of the Zionist dream. The Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland joins Jews everywhere in gratitude to Almighty God that this fateful event in Jewish history has been experienced by this generation of the Jewish people . . .” (From a proclamation issued by the Zionist Federation after the announcement of the setting up of the State of Israel.) * * *

An unexpected consequence of the Arab invasion of Palestine has been the reversal of the Arab superiority in numbers in the land. Whereas before the ending of the Mandate the Arabs numbered about one million, and the Jews six hundred thousand, the flight of some three hundred thousand Arabs into Transjordan and elsewhere, and the immigration of a further number of Jews, has left the superiority with the Jews, 750,000 against 700,000 Arabs. * * *

In the first six weeks following the establishment of the State of Israel on 15th May, sixteen new

settlements were established in various parts of the country. In the same period, despite the troubled condition of affairs, thirty thousand immigrants entered the land. Mr. Moshe Shapiro, member of the Cabinet of Israel, stated at a recent Israeli State Council meeting that between 200,000 and a quarter million immigrants will come to Israel yearly. Immigration at this rate would double the present Jewish population of Palestine in three years. * * *

The State Council of Israel has issued a decree making the Sabbath, and all religious holidays, State holidays in Israel. * * *

It is a biting commentary upon present day political affairs that about the only subject upon which America and Russia can agree is Palestine. Both nations have recognised the State of Israel, and Dr. James MacDonald, U.S. Minister to Israel, and Mr. Pavel Yershov, Soviet Ambassador to Israel, have arrived at Tel-Aviv and presented their credentials. Britain has not yet recognised the new State. * * *

The first Israeli air line commenced regular services to Europe and Africa during August.

A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S PLANS

AN OUTLINE FOR THE
NEWLY-INTERESTED

The Creator and His Work—Creation—The Beginning of Sin.

THE CREATOR AND HIS WORK

The works of creation speak of a Creator. Great as is Creation, the Creator must be far greater. Look at the flowers in the garden or meadows. Notice their variety and different colours. They all spring out of the same soil, each according to its own kind. Out of the soil grow the many kinds of trees, each having its own distinctive form or shape, bringing forth leaves, flowers, or fruit according to its own kind, and according to the season of the year. Think of the many kinds of birds, all beautiful, some beautiful to look upon, some beautiful in song. Look up into the heavens on a clear night and behold the countless millions of stars, far greater than our earth. Each is in its place and moves in an orderly fashion and noiselessly in its own orbit. These things; all the works of creation, have not come by chance, but are the handiwork of the great Creator, whose power and wisdom is far superior to that of man. He is the great First-Cause, who made and put into action all things in the universe.

*"Author of Nature's wondrous laws,
Preserver of its glorious grace,
We own Thee as the great First Cause,
And here delight Thy ways to trace."*

Who is this great First Cause—the Creator? The prophet answers: "*The everlasting God, the Lord*" (Isa. 40. 28). "*His name is Jehovah*" (Psalm 83. 18).

It is reasonable to expect that Almighty God would give to man something that would reveal His eternal purpose in respect to those things created. He has given a revelation of His plans and purposes in the Bible. It is believed that all Christians will, in accord with Christ's own words, believe all that the prophets have written. (Luke 24. 25.) The prophets wrote as they were moved by God's Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1. 21). Hence all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3. 16-17). The writers of both the Old and the New Testaments wrote under Divine inspiration. The Bible is the only basis for true Christian faith; therefore we will note certain passages of Scripture in proof of that which will be set forth in the following short statements. We will seek to make them truly Bible talks, putting on one side the creeds and doctrines of men, which are often confusing and misleading.

CREATION

The Bible was given for man's benefit; therefore the Bible account of creation has to do with man

and the place of man's habitation, the earth. The first words of the Bible tell us that "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*". The "heavens" here mentioned is that great expanse in which God placed the sun, moon and stars. The earth is the place of man's habitation. Before creating man, God created the birds, fish, cattle and beasts of the field. Then He created man in His own image. He created them male and female and gave them power to bring forth children.

He also gave man dominion over the works of His hands. This is set forth in the first chapter of Genesis.

The account of how man was created is given in the second chapter of Genesis. There we read "*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*". (Gen. 2. 7). Notice that God did not give man a soul. He made man's body out of the elements of the earth, and animated that body with the breath of life, in order that man might be a living being, to enjoy the blessings of life in that beautiful Eden home where God had placed him. Man was not given a soul, separate and distinct from himself, but when he was created he "*became a living soul*". In other words, no man has a soul, but every man is a soul. God designates the various animals as "souls". (See Gen. 1. 20 margin and Numbers 31. 28.) Every living creature is a "soul".

Man's original home was a very beautiful place. We read "*The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*". (Gen. 2. 8, 9, 15.)

God then gave man a law to govern his life. The keeping of God's law meant the continuance of life and the blessings of Eden. Disobedience meant death and the loss of all the blessings man enjoyed (Gen. 2. 16, 17). God had previously created the angelic hosts. These are His heavenly sons, who shouted for joy when He began His work in connection with man by laying the foundations of the earth. (Job. 38. 4, 7.) They would watch the work in progress and when the highest earthly

creatures, perfect man and woman, were created in the image of God, there would be great joy in heaven. All God's creation being perfect (Deut. 32. 4), there would be nothing then to mar the happiness of every creature in heaven and earth.

THE BEGINNING OF SIN

From the time of creation there was perfect peace and harmony amongst all creatures in heaven and earth. Not a stain of sin, nor mark of evil, marred the happiness of the sons of God, angelic or human.

One of the brightest and most beautiful of the angelic hosts was Lucifer. Like all of God's creatures, he was perfect from the day that he was created, but iniquity began to creep into him. (Ezek. 28. 15.) He was lifted up because of his beauty. (Ezek. 28. 17.) He became proud and selfishly ambitious, seeking to live like Jehovah himself. (Isa. 14. 12-14.) By this we could understand that he sought the worship of man, which rightly belongs only to God. Thus he became rebellious against God, and planned how he might divert man's worship to himself. From that time Lucifer became "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan". (Rev. 20. 2.)

By deception Lucifer induced Eve to break God's command, by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree and passing it on to her husband. Knowing this was against the command of God, he ate also, and God's law was broken in a simple act of disobedience. (Gen. 3. 1-6; 1 Tim. 2. 14.) Under the test, man had failed, and the justice of God

must now bring the penalty upon him. They were turned out of Eden into a condition which was far from being perfect, there to gain their food by sweat of face, until they should return to the dust. (Gen. 3. 17-19.) This is what Adam did for nine hundred and thirty years before he died (returned to the dust). Thus the wages of Adam's sin was his death, by gradual process lasting nine hundred and thirty years. Dying, he surely died, according to the command. (Gen. 2. 17.)

His children were born after he was turned out of Eden and whilst he was in an imperfect condition, hence they were born imperfect, inheriting sin and imperfection from their father. This imperfection has passed to all of Adam's posterity; therefore all die. (Rom. 5. 12; 6. 23.)

Be it noted that the wages of sin is *death*, and not eternal torment. God does not eternally torment any; such a thing is contrary to His nature, and never entered His mind. (Jer. 19. 5.) Sin began in Lucifer by his rebellion. Sin entered the world of mankind by Adam's disobedience, and has passed upon all his children. Because of this all die. But God has made a loving provision for every man through the death of His only begotten Son. All who die in Adam will in due time have a full, fair opportunity to gain life for ever in perfect happiness, free from death and all it implies—aches, pains, sickness, infirmity, and the ills which man is now experiencing. (John. 3. 16; 1 Cor. 15. 21, 22; 1 Tim. 2. 4-6.)

To be continued.

"They Looked for a City"

The testimony of past ages
to Millennial belief.

C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) was one of the most famous of British preachers. He was a staunch believer in the truth of the Bible. The following extract from one of his sermons shows how fully he accepted the Millennial teaching of the Bible.

* * *

"We stand on the borders of a new era. The present dispensation is almost finished. In a few more years, if prophecy be not thoroughly misinterpreted, we shall enter upon another condition. This poor earth of ours, which has been swathed in darkness, shall put on her garments of light. She hath toiled a long while in travail and sorrow. Soon shall her groanings end. Her surface, which hath been stained with blood, is soon to be purified by love, and a religion of peace is to be established. The hour is coming when storms shall be hushed, when tempests shall be unknown, when whirlwind and hurricane shall stay their mighty force, and

when 'the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ'. But you ask me what sort of kingdom that is to be, and whether I can show you any likeness thereof. I answer 'No'. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him' in the next, the Millennial, dispensation; 'but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit'. Sometimes when we climb upwards, there are moments of contemplation when we can understand that verse 'From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' and can imagine that thrice-blessed hour when the King of Kings shall put on His head the crown of the universe; when He shall gather up sheaves of sceptres, and put them beneath His arm; when He shall take the crowns from the heads of all monarchs, and welding them into one, shall put them on His own

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"These Things" A STUDY IN 2 PETER 1.

The key note of this study is "these things". The expression occurs no less than five times in eight verses. By "these things" Peter refers to the list of Christian virtues mentioned in verses 5 to 7, where he says "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love".

Let us note these five occurrences, and what the Apostle says about "these things" and their importance. The first is in verse 8. "If these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". The marginal rendering for "barren" is "idle", and Weymouth's translation brings out the meaning better; "if these things exist in you and continually increase, they prevent you being either idle or unfruitful in advancing towards a full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". Each part of this verse is important. "If these things be in you" has in the original the idea of existing in you as your permanent property or possession, something that has become a part of yourself. These things are furthermore not only to be in us, but to *abound* in us. In the original, the word "abound" has in it the thought of "to multiply". They are to exist in us not as expressions of a moral code, but as principles of an inner life. Where life exists there must be activity in the reproduction of itself, continually increasing, as Weymouth renders it, just as the cells of the living organism increase and multiply in the process of growth and development. The permanent possession of living principles like faith, virtue, etc., cannot but be accompanied by a process of multiplication in thoughts, words and acts in conformity with these principles. It would be impossible for such a life to be idle or unfruitful.

Notice, further, that the thought is not of not being barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ, as the Authorised Version has it, but of being neither barren nor unfruitful in *advancing towards a full knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. As one writer expresses it, "the knowledge of the Lord is not the region in which their activity is to work, but the goal to which all that activity should be tending". This knowledge, the writer further points out, is the higher *personal* knowledge, in contrast with the lower general knowledge. We are exhorted to add to our faith, virtue, and to virtue general knowledge and all the other qualities mentioned so that we might be able thereby to reach unto the *personal* knowledge and love of Christ.

The second thing that Peter says about *these things* is that where they are wanting it results in spiritual blindness. "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins". A fable is told of how in the centre of a great forest a bird is perched on the topmost branch of a tall tree, singing with all his might. A fox at the bottom of the tree asks what it is making all the song about. The bird replies that it cannot help it, the view is so wonderful. "What do you see?" asks the fox. "I see mountains and meadows, a great dome of blue sky and the sea far away." "I don't believe a word of it", said the fox, "I don't see anything but these trees. There isn't anything else to be seen". Spiritual vision is the ability to see far off, away beyond the things of sense and time, and such vision can only come from the possession of Christian faith and hope. Lacking *these things* no one can see beyond the "trees" of the present and the temporal.

Only as the Spirit bears witness by *its fruit* that we are the children of God can there be any assurance that we are God's heirs. If we lack this assurance, there is no real ground for faith and hope, and there can therefore be no real spiritual vision.

Advancing years in the natural life is often accompanied by failing eyesight. The reverse should be true of the spiritual life. As these things abound in us increasingly the spiritual vision becomes clearer and clearer, until, as Bunyan pictures it in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Delectable mountains are reached, from where it is possible to see the very gate of the Celestial City.

Continuing, Peter says that those lacking these things have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This implies not only a losing of sight, but an experience of moral relapse. People who are becoming defective in sight are sometimes apt to become negligent with regard to habits of cleanliness. When we lose the vision of God's holiness it is certain to be attended with negligence regarding holy living.

The third thing Peter says about *these things* is that by enabling us to make our calling and election sure they will secure for us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Verse 10 says "Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure". This follows naturally after the previous verse, where he has been showing

how that the doing of these things will give clearness of spiritual vision, urging us on to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended. The candidate for parliamentary election makes his *calling* sure when he accepts nomination and subscribes to the rules governing the election. He makes his *election* sure when he gains the approval of the electorate as reflected in their vote. The child of God makes his calling sure when he gives himself in consecration to God and daily seeks to confirm that calling by a life of sanctification. He makes his election sure when he wins the final approval of God. Of Enoch it is said that he was translated for the reason that before his translation he had this testimony, that he "pleased God". As God's approval was expressed in Enoch's translation, so will it be expressed in our "change" in the glory of the First Resurrection, when, called, chosen and faithful, we shall have made our election sure.

Continuing with verse 10, Peter says "for if ye do *these things*, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The word for "fall" in the original means "to stumble". If ye do these things ye shall never stumble. This does not mean that they would never make a mistake, or have a setback. The thought in the Apostle's mind may be gathered from his use of the expression in the previous epistle, where he refers to Jesus as a stone of stumbling to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient. Jesus had come unto His own, and His own had received Him not. Because not right at heart, they had stumbled, and so serious were the consequences that they had to be cut off from the favour of God. Stumbling as used here does not refer to the temporary slips of a man who is right at heart, for none knew better than Peter how easy it was to slip. It means rather the serious occasions of offence experienced by the man who at heart is at cross purposes with God. A man whose blood is pure can get quite a deep wound without causing permanent harm, but the person whose blood is *unhealthy* can develop blood poisoning from the merest scratch.

There is something grand about Peter's expression "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly". It reminds us again of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the stirring account of the passing over of Valiant-for-truth. "When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side into which as he went he said, 'death where is thy sting?' So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side." What an abundant entrance the Lord Jesus had; "ten thousand times ten thousand";

and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing". The picture which the Bible presents of the Christian life here is that of an *abundant* life, comprehending a peace that passeth all understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In like manner it pictures a fitting end for such a life in an *abundant entrance* into the everlasting kingdom, when as more than conquerors we shall have a Divinely royal reception.

The opposite of an abundant entrance is that of being saved, yet so as by fire. Lot stands forth as an example. In the destruction of Sodom he lost everything with the exception of his own life and the lives of his two daughters. Our ambition should be to live the full life here that God has designed for us, experiencing the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and to win hereafter this abundant entrance. Do not let us be satisfied with anything less. What the glories are that await us there, neither tongue nor pen can show. One thing we know, "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". As the crowning feature of the life to come, Paul, speaking of it, ends by saying "so shall we ever be with the Lord". This will be our greatest joy, and it is manifest that we can be prepared for those delights of His immediate presence only if the spiritual qualities that Peter has been describing, exist and abound in us, here and now.

Going on to verse 12, we have the fourth occurrence of "*these things*". Peter says "*wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in the present truth*". In this section Peter is telling us that the possession of these things is essential to an establishment in the present truth. Present truth is an expression we often use to denote the fuller light which we enjoy in these last days. Peter, however, was speaking here of the truth which was present with, and enjoyed by, the believers in his day, and has been present with and enjoyed by believers ever since. That truth was vastly different from the truth belonging to the old dispensation. It was different doctrinally, dispensationally and practically. Doctrinally it embraced all the new teaching associated with the ransom sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and how the types and shadows of the ceremonial law were fulfilled in Him. Dispensationally it comprehended all the new light regarding the ending of the Jewish Age and the opening up of the Gospel Age. Practically it contained all the new teaching regarding the possibility of deliverance from the law of sin and death, because of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

All these were vital fundamental differences and it is the last feature that Peter has been stressing in his emphasis on *these things*. Having a good understanding of the doctrines, and a good knowledge of the dispensational features of God's plan are not enough. To be established in the present truth one must possess *these things*. As this was true in Peter's day, so it is true with us to-day.

There is just one other occurrence, the fifth, of the key note "*these things*" in this section, which we have space to mention only briefly. About thirty years before writing this letter, the Lord had given Peter a thrice repeated commission to feed His sheep. On the same occasion He had given him an indication that he was to die the death of a martyr. We find both of these ideas in the verses that follow. He says, "*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*"—performing thus to the very last the duties of a faithful shepherd.

"*Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me.*" But Peter does not stop there. Like the Lord, whose spirit he has so richly imbibed, he thinks of the need of the sheep after he has been removed from them, and continues: "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance". As if he would say, "this is the all important matter, as I have endeavoured to show by both my teaching and by my life. And now since I feel that the death by which I must glorify God is drawing nigh, I will do my utmost in the time that yet remains to impress this same truth indelibly on your minds". This is Peter's parting injunction. It was written not only for those who received it in his day, but for us living to-day. May we take it as a personal message from him, and may we each endeavour to have *these things* of such vital importance always in remembrance.

"THE EARTH TREMBLED - AND SHOOK" A commentary on current events

The Archbishop of York in his closing address at the end of the Lambeth Conference in August uttered words which are significant, not merely because they were spoken by a leading dignitary of the national Church, but because they were couched in Scriptural language, language that is so definitely descriptive of the present day that we at any rate have used it for many years to describe what now we see. It would appear that Dr. Garbutt is seeing it also. "We are watching the death of the old age and the new is still in its birth pangs", he said. "Over mankind there hangs the menace of the atomic bomb, which with other weapons almost as deadly, may finally destroy our civilisation. The hearts of millions are fainting from fear and in expectation of the dread things which may come upon the earth. Before it is too late we must preach the Gospel and bear our witness. To the multitudes who are now like sheep without a shepherd we must call 'Look up, lift your heads, for the Christ who is your redemption is near you'."

That last quotation is not quite correct. What Jesus did say was "look up, lift your heads; *your deliverance draweth nigh*". It is true that deliverance is to be brought to mankind by the Lord Jesus coming in the glory of His Second Advent, but that is not what the Archbishop meant to convey. He was concerned for the conversion of England to Christ *before* Christ comes; the Bible makes it very plain that England will not be converted to Christ, and neither will the rest of the

world, until *after* Christ comes. In other words, the coming of the Lord from heaven is for the express purpose of speaking peace to the nations, putting down evil with a firm hand, and turning to all the nations a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord with one consent. That is why men's hearts are failing them for fear now; they have brought the world to such a pass that nothing, not even all the best endeavours of men of goodwill, like the Archbishop, may save men from the judgment which they have brought upon themselves by their own course through the centuries. The world is now reaping the bitter harvest of its own sowing; but praise God that He has the situation in full control and will, when men have reached their extremity, reach down from heaven to save and teach them the better way. But there is one element in Dr. Garbutt's words which we do well to take to ourselves. The sternness of the times calls all Christians to witness to their faith before those of their fellows who have no faith. If we fully believe that the hope we have is solidly founded upon Scripture then we of all Christians should be diligent "in season, out of season" in making it known.

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At a meeting of the International Congress of Mental Health in London recently it was stated that our industrial civilisation with its huge and growing cities is responsible for an enormous increase in mental disabilities. The effect of town

life, it was said, is to intensify strain and disturbance and although this has been true throughout the industrial period—that is to say, for the past two hundred years—recent rapid changes for the worse indicate that the limit of human endurance in this direction has almost been reached.

Here is another instance of “men’s hearts failing them for fear”. The tremendous strain of modern civilised life—especially city life—cannot be borne indefinitely, and the reason is that this type of life is contrary to the Divine intention for men. In the story of creation humanity was commissioned to till the ground and have dominion over the living things of Nature, but to-day we have come to a pass where men are forced increasingly out of touch with Nature and live a consequent unnatural life—one in which mechanical devices, artificial foods, and uncreative occupations and amusements, occupy an altogether disproportionate place. It is noteworthy that the early chapters of the Bible do not have a good word for cities—one might almost think they are under the shadow of Divine disapproval. The first city was built by Cain (Gen. 4. 17) hardly an auspicious omen. (Cain’s city—Heb. *ir*—was probably little more than a walled habitation for his family, but it was the first application of a principle that has run riot in subsequent days.) The next city to be mentioned in the Bible is that associated with the Tower of Babel, and that definitely was built in disobedience to the Divine command. After that comes Ur of the Chaldees, and Abraham was bidden to forsake that city and take up a country life. And the next we hear of are the ill-fated Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah; they were destroyed by fire from heaven. About the only city that is described in commendatory terms is the New Jerusalem, and that because it symbolises the Divine government upon earth during the coming Age. It might well be that one feature of the Millennial Age will be the elimination of these excrescences from the face of God’s fair earth, and the organisation of men into relatively small communities in which they can live in much closer touch with Nature, and Nature’s God, than do the pallid-faced and ailing caricatures of humanity that throng our busy streets to-day.

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This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of England’s great Christian Prime Minister, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, who guided the country’s destinies for several periods between 1868 and 1894. “*All I think, all I write, all I am*” he wrote shortly before his death “*is based on the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the central hope of our poor wayward race*”. One of his political opponents paid this tribute to his memory. “*He has left behind him the memory*

of a great Christian statesman. He will be remembered . . . as an example, of which history hardly furnishes a parallel, of a great Christian man.”

It is on record that upon one occasion Queen Victoria sent for him while he was at his prayers. When asked why he had not come at once he replied that he had an engagement with the King of Kings that must not be interrupted.

That is the type of politician this perplexed world needs, men who will govern, not according to expediency, or to serve the immediate interests of their own nation or party, but with an inflexible resolve to administer the duties of their position justly and wisely, without fear and favour, in constant acknowledgment of the supremacy of God in every affair of life. According to the prophetic Scriptures such rulers will appear at the end of this Age in the persons of the restored “Princes in all the earth”, the patriarchs and holy men of Old Testament times, well fitted by reason of their past lives’ experiences, lived in the reverence and service of God, to take charge of affairs in this ruined world and restore to it peace and order. Thus will the reign of Christ the King be extended over the earth, and, in the words of the Psalmist, “all nations shall call him blessed”.

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Rev. G. F. MacLeod, speaking recently at the annual meeting of the B.F.B.S., told how he asked a Bible class of fifty 17-year-olds how many possessed their own Bibles. *Ten* hands went up. In response to a further question it was revealed that of these only *three* read their Bibles regularly. Later on he put the same question to a group of two hundred boys and girls. The answers were in exactly the same proportion. So many instances of this nature are being reported that there can be no doubt as to the general accuracy of the impression these things give. There is to-day an appalling ignorance of the basic elements of Christian teaching. One wonders if our own aim in “public witness” should not be to stress the truth of the Bible and impart solid teaching regarding its contents instead of concentrating upon the “dispositional” subjects which so often form our subjects.

True religion never speaks of what it has done or is doing, neither has it any pomps or vanities, but does its work silently and without hope of reward, at least in this life.

* * *

“Love is a universal language. If a man cannot understand your speech he can always understand a loving and kind action.”



THE QUESTION BOX



Q. Psa. 149. 9. "*To execute upon them the judgments written; this honour have all his saints*". Does this refer to some present duty of the Church in the flesh?

A. No. The setting of the Psalm shows that the reference is to the coming Age. This psalm was of course first written for and applied to Israel. Now Israel expected that when the Last Day had come and the Messiah appear in the glory of the Kingdom they, His people, would be called to execute His judgment upon the wicked—which to the average Israelite meant the Gentile nations. Their expectation was right in principle, but their knowledge of the detail of the Divine Plan was deficient. When the Millennial Kingdom is fully set up there will be a heavenly people, the Church, associated with the King for the purposes of judgment, as well as the earthly people, Israel, in the Holy Land, even although that earthly people does also have a share in the privilege of doing God's work in that Age. It is correct therefore to apply this Psalm to the Church as well as to Israel, but the time of its fulfilment is in the future just the same—in the Millennial Age.

The Psalm itself indicates this. First of all, the faithful are exhorted to sing unto the Lord a new song, to praise His name in the dance, to sing

praises with the timbrel and harp. This is a theme of joy and triumph, therefore, not of grief and humiliation. "*Let the saints be joyful in glory*" says verse 5. It cannot be insisted too much or too often that the saints are not in power or glory *now*; glory is reserved for the future. "*Let them sing aloud upon their beds*". This is an allusion to the time of rest from labour and entrance into eternal habitations. ("They shall rest in their beds", i.e., in death—see Isa. 57. 2. See also Psa. 132. 13-14 where the Lord is said to "rest for ever" in His habitation of Zion.) Rotherham, on this ground, translated this verse "*Let them sing out their joy at their great habitation*".

Verses 6-9, referring to the two-edged sword, and the executing of vengeance upon the nations, binding their kings with chains and executing upon them the judgment written, refer to the judgment work of the Millennial Age, the work of destroying all evil institutions and things that afflict mankind. It is a work that belongs to the period of the Church in power and that time is not yet. The application of the text to the present leads back to the old erroneous doctrine of the reign of the Church in the present Age, and such an application should be studiously avoided. For the Church is not reigning *now*.

LONDON CONVENTION 1948

A great deal of spiritual and material preparation had preceded the second post-war general Convention in London, so it was not surprising that with the opening session on Saturday afternoon, 31st July, there came a flood of joyful enthusiasm. No doubt there was additional impetus from the Witness effort which had been made in conjunction with the Public Lecture on Sunday evening, which was one of the biggest campaigns that our fellowship has attempted for many years. During the previous months brethren all over the land had, in anticipation of the event, prayed for guidance on behalf of the committee arranging the gathering and for those who would publicly minister.

At 3.0 p.m. Brother W. Batcheller (Putney) welcomed the many friends from all parts on behalf of the London classes. His words of affection emphasised the realisation of the Divine Family and that we were all of one Household. These warm expressions of love were followed by a discourse on "*Celestial Fire*" by Brother L. Shephard (Cardiff).

Taking his lessons from such worthy lives as those of Moses, Elisha and John the Baptist, he showed how "fire" in the Scriptures is indicative of Divine power. After tea, at 6.0 p.m., Brother D. Parker (Windsor) surveyed the Christian life, and illustrated it by the Olympic Games. Interestingly he compared and contrasted the worldly athletics with the race for the Prize of the High Calling. The first happy day concluded with an exposition upon "*Christian Knowledge*". Brother B. J. Drinkwater (Birmingham), clearly distinguishing between his subject and "Bible knowledge", pointed out some of the steps which make up the experiences of those who follow Jesus, as depicted in the Scriptures.

There was sunshine in the hearts of the Lord's people as well as in the streets of the great metropolis on Sunday morning as slowly another large congregation gathered to hear Brother R. J. Philip (Warrington) speak in his familiar style on the subject of "*Christ in you*". Taking his text from Col. 1. 27 he reviewed the work which God had per-

formed in the members of Christ's Body since Pentecost, and went on to express the fact of what it had cost God to call the Church, and His high value for individual Christians. During the lunch interval the young brethren held their annual business meeting at which they reviewed the past year's activity and elected a panel for the coming year. In the afternoon our American pilgrim, Bro. J. T. Read, who has become so endeared to the brethren all over the land, spoke to the friends upon "*Knowing Christ*". He showed that all the knowledge and activity in which we engage would be of no avail unless the Truth became a living reality. His Scriptural citations were illuminated by reference to the graduating student, showing how we enter, progress and mature in the School of Christ.

In order that arrangements might run smoothly for the reception of the public, guidance was given to the brethren concerning the tea interval. The first guest arrived well before 6.0 p.m. and after that time a steady stream of interested ones continued. At 6.15 nine of our "Elder Brethren" took their places on the platform with the speaker and chairman. At 6.20 Brother John T. Read sang the "*Holy City*", and this fine solo was indeed an impressive prelude. A few minutes later Brother A. J. Lodge, who presided, announced the first hymn and the meeting proceeded in customary fashion. Introducing the speaker, the chairman extended a hearty welcome to all present, and gave some indication of the nature of our fellowship. Brother Guard's opening words, dignified and measured, enunciated the principles upon which the lecture was to be based and a proposition concerning God's intervention in the affairs of men. Briefly, but graphically, a picture of world chaos was drawn, showing how mankind was at its wits' end to contend with the hunger, disease and other results of sin in the world. He went on to point out the need for men to repent and turn to God for salvation through Jesus Christ, after which the returned Messiah would restore the blessings of life, and bring health and peace to the whole race, both those living and those who were in their graves. The attentive audience included well over one hundred strangers, and fifty-seven of these signed hymn-sheets for more information. At the exit of the Hall everyone was handed an envelope containing appropriate literature.

It was with gladsome hearts that the friends gathered again on Monday morning, first to praise God with spiritual songs and then to listen to Brother G. H. Jennings (Central London). His theme "*But ye are come unto Mount Zion*", centred in Hebrews 12. 24, was an encouraging exhortation concerning the diligence required in the Christian way, during this period in man's history when the evil institutions

and works of darkness are being shaken. For a short while after the mid-day meal, the younger ones drew aside for a sweet hour of exhortation with Brother Fox, who spoke to them upon the text of 1 Timothy 4. 12.

At the final session the first address was by Brother W. R. Walton (Coventry)—upon "*God's husbandry—God's building*", reminding his listeners that we are our Father's workmanship and not members of any sectarian following. He clearly indicated the need for fruit-bearing if we are to be of service to God. The dynamic concluding discourse, upon the "*Armour of God*", from Brother H. L. Panteny (Forest Gate) brought to the brethren's attention the need for using all God's provision to withstand the Adversary, especially showing that we must lift up the Royal Banner and preach the Gospel of Peace.

So ended another happy season of fellowship, which gave us comfort and instruction for this evil day, and spiritual food for thought and meditation. Especially emphasised had been the need for deeper communion with our Father, a closer walk with Jesus and a more affectionate tie of Christian love among ourselves. Between the sessions, the brethren availed themselves of the opportunities for fellowship, which were continued in homes and hotels after leaving the Convention buildings. Much gratitude is due to the Catering organiser and his staff, who served about a thousand meals throughout the Convention. The ushering and bookstall services, together with many other Hall amenities conducted by the co-operation of the "Junior team", ensured that the brethren's comfort and requirements were satisfied. Assuredly the labours of love in time and energy in proclaiming the Gospel were rewarded, not only by the exceedingly encouraging meeting on Sunday evening, but by a gathering which was permeated with the Spirit of God.

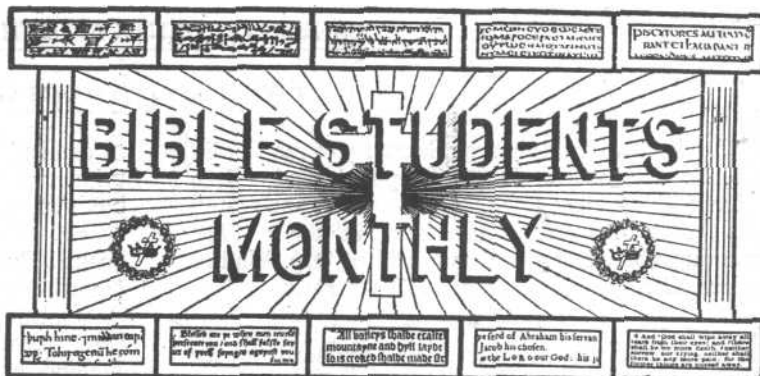
"THEY LOOKED FOR A CITY"

Concluded from page 118.

head, amidst the shout of ten thousand times ten thousand who shall shout His high praises. But it is little enough that we can guess of its wonders. *O Christians, do you know that your Lord is coming?* In such an hour as ye think not, the Man Who once hung quivering on Calvary will descend in glory; the head that once was crowned with thorns will soon be crowned with a diadem of brilliant jewels. I do look for His pre-millennial advent, and expect He will come here again. Jesus, our Lord, is to be King of all the earth, and rule all nations in a glorious, personal reign."



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



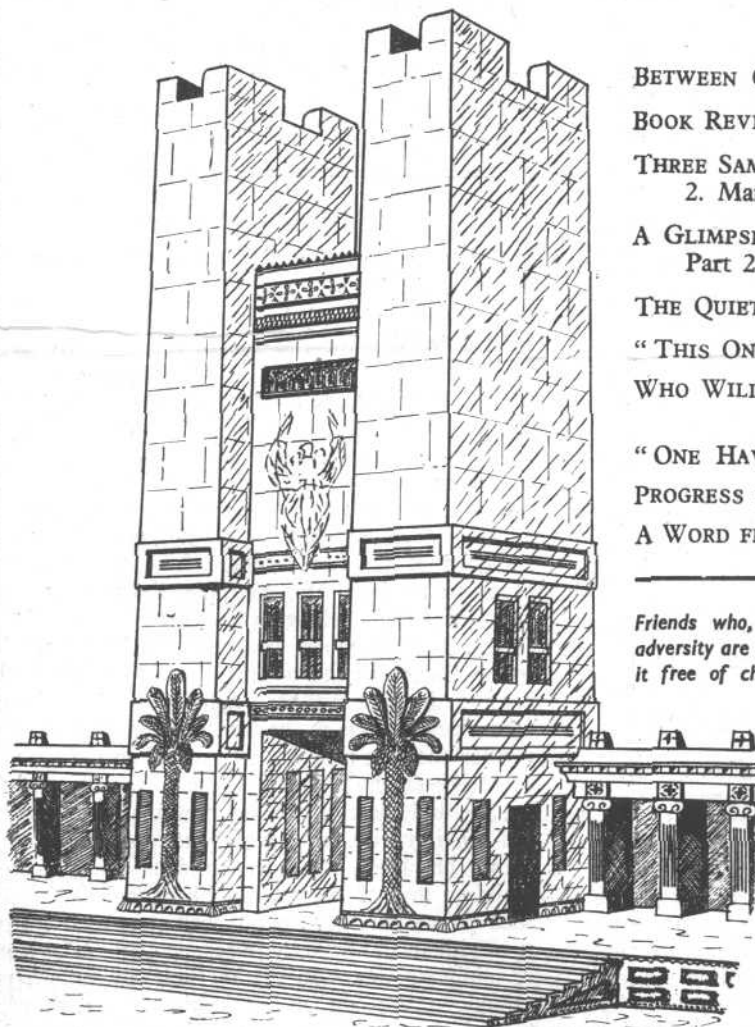
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Friends who, through old age, infirmity or other
adversity are unable to pay for this journal may have
it free of charge upon request, renewed annually.



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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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Advice is to hand that the Secretary of the Cardiff friends is now Bro. L. W. Shephard, Bedw Bach House, Llanharen Road, Llanharen, Glam. Will class secretaries please take note of this? The meetings at Cardiff are now held at 35, Windsor Place, Cardiff, and no longer at Park Place.

* * *

Quite a number of brethren responded to the announcement in the September issue respecting a proposed re-publication of Brother Pepworth's book *"The Coming of the Kingdom"*. In order to justify publication, however, there will need to be a really greater response, and it would be appreciated therefore if friends who would like to see this book again in print but have not yet notified the fact would do so speedily, in order to help our decision on the matter. As is probably well known, the book is a poetic composition describing the advance of the "Northern host" on the Holy Land at the time of "Jacob's Trouble" and although of course the incidents of the story are fictitious, they are based upon our normal expectation of the events that will take place at that time and the poem is of considerable interest on that account. It might also be of interest to others beside the brethren, many who will not or cannot appreciate our expositions of those coming days, being perhaps more amenable to the same presentation when expressed in this "story" form. The opening poem of the book, one entitled *"The Lord Cometh"*, is reproduced on page 138 of this issue, and this will serve to give those friends who are not acquainted with the book some idea of its nature.

* * *

Brother Lardent is able to supply his usual Scriptural Art Calendar, for 1949. There are two months to each sheet, with text for each day and coloured Biblical picture for each month, similar in style and quality to that for last year. The price is 2/9 post free. Please order direct from Brother F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23.

* * *

At this time of the year brethren are usually desirous of knowing what books of a Scriptural nature are available for use as Christmas presents. A copy of our publications list is enclosed with this issue, and in addition there will be found on the last page of this issue some recommendations of useful books and also details of a few books suitable for Christmas which are now in stock but have not yet appeared on the publications list. We would especially ask friends who require children's books to note that the book *"The Ten Camels"*, which is usually

in demand at this time of year, is at present out of print and out of stock, although our Australian brethren are expecting to issue a new edition in due course. We have good stocks of the large children's book *"Bible Story Book"*, which is deservedly highly esteemed by the friends, and we do also recommend *"A Little Life of Jesus"*, which has been recently republished and is also in stock at Welling in good supply.

* * *

Quite a useful book for young people in their 'teens, and not in the Truth, is *"The Man who did not sin"*, a work of fiction depicting life in the Millennial Age as seen by the Christian journalist, Newman Watts. This book is kept in stock at Welling for the sake of those who find it useful, price 5/6 post free, cloth-bound, 156 pages.

BOOK REVIEWS

"Heroes of the Bible" (Miller). Waverley Book Co. 27/6.

This is a children's book of a rather unusual type, in that it takes the life stories of thirty-five of the more well-known characters of the Bible and tells their stories in quite readable language and without taking liberties with the Biblical record. So far as the text goes, the book is well written and produced; there are some who will feel that the illustrations, one hundred in number, of which twenty-nine are full-page coloured plates, do not come up to the standard of the text. There is a certain lack of attention to detail; for example, the famous "bedstead of iron" belonging to Og, King of Bashan (Deut. 3. 11) is shown as a type that is very familiar in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in suburban back bedrooms but hardly likely to have been a commercial article in the fifteenth century B.C. And not for the first time are we treated to the spectacle of Moses raising a tablet of the Law fully two feet by one and therefore, being presumably of the best red Sinai granite, weighing about forty pounds, high above his head in order to dash it to pieces! Children are, of course, not likely to be critical of such points but they may as well start their instruction without unnecessary misconceptions. The stories certainly do weave in to the Bible accounts a very graphic impression of life in the days with which they deal, culled from what is known of those days from history and research, and the book is interesting and useful on that account. The size is 9 inches by 7½ inches by 1½ inches and the price 27/6. Not stocked at Welling.

THREE SAMUELS

Three stages in the life of a great man :
YOUTH—MANHOOD—OLD AGE

Part 2—Manhood.

Ten years had passed since that memorable night when the Lord spoke to Samuel out of the sanctuary. Now he was grown to manhood, and already "all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord" (1 Sam. 3. 20.) The judgment pronounced ten years previously had not yet been executed: Eli, an old man of ninety-eight, was still High Priest. His profligate sons, middle-aged themselves, were still apostate from their high mission, and Israel still worshipped false gods. It was not that the true God was quite unknown: all the evidence is that there was always a substantial minority who themselves served God and "sighed and cried for the abominations" that were done in Israel. But in the main the nation was godless. The Tabernacle, made by Bezaleel in the wilderness, still stood at Shiloh and the ceremonies and feasts were still celebrated in a more or less perfunctory manner, but quite evidently the moral state of the nation was thoroughly bad. It was upon this unpromising material that the youthful reformer set to work, and with such vigour that his name and fame speedily became renowned throughout the land. The first sentence of chapter 4, belonging really to the end of chapter 3, tells us that "the word of Samuel came to all Israel". That does not demand that the people heeded Samuel to any extent: the next series of events in their national history, involving one of the greatest disasters they ever suffered, the capture of the Ark of the Covenant in open battle, is evidence that they did not; but the expression itself is sufficient to indicate that the young man was already in process of making himself a force to be reckoned with in Israel.

It was during this period that, as chapter 3, verse 21, tells us, "the Lord appeared again in Shiloh; for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord". The expression "the Lord appeared *again* in Shiloh" implies that for a long time previously His presence had not been manifest there. If one reads the stories of Israel's national life during the latter part of the period of the Judges there can be little wonder at that. The sad refrain "*In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" intones its sorrowful message throughout those dark days after Joshua had died, and the Judges ruled, uneasily, one after another, with troubled times of anarchy in between. The Taber-

nacle had been standing at Shiloh from very early days. When they crossed Jordan and entered the land it had at first been erected at Gilgal, quite near Jordan, but before many years had passed a more suitable site was sought and found at Shiloh, in almost the exact centre of the promised land. Obviously Shiloh became the spiritual capital of the country—for Jerusalem was still the stronghold of the Jebusites and not in the possession of Israel at all—and it was to Shiloh that men looked for religious and political leadership. The High Priest, in the days when there were no kings, and the Judges rose, ruled, and passed away at frequent intervals, rarely exercising authority over more than a portion of the land at a time, was the most important because the only permanent figure in the national life, and the High Priest therefore had immense possibilities for good or for ill according to his administration of his sacred office. And for many years now, that office had fallen into disrepute and the nation was suffering accordingly.

What lesson is there in this for us ? Is it not that strong spiritual leadership is essential for the community that would make progress in the things of God ? Democracy is the cry of the day, but democracy is only good for those who are fit to govern themselves, and that is not true of mankind to-day. Hence the world, in which the masses are claiming and gaining more and more power, is becoming steadily more ill-governed and anarchistic. That was the condition of Israel under the Judges. And this is true to a great extent in the Church also. There are aspects of our communal Christian life together where democratic methods are out of place because the company of believers, for all their zeal and enthusiasm and loyalty to their Lord, are not yet at that stage of Christian maturity where they can fitly order their own course. Therefore God, in His wisdom, does provide pastors, teachers, "fathers in God", for the "perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ". (Eph. 4. 12.) It is when such men are affording wise and clear-sighted leadership that the Church prospers; when their vision is fading, or their devotion to their calling is slackening, the people perish. We, no less than Israel, need the wisdom and reforming zeal of a Samuel if the conquests of Joshua are to be retained and maintained; conversely, if the elders of the assembly or the community have eyes that are waxed dim, as were those

of Eli, if their faith and zeal has left them, if they have no longer the passionate devotion to the cause of Divine Truth that characterised their earlier years, then there is most surely cause for deep concern as to the spiritual health of the flock.

Samuel would be about twenty-five years of age when the Battle of Aphek took place and the Ark of the Covenant was captured. His own efforts to turn Israel to the God of Israel, to induce them to forsake their false gods and to renew their covenant with Him, could not as yet have borne much fruit. He had become known as a prophet and men were conscious that God was speaking through him; but Israel was notoriously indifferent to the messages of its prophets, and whilst the nation could go on its way without meeting utter disaster they were disposed to enjoy the good things of life they had and take little real notice of the young enthusiast among them. But the sands were running out. The Philistines, who had been off and on the oppressors of Israel for two or three centuries past, were gathering their forces for a fresh attempt to bring them into bondage. Had the nation been true to its Covenant with God there had been nothing to fear. Had it even showed signs of repentance and a desire to come back to its holy calling God would have delivered; but there was no such trend. Despite their half-grudging admission that God was speaking again in Israel at the mouth of Samuel they were still at heart apostate as ever, and the depth of their irreligiosity was shown up when, in consequence of their defeat at the first encounter with the enemy, they determined to take the Ark of God into the battle with them. "*It*" said they "*may save us out of the hand of our enemies*". (Chapter 4. 3.)

This was the most fearful act of sacrilege ever committed by the people of Israel in their history. They were relying on the belief that God, thus put to the test, would not allow the sacred symbol of His presence to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised heathen. What He would not do for His people He would do for His holy habitation. They would compel God to save them, even against His will. That was probably their line of reasoning, and it shows the depth of ignorance into which they had fallen. This was no repetition of those ancient days when the priests, bearing aloft the holy Ark on their shoulders, set forward with the consecrated people in their wake, and the fervent cry arose on the still air "*Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; let them that hate Thee flee before Thee*". It might be that the age-old shout was heard again as the army marched toward the Philistine host with the sacred object in its midst, but the triumphant song must have been quickly changed to cries of dismay and terror as it speedily became evident that

God was not going to intervene, and that the defeat of the previous day was nothing to the disaster that was now to overwhelm them. And to the weak, apathetic old High Priest, without whose permission the Ark could not have been removed from its sanctuary, came the terrible news that the revered symbol was in the hands of the alien, the Tabernacle shorn of its glory, the nation of its centre of worship. It was a tragic ending to a life that could have been mighty in God's service—for Eli had ruled Israel for forty years.

Samuel would have been no party to this, but he would have had no power to prevent it. The part he had to play was yet to come. For the next twenty years the land lay under the harsh rule of the Philistines, and the nation mourned, desolate. Evidently the Philistines had followed up their capture of the Ark by razing Shiloh to the ground, for the name drops out of history thereafter, except for one solitary mention as the place of an obscure prophet in the reign of Jeroboam (I Kings 14. 2.) The fate of the little settlement is described graphically in Jer. 7 and in Psa. 78. The High Priest—dead. His son and successor—dead. The priesthood—scattered. The Ark—gone. The Tabernacle—destroyed or hidden away for safety. The nation—subjected to a cruel enemy. That was the condition when Samuel entered upon his life's work.

The death of Eli obviously left Samuel in the position of leadership. During the twenty years that the Ark, restored by the Philistines after the series of plagues it had brought them, abode at Kirjath-jearim (1 Sam. 7. 2) the young prophet sought diligently to turn the hearts of the people back to God. His message was an exhortation to repentance, but it also held practical promise. "*If ye do return unto the Lord your God with all your hearts*" he cried, "*then put away the strange gods and Ash-taroath from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines*" (1 Sam. 7. 3.) His message was definite and without compromise, but it held hope.

And Israel turned! The example and preaching of the one who loved and served them so faithfully, because he loved and served God most of all, brought the nation back to God. "*Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only*". At forty-five years of age Samuel found himself at the head of a repentant and pious people.

What a lesson for us in these times of discouragement and faint-heartedness when we think all is lost! What an incentive to consistent and persistent witness, both with our fellowship, and outside it to the world! The apathetic Eli, without doubt a good

man in his earlier days, had been the cause of national ruin and the loss of the nation's greatest treasure. Weakness of faith, dimness of vision, had palsied his hands and leadened his feet so that he no longer inspired and led the nation; and the people drifted from belief to unbelief and from unbelief to open rebellion. So the wrath of God was visited upon them. There could have been no other sequel. Now Samuel, in faith and zeal and by dint of ceaseless endeavour, had restored the people to their rightful position before God, and God, as ever in such circumstances, waited, ready to bless.

The occasion was not long in coming. Samuel, sensing, as did Daniel in a much later day, that the time was ripe for God to intervene to honour His people's faith, summoned a great assembly at Mizpeh. There he said, "*I will pray for you to the Lord*". Can we not imagine how his heart must have beat fast in looking upon that confident host, so different from the fear-stricken armies that twenty years before had borne the sacred Ark into battle to their own destruction. Here was a people for whom the Lord could indeed fight, an army that trusted not in carnal weapons, not in the strength of its own power, but the superabundant power of Almighty God. And as the children of Israel publicly acknowledged their fault and repudiated the past, saying "*we have sinned against the Lord*", God drew near to act.

The Philistines, being made aware of this great gathering at Mizpeh, and fearing insurrection, gathered their forces and came up to quell the rebellion. There was fear in Israel, but there was also trust. "*Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us*" they cried to Samuel "*that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines*". That was a significant phrase. "*The Lord our God*". There was no fetish-worship of an inanimate object this time, no appeal even that Samuel pray to his God. "*This is our God*" was their instinctive thought. "*He will save us.*" That speaks volumes for the untiring work of Samuel during those twenty years that had elapsed since the disastrous Battle of Aphek.

So God saved! He thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines, and, wonder of wonders, utterly discomfited them, discomfited them so completely that they troubled Israel no more all the days of Samuel's judgeship. The deliverance that was wrought that day is comparable with the destruction of Sennacherib's host in the days of Hezekiah and of the Moabites in the days of Jehoshaphat. There are three memorable occasions on which God delivered in response to the prayer of faith without His people needing to strike a blow—although they did on this occasion pursue the defeated enemy and com-

plete the work of destruction after God had given the victory. But it was God that saved!

Thus did the last and the greatest of the Judges become firmly established in the seat of power. He was leader by common consent, and Israel willingly accepted his rule. At Mizpeh, and Gilgal, and Bethel, each in turn, year by year, he dispensed justice and ordered the everyday affairs of the people. At Ramah, his home, he guided the nation's destinies and gave Israel perhaps the only period of real peace it had known in all the troubled years that had followed the entry into Canaan. Israel, that forgetful people, never forgot Samuel. His greatness in rulership and in the dispensing of justice passed into a proverb, so that years later the Lord could say to Jeremiah the prophet "*Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight*" (Jer. 15. 1.) The little lad who had been given to God in the sanctuary at Shiloh had grown to be classed with Moses, the greatest man of all time in Israel's history.

And in the Temple services, throughout Israel's generations, the sweet singers of Israel chanted "*Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the Lord, and He answered them*" (Psa. 99. 6.) Thus did Israel praise her most famous Judge.

Next month: Samuel in old age.

SERENITY

We all know the almost miraculous effect that one strong poised mind can have over a panic-stricken multitude, how a few calm words and clear authoritative directions will produce an immediate result and reduce confusion to something like order. This influence, which is so obvious on marked occasions, is always felt, and leaves its impress everywhere. In quietness and confidence there is always strength. One poised mind has more effect than many restless, uncontrolled ones.

It is well worth while to spend time in cultivating quietness of spirit. It is not until the peace of God garrisons our hearts and thought that the world and all belonging to it can be seen in their right proportions, and energy needed for co-operation with God in the working out of His plans is set free. Many mysteries remain, problems are unsolved. We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with Him, and let Him unfold His plans little by little, and show us our share in them. We know that "*He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.*"

A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S PLANS

AN OUTLINE FOR THE
NEWLY-INTERESTED

Promise of Deliverance—Birth of Jesus—Ransom for All.

THE PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE

After man was turned out of Eden children were born to him, and as these began to multiply some were good and some were wicked. As examples of faithfulness we have Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others.

It was after a great lapse of time from the creation and fall of man that God called faithful Abraham and promised him that in his offspring all mankind should be blessed. (Gen. 12. 13; Gen. 22. 15-18.) God had previously stated that the offspring of the woman should bruise the head of "that old serpent the devil". This was when the first man and woman were about to be turned out of Eden, with the curse of death upon them. (Gen. 3. 15.) This statement was God's promise of a coming deliverance for man from the power of the Devil. It meant that a deliverer should come from the offspring of the woman, who would destroy the Devil and bring blessing to man. The promise made to Abraham showed that the long looked for deliverer was to be of Abraham's children. Perhaps Abraham thought his son Isaac would be the one; but not so. Isaac and his son Jacob were greatly blessed by God, but they did not fulfil the promise. Neither became the blesser or deliverer of mankind.

At Jacob's death his twelve sons and their families, known as the Children of Israel (Jacob's name was changed to Israel), became a special people to God above all others. (Exodus 19. 5.) They were the descendants of Abraham, and so long as obedient to their God, received many favours, but did not, as a people, become the great deliverer of the world of mankind, as they may have hoped. Moses, their leader and lawgiver, prophesied that the great deliverer should be one of their brethren. (Deut. 18. 15.) Many great men arose in Israel after Moses, such as Joshua, Samuel, David, Solomon, and others, but none of these proved to be the deliverer.

From time to time the prophets of Israel kept the hopes of the faithful alive, that God would send a mighty one who would fulfil the promise made to Abraham. In time this promise was limited to the house of David; the statement being, that of David's children God would set upon his throne for ever. (Psalm 132. 11, 12.) This would give the thought that the coming deliverer would be a great King, one who would sit upon David's throne. (the throne of the Lord. 1 Chron. 28. 23.) The prophet Jeremiah prophesied concerning the deliverer, the

great Messiah, that he would be a branch (offspring) of David, and that as a king he would reign and prosper, and execute justice and judgment in the earth. (Jer. 23. 5, 6.) Thus the faithful in Israel would be looking for their long promised Messiah as a great Prophet and a great King.

When the great deliverer came the faithful recognised Him, but the majority rejected Him even though all were in expectation of Him. (Luke 3. 15.) *The great deliverer, the seed of Abraham, is Christ.* (Gal. 3, 16.)

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

The promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12. 1-3) and often repeated to others, would thoroughly impress upon all true Israelites that at some future time there would be born of a woman of the Jewish people a holy child, who would in some way (which they could not then understand) become a great King and bring blessing to all peoples of the earth.

Words such as those of the prophet Isaiah given to us in chapter 9, verses 6 and 7 would lead them to this expectation. The words of the prophet are "*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice for ever.*"

These words are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, as all can readily see, though only partially fulfilled as yet. The greater fulfilment is yet future. The birth of Jesus is one of the greatest events in human history. The place of Jesus' birth, as all know, was Bethlehem. This was according to the words of the prophet long before the event took place. (Micah 5. 2; Matt. 2. 5, 6.)

Mary, the mother-to-be of Jesus, had been previously informed that her child should be called Jesus, that He should be called the Son of the Highest, and that God would give Him the throne of David, that He should reign and have a kingdom without end. (Luke 1. 30, 33.)

She with her husband Joseph lived at Nazareth, a humble despised city many miles from Bethlehem, but God over-ruled matters in order that the birth of Jesus should take place in Bethlehem, according to His word through His prophet. (Micah 5. 2.)

The account is given in the second chapter of Luke, how that Cæsar Augustus, the Roman emperor (ruler of Palestine, the home of the Jews), sent forth a decree that all were to be taxed, every one in his own city. Everyone must go to the city of their nativity, there to be enrolled and taxed. Mary and Joseph were of David's line and therefore had to go to David's city, Bethlehem. Whilst there, the birth took place, amid circumstances with which all are familiar.

There was no great pomp and show surrounding the birth of this Great One. Each one whom God chose to take part in this great act were humble, meek and possessed of great faith in God's promises. Both Mary and her husband were poor, as no doubt were the shepherds to whom the angels brought their message of joy.

In heaven there would be great rejoicing and a host of angels were ready to take their part in this great event. Whilst others slept, Jesus was born, and the angels, led by the angel of the Lord, brought their message of joy and song of happiness to the shepherds keeping sheep. The angel of the Lord brought glad tidings which shall be unto all people. All have not heard these glad tidings yet, but we look by faith to the time when all shall have heard, and all shall bow to the name of Jesus. (Phil. 2. 7-11.)

A RANSOM FOR ALL

When Jesus grew to manhood and was heralded by John the Baptist as the Messiah the Jews were disappointed in him. They were looking for a leader greater than Moses, a general greater than Joshua, a king far greater than David or Solomon, who would deliver them from the subjection of the Romans, and make of them a great and mighty nation. The meek and lowly Nazarene was rejected by them, and thus Jesus became "despised and rejected of men" as the prophet had said the Messiah would be. (Isa. 53. 3.) They had set their minds upon the prophecies which spoke of the might and power and glory of their Messiah, but overlooked those which spoke of his humiliation and sufferings. They forgot that God's prophet had said that he should be "led as a lamb to the slaughter," that he should "pour out his soul unto death," and "make his soul an offering for sin." (Isa. 53. 3-12.) These prophecies and many others were fulfilled in Jesus when He came to earth, but those which speak of His glory and power are yet to be fulfilled. Then the hopes of the Jew respecting the Messiah and the expectations of Christians respecting Christ's second coming will be more than fulfilled.

Why should Jesus pour out His soul unto death? Why should He make Himself an offering for sin?

Briefly the answer is this: Man, because of sin, dies. "*The wages of sin is death.*" (Rom. 6. 23.) Sin entered the world by one man's disobedience—the disobedience of Adam (Rom. 5. 12) and has passed upon all men because the offspring of Adam are all born imperfect, he having fallen from his perfect condition before any children were born to him. Thus "all in Adam die." (1 Cor. 15. 21, 22.) Before man can have hope of everlasting life a ransom must be found for him, a "corresponding price" for the first man whose sin brought death. If such could be provided, then all who die because of Adam's transgression could be given hope of life. God had promised to ransom man from the power of death. (Hosea 13. 14.) Where was the ransom to be found? Not amongst fallen man. None of these can redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for him. (Psalm 49. 7.) They are all imperfect, therefore cannot provide the ransom for man. Jesus was a perfect man, because he was "the only begotten Son of God." God was His Father. (Luke 1. 30-35.) Jesus said that He came to give Himself a ransom, (Matt. 20. 28) and the Apostle says that the man Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. (1 Tim. 2. 5, 6.) Jesus further said "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." (John 10. 10.) Jesus by reason of His great sacrifice provided the ransom price, which "in due time" (1 Tim. 2. 6) will bring to every man (*He died for all*; Heb. 2. 9) a release from the death in Adam, and give to all, one full fair opportunity of salvation and life everlasting. Thus "all the families of the earth" are to be blessed in Him, according to God's promise to Abraham. (Gen. 12. 1-3.) Jesus' teaching and example are the finest ever given to man, and have done much to make the world better, but His death was the all important matter. From the Cross there radiates the only real hope for humanity.

Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, highly exalted (Phil. 2. 7-11) and given "all power." (Matt. 28. 18.) As the risen, exalted Lord, He has power to bring to mankind the benefits of His sacrifice, but that work will not be completed until other features of God's plan and purpose are fulfilled.

(To be concluded.)

Plenty of Scriptural cards are on hand; the SA packet, which has 30 cards, all different, at 3/6 is always useful.

* * *

God has placed us in the world to be Lighthouses, to reflect His Light and to shed radiance wherever we go.

THE QUIET TIME

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

HE COMES

*See, the King in beauty cometh,
He, thy long, long absent King;
As the light of dawn He shineth,
And His breath is that of spring.
From the night of darkness waking
Zion, lift thy voice and sing.
From the dust of ages rising
Put on all thine ancient might.
For to thee the crown belongeth,
And to thee the raiment bright;
Of the coming age the glory,
Of the ransomed earth the light.*

SELFISHNESS

The people who are lonely in this world are those who are always looking for something to come to them; they hope for pleasant adventures; they exact much from their friends and from their family, and they are never satisfied. But the happy men and women are those who never think to demand for themselves—who give and give and give again, and find joy whenever they find opportunity to give joy.

UNRUFFLED

Although Jesus knew that His time on earth was short, and although He would have us remember that the same is true of our work-day, yet He was in no feverish haste. With a calmness, and a steady, even deportment He went about His work. There was a time to work, and a time to pray; a time for the multitude, and a time for the disciples alone. He could not be hurried into any action by the solicitation of His friends, or the taunts of His enemies. When His brethren urged Him to go up to the feast and make Himself known, His reply was significant: "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready." It was as though He had said, yours is the worldly mind—they who do their own work, who seek their own glory, are the masters and disposers of their own time, but my time is not yet.—*The "Herald"*.

DISCIPLES

Mysterious people. Moving amongst us, and yet not seeming to be of us. Passing through the world without seeming to be deeply concerned in its forms or fashions, its prizes or blanks; tranquil amidst its contentions, humble amidst its pomp, silent amidst its uproar, passive amidst its struggles, free

amidst its bondage. Wrapped up, it should appear, in thoughts of your own, which work in you pursuits of your own; happy in yourselves, and never so happy as when shedding quiet blessings on all around you. How have your ways won on me, durst I but say so. How has your simple character told its tale on me, more touchingly than all the arguments of philosophy, more convincingly than all the logic of the schools. How have you almost persuaded me to be a Christian.

UNMOVABLE

The old Lollards were called "Holdfasts", not only because of their firmness under persecution, but of their strong grasp of the truth. Coleridge said, with a practical aptness unusual with him: "What does not withstand has no standing-ground". "Hold fast, then, the form of sound words, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." Be modest, unostentatious in all that is your own, willing to concede everything you have a right to yield, but be scrupulous and immovable about all that is Christ's.

ENDURANCE

Ask the Apostle John, who began in earliest life and lasted longest in earthly service. He had not found it an easy service; he had been exiled for the Word of God; he had lost his own brother, James, and his dearest friend, Peter, by martyrdom; but what does he say of it at the end? "His commandments are not grievous." He came to see how thoroughly reasonable is this service; how good, how blessed. John heard his Master saying, and put his "Amen" to it at the end of his service, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

BEYOND THE VAIL

*When I stand before the throne,
Dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see thee as thou art,
Love thee with unsinching heart,
Then, Lord, I shall fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.
When the praise of heaven I hear,
Grand as anthems on the ear,
Loud as many waters' noise,
Sweet as harps' melodious voice,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.*

"This One Thing I Do!"

A CALL TO CONSECRATION

The Apostle Paul gives in another place his testimony as to the wisdom of shaking off some of our plans and arrangements and of relaxing our efforts in various directions in order to concentrate our energies upon those things which we can best bring to perfection, saying "This *one thing* I do". (Phil. 3. 13.) The Apostle's one business in life was to be, so far as he was able, acceptable to the Lord, personally, and to do with his might what he could to assist others into the same condition.

In harmony with this the thought of our text seems to be that whatever the Apostle knew respecting other matters prominent in his day—customs of the Age, scientific questions, etc.—he would ignore. He would be a *specialist*. He would confine his thoughts, words and teachings along this *one line*; for he thought it was *worthy*. He had been at Corinth as an ambassador of Christ. He was not there to air his knowledge, but to tell the *message of the Kingdom*. He would make preaching the Gospel his one business, to accomplish which he felt that all of his knowledge and energy were too little.

The Apostle did not determine to ignore all of his knowledge without having a good reason or purpose. It was because he wished to concentrate all his attention and influence upon one great subject. That subject was Jesus Christ, Jesus the Anointed; Jesus the Messiah was the main thought of all his preaching. He realised that the great Messiah was a part of the Divine Programme which had been promised—the "Seed" which was to bless all the families of the earth; that Jesus was that great Messiah, and that all men should recognise Him, should flock to His standard.

But St. Paul would preach, not only that Jesus was the Messiah, but that He was the *crucified* Messiah, for he would not be ashamed of the Divine teaching. He would preach that God sent forth His Son; and that the Son had left the glory He had with the Father, had lived on the earth, and had "died, the Just for the unjust", for this very purpose—that He might manifest His obedience to the Divine arrangement. In thus preaching Christ and His crucifixion, the Apostle was not ignoring the fact that there was to be a Church; Jesus was the Anointed Head over His Body, the Church. Hence, in preaching Jesus the Anointed One, St. Paul was showing how the Divine Plan was being outworked under Divine supervision, and what the glorious results would be. To these things he had

determined that all his time and attention should go.

Because we have found the Truth we, like, St. Paul, feel constrained to preach nothing but this Message. The same truth that influenced Him should influence us. If, therefore, any of the brethren feel disposed to preach something else, here is the reproof—"Not . . . *anything* save Jesus Christ and Him crucified". This is the *only subject*. St. Paul would be as though he *knew nothing else*. This subject would be the *one thing* to which he would give his time and attention. Let it be so with us!

Beloved, as you value the glorious hope set before you, we beseech you, that you give no heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, as the Apostle terms them (1 Tim. 4. 1); but that with fixedness of purpose you apply yourselves to the one thing to which you are called, and which as prospective heirs of Messiah's Kingdom you are privileged to do. Let us not forget that we are a "peculiar people", separate from the world, having higher hopes, aims and ambitions, and favoured with a clearer insight into the deep things of God, having been called out of our former darkness into His marvellous light. Thus separate from the world and from Christians who partake largely of the spirit of the world, what wonder if we find them all out of harmony with us, and either ignoring or opposing us!

We expect such opposition; and we know that it will continue until our course has been finished in death. If we endure hardness as good soldiers for the Truth's sake, no matter how that hardness may come, in our efforts to do the Lord's will and to advance the interests of His Kingdom, then we are presenting our bodies as living sacrifices in the Divine service. To be really in His service includes both the careful and continual study of God's Plan, and the imbibing of its spirit, leading to an enthusiastic zeal for its accomplishment, and to activity to the extent of ability in its service, whatever the cost or sacrifice it may require.

If faithful in this service we have neither time nor disposition to give heed to other themes having no bearing on the *one thing* to which we have solemnly dedicated our lives. If we have consecrated all to God our time is *not our own*; and consequently we have none to spare for the investigation of theories built upon any other foundation than that laid down in the Bible. Nor have we time to devote to the ideas and pursuits which

engross the world's attention, many of which are harmless or even elevating in themselves, but which would be harmful and degrading to us if we allow them to occupy consecrated time and to divert our attention from the *one thing* which we ought to be doing.

The Apostle warns us to "Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness"; but counsels, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth"; "*Teach no other doctrine*, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith". (2 Tim. 2. 16, 15; 1 Tim. 1. 3, 4.)

Is not this a very narrow way? Yes, so narrow that our Lord foretold respecting it "Strait [difficult] is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that *find it*!" (Matt. 7. 14.) It is so narrow that it is wide enough to admit only the Lord's Plan and those who are willing to discard all other plans, projects and questionings, and to devote themselves fully to its service; and who are quite willing to bear any reproach it may bring.

Are you endeavouring from day to day to vindicate the Divine character and to make known God's righteous ways? Are you diligently studying to make yourself thoroughly familiar with the Truth, so that you may indeed be a living epistle known and read of all men within the circle of your influence? Are you indeed a workman that need not be ashamed (2 Tim. 2. 15)? Are you of those who have really given themselves to the Lord, saying truthfully to Him:

*"Take myself—I wish to be
Ever, only, all for Thee"?*

Dear! beloved, *we* impose neither vows nor bondage upon each other, but the *call* has its own limitations; the Master has directed us to teach all nations and to "*Observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*". (Matt. 28.20.)

This is what the Apostle Paul did. Hear him in his zeal for this *one thing* to which he had devoted his life: "And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the mystery of God; for I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (*I riveted your attention on this one thing! I kept this one thing continually before you.*) . . . And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (of the Truth), that your faith should

not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2. 1-5.)

St. Paul was an outspoken, uncompromising teacher. When he *knew* that he had the Truth, he spoke it with confidence, and boldly declared that everything contrary to it is *false doctrine*. He also taught believers that it was not only their privilege, but their duty to be *established* in the faith, to know on the evidence of God's Word, *why* they believed, and to be able to give every man that enquired a reason for the hope that was in them.

Let it be so with us also. Each consecrated believer should ask himself, "How carefully have I studied that which I recognise as Divine Truth? How fully capable am I of handling the Sword of the Spirit?" To gain such proficiency in the Word is the work of a lifetime; but every day should see a closer approximation to that proficiency, and will if we are faithful students and faithful servants of the Truth.

In all the history of the Church there has never been a time in which the great Adversary has been so active in diverting attention from the Truth by introducing unprofitable and irrelevant questions as at present. Just now, when the exaltation and glory of the Church are soon to be accomplished, and when the faithful are about to be received into the joy of their Lord, Satan is resorting to every device in order to beguile them of their reward and to frustrate this feature of the Divine Plan.

But really to frustrate any part of the Divine Plan is impossible. God has purposed to take out from among men a "little flock", "a people for His name"; and such a company is assuredly being gathered. Yet whether all those now in the race for the prize will surely be of that company, is still an open question. Take heed, beloved, that no man take *thy crown*. (Rev. 3. 11.) If any come short of their privileges and prove unworthy of the rich inheritance, there are others who will quickly fill their places.

Let us all, then, who have this hope, be very jealous in husbanding time and talent for the ministry of the Gospel, leaving all subjects outside of this, however interesting they may be, to those who prefer to devote time to them now; and to the future life for ourselves, when all knowledge shall be ours. May we, dear brethren, be able truthfully to express our position in the words of the Apostle: "*This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*".

WHO WILL INHERIT THE PROMISED LAND?

A Question of the Hour

Reports of ships carrying Jews to Palestine cause controversy and comment. A statement made by some claiming the Bible as their authority is this: "These Jews are going to Palestine; and nobody can stop them". Is it meant by this that anyone having Jewish blood in his veins, and who makes up his mind to go to Palestine, has a *right* to do so? Some claim that every Jew on earth will eventually find himself in that land. Some say that every natural descendant of Abraham who has ever lived will, before long, be in the land promised to Abraham and his seed. There are those who say that all who believed and served God before Jesus came, and those who have faithfully followed Him, will together inherit the land; that no one will go to Heaven, but all faithful will have an inheritance in the land of promise. All this gives rise to the question: "To whom did God promise the land?" *And the Lord said unto Abram, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.* (Gen. 13. 14-17.)

Some time later, the Lord said to Abram: "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years, and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." (Gen. 15. 13, 14.)

When these words were due to be fulfilled, God called Moses to lead the people out of bondage, and God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, "I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them; and I have also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians . . . and I will bring you into the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage. *I am the Lord*". (Exod. 6. 2-8.)

Three months after they left Egypt, they came to Sinai. "And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say . . . Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, *IF* ye will obey my voice indeed, and *keep my covenant*, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." (Exod. 19. 1-6.) To be His "peculiar treasure", "a holy nation", *they must obey His voice, and keep His covenant.*

Later, when the Israelites were encamped in the wilderness of Paran, "the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them . . . And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan . . . and they returned from searching the land after forty days. . . Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it. . . But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we . . . And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and . . . said unto them, Would God we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land to fall by the sword. . . And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return unto Egypt. . . And Joshua . . . and Caleb . . . spake unto all the company of the children of Israel saying, The land . . . is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into the land . . . and the Lord said . . . Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness . . . *have not hearkened to my voice*, surely they shall NOT SEE THE LAND . . . neither shall any of them that provoked me see it. But Caleb, my servant, *because he hath another spirit with him, and HATH FOLLOWED ME FULLY, HIM WILL I BRING INTO THE LAND* whereinto he went. . . I, the Lord, said it, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation . . . In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall

they die. . . . But Joshua . . . and Caleb . . . lived still." (Num. 13 & 14.)

Only those of that generation who had faith enough in God to take Him at His word, and be obedient, entered into the land. Is it not here demonstrated that the condition upon which the land is to be inherited is faith in the promises of God, and obedience to His commands? Any who seek to possess it by violence, without the Lord, will surely suffer the same fate as Israel did, when, after refusing the way of the Lord, they tried to get into the land in their own way, and in their own strength.

When the forty years of wandering in the wilderness were about expired, "Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness" (Deut. 1. 1). "Because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen. . . . Know, therefore, that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations. And repayeth them that hate him to their face. . . . Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments. . . ." (Deut. 7. 6-11). And it shall come to pass if thou shalt hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments . . . all these blessings shall come upon thee . . . and He shall bless thee in the LAND which the Lord thy God giveth thee. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt *not hearken* unto the voice of the Lord thy God . . . *cursed shalt thou be*. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all nations which the Lord shall lead thee. . . . And it shall come to pass that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and multiply you; so the Lord will . . . bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the LAND whither thou goest to possess it. . . . (Deut. 28 and 29.) And it shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee . . . and thou call them to mind among the nations . . . and shalt *return* unto the Lord thy God and shalt obey his voice . . . That then the Lord thy God will . . . gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee unto the land . . . and . . . circumcise thine heart. (Deut. 30. 1-10, compare Ezek. 36. 24-29.)

Here is plainly set forth the reason for their being removed from the land, and the condition upon which they may be regathered. This is a Divine rule which has operated at all times, and still applies.

In the days of the Kings of Israel "the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight . . . And Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made, and the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel. . ." (2 Kings 17. 6-23.)

When Jesus came, those who had faith in God and His Word—Israelites indeed—accepted Jesus as the Christ, He of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets did write (John 1. 35-47.) These became SONS of God (John 1. 11-13). The true sheep in Israel followed Jesus (John 10. 26, 27) and became a "remnant" according to the "election of grace" (Rom. 11.5). All who accepted Jesus as the Christ were given a "living hope", not of possessing the land, but of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in *heaven*" (1 Pet. 1. 1-5).

Of the people in the land Jesus said "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations". (Luke 21. 20, 24.) How true these words were! History proves that they were fulfilled about A.D. 70. As a people they were unfaithful, and never really embraced the promises of God. They did not take God at His word, nor did they obey His voice, therefore they lost all claim to His blessings in the land.

Who then will inherit the land and all its blessings? The answer must be—those who amongst them believed God, and embraced the promises, even though they only saw them "afar off" (Heb. 11. 13). The Ancient Worthies are the ones who will possess the land. The unfaithful of the past have no right to it.

The land was promised to Abraham and His seed. Who are the seed?

To be born a natural descendant of Abraham does not guarantee anything more than the *opportunity* to possess the land and all its blessings. To some in his day John the Baptist said "And think not within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Matt. 3. 7-12). To the same people Jesus said, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham . . . Ye are of your father the Devil". (John 8. 33-47.) Paul says "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly . . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly . . ." (Rom. 2. 28, 29.) Circumcision of the flesh was of no avail, so far as inheriting the promises of God was concerned, unless there was also the circumcision of heart (see Deut. 10. 12-17, Jer. 4. 4). Those who feared the Lord their God, and sought to walk in His ways, before Jesus came, are the only ones of that time

who have any claim to the Land of Promise. *These are the "seed" to whom it is promised.* Those accepting the way of Jehovah in Jesus Christ were given heavenly hopes. Together with the Gentile believers of this Age, they constitute the spiritual class of Abraham's seed (Gal. 3. 26-29). Their hope is not to possess the land of Palestine, but that which is "within the veil" (Heb. 6. 18-20). Paul says "We, however, are free citizens of heaven, and are waiting with longing expectation for the coming from heaven of a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the exercise of the power which He has, even to subject all things to Himself, will transform this body of our humiliation until it resembles his own glorious body. (Phil. 3. 30, 21 *Weymouth.*) Then the faithful of past ages will receive a "better resurrection". The Lord will then give the promised land to Abraham and his seed.

What about the Jews still alive?

As the time of the promised Kingdom of God draws near, we see a movement of the Jews toward Palestine. Will all living Jews acquire the land of Palestine for an inheritance? If not, who will? The answer, of course, is to be found in the Word of God. When the Jews were in captivity in Babylon, their leaders came to Ezekiel the prophet to enquire about their return to their own land. The word of the Lord came to the prophet "... cause them to know the abominations of their fathers". Then followed a long statement about God's dealings with this rebellious and disobedient people from the time of its deliverance from Egypt until their own day. Concerning the future deliverance and possession of the land, the record says: "As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm, and with *fury poured out* will I rule over you (this must have reference to their experience in the countries where they have been scattered. They have felt the full penalty of the Law given by Moses. Their bitter persecution has been the "fury of God poured out".) And I will bring you from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye were scattered . . . And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you . . . And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and bring you into the bond of the covenant." (Does it not seem that thus the Lord will count His *sheep*, and bring them into the deliverance of the New Covenant? Only sheep, willing and obedient ones, will be allowed to possess the land. Compare Ezek. 34. 11-16, etc.) "And I will purge out from among you the *rebels* and *them that transgress against me*. I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel"—

not possess the land according to the promise made to Abraham. "They shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel." (They will not possess the land according to the promise.) (Ezek. 20. 1-44; 13. 9.) God has purposed to give the land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all who had faith in Old Testament times. Palestine is to be the visible centre of world government, after the Lord has prepared a Christian people to inherit the heavenly promises of the Kingdom. Until God gives the land to the Jews, there will be strife and trouble. To attempt to get it by violence is entirely opposed to His way. Those who practice violence are rebellious, because such is contrary to the Law given by Moses, and to the purpose of God. Violence and bloodshed by Jews who want to possess the land can only bring trouble, and further severe judgments from God. The experience of the Jews is really an object lesson in the severity of Divine judgments. They have been severely chastised, but as a people show no sign of repentance. Until they do repent and acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, they will not possess the land. Their prophets show that they will do this in due time (Ezek. 12). Those who remain rebellious will never possess the land, even though they are natural descendants of Abraham.

There are prophecies which show that after the present violent phase is over, the people will be allowed to possess the land, and settle in at least a measure of peace and prosperity. Then the forces from the North will make their mighty assault upon the people in the land; but God has promised to fight for them as in the days of long ago. Then lasting peace and prosperity will follow, and then shall they say "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden . . . Then shall the heathen *that are left* round about you know that *I the Lord build the ruined places*, and plant that that was desolate. *I the Lord hath spoken it, and I will do it.* (Ezek. 36 to 39.)

ONE HAVING AUTHORITY

"He taught them; as one having authority."

In this world of dictators and totalitarian states, where the gospel of individual submission to the will of the Leader is paramount, such a statement as this would cause disquiet of mind were it not that we know Him of Whom the words were spoken. Not for Jesus the blustering arrogance of the bully, nor the cold passionless orders of the man of steel. Christ's teaching was warm, tender, vibrant with the love of humankind and pity for

their unhappy conditions; yet underlying his words there was a calm authority which carried with it conviction that this man who "spake as never man spake", told of things he had both seen and heard. He, Who, having beheld and shared in the glory of that spiritual realm of which the Infinite Creator is at once the centre and the all-in-all, spoke to the hearts of men and women who themselves were part of God's creation, and His words came with the force of that authority which is engendered, not by the outward trappings of physical force or mental superiority, but the inward power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Christians right down the Age have realised this, and rejoiced in the assertion of our Heavenly Father's own way of imparting knowledge to mankind—knowledge not only of Himself and His Plan, but also of themselves, their relation to each other and their mutual obligations and responsibilities as fellow-citizens of the earth. But it still remains true that those who remain to listen are far smaller in number than those who turn away "to walk no more with Him". The day has yet to dawn when the emptiness and worthlessness of these much-vaunted earthly dictatorships will be appreciated by all men, and, in the appointed day when God shall judge the world in righteousness, that gentle, insistent teaching of the stranger from Galilee's shore shall come into its rightful heritage.

Therefore, knowing this to be the outcome of the Divine Plan for humanity we can with confidence turn to our own position as men and women who already have accepted the Divine principle of teaching and have rejected the earthly policies. Not for us to sit at the feet of teachers who impress their claims to over-lordship as by right, or who will enforce the acceptance of their dogmas by appeals to the intellect, or alleged loyalty to the personal teachings of past or present ministers to the Church, or considerations of policy or allegiance to the group. All these things are but manifestations in our Christian fellowship of that same spirit which is producing in the political world menacing forms of government and national life and filling the minds of worldly thinkers with apprehension for the future of humanity. "Mass-thinking" and the restriction of personal liberty may yet prove to be an important factor in bringing the nations to Armageddon. The same principle within the Church must produce, in a more spiritual sense, the same results.

We turn then to Christ's words with a feeling of relief. Here is our salvation in very truth. "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free." In the calm, quiet discussion

of Scriptural teaching between ourselves; in the constant appeal, not to force, not even to intellectual reason, but to the enlightening and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit, dispensing to every man severally as it will, shall the word of old be fulfilled, "And they shall be all taught of God; and great shall be the peace of Thy children." Thus shall every teacher and pastor the Church has ever known be held in rightful esteem and honour, "for his works sake" and the truest feelings of loyalty to those who in the past have been our personal mentors, manifested. Thus shall we progress into further revelation and understanding of the Divine Will, until at length, like Christian in Bunyan's immortal allegory, we shall see with our own eyes the city to which we journey, and hear with our ears the strains of celestial song.

THE LORD COMETH

*Rejoice, O earth, the Lord from heaven comes,
Now in the fulness of prophetic time;
He comes, not with the sound of war-like drums,
But in the plenitude of grace sublime.
He comes to bind in adamant chains
The mighty adversary of our race;
To purge the nations from their sinful stains,
And all Satanic influence efface.
To bend mankind to His benignant sway,
And win by truth and righteousness His foes:
To drive all want and misery away,
And make the desert blossom as the rose.
He comes, He comes, our great Emmanuel,
To bid the world its angry clamours cease:
He comes all forms of tyranny to quell,
And usher in the thousand years of peace.
The hour approaches—yea, is now at hand,
The bright Millennial dawn its splendour flings:
Lift up your longing hearts, expectant stand,
And hail the presence of the King of Kings.*

Arabs have discovered near the Dead Sea some earthenware jars containing ancient manuscripts. Upon examination one of these was found to be a copy of the Book of Isaiah dating back to the second century before Christ. Up to the date of this discovery the oldest known manuscript of Isaiah was one of about 900 A.D., and the new discovery is therefore at least a thousand years older. It still awaits critical examination by experts. Modern scholars of the "Higher Criticism" have argued for years that the Book of Isaiah is in fact a collection of writings by various men living at a much later date than the time of the prophet himself, and this new find goes far to demolish their arguments.

PROGRESS IN PALESTINE

A record of current happenings
in the Holy Land.

After four months of conflict it is interesting to take stock of the position to date. Notwithstanding the fact that seven Arab states have joined forces in an attempt to push them into the Mediterranean, the Israelis have not only held the territory originally allotted them by UNO, but have also captured, and now hold, Arab Galilee and the towns of Nazareth, Jaffa and Acre, and the main part of Jerusalem. A great number of Arabs have left the country and their place has been taken by Jewish immigrants; it is unlikely that the Arabs will ever come back. The State of Israel, whatever its final form as agreed by UNO, has come to stay, and the Arab rulers will very soon be hard put to it in explaining this fact, and the failure of their military operations, to their own people. The Western nations will make their peace with Israel and begin to bargain for trade agreements. Trans-Jordan, at least, among the Arab states, will follow suit. And although we who are students of the Word of God know that this is not the gathering "with supplication and weeping" that was foretold in ancient time and for which we look; although we must realise that there is evidently a further phase of development to be revealed before we can say "this is the end", yet the significance of this year's events is great and the things we now see going on before our eyes must be playing some part in, making some preparation for, the real gathering of those true-hearted sons of Israel who will build "the land of unwallled villages".

* * *

Under the Constitution of the State of Israel, now being framed, the President of the State is responsible for appointing the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Israel, acting upon the advice of the Minister of Defence. In this, as in so many things, Israel has taken its stand with the "kingdoms of this world". Can it then avoid sharing their destiny. The "Holy Nation" of the Last Days will look to, and trust, God for their defence and it is then that He will "go forth, and fight as when He fought in the day of battle." ((Zech. 14.) How evident it is that a great change of heart must come to that people before we can expect prophecy to be fulfilled.

* * *

There is now a constant stream of immigrants going into the Holy Land. By the end of 1948, it is estimated, the Jewish population will number 805,000, an increase of nearly 20 per cent. since

the withdrawal of British forces in May. During 1949, it is expected, another 150,000 will enter, and in a few years' time, it is thought, the nation may be three or four millions strong. (The population in the time of Christ is estimated to have been about five millions—there is evidently space enough). It is evident that all the tortuous policies of the Western nations and all the opposition of the Arab peoples cannot prevail against this tide. Jacob is going home.

BIBLE STUDY

Malachi 3. 1 is a good verse to be used illustrative of verse study. It reads: "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come saith the Lord of hosts*".

The Lord's coming to his temple is the subject matter of this verse, and it brings many questions to mind which the Bible student would like to know. Before we can answer these questions we must know something of the circumstances under which the verse was written. Who is the author? When did he write? Who did he write to? What were the conditions in Israel when he wrote? What was the prior history of the Lord being at the temple which the prophet may have had in mind when writing this verse? Does the book of Malachi give any clue as to the attitude of the Israelites concerning the Lord being at the temple, or not being there, which would assist in arriving at a determination of what is meant by Him coming to the temple? Then there are the matters stated in connection with His coming to the temple: the testing and refining; the purification of certain ones; the judgments against some. Thus the study of the verse leads into the investigation of the chapter and the entire book of Malachi. And not only that, but it leads to search of other portions of the Bible. The New Testament tells of the Lord coming to the temple at His First Advent. Is that the fulfilment of the prophecy? Or does it have reference to the Second Advent? Thus the one verse leads on into a fascinating search for information that the Lord has placed in His word for the benefit of those who study and seek to know His will.

(Bible Student Inquirer.)

A WORD FROM GLASGOW

We feel constrained to express our appreciation of the ministry of Brother Read last weekend. The attendances at the meetings were high and embraced brethren from the various classes in Glasgow. Though holding different points of view with regard to some aspects of the Truth, we all enjoyed a very profitable season of fellowship together on the many things we had in common. By word and example Brother Read made us feel that our fellowship was not merely with each other but with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

It was a mountain top experience. As Jesus took Peter and James and John away from the bustle and excitement of the plain up into a high mountain and was transfigured before them, so we felt He was doing with us through the instrumentality of our dear Brother. Saturday night's session was spent among the lovely and variegated foothills of the twelfth chapter of the Book of Hebrews with its comfort and encouragement, its warnings and instructions and its views of the magnificent peaks of the kingdom. How very close now we seem to be to mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the General Assembly and Church of the First-born, and to God the Judge of all, and Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant!

Still climbing in the spirit, on Sunday afternoon we were conducted through the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah, with its suggested views of the great Covenants or contracts that God had made on behalf of man and which formed the basis of our hope and the ground of our strong consolation. Particularly did we notice that it all centred in the One who was both Priest and Sacrifice, who gave His back to the smiters and hid not His face from shame and spitting.

The evening session brought us to the summit. As a high mountain dwarfing all surrounding peaks enables one to get an unobstructed view and see all lesser objects in true perspective, so did Brother Read on a talk of "*Knowing Christ*" in the setting of the third chapter of Philippians demonstrate the relative value and importance of all lesser knowledge in view of the length and breadth and depth and height of the knowledge and love of Christ. Nothing, not even the wondrous revelation of the Present Truth, must take the place of the Lord Jesus Himself as the centre of our individual and collective life as members of His Church. To know Him and the power of His resurrection must be the inspiration of our lives as it was with that of the Apostle Paul.

We were still on the mountain top in spirit on Monday night when Brother Read conducted us through the fifty-first chapter of the Book of Isaiah with its up-to-date instruction regarding both natural and spiritual Israel. The continually increasing prominence in world affairs of natural Israel is an indication of the near approach of the end of the course for spiritual Israel. How important it is for us therefore to look continually unto our Rock who was not only the Author but will also be the finisher of our faith, and to run with patience to its rapidly approaching end, the race set before us in the Gospel.

Brother Read was with us as a sweet savour of Christ and left behind him when he departed a spiritual fragrance as of precious ointment poured forth. The Lord continue to bless him abundantly and make him a blessing, is our prayer.

A CHRISTMAS BOOK LIST

All available from Welling.

<i>Bible Story Book</i>	17/6
<i>Streams in the Desert</i>	11/6
<i>Palestine the Land of my adoption</i>	13/3
<i>Pilgrims Progress</i>	13/3
<i>In Green Pastures</i>	4/6
<i>Daily Heavenly Manna (pocket size)</i>	2/9
<i>Daniel the Beloved of Jehovah</i>	5/6
<i>The Mission of Jonah</i>	2/9
<i>Palestine and the Bible</i>	2/9
<i>Bible Students Hymnal (rexine)</i>	2/9
<i>The Man who did not sin</i>	5/6

For details of above see Publication List.

A LITTLE LIFE OF JESUS (*Matthews*). Story of Jesus very well told, illustrated 12 photographs Palestine, coloured frontispiece, 204 pages, red cloth, gold blocked. Suitable for children above 8 years and young people. Price 6/9.

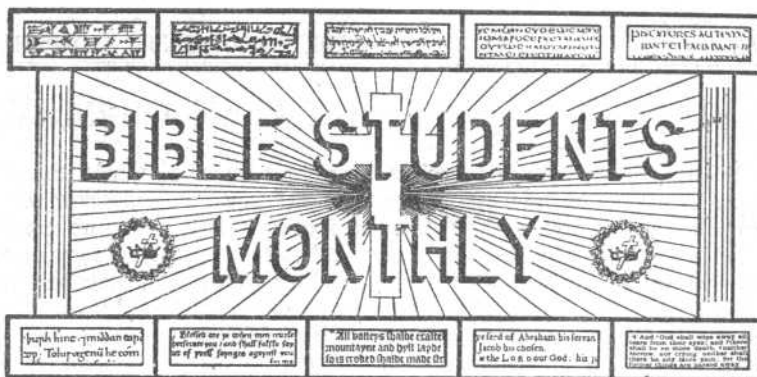
JESUS THE BABE BORN TO BE KING (*Victory*). For children under 10, tells of the coming of Jesus, very acceptably written. 16 pages, thick paper cover, coloured illustrations on every page. Price 1/6.

SONG OF OUR SYRIAN GUEST (*Stirling*). Handsome new edition of the well-known exposition of the 23rd Psalm with 13 superb full-page photographs of Palestine scenes illustrating the text, cloth bound, title in gold. Price 3/3.

REBUILDING PALESTINE ACCORDING TO PROPHECY (*Davis*). A mass of interesting facts concerning the development of Palestine, 136 pages, 29 excellent photographs and 2 maps. Price 2/-.



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



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DECEMBER, 1948

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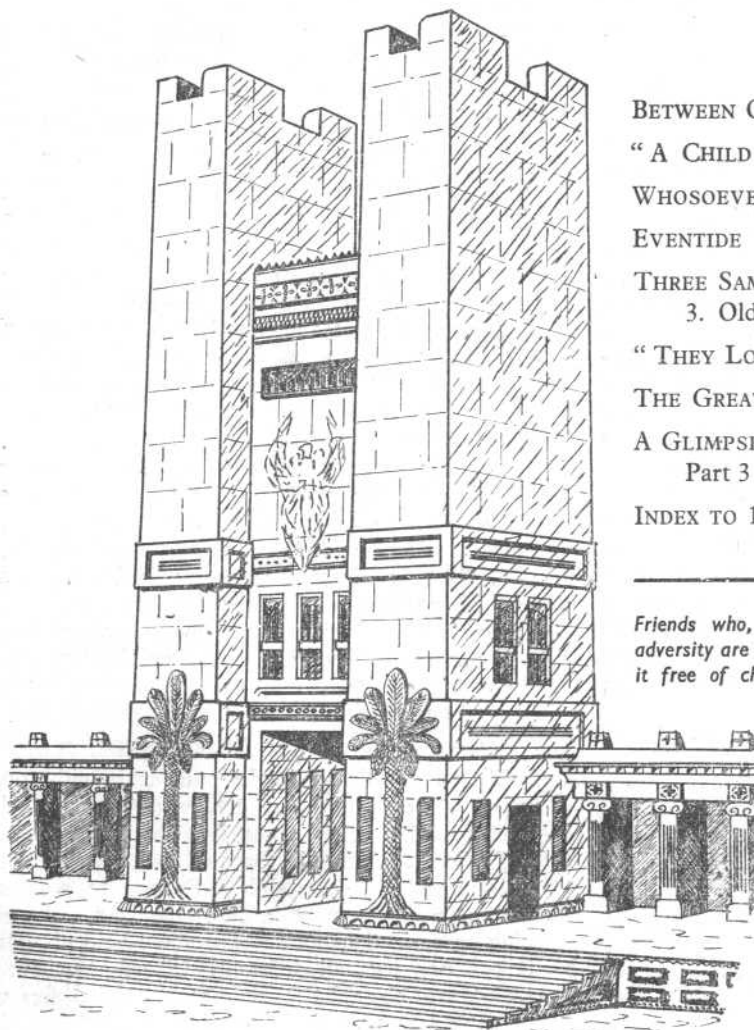
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

British friends will find enclosed with this issue a leaflet concerning the establishment of "Pastoral Ministry", with details of its aims and ideals. The "*Bible Students Monthly*" is pleased to make this venture known to the friends and has agreed to publish details and reports of its activities from time to time. There is no doubt that a ministry of this nature could be a means of great blessing to the brethren, especially to the smaller numbers and the isolated, and it is sincerely trusted that the friends will take advantage of the opportunity thus offered. Please note that all correspondence in connection with this leaflet and its associated activities should be addressed:—

Pastoral Ministry,
62, Greenway, London, S.W.20.

* * *

For a long time it has been felt that there is room in London for an arrangement whereby London brethren, and those living around the Metropolis, can meet together for worship and fellowship without interfering with their usual class affiliations. It has now been decided, in connection with the newly-formed "Pastoral Ministry", to initiate such a meeting, and therefore, commencing on Saturday, 22nd January next, there will be a monthly Saturday evening service of worship and fellowship at Tudor Hall, Caxton Hall, Caxton Street, S.W.1 (just outside St. James Park Underground station and close to Victoria Street buses). For the present there will be one session, commencing at 6.30 p.m., and this session will be devoted to worship, exhortation and fellowship. It is sincerely hoped that this will be a means of blessing and uplift to the brethren besides affording them an opportunity of occasionally meeting their friends from other parts of London in a manner which has not been possible heretofore.

Details of the month-by-month arrangements will appear in the "*Bible Students Monthly*" or may be obtained from the brethren responsible for the effort. Communications should be addressed to Pastoral Ministry, address as above.

The hall is easily accessible to friends coming in to any of the London main line stations by taking an Inner Circle underground train to St. James Park. There is a buffet at the hall where light refreshments prior to the meeting may be had if desired.

The meetings for the first three months of 1949 will be on the 22nd Jan., 19th Feb. and 19th March. Thereafter they will be on the third Saturday in each month. Regular notification of programme will be sent to anyone desiring, if request is made to that effect.

At this time of the year brethren are usually desirous of knowing what books of a Scriptural nature are available for use as Christmas presents. A copy of our publications list was enclosed in last issue, and in addition there will be found on the last page of this issue some recommendations of useful books and also details of a few books suitable for Christmas which are now in stock but have not yet appeared on the publications list. We would especially ask friends who require children's books to note that the book "*The Ten Camels*", which is usually in demand at this time of year, is at present out of print and out of stock, although our Australian brethren are expecting to issue a new edition.

* * *

"Daily tear-off" Scriptural calendars with finely coloured landscape or floral pictures are available from Welling this year at 5/- each post free, this price including purchase tax. It will help if orders are sent in early.

* * *

Anticipating enquiries at this season of the year for appropriate greeting cards, we would say that Christmas cards are not being stocked but that the regular styles of Scripture cards are available and will be sent gladly when desired. These styles are as follows:—

L CARDS. These are well-known as the "Lardent" card, and are hand-tinted floral and landscape scenes, with well-chosen Scripture poems, etc.

G CARDS. These are also by Bro. Lardent and are Scripture cards printed in green with slight hand colouring, consisting of poetic compositions.

R CARDS. There are six varieties of these, all floral designs, bowls or sprays of flowers with verses in gold and black.

All the above are 1/8 per doz. post free.

T CARDS. These are Scripture texts with appropriate verses printed in gold and green or blue, twelve cards to the set, at 1/3 per doz.

J CARDS. The "J. Danson Smith" card, quite well-known to the friends. Printed in gold and various colours on white card, the verses are of a high order, and many are extremely helpful. Price is 1/6 per doz., all different. There are about 36 varieties of the "J" card in stock, and orders will be as widely assorted as possible.

The "SA" packet contains six of each of the above types of cards, making thirty cards in all, all different, at 3/6 per packet post free. This packet constitutes an excellent assortment of cards suitable for all purposes.

"A Child is Born!"

A CHRISTMAS STUDY

Many are the names of the Son of man—the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. The first name given in the list of the Prophet is called Wonderful, and is surely appropriate. His is the most wonderful career and the most wonderful character of which we have any knowledge. Who else than He left the glories of the heavenly state for human conditions? as He Himself said, "*No man hath ascended up to heaven save he which came down from heaven*". (John 3. 13.) He alone left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; He alone exercised that wonderful faith in the Father which permitted Him to sacrifice everything with joy, delighting to do the Father's will, with confidence that in due time the rewards of the Father's favour and love would more than compensate for every sacrifice.

Wonderful, too, was His life amongst men, the Light shining in the darkness, the darkness comprehending it not. More and more as we come into the light ourselves we are able to comprehend this Wonderful One. As the Apostle suggests, the eyes of our understanding being opened, we are able to comprehend with all saints the heights and depths and lengths and breadths of the love of God which passes all understanding; such love being manifested, exhibited, illustrated in this Wonderful One. Wonderful also was His resurrection, the "first that should rise from the dead", "the first-born amongst many brethren", highly exalted, given a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. (Rom. 8. 29; Col. 1. 15, 18; Phil. 2. 9, 10.)

The second name on the list, "Counsellor", is also appropriate. Who else is such a Counsellor? Who else is able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Who else is able always to guide us with His eye? Who else has assured us that all things shall work together for our good? Happy are they who have made the acquaintance of this Counsellor, whom God has set forth to be the satisfaction for our sins and to be the Counsellor, the Leader, the Guide, the Instructor of His people, and to bring them out of darkness into His marvellous light, out of the chains of sin and bondage of death back to full liberty of the sons of God. Let us more and more heed the voice that speaketh from heaven, our Counsellor.

"The Mighty God", another of his names, is

also appropriate. If the angels were called *Elohim*, gods, and if the angels appearing to men in the past were called *Elohim*, gods, because they were the representatives of Divine power, surely much more appropriate is the name to Him whom the Father specially sent as His special messenger to men. If *Elohim* signifies mighty ones, surely He is above the other mighty ones, next to the Father Himself, and may therefore most properly be termed the mighty *Elohim*—the Mighty God—the one mighty amongst the mighty. "Mighty to save" we sometimes sing; yea, says the Word of the Lord, "*He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto the Father through him*". (Heb. 7. 25.) Such a mighty Saviour we need, one not only able to sympathise with us and to instruct us, but able also to deliver us from the Evil One and from our own weaknesses as well as from the Divine sentence against our race as sinners. Let us exult in this "Mighty One" whom the heavenly Father has sent forth for deliverance from sin and death.

The title "Everlasting Father" will in due time be appropriately his—but not yet. These words are a prophecy; some of them have been already fulfilled and others are yet to be fulfilled. When they were written Jesus had not yet left the heavenly glory. Jesus is not the everlasting Father to the Church. No; the Scriptures reveal Him as our elder Brother, and again as our Bridegroom. The Apostle most explicitly tells us that Jehovah is our Father, saying, "*The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us*"—we are His children. The dear Redeemer Himself taught us to pray, "*Our Father which art in heaven*"; and again after His resurrection He sent the message to Peter and others of His followers, "*I ascend to my Father, to my God and your God*". (John 20. 17.)

In due time He will be the everlasting Father to the world—to those of the world who, during the Millennial Age, will hearken to his voice and receive of his life—restitution blessings. Jesus purchased Adam and all of his children by the sacrifice of himself; they are his, to make out of them everything possible and to bring as many as possible back into harmony with the Father and to eternal life. They died under Divine condemnation; what they now need is life, and the Father has arranged that Jesus may be their Life-Giver, and to this end He has given his life, purchased them, that in due time, during his Millennial

Kingdom, He may offer them the return of all that was lost in Adam, for it is written, "*He came to seek and to save that which was lost*".

Since that life which Jesus will give to the world during the Millennial Age is the fruitage of his own sacrifice, therefore He is said to be the Father, the Life-Giver, to the world. And since that life that He will give will not be merely a temporary one, but by obedience to him all those who receive of his life may be brought to perfection, and maintain that life eternally, therefore He is the Everlasting Father. He gives the everlasting life in contradistinction to Adam, who attempted to be the father to the race, but through his disobedience brought forth his children to a dying condition. Not so the everlasting life: the life which He gives to his children during the period of the Millennium, and which will accomplish the regeneration of the world, or of so many of the world who will accept his favour, will be unto life eternal.

Not yet is He the Prince of Peace and King of Glory, but very soon He will take unto himself his great power and reign. Far from peaceful will be its beginning. The Scriptural description is that the nations will be angry and Divine wrath will come upon them, and that they shall be broken in pieces as a potter's vessel: that the Lord will speak to them in his sore displeasure, and that there will be a time of trouble such as was not since there

was a nation. (Psa. 2. 5; Dan. 12. 1.)

But the Lord wounds to heal, he chastises to correct, and will not "keep his anger forever", but will ultimately prove that He is "plenteous in mercy". The result of his righteous indignation against sin and all unrighteousness and iniquity will be the establishment of justice upon a firm footing throughout the world. Then as a consequence peace will reign and the King of Glory will be known as the Prince of Peace, whose blessings will fill the earth for the refreshment of every creature and the bringing of so many as will into full harmony with God through the processes of restitution.

As we long for the glorious day let us prepare our hearts that we may be approved of the King—that we may be accepted even as his Bride through his mercy and grace. Let us not forget that there are conditions expressed by the Apostle in the words, "*If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him*", "*If we be dead with him we shall also live with him*"—"heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together". A little while and the trials shall be over; a little while and if faithful we shall have the crown and hear the blessed words, "*Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things.*" (Matt. 25. 21, 23.)

WHOSOEVER WILL

A DOCTRINAL
ESSAY

In the prophecies of Moses we find this man of God looking forward down the years, and seeing with perfect clarity the fall of Israel from her place near to God, and of her subsequent re-gathering from heaven's bound to its bound. (Deut. 30. 4; Matt. 24. 31.) Also he was given to know that another Prophet, greater than himself, would arise, who would cause Israel to learn the Law of God, so that none would need to ask his fellow if he knew the Lord; all would know the Lord from the least to the greatest in Israel. Striking conviction into the hearts of many in Jerusalem shortly after Pentecost, Peter re-adapted a promise made by God to Moses (see Deut. 18. 18-19) when he said "*A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you. And it shall be that every soul which will not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.*" (Acts 3. 22-23

R.V.) Here a distinction between the nation and the individual is possible, and while it allows for the greater part of the nation to hear and obey, it also permits the assumption that a smaller part may disobey and suffer the consequences of such a disobedience. Peter is speaking of Restitution Times, and of the re-gathering of Israel subsequent to the Lord's Return, although he knew not how long it would be ere it could be fulfilled. But his words are clear as to their import and application. When the re-gathered nation is receiving its training, preparatory to entering into a New Covenant with its God, any disbelieving and disobedient souls, failing to profit from the Prophet's ministry, would be put outside the pale, and meet the fate allotted to those disinherited from Israel. Isaiah has an explanatory word of testimony concerning those who lend themselves to sin. Speaking of a time when God will rejoice over Jerusalem, and find joy in His people, of a time when the voice of weeping shall

no more be heard in Israel, of a time when there shall be no more thence an infant of days nor an old man that has not filled his days, he says that a sinner dying at one hundred years of age shall be accursed. (Isa. 65. 19-20.)

In that better day people need not die, if they will refrain from sin; and, even if they are set on a life of disobedience and sin, Kingdom grace is such that not less than a full century is accorded them in which to relent and repent. Under the righteous conditions of the Restitution days, only an attitude of outright perversity will dare to disregard and disobey the redemptive love that has brought the regenerative opportunity to pass. And, apparently, in keeping with the Prophet's words, divine forbearance will tolerate and suffer the heedless ear and scoffing tongue for a full hundred years before the hand of doom descends, and removes the wayward sinner from the restored people's midst. If repentance and reformation is not forthcoming within a full hundred years of such righteous environment, what further evidence could be required to prove that the re-accursed transgressor would be unfit to live in any Age? That there will be examples of Divine recompense upon those who spurn Divine grace is also evident from Isaiah's further words "*and they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched* (till destruction is complete) *and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh.*" (Isaiah 66. 24.) Making all allowances for the Oriental nature of this prophecy, and its adaptation of the lessons gathered from the valley of Hinnom, it would be a travesty of all interpretation to say that language such as this indicates the reconciliation of the presumptive transgressor, at any time thenceforward while those "new heaven and earth" endure. Isaiah's testimony supplies the key to the Apostle's words that they who do not hear and obey that greater Prophet's teaching shall be cut off and cast out from Israel into the destroying fires, which cease not till their work is done.

It is in the language of the Revelator that the evidence becomes most intense and precise, and we will find that the language of John gathers up the many diverse strands of prophetic thought scattered here and there throughout the prophecies, and weaves them into the finished fabric of the Plan. Like some master-weaver, interspersing his colours with his whites, the Holy Spirit of God loaded up its spindles in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the other gifted Seers of Israel, ready to begin to weave its tapestry. Some of these threads were dark and sombre, others bright and radiant, but each was needed to make the pattern

complete. Every strand and thread of prophetic thought was brought into its place when the loom began to move, and, as John watched in wonderment and ecstasy, the Master-working Spirit of the Living God wove on and worked out the Great Design. "Revelation" is not only the continuation of the prophecies, it is also the Inspiration's goal. Its thrilling visions are a resume of every Prophet's distant expectations, winnowed and sorted from the husk of the Prophet's own day and environment. It is as the cream separated from the milk; as the attar distilled from the full-blown rose; as the gold refined from its native ore, and as such its words and phrases are laden with the very essence of Prophecy. It is for this reason that its words and phrases are invested with such paramount authority, and call for intense care in their elucidation.

Already we have considered some of this symbolic imagery, and have seen that it affords no warranty for an expectation that *all* men, at last, will turn to God and be saved eternally. Only those whose names are entered in the Book of Life, are, in the "End" accorded sonship and inheritance in the Household of God.

Close attention to other details will detect an interwoven series of closely related contrasts depicting and defining dissimilar destinies for men, resulting as consequence of what they decide and do.

Some things may be gained (if sought for with diligence)—but those same things may also be "lost". Acquisition of these things is optional and conditional—optional to any man who "will", conditional, because God has set the terms, and only by strict compliance with the terms can the prizes be won. To win them a man must "overcome", hence, failure to overcome means failure to acquire. God's words are very clear—"He that *overcometh shall inherit all these things, and he shall be My son, and I will be his God*". (Rev. 21. 7.) Contrariwise, all who are of fearful (craven) heart, or who show evil intent, will have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. (Rev. 21. 8.) Sonship is thus contingent and consequent upon "overcoming" and faithfulness under test. "Water of Life" is to be obtained, but they who obtain must not stay outside the City Gates. Access to the Tree of Life is to be enjoyed, but only those who "enter in" can have that joy. Entry within those Gates is dependent on a "Right" of entry being won, and none may find entrance there without his "right" thereto. (Rev. 22. 14.) Before that "Right" is won each would-be entrant must wash his robes and cleanse himself from every stain of sin. Thus, there is "purity" to be attained and "blessedness" secured; there is a "Right" to be won, and an "Entrance" to be

effected; there is the fruit of the Tree to be eaten, and the Water of the River to be sipped; there is a "sonship" to be gained and a "God" to be possessed, and to be, by Him, possessed. To inherit this desirable estate, the aspirant must overcome; overcome the inertia within and the hindrance without; he must "work" and "walk" and exert himself with deliberate intention and zeal.

The alternative to inheriting, is to be consigned with the dogs, the sorcerers, the fornicators, etc., to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. Evidently this destiny of the apostate is not akin to that of sonship with God. There is no Water of Life in this fiery lake. Thus there is a destiny of gain, and a destiny of loss; for, in very truth the loser loses all that the gainer gains. But there is more than that, for the symbolism associated with that loss is so clearly marked and emphasised that it can only indicate loss of life itself. Twice symbolic fire is used to illustrate the means of the dissolution and overthrow. "Fire" is no fitting symbol of refinement or restoration when applied to human flesh. Fire, rained down from heaven, upon the attacking hosts seeking to subdue the Beloved City, cannot mean the eternal salvation of those rebellious hosts. For a full thousand years they had refused to enter the City's Gates; now, with evil again let loose, they seek to overthrow and extinguish its rule among men. Surely none will ever dare to say (with this refusal before us during a thousand years and rebellion at their end) that the overwhelming fire is the agency of their salvation; "Fire came down out of heaven and devoured them" (Rev. 20. 9). Not eternal salvation, but eternal destruction is the fate meted out upon these Satanic hosts—a fate required by the very nature and setting of all this associated symbolism. The setting is that of rebellion and war against the Kingdom and Authority of God, and the destruction that overtakes them all is the one that natural usage and universal custom would attach to all rebellions that fail. Extermination, without mercy, is the fate required by the nature of the episode, and extermination without mercy is the fate, which, in the language of symbolic imagery falls upon their rebellious heads. There is not one single word or indication in the whole text or context to indicate any mitigation or alleviation from the destructive severity of the "fire".

Already we have considered some aspects of the second instance of fiery recompense, hence there is no need, at this point, to extend our enquiry too deeply into the setting and sequences attendant upon the Judgment of the Great White Throne. The main point for consideration is the difference in

the destiny that comes to those who overcome, and to those who fail.

The record says "*And if any was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire*". (Rev. 20. 15.) The book of life holds the names of those who have won the right to enter into life—those whose names are not written there are consigned to the "lake of fire". Obviously these destinies are not the same, and, as they are the destinies consequent upon the last and final Judgment recorded in Holy Writ, these destinies can never, to all eternity, mean the same thing or become the same thing for all.

The Book of Life is the symbolic counterpart to the Genealogical Register in ancient Israel, on which, with the most scrupulous care and fidelity, the name of every child was written up. It performed the function of a Registry of Births and Deaths, and by its entries every true son of Israel could prove both lineage and descent. The right of inheritance and possession of the ancestral "lot" was established by its faithfully kept records. Evidently, then, they whose names are written there by the Righteous Judge are invested with the rights to live and to possess the earth. It is thus the Charter of their inheritance—and a public record of their worth and faithfulness. That written Name entitles them to eternal life.

The "lake of fire"—in symbolic significance—bears the same relationship to the Holy City and its communal life, as the Valley of Himmon to the ancient City of Jerusalem. Like that notorious pit, it represents the destructor and incinerator of all its waste. Also (and this is where it is so apposite to our point of enquiry) it represents the crematorium of all the unworthy, faithless souls, guilty of criminal intent, whose names were not deemed eligible for continuance within the Records of the faithful in Israel. Condemned by the highest Court to death for wilful crime, and tossed, after execution, into the burning pit, his name was then erased from the living scroll, and thus his identity and person were eliminated from Israel as completely as if he had never been—none thereafter, daring or caring to make public mention of his name.

The "lake of fire" is equated in another passage with the "Second Death". "*But for the fearful . . . and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the Second Death*" (Rev. 21. 8.) The connection (in this verse) of the "lake of fire" and the "Second Death" has the endorsement of all the trustworthy manuscripts, and is based on the fullest authority. They furnish us with a two-fold aspect of the one

destructive thing, and both, from divergent points of view, represent the same destiny.

The Second Death stands related to the Judgment of the Great White Throne exactly as the death which we call "Adamic death" did to the first Assize in Eden days. It is the penalty to be imposed upon the wilful transgressor, who dares to pit his will and way against that of the Creator-Judge. This "Second Death" is not a roundabout, backstairs way up to life; it is the final and irreversible way out of life. There is no Lamb of God appointed to bear away the sins of the last Assize; nor is there any further vicarious Substitute arranged for in the Plan of God. The sacrifice of Calvary does not apply to wilful sins committed before the Great White Throne—it furnished grounds for *one* release—the Millennial release for all from Adamic sin. (See Rom. 5. 18.)

"Second Death" does not mean "*dying a second time*". Some of the most conspicuous victims of that penalty have never suffered death before. The monstrous creatures which had fought the worthy Lamb, pictured for us as the seven-headed, ten-horned Dragon; the seven-headed ten-horned Beast, and the two-horned Image of the Beast (the false prophet) are all made victims of the lake of fire, which is the Second Death. None of these had ever died before. That we may not easily define who or what these gruesome things represent does not alter the argument. They have oppressed humankind (see Rev. 13.), they were enemies of Christ, and fought with determined intention to oppose the establishment of His authority, and it is because of this evil character they are consigned to the lake of fire. It would be a sad day for humanity were they, at any time, to be raised again. The major triumph of the conquering Lamb is His victory over these gruesome things, and were they ever to be restored, His victory would be nullified and cancelled out.

All, who, like them, fall victims to the lake of fire, become the victims of an eternal fate. It is a final fate, for there is no further hope or expectation recorded in the Holy Word for such faithless souls beyond the sentence of the Great White Throne. There is no word, nor hint nor shadow of a hope that they who die the Second Death will ever wake again. The Lake of Fire will do its work completely and thoroughly, and they who are consigned thereto will be as though they had not been. This "finale" is set on the threshold of eternity, into whose unending years neither sin nor sinners can be allowed to penetrate. The earth must be swept clean from everything that can defile or be defiled, or that has not given proof of its whole-hearted love of righteousness and truth. And evil

men will meet the like fate that every form of monstrous government will meet that has dared to throw challenge to the Will of God.

Will there then be loss of human life and identity at the final "End"? Undoubtedly! Will there be much loss of life? We cannot say! The record as it stands says that the number of the revolters will be "as the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20. 8.) But we are led to wonder if that passage is not misplaced. Elsewhere, in several other occurrences that phrase is applied to Israel. It first appears as an item of the Oath-bound Promise to Abraham (Gen. 22. 17; Heb. 11. 12) assuring him of a prodigious family. Isaiah (chap. 10, 22); Hosea (chap. 1. 10), and Paul (Rom. 9. 27) also apply it to Israel. It could have reference to the "Camp of the Saints"—and thus stand as an indication that Abraham's seed had at last reached its full intended complement.

But even taking the statement as it stands, it is not possible to determine whether it means that the loss will be great or only comparatively small. It is an Oriental mode of speech. The armies of confederate kings gathered to oppose Joshua and Israel were "as the sand that is upon the sea-shore for multitude" (Josh. 11. 4.) Even the small armies of Amalek and Midian are so described (Judges 7. 12.) The same is said of the single army of the Philistines (1. Sam. 13. 5.) Thus it need not stand for a universal multitude, but may represent a body of men clustered thickly in a given area moving along in close-filled ranks, shoulder, as it were, touching shoulder, exactly as grain touches grain along the sea-shore. But, be it many or be it few, the symbols indicate that they meet their eternal fate. With these, as with the reprobates in the Christian Church, it is the story of their "End". That is also the situation for all who are "hurt" of the "Second Death"; of all who are cast into the "Lake of Fire".

Brother Lardent is able to supply his usual Scriptural Art Calendar, for 1949. There are two months to each sheet, with text for each day and coloured Biblical picture for each month, similar in style and quality to that for last year. The price is 2/9 post free. Please order direct from Brother F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23.

* * *

Quite a useful book for young people in their 'teens, and not in the Truth, is "*The Man who did not sin*", a work of fiction depicting life in the Millennial Age as seen by the Christian journalist, Newman Watts. This book is kept in stock at Wellington for the sake of those who find it useful, price 5/6 post free, cloth-bound, 156 pages.

Eventide

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"



*"At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay,
Oh, in what divers pains they met,
Oh, with what joy they went away!"*

What a day for the suffering souls in Israel that had been! The Priests and Pharisees may have found no place in their thoughts for this tender Healer who had come to Israel; but for the poor and afflicted He was the Man of the Hour. How they spread abroad from village to village the news of His comings and goings, and set every suffering soul aflame with expectation and hope that He might cross their path, and lay His hands upon them, or speak some healing word. Think of the arresting power that could send men hasting here and there throughout a whole region proclaiming "Bring along your sick—the Great Healer is here!", and of the gripping confidence that could say to Him "Will you but let these ailing souls touch only the fringe of your robes?" (Matt. 14. 34.) A mighty surge of approbation had spread around the countryside concerning Him, for nothing like these things had ever taken place in Israel before.

To be alone with His grief concerning John, Jesus had taken ship to a lonely place apart. "But when the crowds heard it they followed Him on foot from the towns." (Matt. 14. 13.) A great throng, with many sick in their midst awaited Him, "... and He had compassion on them, and healed their sick". (v. 14.) At another place and time, the nature of these sicknesses are specified in greater fulness, "... the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb, and many others . . ." (Matt. 15. 30.) And perhaps it was just these same afflictions that awaited Him as He stepped ashore at the place of His retreat. "And they put them at His feet." (Matt. 15. 30.) What a picture in these few words! All the wasted frames from the shadowed homes of the countryside lying side by side—and placed there "at His feet"! What would He do? Would He chide them by reminding them that there ought to be no sick in Israel—that were they faithful to their God He would be "Jehovah Ropheka" (Exod. 15. 26) to them, and would, according to His own good promise, heal them of their sicknesses? (Exod. 23. 25; Psa. 103. 3 and 147. 3.) He could rightly have done that; instead He had compassion

upon them all, and in the Name and power of God healed them one and all.

What a surge of gladness would sweep through the crowd as sightless eyes began to see, and speechless tongues began to speak, and palsied limbs began to move, and diseased bodies lost their pains! Truly it was a day most wonderful!

And for Himself, too, it was wonderful—that deep surge of compassion that swept through His tender heart left its sanctifying impress there, and a little more of the "perfecting" work was done. He was now, at close of day, a little more nearly prepared to be the sympathetic High Priest for all who were "out of the way" and astray from God. It was an opportunity for Himself not to be missed!

Time has passed, scenes have changed—and . . .

*"Once more 'tis eventide, and we
Oppressed with various ills draw near;
What if Thy form we cannot see?
We know and feel that Thou art here."*

These various ills—what are they? Not the ills to which the flesh is heir, to be sure! These are to be borne patiently, like the illness of Epaphroditus, and the thorn of Paul (Phil. 2. 27; 2 Cor. 8. 10.) But there are ills and discomforts of the spirit that can be like a weight at the end of day. Indeed, in a world like this, no day ought to go by without these ills and discomforts pressing heavily upon us. They are a part of our spiritual education, and contribute greatly to our development into the likeness of our Lord.

Spite of all the ecclesiastical organisation and ministerial service in this world, it is still as a flock without a shepherd—a flock astray in the ways of sin. The daily paper tells its story of tragedy and misery every passing day; the daily round brings each child of God into painful contact with the perversities of men; in the office, at the work-bench, in the street, and even in the home. The watchful eye and listening ear can see and hear the world's writhing pain and piercing groan, but no child of God can see and hear these things without being touched to the heart—or without joining in the groan! In proportion as the saint partakes of the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem's perversity,

so will he be inclined to weep with a world in anguish, waiting for it knows not what, waiting it knows not how long, but waiting in its chains of vanity for all that! Some day the hour of deliverance will come, but for this present season it must bear the anguish, and groan out its despair.

All this comes out in the daily life every day, and we who have been led aside, and let into the secret of the Divine purpose in it all, can either look on nonchalantly or sympathetically. And, in proportion as our sympathies are touched, so will these things lie heavy on our souls. Moreover, we shall see even some we love touching much too lightly these Divine opportunities—never having loved Him well, perhaps having lost the love they had. And that wounds most of all!

How do these things react back upon us at close of day—the sorrows of a world, the coldness of a

friend! They who fain would serve Him best are touched the most by all these wrongs without, within. What can we do about it all? Surely nothing less than they of ancient Galilee did with their sick—lay them down at Jesus' feet and leave them all to Him, and His healing power.

How necessary, then, at eventide, that we should go aside with Him and tell Him all that has grieved and disappointed us through the day, reminding Him,

*"Thy touch has still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;
Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all."*

Out of the daily throb of pain can come a little more of that "perfecting" experience for every one of us, if we are alert and alive to its possibilities.

THREE SAMUELS

Three stages in the life of a great man:
YOUTH—MANHOOD—OLD AGE

Part 3—Old Age.

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel."

There is a world of tragedy enshrined in those few words; tragedy, because the sons of Samuel were not fit for such exalted office. It is one of the most puzzling things in Scriptural history to find that the man who owed his own position of leadership to his predecessor's failure in the training of his children should, after a lifetime of honoured service, have himself failed in the same respect. The man who saved the nation and gave it its first ordered system of justice and administration did not restrain his own sons from going on the wrong path. Joel and Abiah had not followed in the upright course of their father; they had no share in the piety and godliness of their grandparents, Manohah and Hannah, by now long since laid to rest. They were of a more modern generation and largely heedless of their father's and father's father's God. So the chronicler records, doubtless sorrowfully, that when they had been promoted to leading positions in Israel, they "turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment".

Whether it was Samuel's judgment that was at fault, or his advancing age—he would now be about seventy-five—or some secret hope that God would honour his family for his own work's sake, and make his descendants pre-eminent in Israel, we do not know. What is certain is that his choice did not meet with the approval of the elders in Israel, and they were not slow to express the fact. It is plain that Samuel's authority was on the wane; perhaps

for some time now the people had retained their allegiance out of gratitude and for sentiment's sake, remembering what great things he had done for them in the days of his maturity, but at this, the first sign that he was in process of relinquishing his personal direction of the nation's affairs, long-suppressed thoughts came to the top, and they gave voice to the desire they had refrained from broaching to him before. "*Behold, thou art old*" they said "*and thy sons walk not in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.*"

In a way, their request was a testimonial to Samuel's own faithfulness to the interests of his people. In the days of Eli apparently no one had cared whether the High Priest's sons were profligate or not, and it had required the labours of Samuel's lifetime to awaken Israel to a sense of responsibility. Is it that they had at least learned that lesson; that they did wish for strong and decisive leadership and looked with some dismay upon the prospect of another disaster such as had happened in those by-gone days, half a century earlier, when the Ark of God had been taken and the country plunged into anarchy? We must not be too unsympathetic toward these men's desire for a king; there might very well have been laudable elements in the mixture of thoughts that led them to make this request of Samuel.

How plain it is that leadership cannot be handed down; the mantle cannot be awarded, it must fall upon the shoulders of the one who is ready to wear it. "*If thou see me when I am taken from thee*"

said Elijah to the man who had prayed for a double portion of his spirit "*it shall be so . . . but if not, then it shall not be so.*" That Elisha was such a man, ready to carry on the work begun by his master and mentor, and to exalt it to greater heights, is evidenced by the admission of his companions "the mantle of Elijah is fallen upon Elisha". We may have been blessed with great privilege in the Lord's service while we enjoy the full use of our powers, but when the time that we must go hence is come, it is the Lord who determines what shall be done with the remnants of the work that has been our joy and care.

Samuel was disappointed. He did not take readily to the request of the elders, and he took the matter in prayer to his God. The answer is kindly; it is sympathetic; but it is firm. "Hearken unto the people in what they say, for they have not rejected thee; but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." That does not mean, as is so often assumed, that the people had rejected God in *desiring* a king. David and others in after times "sat on the throne of the Lord" with full Divine approval and endorsement. The nature of the Messianic prophecies that were yet to be given required that a king reign in Israel to give colour and form to those prophecies, and in order that attention might be focussed on *the* king that one day should "reign in righteousness". Their refusal to accept the overlordship of Samuel's sons because they were not upright men must also have had the approval of the Most High. And their loyalty to Samuel himself, God's appointed man, was not in question. Their rejection of God lay in the fact that, now Samuel was manifestly nearing the end of his life, they were not prepared to trust God Himself to raise up a successor who would lead the nation in right ways. They had forgotten that all they then enjoyed of national peace and prosperity was the result of God having raised up one to serve them, one who had been but a small boy in the Tabernacle, unnoticed by and unknown to the nation until the time of need had come. And now, instead of waiting upon God for a further manifestation of His overruling providence, they had rushed in with their own desire that a man of their own choosing and acceptance be installed as king over them. The homage and obedience they should have reserved for God they were anxious now to render to a man of themselves, like the nations that were around them. The terms of the Covenant were largely forgotten, the fact that they could never be quite like the nations about them, but must always be a chosen nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, set apart to illustrate in this world and Age the principles that are to govern the next world and Age, the Millennial Day, when all the world is to come

to the throne of Jesus and worship Him as King and Lord. They had forgotten all this—or perhaps had never really believed it—and it was this failure that constituted their rejection of God. Samuel they knew and honoured for his past works' sake, but God they did not know.

Thus it was that Samuel was brought into contact with Saul—Israel's first earthly king. The circumstances of their meeting show more vividly than ever how much the star of Samuel was in the descendant. Saul, a comparatively unknown young man, had left his home district to seek his father's lost asses. In company with his servant, he had explored the countryside fruitlessly when suddenly the servant had an idea. "There is in this village," said he, "a man of God—now let us go thither; peradventure he can show us our way that we should go." Neither Saul nor the servant knew the name of this man of God; they only knew that one who was somewhat renowned for his sanctity lived there, and the thought came to them that he might be induced to use his supernatural knowledge or insight to tell them at once the whereabouts of the straying equines. A biting commentary on the religious state of Israel at the time is afforded by the fact that Saul did not anticipate the small service to be rendered for nothing; the "man of God" would expect some appropriate remuneration for services rendered; and so a quarter shekel of silver (to-day's value equivalent to about two shillings) which the servant had on his person was set aside to flavour the deal. It would appear that Samuel's professional skill was not rated very highly.

It is evident that Saul did not know Samuel. Upon entering the village he inquired of a passer-by the whereabouts of the house of the seer (the older term for prophet). "I am the seer" was the reply. In the providence of God Saul had accosted the very man he had come to seek. Samuel was able to assure him that the asses were found, and safe; but he went on to tell Saul that his coming to Ramah was for something far more important than the recovery of a few farm animals. He had come, unwittingly, to be anointed king over Israel.

But how does the position of Samuel stand out in all this? At one time known by "all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba" (I Sam. 3. 20) as a prophet of the Lord, and established as the first man in all the land, going annually on circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh to judge the people's causes, and so home again to Ramah (I Sam. 7. 16) he had now evidently retired to a considerable extent from active service and contact with the people, and in consequence was quickly being forgotten by them, so that Saul, coming from less than a hundred miles away, knew him only by repute as a "man of God". Quite evidently

Samuel had not been in Saul's home district for many years or the latter would surely have known him by sight. The handing over of judicial responsibilities to the two sons, Joel and Abiah, tells the same story. The conclusion seems to be that in his old age Samuel had commenced to "take things easy" as we would say. And the disruption of his life's work was beginning in consequence.

How many there are, Christian believers who have borne the heat and burden of the day in times gone past, who do this same thing. When the tale of years begins to mount and physical strength commences to ebb, they succumb to the ever present temptation to lay aside the privilege of active service and hard work for the Master, and turn instead to intensive contemplation of the written Word from the recesses of an armchair. So do they become progressively more and more out of touch with the realities of the Christian way. Our Lord has provided that our devotional life and our growth in the knowledge of His Word and His Plan shall be tempered with the experience and broadening effect of outward service, ministries to our own brethren and evangelical ministry to the world. The Apostle Paul, notwithstanding his advancing years, his physical disabilities and his many deep excursions into the doctrinal teaching of the Word of God, so manifest in his written works, at no time lost sight of that part of his commission which had to do with God's witness before the world. "*Woe is unto me*" he cried "*if I preach not the Gospel.*" The zeal and assiduity with which he carried out the Christian's age-old commission is evidenced by the churches that sprung up wherever he went. If we believe, as we say we do, that we are "immortal until our work is finished", then surely we should continue with undiminished faith and zeal in doing with our might what our hands find to do, until we are physically able so to do no longer.

Reading between the lines, it does seem that this visit of Saul to Ramah had the effect of causing Samuel to bestir himself. He appears, as it were, to come into the picture again and stand out more prominently in the affairs of Israel. Perhaps the communion he had with God over the matter of Saul's anointing caused him to realise the direction in which it seems he had been tending to drift. Perhaps the demand for a king brought home to him such shortcoming in administration as could rightfully have been attributed to him. At any rate, we hear no more of his sons being judges over Israel. Evidently he brought that arrangement to an end, and from the 10th chapter of I Samuel onward, Samuel the aged is once again supreme in Israel and a name to be respected. But that same chapter is also a pointer to the outcome of Samuel's temporary lapse. The Philistines were once more

in power in Israel. How long they had been there we know not, but in chapter 10. 5, where Samuel is giving Saul his instructions, he refers, quite casually, to a place in the midst of the land "where there is a garrison of the Philistines". Now the Philistines had been heavily defeated at Mizpeh thirty years back and had troubled Israel no more; for them to be thus in occupation again at this time means one thing, and one thing only. It means that the reformation initiated at Mizpeh had lost its force and the people had relapsed into apostasy and idolatry, for only thus would their enemies have been able to overcome them again, under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant. Samuel's life ended, and Saul's reign began, under the same shadow that had covered the land when Samuel was a small boy in the service of Eli, the shadow of the Philistine occupation.

So once again Samuel, re-asserting his former authority, called the people to Mizpeh that he might formally present to them their king. This was a renunciation of authority of a different kind; as Saul's authority increased so that of Samuel must decrease. It must have been with a heavy heart that the aged judge recited in the ears of the people the past blessings they had enjoyed from their heavenly King, the future miseries they would experience at the hands of their chosen earthly king, and exhorted them nevertheless to continued faithfulness to their covenant that, ultimately, God could accomplish His purposes in and through them. And then Samuel wrote for them "*the manner of the kingdom in a book, and laid it up before the Lord*" (I Sam. 10. 25.) In other words, he drafted the constitution of the monarchy, defining the duties and the privileges and the liberties of king and people respectively. It was the last great service he could render to the nation he loved; perhaps it was his greatest service. Perhaps, after all, that order of things that directed and moulded the ways of the kings of Israel for the next five hundred years, honoured to a considerable extent by good kings and probably to some extent at least by even the bad kings, played a great part in making the nation of Israel what it was when the time came for its true King to be presented in the way He came. The prophetic zeal of Samuel blazed up and performed a good work during his own lifetime, but it died away and was extinguished almost before he was dead; the kingdom of which he, under God, laid the foundations, must have owed its five hundred years of existence in great measure to the wisdom and foresight—and experience—that he had put into its constitution, "*laid up before the Lord*", and the effects of that day's work are with us yet, and will never die.

(To be concluded)

"They Looked for a City"

The testimony of past ages
to Millennial belief.

Reginald Heber, for a short time Bishop of Calcutta, and the author of the well-known hymn "From Greenland's icy mountains", was born in 1783 and died in 1826. He could read his Bible at the age of five, and was translating Greek at the age of seven. The poem "Palestine", from which the following extract is taken, was published in 1803 and created a sensation at the time.

Yes, Salem, thou shalt rise—thy Father's aid
Shall heal the wound His chastening hand hath made,
Shall judge the proud oppressor's ruthless sway,
And burst his brazen bonds, and cast his cords away.
Then on your tops shall deathless verdure spring,
Break forth, ye mountains, and ye valleys, sing!
No more your thirsty rocks shall frown forlorn,
The unbeliever's jest, the heathen's scorn;
The sultry sands shall tenfold harvest yield,
And a new harvest deck the thorny field.
E'en now, perchance, wide waving o'er the land
That mighty Angel lifts his golden wand,
Courts the bright vision of descending power,
Tells every gate, and measures every tower;
And chides the tardy seals that yet detain
Thy Lion, Judah, from His destined reign.
And who is He? The vast, the awful form
Girt with the whirlwind, sandalled with the storm.
A western cloud around His limbs is spread,
His crown is rainbow and a sun His head.
To highest heaven He lifts His kingly hand
And treads at once the ocean and the land;
And hark! His voice amid the thunder's roar,
His dreadful voice, "that time shall be no more".
Lo! cherub hands the golden courts prepare;
Lo! thrones arise, and every saint is there;
Earth's utmost bounds confess their awful sway,
The mountains worship, and the isles obey;
Nor sun nor moon they need—nor day, nor night—
God is their Temple and the Lamb their light;
And shall not Israel's sons exulting come,
Hail the glad beam, and claim their ancient home?
On David's throne shall David's offspring reign,
And the dry bones be warm with life again.
Hark! white-robed crowds their deep hosannas
raise,
And the hoarse flood repeat the sound of praise;
Ten thousand harps attune the mystic song,
Ten thousand thousand saints the strain prolong—
"Worthy the Lamb! omnipotent to save,
Who died, who lives, triumphant o'er the grave."

William Cowper, known as England's "Christian poet", was the son of a clergyman and a friend of John Newton the hymn-writer. Born in 1781, he wrote "The Task" in which the following lines appear, in 1785, thereby testifying to his personal faith in the coming Kingdom. He died in the year 1800.

The groans of Nature in this nether world,
Which heaven has heard for ages, have an end,
Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung,
Whose fire was kindled at the prophet's lamp.
The time of rest, the promised Sabbath comes.
Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things,
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm that rocks itself to rest;
For He whose car the winds are, and the clouds
The dust that waits upon his sultry march,
When sin hath moved him and his wrath is hot
Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend,
Propitious, in his chariot paved with love;
And what his storms have blasted and defaced
For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

Behold the measure of the promise filled;
See, Salem built, the labour of a God!
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase.
From every clime they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy.
O Sion! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as heaven stoops down to see.

Come, then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant ere Nature's birth;

Thy saints proclaim thee King: and thy delay
Gives courage to their foes, who, could they see
The dawn of thy last advent, long desired,
Would flee for safety to the falling rocks.

The Greater Blessedness

A meditation on some
unwritten words of Jesus

Admonishing the Elders whom he had called from Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, the Apostle Paul sought to impress upon them the wonderful privilege they had of doing for the Lord's people a service very much akin to the service of the Lord Jesus Himself. Pointing to his own faithful life also as an incentive to them, he quotes one of the unrecorded utterances of our Lord to give emphasis to his admonition, and to show them that the essence of the Christian's course (and especially the Christian Elder's course) in his relations with others was much more a matter of "giving" than receiving. "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" The nearest that any recorded words of Jesus come to this utterance is in Matt. 10. 8. "Freely ye have received, freely give". No one of the evangelists place on record the words of Jesus just in the particular form here expressed, but evidently He had said them and some one or other of His immediate hearers had remembered them and had passed them on to Paul, who had treasured them up in his heart, and now made use of them to incite his beloved brethren (sharers with himself in the ministry of grace) to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren—not serving with any idea of recompense, but of a ready mind.

Paul's quotation of these words leads us to realise that there must obviously have been many of the sayings of Jesus left unrecorded. It is not for a moment thinkable that the few chapters of incidents given from His busy life was anything like a full chronicle of His sayings and doings. As John says (John 20. 31-32) "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." Just a few episodes from His activities, and just a few excerpts from His many and varied utterances, are given, but, under the Holy Spirit's guiding care enough to enable the believer to understand and appreciate the "way that leadeth unto life".

As with the Lord, so with many of the faithful prophets who preceded Jesus. Even though the book of Isaiah has sixty-six chapters and Jeremiah fifty-two and Ezekiel forty-eight, it is hardly likely that these records contain all their warnings and pleadings

and chidings as they sought to turn a wayward people back unto the ways of the Lord, and one feels very sure that some of the minor prophets spoke much more fully in the name of the Lord than has been left on record to come down to us. Part of our difficulty of understanding them lies in the fact that only a resumé of their appeals were written for our learning, but of one thing we may be sure. The Holy Spirit of God has given us the essence of all they said. No essential point has been omitted of their many and varied utterances. The sweet fragrance of their self-sacrificing lives has been concentrated, and the sweet aroma of God's tender watch care over His chosen people was distilled by them into a very few inspiring promises of a rare charm and beauty.

Let us think of these things in the same way that we do of the "scents of Araby". Those skilled craftsmen who knew the secrets of the perfumer's art would gather every flower that grew and lay it under tribute so that nothing of its matured blooming fragrance would be lost. The petals and stamens of millions of blooms were collected and the precious odours they contained extracted from them and reduced to a form in which they could be stored up and easily transported from place to place. Compacted into small compass and to last for long, long periods, yet they were capable of being expanded and expended and dispersed again at pleasure by and to all who joy and delight in the fragrance of flowers. Who can be indifferent to the delicate subtle fragrance wafted abroad on the air as some stopper is withdrawn from a wee flask, probably no larger than a baby's finger? Yet that delicate odour is the essence—the life-blood, of hundreds, if not thousands of lovely blossoms—the concentrated extract of Nature's wondrous alchemy—of sunshine and rain and of the mysterious creative powers of Mother Earth. *Multum in parvo*—much in little! Yes, much into little, and much from little.

In this same way the Heavenly alchemist has concentrated His Divine Principles enunciated by His prophets into small compass, like the precious spikenard of Mary, into the brief restricted utterances put on record for us in His Holy Word. Distilled by the Spirit of God and sealed up within His beautiful flask, the God of the Holy Book has stored up fragrance ravishing beyond words, and

when the seals are broken and the alluring fragrance is unstopped, the odours fill the house. The "Lily of the Valley" is there, and the "Rose of Sharon", and Myrrh and Cassia and every lovely fragrance the earth can know.

Like a casket of Attar of Roses, which is the concentrated essence of thousands of beautifully tinted rose leaves, full grown and mature, put into that form with a view to its subsequent expansion and distribution as and when required, so facts and truths and principles of the profoundest importance to man are laid up and enshrined in the Scriptures in comparatively few words with a view to their being, in God's providence, and as He sees fit from time to time, expanded and distributed to the delight and

profit of those who diligently and humbly give themselves to the study of His Holy Word.

It is the custom of Eastern potentates who have it in their power to produce these exquisite perfumes to present the precious fluids only to their trustiest friends. Would we experience the unspeakable joy of receiving a fragrant token of the Heavenly Potentate's affection? Then ask Him to break for us the alabaster box of spikenard most precious. Ask Him to exhale the fragrance stored up in the concentrated statements in His Holy Word. Wait upon Him, till the aroma of His love is breathed into your very soul—until "all thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia". (Psa. 45. 8.)

A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S PLANS

AN OUTLINE FOR THE
NEWLY-INTERESTED

The True Church—"Thy Kingdom Come"

THE TRUE CHURCH

The blessing and deliverance of mankind by the Lord Jesus Christ is the purpose of His Second Coming. All the prophecies relating to His power and glory will then be fulfilled, as those relating to His suffering and death were fulfilled at His First Advent. Meanwhile, another work has been in progress—the development of the Church of Christ. The true church is not composed of one nor all of the church organisations or denominations. It is made up of the faithful followers of Jesus, whether they have been inside or outside of church denominations. True Christians are members of the Church of Christ. There are many professing Christians who are not of the true church. (Matt. 7. 21.) Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 22. 23) and members of the true church must follow the example set by Him. (1 Peter 2. 21.) They must take up the Cross, deny themselves, follow Jesus (Matt. 16. 24) and be wholly devoted to the will of God, doing the will of God from the heart, not as men pleasers, but as the followers and servants of Christ. (Eph. 6. 6, 7.)

Those who are truly followers of Jesus are given many precious promises. (2 Pet. 1. 4.) They will be with Christ in His kingdom (Luke 12. 32; 2 Pet. 1. 5-11.). They will share His throne and His glory (Rev. 3. 21; Rev. 20. 4; Col. 3. 4.). Theirs is a heavenly inheritance (1 Pet. 1. 3, 4.). As the gospel has been preached amongst the nations those with an ear to hear have responded to its invitation, and conformed to the conditions of discipleship. These have not been a great number, but few, "a

little flock". These have lived and died, and slept in death, awaiting the return of the Lord for their reward. At the Lord's return they rise from the dead first and are made partakers of the First Resurrection to share the honour and glory of Christ. Those of the true Church living at the Lord's return do not sleep in death; but death to them is a change from a human to a heavenly condition (See 1 Cor. 15. 20, 38, 50-52; 1 Thess. 4. 14-18; Rev. 20. 4-6; Phil. 3. 7-11.)

This class is spoken of under different figures of speech. In 1 Cor. 12. 12, 27 they are spoken of as the body of Christ, Jesus being the head. As a class they are spoken of as the "bride" of Christ. The union of the members of the church with Jesus their Head is the marriage of the Lamb. (Rev. 19. 7.) When this has taken place, then the true church of Christ, with Him in power and glory, sharing His great kingdom, will share His work, and with Him invite "whosoever will" to come and drink of the water of life freely". (Rev. 22. 17.) Then all who die in Adam will be given a full fair opportunity to regain all that was lost by sin. This means they will be given the opportunity to live for ever in a condition like unto the conditions of Eden, free from sin, aches, pains, sickness and death. This will be the time of deliverance for mankind.

"THY KINGDOM COME"

When Jesus was on earth He told his followers that He must die, that He must go away, but would come again and receive them to himself. (John 14.

11-13.) He further taught them that He would go away from earth and return to receive His kingdom. (Luke 19. 10-12.) Since He was on earth the gospel has been preached in order that some might hear, believe and become true followers of Jesus; and being faithful unto death, should participate with Christ in His kingdom. (Rev. 20. 6; Rev. 2. 10; Col. 3. 4.)

For nineteen hundred years the hope of the Christian has been the Second Coming of the Lord, and the establishment of His Father's kingdom on earth. These have prayed from the heart: "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*". This is the kingdom which will bring deliverance to mankind, and which will bless all the families of the earth with the opportunity of life, liberty and happiness eternal. The Revelator saw in symbolic vision the present order of things passed away and all things made new. After seeing the Devil, the adversary of God and oppressor of man (Rev. 20. 1-3), bound, he saw a new heaven and a new earth, a new order of things, and the present order of things passed away. He saw the time when death will be no more, when sorrow and suffering and pain will be ended.

He saw One on the throne (Christ, the new king of all mankind) saying "*He that overcometh shall inherit these things*"—the blessings of life, and freedom from sorrows and suffering, and the oppression of the Devil. (Rev. 21. 1-7.) These blessings are for all, even those in the grave. To this end God has provided a resurrection of the dead through Christ His Son. Jesus said that the time was coming when those in the graves would hear

His voice and come forth. (John 5. 28.) The Revelator further saw a river of life proceeding to man from the throne of God and the Lamb, and Christ and his Bride, the Church, glorified, inviting whosoever will to come and drink of the water of life freely. (Rev. 22. 1-3, 17.) The Apostle Peter spoke of "times of restitution of all things" when Christ should return. Restitution means a restoration of something lost. Through sin, man lost life and his Eden home. Jesus said that he came to "seek and to save that which was lost". In His kingdom, the earth is to be made beautiful and fruitful. (See Isa. 35. 1-10 and Ezek. 36. 35 for proof that earth will be like Eden.) Man will then be given a full opportunity to live for ever (Ezek. 18. 19-23), but those who are disobedient will be destroyed from amongst the people. (Acts 3. 19-23).

When Christ's work on behalf of man is complete, every knee shall bow to Jesu's name; all living creatures in heaven and earth will praise God. (Rev. 5.13; Phil. 2. 7-11.) Every follower of Jesus desires His kingdom to come. The disciples asked Him when it would come and for signs of his return and kingdom (Matt. 24. 3.) The Lord's reply (verses 7 and 8) tell us plainly that world wars and events following are the signs of His return and that His kingdom is near. Before man gets the blessings of this kingdom he is to pass through a great wave of trouble which will completely destroy the present order, upon the ruins of which Christ's kingdom—the new heaven and earth—will be established. The Bible message for to-day is "*The Kingdom of God is at hand*", which should be a message of joy and hope to all who desire better things for mankind.

THE END

FAREWELL MEETING TO BRO. J. T. READ

A number of London friends, representative of all the London classes, gathered together on Saturday 23rd October, to bid Brother Read farewell on the eve of his return to the United States. It was an informal and very pleasant occasion. The meeting was opened with praise and prayer, after which Brother Read ministered, first in song with the "*Holy City*" and then for a short while giving some impressions of his tour among the friends in Britain and Denmark. Many present who knew Brother Carl Lutichau were interested to learn of his present welfare and that he had been able to accompany Brother Read throughout his trip in Denmark. Our brother has, this year, visited practically every class in this country and it was good to learn from his own lips of the joy his ministry has brought him, as we have learned from other lips of the joy that

ministry has brought others. Following his remarks, Brother Read rendered the 91st Psalm in song, and then the brethren adjourned for half-an-hour of informal fellowship with each other, during which time Brother Read moved among them for final leave-takings. The meeting then re-assembled and after our brother had given the sacred song that has become so closely associated with him in our minds, "*Great is Thy Faithfulness*", and all had joined in "*God be with you till we meet again*", he closed the meeting in prayer and invocation of the Divine blessing upon us all until we indeed gather at last in the "General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven". So ended a most happy little meeting and one that will live in our memories whenever we recall the ministry which during these past two years has been such a gracious one in our midst.

A CHRISTMAS BOOK LIST

All available from Welling.

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