



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 1

JAN / FEB., 1958

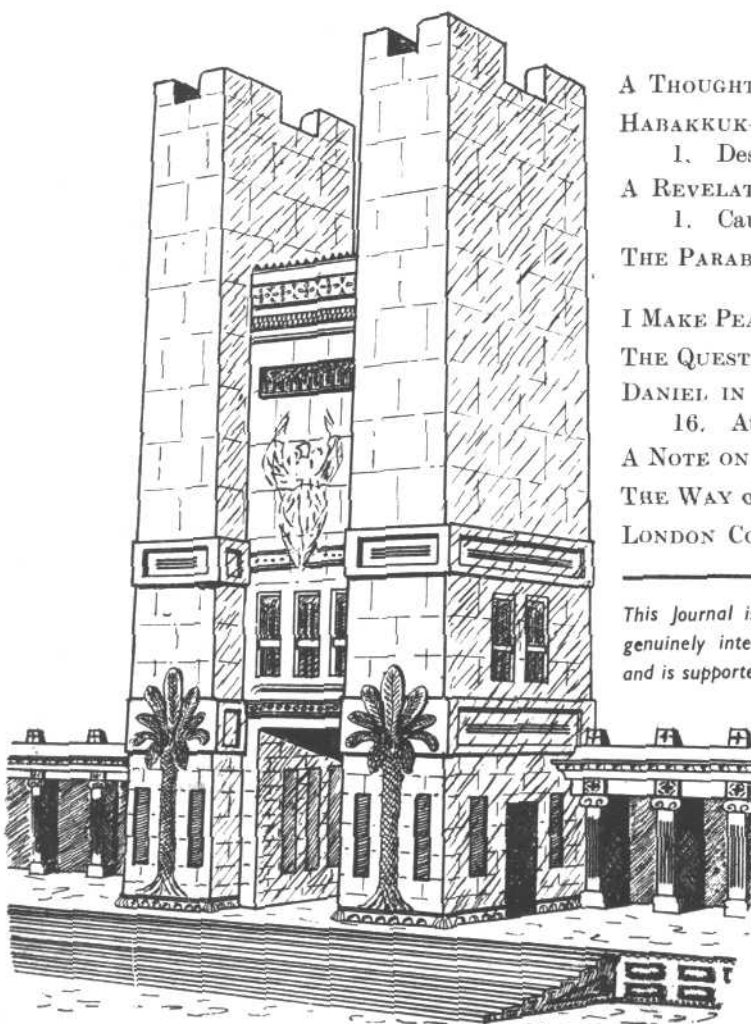
Published January 15th

Next issue March 1st

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



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

Published by

Bible Fellowship Union

11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"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; but 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. 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 realise this, and rejoice in 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.

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 overlordship 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 spiritual sense, the same results.

We turn then to Christ's words with 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 calm, quiet discussion of Scriptural teaching between ourselves; in 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 he 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 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.

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 1—Destruction from the North

He was, in all probability, director of the musical service at the Temple in the days of King Jehoiakim and just before the shadow of Babylon fell across the land. He was a prophet; the particular form of the title used, applied only to Haggai, Zechariah, and himself, appears to indicate that he held a definite prophetic office. He was not one of the wandering seers like Elijah, nor a layman like Nahum, but a priest or a Levite whose prophetic gift had been so far recognised by the ecclesiastical authorities that he was officially accepted as a prophet of God. His life therefore must have been spent in and around the Temple and its services.

He might have known Ezekiel and Daniel; the latter was a boy at the time. He must certainly have been acquainted with Jeremiah and the two men were probably close friends. They both lived at the same time, were probably of much the same age, and shared the same outlook on the things of God. They were both passionate for the righteousness of God and both waited longingly for the coming of His Kingdom. But whereas a great deal is known of the life of Jeremiah, from his youthful days in the reign of good King Josiah until we lose sight of him forty years later in Egypt, after the destruction of Jerusalem, nothing whatever is known of the life of Habakkuk. He comes upon the scene and delivers his prophecy, calm in its faith and resplendent in its presentation of the majesty of God, and passes out into the unknown. Whether he lived to witness the fall of the city twenty-five years after his prophecy, and was carried into captivity with his nation, or on the other hand had by then been laid to rest to await his reward at the Last Day, we have no idea. His prophecy is his history and his only monument.

Habakkuk was essentially a prophet of faith. He gave the Apostle Paul the inspiration for that greatest of doctrines, justification by faith. "The just man shall live by his faith" cried Habakkuk. Paul sensed the inner truth behind the words and carried them to an infinitely higher plane when he showed that the life enjoyed by the just man can only be received in Christ and through belief in and

acceptance of Christ. Habakkuk's own personal faith is revealed from time to time in his prophecy, shining forth like illuminated gold and red initial letters on an ancient parchment. His sterling confidence in God's holiness and justice despite the apparent triumph of evil (chap. 1. 12-13); his steadfast belief that God would perceive his standing on his watch, and reveal to him His plans (2. 1); his plea that God would preserve alive His work with His people in the intervening years between the early and the latter fulfilments (3. 2); his willingness to "rest" in death until the time of Israel's deliverance and glory at the end of the world (3. 16); and his determination to honour and praise the Lord despite the apparent utter failure of His promises (3. 17), all attest the deep-rooted faith which enabled this man clearly to see, not only the faults and shortcomings of his own people and the retribution that must surely come upon them in consequence, but also the Divine intervention which, at the end of time, would restore that people, repentant and purified, to its destined inheritance, destroy its enemies, and exalt righteousness over evil for ever.

It would be a matter of surprise, therefore, if such a man did not see, in prophetic vision, something of the circumstances attending the dawn of that great day, the day of the Messianic Kingdom. Sure enough, his words do convey some very definite foreviews of these circumstances, and stamp him as one of those prophets who "spoke" of the coming "Times of Restitution" to which Peter referred in his sermon to the people of Jerusalem (Acts 3. 21).

The prophecy of Habakkuk is a striking example of the manner in which "holy men of old" were led to a perception of things relating to the "last days" only after they had been prepared for that perception by an understanding of the presence of sin in the world and the cause of that sin. In these three short chapters there is a whole process of development which must be repeated in the life of every Christian disciple who would understand intelligently "what his lord doeth". Habakkuk was first led to supplicate God on account of the injustice and apostasy

which was rampant in his own day. "Why does God permit such evil?" was his question. "*How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear; even cry unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save?*" (Chap. 1. vs. 2.). The answer of God when it came to him was not one of reassurance. True, it showed that God was not heedless, and that the wicked would not escape retribution, but it also showed that retribution was to come in the form of an invasion of the land by the Chaldeans, "that bitter and hasty nation", under Nebuchadnezzar, and that the land would be destroyed and laid desolate. Habakkuk, filled with dismay at the drastic nature of the remedy, approached God once more and appealed to His holiness and righteousness, that He would remember His promise and purpose with the children of Israel, and not permit them to be utterly destroyed by the heathen. There was apparently no immediate answer to this plea, and it was then that Habakkuk rose to the heights of faith and took his stand upon the watch tower to await further instruction from God, instruction which he knew would come, because he knew that God was faithful.

His faith was honoured, and the message came through to him. It was a message of woe and condemnation against the persecutors of Israel. It was to be for a long time; as with Daniel not many years later, the vision was for the "time of the end" but at that time it was to speak plainly and not lie. And then, at the end of the message, God appeared to the prophet upon the throne of His holiness in the glory of His heavenly Temple, just as He did to Isaiah (Isa. 6. 1), and gave this faithful servant of His a vision of the "end time" set against the background of the Exodus incidents. Under those vivid symbols there appears a dual picture of the great Time of Trouble that is to close this Gospel Age and usher in the Millennial Kingdom; a picture that shows first, God's working in the affairs of men during the "Time of the End", the period during which the kingdoms of this world are disintegrating and breaking down in face of the imminent Kingdom of Christ, and second, arising to intervene in that short and final phase of human resistance to the incoming Kingdom which is called "Jacob's Trouble", the invasion of the Holy Land by the forces of "Gog and Magog". And perceiving the final glorious outcome, Habakkuk closes his prophecy with an expression of his own confidence in his awakening from the "rest" of death when that day shall have come, and all God's

promises should certainly be fulfilled.

So his first complaint serves but to awaken him to a consciousness that all is not well with man's world; it is sunken in sin and iniquity. "*Why dost thou . . . cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me . . . therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous*" (Chap 1. vs. 3-4).

Habakkuk's complaint was fully justified. The reforms instituted by King Josiah had lapsed very soon after his death. His son Jehoiakim, a young man of twenty-five, had no reverence for God and was much more interested in political bargaining with Egypt. He appears to have been a "modern" ruler surrounded by a "smart set" which had but scant respect for older and wiser counsellors such as Jeremiah, the men who saw quite plainly to what this state of affairs must lead. In consequence public morality declined, injustice and oppression flourished, unbridled commercialism forced the observance of the Sabbath into virtual disuse, and the Temple of God was neglected. The nation had repudiated its covenant with God—the covenant entered into at Sinai upon their organisation as a nation—and in accordance with the terms of that covenant, national disaster must surely follow.

Verses 2 to 4 record Habakkuk's prayer. Verses 5 to 11 tell of God's answer to that prayer. It is a message of condemnation and judgment; prophetic, because the events of which it spoke were yet future. "*Behold ye among the nations . . . and wonder . . . for, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs*" (1. 5-6). Within a very few years the word was fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar with his armies invaded and ravaged Judah, captured or slew successive kings and many of their godless princes and nobles, and took the people captive into Babylonia. For nineteen years or more he continued those raids until at length the Temple was burned, Jerusalem destroyed, and the land utterly desolated. The historian rightly attributed this great disaster to the people's neglect of the things of God, and their mocking His messengers "till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. 36. 14-20).

The description of the Babylonian invaders struck fear into the prophet's heart. Neither he nor his people knew much about the Baby-

Ionians. They had but recently, under Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, become a power in world affairs. The Assyrians had been known and feared, but Nineveh had been destroyed forty years before, destroyed by these very Babylonians, and the once-dreaded names of Sennacherib, Sargon and Shalmaneser were dreaded no longer. But this was a new menace. *"They are terrible and dreadful . . . their horses are swifter than leopards, more fierce than the evening wolves . . . their horsemen shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to the prey . . . they shall come all for violence . . . they shall scoff at kings, and princes shall be a scorn . . ."* (1. 7-11). No wonder that the heart of Habakkuk failed him at the terrible prospect and he betook himself again to God, praying this time, not for judgment against the unrighteous, but mercy upon the wayward.

Verse 11 requires re-translating. It should be rendered rather "Then he sweeps by like a wind, he, the guilty, whose might is his god". An apt description of Nebuchadnezzar, the man who said later "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of my kingdom and by the might of *my* power?" (Dan. 4. 30). The keynote of this prophecy is the triumph of Divine influence over the material might of man: it commences with the growth of Babylonian world dominion, the "head of gold" of the world-image (Dan. 2. 38) and its decline to ultimate destruction, and it concludes with the greater world-empire of the end of this Age and that empire's utter overthrow by Divine intervention at the time of Christ's Kingdom upon earth.

Now Habakkuk (in vss. 12-17) comes before God in supplication that Israel might not perish utterly. He reminds God of His own glory and power, and of His infinite righteousness. *"Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die . . . thou hast ordained them for judgment . . . established them for correction"* (vs. 12). Because God is, and because He is the God of Israel, and His promises are bound up in Israel, it is unthinkable that the nation should die. The Babylonians were "ordained" or appointed for "judgment" and "correction" upon the faithless nation, but not to exterminate it utterly. That is Habakkuk's first reaction. But then there comes another thought to his mind. Is not the Lord violating His own principles by inflicting evil in order to purge from evil? Is He doing evil that good might come? *"Thou art of purer eyes than to*

behold evil . . . wherefore lookest thou upon them (the Chaldeans) that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he, and makest men as the fishes of the sea . . . They take . . . them with the angle . . . in their net . . . in their drag . . . and are glad" (1. 13-15). In this wonderful picture the prophet alludes to the helpless condition of his people, as fish in the sea, swept up by the nets and drags and torn away from their native habitat without strength or power to resist. Can this be the will of God, God who is pledged to destroy all evil, God Who said to Moses that He would fill the earth with His glory? (Num. 14. 21). Had the Lord indeed given the earth over to destruction and all people on it to slavery and death? These all-conquering hordes had subjugated Assyria and the northern peoples, they held Damascus and the land of Israel to the north of Jerusalem, they ruled Moab and Edom and the desert tribes to the south. Only Judah and the coastlands were left, and now it seemed as if they were to be swallowed up also. What was to become of all God's promises? The heavens were dark unto Habakkuk and the Lord seemed very far away, almost as if He had forgotten His people, and yet the prophet knew within himself that such a thing could not be. But the prophetic message, so full of tragedy and disaster, was trying his faith to the uttermost, and he broke out in the anguish of his heart with the despairing cry which closes the first chapter, *"Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?"*

* * *

But it was at this crisis that Habakkuk's faith inspired him to take his stand upon the watch tower and hearken diligently for the Divine message; and from this point that his prophecy expands into increasingly glorious stages of revelation, taking him far beyond the events of his own days and showing him that which was to come upon his people "at the end of the days". Next month's chapter will tell of his experiences.

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind by the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.

(Dr. Temple)

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

St. Paul's vision
of the future

1. Caught up into Paradise

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

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

In the reminiscences which Paul narrates in the text, a hard and painful lesson had been set by the Divine control, and Paul had needed time to learn and understand. A time of “change” in the Divine Plan was under way. Not only were the institutions of an Age

about to pass, but a people hitherto outside the pale of Divine recognition was about to be brought “near”. Not only was it a time of crisis for Paul's kin, it was also such a crisis for himself. To prepare Paul for the part he was called to play, an experience of intense illumination was bestowed which, while it gave him moments of rare ecstasy, brought in its train years of conflict and suffering. It made him realise keener than heretofore that the love for God's sovereign Will must run deeper than love for fellow-man.

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

In these few sentences Paul relates an experience which till his day had not been granted to any other man since time began. Not one of the farsighted prophets of Israel had been carried so far along the stream of time as this man of whom Paul speaks. Not even Isaiah of the golden tongue, when speaking of a new heaven and a new earth, ever really saw in vision the sights of that perfect Day. All he did under the Holy Spirit's inspiration was to tell Israel that their name and seed would endure as long as that new heaven and earth endured. Apart from several Divine assertions, such as “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with my glory”, prophecy stops short of that perfect Day. It describes the constructive glory of the “perfecting day”—of “times of restitution”—but never of the eternal day beyond. It was reserved for this honoured man (and of course that man was Paul himself: see v. 7) to be carried forward

beyond the farthest bounds of prophetic understanding to see glorious things and hear unusual words such as had not been revealed theretofore. Paul was borne forward to that final state where God will be "all in all" and reign supreme for evermore.

This third heaven is not (as sometimes supposed) one of altitude—one of a series of heavens existing simultaneously, built upwards into the celestial heights. It is one of rotation—the third and last in a sequence of such heavens. Of these Peter speaks in 2 Pet. 3. 5-12. It is a new order of governmental control in which righteousness will dwell, without the least trace of sin or evil or any such thing. Paradise is not some place where disembodied spirits gather after their release from human flesh, and there enjoy the supposed delights or endure the restless wanderings of the land of shades. The term comes from a Persian word signifying a park, or other shaded enclosure, and is frequently used to describe the luxurious grounds surrounding some Oriental prince's palace-home. In the Scriptures it stands for the "garden of God", as it were a great enclosure in which God will erect His great House, and into which He will bring His great united family. "*In my Father's house are many mansions*"—places of abode for undefiled angels and men. Over every gradation of rank and authority Jesus will be the Supreme Steward—into whom all principalities and powers will be built up. Paradise, into whose eternal blessedness the Lord, in the dark day of His death, promised right of entry to the dying thief because of his penitence, will be the stately home of every beautiful human soul and every radiant celestial spirit dwelling together, each in its native sphere, with beauty and plenty everywhere, as one united family, obedient and submissive to almighty God, whose joy and pleasure it will be to own himself Father to so worthy a family.

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

It is not easy to say with exact precision just when Paul had this unique experience. Some uncertainty abounds, because a portion

of his life is lost to view after he was compelled to leave Jerusalem for his native Tarsus, some three years subsequent to his conversion on the Damascus Way (Compare Acts 9. 30 and 22. 17-21 with 11. 25-26). We know but little about these years, but we do know why his seclusion there was terminated.

This letter to the Corinthians is believed by competent authorities to have been penned about the year 57 A.D. If that is so, fourteen years measured backwards would reach to the year 43 A.D. Can we say where Paul was working at this time? We can! The year 43 found him at Antioch. There is a fixed chronological point at this stage of the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles. It is found in chapter 11. 27-28. The year of universal famine predicted by the prophet Agabus to the Church occurred in the year 44 A.D. This date is fully established upon Roman historical evidence, and is accepted by all critical authorities. In that year Paul had been at Antioch for a whole year (Acts 11. 25-26). He had removed to Antioch at the solicitation of Barnabas, because a great work was taking place with which Barnabas and his fellow-ministers were unable to cope. Gentile converts were crowding into that Church, and the pastoral care was proving too exacting for the elders and deacons there. From various evidences we know that Paul had not been inactive prior to the invitation of Barnabas reaching him. Churches existed in Cilicia—the upland country behind Tarsus—which none but Paul could have established. He had laboured mainly in Jewish synagogues, and had been punished several times for preaching the "offence of the Cross". This we know from the catalogue of his sufferings recorded in 2 Cor. 11. 24-27. The invitation of Barnabas constituted a call to the Gentile field. Already the Master had told him he was a chosen vessel to carry his name to the Gentiles—now the hour was come! With what attitude would Paul meet this call? How would he respond to the new leadings of Providence, as the Jewish nation was being set aside and the Gentiles accepted in their stead? Age-long privileges were being withdrawn, and new privileges coming in. For several years he had laboured independently in a small secluded field, where opportunity was circumscribed—now he was being called to the centre of a larger field, which, for these new developments, was set at a place outside Palestine and Jerusalem. The evangelisation of the Gentile world was about to begin in earnest and Paul was the

Lord's chosen instrument for the task. Great issues were at stake. For himself it was to mean much travail and suffering—suffering of far greater intensity than had befallen him in the earlier days of Cilicia. For his Jewish kinsmen it betokened the end of their exclusive privilege. Gentiles were to be accepted on equal terms with believing Jews, not as mere proselytes of the gate, but as brethren in the Lord. This, to a Jew, was a revolution on a colossal scale, overturning the institutions and sanctions of ancient days. In the new field of ministry Paul had to make these drastic changes known not only to a people outside the pale, eager to come in, but to a bigot nation within, desiring to keep the others out.

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

Shall we wonder then if, at this vital crisis of his life, Paul besought the Lord for guidance and instruction how to proceed? Can we marvel if, before he lent his influence to this new development in the Gentile sphere, he went aside into some secret place to ask sincerely if the things transpiring at Antioch were really ordained of God, and if so, what such things could indicate?

Under these circumstances shall we be surprised that Jesus took this chosen vessel further into his confidence and made known to him what the end of it all would be? Already Paul's understanding would carry him as far forward as the prophets' eyes had seen into future days, but it left the picture incomplete. Already Paul had come to know that the Messiah of Israel was to be, in some way, the Saviour of the world, but the prophetic horizons were indistinct and ill-defined. Something more was needed to fill out and illuminate the dull background of this universal work. Need we then wonder if it was at this stage of the developments of those momentous days that the watching Saviour blessed his praying servant's eyes with that larger vision of Paradise, that distant consummation in which all these changes and developments would terminate? Though there were yet many steps and stages ere that

consummation would be reached, it is not difficult to understand how great an incentive would be given to this special messenger for the new impending task, if the curtain could be raised for a little while and he could be assured with certainty what the end of the redemptive and restorative scheme was intended to be. At least he would know that his labours and sufferings in the Lord would never be in vain.

What a remarkable experience it must have been! Caught up and carried forward from these scenes of sin and woe to the unsullied bliss of that perfect Day, and given to see the whole creation at rest in God—no longer Gentile divided from Jew; no longer those "near" or "afar"; no longer sin or death, or hatred or prejudice, but a perfect family in which every perfect son bent the willing knee to the well-beloved Son who by his death had made the purpose of his Father possible. By this glimpse into Paradise the need of his valiant heart was met, and thus this little man, this one man in the whole wide earth, was fortified and strengthened for the colossal task to which he had been called.

At some point of time, so it seems, when called to quit Cilicia for the larger field at Antioch, the Lord most graciously took his "chosen vessel" deeper into his confidence, and made known to him an outline of that consummation of the great Plan which God had revealed to him after his own ascent to the Father's right hand. But that revelation was mainly for himself alone; it was made "unlawful" for him to pass the "words" along. What he saw and what he heard was for the comfort and assurance of his own loyal heart. They were not to be told in their fulness to other men—most certainly not to the faithless Jew—though here and there, in written words directed to his children in the faith at Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, and Ephesus, faint glimmerings of the great lights, at times, break through.

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

would make the consummation possible.

We ought to thank God to-day for this special servant of the Lord. Next to that which we owe the Lord himself, we owe to this intrepid soul more than we owe to any other man who has set foot on this sad old

earth. His fervent pen, guided by the Spirit of the Lord, has brought wealth untold into every believer's heart—the gold and rubies of Divine Truth—and made them rich unto eternal life.

(To be continued)

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD LABOURERS

Sometimes known as the "Parable of the Penny", this story of Jesus in Matt. 20. 1-16, has been explained in a variety of different ways, but not often is it 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 enquiry as to what *they*, who had given up all for His sake should have therefore, and by then it was becoming apparent that some sound instruction was necessary; so Jesus told this story of the man who hired labourers to work in his vineyard and what happened to them at the end of the day.

We shall miss the point of the parable, therefore, unless we bear in mind that it is intended to teach the disciples the truth regarding this matter of ultimate rewards in the heavenly Kingdom. *Here* is a rich man who was debarring himself from entrance because he would not give up his riches; *there* were other men who would attain to glory and power in that Kingdom because they had given up their scanty possessions. But there

was something else beside. They had "followed" Jesus; the rich man had failed to follow. The sacrifice of worldly possessions was not of itself enough; there must also be the willing acceptance of the life of labour "with Him" if the desired end was to be reached. And above all things, the idea of, and the thought of, personal advancement in front of one's fellows must be eradicated from the mind; there can be no ruling over one another, no taking precedence or assuming superior glory, in the Kingdom. All will be brethren, and there will 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 marketplace where the casual labourers congregate and engages sufficient men to complete the work. It is important to the right understanding of the story that this point be appreciated; *the householder engaged all the labourers he needed, at the normal time for starting work.* Other employers would be there too, engaging men for their requirements, until the demand

was satisfied, and then, just as in later and, to us, more familiar days, the unfortunate ones who had not been engaged would resign themselves to another day of idleness and loss of wages.

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

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

Five o'clock came; the eleventh hour. In sixty more minutes the sun would sink suddenly below the western horizon and darkness would drop down, quickly and completely. The day's work was virtually over; and yet here is the householder, once again in the market place, asking the few remaining stragglers why they stand there all the day idle. "*Because no man hath hired us*" they answer, perhaps resentfully, perhaps wonderingly. A strange question to ask: he knew very well why they thus stood. But the rejoinder was stranger still. "*Go ye also into the*

vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." They needed no further encouragement, and an hour later were standing before the steward, probably thankful for the small moiety of payment they expected for one hour's more or less nominal labour. They received, each one of them, a full day's wage!

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

Of course, there was disappointment, and expostulation, and talk of injustice. The householder was called to the scene, and listened to their complaint. Quietly he told them that none of them had suffered loss; all had received the amount for which they had bargained, the amount they had expected, the amount which, if commonly accepted observation be true, was the normal day's wages for a labourer at the time. True, they had worked longer and harder than had the late comers, but it was their good fortune that they had obtained work and in the ordinary way the others' 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 is Heaven is like that, said Jesus to his listeners. They sat round him, chins supported in cupped hands, flowing robes gathered closely, seeing in the mind's eye that coming day in which they would sit, each on a throne, twelve men on twelve thrones in all, judging the tribes of Israel, and the rich man who could not find it in him to sacrifice wealth and position *now*, bereft of it *then*, taking his place amongst the crowd. A group of men, some having worked long and hard, others for a little time only, all receiving the same at the end, without distinction in position or reward. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like that!* What Kingdom of Heaven is this?

Evidently from the fact that the parable is given in consequence of the disciples' question regarding future reward for present sacrifice, it has reference to the spiritual phase of

the Kingdom of God in the next Age, the Messianic Age, when the Church of Christ, glorified and associated with Him in the spiritual realm "beyond the Veil" will have ceased from their labours in the vineyard of this Age and appeared to receive their "hire", the "reward" of their consecrated walk before Him. The householder, of course, is the Lord Himself, going out himself to find disciples who will serve His interests in this world. His "going out" thus continues during the whole of this Gospel Age, from Pentecost until the setting up of the earthly Kingdom, but the third hour, sixth hour, and so on must refer, not to the early, middle and late centuries of the Age, but to stages in the lives of individuals at which the call comes to them. Quite obviously no one has laboured from Pentecost until 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". Others receive the call in middle life; these are they who respond to the householder's invitation at the third or the sixth or even the ninth hour. And some are already in the evening of life when they give themselves in whole-hearted surrender to the Lord Christ; they come in at the eleventh hour but the Lord has work for them to do and a work to do in them.

So it will be, then, when the hope of every true believer is realised, and the "General Assembly of the Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" has become an accomplished fact. We shall meet our fellows and our companions of the pilgrim way, those that have gone before us into the glory land, the saints and martyrs and prophets and apostles of earlier times, and we shall find that we are all equally citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, thinking no more of station or rank, of preferment one above another, but all rejoicing together in the wondrous companionship and over-lordship of Christ our Head, the heavenly Bridegroom. *"With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace."* The "penny" which each one will receive is the prize of eternal association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Kingdom, and before the presence of the Heavenly Father; and, associated with that for the duration of the Messianic Age, the

inestimable privilege of working together with the Saviour for the conversion of the world.

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

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

"I MAKE PEACE AND CREATE EVIL"

A note on
Isa. 45.7

*I form the light, and create darkness.
I make peace, and create evil.
I the Lord do all these things.*

(Isa. 45. 7.)

Those words have puzzled many. How can it be that God is the creator of evil, when another prophet recorded words which said "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1. 13), and the Scriptures are full of assurances that God is actively working to destroy evil; that Jesus laid aside the spiritual glory which He had with the Father before the world was, became man, and suffered Himself to be put to death by men, for the same purpose? The two ideas seem at first sight to be incapable of harmony the one with the other; and yet there must be a reasonable harmony between them even although we do not discern it at first sight.

Let it first be observed that the theme of this part of the 45th chapter is God's own sovereign responsibility for all that takes place in His creation. "*I am the Lord, and there is none else.*" Whatever is, is ordained or permitted by God, and nothing can be, except it is allowed by His sovereign will.

This immediately raises the question of evil, the most perplexing puzzle that has ever posed before the mind of thinking man. That evil exists and afflicts mankind, there is no doubt. If God is all-powerful, why does He allow it?

In the days of Isaiah, one answer—the wrong answer—to this question was beginning to penetrate Israelitish thought from the religious beliefs of the Persians, who at that time were coming more and more into contact with Israel. The system which afterwards became the national religion of Persia under the name of Zoroastrianism was advancing into prominence. The chief tenet of this system held that the world was the scene of a mighty and apparently interminable conflict between two great supernatural powers, Ahura-Mazda, the god of all good, and Ahri-man, the god of all evil. Ahura-Mazda was pictured as throwing all his powers into this fight against evil, but progress was necessarily slow and in the meantime Ahri-man was measurably victorious and the world in consequence suffering under the reign of evil. As a human philosophical explanation of the fact of evil the theory could appear to match

the observed facts; but it was not the true explanation. And it might well be that the Lord gave this emphatic word to Israel through Isaiah in order to emphasise that He, and He alone, accepts responsibility for all that goes on in His creation and whatever condition of things may exist is subject always to His control. Evil is always under the controlling power of God, and can be instantly restrained by Him if that should be His will.

Such a time will come in history. The Scriptures speak of Satan being bound a thousand years, to deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1) and nothing will hurt nor destroy even although during that time, some who at heart are opposed to justice and righteousness will yield merely "feigned obedience" (Psa. 18. 44, *margin*). That one instance, of the binding of Satan himself, is sufficient to show that God is able instantly to restrain outward evil when in the exercise of His wisdom He deems it time so to do.

So, then, after emphasising that He alone is God and that there is no other God, either good or evil, beside Him, God makes the issue doubly definite by saying "*I make peace, and create evil*".

There are three different Hebrew words, each having its own special application, used in the sense of "making" or "creating", and the meaning of a passage such as this can best be appreciated when the precise words used are known.

The first and most important of these three words is *bara*, which means to create a thing as though to bring it into existence. This is the word used in Gen. 1. 1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" i.e. brought them into existence. The second is *yatsar*, meaning to mould or fashion into shape as a potter does his clay, and so is usually translated "to form" or "to fashion". The third is *asah*, a word meaning to construct or make in a mechanical sense, as though to assemble or put something together from already existing things. Now let us see how these meanings help us in the passage under consideration.

"*I form (yatsar—fashion or mould) the light,—and create (bara, cause to exist) darkness. I make (asah—construct) peace, and create (bara, cause to exist) evil. I the Lord*

do (*asah*) all these things."

By "forming" light the Lord automatically made "darkness" a separate thing, in contrast to light, for darkness is the absence of light. By constructing the laws that make for peace the Lord automatically defined "evil" as a separate thing—for evil is the absence of righteousness. Without the law there is no

knowledge of sin, said the Apostle Paul (Rom. 3. 20 and 7. 7). So without God giving His definitions and laws of righteousness (peace) there could be knowledge of what constituted evil. Thus in making peace or righteousness, God gave a tangible definition or existence to evil which it could not have had otherwise.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. What is the meaning of "shutteth up his bowels of compassion" in I John 3. 17, "if any bowels and mercies" in Phil. 2. 1., and similar texts?

A. The word had a rather different meaning in Apostolic days to that which is its general use to-day. Anatomically, it meant the vital organs, the heart, lungs and liver, and metaphorically was used to denote the tender affections, love, sympathy, kindness, etc. (much as to-day the heart is regarded as the seat of the affections). There are two instances where the word is translated in this manner, in 2 Cor. 7. 15, "His inward affection is more abundant toward me", and Luke 1. 78, "through the tender mercy of our God whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us". If the occurrences where it is translated "bowels" be examined it will be seen that in all instances save one (Acts 1. 18), the reference is to this inner feeling of compassion and tenderness (see 2 Cor. 6. 12, Phil. 1. 8, 2. 1, Col. 3. 12, Philemon 7, 12 and 20). The same word used in its verbal form, is rendered "moved with compassion" in Matt. 9. 36, 14. 14, 18. 27, Mark 1. 41, 6. 34; and "had compassion" in Matt. 15. 32, 20. 34, Mark 8. 2, 9. 22, Luke 7. 13, 10. 33 and 15. 20. In every case except the latter (the story of the prodigal son) the One thus moved to compassion is Jesus Himself. It is worth while to turn up all these texts in order to realise how full of meaning they become when their true import is understood.

There is a link, too, with the Old Testament. In the Levitical types the "inward parts" of the sacrifice, the heart and other organs, were offered up on the Brazen Altar "a sweet savour unto God", and it has often been pointed out that this symbolises the heart's best endeavours and affections, given to God. Now this same word translated "bowels", *splagchna*, was the term used by the Greeks to denote this sacrifice of the inward parts of animals, having the same idea in mind. We can say therefore that the proof of our under-

standing of this element in the Tabernacle sacrifices lies here in the New Testament. The "inward parts" represent our hearts' best affections, manifested toward each other and to our Lord, offered up to our Heavenly Father in sincere consecration of life in His service and the service of His people.

Q. 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" (*Moffat*), 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 than he is exhorting each one of us to give special diligence to the casting off 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.

DANIEL IN BABYLON

*The story of a
great man's faith*

10. At the End of the Days

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

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

years and constituted him instructor for the coming twenty-five centuries of prophetic study.

It is probably true that Daniel never understood much of the detailed prophetic meaning inherent in that angelic revelation of world history which constitutes chapters 11 and 12 of his book. Even to-day there is considerable uncertainty and difference of opinion as to the right interpretation of much of these passages. Admittedly the opening verses of chapter 11 deal with matters which would have been plain enough; he had already learned, eleven years earlier, in the third year of King Belshazzar (Chap. 8) that the Persian power would one day give way to that of Greece. Although that event was still two centuries away the influence of Greece was already being felt in Daniel's time and he would not find it difficult to interpret that part of Chapter 11. But after that the story went into details which must have been completely incomprehensible to the aged prophet. He could only have come to the conclusion which Jesus at a later date had to impress upon His own disciples, that there would be "wars and rumours of wars", that "nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but the end is not yet". After a lifetime of studious and devoted waiting upon God to know when the golden time of blessing was destined to break upon the world, he eventually had to accept the Divine decree, which those other disciples had in their day and turn also to accept. "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but my Father only.*" There is a lesson in that for all Christian students of prophecy. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter how closely imminent the words of the Book and the signs of the times make the Day of Deliverance appear to be, the day and hour is locked up in the counsels of the Most High. It may be an age hence; it may be to-morrow night. We have to be ready for either eventuality.

Although Daniel would not be able to anticipate the detailed outworking in history

of the strange story he had written on the tablets, there were certain embedded principles which he would be able to follow. He was of course by no means the first Hebrew prophet to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to transmit knowledge of God's designs for the end time. Joel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, all had spoken and written of those things in previous years and Daniel would assuredly have possessed and been familiar with their writings. He was by no means a stranger to the general tenor of Divine revelation concerning happenings of the End. This crowning revelation, coming to him at the end of his life, was in considerable degree supplementary to what he already knew from his studies in the books of the earlier prophets. He must have been familiar with the prospect of a day to come when the hosts of the north, the enemies of Israel, would come out of their place to invade and destroy the chosen people, and God would intervene with the powers of heaven to destroy the forces of unrighteousness and deliver them. The factor which was new to Daniel in his own revelation was the delineation on the one hand of a personal figure who would be the Divine Leader and champion in this battle—one like the Son of Man; Michael the archangel—and on the other hand the crystallisation into another personal figure of all those vague world forces allied against God, the Antichrist.

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

Perhaps, though, these last two chapters of Daniel's prophecy do sow the seeds of a prophetic distinction which only comes to full flower in the New Testament, the slow but inexorable heading up of all the various and mutually antagonistic forces of evil in the world into one iron spear-head of resistance

which as a single unit meets the powers of righteousness and by them is utterly broken. Daniel saw the development of earthly empires and the rising arrogance of man and the lining up of those powers into two camps—the king of the north and the king of the south. Whether we do or do not understand the extremely detailed narrative of the continuing conflict between these two powers does not alter the fact that quite evidently a long period of time is indicated. But when we come to the end of chapter 11 and the time when Michael stands up to wage final war, there is only one enemy. How it comes about, and when, may or may not be certainly apparent, but here in Daniel, as in the New Testament, God rises up in judgment at the time of his kingdom to find one united enemy, and one only, standing against him. Perhaps the vision of Revelation 19 where the rider on the white horse comes forth from heaven to do battle, is more lucid. In that scene the powers of earth are clearly seen united as they have never yet been united in history "to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army".

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

From that time onward affairs in the world will take a different course. *"At that time thy people shall be delivered."* *"Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake."* *"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."* The rider on the white horse; Michael who stands up; these are none other than our Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent, come to overthrow the power of evil and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth under which all men and nations will be instructed and led in the ways of God, and

the message of repentance, justification and reconciliation preached as never before.

So the old man closed his eyes in complete confidence that it would surely come. He knew and had proved throughout a long life the faithfulness of God. He knew that, like Peter in a time yet to come, he had not followed "cunningly devised fables," but had been an eye-witness of God's majesty. What was it that the saintly Polycarp said when exhorted by the pagan magistrate to save his life by forswearing Christ? *"Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has never failed me. How can I deny him now!"* Daniel must have felt like that. Perhaps his mind went back to the early days of boyhood, when he first learned of God and His plans for eventual world deliverance, at the feet of his mentor, Jeremiah the prophet. Maybe he recalled dimly, because it was a long time ago, the journey to Babylon as a youth of eighteen or so, and his companions Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who together with him had refused the rich foods of the palace and because of their abstemiousness had eventually found the king's favour and attained high office in the State. That would have brought before his failing eyes the picture of the arrogant king whom yet he had been able to serve so faithfully, and the king's family which he had known so well, the gentle Queen Amytis, and Nitocris the king's daughter who had remained so staunch a friend through all the vicissitudes of a life time and into old age. They were all dead now and only he was left. He remembered the king's dream of the image, and how God had given him the interpretation and the understanding that four great empires were to rule on earth and then the kingdom of God come. The leaping flames of the fiery furnace flickered before his eyes, and again he heard the awed voice of the king *"I see four men, loose, and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods."* The

thin hands moved restlessly; again he was in spirit endeavouring with Queen Amytis to restrain the mad king as he sought to emulate the beasts of the earth, and once more he knew the thrill of hearing the voice of Nebuchadnezzar, restored to sanity, professing allegiance to the God of heaven. The days of dreams and visions passed across his mind, the visits of the revealing angel, the years of study and reflection when he lived as a private citizen, waiting in patience for the revelation of God from heaven. The shadows in the room gathered and he entered again into the darkness of Babylon's last night, when the Persians besieged the city; the blaze of light at the palace banquet, the writing on the wall, the end of the empire, his brief time of service under the Median King Darius, his deliverance from the lion's den. Rapidly the pictures passed before his mental vision and at the end of them all, a golden glory in the background, he saw the fair beauty of the world that is yet to be, the world for which he had waited all his life, the world in which he himself was to stand, in his lot, at the end of the days.

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

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

The end

A NOTE ON PHIL. 2. 5-7

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." (Phil. 2. 5-7)

The expression in verse 6 *"thought it not robbery to be equal with God"* is a rather crude and meaningless translation. It is better rendered in the R.S.V. *"did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped"* or as Rotherham has it *"Not a thing to be seized*

accounted the being equal with God". Even so, the Apostle's meaning is not easily grasped until the text is set against the background of the subject. The entire passage constituting the first part of Phil. 2 is primarily an exhortation to humility and selflessness. The example of Jesus is held up as one to follow, Jesus who, though in the likeness of God, emptied himself of that glory (this is the meaning of the phrase 'made Himself of no reputation') and took upon Himself the like-

ness of man, for the suffering of death.

That part of the passage is probably easy enough to follow. Not so easy to understand is the statement that in this same connection the Son, prior to His taking human form, "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" or seized. The Greek here definitely implies the idea of seizing or attaining "equality with God" by force. The oneness always subsisting between the Father and the Son is clearly defined for us in the New Testament but it would be an utterly incongruous and improper thing to conceive that relationship as being attained or maintained by force. The meaning of St. Paul's words must be sought in another sphere.

The Apostle made this allusion in the interests of teaching humility and loyalty to God. Did he have in mind the contrary course of the Arch-enemy of God and man, Satan? It has often been suggested that the prophetic denunciation of the king of Babylon in Isaiah 14 is a veiled allusion to the sin and consequent doom of Satan. If so, the language there used forms a fine contrast to the attitude assumed by the Beloved Son in taking human form in conformity to the Father's Will. Isa. 14. 12-14 reads, in part "*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning . . . for thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.*" Here then is one who did "count equality with God a thing to be grasped." Is it possible that back in the dim past this one of God's created celestial beings raised the standard of revolt in the ambitious attempt to reign co-equally with God, and thereby precipitated the era of evil in which we find ourselves? If so, how full of meaning are St. Paul's words where here in Philippians he directs our attention to One Who, despite His essential Oneness with the Father, was prepared to lay aside that glory and descend to the depths of human form and environment, for the salvation of man, in contrast to the one who aspired to ascend by force to the heights of Divine kingship.

After all, that is what Jesus meant when in simple words He told his disciples "He that would be great among you, let him be your servant." "I am among you" He said "as one that serveth." And again in contrast to the rebellion and disobedience of the enemy Satan, we have to realise that in some wonderful manner not easy for us to comprehend

the element of obedience is involved in this coming to earth of the Son. Phil. 2. 8 declares that "being found in fashion as a man, he . . . became obedient unto death." That aspect is amplified in Heb. 10. 5-7 "*When he cometh into the world, he saith . . . Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God.*" In the days of his flesh He said to the Pharisees on one occasion "*I do always those things that please him*" (the Father—John 8. 29.). The contrast therefore is between disobedience with soaring ambition on the one hand, and obedience with selfless humility on the other, and this latter is the example which St. Paul sets before us to emulate.

There is a further consideration to bear in mind in all this. The "form of a servant" in which the Lord Jesus Christ was manifested to men during his First Advent was only for one specific purpose—the suffering of death. "*My flesh*" he said to the Jews "*I will give for the life of the world.*" (Jno. 6. 51). Before He appeared among men in the form of man He was the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person (Heb. 1. 3), dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, in eternal communion with the King of Kings whom no man hath seen nor can see. (1 Tim. 6. 16). After his resurrection He ascended again into that glory and "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" as Heb. 1. 3 goes on to say. This was the prayer of Jesus whilst in the days of his flesh. "*Glorify thou me*", He prayed "*with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*" (Jno. 17. 5). That glory is one which is not of this world and owes nothing to the material things of this world. Neither can it be perceived or comprehended by the natural human senses which are designed only to perceive the things of this world. That is why the Apostle John in I Jno. 3. 2 tells us "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*" He will appear to us, we shall see him, in his celestial glory, only when we have been "changed" to be like him, when earthly life is ended. Glorious as was the time of his laying hold of humanity for the salvation of the human race and for the eternal purpose of God, it is but a break in the spiritual glory of the Son of God, and at his Second Advent, the one that is to be characterised not by humiliation and death, but by power and life, He comes in the fulness of celestial glory, which will have to be perceived by other than the natural senses.

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

A 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 Messianic 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 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 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 known as 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 country lanes or pathways. Our modern arterial roads, driven straight through hills and across valleys, are good illustrations of what Isaiah meant. 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 pro-

gress more and more into the Divine likeness.

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, 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.

London Convention 1957

Conway Hall, Holborn, was the venue for another annual convention during the August Bank Holiday season. This gathering has become something of an institution to which many look forward each year. Away from the noise and bustle of the city, Red Lion Square contains an attractive little garden where one may rest and meditate. The attention of early visitors to the convention on the Saturday afternoon must have been attracted to helpers actively engaged in preparing the amenities for their comfort and pleasure. Two young brethren could be seen surrounded by equipment from which emerged a very efficient amplifying system. Two sisters were transforming the platform with flowers whilst others busied themselves with hymnbooks and literature. In the canteen some were working to provide the visitors with meals throughout the convention. It is to the credit of the catering team that so many were served, so efficiently in such cramped circumstances.

A few minutes before the commencement of the first session, chimes peeled forth over the

public address system inviting all to take their seats. Promptly at 3.0 p.m. the first hymn was announced and soon we were listening to the welcoming tones of Bro. S. Naylor (*Forest Gate*) as he formally opened the convention. Reading and commenting upon Psalm 86, this prayer of David was suggested as a setting for the convention. Referring to Lev. 20, 26 we were reminded of Jesus' call to the disciples: "Come ye apart and rest awhile". This was another such occasion, when together we were to have fellowship in the Lord as a stimulus to our future hope.

Under the heading of "*All them that love His appearing*" Bro. A. J. Lodge, (London) gave a commentary on the first few verses of the chapter from which his text was taken, 2 Tim. 4. In them the apostle urged the young elder at Ephesus to preach the Word always, to reprove where necessary and even to take the stronger measure of administering a rebuke. Three important aspects of our faith were emphasised; simplicity, certainty and reality. Our Master was always simple in His teaching, and a plea was made that we should

be the same. Paul had expressed his certainty of belief in his first letter to Timothy when he wrote "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded . . ." There was no room for doubts in Paul's conviction. Thirdly our faith must be real, a trust that is related to our daily life. To illustrate this point the speaker sketched a mental picture of a passenger boat entering a harbour. Those along the quayside watching the vessel drawing nearer to the land could be divided into two groups. There were sight-seers who were interested in the size and appearance of the ship, and those who had loved ones on board and were waiting patiently for them to come ashore. The observations of the first group are measured by an intellectual appreciation of what is happening while the latter are personally concerned with that particular boat coming safely to port. It is possible to accomplish many wonderful things in the name of the Lord but to be completely lacking in personal knowledge of Him. Paul had discovered that intimate relationship with the Lord as shown from his words in Phil. 3, 8-10. Therefore with such a conviction our anticipation of the Second Coming of the Lord is not merely abstract but a real love for Jesus' return and what it means. Such a hope cannot fail to purify our hearts as we wait for it.

After tea, Paul's words in 2 Tim. 4, 8 were considered still further by Bro. L. Shephard (*Swansea*). The title of his address "*A crown of righteousness*" emphasised this aspect of the verse to be discussed. Righteousness is a foundation truth of the Bible. Righteousness was Paul's aim, so that life was not in vain to him, and he looked forward to receiving a "crown of righteousness". As we look at the lives of the martyrs and other saintly characters we feel that we never could be worthy; we must not however, be discouraged. Discouragement is carnal, a negative outlook which belongs to death. We are called to be like Christ who is deathless. Only a few find righteousness now, just as only a few righteous were found in Sodom. Men are not saved willy nilly; but when God's judgments are in the earth its inhabitants will learn righteousness. Righteousness is a theme which runs through the whole Bible. The Church is chosen to demonstrate to the world God's righteousness in practice, a light to the Gentiles, a heart righteousness, not mere legalism as the Jewish law had been. Goodness in the Bible means complete consecration to God,

"We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2, 10). Liberty indeed! 'The coming kingdom, the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, is a kingdom of righteousness, and only the righteous will be identified with that kingdom. What a wonder and a hope, if we can say, like Paul, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness".

Sunday morning began with an half hour of praise. This was followed by a very interesting discourse on "*The Holy Spirit*" by Brother W. Clarke (*Ipswich*). Introducing his subject from the standpoint of the spirit's power in the early Church, the speaker dealt with the commands and commissions of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles. In a short diversion, we heard something of the work of the Spirit among missionary translators and the problems that they overcome. Our attention was then directed to the account of Creation in Genesis 1. In verse 1 the word "created" is derived from an expression which suggests a "generous out-throwing". The Spirit of God then "brooded" upon the waste or void, which was an unrecognisable darkness and an unfathomable mass. The result was the separation of darkness and light. Returning again to the main theme of the work of the early Church reference was made to Acts 2, 2 and that great outpouring of power which filled the apostles with spiritual energy. Again through the Spirit, light was given which was not comprehended of the darkness. More evidence of the power of the Spirit was shown from Acts 4, where following the wonderful prayer about God "stretching forth his hand to do signs and wonders through the name of his devoted servant", the very house where they were assembled was shaken. Nor was this being filled with the Spirit confined to the "Twelve". Stephen, assigned to the work of serving at tables, was "full of faith and power" so that they were "not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." (Acts 6. 8, 10). This same power was transmitted through Philip and shown in his work in Samaria where also were done many mighty works (Acts 8. 12, 13). And so this Holy Spirit has come upon all who have followed the Lord, and "*... as many as are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*" (Rom. 8. 14; Joel 2. 28, 29).

(To be concluded)



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 2

MARCH, 1958

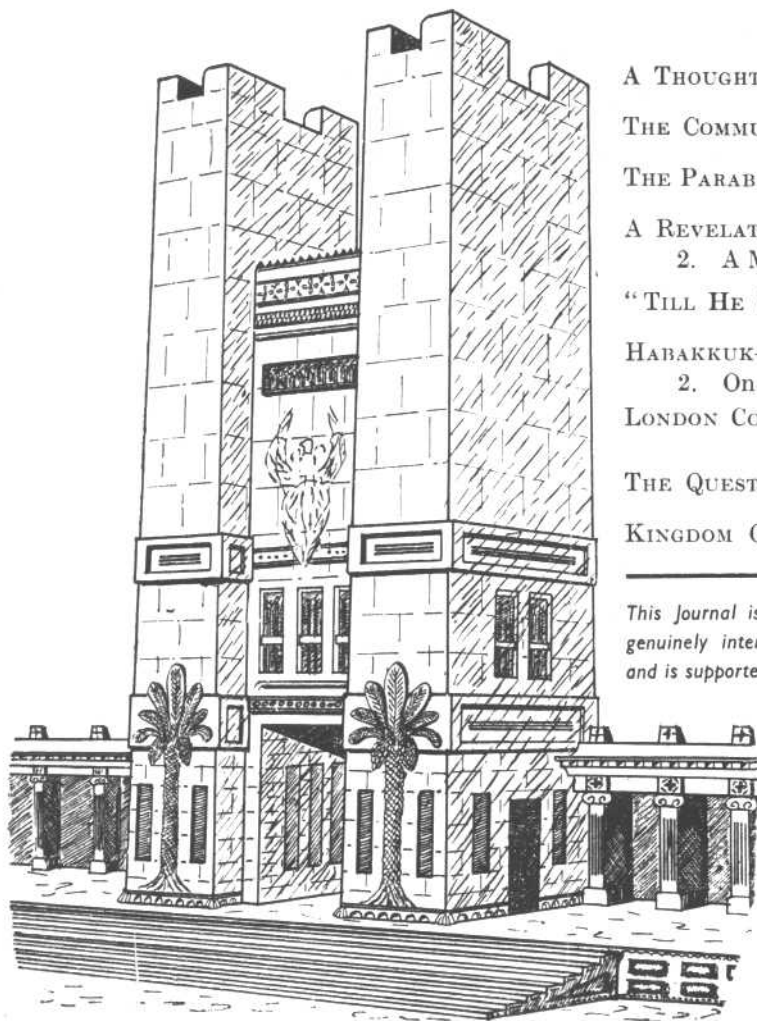
Published March 1st

Next issue April 15th

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



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

Published by

Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

"He gave . . . apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists . . . pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . ." (Eph. 4. 11).

Every now and again someone comes along with an eulogy on the merits of eschewing all human aids to faith and belief, and relying entirely upon personal reading and interpretation of the Bible. Once we were immature children, spoon-fed with the theological notions and definitions of faith of older men or long-since-dead members of a past generation who only partially understood the Christian faith. Now we have our eyes opened and we can interpret the Scriptures to ourselves without any human help, and we are all the better for it. That is the presumption, and the elderly believers who ought to know better, and the naive youngsters who cannot be expected to know much better, would alike be greatly disturbed to be told that their attitude is spiritual egotism of a high order. But so it is. The Christian who thinks that he can complete his growth in grace and knowledge without any assistance from the instruments the Lord has placed in the Church for that purpose is repudiating the whole arrangement whereby Christ ordained that his Church should grow. The right of private judgment, of deciding for oneself the extent to which things we see and hear and read do correctly represent the word of the Lord to us, is one that we do well to maintain and guard jealously. That is our privilege and prerogative. But to claim that our own ability to sense the Divine mysteries is so pronounced that we need no assistance from the ministers God has appointed for that purpose is one that has no endorsement in either the writings of the Apostles or the teachings of Jesus.

It is a truism, endorsed by St. Paul, that no man liveth unto himself. That holds good in our spiritual lives particularly. The whole body can only be "fitly joined together and

compacted by that which every joint supplieth": The labours and writings of men long since gone to their rest, the ministry of men now living and moving amongst us, the devotional thought and intellectual insight of zealous disciples known or unknown to us, in a myriad ways contribute to our own growth in the things of the Spirit. The man who refuses to avail himself or partake of these things and deliberately confines himself to the circle of his own interpretation of the Authorised Version is, whether he realises it or not, rejecting the accumulated experience of all God's saints through the Age provided by the Good Shepherd for his benefit.

It may sound very fine and large to say "I study the Bible for myself; I don't accept the opinions of any man", but it is really rather petty and very silly. It does not betoken maturity of Christian character but rather the reverse. One element of true humility lies in the willingness to learn from others and the man who ignores all that has been discovered in the past in knowledge and understanding of the Divine Plan and endeavours to start again from scratch, so to speak, would be a very remarkable individual if he could catch up on all that two thousand years experience in the short space of his own lifetime.

We find that a number of copies of the December issue were printed with pages 127 and 131 blank. Several readers have written about this and had their copies replaced; if anyone else has a similar defective copy we will gladly replace it in receipt of postcard request.

Gone from us

Bro. H. Heavens (Canterbury)
Sis. M. Leighton (Portland, U.S.A.)
Sis. G. Melling (Bury)

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

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

A Vital Feature of
Christian Fellowship

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

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

The outward expression of that unity is to be found in the Memorial of the Last Supper and the coming together from time to time in regular assembly for the simple sharing of bread and wine—a symbolic feast that at one and the same time expresses our one-ness with each other and our one-ness with the Lord. Whether that celebration be as often as once a week or as seldom as once a year it always symbolises, not only our acknowledgement of the saving power of our Lord's death, our acceptance to ourselves of His shed blood and sacrificed life, our association with Him in the offering of life to the world in due time; not only all this, but also that kinship, that brotherhood, that one-ness with each other as brethren in Christ, without which none of the other significance can be really appreciated by us or true of us. He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, asks James, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? So the one that has not entered truly into living relationship with his

brethren may by no means be in living relationship with Christ. His acceptance by and standing with Christ may be, and is, the result of an individual decision and based upon his personal justification by faith, but he can maintain that acceptance and standing only by becoming one of "the brethren"; a fellow-member of the Body. He must enter and accept the communion of saints.

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

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

But this word "communion" is also sometimes translated "fellowship", sometimes "communicate", sometimes "partaker". Each of these aspects of our Christian life is an aspect of the communion of the saints and as such is intimately associated with our under-

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

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

It is out of this practical brotherliness that effective fellowship in service is born. There is a communion in the Gospel which is the inspiring force behind all powerful proclamation of the Kingdom message. In writing

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

This in turn led to a realistic understanding of their common participation in the sufferings of Christ. There was no beclouding or confusing the plain issue by theological definitions of doubtful value and full of incipient sources of argument and misunderstanding. To these earnest, enthusiastic souls, participation in the sufferings of Christ was a sharing the life that He lived and enduring the same trials and distresses that came upon Him in consequence of that way of life; and this participation was a very real thing to them. The history of early Christian persecution and martyrdom shows that. The ordeal of fire which so many of them went through and endured until death released them from their sufferings is too terrible to recount—historians have already described it in sufficient detail. Let it be realised that nothing but the oneness of the Church in which all members suffered with one, and so the strength of all was given to one in the hour of need, could have enabled them thus to endure. Many in later times have wondered how those stoical souls withstood the fiendish cruelty of their pagan persecutors. The answer is that their strength was not of themselves, it was of the Body, and from Him Who is the Head of that Body. And without the true unity of the Spirit the strength would not have been theirs. Paul knew this when he desired that he "might know . . . the *fellowship—communion—*

ion—of his (Christ's) sufferings" (Phil. 3. 10). He knew that in that common-sharing there resided a source of strength such as his own self-resolution could never give him. To the Corinthians he says "as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of the sufferings (both of Christ and of His disciples) so shall ye also be of the consolation" (2 Cor. 1. 7). That word "consolation" is full of significance here. It means the arrival of help at a time when it is needed (*paraklesis*—a being alongside to help). That is the effect of conscious sharing in the sufferings of one another and of our Master—it gives strength to withstand all that makes our Christian way difficult and arduous. There is then a "being alongside to help". What wonder, then, that Peter, in the calm maturity of his old age, bids his suffering brethren to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are *partakers*—common-sharers—of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4. 13). And it is Peter who takes us to the highest level of this communion of saints, for in two eloquent Scriptures he relates it to the consummation of our glorious hope. In 2 Pet. 1. 4 he tells us that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the divine nature" and in 1 Pet. 5. 1 that we shall be "*partakers*—common-sharers—of the glory that shall be

revealed". The communion of saints is not only one of suffering, it is also one of glory. The fellowship that is begun here below in conditions of "weakness and much trembling" is to be continued forever in that eternal kingdom where it will be expanded into the glorious fellowship of the general assembly of the Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in heaven.

Seeing then that we know these things, how ignoble and petty become those specious arguments which limit and restrict the unity which can exist between all who name the Name. We who have a glorious hope for mankind, a clear perception of the Divine Plan, and a noble tradition going back to Apostolic days, should we be one whit behind those who in those same early times took their Lord at His word, and because He bade them "share together", brought that spirit of sharing into every phase and aspect of their fellowship, and in that joyful union found a strength and a power that in its outworking shook the pagan world until that world tottered and fell? If we in our day could by any means achieve a unity such as that, what man could foretell the magnitude of the blessing that would flow out from the "communion of saints"?

THE 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 picture all who now wait for the consummation of their hope in Christ. 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 teaches 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 blame-worthy 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 shop-keeper 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 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 shop-keeper 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 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 Firstborn" 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.

Our hearing and reception of this call does not 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 will also know us; and with joy and triumph we shall both meet Him in the way, and enter in with Him to the marriage.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

2. A Messenger of Satan

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12:1-9

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

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

Paul does not himself explain what this corrective was, unless, of course, we allow his simple statement to stand for what it is. There is no other direct reference in his letters to this thing, nor does any other writer of Apostolic days explain what it was. The Second century had dawned before the first reference—still extant—was made, by writers of the early Church, to Paul's afflicting thorn, and even then they do not explain what it was. Since those days (and more

particularly in the last two centuries), expositors have suggested almost every ailment to which the human mind and body is susceptible. Some of these expositors, citing Paul's angry flash before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23. 1-5) have sought to prove that Paul's thorn was an affliction of the mind—a domineering impatient asperity that could not brook opposition or diversity of understanding on any point—an attitude at once dictatorial and easily provoked to retaliation. Catholic commentators think the thorn was a real weakness of the flesh—a weakness open to suggestions of impurity and unchastity, and that Paul had to fight hard to maintain his celibate estate. Many others maintain that the evidences indicate a weakness of the eyes—some form of ocular affection which caused him intense discomfort and pain. From Paul's own words in Gal. 4. 14-15 an assumption is drawn that Paul's eyes were diseased and that the Galatian brethren had been so solicitous for his welfare and his ministry that they would willingly have given him (if they could) their own unaffected eyes. Again they point to Paul's later words (Gal. 6. 11) "... see with what large letters I have written unto you *with mine own hand*". They take the phrase to indicate that at this point Paul took up the pen from his secretary's hand, and wrote these few sentences in unusually large characters. The fact also that he had to have recourse to the help of some other secretarial hand in preparing his epistles is taken to indicate defective sight. It is assumed that blinding glare of the Heavenly Presence on the Damascus way so injured the cellular tissue of his eyes, that, though scales fell away therefrom after three days (Acts 9. 9 and 18) they had been injured beyond recovery. Be that as it may, it is also a fact that there was enough intensity of expression in those eyes to match the stern reproof admin-

istered to Elymas the sorcerer at a later date (Acts 13. 8-11). "*Paul fastened his eyes upon him and said . . .*" Here were words of rapier sharpness and to drive them home a "look" not less intense!

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

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

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

ience foreign to God's saints?

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

If we take the "messenger" as the reality, and the "thorn" as the metaphor, we can still find in the thorn enough evidence to show what it meant in suffering to Paul. Several versions call it a "thorn", others describe it as a "splinter", still others depict it as a "stake". The Greek word skolops is used as equivalent for them all—but the last usage betokens a far more grievous affliction than the other two. A thorn or splinter could be an irritant and a cause of considerable pain, but the impalement by the stake (as with criminals transfixed at the crossroads) is a more serious thing. When we consider Paul's avidity for suffering (Phil. 3. 10) we can scarcely think he would plead for the removal of a mere irritant—a thorn, or splinter in the flesh—but if it were a stake driven through his very flesh (as it were) transfixing him to the earth in a public place, that were indeed enough to pray about! It stood for Satanic effort to wound and injure, to confine and circumscribe, to expose and calumniate as a vile criminal unfit for human society. And to see this done an angel from the Satanic court was deputed to attend Paul, day and night, and hold him up to odium everywhere, and frustrate his activities by every means within the limits of the Divine permission.

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

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

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

Everywhere the stake must be given another turn, another thrust, another wrench to daunt, if that could be, by its excruciating pain, the little "chosen vessel" upon whom so great a portion of the fight for righteousness had come to rest. No wonder that he sought the presence of his Lord to ask for some relief, as, from place to place he went forward on his journeyings. Perils of nature were everywhere in those rude times. Wind and storm and flood opposed, and at times, like his beloved Lord, he had no place to lay his weary head. Perils of robber chiefs, infesting the lone mountain pass; perils of fickle countrymen who could change like an April day. Perils from his kinsmen in the flesh who would neither hear him nor forgive, and worst of all, perils from false brethren within the Church, who spat venom on his name. Leal-hearted friends were few, and the distance between them far; enemies were numerous, and were found at every turn. And everywhere, to take advantage of every circumstance, the messenger of Satan accompanied him to augment every hostile thought and word and act. Need we wonder then that the new situation as he stepped forward to

the front, took him somewhat unawares, and that at first he failed to understand the situation aright! Once, and twice, and thrice he asked the Lord to withdraw the permission accorded to the Satanic messenger. And thrice the Lord refused—refused with great tenderness and affection for His suffering friend. "Yes, I know Paul what it means, but remember My Grace is enough for all thy need."

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

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

(To be continued).

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

* * *

Why are we bidden seek that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? What worthy motive prompts us to seek after a heart in every thought renewed and full of love divine? Is it because holiness is necessary for service or for godly influence? No. The true reason for our holiness is given by God in His command to us, whether through Moses or Peter, "Be ye holy for I am holy"; and the first great reason why we should seek true holiness of heart and life is for fellowship with a holy God.

"TILL HE COME"

An Exhortation to
Self-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 we are my disciples, if we 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 resolve, that, casting aside all that makes for disunity and unbroth-

erliness, 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".

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 2—On the Watch Tower

Habakkuk's second message came to him after a time of waiting, a time spent on the "watch tower" in looking and listening for guidance and light. So it is with all who wish to know God's plans; it is necessary first that they come to a realisation of man's own folly and sin, that, to quote Paul in Romans 3. 12 "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" that men are held in the grip of evil powers and forces. But after there has been a time of quiet contemplation whilst this truth is sinking in there comes the assurance that things will not always be thus, that God is working to destroy the power of evil and that His judgments will certainly come upon the powers that have wrought evil. The theme of Habakkuk's second chapter is his realisation through his "watch tower" experience of the certainty of Divine retribution upon the evil forces of the world.

"I will stand upon my watch" he says, "and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved"—more properly "what I shall say concerning my plea". The first requirement of prophetic insight is watchfulness. Those words allude to the watchmen of Israel, stationed on the city walls to perceive in advance the onset of toward happenings, the approach of travellers, or the coming of dawn. "Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth" the Lord commanded Isaiah (Isa. 21. 6) and in obedience to that command the watchman looked and listened "diligently with much heed". It was in consequence of his watchfulness that he saw the evidences of the downfall of great Babylon, and—abruptly changing the picture—the merging of earth's long night of sin into the morning of Millennial day. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls. O Jerusalem" says the golden tongued prophet again (Isa. 62. 6) "which shall never hold their peace day nor

night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence . . . till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth". It was in the inspiration of these words that Habakkuk took up his stand in patient waiting on the Lord for the answer to his "plea", the suit that he had brought before God. And it is important to note that he watched, not so much to learn what God would say "unto" him, in the words of the A.V. of verse 1, but rather as in the margin, what God would say "in" him, that is, *through him to others*. It is the purpose of Divine revelation that it be passed on, and the prophet who by reason of patient watching has been entrusted with a knowledge of the Divine Plan is thereby obligated to make it known to those who need that knowledge. God will speak to men "in" him.

It was not a literal watch tower upon which Habakkuk took his stand. Like Daniel a little later, he was waiting upon God in prayer and supplication, perhaps in the silence of the desert, perhaps in the quietness of the Temple sanctuary, and because of his readiness to be the recipient of Divine revelation, God was able to use him. "And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry". (Hab. 2. 2-3).

This is the first indication that Habakkuk's prophecy reaches beyond his own people and time, and touches the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. The prophet is bidden to write down the vision for the benefit of later readers, for its fulfilment is not wholly in his own day but is also in the "appointed time", an expression with which we are familiar in Daniel as betokening the day of Divine intervention for the establishment of the Mes-

sianic Kingdom. The message certainly did have a direct application in the prophet's own day and was without doubt delivered orally to Israel at that time, but the writing down was equally evidently for the benefit of a future generation. "Now go" says the Lord to Isaiah (Isa. 30. 8) "write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, *that it may be for a latter day . . .*" In these few words of God to Habakkuk we have evidence that a substantial part at least of the subsequent message is intended to apply to the day when God rises up to overthrow evil, and this conviction is heightened by the expression, later in the second chapter, to the effect that the earth is to be filled with Divine glory just as the waters fill the sea. That will not be fulfilled until the Kingdom is established.

The phrase "*that he may run that readeth it*" has to do with the ease or rapidity with which the enquirer may read that which has been written. Rotherham has it "that one may swiftly read it" and Leeser "that everyone may read it fluently". The "tables" (*luach*) were clay tablets, used in Babylonia for writing material. The soft clay, inscribed, by means of a stylus, with characters known as "cuneiform" (arrow-shaped) was baked until hard, and was thereby rendered practically indestructible. It may not have been without design that Habakkuk was told to write on "*luach*", imperishable tablets, instead of "*sepher*", the usual Hebrew term for book; for "*sepher*" in Habakkuk's day referred to parchments written with ink, and perishable. No such parchments have survived to our day, whereas plenty of clay tablets have been recovered. Perhaps this is an indication that Habakkuk's message was, as it were, to be preserved in permanent form, for God had purposed that nearly three thousand years after he had uttered it, there would be readers waiting to "read it fluently".

In verse 3 the prophet is warned that there will be misunderstanding and disappointment over the apparent non-fulfilment of the prophecy. "*The vision is yet for an appointed time.*" The term is the same as that used in Daniel; "at the time appointed the end shall be" (Daniel 8. 19). Further occurrences in the Old Testament indicate that a definite, pre-ordained point of time is meant. Daniel was told several times that the full understanding of the vision could come only at the "time of the end", the time appointed for its fulfilment, and he was counselled to rest in patience for that day. This is the message to Habakkuk also: The two occurrences of "tarry" in verse

3 are two different Hebrew words, each having a distinct significance. The first means to linger or delay in coming, and the second to stay behind as though never to come. Thus the phrase is better rendered "*though it linger, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not fail to come*". To many in past days the vision has appeared to linger; the word comes to them as it did to those Israelites who complained in the days of Ezekiel that the days were prolonged and every vision had failed (Ezek. 12. 22-23) "thus saith the Lord God, the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision". So it is in these days when the Kingdom is imminent: for the message of the hour is "*though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come*".

The first clause of verse 4 "*His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him*" is rather obscure. It breaks the sense of the passage. There is a suggestion that it refers to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Babylonian invaders, contrasting him with Habakkuk, the just man who is living by his faith. The Septuagint gives a different thought altogether, one that is more in harmony with the context, and the fact that it is the Septuagint that is quoted by the writer to the Hebrews in Heb. 10. 37-38 gives this rendering an added authority. It runs "*though he tarry, wait for him, for he will surely come and will not tarry. If any man should draw back my soul has no pleasure in him; but the just shall live by faith in me. But the arrogant man and the scorner, the boastful man, shall not finish anything . . .*" etc. Here, surely is a picture of the man who, because the vision has apparently "tarried", draws back and "walks no more with him" (John 6. 66), and on account of that failure God no longer has "pleasure" in him. The just man, the one who does not lose faith, goes onward and into life because of that faith and in the strength of that faith. It is his faith in the unseen things that sustains him when there is nothing seen that can give confidence. This understanding of the text is the one adopted in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, a passage so stirring in its exhortation and so adaptable to this present time in which we live, a time when the vision has apparently tarried and yet is now about to be fulfilled, as to deserve quoting in full:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that

shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but to them that believe to the saving of the soul." (Heb. 10. 35-39).

Those words are redolent of supreme confidence, a confidence so well founded, so unshakeable that it stands in the New Testament as does the prophecy of Habakkuk in the Old, a beacon light shining to dispel the shades of doubt. The hope of the Messianic Age, when Messiah would reign as King over redeemed Israel and through them enlighten the nations, was the hope of every Israelite in the centuries between Habakkuk and Christ, and led many to be "in expectation" at the time of the First Advent. That hope was not fulfilled just as they expected. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" asked the disciples with rapidly fading hope as they realised that He was about to ascend to heaven and leave them (Acts 1. 6). The hope of the Millennial Age, when Christ would reign over all the earth, and through his glorified Church in the heavens as well as through restored and purified Israel on earth, not only enlighten but convert and reconcile to God "whosoever will" (Rev. 22. 17) of all nations was the hope of every member of the early Church from Apostolic times up to the close of the third century. But "hope deferred maketh the heart sick" (Prov. 13. 12) and when the failure of their chronological understanding in the fourth and fifth centuries revealed that the longed-for earthly Kingdom was not yet to be, there were many who did cast away their confidence. Although they had "done the will of God" they were not able to wait with patience for the fulfilment of the promise. So it was that the churches of that day began to listen ever more closely to men who belittled the glorious promise of an earthly restitution of all things, men who made light of the Divine calling of this Age to Christian discipleship in preparation for the administrative and missionary work of the next, and degrade the teaching of Jesus to an impassioned exhortation to "flee from the wrath to come". Their highest conception of Christian teaching was a call to escape the terrors of hell and achieve the blessings of heaven, a purely personal salvation.

To-day we have come back to the apostolic principles and we know that God is, in this Age, setting a premium upon faith. His pur-

pose stands firm, His promise is sure, and in His own due time this earth will be filled with His glory. It is our part as disciples to hold fast to that conviction and wait in quiet assurance that the tarrying One will surely come. And by that faith men shall live.

The Apostle Paul in the first chapter of Romans shows the intimate connection between faith and the revelation of God's righteousness, and quotes Habakkuk's words to support his argument. The revelation of that righteousness, he says, is "out of" faith, in consequence of faith, and it is "in order to" faith, it leads on to further faith (Rom. 1. 17) as it is written "the just shall live by faith". The epistle to the Romans is a progressive enlargement of this dominant theme; **THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH!** Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4. 3) and so are we, *if we believe* (4. 24). By this avenue we come to a condition of freedom from condemnation and acceptance with God (5. 2) leading on by full surrender to Christ, to baptism into His death and a rising to walk with Him in newness of life (chap. 6). So the fleshly mind passes away and the spiritual mind takes control and we are joined forever to the company of Christ's brethren (chap. 8). From that position Paul goes on to show that Israel after the flesh must also tread the same path, leading to full acceptance with God, and in their turn live, by faith (chap. 9 to 11). So comes that great crisis in the outworking of God's Plan when "all Israel" has been saved through faith, and is ready to embark upon its pre-destined mission of enlightening the nations, who in their turn, during the Millennial Age, are also to be saved through faith. And it is precisely that climax in the affairs of Israel to which Habakkuk's prophecy also points. Where Paul perceived the culmination by means of theological reasoning, his predecessor saw it in prophetic vision.

Now even at this point Habakkuk was not quite ready to have the vision of the future revealed to him. God must now acquaint his mind with the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil. What a man soweth, that shall he reap. Consequently the remainder of chapter 2 is taken up by a "song of taunting", to use the Hebrew expression, in which the sin of Babylon and the corresponding retribution is set out in five-fold form. That is the theme of our next instalment; and after that comes the great prophecy of the Last Days.

London Convention 1957 (conclusion)

Sunday afternoon of August Bank Holiday week-end marked the half-way point of the convention. Bro. H. Chrimes (Altrincham) was to have addressed the convention at this session but was prevented at the last minute from attendance. His place was taken at short notice by Bro. A. L. Muir (Florida, U.S.A.) who began to describe the incident at Bethany when Jesus raised Lazarus from death. Jesus, preaching in Perea, received a note sent by Martha but written by Mary. There was no request for the Lord to "come quickly" nor even "that he who loves you is sick" but "he whom thou lovest is sick". The Lord prepared to return to Judea but the disciples were concerned for his welfare; they wanted him to adopt a moderate course of action which would not involve conflict with the authorities. We catch a lovely glimpse of "doubting Thomas" who encouraged his fellows to accompany Jesus even if it meant death. The agitated Martha went out to meet the Lord and almost rebuked Him for not being present in time to save her brother's life. We are like that, we think and pray in such a way as to demand God to do our will instead of accepting His. Mary had sat patiently waiting but on the instant of the Master's call readily went to greet Him. The Jews, typical of unregenerate men, also questioned why Jesus had not healed Lazarus. Jesus then gave thanks not merely for what God had already given Him, but in faith expressed his gratitude for that which was yet to be granted. We were reminded that God answers not the prayers of our heads but the sentiments of our hearts. We went on for a peep into the same family circle when Mary poured the costly ointment over the Lord's feet. Emphasis was placed upon the loveliness of Mary's action and the shadow of Judas' remark. John commented on the disguised thoughts of Judas in his expressions for the poor. How often do we disguise our thoughts? It is by sharing our fellowship with Jesus that we become like Him, and then He is our burden bearer. We are brought closer by experiences with Him, and like those who walked the Emmaus road with the Lord, we shall recognise the bread of truth when He breaks it in the old familiar manner.

During this session the children attended a service in another part of the building. Here, in seclusion they were able to worship God and learn from His Word in a manner best

suited to their tender years.

After tea we enjoyed a very pleasing "Prelude of Song and Praise" by the choir. The Sunday evening address was given by Brother P. L. Read (St. Louis, U.S.A.) in which he spoke of the Church's double mission. The first aspect of the Christian life is summed up in those words of Peter "*But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" The second is the work of the Lord's followers to be Light-bearers. We are to bear witness to the reason for our hope. These two phases could be likened to the nervous and arterial systems within the human body. They function properly in a living person. When either fails the person dies. The question was then posed "Have the last members of the Church a different mission?" and it was shown that "sowing" and "reaping" are two parts of the same mission. The need of tolerance when different outlooks clash on these matters was stressed, the speaker endeavouring to show that such tolerance did not imply any lack of personal conviction as to the importance of things regarded as fundamentals. The right of individual judgement before the Lord was upheld as a right principle and due acknowledgment of the position of Christians in other fellowships was made. The speaker then submitted a sequence outline of events to transpire during Christ's Kingdom on earth, commencing with the Second Presence of Christ and "Jacob's Trouble"; the binding of Satan and the Millennial reign; death destroyed and God's eternal Kingdom established. This resume of basic prophetic and dispensational principles occupied the remainder of the time and was concluded by an exhortation to lay up treasure in Heaven, for if our treasure is there, so will our hearts be also.

On Monday morning Bro. Muir took his scheduled place on the platform, his topic being "*The calculated risks of prayer*". Taking Luke 11 as his text and quoting the model prayer, its simplicity was underlined. God did not expect us to tell Him all about His Plan in our prayers nor were our public prayers the place for a sermon on the Divine purpose. Mountains are not moved by the half-hearted occasional prayers, but as Jesus showed by parables, importunity in prayer is necessary. Using the illustration of the Prodigal Son our thoughts turned to the "Ignor-

ance of asking". The lad had requested his father "give me my portion". That is how we demand things of God. When the prodigal repented and returned he said, "make me as one of thy hired servants" and so had learned a lesson in humility that we should note. The "unwise use of prayer" was then considered with reference to Numbers 22 and 23, the story of Balaam and Balak. Like Balaam we are tempted away from God's will by worldly goods, and like Balaam also we try to talk ourselves away from God's "no". No matter how the prophet looked at things he saw a great nation arising out of Israel. When Jacob approached Esau on his return to Canaan he prayed to God for deliverance from his brother whom he feared, but still did not trust sufficiently to go forward boldly. Instead of gaining strength from God's peace and blessing he showed his weakness in the use of strategy. Human reasonings and arguments in favour of self will lead us away from a simple faith in God. By praying for guidance, by obeying His voice, He will fit us for our place in the New Creation.

The convention began to draw to a close. Brethren who had long journeys in front of them began to say their farewells. Nevertheless for those able to remain there was a choice portion left. Bro. H. L. E. Panteny (*Forest Gate*) addressed us on the "Highlights of Philipians" in which he went through the epistle, selecting a verse here and there, and drawing helpful lessons. The first was chap. 1. vs. 5 in which Paul writes of fellowship in prayer. In the early days of the

Gospel channels of life were cut by prayer as the apostles went first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles in Asia, on into Europe and unto all the then known world. The speaker reminded us of the value of fellowship and warned us that it was possible to mar it for ourselves and others. In verse 21 Paul spoke of his preference for dying and being with Christ. He had reached that height of spirituality when he could say whichever was God's will and best for his brethren he would gladly do. The next high-light was chap. 2. vss. 5-16. The mind that was in Christ Jesus was self-emptying and humble. In working out our salvation we should come in humility of spirit, working out in our lives what God works in us, without murmuring. At the end of chap. 2, Paul commends Epaphroditus, who has risked his life to come to him for the sake of the work of Christ. In chap. 3 Paul writes of his renunciation of worldly advantage for the knowledge of Jesus Christ. How do we value this knowledge? Are we prepared to sacrifice all. to gain it? Rejoice then, he writes in chap. 4, and think on worthy things. Be willing to suffer all things, for God will supply the needs of His people according to His riches in glory.

The final item on the programme was the singing together of "God be with you till we meet again", a hymn that is sung with joy and sorrow interwoven, joy in the fellowship we have just been having, sorrow at the inevitable parting, joy again at the anticipation of the next occasion for fellowship, perhaps "at Jesus' feet".

? The Question Box ?

Q. What was the "angels' food" of *Psa. 78. 25* "Man did eat angels food; he sent them bread to the full"?

A. An expression descriptive of the manna which sustained Israel in the wilderness during the Exodus. The word rendered "angel" ---abbir---is nowhere else so translated. It has the meaning of strong, valiant, mighty. The expression is poetic "man did eat the food of the mighty" alluding to the fact that they went forty years in the strength of the manna and emerged conquerors of the Promised Land.

* * *

Q. Please explain *2. Pet. 1. 20* "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation".

A. The Scriptures tell us that God has "set" various helpers in the Body—pastors,

teachers, elders, and so on. It is only from the Divine Word that such helpers can fulfil their privilege of instructing the "saints". The verse should be read as a whole: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". The word "private" in the Greek means "of one's own self" and "interpretation" is "unloosing"; from this it can be seen what is the thought behind the verse. The prophecies of Scripture were not revealed and interpreted by the prophet's own mental powers; but what they said and explained was by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In exactly the same way it is not possible for us in our day to explain and interpret the prophecies of Scripture by the ordinary processes of natural reasoning; we can understand and interpret them only by the

power of the same Spirit by which they were given. We should take for our guides and teachers in these things, therefore, those of our brethren who give evidence of the Holy

Spirit's indwelling in their hearts and lives and who can speak to us, not *"in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth"* (I Cor. 2. 13).

KINGDOM GLORIES

A look to
the future

At the close of the Millennium righteousness prevails; John saw *"a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away"*. Though we say these things, the finite mind can hardly grasp what it means to have an earth peopled only by righteous persons; at the same time we recognise that only in this way can there be true peace on earth. A new earth conjures visions of the present earth being destroyed and a new one being created on which a new race of human beings will be raised. The planet Earth will be the same, else we would have to say God had made a mistake and created the Earth in vain, and Scripture does not admit that. (Eccl. 1. 4, Isa. 45. 8, 55. 11). Yet everything upon the earth will be new.

Though our imagination fails to conceive such wonderful things, there are Scriptures to aid in this matter. Just as there are seven sublime features in I Cor. 13 shewing what love is not (the negatives), so there are seven such negatives in this marvellous Kingdom. Also, as there are seven features shewing what love is, in that chapter, so there are seven positives in the Kingdom.

As to conditions when the Kingdom is delivered to the Father, (I. Cor 15. 24), we have said, "we don't know"; we realise that we can have no conception of what it will be like. In this we confess a spiritual application. These seven will be seen to indicate that, as our examination proceeds. The negatives appear to be (1) No Temple; (2) No Light; (3) No Lamp; (4) No Night; (5) No Shut Gates; (6) No unclean Thought; (7) No Curse. The positives are (1) River of Life; (2) Tree of Life; (3) Throne of God; (4) Servants of God; (5) They see His Face; (6) His Name in their Foreheads; (7) They shall reign forever.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." (Rev. 21. 22). In this we realise that the service of Ezekiel's Temple is ended, which illuminates Ezekiel 48. 35; the name changes from *"New Jerusalem"* to *"The Lord is There"*. Thus, if all are together, speaking peace, the secrets of the heart are manifest, each confessing to the other that *"God is in you of a truth."* Then will Spirit and Truth

really be one, as our Lord said *"Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews, But the hour cometh, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."* (John. 4. 21-23).

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21. 23). The shining of this great light, the Lamb, means that everyone knows that the Light of the World is Jesus. Every individual person is enlightened. However we symbolise sun and moon, such light as these represent is no longer required. This assurance makes vivid the scripture which reads *"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they all shall know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them."* We now have the radio and television to add to many other aids for disseminating knowledge, but none of these, speaking in strange tongues and teaching many beliefs, will *"put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts."* Of none of these can it be said that the *"Knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea."* So we conclude that this wonderful cloud "coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride" which is called *"the holy city, new Jerusalem,"* the cloud in which God dwells; a cloud that is described as a *"tabernacle of God"* does a most marvellous work; every man, woman and child realises that the *"Lamb is the light thereof."* There is one language only, and, now that God's law is in their hearts, it is spontaneous, the language of Love. The beauty lies in realising that the work is akin to that of the saints *"But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him"*. (Jer. 31.34; Heb. 8. 10; Isa. 11. 9; Rev. 21. 2-3;

I John 2. 27).

"And there shall be . . . no candle." (Rev. 22. 5); more properly "Lamp". Who on retiring forgets to take his candle for the night? Who would be without his switch by the bedside? This fear of the night passes away for evermore, now, because there is no need for man-made lights. If the Lamb is the light, there will then be no need for us to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life," neither will it be necessary to be reminded that "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and so glorify your Father which is in heaven." Such reminders are not necessary when all are speaking peace and the secrets of the heart are manifest; when all are worshipping and acknowledging the Lamb as the Light. It is no marvel, then, that we now read "And there shall be no night there." No fear, no superstition and no ignorance "for the Lord God giveth them light." Perpetual light! Let us never forget that "*I form the light, and create darkness . . . I the Lord do all these things.*" If we are to marvel that the Lord created darkness, there should be no need to marvel at the passing of darkness in his due time. No wonder the "nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." (Phil. 2. 15, 16; Matt. 5. 14, 16; Isa. 45. 7; Rev. 21. 24).

We learn that the day will always be called "Day". In harmony with this we read "*and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.*" Nowadays people leave the radio working and the electric lights burning but their doors and windows are locked. All those doors are going to be open and all people will be safe. The cities used to close their gates; not so then. During the Gospel Age, it was necessary to come to the Father through an Advocate, or an Intercessor, and in the Jewish Age through the High Priest (I John 2. 1; Lev. 16. 11, 15, 24) but now these gates are open because all is righteous and the glory of God (the Lamb) lightens all. Such a vast change compared with the story in Exodus 33. 12-23, needs to be told again and again for us to realise the wonder and the joy.

There is a story in the New Testament which helps us realise the next point. "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old*

time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Our next negative is "*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.*" No unclean thought! Literally: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." If the force of evil is a principle, it is now controlled. If constant ebb and flow, heat and cold, light and darkness, good and evil be principles of life, here is a change, illimitable in its grandeur, superlative beyond degree, measuring a far grander wonder than that awesome "I, the Lord do all these things" of Isa. 45. 7. The New Creation, drawn from the world of mankind as we know it at present, is created by the Holy Spirit. Every thinking Christian is inspired in worshipping our Heavenly Father for this marvellous work through Jesus Christ our Lord: worshipping always in wonder, love and praise. As we try closely to examine these pictures of Revelation 21 and 22, a panoramic vision of new and still more glorious works of creation opens before our eyes and this theme of precious eternal light and eternal righteousness is past our human conception, except that we can cry, with heartfelt sighs, about the last of our seven negatives "*And there shall be no more curse!*" No evil angels to tempt, no sorrow in conception, no thorns and no thistles. Weeping has endured for that night, but now the eternal morning of Joy is with us.

Now for the positives. The River of Life proceeds out of the throne of God, and gives life to the entire world. That tells us that as the River proceeds from the Heavenly Throne it is symbolic. Notice how our Lord suggests an interpretation (John 7. 38, 39). "*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.*" The Spirit, in this glorious day of the Kingdom, proceeds out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb, and is verily a river of water of life giving life to all. We are transferred to Spiritual Realms in describing the mighty possessions of each one who has come through the testings of the Millennium, and it is good to feel the security of those possessions. During the Gospel Age they were "exceeding great and precious promises", something to

which our faith could cling, a faith most precious that needed the additions of virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. But now the era of promises has ended, and timeless possession is the lot of all and sundry. Such is the Spirit now described as the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb".

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, the tree of life." What would the tree symbolise? It depends upon the river, is sustained, indeed, by the river. So the Spirit is maintaining a tree that bears twelve fruits, yielding her fruit every month, and whose leaves heal the nations! Assuming the river to be symbolic, dare we change our thought and say the tree is literal? It would appear not, but help is given elsewhere. Jeremiah says, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Here the tree is the "man that trusteth". The Psalmist says "Blessed is the man . . . like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither." So Isaiah "To appoint unto them in Zion . . . that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

The jewel picture (Rev. 21, 19-21) states this new City has twelve foundations, the Apostles. The servants of the Lamb heal the nations, as leaves (vs. 2). Is it possible that the picture now disclosed means that the Spirit has, produced the supreme perfection, a Tree of Life yielding twelve fruits, those foundations that as the glorified servants, heal all the nations? It is felt that verses 3 to 5 can only be understood as describing the world's spiritual blessings at the time when the glorious canopy of Heaven covers the Millennial earth. With this understanding we can enter fully into Ezekiel's description of the river (chap. 47) knowing the greatness of the power that controls that river and the healing trees.

When considering there were "no shut gates", it was stated that there was open access to God. The Throne of God is in the glorified Kingdom. Our blessed assurance to-day is "Jesus is Mine". In that day the positive assurance is the "Throne of God", open always, and assuring that there will be

no more curse. Only those who know the sanctifying influence of prayer can fully realise what a blessing that will be. One thing is certain, the thanksgiving and praises then will be the most "sweet smelling savour" of all time. Similarly it is good to realise that there will be "great voices in heaven, saying, The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever".

Jesus did not call his disciples "Servants" in his final address (John 15, 15) but "friends". We also learn that our Lord Jesus is "Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end". He counts those same friends as sons. Speaking of themselves, however, these sons call themselves servants: "if I yet please men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1, 10); "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ". (Jude 1). This fourth great blessing in the Kingdom, is, fittingly, what they would call themselves, "servants". It almost appears as if our Heavenly Father would use their own description, as we read "and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads". These servants "serve" and bless all mankind, under the Divine influence; they see his face and have His Name in their foreheads.

When the first Temple was dedicated, one hundred and twenty priests sounded with trumpets. The greatest orchestras we know do not contain so many trumpets, but that congregation included "the Levites, the singers all of them, with their sons and their brethren, arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps", all sounding "as one" to make "one sound" in praising and thanking God. And when "they lifted up voice, with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the Lord saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever" it came to pass "that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chron. 5).

If with the golden Temple of Solomon there was such an awe inspiring result, what will there be with the completion of this marvellous Temple work of our Lord? Will all mankind sing? Yea, verily, and their most positive saying will be, not "For his mercy endureth for ever", but "They shall reign for ever and ever".



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 3

APRIL/MAY, 1958

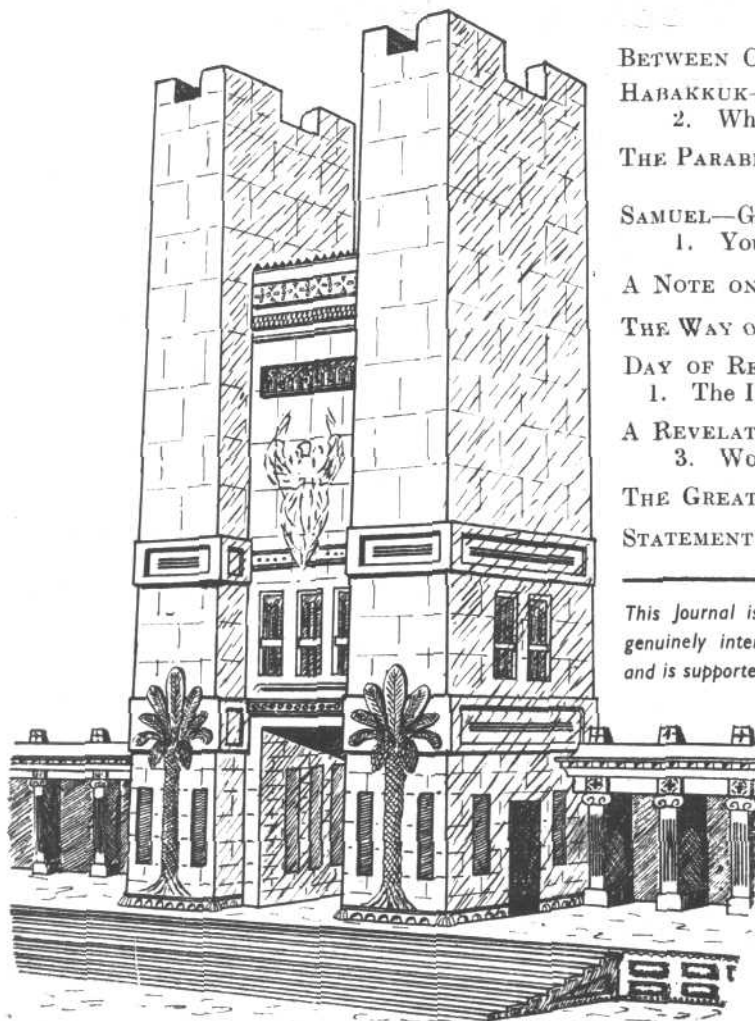
Published April 15th

Next issue June 1st

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



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

Published by

Bible Fellowship Union

11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowship and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Convention sponsored by several Bible students groups in London is being arranged for the August Bank Holiday season, August 2, 3 and 4, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, and a warm welcome is extended to all who would like to attend. Further details and programmes (when ready) can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Mr. H. Charlton, 9 Fox Road, Langley, Slough, Bucks. Accommodation for provincial visitors for the Saturday and Sunday nights can be arranged at nearby hotels and application for this should be made early to the accommodation secretary, Mr. H. Chapman, The Small House, Stoke Close, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey, giving details of requirements.

* * *

A number of our readers are associated with Bible study groups using the "Bible Students Hymnal" which has been out of print for a number of years. We are asked to announce to all such, and to others who may be interested, that the "words only" edition of this book is to be reprinted with a number of additional hymns, making some 500 hymns in all. The Bible Students Hymnal Trust, which is responsible for this new publication, wishes it to be known that the new edition has been made possible by reason of a very generous gift from overseas, a gift which has been received with very sincere appreciation. The new book, bound in blue cloth similar to the old one, will be available in the early autumn at a price of 2/6 each post free. Orders may be sent to Mr. S. A. Couling, 15 Ashlawn Road, Rugby, and the books will be despatched as soon as ready.

* * *

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A neat little 14 page booklet "Has Judgment Day begun" by P. L. Read, is issued by the Pastoral Bible Institute, 177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38, N.Y., U.S.A. and can be obtained from them free of charge upon request. We have before mentioned these little booklets and for the convenience of all interested now give the full list at present available. Any of these will be sent by the Institute on request, without charge. Please write to Brooklyn for same, and not to Lyncroft Gardens.

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The ABC of Bible Prophecy
After Death the Judgment
Parables of the Kingdom
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Is Israel emerging from Hell?
Has Judgment Day begun?

Gone from us

Bro. J. Holt (Stockport)

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

"On the cross Jesus showed that there was another method for a king with ten thousand to meet him that cometh with twenty thousand; he could meet him with none."

(Rev. Paul Gliddon)

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 3—What A Man Soweth

Habakkuk had now been brought to realisation of the fundamental causes underlying human distress, man's own sinful, fallen condition, and of the way of escape therefrom, repentance and justification through faith. The details of the process of reconciliation could not yet be revealed; that had to wait for the advent of Jesus, but sufficient was given the prophet to show him that God had devised a way, that the oppression and injustice from which his soul revolted would not endure for ever. Now God had something else to show him, the inflexibility of Divine judgment upon evil; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. That law is as true in the case of nations as in individuals, a lesson that needs to be brought home to-day and indeed is being brought home to those who have regard to the significance of current events. And in order to impress this lesson with all the sharpness it required, the Holy Spirit cast it in the mould of a "taunt-song", a form of poetic composition in which the Hebrews excelled. One of the earliest "taunt-songs" is that of Miriam the sister of Moses, composed to rejoice over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exod. 15). This one in Habakkuk is directed primarily against the Babylonians, exulting over their coming fall, in veiled language touching upon the great moments in their history when their arrogance and opposition to God's holiness was thrown up in sharp relief, dwelling upon the "poetic justice" of the retribution that was surely coming upon them at the hands of the Persians. But the taunt-song has a wider scope of application than that, for its principles also fit the greater world system which, built on the same basis as Babylon of old, has by reason of its greater magnitude and extent infinitely excelled the empire of Nebuchadnezzar in the weight of its oppression and the cruelty of its yoke. And that greater system also must fall with the weight of its own corruption, perishing in the fires of retribution which follow inevitably upon the filling up the full measure of its evil course, to be succeeded by the glorious Kingdom of Christ in which the hands of the oppressor will be felt no more. The terms of this taunt-song, framed at first to fit the Babylon of Habakkuk's day, can be suited very easily to this present world order in which we live.

"Shall not all these take up a parable against him (Babylon) and a taunting proverb against him, and say 'WOE to him that increaseth that which is not his! how long? and that ladeth himself with pledges.'" (vs. 6). This is the first of the five "woes" of the song, each describing one outstanding sin of Babylon. Here it is the sin of usury, consistently condemned in the Scriptures. Much of the distress of our modern world is due to the place of usury in its financial system, and the opportunity thus given the unscrupulous to exploit the needy and defenceless. In the case of Babylon the prevalence and practice of usury is known to go right back to the beginning of the city's existence, prior to the time of Abraham. In Habakkuk's day Babylon was the centre and controlling power of the world's commerce and trade. But, *"shall they not rise up suddenly that smite thee"*, cries Habakkuk, *"and thou shalt be for booties unto them?"* (vs. 7). The Persians were destined to destroy Babylon's usurious practices, and Babylon, that had preyed for so long on others, would in turn become the prey of others. *"Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee"* (vs. 8). Babylon steadily declined in commercial importance after its capture by Cyrus, its trade being transferred in later days to the new city of Seleucia on the Tigris, and it never recovered its place among the nations.

The second "woe" may very well contain a veiled allusion to Babylon's first great crime against God, the building of the great Tower from which God might be defied (Gen. 11). *"WOE to him that gaineth an evil (dishonest) gain to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the hand of evil"* (calamity—Moffat). The word for "nest" denotes an eagle's or other bird's nest set high up in the crags of the rocks, and also any kind of sanctuary or abiding place built on high. Speaking to Edom, God says *"though thou exalt thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down"* (Obad. 4) and to Bozrah *"though thou shouldst make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence"* (Jer. 49. 16). Those godless men of early times set out to build a tower whose top should scale the heavens; they would challenge God in His own realm. Men are

doing that to-day, and the fate of their work will be as catastrophic as was that of their predecessors. In Daniel's time, the tower, still standing, enlarged and beautified by almost every successive king since its erection, was crowned with a golden sanctuary dedicated to the Babylonian god Bel, the god to whom was devoted the treasure looted by Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple (see Dan. 1. 2). The literal Bel has been destroyed as was prophesied of him (Jer. 51. 44, Isa. 46. 1); and his modern counterpart is fast meeting the same fate.

"*WOE to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity*" (vs. 12). That is an apt description of the building of great Babylon, one of the mightiest cities the world has ever seen, largely in the blood and tears of the helpless captives taken from other lands, its gigantic walls, magnificent palaces and stately temples monuments of oppression and iniquity. WOE to it all, cries Habakkuk, for it will all come to naught. "*Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour for (Heb.) the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for nothing? for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea*" (vs. 13-14). In other words, man has erected this great edifice of evil on the misery and sorrow of his fellows; and when it is completed the Lord will sweep it away as by fire and the labour will have been for nothing, for it is the Divine intention to fill the earth with Divine glory, a glory which will brook neither sorrow nor sighing, neither unhappiness nor pain, but demands that the former things shall pass away (Rev. 21. 4). So "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, without an inhabitant" (Jer. 51. 37). To-day, the Baghdad-Basra railway crosses a wind swept waste of broken brickwork and heaps of rubble, inhabited only by jackals and scorpions, all that is left of proud Babylon. That is a fitting picture of the end of this world. The rule of unrighteousness will perish, and the evil that man has created be swept away, as God arises to "turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph. 3. 8-9). In the midst of the darkness and gloom of these five woes, with their dark recapitulation of human sin this fourteenth verse shines like a beam of light piercing the storm clouds. It is an assertion of the inflexible Divine purpose that cannot be frustrated. The earth shall be filled

with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—a universal, world-wide knowledge of the glorious gospel of Christ, the ultimate fruit of the work of the Millennial Age.

"*WOE unto him that giveth his neighbour drink . . . and maketh him drunken also*" (vs. 15). It was literal intemperance and drunkenness that marked and contributed to the final capture of Babylon by the forces of Cyrus. The carousal at Belshazzar's feast, when the aged Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall as spelling the doom of Babylon, is well known. When the Persians laid siege to the city they effected an easy entrance because the whole city had been given over to feasting and debauchery. In a metaphorical sense Babylon had made all the nations drunken by seducing them into the worship of her own system of brute force, in much the same way that present-day materialism is seducing the people more and more away from true religious faith and belief. Both then and to-day the prophet's words are true: "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad (Jer. 51. 7). It was during their captivity in Babylon that the Jews, before that time mainly a pastoral people, learned the arts of trade and acquired the financial acumen for which they have since become famous—or notorious. They too have been intoxicated by the influence of Babylon. To-day all the nations partake of the same "mixed wine" and in their intoxicated condition cannot see, even after the earth-shaking war from which they have but recently emerged, that this vast edifice of greed and gain has come at last to the point where the judgment of this woe will be executed, and that without remedy.

"*For the violence done to Lebanon shall return upon thee and the slaughter of beasts shall terrify thee.*" (vs. 17). This is the literal meaning of the verse. The cedars of Lebanon, so ruthlessly cut down by the invaders (see Isa. 14. 4-8) are poetically used as a symbol of God's people; there will be a dual judgment upon great Babylon, retribution for the violence done to the saints of God (Rev. 16. 6) and a great destruction of earthly evil powers, the "wild beasts" of the earth, which, in their fall, will involve in ruin the entire evil system which is symbolically termed "Babylon the Great" (Rev. 17. 16).

The final woe is a sentence upon idolatry. Babylon, by means of her power and ruthlessness, first intoxicated the nations and then led

them into idolatry, the worship of the created thing rather than the Creator. "*What profiteth the graven image . . . the molten image . . . dumb idols?*" cries Habakkuk. "*WOE unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach. Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it*" (vs. 18-19). There is a modern counterpart to all this. Men to-day have set up science as a god, a god of their own creating, a god to which they devote all their powers and wealth, laying it over with silver and gold, and saying to it, "Arise—it shall teach!" And the prophet scornfully regards their handiwork and says "there is no breath at all in the midst of it". Though all people in the world bow down before the image they have made and cry to it for deliverance from their distresses, there will be no answer. "They bear him upon the shoulder" says Isaiah "they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth . . . one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" (Isa. 46. 7). So it was with Babylon, and so will it be at the end of this Age. Men will plan and put into execution all their schemes and devices for bringing peace and prosperity to the earth without God and without righteousness, and all their endeavours will fail, because there is no breath at all in the midst of them. There can be no peace without righteousness, no righteousness without morality, no morality without Divine law—despite all that the "moderns" say to the contrary—and no Divine law without the Holy Spirit. the "breath" which is of God to inspire and vivify. It is when all these plans have utterly failed to

bring about any deliverance in the earth that God's time will come, and He will intervene in His own way to establish lasting peace amongst men.

And so Habakkuk, comforted and reassured by this revelation of Divine judgment impending over the oppressors of his people, looked up into the heavens and saw the beginnings of a new and marvellous revelation. The darkness was rapidly giving place to an effulgent golden glory. Like Elihu in the days of Job, suddenly perceiving in the heavens a light that he had never seen before (Job. 37. 21-22), and Isaiah, waiting to be used of God, beholding the wondrous vision of the throne (Isa. 6. 1), so now Habakkuk, realising at last that evil shall not always flourish but that the time of the dispensation of evil is known to, and fixed by, the Almighty, looked up into the skies and saw the temple of God open in heaven, and the Lord seated upon His throne with His attendant angels around Him; and in the glory of that vision cried out in exultation "*The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him*".

And in his fervour of soul he bowed himself before that great sight and waited in silent reverence for the vision of the End Time that God, by His Spirit, was about to show him.

* * *

Sin—justification—retribution. These three great truths had to be seen in their true relationship to each other before the necessity and nature of the Time of Trouble could be rightly understood. Now comes the great prophecy which shows God arising to perform His "strange work".

THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND GOATS

The opening verse of this parable indicates the time of its application. It refers to the period of Christ's reign over the earth, from His assumption of power at the commencement of the Millennium to the cleansing of the world from the last trace of evil. "*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats*" (Matt. 25. 31-32). Jesus cast this parable against the background of Daniel's vision (Dan. 7. 9-10) in which that prophet saw the "Ancient of

Days" seated upon a throne of splendour with myriads assembled before Him for judgment, one "like the Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven to be brought before Him, and the kingship of earth being formally committed to that Son of Man and his companions, the "people of the saints of the Most High" that they might possess the kingdom for ever. Meanwhile the evil powers and institutions of the old world were being destroyed in a great holocaust of fire. Jesus knew himself to be that "Son of Man" and his disciples and those that should afterwards believe on His Name to be the "people of the

saints of the Most High" that were to be joined with Him in that Kingdom, and in this parable He set down the purpose and the character of his kingship over the nations during the Age of his glory.

The disciples must have understood this parable more clearly than any other parable. They were so accustomed to this view of the Messianic reign. How often in the Temple services would they join with intense feeling in the inspiring strains of the twenty-fourth Psalm *"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty . . ."* and so on. How they must have conned over the mystic vision of Zechariah *"Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH . . . he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne"* (Zech. 6. 12-13). Jewish literature of the date of the First Advent is full of such references, and Jesus himself must have been thoroughly familiar with them. It is thought that the very phraseology of this parable was suggested to his mind by passages in the Book of Enoch, a book with which He would certainly be well acquainted: *"On that day mine Elect One shall sit on the throne of glory and shall try their works . . . and I will transform the earth and make it a blessing . . . for I have provided and satisfied with peace my righteous ones, and have caused them to dwell before me: but for the sinners there is judgment impending with me, so that I shall destroy them from the face of the earth".* *"And the Lord of Spirits seated him upon the throne of his glory, and the spirit of righteousness was poured out upon him, and the word of his mouth slays all the sinners . . . and they shall be downcast of countenance, and pain shall seize them, when they see the Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory"* (I Enoch 45. 3-6 and 62. 2-5). Another passage in the same work, quoted by Jude, runs *"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. 9; compare Jude 14-15). Here is a reference that parallels the various sayings of Jesus regarding the "angels" or messengers that will be with him at his coming, the members of his Church, raised from the sleep of death, or

changed "in the twinkling of an eye" as the case may be, united with him and revealed with him to the world in glory.

The vision of the Great White Throne of Revelation 20. 11 is parallel to that of Daniel 7 and to this parable. In Revelation there is the same standing of the nations, the "dead, small and great", before the Throne, the same judgment and separation between good and evil, and the same condemnation of sin and sinners. These three passages between them afford a wonderfully vivid picture of the work of judgment that is carried on throughout the Millennial Age, a work that divides and separates men into two classes, those who choose righteousness and life, and those who choose unrighteousness and death.

The basis of the selection, feeding or not feeding the hungry, clothing or failing to clothe the naked, and so on, is an allusion to the very practical ideas held by thinking men in Jesus' day as to what constituted fitness or unfitness for eternal life. Such "good works" have always been features of the religious life of true Jews. There is a parallel to the Lord's words in the "Secrets of Enoch" (not to be confused with the Book of Enoch just now mentioned, and usually known as 2 Enoch to distinguish it from that book), a work which was known to pious Jews during His lifetime, or at any rate shortly thereafter. The book itself is of no particular value to Christians; it presents the truths of religion as they appeared to orthodox Jews of the First Century and was to them what many theological works are to us to-day; and was strongly coloured with Greek and Oriental philosophies. But the passage in question is interesting: it describes Enoch's visit to Paradise, in the third heaven (compare Paul's use of this term when writing to the Corinthians) and his guides say to him *"This place, O Enoch, is prepared for the righteous who endure every kind of attack in their lives from those who afflict their souls: who turn away their eyes from unrighteousness, and accomplish a righteous judgment, and also give bread to the hungry, and clothe the naked, and raise the fallen, and assist the orphans who are oppressed, and who walk without blame before the face of the Lord, and serve him only. For them this place is prepared as an eternal inheritance"*. The likeness of these words to the parable is obvious. The following reference to the sinners is also highly significant. They are said to be *cast into hell in the third heaven*. That is a fitting description of that death which comes to

sinners in or at the end of the Millennial Age, the third heaven of which Paul spoke. "And I (Enoch) said, Woe, woe, how terrible is this place! And the men said to me: This place, Enoch, is prepared for those who do not honour God: who commit evil deeds on earth . . . *oppressing the poor and spoiling them of their possessions . . . who when they might feed the hungry, allow them to die of famine: who when they might clothe them, strip them naked . . .* (2 Enoch 9 and 10). If in fact Jesus was familiar with the book and did take these passages as the basis of his parable it is easy to see how readily his hearers would grasp his meaning, and connect the "sheep" and "goats" who "did" or "did it not" with the final judgment upon righteous and evil men. At any rate the similarity of thought shows that the sentiment portrayed was one that was quite familiar to Jewish ears.

In the parable the "sheep" are those who manifest the practical Christian virtues toward their fellows—feeding the hungry and thirsty, sheltering the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and delivering those in bondage. It has been pointed out that of the seven obligations laid upon the Christian in the New Testament only one—visiting the fatherless—is omitted in this parable. The reason is not hard to discern—there will be no fatherless in the Millennium! All will have been restored to conscious life by the Redeemer, Jesus, and all may thenceforth become sons of God by reconciliation to him. But there will be many hungry, naked and in prison, at first. Men, returning from the grave, will have the same characters and dispositions that were theirs at death, and the result will be that, although physically whole, many will still be mentally and morally sick, in prison by reason of bondage to their past vices and depravity, naked as respects fitness for the new world into which they have come, and whether they realise the fact or not, hungry and thirsty for the blessings of life and knowledge that the Kingdom is designed to give them. There is a link here with the Parable of the Good Samaritan; it will be remembered that Jesus gave that parable in answer to a question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and the Samaritan who undertook the care and healing of the distressed wayfarer was the one shown to be worthy of such. So it will be in the Millennial Age; the man who is making progress toward perfection and harmony with God will be actively employed in helping and assisting his fellows in every conceivable way; the

selfish and the sinner will be indifferent to such service and Jesus in the parable points to this as a touchstone by which the true state of the heart can be indicated.

The question put both by sheep and goats "*When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst . . .*" and so on, is a rhetorical one, put into the mouths of the characters in order to throw into prominence the essential principle of these "good works"; inasmuch as ye did it—or did it not—unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it—or did it not—unto me. Our Lord's concern for those He came to seek and to save is such that every service or disservice rendered to them He feels as if rendered to Him. More; since He gave his own life, at the cost of great suffering, for the salvation of men, and is to establish his thousand year reign on earth for the purpose of persuading as many as can possibly be persuaded to "turn from sin to serve the living God", it follows that every service or disservice rendered to men in that day is either a help or a hindrance to the execution of the King's plans, and therefore can be aptly said to be done, or not done, unto him. No one in that Age can escape working, either for or against the purposes of God—and all will be judged accordingly.

"*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'*" (vs. 34). This "kingdom" is not the same as the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. *That is a kingdom in which all men are under discipline, and all, good and bad alike, are present in that kingdom and must perforce remain so until they have come to a full knowledge of the truth and made their choice between "life and death, good and evil". This is a kingdom entrance into which is granted only to the proved righteous, to those who have passed the test and are in no sense unclean. It thus corresponds to the Holy City of Rev. 21 and 22, into which nothing unclean or that defileth will ever enter. It is the kingdom of the earth after the Millennial Age, which men inherit as kings in their own right, living, moving and having their being in God the Father and conducting their own affairs on a basis of equality with each other in harmony with the laws of righteousness.*

"*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'*" (vs. 41). Here we have the antithesis to the Holy City, the lake of fire of

Revelation 19 and 20, symbolic of utter destruction. The allusion is, of course, to the valley of Gehenna outside Jerusalem, where perpetual fires destroyed the refuse of the city. Jesus took the illustration from the apocalyptic literature of his day, and his hearers would realise quite naturally what He meant. The final verse of the parable perhaps makes this more clear "*These shall go away into everlasting punishment*", where "punishment" is *kolasin*, disciplinary restraint, and not *timora*, which is the word that indicates penal infliction in the sense of the

English word punishment. *Kolasin*, derived from the verb *kolazo*, which means to lop or prune trees, hence to check, curb or restrain, is very descriptive of the purpose of God with irrecoverable sinners. "They shall be as though they had not been"; they will be "cut off from among the people" and so the expression "everlasting" (or enduring) punishment can be accurately rendered "final cutting-off". That cutting-off is as permanent and everlasting as is the eternal life of the righteous mentioned in the same verse.

SAMUEL—GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

I. 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 life-time 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. 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 wall 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 under-

standing 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 times 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 learnt 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.

(To be continued).

NOTE ON LUKE 17.4

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

That verse has well been called the "gospel of the seventh chance". It enshrines a princi-

ple of Divine dealing which has been measurably overshadowed in Christian theology by the zeal of believers for judgment upon sinners. That death is the wages of sin is a firmly established doctrine of Scripture; we do not always realise so clearly as we should

that no individual soul will incur that penalty until God has used every weapon in His armoury to reclaim the sinner from the error of his way. Salvation is not a niggardly offer grudgingly held out before men and quickly withdrawn if not accepted at the first presentation. *"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live ye"* says God through the prophet (Ezek. 18, 23 and 32). God will coerce no man's will, and one who deliberately refuses the way of

life after full opportunity to understand and accept it places himself beyond the reach of God; but it is true, as Dr. Paterson Smyth wrote many years ago (*"The Gospel of the Hereafter"*) that *"no one will be lost until the Heavenly Father has as it were thrown His arms around him and looked him full in the face with the bright eyes of His love and that of his own deliberate will he would not have Him"*.

THE WAY OF AN EAGLE IN THE AIR

"There be three things that are too wonderful for me, yea, four that I know not; the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid."

(Prov. 30. 18-19)

This is one of the wise sayings of Agur the son of Jakeh. We know nothing else of Agur; he is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible; but there is some ground for thinking that he lived in the Arab lands at some time between Abraham and the Exodus, his words being preserved in Israel and added to the Book of Proverbs when King Solomon compiled that book.

What a strange little statement it is! Four everyday sights in the world, two connected with the lower creation, one in the air and one on the earth; two connected with man, one in the sea and one on the land. Four everyday sights, common enough, so common as probably not to excite any remark at all on the part of ninety-nine out of a hundred witnesses—but Agur the son of Jakeh was the hundredth, a serious, reflective man, and as he watched, he confessed that in each of these four sights there resided a mystery, a something that went beyond his understanding, a something that stirred his emotions to their depths and left him with a feeling of quiet awe.

The eagle (or, more accurately, the vulture) winging its swift flight through the higher levels of the air, building its nest on high in the inaccessible crags of the highest rocks, swooping down at terrific speed upon the prey its keen sight has espied from far, cleansing the earth from the defiling presence of dead carcasses: Agur gazed upon the spectacle with wonder. The serpent, slithering out from its den to sun itself upon the warm rock, its brilliantly coloured scaly skin scintillating

and glistening in the sunlight as it twisted and darted after its prey: Agur must have stood enthralled as he watched it shed that skin and emerged clothed in an even more brilliant and showy one. He beheld the birds and small animals stand petrified with fear, held spellbound by the serpent's malignant eyes, until it advanced upon them to their doom. The serpent, perhaps mused Agur, brings death to the earth—but the eagle cleanses death from the earth!

Then he lifted up his eyes, and away on the heaving billows of the great sea beheld a vessel, making its way with difficulty and labour through the mounting waves that threatened to submerge it. *"The way of a ship in the heart of the sea"* indicates that he had in mind a boat caught in a storm, tossing and straining in the trough of the waves, helpless in the grip of the elements. However could it get safe to land, Agur must have wondered; yet in the fulness of time the storm would abate and the crew arrive safely home with their cargo. *"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then they are glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."* (Psa. 107, 29-30). And in coming to the fourth subject of wonder there is no need to think other than that Agur conned over what Paul himself called a great mystery, the love of a man for the woman who is to be his wife. Perhaps the son of Jakeh caught some echo of those far-off days when the Lord God brought the woman unto the man, and she became his wife. (Gen. 2. 22). In the impulse which drives a man to seek and win the woman of his choice Agur found mystery beyond his ability to solve.

But why are these homely allusions in the text of Scripture? What is there here of instruction or furnishing unto good works for the Christian? Agur may have spoken and

perhaps written down these words in all sincerity and others may have recorded and preserved them to later generations, but why should they have been taken hold by the Holy Spirit and granted that immortality which is the lot of every word "written in the Book"? In short, what is there here for us?

We may take it that Agur ben Jakeh had no idea of any deep significance in his words. He spoke as he felt and said exactly what he meant. He intended the application of no other than a strictly literal meaning to his sayings. But the fact that the Holy Spirit enshrined these words in a setting which presents them for the consideration of every succeeding generation of truth-seekers does indicate that some deeper purpose is in fact interested to be served.

A great deal of Bible teaching is pictorial imagery. Everyday scenes and incidents are described, not for the merit or interest of the particular scene or incident itself, but because in the description of the scene or the relating of the incident parallel thoughts of spiritual things are suggested, and the mind is led to be exercised in the "things of the Spirit". An analogy between the natural illustration and some important spiritual truth is discernible, and although the illustration is at best but an illustration, it has served a valuable purpose in turning the mind more definitely and habitually to the spiritual truths in which that mind has already been instructed, and familiarises it with the "things of the Spirit". The discerning of a likeness between the natural things of this world and what may be termed their spiritual counterparts brings more reality into our spiritual understanding and accustoms us to look at all things in life from the standpoint of the Spirit rather than the standpoint of the world.

The four "mysteries" of Agur ben Jakeh may be taken as illustrative of the four great mysteries in the Plan of Salvation—the power of Evil, the Redemption from evil, the call of the Church, and the hope for the World. And even if such an application be held to be no more than the use of the text to provide an illustration—well, it is by illustrations often that the deepest of truths are conveyed to our immature minds.

"The way of an eagle in the air." That downward swoop of the swift-pinioned bird to the earth reminds one of the well-known hymn "*He saw men plunged in deep distress, and flew to their relief.*" The eagle makes its nest in the highest parts of the mountains from whence it can survey the world around.

Wisdom, says the 8th chapter of Proverbs, stands at the head of the ways, the chief of the high places of the earth. (Prov. 8. 2). The personified "Wisdom" of Prov. 8 is thought to describe the Son of God, our Redeemer, prior to his coming to earth for our salvation. From that high place He surveyed the world, seeing death and corruption, and came down to the world to abolish death and cleanse the earth from the defiling influence of sin. The 'eagles' of the Bible were in reality great blessings to the land, for, being what is known as "carrion birds", they disposed of animal carcasses which otherwise would quickly putrify in that tropical heat and pollute the land, spreading disease and further death. It is from this standpoint that we must use the illustration. Our Lord, coming to those who were dead in trespasses and sins, "as the way of an eagle in the air," descends to earth, takes to himself the burden of death and sin, and leaves the earth clean and free from defilement, corruption and death. "*O death, I will be thy destruction.*" He transmutes death and decay into life and immortality. Surely to us, as to Agur ben Jakeh, this "way of an eagle in the air" is too wonderful for our human understanding. "*As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him.*" (Deut. 32. 11). The protecting power of God the Father is shown in this picture of the eagle and its care for its young.

"The way of a serpent upon a rock." From the very commencement of the sacred history the serpent has been the symbol of Satan and of sin. The seed of the woman is one day to bruise the serpent's head and righteousness will then be supreme for ever, but in the meantime evil reigns, and that fact is a great mystery not only to the natural man who knows not the things of the Spirit of God, but also in large measure to those to whom have been revealed much of the Divine counsels and the Divine Plan. The way of evil through world history is like the way of a serpent upon a rock, tortuous and sinuous, a stealthiness of progress, first in this direction and then in that, seeking out opportunities for entrance into the good and pure and holy, that it might befoul with its corrupting influence. "*Your adversary the devil . . . goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.*" (1 Pet. 5. 8.) "*From whence comest thou?*" asks the Most High of the Adversary in the story of Job. "*From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down it*" answers the

Adversary glibly (Job. 1. 7). That has ever been the way of Satan, like the way of a serpent upon a rock; and why such a thing has been permitted for so long has been a matter of wonder to men just as the natural case was to Agur ben Jakeh. But evil and the Spirit of evil is earthbound, as is the serpent. Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven and although he appears to men as an angel of light it is but an earthbound glory; it reflects no radiance to heaven. The serpent cannot follow the eagle into the air; it must forever twist and writhe upon the rock; its sinister beauty dazzling to mortal sight but having nothing in common with the graceful denizens of the air. It emerges from its hole; it suns itself upon the rock and fascinates by its fatal beauty even while it repels; it hypnotises its victims by its baleful stare and strikes death to them before ever they are aware; but its latter end is that it perishes in the dust and is no more. In the new earth which is to be, the nobler animals are to live in peace and concord one with another, but "dust shall be the serpent's meat" (Isa. 65. 25)—a metaphorical allusion to everlasting death—for "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain."

"The way of a ship in the heart of the sea." The ancient peoples looked upon a sea voyage as a hazardous undertaking—as indeed it usually was in those far-off days. The frail ship, with its load of human lives, so utterly at the mercy of the elements, so dependent upon the saving power of God when storm or other danger threatened, very easily became to them a symbol of the uncertainty and difficulty of human life. That symbol is a more than usually apt one. The world of mankind, pursuing its normal course, very generally heedless of God whilst times are calm, becomes transformed into a frightened world when danger and disaster threatens, as it does to-day. And like the mariners in Jonah's ship, men then begin to call upon God for salvation. But, through calm and storm, through fair weather and foul weather, alternating between unbelief and faith, indifference and supplication, the world of man, like a ship in the heart of the sea, goes on its way, forging onward to an unknown land, in imminent danger from the towering waves and yet after each burst of the element's fury is seen to be still afloat, battered and shaken perhaps, but still limping on its way toward the unseen land of promise. That was the wonder to Agur ben Jakeh, that the ship survived at all, that it could still be seen in the far distance until

at length, the conflicts and tumults over, it was lost in the calm glory of the far horizon. A fitting symbol, surely, of the way of mankind during this time of sin and death! Not because of their own righteousness, but because of His great mercies, does God save them and bring them at the end into His "afterward of peace". Zechariah, his spiritual vision quickened to perceive the details of that final ending to the ship's voyage, said "at even time it shall be light". The way of the ship in the sea, with all the vicissitudes it experiences, is a great wonder, but it ends in the light of the far horizon, the light of the "land of far distances". (Isa. 33. 17 *marg.*).

"The way of a man with a maid." There are several words for "man" in the Old Testament, each having its especial significance. There is *adam*, meaning "red earth"; *"ish"* man as an individual, an ordinary being; *"enosh"*, man as a mortal, dying creature; *"ben"*, man as related to his surroundings (as "a man of the city") but in this passage the word is the supreme one of them all, *"geber"*, a "mighty man", a man indeed, a man head and shoulders above his fellows. That takes us at once to the glorious description in the Song of Solomon, "My beloved is . . . the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely". The last and greatest mystery of the four wonders must surely be the mystery of Christ and his Church. *"Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy lord; and worship thou him."* (Psa. 45, 10-11). That is the "way of a man with a maid", the coming of the Lord from heaven to seek and win his Bride, that He might take her away and present her faultless before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy. We have heard that call and responded to it; we trust that we are of those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"; we talk together, as did Paul to the Ephesians, of the love of Christ for his Church, but, like Agur ben Jakeh of old, we still stand in wonderment before this great mystery. We look forward to the "marriage of the Lamb" when the Bride has been made ready; we hear in anticipation the words that are one day to be uttered by the Bride to all the world, "Come—take of the fountain of the water of life freely", (Rev. 22. 17) but still we do not approach to the depths of understanding that must one day be ours when, in the splendour of that marriage feast, and in the overwhelming glory of the Father's presence

we look back upon the long story of sin and redemption and perceive the evidences of Divine love and wisdom in every step of the way. Then, perhaps as never before, we shall understand why, long ages ago, a man of God was inspired to look upon the world he knew

and speak of four things too wonderful for him to understand: *the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and—the way of a man with a maid!*

DAY OF REST

A short series
discussing Sunday

1. The Institution of the Sabbath

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy"

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

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

The custom of observing this weekly rest from the normal occupations of life did not begin with the giving of the Fourth Commandment. That law only stated in formal terms what men had known and practised from much earlier times. Long before Israel existed as a nation the peoples of Sumer and Akkad, the lands which afterward become Babylonia and Assyria, had incorporated Sab-

bath observance into their national life. The earliest record of its observance now extant dates back to the days of Sargon of Agade, a ruler whose kingdom extended over the lands bordering the Tigris and Euphrates five or six hundred years before Abraham. In a calendar of the period the word "Sabbattu", as the day was called, is explained as meaning "completion of work, a day of rest for the soul," and this day was to be observed five times in each month, viz., the 7th, 14th, 19th, 21st and 28th days. On these days it was unlawful to transact business, labour for gain, cook food, or conduct civil, political and military functions. The whole life of the community came to a stop, just as did that of Israel in the wilderness many centuries later.

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

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

These Babylonian records are probably greatly distorted versions of the same historical facts which are set down with such accuracy in the early chapters of Genesis. The extract given above is reasonably harmonious with Gen. 2, 2-3: "... *he rested on the seventh*

day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work . . ." In these few words in Genesis we have the earliest written reference to the institution of the Sabbath. And they teach that the first to "keep Sabbath" was the Most High Himself—surely the supreme example!

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

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

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the children of Israel were already Sabbath-keepers when they left Egypt. The evidence for this conclusion is to be found in Exod. 16, 22-30, in which it is recorded that after crossing the Red Sea and entering the wilderness of Sin (so called after Sin, the Babylonian Moon-god), they commenced to gather manna. Upon each day they gathered enough for that day only, speedily finding that it would not keep overnight (vs. 20). But on the "sixth day" (vs. 22) it appears that they gathered

two days' supply, quite spontaneously and without being so bidden, and the rulers of the assembly came to Moses in some concern over this action.

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

It appears that some of the Israelites did go out on the sabbath to gather, and found none (vs. 27), and in consequence the Lord's words came to Israel through Moses: "*How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?*" This, be it noted, was before the Law was given at Sinai. It seems clear, therefore, that Israel already regarded the sabbath as a Divine institution, and the Law at Sinai merely confirmed the rule.

Perhaps the great feature of the Fourth Commandment given at Sinai was the revelation of a relationship between the sabbath ordinance and God's own work in creation. Exod. 20, 8-10 bade the people of God not only to remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, but told them that "*in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*" This connection of the two themes is important, for at any rate it shows that man is bidden to do that which God himself has already done. It is even more striking to observe that when, upon a later occasion, God repeated this injunction to Moses, He told him that "*in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed*" (Exod. 31, 17). Does this mean that even the Almighty Himself must needs "cease" from his creative activity for a time, in order to concentrate his great power for some other creation at some future time? We are quite unable to enquire sufficiently closely into the attributes of Divinity to say, although there is no doubt at all about the meaning of the expression. It is used in Exod. 23, 12, where the servants and domestic animals were to be "refreshed" by the keeping of sabbath, and in 2 Sam. 16, 14, where David and those with him, weary with their journey, came to a place at which they "re-

freshed" themselves. (The word is "*naphash*," meaning primarily to take breath, as when fatigued by heavy labour; to breathe or pant strongly; being, in fact, the root from which "*nephesh*"—breath—is derived). We can content ourselves with the reflection that after six days of incessant creative activity, culminating in the emergence of man, the Most High "ceased" from creating, not for ever, but for a span of time, and from a human standpoint He "rested, and was refreshed." After his seventh day of rest, God surely commences to labour again, although of that labour the Scripture tells us nothing.

The institution of the sabbath, then, lies back in the mists of pre-history. We do not know when it originated. It may have been with Adam in Eden. If its observance is a fundamental requirement of human nature it probably did originate in Eden, and was observed more or less sincerely in the centuries following. The earliest knowledge we have of its national observance dates back several centuries before Abraham, and even then its institution is accredited to God. The Israelites were sabbath-keepers when they came out of Egypt, and had doubtless inherited the ordinance from their ancestors. At Sinai, the rule was elaborated into a code with minute details of its application to the affairs of Israel's national life.

Briefly stated, the Mosaic laws provided for:—

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

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

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

(To be continued)

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

3. Words not lawful to utter

St. Paul's vision
of the future

It may seem a strange dispensation of Providence to us that anything once disclosed to His people, by God, should ever need to be sealed up again. We might be more inclined to think that every revelation from on high should be blazoned through the earth with the utmost dispatch. But such is not always the case. We call to mind that after Daniel

had received the angelic messenger's full and final disclosure of what was written in the Scripture of Truth (Dan. 10, 21) he was told not to enquire for further explanation because the words were closed up and sealed till the time of the end (Dan. 12, 9). Also, after John had heard the message announced by the seven thunders he was commanded not to

write what he had heard, but to "seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered" (Rev. 10. 4). Obviously, therefore, there are some things which have been "passed over" through inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but they are neither to be understood nor promulgated till a later time.

It was in line with these instances of restricted disclosure that Paul, in his vision of Paradise, heard words which he was not permitted to repeat in his general evangelistic activity.

It is not difficult to see that the perfect conditions of that final eternal state of sinless purity could be far too magnificent to be described by human tongue or pen. Even the great gifts of a Milton or Shakespeare would be far too inadequate to do justice to such a theme, and if their choicest language failed to depict the glory of that Heaven-created scene, surely they could be excused! Beyond any question it is not within the power of any man to set forth the splendours of God's perfect Creation, especially when we realise that He has devoted consecutive ages of time, and His Almighty Power to the performance of the great task.

Now if that were the standpoint of Paul's argument there would be no need to impose a ban on Paul's descriptive powers. If it were "impossible" that, in itself, would be a sufficiently restrictive ban. But the prohibition that God applied was imposed on a basis of "law"—not inability. That the question of "Law" arises in the case may be seen conclusively by the citation of other passages where the same Greek word (*exon* or *exestin*) occurs. Here are three instances which admit of no doubt regarding their legality. "It is not lawful for thee to have her" said John the Baptist to Herod (Matt. 14.4). "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar?" asked the enticing Jew, and "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman and uncondemned?" asked Paul (Acts xxii. 25). The existence of the legality or illegality of this act or that is here manifest,—and show that Paul's prohibition had its basis in law.

The words spoken in Paradise were not utterable, therefore, merely because they were beyond man's power to express, but because the competent authority (God Himself) had placed their repetition under a ban, and had forbidden their use by Paul in his missionary activities.

This restriction is brought out in different ways by other translations of the Scriptures. Ferrar Fenton and the Diaglott, say "*it is not*

possible to relate"; Weymouth says "*no human being is permitted to repeat*"; Rotherham translates "*it is not allowable for a man to utter*". Things not legally "allowed" are not "possible" to loyal subjects—hence, each version admits (as it must admit) the inhibition placed on Paul was laid on him by the authority of the law.

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

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

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

their sufferings would eventually be. When John was permitted to describe what he had seen, he wrote for another day—a day when the banished wanderers would be gathered “home” again.

These do not appear to finish anywhere. But let us look again at Paul’s literary work and ask, “Did Paul not have anything to say, at any time, about the final things? Does no single glimmer of light respecting that Day of perfect rest filter through his mind as he writes, and travel down to the written page? Is it not of this final state that he has something to say in 1 Cor. 15. 24-28: “Then cometh the End, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father . . . *that God may be all in all*”? Also, is it not in that final state, when, with enemies destroyed, every knee in heaven and earth shall bow, and confess to the glory of God that Jesus Christ is worthy to be their Lord (Phil. 2. 10, 11)? Again, must we not place that magnificent climax of the “heading-up of all things in Christ” in that final and eternal state? (Eph. 1. 10 and Col. 1. 20). *Are not these the elements that belong to the third heaven and earth*? Does not the bending of every knee tell of that Day of perfect peace and rest? Is not the assembling together of every living intelligence in heaven and earth under one stewardship identical with the house of many mansions set in its verdant park?

If then Paul was imperatively forbidden to utter the words he heard in Paradise, why did he dare to make reference to these things in his letters to his friends? Did he thereby break the “law”? Did he thus disregard the ban? Or was the prohibition intended to apply only to his contact with the rebellious Jewish House? Was it because God did not desire this “chosen servant” of His Son to join the babel of Apocalyptic thought then current among the vision-seeking Jews? Did God really determine that Paul should stand aside (as it were) and see his callous kinsmen drifting ever nearer to their doom, without permitting him to raise the only type of warning cry they might have been disposed to heed? If so, did not God thereby remove the last semblance of restraint, and thus make it inevitable that the headstrong nation should thenceforth go rushing down the rapids to the rocks below?

Does not the correct reading of the situation therefore seem to be that some of the unutterable words could be told (as in a glass darkly) to the Christian Church, but not one single word could be imparted to the faithless House of Israel, which having spurned and

crucified the Lamb of God, in His day, maintained that same rebellious attitude at a later time when he offered proof of His resurrection from the dead? And thus, because they were not prepared to accept God’s sacrifice for sin, He had no further word of comfort or enlightenment for them, and had no other course open to him but to let them drift on to the only fate that could follow such a hardening of heart and mind.

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

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

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

These primal things were exactly what the Jews did not want to hear or accept, hence,

God had for them no further word, nor will He have any further word, till they have heard and heeded the primal things. Only for the believer in Christ—they who have already been “brought nigh” by the Cross—had God any further word concerning eternal things. God has no further favour or bounty to bestow on Jew or Gentile until acceptance has been made of the vicarious sacrifice of His beloved Son. Paradise has not been purposed or prepared for any man refusing to accept Jesus as the Lamb of God. It is not in God's order to put “restitution” or “perfection” before the Cross!

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

power.

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

This restraint made Paul's letters practical and realistic documents, packed with sound advice throughout, helpful to his readers for the experiences of this present life. It directed all Paul's activities to the work of winning men from sin and establishing them in grace. But at the background of his own ardent mind he had the assurance of that view of Paradise, as the sure token to him of what the end of God's purpose would eventually be, and it kept him faithful even unto death.

(To be continued).

THE GREATER BLESSEDNESS

A reflection 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 chap-

ters 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 periods, they were capable of being expanded and dispersed again at pleasure by and to all who joy and delight in the fragrance of flowers.

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.

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.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS — YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1957

Receipts		Payments	
BALANCE IN HAND, 1st Jan., 1957	£385 12 9	BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY:	
CONTRIBUTIONS:		Printing	£311 15 0
Bible Study Monthly		Postage	44 7 11
Special Donation (\$300)	£107 3 0	Advertising Expenses ...	13 3 6
Normal Donations	285 19 0	Stationery & Sundries ...	15 18 8
Tract Fund	34 1 2		£385 5 1
		TRACTS:	
		Printing	£ 22 2 0
		Postage	1 9 0
			23 11 0
		BALANCE IN HAND, 31st Dec., 1957	403 19 10
	£812 15 11		£812 15 11

B. G. DUMONT
Treasurer

I have examined the above account with the books and vouchers submitted to me and certify that it is correct and in accordance therewith.

3rd March, 1958

GEO. H. JENNINGS
Auditor



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 4

JUNE, 1958

Published June 1st

Next issue July 15th

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



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

A Convention sponsored by several Bible students groups in London is being arranged for the August Bank Holiday season, August 2, 3 and 4, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, and a warm welcome is extended to all who would like to attend. Further details and programmes (when ready) can be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. H. Charlton, 9 Fox Road, Langley, Slough, Bucks. Accommodation for provincial visitors for the Saturday and Sunday nights can be arranged at nearby hotels and application for this should be made early to the accommodation secretary, Bro. H. Chapman, The Small House, Stoke Close, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey, giving details of requirements.

* * *

A number of our readers are associated with Bible Study groups using the "*Bible Students Hymnal*" which has been out of print for a number of years. We are asked to announce to all such, and to others who may be interested, that the "words only" edition of this book is to be reprinted with a number of additional hymns, making some 500 hymns in all. The Bible Students Hymnal Trust, which is responsible for this new publication, wishes it to be known that the new edition has been made possible by reason of a very generous gift from overseas, a gift which has been received with very sincere appreciation. The new book, bound in blue cloth similar to the old one, will be available in the early autumn at a price of 2/6 each post free. Orders may be sent to Bro. S. A. Couling, 15 Ashlawn Road, Rugby, and the books will be despatched as soon as ready.

British visit of BRO. P. E. THOMSON, U.S.A.

Bro. P. E. Thomson, representing the Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, will be re-visiting groups of friends who last saw him on his last visit some ten years ago.

Where dates in this list differ from those shown in the "*Herald of Christ's Kingdom*" the dates shown herein are to be taken as correct.

June	1	Warrington
	3	Letchford
	4	Bury
	5	Shotton
	6	Accrington
	7 (aft)	Dewsbury
	7 (eve)	Ossett
	8	Manchester
	10	Sheffield
	11	Lymm
	12	Liverpool
	13	Birkenhead
	14	Irlam
	15	Wallasey
	17	Southport
	22	Atherstone
	25	Coventry
	29	Cardiff
July	6	Yeovil
	12	Maidstone
	13	Central London
	16	Welling
	20	Windsor
	27	Aldersbrook
	30	Ipswich
Aug.	3	London Convention
	6	Central London
	9-15	Reading Conference
	17	Oxford
	18	Aylesbury
	19	Luton
	24	Leicester
	28	Downham Market
	31	Lincoln
Sept.	7	Nottingham
	9	Perth
	12	Dundee
	14	Glasgow
	21	Belfast
	23	Dublin
	26	Rugby

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

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

The fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel sets out in sequence three parables illustrating the Lord's words in Luke 19. 10 "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" These are: the story of one lost sheep out of one hundred; one lost piece of silver out of ten; one lost son out of two. The shepherd went out to seek his sheep, and there was joy among his friends and neighbours when he had found it. The young girl searched diligently for the missing coin from

her betrothal string, and there was joy among her friends and neighbours when she had found it. But the father did not go out to seek his son; he let him have his way and go whithersoever he wished, but he waited and watched until the lost one began himself to seek the way back, and then he went out gladly to bring him in. And there was more than rejoicing; there was a feast, and music and dancing. Is there a hint here that when man goes out in his own self-will to live his life without God, he is allowed to do so without let or hindrance, but God is always watching and will reach out to reclaim the wanderer just so soon as that self-will shows signs of breaking down? God will coerce no man's will; none will be saved except by the exercise of his own free will, voluntarily and intelligently coming to Christ by repentance and justification by faith, and so into a condition of reconciliation with God. But it is only the first step back that the wanderer must take for himself; after that he finds his father hasting to meet him.

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

There has never been a nation, never a generation since the world began, in which this same drama has not been enacted time and time again. The sequel has always been the same. "*He took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.*" That is always the second stage. Then comes the third "*When he had*

spent all . . . he began to be in want". That is the point at which his new-found friends all left him—directly the money ran out. There has been no change in two thousand years—it still works the same way. Now the wanderer is friendless, destitute, hungry and desperate. Now he begins to think of the home he left and the many advantages he had, which he then so lightly esteemed; what would he not give to be back there and have them now! He looks on his old home and his old life in a very different light from that in which he viewed it formerly. That subordination to his father against which he had so chafed; that obligation to take his share of the household duties and farm work which had so irked him; that day-by-day routine so necessary for the orderly conduct of communal life together; he began to see now why these things had to be. He began to realise that he was one unit in a community and could not repudiate his duties and place without prejudicing the welfare of that community. He might have had words come into his mind which were afterwards put on record by the Apostle Paul "*No man liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself.*" The thought of responsibility came into his mind and it was a thought that had never occurred to him before. And it was then that a great illumination came to him. "*He came to himself*", and there and then he determined to go back home.

How many of us realise that in those five words in verse 17 "*When he came to himself*" is summed up the whole secret of the Divine permission of evil? All too often Christians—even dignitaries of the Church—confess, in reply to questions, that they cannot understand the reason for the existence or permission of evil; it is a profound mystery. It is really nothing of the kind if the Bible is read carefully from Genesis to Revelation and the full import of the Eden story allowed to sink in. "*I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it*" ruminated the Preacher (Eccl. 3. 10) and there is the answer. God did not ordain that man should fall into sin, and the story of Eden shows that man sinned entirely of his own volition; but evil having thus entered the world, God in His wisdom does not restrain it immediately, because it is, under His providence, yielding to mankind lessons of experience just as the prodigal's life of dissipation did to him. The reign of evil has been under Divine control from the start and will persist only for the period God has

ordained, for He has declared "*As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord*" (Num. 14. 21) and the day will certainly come when "*the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together*" (Isa. 40. 5). These promises, and many like them, cannot be ignored; the integrity of the Word of God is bound up with them, and they must surely be fulfilled. Evil and sin will one day be banished from God's creation and all things and all creatures will be at one in Christ. Unto him shall every knee bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2. 10-11), and that means that not one soul can continue in conscious life into the eternal ages without being reconciled to God. It is literally and terribly true that "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezek. 18. 4; Matt. 10. 28).

It was when the wanderer had repented and started on the way back that his father went out to meet him. The son had the right idea; he was not going to claim the privileges of sonship; he realised that he had forfeited those. He was going to ask merely to be put on the same footing as the servants. He would labour and be obedient, and take his place in the community, but he was not expecting to be reinstated in his former position just as if nothing had happened. The father, for all his love and tenderness, made it plain later on that the returned prodigal could not resume his former position purely on the basis of repentance. When the elder son, coming to the house at the close of day, reproached the father for having received that waster back, he received the answer "*Son . . . all that I have is thine*". (vs. 31). The whole of the father's property would now revert to the elder son, for the younger had already had his share. Whatever the younger son might gain in property in later life must be by his own efforts.

There is something here that demands serious thought. The repentance of one who comes to God is a great thing and there is joy among the angels of heaven over one such sinner that repenteth, but repentance of itself does not fit the converted sinner for his ultimate place in God's eternal creation. The Divine purpose in creating mankind does not envisage human destiny confined to the alternatives of playing a harp or blowing a trumpet to all eternity. Man is created to fill a definite place in creation and has to be fitted and prepared for that place. His experience with sin and evil is only one aspect of that preparation, and after repentance and

reconciliation with God there must be instruction in righteousness and a determined co-operation with God in rooting out the effects of sin from the character, so that at last the man stands as did Adam before his fall, perfect and sinless, but with the advantage, which Adam never had, of experience.

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

That is how God is dealing with man. "God will have all men to be saved" said St. Paul in I Tim. 2. 4 "and to come to a knowledge of the truth". Israel in Ezekiel's day had the Divine message "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18. 32). The story of Jonah, and the Divine purpose to save Nineveh because the Ninevites repented; of Sodom, and the promise to avert the judgment if only ten righteous men could be found in it (Gen. 18. 32), shows that God is actively working to save men, and will save those who come to Him by belief in Christ. But belief in, and acceptance of, Christ is not merely a lip-service verbal assent to his claims, but a coming so completely into harmony with all that He is and all that He does that in all respects the life is transformed and a character built that will stand sinless to all eternity. Such a character is not built in a day. That is why we who are Christ's now have to give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1. 10), and why God has appointed a day (Acts 17. 31), the thousand year day of the Messianic Age, to reclaim all from among men who can be reclaimed, before the eternal ages of glory of redeemed mankind commence to run their endless course.

The elder brother? He was angry, jealous, resentful that the sinner had been received back home. It was not that he himself would be any the poorer. The entire property was still to be his at the father's death. The younger son still had to make his own way in life. But the elder in his passion for righteousness could not find it in him to admit the younger

to take any part nor lot in the happiness of the family home. The youth had sinned; he should be punished for his sin and the punishment should be everlasting. He should be banished for ever from the father's home, repentance or no repentance.

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

There is a hymn which runs:

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

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

The Apostle James says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." He does not say, "Feel it all joy . . ." You cannot always rejoice in your circumstances, but you can rejoice in the Lord always. God may not change your circumstances, but He will change you, and give you victory in those circumstances.

It is a good deal better to live holy than to talk about it. We are told to let our light shine, and if it does, we won't need to tell anybody that it does. The light will be its own witness. Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining—they just shine.

(Moody)

SAMUEL—GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

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 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 which 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 mes-

sage throughout those dark days after Joshua had died, and the Judges ruled, uneasily, one after another, with troubled times of anarchy in between. The Tabernacle 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 shown 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 irreligiousness 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 (1 Kings 14. 2). The fate of the little settlement is described graphically in Jer. 7 and in Ps. 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 Kirjathjearim (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 Ashtaroth 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 within 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 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 complete 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.

(To be continued)

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 4—God came from Teman

The third chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy opens with prayer and closes with praise. Between these expressions of worship there is a wonderfully eloquent account of Israel's last onslaught and Divine deliverance at the end of the Age, told in language which takes for its inspiration that other glorious epoch in Israel's history, the time of the Exodus. The prophecy is written in poetry—Hebrew poetry—and in form to be sung at the Temple services to the accompaniment of musical instruments. We may not doubt that in after days the noble strains of Habakkuk's psalm often were heard in Jewry, the hearts of the people beating fast with excitement and their eyes growing bright with pride as they thought of the salvation that one day must surely come.

"A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet in dithyrambic measure." That is the superscription, the title, of the psalm, appearing in the Authorised Version as verse 1. The translators were uncertain as to the meaning of the last part of the phrase and so left the Hebrew word "*shigionoth*" untranslated, to the lasting puzzlement of future generations. Scholars now know that it referred to what we call the 'metre' of the song. In the original Hebrew the lines are of the impetuous, lofty style, composed in a state of deep mental stress or excitement, to which the Greeks gave the name of "dithyramb"; hence the title "upon Shigionoth" is best translated "in dithyrambic measure", as Moffatt renders it.

It is sometimes suggested that this third chapter was written at a much later period in Habakkuk's life, and that this accounts for the change in style. What is much more likely is that the vision awakened the dormant fire in Habakkuk's nature and brought to the surface all the passionate zeal which lay beneath his faith. In chapters 1 and 2 he had talked with God, prayed to God, and interceded with God—and God had answered and talked with him; but it is certain that at the end of chapter 2 heaven had been opened before the prophet's eyes and he had seen, first, the Lord seated upon His heavenly throne (ch. 2 vs. 20) and then the stupendous vision of the Lord coming forth to bring to pass His "strange work" (Isa. 18. 21) upon the earth. And it was that vision which, in the intensity of his excitement, he recorded in such glowing,

vivid symbols in verses 3 to 15 of Chapter 3.

It was this experience that led him first of all to utter what must surely be one of the most moving prayers in the whole of the Scriptures. "*O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid; O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known, in wrath remember mercy*" (vs. 2). He had realised at last that there was ordained a great gap between his own day and the day of the vision when Israel would be completely and finally delivered, and he was concerned that God should save alive His people, the work of His hands, during the intervening time. The word really means "preserve alive" as well as "give new life at the end", and is as often rendered "save alive" as it is "quicken". Habakkuk acknowledged that he had heard God's words, but although the scenes of the vision had filled him with joy and exultation, and given him a new confidence as to Israel's ultimate destiny, he was still "afraid" as to the intervening period. He knew that his people time and again would merit Divine condemnation for their faithlessness and hardness of heart. He knew how often they had been scattered and enslaved in past times because of their apostasy, and although he could not doubt God's faithfulness, his heart failed him when he thought of Israel's waywardness. And so, like Moses of old, he besought God on behalf of a stiff-necked and perverse people, that God would not cause his purpose to fail even although the people would prove undeserving of His bounty; that in His chastisement He would always save a remnant, and in the end "bring forth judgment to victory". "*Preserve alive thy work in the midst of the years*" he pleaded "*in wrath remember mercy.*"

With that his mood changed. Even as he uttered the words he knew that God would be faithful, that deliverance would surely come, and with it the utter overthrow of all those evil forces which threatened and oppressed his people. And as the glorious history of the Exodus flooded into his mind he lifted up his eyes to the distant horizon and the Holy Spirit quickened his spiritual faculties so that before his wondering gaze there appeared the splendour of the God of Israel, a glory overspreading the skies and putting even the sun to shame as He advanced in the forefront of

His ancient people, destroying their enemies before them and leading Israel into his desired haven. To the prophet's lips there came unbidden, words which at one and the same time combined the events of the Exodus, the upheavals of Nature which so aptly symbolise the arising of God to set up His Kingdom, and the details of that last conflict in the empire of men which the Scriptures elsewhere call "Armageddon" and "Jacob's Trouble".

What did Habakkuk actually see? He beheld a great manifestation of natural forces—all in vision—the gathering and the breaking of a terrible tempest over the earth; in the midst of the tempest, riding upon the wings of the wind, Jehovah Himself in His war chariot, hurling celestial thunderbolts upon the wicked and burning up His enemies round about (Psa. 97. 3). He saw Israel, a helpless people, surrounded by hostile nations invading the Holy Land, and he saw those nations swallowed up in the zeal of God's fury. He watched the storm die away, and Israel, resplendent in the calm sunlight of Divine favour, delivered for ever from all his oppressors. That was what he saw, and as he looked he clothed what he saw in the language of the story he knew best, the story of the Exodus; at the same time, all unknowingly, he described the later conflict that is yet to come, the one that closes the end of this Age.

We can be certain of that because it is that conflict which results in Israel's final deliverance and the fulfilment of all the prophecies concerning the Kingdom, and as if to make doubly sure, Habakkuk in verse 16 places on record his knowledge that he himself was to "rest" until that day arrived. If this prophet is in fact to be one of the heroes of faith who will rise again to lead Israel in the day of Christ's Kingdom, then there is a very definite fitness about the words of verse 16. But of that more presently.

In reading the verses that follow, it needs to be remembered that Habakkuk is writing in what has been called the "prophetic perfect" tense, that is to say, he took his stand, mentally, at the time of the fulfilment of the vision and described the events as having already occurred. This is a common practice in Hebrew prophecy; the absolute certainty of the things seen, even though still many years in the future, justifying the use of the completed tense. We appreciate the force of the symbolism best if we, in thought, range ourselves alongside the prophet and behold what he beheld, our imagination fired by the

glory of his language.

"*GOD CAME FROM TEMAN, and the Holy One from Mount Paran.*" That is the tremendous announcement with which Habakkuk heralds his vision. Then comes the rubric instruction "*Selah*", the command for a reverent hush and pause in the Temple service, for priests and people to keep silence, as it were, before the God Whose majestic presence has so solemnly been declared to them. And if the people thus kept silence before the ineffable Name upon every occasion that this Psalm was sung in their worship, with what more awesome reverence must the prophet have viewed the opening scenes of the vision which gave birth to the words. He was evidently looking southward toward Teman, (Edom or Seir), and Paran (in the Arabian desert), the two centres from which God had arisen to lead His people to the Promised Land, and he saw the dawn of a golden radiance that told him of the Lord's rising up once again for deliverance. He might have thought of the words of Moses "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of his saints"—holy ones—(Deut. 33. 2). He must certainly have recalled the inspiring words of the 68th Psalm "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him . . . O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel", for this is the song of Israel's march toward the land under the leadership of God, as the historian declares in Num. 10. 35; "And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said 'Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.'" For a moment Habakkuk may have seen what Balaam, seven hundred years previously, had seen in vision, the ten thousands of Israel surging homeward to their land of inheritance under that golden radiance of the Divine presence, and have repeated to himself Balaam's words on that great occasion: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him . . . how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel . . . God brought him forth out of Egypt . . . He shall eat up the nations his enemies . . . Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee" (Num. 23 and 24). And as Habakkuk watched, the

brightness of the Shekinah glory, the "pillar of fire by day", illumined all the sky and all the earth, preceding and guiding Israel in the way. So did he break out into the glowing description that follows the pause. *"His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; rays streamed forth out of his hand (Leeser) and in them was hidden his might."* (Ferrar Fenton). The whole picture is that of a great sunrise of golden fire advancing from the horizon to overspread the heavens and resolve itself into the glory of the Lord, the *Shekinah*, leading the hosts of redeemed Israel back home.

And the question we have to ask ourselves is this: to what event in the end of the Age does this opening portion of the vision refer? Where is our starting point for the final application of Habakkuk's prophecy?

Analogy points us to the day when God will "set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt . . . and from the islands of the sea . . . and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11, 11-12). And not only so, but to a time when God begins to rise up for the salvation of all men from the power of sin and death, a time when He commences to set in motion those forces which result in the glory of His Second Advent, to inaugurate the "sending" of the Lord Jesus Christ, in all the "Times of Restitution of all things" (Acts 3, 19-23). The vision as it proceeded showed that the golden glory was to be followed by a dark storm before the ultimate "afterward of peace", but prior to the storm there was certainly a phase in which the sunshine of Divine favour shone for a brief space upon the earth, an earnest of good things to come. And that fact gives us our starting point. The vision dates the commencement of its fulfilment at that time in the history of this world—the nineteenth century—when both Christian and Jew became conscious of the active working of God in their separate destinies. The Christian world—that section of it which was "watching for His appearing"—realised the approaching consummation of the Age and the imminence of the Advent of its Lord, and the Jew who still prayed in sincerity and earnest longing "next year in Jerusalem" saw the outward evidence of forces moving toward the accomplishment of his desire. Before the storm clouds of this present time of trouble had begun to gather there was a

period of golden glory during which light from the Heavenly Throne was illumining the Plan of God as never before, and the roseate prospect of the coming Kingdom, for both Christian and Jew, became clearer and more entrancing as year succeeded year, "This Gospel of the Kingdom" said Jesus, "shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24, 14). That word was fulfilled in that century as never before. An understanding of the nature and purpose of the Millennial reign was attained such as had not blessed the Church in previous centuries. The knowledge of "Advent Truth" relating to the coming again of Jesus was brought to a higher and more complete stage than had ever been known. On the Jewish side the movement for the return to Palestine—then drawing its inspiration largely from religious sources—was born, and men began to talk of a Jewish state and nation. In a score of ways the golden light of Divine favour overspread the earth and caused men to look up and lift up their heads, sensing that deliverance was drawing nigh. In very truth a mighty angel had come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. (Rev. 18, 1).

* * *

And the next stage in the prophecy is the gathering of the storm-clouds of trouble, the calling to the "valley of Jehosaphat"—still a preparation, but a preparation that ushers in Armageddon itself. That forms the subject of next month's instalment.

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

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

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

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

4. "And He said unto me"

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12, 1-9

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

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

If now the suggestion made heretofore concerning the Satanic messenger and the nature of the stake be taken as correct we may then conceive the substance of Paul's prayer to run something like this: Dear Lord and Master, hear, I beseech Thee, my humble prayer. Again I come to ask Thee to remove this painful stake. I do not shrink from suffering and would gladly go to death for the sake of Thy dear Name. But I cannot understand the need for my present sufferings, and ask Thee now for some relief. Thou knowest, Lord, the arduous nature of the task Thou hast committed to my charge. Thou knowest also that my people are hard of heart, and that the priests and rulers repudiate Thy claims. Thou knowest how they oppose and seek to thwart Thy work, and how they drive and chase me along from place to place. Nor need I tell Thee how they cling tenaciously to the ancient institutions and will not accept the "new." Yet in my heart I feel that if they only knew and understood the glories of that better day which Thou hast now revealed to me, and of the part therein which they are called to play in preparation therefore, they surely would not fail to heed what I might have to say to them in Thy Name. If only I could show them that "the half has never yet been told," and that, in spite of all that Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the other prophets spake, they only spake in part, and that the glories that await them are grander far than mortal man has yet conceived, surely they would choose and accept the new and better things, and turn with their whole heart into the Way of

God. If only I might tell them of that eternal peace, and of all that satisfying plenty which then will abound, and of the ever-open access into the Presence of our God, oh! how could they longer refuse to accept Thee as their chosen Lord, and take Thee to their heart? Wilt Thou not permit me to speak freely of what I have come to know? Wilt Thou not permit me to win acceptance from Israel's choicest sons from Gamaliel, and such noble souls as he—who wait expectantly for proofs and tokens such as I could now present? Dearest Lord, wilt Thou not bid me speak of all the glorious things Thou hast made known to me? Thou knowest, Lord, that I would run with haste over mountain and plain, over land and sea, and teach them in their synagogues and draw them to Thy feet. Only speak the word, dear Lord, and bid me go, and I will go with ready heart and willing feet, and as I speak to their waiting hearts, this suffering will cease.

If in the foregoing we have faintly caught the echo of Paul's ardent plea, we may now, with diffidence, construct some semblance of the Lord's reply; a reply couched in words of chiding and reproof, but oh, so tenderly and soothingly expressed: "I have heard thy thrice-told prayer, O Paul, my faithful messenger and friend. Listen now to Me, and let Me explain to thee the meaning of thy stake. That glimpse of Paradise I gave to thee was for the assurance and comfort of thine own suffering heart. It was not intended for the nation's ear nor for their ruler's enlightenment to-day. Believe Me when I tell thee they would not accept thy word even as they did not accept Mine. It is a 'strange work' which My Father purposes to-day—for He seeks only a 'small remnant' from their midst as He sets the unready nation aside. Blindness is about to befall them, because their heart is becoming hard, and My Father purposes to excite this people to jealousy by calling and accepting believers from among a 'no-people' in their stead. I, also, am solicitous concerning Israel and would spare them if I could, but though I have been endowed with all power in heaven and earth I may not use that plenitude of power contrary to My Father's Will. Though seeking nought but Israel's highest good, even I may not make known to them what I have come to know about their future

destiny. I, also, am under restraint at this present stage of My Father's purposes. This is the season of sacrificial suffering—sufferings made necessary by the nature of My Father's Plan. My own share in those sufferings is at an end, but it is now thy privilege to share with Me in those sufferings. Some years ago I chose thee to be My special messenger to bear My Name before this faithless generation, and to suffer for My sake! Wouldst thou now have these purposes changed, so that thou couldst win the favour of Israel, especially of her choicest sons? Is not My favour alone enough for thee? Thou couldst not win approval from Gamaliel, or Israel, as they are, this day, and still retain thy Father's smile and approbation. My favour can be much more vital to thee than all the commendations of Israel! With My approval thou canst attain thy appointed goal, even though the whole world disapprove thy course! With My assistance thou canst overcome Satan's craftiest wiles, and bear all the buffeting his angel can inflict. Even when thine own strength gives out, My power can work unchecked within thy heart, and bear thee up over every obstacle, and give thee victory over every foe,—yea more, when thou art at thy lowest ebb, My power can attain and manifest its greatest energy. Believe Me, O My chosen friend, My grace is quite sufficient for all thy need—to help thee bear the chafing and restraint what time thy heart is heavy for thy people's perversity. Thou canst not love this wayward people more than I have long loved it Myself, yet, what can I do, as yet, to stay its evil course. It must, ere long, be set aside, and overwhelmed with hard judgment and banishment from this chosen land, but I have shown thee what the "End" at last, will be. In that better day which lies beyond their night of sin and suffering they will come home again to this good land, and to their God—of that thou mayst be well assured! It was to give thee full assurance of this consummation that I took thee forward through the long, dark years, and blessed thy deeper senses with the sights and sounds of that better day. Rest thee, then, content with Me and with My help, and take to thyself the fulness of My grace. When thou art sorely buffeted, and thy piercing stake wounds thee sore, come thou near to Me, and I will bear thee through thine agony. When thy people spurn thy voice and drive thee out from place to place, I will go along with thee to soothe thy aching heart. Only trust Me to the end, and My grace shall be sufficient for thy need,

every day, in every way. Be thou at rest in Me, and bear thy stake and buffeting for Me, and share with Me the restraints of My Father's Sovereign Will."

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

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

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

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

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

the watchful Lord. It linked the servant with his Lord, and made them one in purpose and suffering.

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

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

May we use that episode in the Apostle's life as a parable for our own anxious day? Beats there one single heart which throbs for love with humankind that would not spend its days and hours, its voice and pen to have the nations understand the Way of God amid the tangled mazes of to-day? We who have

glimpsed that better world—that new Jerusalem yet to come down from God to men—would we not right willingly tell the peoples of this sad old earth what we have come to know? Like Paul himself, we also want to "go" and "speak"—to tell this suffering world of a better day, and turn this warring generation from the rapids and the rocks.

But are we sure that God would have it so? Are we sure this generation would give heed to us though we spake with angelic tongue, or with trumpet voice? Is the present set-up of circumstances a "stake" for us, driven through our very soul, to make it impossible to speak the word we would? Let us leave that point for another day, and meantime, take to ourselves the balm of our Master's soothing words. As first spoken they were intended for one loyal heart when self-desire must be made submissive to the over-ruling Will of God. It will be so again, to-day, for any child of God, who, uncertain what this crucial hour requires of him to do, can sink right down at Jesus' feet and "rest" with good contentment in his heart until his way is clear. It is far better to tarry till the "glory-cloud" begins to move, than go forward to any task at our own time, and in our own way.

(To be continued)

DARK SAYINGS OF JESUS

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (Matt. 13. 10, 11).

This passage is not to be taken as implying that Jesus deliberately veiled his message in obscure sayings, "parables" in order to keep his Truth from those to whom it was "not given" to understand. Such a thing would be out of accord with the object of his mission. He came to bring the message of life to all men and to turn them from the way of darkness to that of light. The idea that God arbitrarily selects some individuals to receive His Truth and just as arbitrarily withholds it from all others is against the revealed principles of His dealings with man and, too, against all common sense. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should turn from their wickedness, and live". It

follows that whosoever in this Age turns toward the Father by the exercise of faith in Jesus will be received and encouraged to the full extent to which he is prepared to go. But not many have that initial turning of the heart to God which alone enables them to see enough of His ways to bring them to Him. That is what Jesus meant by this saying. It was "not given" to the people in general to understand the message of the kingdom; they just did not have, in their hearts, that which is necessary to enable the taking of the first step. And because of that fact Jesus spoke to them in parables, stories they could understand, if by that means he could awaken in their hearts some glimmering of understanding which in turn might lead them to God. The parables were because of their blinded condition, a means whereby perchance their eyes could be opened, not a device by which their blindness was to be made permanent.

GOOD-TIME CHRISTIANS

"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. There are so many fellowships and groups which have rendered Christian service in past years who now 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".

A Thought for the Month

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?

It is in that spirit we can make a sober appraisal of our position and resolve that we will by our lives and our works give a good 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 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.

DAY OF REST

A short series
discussing Sunday

2. The degeneration of the Sabbath

"... until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbaths, to fulfil threescore and ten years." (2 Chron. 36, 21).

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

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

Evidently the Shunamite was a faithful adherent to the law of Moses, and probably many in Israel shared her faithfulness. At much the same time the sabbath was a sufficiently marked day to become the occasion for periodical changing of the Temple guard (2 Kings 11, 4-11 and 2 Chron. 23, 4-11).

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

The earliest of such denunciations in the Old Testament is that of Isaiah, who commenced to prophesy in the reign of Uzziah, about six hundred and fifty years after the Exodus. By this time Solomon had been dead for many years, but the taste for luxuriance, ease and other fruits of commercialism, introduced by him, had remained, and Israel was well on the way to becoming the nation of traders it has been ever since. Isaiah shows (1, 13) that in his days the sabbaths had become a mere formality; they were an abomination in the sight of God, and He would no longer accept them. Later on in Isaiah's life (56, 2 and 58, 13-14), in greater maturity, he called Israel to come back to their original sincerity and zeal in sabbath-keeping. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight ..." etc. At much

the same time Jeremiah exhorted the people to cease from desecrating the sabbath (Jer. 17. 19-27). Ezekiel, a generation later, felt the same burden, as recorded in the 20th, 22nd and 23rd chapters of his prophecy; whilst Amos, contemporary with Isaiah's early days, has preserved for us a vivid picture of the Israelites chafing under the sabbath law, and mentions the very thing which led to their rejection of the sabbath, their greed for gain. "*When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit*" (Amos 8. 4-7). It seems clear that in the days of Amos and Isaiah, when King Uzziah was reigning, the sabbath was still observed, but in a perfunctory, formal manner. Men were impatient for its passing that they might turn again to the buying and selling which was rapidly creating in their midst an economic system of the same kind that has produced such evil results in the world to-day.

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

After the Babylonian captivity there was a great change. Strong influences were at work to maintain an increasingly rigid observance of the sabbath. When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem he found alien traders in the habit of selling their wares in Jerusalem, and Jews conducting all manner of business, on the sacred day, and sternly forbade such practices (Neh. 13. 15-22). This zeal for the day developed into an extreme fanaticism during the four centuries which elapsed before the First Advent. The records of the Maccabees, those stalwart patriots of this intervening time, show that many Jews even refused to fight their enemies on the Sabbath, choosing to be

slain rather than violate the day by lifting weapons. By the time of our Lord the simple commands of Moses had been overlaid by a vast mass of detailed prohibitions equalled only by those governing the English Sunday in the days of the Puritans. To practise as a physician and accomplish works of healing on the sabbath was forbidden; hence our Lord was accused of breaking the sabbath because some of His works of healing were done on that day (see Luke 6. 6-11, 13. 11-17, 14. 1-6, and Jno. 5. 1-16). In like manner it was declared that His disciples, rubbing corn between their hands on the sabbath (Matt. 12. 1-8) were technically guilty of threshing wheat. One wonders to what extent our Lord's injunction, "*Pray ye that your flight be not . . . on the sabbath day*" (Matt. 24. 20) is not an allusion to the restraining power of "orthodoxy" on those who are "watching for His appearing", remembering that the Rabbis forbade any man to travel more than two thousand paces—about one mile—outside the city on the sabbath!

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

(To be continued)

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

("Reconciliation.")

It is all too possible for the believer to be affected by the spirit of the age in which he lives. He can accept its maxims and adjust himself to its intellectual and social fashions. Perhaps, in the last resort, this is the real meaning of worldliness. To be a worldly Christian is to be a Christian who is unduly influenced by the spirit of the times in which he lives.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN BROTHERHOOD

A glimpse of the Early Christians of Jerusalem

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

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

That was the driving force behind this wonderful family fellowship of the primitive Church. It drew its inspiration from the apostles' memories of the Last Supper. Up there in the quietness of that upper room their minds had received an impression which could never be effaced. "*This do . . . in remembrance of Me*". In remembrance of Him! How could they ever forget? The mystic ceremonial of bread and wine had bound them to eternal association with Jesus their Lord, and now that they had seen him alive after death, were witnesses of his Resurrection, they

knew without doubt, as Peter declared thirty-five years afterwards, that they had not followed "cunningly devised fables" but had been actual eye-witnesses of the most tremendous event in all history. *Christ was risen!* That they knew, and now all the rest would come to pass in due time. He had gone away, but He would surely come again, and even if they in the meantime must sleep awhile in death, He would raise them to be with him in glory and manifest them with himself to all the world in that day when the golden visions of the prophets became glorious reality. There was no doubt about it; all was true; the Kingdom would surely come; and now they must cling together as brethren and "tell the whole world these blessed tidings". That was the joyous theme, which engrossed their thoughts and loosened their tongues as they met from one house to another and began to lay the foundations of a Church destined to endure to all eternity.

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

The listeners became conscious of a deeper note. Their calling was not to be that of mere publicists, advertising the King and his Kingdom along purely informative and intellectual lines. They were called to *live* the Kingdom, to show all men by their own pattern of

life what the teachings of their Lord could do to a man or woman who is utterly and irrevocably committed to him. It was that which came, so startlingly new to those who so recently had been in bondage to the dead letter of Judaism and its law. This was a personal relationship into which they had entered with their Lord, and with that close intimacy was bound up the moral obligation, so much more compelling than the "thou shalt not" of the Mosaic Law, to show their love for their Master by putting his precepts into practice.

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

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

what Christ had done for these people, and remained to take their place and share in the work that lay before that family.

Little did those early believers dream that life for them was to go on into old age without their realising the fruition of their hopes. In the first rosy flush of the promise "I will come again" they looked for his appearing in the clouds of heaven to take them to be with him and to set up his Kingdom upon earth, this year, next year perhaps, certainly in the third year. He had gone away, but He would come again. They knew now, as they had not known before, why He must needs go away. He had suffered and died for them and now in the glory of his resurrection must go to the Father from Whom he had come in order that He might receive the ovation of triumph due to a conqueror. He had overthrown the gates of death and broken down the bars of hell. Satan and all his minions were defeated and now the angels of heaven were acclaiming the One who beforetime had been pre-eminent amongst them, had laid aside the glory which He had with them before this world was, had been born of a virgin, was found in fashion as a man, manifested the glory of God in the embodiment of human perfection, and at the hands of wicked men had been crucified and slain. He had gone to be seated at the right hand of the Father whilst his disciples were to execute the commission of witnessing to his Name among all the nations. The world was a small place; they would complete that work within the next few years; and then He would come.

So it was that in their annual commemoration of that last meal together they repeated to each other the longing words "Till He come!" It became a solemn ritual among them, a phrase combining within its compass all the faith and all the hope and all the ardent desire that possessed their minds and nerved their hands to action and endurance. "Till He come"—surely it will not be long. As each lifted the cup to his lips he realised anew the significance of the action. He was partaking of the blood of his Lord; he had become blood-brother to his Lord; now and for all time he was irrevocably associated with his Lord in the work of reconciliation. "This cup is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins . . . Drink ye all of it." They knew that the Old Covenant was passing away, for it had failed to bring life to man, failed to effect release from the thralldom of sin. The blood of bulls and goats, offered year by year without

ceasing, had given a measure of communion with God and a feeling of peace to Israel, but it had not taken away sin. Moses the deliverer had brought them out of Egypt and led them to Canaan, where they might live a life of peace and prosperity, but he had not given them everlasting life. And the unbelief of Israel had nullified and made of none effect all the glorious promises which had been told unto the fathers by the prophets. But God had promised a new Covenant, one that would succeed where the old one had failed, one that would take away the stony hearts of Israel and give them hearts of flesh, one under which every man would know the Lord and sit under his own vine and fig-tree with none to make him afraid. And now Jesus had told them that in his own Person He was about to make that new Covenant possible by the offering of his life to God just as the blessings of the Old Covenant were made possible by the offering of a sacrificial bullock to God. The day had not come, even when Jesus spoke, for that New Covenant to go into operation. Sin must reign unchecked yet for a season. The stony hearts could not yet be turned into hearts of flesh, nor the pure language be heard on the lips of the people. But the offering had been poured out "for sin" (Isa. 53. 10). For three and a half years had the antitypical bullock lain on the altar, its blood covering the mercy-seat which is in Heaven itself, mute testimony to the loving devotion of that Son who had said "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10. 7). But even with the final consuming of that offering the time had not come. Although those early believers knew it not, sin was to continue yet for another two thousand years the while the offering continued. "Drink ye, all of it" the Master had said. Slowly the realisation filtered into each mind that they, too, were called to devote their lives' best endeavours, their abilities, their talents, their resources, all that they had and were, to this same laying down of life as an offering because of the world's sin and the world's need of reconciliation from that sin.

What wonder then that in after days Paul told them that God had made them "able ministers of the New Covenant" (2 Cor. 3. 6)? They were to stand as representatives and ambassadors of that new order of things which was to be instituted at their Lord's return. More, they themselves were, by their

devotion to and association with their Master, to be joined with him in the grand future work of writing Divine law in the hearts of men. By virtue of this mystic ceremony they had become separated from all that was of the world and were now "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God". They were a company of brethren, looking forward to a life of sacrificial service until their Lord should come, and then to the ministerial duties of that New Covenant under which Israel, and not Israel only, but the whole world of man, are to receive the Divine blessing of life.

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

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



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 5

JULY/AUGUST, 1958

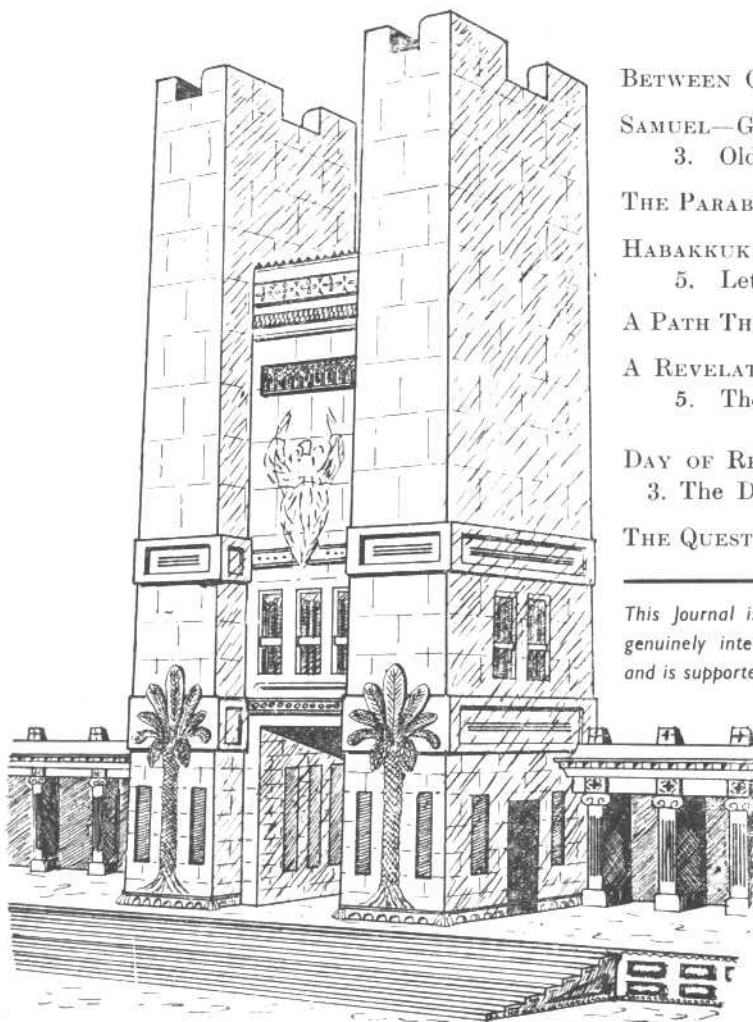
Published July 15th

Next issue September 1st

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



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Many readers are intensely interested in the day-to-day progress of life in Israel and the connection of that progress with Biblical foreviews of Israel's national restoration preparatory to the attainment of their promised destiny "*to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth*". An information service set up by responsible Israel authorities is now in operation whereby authentic literature is sent periodically, without charge, to interested persons willing to pass it round a circle of their friends or associates in a regular and systematic fashion. For the greater convenience of "*Monthly*" readers, Bro. L. H. Bunker, 3 Ingram Close, Stanmore, Middlesex, is acting as an honorary agent and will see that such information is sent to all who make application through him. It is necessary to fill in details of name, etc., on a form which can be obtained from Bro. Bunker on request; this form describes the various classes of information available and the enquirer states the classes in which his interests lie.

Items already received by those who have sent in the form include a "Tenth Anniversary" pictorial record, a 26 page illustrated magazine dealing with the land and agriculture, a fully illustrated travellers' holiday brochure, a descriptive booklet on the Dead Sea region, a 144 page book "*Facts about Israel*", and so on. It is understood that all literature thus received will be passed round the circle for whom it is intended since the object of the scheme is to disseminate accurate information concerning Israel over the widest possible field.

2" x 2" colour slides of Israel suitable for still projectors are also available although these obviously cannot be supplied free. Bro. Bunker can furnish details of such as they become available. As an example, at the moment a set of 12 colour slides illustrating the words of Israel's prophets as reflected in the present life of Israel, complete with script and a pocket viewer which gives the slides a stereoscopic effect, is available at 32/6 post free. Please ensure that all communications with regard to this service are addressed to Bro. Bunker and not to the "*Bible Study Monthly*".

Bro. P. E. Thomson, representing the Pastoral Bible Institute of Brooklyn, will be re-visiting groups of friends who last saw him on his last visit some ten years ago.

Where dates in this list differ from those shown in the "*Herald of Christ's Kingdom*" the dates shown herein are to be taken as correct.

July	16	Welling
	20	Windsor
	27	Aldersbrook
	30	Ipswich
Aug.	3	London Convention
	6	Central London
	9-15	Reading Conference
	17	Oxford
	18	Aylesbury
	19	Luton
	24	Leicester
	28	Downham Market
	31	Lincoln
Sept.	7	Nottingham
	9	Perth
	12	Dundee
	14	Glasgow
	21	Belfast
	23	Dublin
	28	Rugby

SAMUEL—GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

3. Old Age

"And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel." (1 Sam. 8. 1).

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 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, Manoah and Hannah, by now long since laid to rest. They were of a more modern generation and largely heedless of their father's and grandfather'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 maintained 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 bygone 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 who 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. 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, 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 animals. 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" (1 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 (1 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 brethren and evangelical ministry to the world. The Apostle Paul, notwithstanding his advancing years, his physical disabilities and his many deep excursions in 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 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 he had been tending to drift. Perhaps the demand for a king brought home to him such shortcomings 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 1 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 under the terms of the Mosaic Covenant would their enemies have been able to overcome them again. 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. Then Samuel wrote for them "*the manner of the kingdom in a book, and laid it up before the Lord*" (1 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, the 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*". The effects of that day's work are with us yet, and will never die.

(to be concluded)

We do not all need the same things at the same time. Our needs are different in youth, in middle age, and in advancing years. Someone has pointed out that one reason why God is referred to continually in the Old Testament as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is in order to illustrate that He is the God of every succeeding generation and the Friend of every age. This indeed is gloriously true, and we may well rejoice in it.

THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET

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 deep dispensational truth hidden in its half-dozen sentences.

The physical picture which forms the substance of the parable must have been commonplace enough to the disciples. Fishers themselves, several of them, or closely associated with the fishing activities carried on around the Sea of Galilee as the remainder of them must have been, they would all readily have

entered into the Master's thoughts. So often had they themselves assisted in just such an operation, going out in their boats to extend the great net over a wide stretch of water and coming steadily toward land, sweeping into the confines of their net all living in its path. Then the strenuous task of hauling the heavy net, with its living load, out of the water and up the beach to a place where they could sit down and begin to sort their catch. With what satisfaction and delight would they watch the growing pile of good fish in the baskets; with what contempt toss the worthless ones down the beach toward the water, not caring whether they went back into the lake or not, so quickly were they forgotten and the attention turned to the better specimens 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 the 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 for 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."* (1 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 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 con-

sequent 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.

Every day is crowded with minutes, and every minute with seconds, and every second with opportunities to develop fruitage.

* * *

The creation of the visible universe is great, but the creation of countless invisible laws is greater still.

* * *

The women were too late with their spices; Mary was not with her ointment.

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 5—Let God Arise

God came from Teman! We left Habakkuk dazzled by the glory of the vision; God rising up to the deliverance of his people in a blaze of light which eclipsed all other light. *"His glory covered the heavens . . . his brightness was as the light: he had horns coming out of his hand, and there was the hiding of his power."* (ch. 3. 3-4). That last phrase is badly translated; the meaning is that of rays of light streaming from his hands as though held in a clenched fist, and his hidden power "veiled" as though concealed in that hand ready to be let loose upon the earth in judgment. Certain mythological gods have been depicted in ancient sculptures holding flashing lightnings in their hands in the same fashion; here the thunderbolts of Jehovah are about to be rained down upon a world ripe for judgment. Since in this third chapter of Habakkuk's prophecy we have been carried forward to the last great day of this present world, the day when God stands up to intervene in human affairs once more and bring in His Kingdom of everlasting righteousness, this judgment is the one that is to terminate this day and age in which we live, a judgment the beginnings of which we already see in our generation, a judgment which is none the less of God though it be the direct fruit of men's own selfishness and wickedness leading man to the fearful impasse which at this present time confronts him.

"Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet" (vs. 5).

This is the first hint of the gathering storm. In front of the advancing Lord go pestilence and disease, bred by man and taking their revenge upon man, decimating the hosts who would oppose the onward progress of God's Plan. Here is a fit symbol of war, the great desolator of mankind, war which breeds pestilence and throws fire upon earth.

And now it is as though the Most High, arising to "shake terribly the earth", has paused for a moment to take stock of the position. *"He stood, and measured (i.e. took the measure of) the earth. He beheld, and drove asunder the nations, and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow (before him) whose ways are everlasting"*. This is not the coming forth of God to actual judgment. It is preparation for that judgment, and as such corresponds very

well to this Twentieth Century when the nations struggle in a morass of tumult and strife, war and revolution, famine and disease, distress and disaster which is effecting the scattering of the symbolic mountains, the kingdoms of this world, and the driving asunder of the nations. God has not yet come forth in judgment. He is yet in the day of his preparation, calling the nations to Armageddon and gathering them into the valley of threshing. *"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles,"* He commands, *"prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near . . . let the weak say, 'I am strong'. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together round about: thither the Lord will bring down thy mighty ones . . ."* (Joel 3. 9-14). This is how God measures the earth, drives asunder the nations, scatters the everlasting mountains, and brings low the perpetual hills. We in our lifetime are seeing this very thing come to pass; to-day this gathering of the nations to judgment seems to be all but completed and the stage set for the final act in the drama.

Men sense that fact, and they are afraid, just as afraid as were the inhabitants of Arabia and Canaan when they beheld the advancing hosts of the Most High coming out of the desert with the Shekinah glory cloud at their head. Habakkuk knew of their fear, and described it in moving words. *"I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble."* (vs. 7). "Upon the earth" said Jesus, there will be "distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking to that which is coming upon the earth." (Luke 21. 26). The time in which we live is such a time of fear, and the fear is well founded, for the sword of the Lord hangs in the sky above this doomed social order. How long before it descends, as Isaiah said it would descend, "upon the people of my curse, to judgment" (Isa. 34. 5)?

The evidence of Divine displeasure with the earth increased as Habakkuk continued to behold the vision. He broke off his account for a moment to ask two questions—rhetorical questions. *"Was the Lord displeased against the rivers?"* he asks *"was thine anger against the rivers? Was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy*

chariots are salvation?" In the Exodus story, the Red Sea and the river Jordan were barriers to the onward progress of God's people into their inheritance. The Red Sea was driven back, and the Jordan was restrained from flowing, to give the people free passage. In our day there are symbolic rivers and a symbolic sea which alike oppose the onward progress of the Divine Plan and they too will experience the Divine displeasure. The river symbolises human autocracy and the sea human democracy, both playing a prominent part in the affairs of nations to-day but both destined to give way before the triumphant march of the King of Kings. That the sea symbolises "the people" in prophetic lore, is demonstrated by Isa. 17. 12-13 "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters, but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like thistledown before the whirlwind". Of the great host that is to be raised up from the north parts to invade the land of Israel at the end of the Age it is said "their voice roareth like the sea" (Jer. 6. 23) an indication that their savage onslaught has behind it the irresistible force associated with a mighty overwhelming flood of waters sweeping over the land and carrying away everything in its course. "In that day" says Isaiah, speaking of this same great host that will invade the Holy Land at the end "they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea". (Isa. 5. 30). The picture is that of a tumultuous host of people recognising no authority save that which proceeds from their association together; the roaring is the roaring of "mob rule", of government by the masses, of democratic government without God; and God is against it. "Was thine anger against the sea?" asks Habakkuk. God's anger at the time of the end will most assuredly be against the sea.

And the rivers? The great rivers of the Bible—the Nile in Egypt, the Euphrates in Babylonia and the Tigris in Assyria—became the centre of each nation's life and the source from which each drew wealth and sustenance. To the river the nation owed everything, fertility of land, food, facilities for trade; all came from the river. So "the river" very easily becomes a symbol of kingly power and rule, contrasting with the sea, general or mob rule. Ezekiel alludes to this, identifying

Pharaoh king of Egypt with the river Nile. "Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said "My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself". (Ezek. 29. 3). Jeremiah, seeking for a simile to describe the coming of Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt to do battle with the Babylonians at Carchemish, cried "Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers;" (Jer. 46. 7-8). Just as the sea pictures or symbolises the restless masses of humanity seeking to evolve their own system of government, so do the rivers symbolise the more autocratic rule of kings and princes, of military powers and commercial interests; and the anger of the Lord is against them all. God comes forth upon his horses, to war—and the chariots of salvation are following Him.

What are these chariots? They are the forces of heaven, coming forth to bring Millennial blessings to mankind immediately the judgment is ended. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." (Psa. 68. 11). Elisha's servant was permitted, for an instant, to see the chariots of God in the mountains, sent to defend the prophet of God (2 Kings 6. 17). Daniel saw the angelic messengers around the throne in his great vision of the inauguration of the Kingdom (Dan. 7. 10), and John the Revelator, seeing something of the same in his vision, said of the heavenly ones with the returning Lord "the armies which are in heaven followed him" (Rev. 19. 14).

The next verse marks the completion of God's day of preparation. "Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word—SELAH." (vs. 9). This is a poor translation and the meaning is obscure. The word for "tribes" also means an instrument of chastisement, and it is thought that the most likely rendering of the passage is "Thy bow shall be bared, even the chastisements sworn by thy word". Now if that is the true rendering—and it is certainly more intelligible and more closely connected with the context than is the A.V. rendering—we have a picture, from verse 4 to verse 8, of the "day of his preparation", the gathering of the forces that are to play their part in the closing scenes of this "battle of the great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16. 14) and then, in verse 9, all things being ready, God, as a great warrior, as it were, draws back his bow and

lets loose the winged shaft that will bring judgment, swift and decisive, upon the forces that have arrayed themselves in determined opposition to his incoming Kingdom.

This conception of the swift descent of judgment upon the evil host is illustrated by allusions in other parts of the Scriptures. "*For my sword shall be bathed in heaven*" says God through the prophet Isaiah, "*behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment*" (Isa. 34:5). The prophetic song of Moses recorded in Deut 32 has a similar strain when the Lord promises that at the end of time He will remember the sorrows of his ancient people and deliver them, inflicting judgment upon their enemies. "*For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment . . . I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh . . .*" (Deut. 32:40-42). "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed*" says the Psalmist, but "*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.*" (Psa. 2:2-5). Perhaps the most biting, burning, moving words of all are those of Jeremiah, directed, it is true, to the Philistines of his own day and having no prophetic application, but in their impassioned eloquence a fitting commentary on what has already been said. "*O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the seashore? There hath he appointed it?*" (Jer. 47:6-7). How can it be quiet, indeed, when all the sin and iniquity of the long millenniums of human history has filled up the measure of human guilt and the earth cries to high heaven for judgment? How can it be quiet, when the outraged holiness of God will brook no further delay, and the seventh angel is raising his trumpet to sound (Rev. 11:15), and the nations are angry, and the time of judgment is come, and of reward to the faithful saints and prophets, and of destruction to the corrupters of the earth? (Rev. 11:18). "*He gathered them together*" says the Revelator "*to a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon*". (Rev. 16:16). "After many days" says Ezekiel, addressing this same great evil host "*thou shalt be ordered forward*" (Ezek. 33:8).

Thus the stage is set; the world in general, exhausted from its experiences in the "Day of His Preparation", passively beholding the welding of every power for evil in the world into one great striking force, gathering and setting itself in array, against the Prince of Peace and all that is inherent in truth and righteousness; and on the other side, unseen and unknown to men, the raising of that sword of the Lord, that terrific spiritual power which is to descend and in one swift blow annihilate for ever the greatest confederation of evil forces the world will have ever known. Ezekiel and Zechariah have vied with each other in finding words in which fitly to describe the overwhelming disaster which will descend from the heavens upon those who have dared to fight against God.

And at this point the prophet, overawed by the solemnity of the situation, breathes a reverent "*Selah*". In the Temple service there was a pause, a hush, as for a full minute the worshippers contemplated that gleaming sword upraised in the heavens, poised that in a moment it might strike down.

Just so, it may be, shall Christian workers in a day yet future realise, as did Habakkuk, that the "gathering to Armageddon" is complete, the armies in position, the "land of un-walled villages" encompassed on every side, and wait with bated breath for that fearful maelstrom of Divine judgment which will demonstrate to all men without possibility of doubt that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth".

(To be continued)

"Love thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. 13:5).

The word used here for "thinketh" (*logizetai*) is a mathematical word meaning to compute, calculate, or reckon, hence to count or credit to one's account. A number of other texts illustrate its use, as 2 Tim. 4:16: "All men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be *laid to their charge*", and a double occurrence in Rom. 4:3-4: "Abraham believed God and it was *counted* unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not *reckoned* of grace, but of debt." The thought is that love does not keep account of evil so as to hold it against the evil-doer. It is not that, as one translation has it, love "takes no account" of evil, i.e., ignores it, but that love will not record evil done to it with a view to holding it against the evil-doer responsible. Love is forgiving "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

A PATH THAT NO FOWL KNOWETH

A Study in Job 28.1-11

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

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

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

Kingdom". (Acts 14. 22).

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

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

For there is a mine for silver;
And a place for the refining of gold.
Iron is extracted out of the ore,
And copper is smelted out of the rock.
Man setteth an end to darkness.
And searcheth out to the farthest
bound.
He hath sunken a shaft away from
the dwellings of men
They have no support for the foot;
They hang down, far away from men
They swing to and fro.
Out of the earth cometh bread,
And underneath it is turned up — as it
were fire!
Among its stones are found sapphires,
And it hath ore of gold.
That path no bird of prey knoweth!
Neither hath the vulture's eye seen
it.

*The proud beasts have not trodden it,
Nor hath the lion passed thereby.
He putteth forth his hand upon the red
granite
And undermines the foundations of the
mountains.
He excavates channels among the rocks
And restrains the streams that they
trickle not.
His eye discovereth every precious
thing,
And the hidden things he brings
forth to light.*

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

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

Silver, gold, iron, copper and sapphires. These are the fruits of the seeker's activity. To obtain them he must separate himself from the world of men, tunnel a way through the darkness under every possible condition of

toil and danger and fight against floods of waters which threaten to break through and overwhelm him. Dark and dismal is his lot, but he is at least shielded from the danger of wild beasts and birds of prey whilst he remains in the mine; they do not dare to penetrate the "secret place" in which he abides.

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

From this receiving of heavenly wisdom, truth from above, into good and receptive minds, comes the understanding of Divine law which leads us so to walk before God that we may become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1. 4), symbolised by gold—another object of the miner's quest. The crude ore, as gathered from the mine, had to be completely crushed and the pure gold refined,—an apt picture of the crushing, fiery experiences which are necessary to us before the fine gold of the Divine nature can be revealed in us. But when at length that longed-for end has been achieved, comes the turn of the iron. Iron, too, is a symbol, a symbol of earthly things that are strong and unyielding, and in this connection an apt illustration of the strong, irresistible rule that is to be established upon earth after the "sons of God" of this Age have been clothed upon with the Divine nature and shone forth *"as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father"*. (Matt. 13. 43). It is this event for which the world is waiting, as seen so clearly by Paul when he said *"the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"* (Rom. 8. 19).

Even this strong rule of the coming Age

cannot be set up without prior preparation and endurance. The strength of that kingdom lies in the fact that its rulers, its administrators, have all been previously tried in the fire and found worthy. Iron is weak and valueless until it has been smelted from its ore in a blast furnace, and then worked by rolling, forging and hammering until all its latent strength is brought out. So with the rule of the Messianic Age. Its force, its power, its authority, its very effectiveness, is not derived merely from an arbitrary decree of the Most High, but from the rigorous course of development and testing to which its "princes" have been subjected. The "kings and priests" of that Age will have found their way to that position through the darkness of the mine workings and therefore the "iron" that they have produced is adequate to every demand that will be made upon it. The kingdom will not break in pieces like other kingdoms, but it shall stand for ever. (Dan. 2. 44).

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

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

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

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

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

"The idea of the consummation of all things given us in the New Testament is never that of our being carried away to a distant heaven, but of a return of the Son of Man to a re-created earth, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ."

(Bishop of Chichester, 1943)

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

5. The Apostles and the Dispensational Change

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12. 1-9

It is most instructive to take note of the preparatory steps adopted by Divine Providence to drive home to the Apostolic mind the tremendous fact that they were living and labouring amid the far-reaching trends and tendencies of a world-shaking dispensational change. An old-established order was passing away and a new one almost imperceptibly coming in. An Institution, established some fourteen centuries previously was creaking ominously towards dissolution, while that which was to replace it was as yet only in its 'scaffolding' stage.

It is not easy to stand amid times whirling machinery, as it grinds out the 'old', and shapes out the 'new', to appreciate the portents and possibilities of the change. It is much easier for the subsequent generations, on looking back, to understand and evaluate the meaning of the trends and movements which have accompanied the change, or grown out of it, as it progressed from cause to conclusion. It is not any matter for wonder that it took the Apostolic nucleus of the Church so long after Pentecost as it did, to learn and appreciate the now patent fact that the most important change since the birth of their nation at Sinai was then under way. If, by way of comparison, this England of ours, with a full thousand years of growth and development behind it, were slowly but surely crumbling away, while a new structure was slowly assuming a ghost-like shadowy shape all around, no blame would sully our character, if for the time we failed to comprehend the true nature of the change or the specific reason therefore.

The nation and polity of Israel had stood, with but slight intermission, since the Exodus. Various changes in the form of its government had occurred—Judges and Kings and Priestly supremacy—but essentially and politically the nation, as such, had continued the same throughout the whole period. And as far as the Priestly and Rabbinic expectation was concerned there seemed no then present reason why it should not continue for generations and centuries more. With all the recorded wealth of prophetic forecast behind them, as then by them understood, they might even have expected their Law and their nation to continue as long as the sun, moon, and stars ran through their heavenly courses.

But Scripture contained a second line of evidence which fore-indicated a condition of 'change'. Another Leader of the people—one like to Moses—was forecast to come; a High Priest of a new order was fore-spoken about; a New Covenant with better promises was foretold and provided for. All this betokened supersession and change. But even so, time was required for the great fact to register upon the Apostolic, and unofficial believer's, minds that that fore-indicated change was then under way, and that the change was of so drastic a nature that it would sweep the whole nation away from their standing before God, and from the land of their fathers.

The first premonition of this change may be seen in the thanksgiving prayer which Jesus uttered when He came to realise that God was hiding things from the wise and prudent leaders of the people and revealing them to the babes. (Matt. 11. 25-26). The manner of his future teaching—in parabolic language—also further testifies to the same fact. (Matt. 13. 11-17). But the most obvious indication was set forth in his final words ere He withdrew from the Temple for the last time (Matt. 23. 34-38). "Your House" said the Master "is left unto you desolate."

Though most of the Apostles knew this, its import did not register itself upon their consciousness with sufficient perspicacity to influence and direct them in their actions and teachings, for several years subsequent to Pentecost. Indeed, in some cases, special disclosures and revelations had to be made even to the previously selected leaders in the Church ere the great fact registered and went home. Already we have noted the setting for one such revelation.

Let us now note how Divine Providence drove the fact home by many experiences and in many diverse ways. After the first persecution, in which Stephen lost his life, the disciples became scattered from Jerusalem throughout the length and breadth of the land, (presumably in small groups, or as single families) as well as beyond the sea. When the ferocious chief persecutor was converted the persecution subsided, and the scattered little companies enjoyed a season of peace and quietness. (Acts 9. 31). During this quiet intermission Peter embarked upon what might be termed a journey of Pastoral

Visitation, passing through Lydda and other unnamed places till he arrived eventually at Joppa. (Acts 9. 43). At this place the Pastoral Apostle received a vision which initiated a far-reaching change in the direction of the young Church's ministry. Hitherto only believers of Jewish birth had been sought and received into the Church. At Cæsarea Peter opened the door to the first Gentile convert and was led to see and express the conviction that henceforth, in every nation, all who believed and lived accordant with that belief would be acceptable to God. This was the first significant departure from the age-long exclusiveness of favour accorded to the Israelite people. Here began one of those vital changes which left its mark indelibly upon the course of the Christian Church.

To introduce this change Peter was made the recipient of an extraordinary vision—a vision thrice repeated—in response to which he went across the threshold of a Gentile home, to speak words which the Lord God had given him to say. While thus speaking he had the unprecedented experience of witnessing the tokens of the Holy Spirit's gifts fall upon his Gentile auditors. As with Jesus at Jordan; as with the assembly in the Upper Room (Acts 2. 1-4) so here at Cæsarea, the Holy Spirit was poured forth to initiate a new and vital phase in the Callings and directings of God. This is a most important point for consideration, for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit's gifts and power was an indication that Heaven was leading the way. It was comparable to the lifting of the glory-cloud in the wilderness—the sure token that the Camp must break up and move forward on its way.

Peter's act in entering a Gentile Home and eating bread at an alien table was considered suspect when he returned, at length, to Jerusalem (Acts 11. 1-3) though after hearing his defence his ultra-orthodox critics had nothing more to say at the time, beyond the curt remark "*Then to the Gentile also hath God granted repentance unto life*". The record goes on to say that they "*glorified God*" for the grant, but their later record—at least this is true of some—shows how little they approved and acquiesced in this Gentile entry into the Church. This half-hearted reluctance to accept the Gentiles on equal terms lay like a smouldering fire beneath the surface of the Church's life for several years, until, at last, it had to be uncovered and brought out into the open for full discussion in a specially convened session of the Church (Acts 15 6-21).

Now let us follow up another line of activ-

ity. Among those who had been scattered abroad at the time of Stephen's death were some 'Dispersion' Jews—men of Cyprus and Cyrene—who, greatly daring, had spoken to some Greeks at Antioch in Syria, preaching to them the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. "*And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord.*" (Acts 11. 21). Reports of this development reached the mother-church at Jerusalem, which forthwith despatched Barnabas to Antioch to investigate and report back. On arrival Barnabas saw the tokens of the grace of God at work in their midst and was glad. He then and there exhorted them to stand fast in the Lord. Thus, in this out-post of the Gentile world the Holy Spirit was preparing the field, altogether apart from Apostolic supervision, for a great work that was yet to come.

And further, yet another line of preparation must be noted. After Paul's arrest on the Damascus Way the Lord caused him to understand that he was a chosen vessel unto him to carry his Name before Israel, before kings, and before the Gentiles. But apparently the Master did not intend Paul to become too closely identified with the mother-church at Jerusalem, nor with its sphere of ministry. No sooner had he begun to speak for Christ in Damascus than plots to destroy him began to be made, in consequence of which he was compelled to flee. Three years retirement to Arabia followed: Returning thence in due time to Damascus, he found the fury of his foes still strong and aggressive, and deemed it needful to quit the city and flee elsewhere. (Gal. 1. 17; Acts 9. 23-25). He went now up to Jerusalem, and sought ways and means for joining the disciples there (Acts 9. 26-28). His stay among them was of short duration because the Lord Jesus himself peremptorily commanded him to leave that city. His sphere of service was not intended of the Lord to be in Jerusalem, but "*far hence among the Gentiles*" (Acts 22. 18-21). Additionally the risk to his life was accounted too great in that metropolis—hence, the brethren there sent him home to his native city, Tarsus. (Acts 9. 30). Here he was free from the dangers of Jerusalem, and cut loose from the mode and sphere of service directed by the mother-church in Judean territory.

Paul was not inactive during this period of enforced separation from the brethren, but, from testimonies afforded us in other places. (2 Cor. 11. 25-27; Gal. 1. 21-23) was witnessing away for his Lord, on independent lines, in

the bleak uplands behind Tarsus. The chosen vessel for the future missionary service was 'in-the-making' in the out-back districts of a Gentile land, awaiting there the Lord's due time, and the Lord's commissioning "Call". That Call came when Barnabas sought him out in Tarsus, soliciting his help for the great work in Antioch. (Acts 11. 25-26).

Actually this is one of the great land-marks in Church history. Though incipiently the Gentile call began in Cæsarea (and at the hand of another chosen servant) it was here in Antioch that the door of entry was thrown wide open to the Gentiles, and, coincident with the opening of that door, the Lord brought forth the man whom He had chosen and equipped for the task. The 'hour' brought forth the 'man', as it has done so many times at the turning points of history. This was the time and the occasion when, in order to equip and inspire him for the unprecedented task and danger, the Lord drew near in special measure, drew up the curtain that over-hung the great consummation at the end of distant years, and gave this chosen 'Name-bearer' a glimpse of Paradise restored. Before the colossal task began, earth's future king and Saviour accorded His faithful lieutenant-on-the-field a passing glimpse of victory achieved of foes destroyed, and the eternal peace begun. The 'Enemy of enemies' had also taken note, and forthwith deployed an angel to thwart and harass both man and work,—*"A messenger of Satan to buffet me."*

After one year's arduous and successful work in Antioch, the Holy Spirit broke through into that thriving congregation's activities, and said *"Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."* (Acts 13. 2). Thus the great missionary work in Gentile lands began.

For several years this missionary activity progressed but with increasing opposition directed by certain members of the mother-church at Jerusalem; an opposition so severe and persistent, that, at last, it became necessary to convene a general Council of the Church in Jerusalem to consider the facts of the situation, and to determine (under the Holy Spirit's control) the meaning and purpose of a long series of events dating back over these several changeful years. The Assembly began with much uncertain questioning and heated debate as, first, this party and then that, had its say, until Peter stood up in their midst to review the position as it had developed in connection with his own ministry. *"Brethren"* he said *"ye know how*

that a good while ago God made choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us, and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their heart by faith. Now therefore, why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that we shall be saved, through the Grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they. (Acts 15. 7-11). Peter's address had a quietening effect, and, in the subdued silence that followed Paul and Barnabas told of the signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. Then James, the great pillar of the Jerusalem Church, under a flash of inspiration, took up Peter's recital of events, and cast the essential facts into a new form. *"Brethren"* said James *"hearken unto me! Simeon hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles to take out a people for His Name."* Then, bringing prophecy to bear on the subject he continued, *"and to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written. After these things I will return and I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom My Name is called saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning. Wherefore my sentence is that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God"* (Acts 15. 13-21).

This interpretation and suggestion won approval from the whole assembly, and resulted, not only in an agreed declaration being sent, but a deputation also chosen and dispatched along with Paul and Barnabas to the brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to verify and substantiate the testimony which the two brethren would carry home.

The declaration of their findings ran *"... Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, 'Ye must be circumcised and keep the Law,' to whom we gave no commandment . . . For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things, that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well.*

Fare ye well." (Acts 15. 23-29).

This was a fateful, decisive Conference, because the Apostolic and official Judaism within the Church openly acknowledged and accepted the entry, on equal terms, of the Gentiles into the fellowship of the Saints. It was a painful and humbling experience for these long-exclusive people of God to realise that the Jewish nation had been set aside, and deprived of all its former privilege, while the formerly despised Gentile had been invited to accept the proffered grace of God, and to fill up the number of God's elect—"the fullness of the Gentiles".

The sentence (or judgment) of James submitted three main points for the consideration of the Assembly, as follows:—

- (a) that the events of the last few years betokened the out-going from favour of the unbelieving Jew.
- (b) that other co-related events indicated the incoming into favour of believing Gentiles, and
- (c) that the present coalition of believing Jews and Gentiles must continue until a people to bear God's Name had been taken out, after which, there would be a return of Divine favour to the outcast

nation, and a rebuilding of the Davidic system of government among them, and its establishment in the earth, so that all other non-believing men (Jew or Gentile) might then be given an opportunity to seek and find the Lord.

This decision of the Council stands thus as the distinct sequel to the Revelation Jesus vouchsafed to Paul, at the outset of his Gentile ministry. But for Paul's pertinacity and firmness all through the intervening years the mother-church at Jerusalem, with the Apostles at its head, would not have been enlightened and persuaded of the great and portentous fact that a mighty change was under way, and that the Church of God must stand separate and apart from the fallen nation, as it gradually fell away into hardness of heart, and blindness of understanding. God's judicial sword had been upraised to smite the apostate people, and only as the newly instituted Church kept itself apart from its racial kith and kin could they hope to survive when, at last, the sword of judgment fell. Paul learned that secret direct from the Lord; the Council learned it mainly through Paul's words and ministry.

(To be continued)

DAY OF REST

*A short series
discussing Sunday*

3. The Desecration of the Sabbath

The first Jewish converts to Christianity—the Apostolic Church—were scrupulous sabbath keepers. The New Testament shows that if they erred at all it was on the side of extremism in this respect, and several times they are counselled not to regard the keeping of new moons and sabbaths as ends in themselves, but only as means of grace. To this observance of the seventh day, however, the early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, speedily added the special observance of another—the first.

It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. So great an impression was made upon the minds of the first believers by that great happening, the event which changed their lives, that from the beginning they developed the custom of setting aside the first day of the week for assembly together, the breaking of bread or the sharing of a common meal, preaching, prayer and worship. This was quite a different thing from the Jewish sabbath, and was not intended to supplant that institution. It was additional, to commemorate something of

an entirely different nature. Traces of this custom are to be found in Acts 20. 7, telling of Paul's visit to Troas, where the first day of the week was evidently the usual meeting day, and in 1 Cor. 16. 2. For the first three centuries both days were kept by the Christian church, the seventh as a sabbath rest, and the first for assembly and worship. Doubtless, those Christians whose lives were spent in agricultural pursuits and in the country found the ideal more easy of attainment than those who laboured in the cities in one or another aspect of the then industrial system; but the consistent stand made by these early believers for their "first day" of assembly and worship had its reward when the Emperor Constantine by an Imperial Edict in A.D. 321 made the observance of Sunday, and the cessation of business and trade on that day, obligatory upon all dwellers in cities and towns. We literally owe our Sunday to Constantine!

Shortly afterwards, in A.D. 366, the Council of Laodicea formally released all Christians from any obligation to observe the Jewish sabbath—the seventh day. Quite naturally,

therefore, the first day of the week became the day of rest and cessation from work, the day of prayer and worship, and of assembling together with those "of like precious faith."

Who can doubt that the secret of much of the power inherent in the early Church, enabling them to "go forth conquering, and to conquer," resided in this sincere and faithful allegiance to the principles underlying the Fourth Commandment? That day spent in communion with God and with each other; that simple ritual of sharing with one's fellows; that pouring out of the heart and soul in an ecstasy of praise and worship before the Throne of the Most High, must surely have inspired them with new courage and fresh strength, and enabled them to withstand with serene confidence the ragings of the pagan power using its cruellest artifices to force from them a denial of their faith. As with Israel, so with the Christian Church, her best days and her happiest days were those during which the sabbath was observed, and when the blessed day fell into disuse and disrepute the virtue went out of communal spiritual life.

The Catholic Church during the Middle Ages maintained this early insistence upon the cessation of business and labour upon Sunday, exhorting to worship and religious devotion, and holding the day as set apart, in addition, to rest and recreation. This latter aspect was not prominent before, but a little reflection will show that innocent recreation is but the logical extension of rest and relaxation. It has been a great tragedy that the original recreation endorsed by the Church has developed into organised amusement, which is quite a different thing, leading to the evils of what is called the "Continental Sunday". It was probably at least partly in reaction to this that the Puritans during the time of Cromwell (sixteenth century) forced the observance of Sunday into the narrow grooves for which it has become proverbial. Every form of recreation was forbidden: Sunday was made to be a day of religious devotion without exception, and severe penalties were laid upon those who contravened the law. This bigoted intolerance was repeated a century or so later in America where the first colonists, seeking to escape from the religious tyranny of the Mother Country, became just as intolerant themselves. In both lands Sunday observance was quite as circumscribed with ritual and ordinance as was the sabbath in Judea at the time of the First Advent.

The history of this Age, then, depicts three phases in the keeping of the sabbath. The

early Church maintained the Divine principle of rest and worship inviolate, gradually transferring the seventh day rest to the first day, until by the end of the fourth century Sunday was firmly established. For the next twelve hundred years the Catholic Church insisted upon the weekly day of rest and recreation, this being followed in the English-speaking countries—not elsewhere—by a Puritan phase in which all the evils of Rabbinic sabbath legislation were repeated. A reaction was bound to come, and the Industrial Revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the consequent growth of big towns and cities, and, later, the increase in travel and amusement facilities gave that reaction its chance. Men and women, herded together in factories and workshops, oft-times compelled by the new commercialism to spend long days on monotonous or irksome tasks, hailed the weekly break as a means of indulging in diversions denied them during the week. Declining religious faith—and, within the past century, the spread of Darwinism and Rationalism—coupled with the virtual end of the "hell-fire" bogey, cast down the last barriers, and people who had never been given any conception of Sunday other than that of a rather gloomy period of religious devotion turned right about and made it their weekly day of amusement and entertainment.

Commercial interests have been quick to exploit this reaction. Each year witnesses an increase in the number of men and women who must labour on Sunday to provide their fellows, not with necessities, but with luxuries and entertainment. Church congregations dwindle whilst cinema queues lengthen. Not a little of the nervous strain of modern times, and the evils attendant thereon, must be attributed to the frantic rush for amusement and diversion, the excessive travel and holiday-making, so characteristic of our Sundays today. Men do not realise that in their failure to observe the Divine rule of a periodic slowing down of the tempo of daily life, a short breathing space wherein the physical frame can recover its vitality and the mind be refreshed by its dwelling on things higher than of this earth, they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.

So the desecration of the sabbath goes on. Gone, in the towns; fast going, in the countryside, are those quiet, peaceful days when the factories and mills were silent, the shops closed, and the people "*walked to the House of God in company*". The present generation is largely oblivious to any special significance

attached to the day. They know nothing of its past history; they know only that it is the day when they may cast aside the responsibilities and obligations of the week and expend their energy in every form of diversion the day can be made to hold. The sign of Noah is fulfilled in the land. *"They knew not, until the Flood came, and took them all away."*

One aspect of the Christian witness to-day, therefore, is a showing forth, by example and precept, of the Divine Will regarding the

observance of the day. At a time when the gospel of humanism is preached in active opposition to the gospel of Christ there is need for practical demonstration that the ways of God, which were made for the benefit of man, are eminently practicable, and in the long run the only ways which will ensure to man the full and free development of the wondrous possibilities latent in his nature.

(To be continued).

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. What answer can be made to the assertion sometimes made 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 possibly 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.

Those who are instructed in the Divine Plan know that the whole visible creation was brought into being by God, not as a temporary thing, 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 or the smallest stars; there are known at least to be 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 could not 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. 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 STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 6

SEPTEMBER, 1958

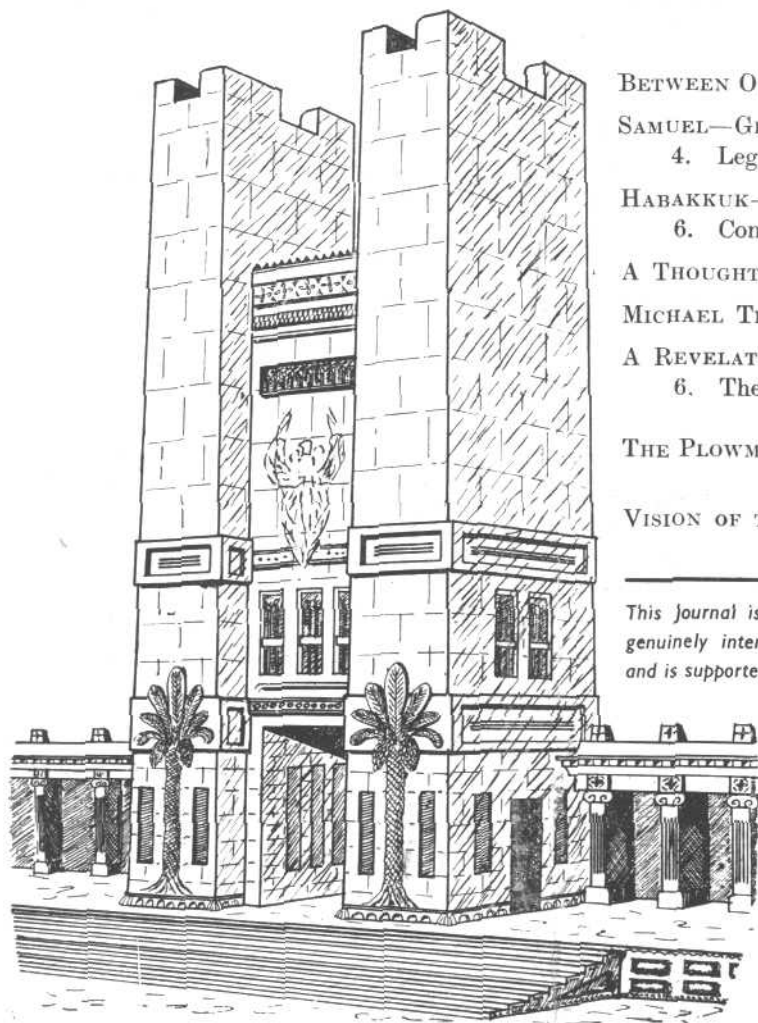
Published September 1st

Next issue October 15th

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



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Garibaldi, the great Italian liberator of the nineteenth century, said this to his followers. *"I promise you forced marches, short rations, bloody battles, wounds, imprisonment and death—but let him who loves home and fatherland follow me."* There spoke the true leader, a leader of men. That is the way Christ speaks to us; the promise is the same and the call is to those who love home and fatherland. Many a time in the world's history have men suffered all these things for their earthly country; the Christian is called to suffer all this, and more, for his heavenly country. The land for which we fight is the land of the future, God's Kingdom on earth as well as in heaven, and if we follow Christ through all these things victory is certain.

* * *

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

The Great Father above is the Shepherd Chief. I am His and with Him I want not.

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

Sometimes my heart is weak and falls down but He lifts it up again and draws me into a good road. His name is Wonderful.

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

It is dark there but I will not draw back, I will not be afraid, for it is there, between those mountains that the Shepherd Chief will

meet me and the hunger I have felt in my heart all through this life will be satisfied.

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

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

Between Ourselves

"Salute to Israel" is the title of a 52-page art paper brochure, profusely illustrated, which has been published by the Anglo-Israel Association at 3/6. It contains eight distinct articles, each by an authority in his particular field, dealing with various aspects of life in Israel at the present. There are fifty-one fine photographs to illustrate the subjects and altogether the book is an interesting production. To name but two of the articles by names well known in this country there is "Conquest of the desert" by Ritchie Calder, and "Israel and the Arts" by Prof. Norman Bentwich. The book is recommended to those interested in progress in the Holy Land. Obtainable from Anglo-Israel Association, 13 Mansfield Street, London, W.1, or from Bro. L. H. Bunker, 3 Ingram Close, Glebe Road, Stanmore, Middlesex.

Gone from us

Bro. R. G. Burton (London)
Sis. M. M. Burton (London)
Bro. W. Wileman (Doncaster)

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

SAMUEL—GREATEST OF THE JUDGES

4. Legacy to Posterity

The last days of Samuel were days of disappointment. The man whom he had anointed king over Israel had proved himself unworthy even before he had well taken up the duties of kingship. When the Ammonites threatened the land of Israel (I Sam. 11.) Saul sent to all the tribes calling upon their warriors to rally to his standard and resist the invader. Three hundred thousand men of Israel and thirty thousand men of Judah were at his side almost immediately. It is evident from the story that Saul had not yet fully assumed the reins of power; Samuel was still looked upon as the head of the State, and Saul in his call to arms joined his own name with that of the old judge. "*Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel . . .*" And Samuel, in his wisdom, called the people, not into immediate conflict with the enemy, but to Gilgal, one of Israel's sacred sites, that he might reason with them concerning their calling and their covenant, pleading with them and beseeching them that despite their great fault in asking God an earthly king, they might still walk before God in his ways and reap the blessings of obedience promised in the covenant. There is something grandly pathetic in this glimpse of the saintly old man, conscious perhaps that this was the last opportunity he would ever have to witness to his God before the people on a national scale, conscious certainly that his own days were numbered and his influence fading fast, pleading with the people that they might remain faithful. "*God forbid*" he exhorted earnestly "*God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and right way*" And then his mood changed—or was it that he realised a demonstration of the Divine disapproval of the nation's attitude was long overdue—and with vehemence he cried "*Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call unto the Lord, and he will send thunder and rain, that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king*". (I Sam. 12. 17). So Samuel called upon God, and there came thunder and rain, sweeping down upon the standing crops, crushing them to the earth, so that the people were affrighted and stricken with remorse.

Here was an enemy their king could not overcome; foreign invaders he would oppose and perhaps overthrow by his own prowess and that of his followers, but the powers of Nature only God could control. When they asked Samuel for a king like those of the other nations they had forgotten that. And now they came before him with some tardy acknowledgment of their sin. Too late, they relented of their purpose and came to their father in God for help in their dilemma.

It is to Samuel's credit that he did not take advantage of the situation to force a return to the old order. The people had asked for a king and had chosen a king, and now they should have their king. Samuel must have realised that all of this was in higher hands than his own, and that God had a purpose in permitting the institution of the monarchy. Moreover, Saul was now the Lord's anointed; he had been anointed by Samuel at the express command of God. Neither he nor the nation could go back on that now. So Samuel exhorted them to frame their national life within the limits of the new order but always in conformity with the laws of God, "*for*" said he, "*the Lord will not forsake his people for his great Name's sake; because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people*". A wonderful phrase, that, and one that stands as a beacon light through all Israel's history. No matter to what depths of unbelief and apostasy they have fallen, it is still and will always be true that they are the people of the Lord, that mainly from them is to come at last the nation which will shine forth from Jerusalem and turn the peoples of the earth to righteousness. There will be a remnant fitted for the purpose of the Lord.

Now that is true of spiritual Israel also on the higher plane. The Christian Church has been guilty of many failures, many denials of its Lord. Institutional Christianity has become a byword, and the lives of individual believers often a cause for reproach. But despite all this the purpose of God stands firm, and in his own due time He will have gathered a people, a remnant, from the work of these two thousand years, which will be amply qualified for the spiritual rule of the world, in association with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavens, throughout the Millennial Age. The Lord will not forsake his

people . . . because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people. Despite all the failures all the shortcomings, all the hardness of heart, there will stand revealed at the end of this Age two companies of "holy ones", one earthly, in the Promised Land, one heavenly, with Christ, in the glory beyond, each ready to take up its own part in the final work of world reconciliation. Samuel must have had faith in some such eventual outcome of God's work when he bade Israel on that day to walk before God in sincerity and truth.

There was not much more for Samuel to do in this life. Saul was beginning to take things into his own hands and at eighty years of age Samuel would not be able to do much to stop him. That faith in the hearts of the people that had kept the Philistine hosts at arm's length during Samuel's judgeship was ebbing away fast now. Saul was engaged in war with the ancient enemy during the greater part of his reign, and although he nominally acknowledged God and rendered due homage to Samuel there was little true religious feeling or piety in his make-up. Eventually the day came when, flushed with his victory over the Amalekites, he ignored the command of Samuel that all their flocks and herds and possessions were to be utterly destroyed, and retained the best of them as spoil. Samuel, learning of all this before he set out to meet Saul after the battle, knew that Divine judgment could not be much longer delayed. In that same night Samuel had heard the voice of the Lord saying to him "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments". And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night. (I Sam. 15. 11).

Did the old man's mind go back seventy years to that night when first he had heard the voice of the Lord, and upon his youthful ears had fallen the dread news of the doom of the house of Eli? What were the thoughts that possessed his mind as now he heard the sentence pronounced again? First it was his teacher who had been dispossessed, and Samuel kept in the favour of God; now it was his pupil who was cast off, and he himself remained. The wheel had turned full circle, the cycle of history had come back to its starting point, and again was Israel without a leader. Once more the full care of the nation before God must fall upon his shoulders. But there was a difference! In that long-since-gone day when Eli had been deposed, he himself had been in the first flush and bloom of

youth, with all the zeal and enthusiasm that is characteristic of youth. He had thrown himself into the work of God with all the zest and ardour of his young heart, and had worked—only his God knew how hard he had worked—to restore Israel to God and keep them there. But now he was old; physical and mental powers were failing. The will to serve was still there; but how could he take up the work of the reformer and the national leader again as he had done those many years ago, and discharge it with the effect that had changed the life of the nation in that day? How could God expect him to bear this new and crushing burden in the evening of his days? Wearily he got up and set out to make his way to where Saul awaited him.

"*Blessed be thou of the Lord*" was the bland greeting with which he was hailed as he came within sight of the jubilant king "*I have performed the commandment of the Lord*". Samuel had loved Saul, even as had all Israel, and he had spent a grief-stricken night with the Lord on the other man's account. But there was no softening nor any indication of his inner feelings in the curt, uncompromising reply that quickly swept the complacent smile from the king's face. "*What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?*" The old man was not going to be trifled with; he had in his younger days seen the dire result of Eli's own easygoing toleration of disregard for Divine laws and he was not going to condone or pass this by even though Saul were to him as a son. Saul immediately realised that the old prophet was in no mood for honeyed words and fair speeches, and hurriedly began to make excuses. He tried to explain that it was the fault of the people, that they had insisted upon keeping the best of the spoil alive "to sacrifice" he said hopefully "unto the Lord thy God"; as though to soften Samuel's stern demeanour by a compliment. He might have spared himself the trouble, for the old man brusquely interrupted his labouring words. "*Stay*" said Samuel "*and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night.*" And Saul had sullenly to listen to the sentence of excommunication which blasted all his hopes and schemes for a dynasty that should sit on the throne of Israel and bear his name through all succeeding generations. It was this happening that gave occasion for words that have been the inspiration for countless disciples throughout all ages since. "*Hath the Lord as great delight*" queried Samuel scornfully, "*in sac-*

rifice and offering as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams!"

That was the end. Samuel never came to see King Saul again. He retired to his home at Ramah and there he remained, whilst Saul went on hopelessly fighting the Philistines and never getting really free from their yoke. The king who was to have led the forces of Israel out to battle like the kings of other nations never succeeded in making Israel a truly independent kingdom. He never achieved the resounding victories for which his ardent followers hoped and for which purpose they had clamoured for his appointment. It was Samuel who had given the nation freedom—Samuel, who trusted not in carnal weapons but in the power of the living God, who had pinned his faith not to the prowess of men but to the Covenant of Moses. In rejecting the way of Samuel Israel had rejected the way of peace.

Israel went on fighting, and Samuel mourned for Saul, and for the blighting of a life that had opened with such promise, and for the disasters that must inevitably fall upon Israel. Until, in the fulness of time, there came to his inner consciousness, as it had done so many times in past years, that familiar Voice.

"How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite; for I have provided me a king among his sons".

The aged prophet might have been excused for demurring. His first venture at anointing a king had turned out an arrant failure. Israel was in worse condition than before. What guarantee could there be that this fresh attempt would turn out any better. If Saul got to know about it, he would certainly wreak his vengeance on Samuel. He could expect nothing less than death for treason of that nature. It is clear that Saul was by now king in every sense of the word and Samuel's influence in national affairs was nil. But that was only as man seeth; God had work for him to do yet, work that would bear much fruit in days to come. Samuel demurred no longer but took up his staff and made his way to Bethlehem.

The story of David's anointing is well known. It was the last service that Samuel performed. He handed the torch, all but dropping from his failing fingers, to the fifteen-year-old lad who stood before him, so fresh and lovable in his innocent and vigorous

youth. The friendship that sprung up on that memorable day between these two, between whom three generations arched their years, was never broken. In after days, David, fleeing from Saul, came to Samuel at Ramah for protection. He found the old man presiding over a school of the prophets, a national leader no longer, but still in the intensity of his zeal using what remained to him of physical and mental strength in the giving of instruction in the things of God to a few young men who looked up to him as pastor and father.

Could there have been a more fitting close to such a life? From being pre-eminent in affairs of state, one to whom the whole nation looked for guidance and judgment; from being the defender of his people against their inveterate enemies the Philistines and the means of freedom from those enemies over a lifetime of years; from making and unmaking kings; from all this he had retired into the seclusion of his native village, content to spend his last days in the day-by-day teaching of a handful of young lads.

How many who in these later days have exercised great privilege of service and held prominent position before the Lord's people have found themselves able so gracefully to give place and serve at the end in such unnoticed and humble position, if so be that they might thus still glorify the God in Whose Name they have done all things? The humility of Samuel, as revealed by this final phase of his recorded history, throws a flood of light upon his character, a character that in this respect is worthy of all our emulation.

The King of Israel came on one more occasion, when the madness that was to darken the last years of his life was already gaining its hold upon him. It is a strange account, this story of the three bands of soldiers who went, each in turn, to arrest David at Samuel's Ramah retreat, and how they were overawed and subdued by the environment in which they found themselves, falling down and prophesying with the prophets they found there; and how Saul, impatient at the non-return of his messengers, went himself to Ramah and was himself overtaken by the same prophetic fervour. He fell down and prophesied before Samuel, we are told, and lay until the morning; and then got up and went away. (I Sam. 19. 13-24). To understand this strange passage we must realise that the term "prophesying" included many kinds of emotional orations and it was more than likely that Saul's outburst on this occasion was a more or less in-

coherent frenzy born partly of baffled rage at his inability to win back Samuel's support and those blessings of God which he had lost by his own selfwill and pride, and partly of his fearful dread, both of David, whom he now knew to be the Lord's anointed, and the ever-present Philistine menace. It is hardly likely that the Holy Spirit spoke in any way through this man whom God had rejected. The momentary excitement over, Saul arose, and for the last time passed out of sight and ken of the one who had placed him upon the throne and established the kingdom under him.

So Samuel breathed his last, an old man and full of days. He died as he had lived, in the company of the Lord's people and in the exercise of devoted ministry. The last sight of

which he was conscious, as the failing eye-lids flickered down over the serene eyes, was that of the young men, the sons of the prophets, gathered around his couch, mute promise of the continuation of his life's work. He rested from his labours, but his works continued. Israel was to pass through strange and troublous times, but the light would break through again and the standard which Samuel had held aloft for nearly a century would be honoured once more. Many a generation yet to be born was to rise up and bless the name of Samuel, his sterling faithfulness to God and to his fellows echoing down the corridors of time for ever.

THE END

HABAKKUK—PROPHET OF FAITH

An exposition of the
Book of Habakkuk

Chapter 6—Conclusion

"Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken." (Ezek. 30. 8). There is a ring of finality about those words. Well may there be, for they speak of the most comprehensive and spectacular judgment against evil that will ever be witnessed upon the earth, not even excepting the judgment of the Flood. The sword of the Lord will descend, and things on the earth will never be the same again. It is this final arising of God to judgment in Armageddon that is prefigured in the remainder of Habakkuk's vision.

That "Selah" in the middle of verse 9 divides the "Day of his Preparation" from Armageddon, or as it is sometimes called, "Jacob's Trouble". The preparation is ended; the nations have been gathered together in the symbolic "Valley of Jehoshaphat" and God is ready to reveal himself for the salvation of his people. To this time belong the events of Zechariah's vision recorded in the last three chapters of his prophecy. Israel has been regathered and is settled in prosperity and faith in the land of promise; the forces of evil have laid their plans and set out to crush this new power for righteousness which has arisen in the earth with its centre at Jerusalem; there is a temporary and partial success—"half of the city shall go forth into captivity" (Zech. 14.2)—probably a cleansing

of the land from fainthearted and faithless elements; and then, with the people and their governors waiting in faith and assurance the further onslaught of their enemies, the unbelievable thing happens—God intervenes.

Habakkuk in his vision saw the breaking of the storm which had been gathering, and all the forces of Nature joined together in one great onslaught against the earth. Behind the storm he saw the majestic figure of the God of Israel, coming forth to judgment. "Thou didst cleave asunder the rivers of the earth" cried the prophet in wonder, as he saw the earth rent by the breaking forth of mighty waters from its depths. "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the inundation of the waters swept along; the abyss uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." Habakkuk saw a repetition of the Flood of Noah's day, sweeping all the enemies of God away and overwhelming them in its depths. "Upon the wicked he shall rain burning coals, fire and brimstone, and a burning tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psa. 11. 6). The word which is rendered "deep" in the A.V. is the Hebrew *tehom*, the primeval chaotic abyss which harks back to the waste and void condition of the earth described in Gen. 1. 2, the condition in which it stood before God began to prepare it for human habitation. The use of the same word here seems

to indicate that Habakkuk witnessed a gigantic upheaval of the earth and the bursting forth of the waters of the abyss, destroying completely all the works of man. *"The deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high"* as though with a roar like thunder the earth opened to permit the uprush of a giant waterspout from its depths. That is the picture, and it fitly describes what may yet prove to be one salient feature of the Last Days, an uprising of the peoples which will shake and destroy the symbolic mountains, the autocratic kingdoms of earth.

But the storm is not finished at this—it increases in fury. The sky grows darker and the sable curtain of clouds overcomes the sun and moon so that they seem to withdraw themselves and retire from the scene. *"The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of thine arrows they went, at the shining of thy glittering spear."* (vs. 11). *"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood"* says Joel, referring to the same happenings. The sixth chapter of Revelation, describing the breaking of the "sixth seal" uses a very similar expression in connection with the same events. In Habakkuk's vision it is as though the brilliancy of the lightning (the "light of the arrows" and the "glittering spear"—the darting flashes being likened to the celestial arrows and spears of the Almighty shooting down upon his enemies) has so outshone the heavenly luminaries that they have ceased from their onward progress across the sky and gone into the storm clouds out of sight. There is an allusion here to that occasion when this literally happened, the day that the "sun stood still" when the Lord fought for Joshua against the Canaanites.

Now the Lord is pictured coming forth at the head of his legions. *"Thou didst march through the land in indignation; thou didst thresh the nations in anger. They wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed"* and then, following Rotherham, *"thou hast crushed the head out of the house of the lawless one, barring the foundation up to the neck"*. (vs. 12-13). Here is depicted the active intervention of God to the physical scattering of the invading host, an assertion that God has gone forth in order to effect the salvation of his people, regathered Israel, and the intimation that He is accompanied in this onward march by those who are described as his "anointed". The New Testament gives the clue to the fulfilment of this vision by describing the com-

ing again of the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent accompanied by his saints, the Christian Church of this Age, to establish the earthly Messianic Kingdom. The Church—the assembly of true Christians everywhere irrespective of denominational affiliation—is that "anointed", associated with the Lord Christ in the rulership and administration of the Kingdom. *"They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years"*. (Rev. 20. 4).

This allusion to the "anointed" being with him at the time He is revealed in glory for the defence of Israel is particularly apt; for our Lord will have already returned and gathered his Church before these events of "Jacob's Trouble" have commenced, and hence quite logically will have his Church with him when He is revealed in judgment against the evil forces and in mercy upon those that have put their trust in him. This verse in Habakkuk therefore corresponds very well with the "opening of heaven" in Rev. 19 where the rider upon the white horse emerges, followed by the "armies which were in heaven" to do battle with the forces of evil gathered upon the earth.

Here there is another "Selah", another pause in the Temple service. At the last "Selah" the worshippers were able to contemplate the vision of God arising to judgment; at this one they see him marching through the earth scattering his enemies; when the story is resumed the work is complete and the workers of evil have been utterly routed. The prophet looks back on what he has seen. *"Thou didst strike through with his staves (weapons) the head of his villages. They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters."* (vs. 14-15). The first phrase in the 14th verse is very significant. It implies that God has turned the enemies' own weapons back upon themselves—thou didst strike through with his weapons the chief of his warriors" is one rendering, thus paralleling the expression in verse 12 "the head out of the house of the lawless one". There seems to be some suggestion here that the mighty army of God will in part at least encompass its own destruction by means of its own weapons. The prophet permits himself one word of exultation in a minor key. *"They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me"* he says, identifying himself with those of his people who would be living when the great day came—"their rejoicing was as to devour

the poor secretly"—a word reminiscent of Ezekiel 38 where the same host plans to swoop down upon an apparently defenceless people "to take a spoil and to take a prey".

There the vision ends. The evil host has been scattered. Israel has been delivered, and Habakkuk is satisfied. From what he has seen he is content; he knows now that even though the time be long and Israel suffer yet further agonies of distress and persecution, at the appointed season God will come forth and save them with an everlasting salvation, and in that knowledge he can rest.

But although Habakkuk was content, he was by no means unconscious of the severity of that final trial upon Israel. Well did he realise the horror of the situation; although his heart leapt at the prospect of Israel's final glory, it sank at the thought of the trouble that must needs precede it. And it is here, in this 16th verse, that we stumble across one of the most amazing statements to be found in any of the prophecies; amazing because it reveals Habakkuk's own knowledge that he himself was destined to live again upon earth and witness for himself the stirring events which he had just seen in vision.

"I heard" he says "... and I trembled in my place, that I should rest, waiting for the day of trouble, when he that shall invade them in troops cometh up against the people." This is the Revised Version rendering. It declares in plain language that Habakkuk expected to rest in death until the events which he described come to pass. The implication is plain that he expected his period of "rest" then to end that he might share with his people the experience of that great day of invasion and deliverance. Leeser renders the passage "*That I should rest till the day of distress, till the withdrawing of the people that shall invade us with his troops.*" There seems to be no doubt that this is the literal meaning of the text, and the amazing thing is that Habakkuk saw so clearly that he, and those who, like him, were "heroes of faith" of old, were destined to be raised from the dead in order to witness the overthrow of the powers of this world and take over the reins of government on behalf of earth's new King, Christ Jesus. "*I will restore thy governors as at first, and thy princes as at the beginning*" says God through the prophet Isaiah. Habakkuk must have known the inner meaning of those words, and looked forward in faith to the day when he should stand once more upon earth and witness Israel's final glory. "*For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with*

great mercies will I gather thee" (Isa. 54. 7).

It is this same understanding, and this same time, to which Zechariah refers when, speaking of the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem, he says "*In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about*" (Zech. 12. 6). These "governors" are the resurrected "Ancient Worthies" or "Old Testament Saints" as they are variously called, and Zechariah's words indicate that they will have returned from the grave and be in control of affairs in the regathered holy nation when the great onslaught is launched.

It is at this climax that Habakkuk has given expression to one of the finest expressions of faith to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. The confidence engendered by the vision he has seen is such that he can now regard the greatest of disasters with assurance. Even though every aspect of his people's national life be destroyed, every activity prove fruitless and the very land itself turn against them, still will he not only believe, but will even find occasion for joy. "*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*"

No matter how adverse the earthly circumstances, he knew that all was well with the Plan of God, because God himself was working out that Plan. On that note he ends; a note of utter confidence and joyous confidence. His faith has progressed from a silent faith to an ebullient faith, a faith of peace to a faith of joy, and in his ecstasy of heart he set his prophecy to music that it might be used for ever afterwards in the Temple service to the glory of God, a living witness to the faith of the man who saw in vision what God will one day do in reality, and laid himself down to rest in utter confidence that so surely as God had spoken, so surely would it come to pass.

(THE END)

"Scripture is like a modern continent, with extreme and unhealthy congestion at certain well-known centres and vast tracts of country uncultivated and unknown."

Sylvester Horne

A Thought for the Month

Leaning on the parapet, he watched the steam ferry-boat making its leisurely way across the river. A queer, ungainly looking craft it was, sitting squat and flat on the water, its two tall funnels standing up straight, one at each end of the motley load of vans, lorries and cars. For more than fifty years now it has plied to and fro between its two landing stages, never venturing up or down stream more than has been necessary to avoid other river traffic. As often as not it makes part of the journey floating sideways in the grip of the tide, which flows strongly at this point. Its paddle wheels make a great deal of noise and throw up a lot of spray, but the boat never gets up any considerable speed, for it is heavy and cumbersome and the distance it has to travel is so short.

A short, sharp blast echoed imperiously over the water. A small motor vessel, making its way down river, was warning the slow-moving ferry of its approach. The heavily laden craft hesitated, slowed down, its paddles whirling furiously first in one direction and then in the other as it manoeuvred and turned in the endeavour to leave a clear passage for the faster boat. The other vessel deviated slightly from its course and passed athwart the stern of the ferry; the sound of its engines came sharply upon the ear as it speeded up and soon it was but a speck in the distance, heading for the open sea. Now the ferry-boat was at the far landing stage, its paddles slowly revolving to hold it stationary there against the urge of the swiftly flowing tide.

And he thought to himself how many Christian organisations and institutions become like that ferry-boat. They pass continually backward and forward across the river of Truth at the point where they began their corporate work, unceasingly repeating the same round of activity and always maintaining the same outlook, their paddles constantly threshing up the same water and fighting always against the flowing tide which would carry them to shores undreamed of and show them vistas of which they had not conceived. And when perchance there happens along a band of Christians not content to man a ferry-boat, but would travel down the ever widening and ever deepening river of Truth until it merges into the ocean of the fulness of Divine revelation, there is much ado to keep the institution with all its lading well clear of the

venturesome rovers, lest there be a collision, and untoward consequences to vested interests.

There are so many to-day who want their religion and their Christian activity made safe for them. It is so easy to join the crew of the ferry-boat, to be very busy with the work of taking travellers across the river and back again, day after day. But it is the pioneer, travelling the course of the river, who feels the upward lift of the heaving billows, senses the keen air and fresh wind, and comes out into the open sea, upon the horizon of which he sees, dimly yet but ever growing clearer, the palaces and temples, the cliffs and mountains, of that glory land which is the world that shall be; the crew of the ferry-boat never see aught but the grimy buildings and smoky factories of the earthly city within which their whole lives are being spent.

Let us be pioneers, like those Pilgrim Fathers who set out to colonise America. "*The Lord hath yet more Truth to break forth from His Holy Word*" was the parting charge to them of their Pastor, John Robinson, and in the power of that admonition they went forth to lay the foundations of a new world. "*The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream, and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.*" Only so may our Christian witness be effective; no witness that is not based upon the best and deepest understanding of the Divine Plan that it is possible for us to attain can be expected to meet the needs and the problems of this generation; the catchwords and allusions that were intelligible to men and women generations ago mean nothing to their children to-day, and so it comes about that it is not only Truth that is progressive, but witness is progressive also. Let us see to it that our own vision of the coming Kingdom is that which is seen, not from the deck of a city ferry-boat, flat down on the muddy river waters, but from the bows of sea-going vessels, high up on the ocean billows, where sea and sky alike tell of the majesty and power of God in creation and revelation.

Those who would successfully govern the world must have both an inexhaustible capacity, and an insatiable appetite, for work. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"

MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

*A Princely Champion
of Righteousness*

So many theories have been woven around the identity of the Divine messenger who appears in the Scriptures under the name of Michael, that one does not realise at first thought that his name only occurs five times in the Bible. A slender basis, this, upon which to build, and yet there is sufficient to afford ground for an interesting study of this intriguing personality—Michael the archangel.

Although Scripture references to Michael are very scanty, he does figure prominently in other Hebrew literature. It would not do to take these other allusions as the basis for belief, but they help to illuminate the subject and make the Bible statements more easily understood.

Michael is called "the archangel" in the Epistle of Jude (Jude 9) and "the prince" or "chief prince" in the Book of Daniel. Another passage in which his name is mentioned is chapter 12 of Revelation, where the reference is a symbolic one. The only other angelic being referred to by name in the Bible is Gabriel, who appears both in Daniel and in Luke's Gospel. Gabriel is not called an archangel, but the Jews counted him as such, and in fact believed that there were seven archangels in the courts of heaven, each commissioned to carry out certain duties. In this the Jews probably based their ideas largely upon Babylonian mythology, for the Babylonians believed in the existence of seven "Watchers" who controlled the affairs of heaven and earth in subordination to the three supreme gods, Anu, the god of heaven, Ea the god of the sea, and Marduk (Bel or Merodach in the Old Testament) the god of the earth. It is to these "Watchers" that reference is made in Dan. 4, 13 and 17, where Nebuchadnezzar saw "a watcher and a holy one" come down from heaven, and where the decree against the great tree was said to be pronounced by the "watchers."

In the time of Daniel, and onward into the days of the New Testament, this belief in the seven archangels was general among the people of Israel. By common consent Michael was esteemed the leader of the seven; his especial work was the protection and defence of Israel, the chosen people. Hence he was thought of in the light of a great heavenly warrior, always ready to do battle against Israel's foes. He was known as the "Prince of

Israel". Next in the popular mind came Raphael, (not mentioned in the Bible) who was commissioned to care for the material interests of men and heal their diseases. Gabriel was the messenger of God, having jurisdiction also over the lost Garden of Eden (which the Jews believed had been preserved and would be thrown open to them at the Last Day). The remaining four were Uriel, placed in charge of the earth and of Tartarus; Raguel, who controlled the movements of the sun, moon and stars, that they might serve man's needs in giving light and warmth to the earth; Saraquel, who was the guardian of the imprisoned evil spirits; and Remiel, archangel of the resurrection. We need take no account of the five names not mentioned in the Bible but we do well to note the harmony of Scripture in respect to Michael and Gabriel, that the one is the spiritual defender and princely champion of Israel, and the other the messenger of God.

In our examination we have to bear in mind the suggestion that is often made to the effect that Michael was the Son of God in his pre-human state, prior to his coming to earth as Jesus of Nazareth. There is no basis for the acceptance or rejection of this suggestion other than the four passages in which Michael is mentioned, and these four passages will be examined in turn.

"Yet Michael the archangel" says Jude (vs.9) "when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." The incident to which Jude refers is recorded in an apocryphal book, but not in the Old Testament. It is evident that Jude's readers understood the allusion quite well, and the importance of the verse to the present study lies in Israel's belief in the existence of a heavenly being, Michael the archangel, at the time of the Exodus, one of sufficiently exalted rank to challenge and oppose the devil and yet so much subordinate to God Himself as meekly to leave the issue of the matter in His hands. Whether such an incident as is referred to by Jude actually occurred or not is beside the point. Jude could have access to sources of information now denied to students, but the verse is important as testifying to Jude's acceptance of the fact of Michael's existence.

In this perhaps lies an indication that Michael should not be identified in person with the Lord Jesus Christ. The attitude and words credited to him seem more appropriate to an angel, even if of high rank, than to the One who was the Father's Executive in all the works of creation. There seems something out of harmony with the dignity of his position in thinking of him as involved in this kind of controversy with the Devil.

There is a more definite and detailed picture of Michael in the book of Daniel. This venerable prophet had been engaged in earnest prayer for the return of Divine favour to Israel, and Gabriel had been sent to him with the message of the "seventy weeks" which were to culminate in the appearance of Messiah. That was in the first year of Darius, the year that Babylon fell (538 B.C.). Two years elapsed before Cyrus succeeded Darius and issued his famous edict permitting the Jews to return to their own land. According to chapter 10 it was three years later still, in the third year of Cyrus, that Daniel, mourning and fasting three whole weeks because of the apparent non-fulfilment of the promise, was granted another visit from the Divine messenger. Gabriel's name is not mentioned this time—chapter 10—but it is fairly obvious from chap. 11, 1, that the messenger is the same one who visited Daniel in the first year of Darius. Now Gabriel, in coming to Daniel, says (11. 12-13) "*. . . from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand . . . thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I left him there with the king of Persia.*"

This is a record of a historical incident. Daniel did actually behold and converse with a heavenly being. And if Gabriel is thus demonstrated to be an actual personality, then the Michael who came to his assistance must be equally real. There can be no doubt about Gabriel, for the Gospel of Luke (1. 19 and 26) tells of his visits to Zacharias and to Mary the mother of Jesus, and it follows logically that angels bearing these names do exist, and that Michael the archangel did in fact come to the assistance of Gabriel the archangel in his conflict with the "prince of the kingdom of Persia".

Here we have some evidence of the activities of the "fallen angels". The Jews held that each nation had an angelic "prince" which had much to do with that nation's destinies.

Just as Michael was their own champion, so Persia and Greece had evil angelic champions. The record in Daniel lends support to this belief; if it is believed that Daniel does describe a visit of the angel Gabriel to Daniel, that the story as written is literally true, then it must equally be believed that Gabriel was successfully resisted in his mission for twenty-one days by the angelic "prince" of Persia, and was only able to resume his duty when Michael, the "prince" of Israel, came to his aid.

What was the nature of that spiritual conflict? Certainly not a warfare in the sense that men know warfare. Much more likely that it was a spiritual battle between good and evil angels *for the mastery of the mind of Cyrus*, the king of Persia. It is claimed by scholars that the first verse of chapter 10 should read "*first*" year of Cyrus, and not "*third*"; and this is the rendering of some copies of the Septuagint. If this is so, it would bring this conflict to the time when Cyrus issued his famous decree for the Return from the Captivity. Surely the evil "prince" of Persia must have been busily engaged attempting to influence the mind of Cyrus against issuing such a decree, one which would advance and help to fulfil the Divine Plan. He must have suggested every possible objection to the proposed course of action, labouring in the interests of his master, Satan the Prince of Evil. And by making use of the many men in the Persian court who were amenable to evil suggestions there might be a very considerable force exerted against the issue of that decree which meant so much to Israel.

Is this why Gabriel was detained twenty-one days, endeavouring to counteract these evil suggestions by correspondingly good ones influencing the king in the direction of carrying out the Divine designs? It had been prophesied by Isaiah two centuries earlier that Cyrus would set Israel free and become God's instrument for this purpose (Isa. 44. 28 and 45. 1). Perhaps Gabriel brought this fact to the king's mind and endeavoured to fire him with the ambition to effect what was written of him. But evidently the suggestions of evil were becoming predominant, until Israel's own champion, the archangel Michael, came upon the scene and Gabriel was able to resume his interrupted commission with Daniel.

Michael was triumphant. Those spiritual powers of evil which dominated Persian affairs were overthrown, at least for the time being. The nature and progress of Michael's intervention in the spiritual sphere, beyond

the veil of human sense, cannot be guessed or described, but its results—if this really was in the first year of Cyrus—are obvious in the favour shown by Cyrus to the Jews for the rest of his life, besides the famous Decree which gave them liberty. If the liberation from captivity which took place at that time was due to the valiant endeavours of Michael the archangel, this would be quite in harmony with the Scriptural statement that “in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia . . . *the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation . . .*” (2 Chron. 36. 22-23; Ezra 1. 1-2).

These two incidents, the one in Jude and the one in Daniel 10 are records of historical events. They describe Michael's actions in the execution of his duty. The other two references to his name, one in Dan. 12. 1 and the other in Rev. 12, occur in what is called, technically, “apocalyptic”, that is to say, prophetic descriptions of coming events expressed in symbolic language of such a nature *that only the initiated can understand it*. In such symbolic passages, as is well known and understood amongst us, figures and things familiar to the prophets and the people of their day were used as symbols of the real truths about which the prophets were talking—hence our use of the term “symbolic”. Thus in Rev. 4 the lamb is a symbol of Christ, in Rev. 19 the woman seated upon a beast, an apostate church allied with a corrupt civil power; and in Rev. 21, Jerusalem pictures the new government that will be set up during the Millennium. The references to Michael in these two symbolic passages must be interpreted in harmony with their symbolic context.

The eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel furnish a symbolic description of the progress of events affecting Daniel's people from the time of Persia to the establishment of the Kingdom. As the account unfolds and develops from the simple conflicts of Persian and Greek kings to the much more complex struggles of modern times it becomes increasingly evident that the “kings” of chap. 11 picture great dynasties and military powers until at last the final world power of evil which is broken before the incoming Kingdom is symbolised by the last king. Now of this time, the time of great trouble such as “was not since there was a nation”, the time of the resurrection of the dead, the time of reward for the faithful followers of God, the angel says “*At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the*

children of thy people”. There can be no dispute as to the time of this event, for there is only one point in world history at which the dead are to be raised; likewise there can be no dispute as to the identity of the great Deliverer who is to stand up at that time. It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. That is the great truth to which Gabriel referred. But since to Daniel and his people, knowing nothing of Christ and having as yet only an incomplete idea of the Messiah, some symbol capable of conveying the idea was necessary, the angel adopted the appropriate and obvious symbol of Israel's spiritual champion—Michael the archangel. That was enough for Daniel and his compatriots. That assured them of the certainty of coming deliverance; and as we read the passage and then our Lord's interpretation of it in Matt. 24 we realise that Michael the archangel was used as a symbol or figure of the world's great deliverer, Jesus the Son of God.

A similar usage is met with in Rev. 12. There will be no attempt here to interpret this much discussed chapter, but only to point out that since it is so very obviously a highly symbolic chapter the reference to Michael and his angels is evidently symbolic also. After the “catching up to heaven” of the “man child”, away from the threatened grasp of the dragon, we are told (vs. 7 and 8) “*and there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels; and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.*” The dragon is symbolic of a strong earthly power—Pagan Rome; this much at least is agreed by most expositors—and Michael, with his angels, must be symbolic of the deliverer which engages this dragon in combat and overthrows his power in that “heaven” which he occupied at the time of the opening of the vision (vs. 1). To say more than this would involve a complete exposition of Rev. 12, which is outside the scope of this article. Suffice it now to say that here, as in Daniel 12, the name of Michael is made into a symbol in order to convey a definite idea—the uprising of a righteous power to fight with and overthrow the forces of evil at a time of great need.

It may be concluded then that there is reasonable ground in the Scriptures for believing in the existence of two greatly honoured holy angels—archangels, meaning “first” or “leading” angels—named respectively Michael and Gabriel; that both these angels have intimate connection with earthly

affairs in the course of their service for their Creator; that Daniel 10 and possibly Jude 9 record actual events in which Michael took a leading part, and that Daniel 12 and Revelation 12 use his name as a symbol in the series of apocalyptic prophecies which those chapters enshrine. There is no ground for identifying Michael with the Son of God as though they were one and the same; in point

of fact, it is perhaps more appropriate to think of Michael, surely held in high esteem in the heavenly courts, as created on the same plane of being as was Lucifer before his fall, and in consequence of his sterling loyalty to God entrusted with important missions to earth in connection with the recovery of mankind from the results of Lucifer's fall.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

6. The Providence that Leads the Way

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12. 1-9

Reviewing still the statement made by James to the Council at Jerusalem, we find it composed of three main propositions, each of which has reference to a particular phase of the Divine Plan, but all of which, in right relationship, were linked together as parts of one greater whole. This statement, thus presented, becomes a most valuable key to the right understanding of the Ages-long purpose of God in the earth.

First, there is the section stating that "*God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name.*"

This can only begin to take place, in conformity with Peter's previous explanation and declaration, from the time when he was providentially directed to proceed "*nothing doubting*" (Acts 10. 20) to the house of Cornelius, to declare all things "*commanded thee of God*". (vs. 33).

Secondly, there follows the assertion, in line with much prophetic testimony, that God will "*build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and set it up again,*" its present ruinous state notwithstanding!

This can only begin to take place after there has been a "return" of Divine favour, and "*after this*"—the taking out of a people for his Name—has been accomplished.

Then thirdly, the declaration that when Israel is thus recovered and restored "*the residue of men*"—all the Gentiles, the nations outside Israel—will seek after the Lord, and find him, culminating at last in his Name (his Authority) being proclaimed over them. His Kingdom, in the end, will thus embrace them all.

The whole statement of James was based upon the recognition both by himself and the Conference that the nation had already been set aside by God, to drift irrevocably into hardness of heart and blindness of mind. The nation (as a body corporate) had been cast off,

and its House left desolate, only a "Remnant" being accounted worthy, at that time, to receive and enjoy further favours from God's hand. To this Jewish Remnant, another elect remnant from among the Gentiles was to be added-on—as joint-heirs and co-participators in Christ—and from these two remnants "a new man"—a new constitution with its varied members—was to be made. (Eph. 2. 11-19).

As there were two elect remnants, previously separated from both Jew and Gentile peoples, so also there were two residues left over for later redemption—a Jewish residue and a Gentile residue. According to the statement of James, and accordant with prophetic testimony, God proposes to recover and restore the residue of Israel first, in point of time. When they have been thus restored and installed in their appointed place among the nations, the invitation of the Most High will go forth to the Gentile 'residue', and call whosoever will respond from among this final residue to enter into the way of righteousness, and live thenceforth as subjects, beneath his Name, of his universal Kingdom. James thus provides a synopsis, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, of the remainder of the Divine Plan for human redemption, as it was ordained to develop, forward from his own day, till that Plan was complete, each part in its respective order and occurring in its own due time. It is thus a most valuable key to all prophetic testimony which yet remains to be fulfilled, both in the Old Testament and the New, the right use of which will assist the watchful people of the Lord to understand the nature of each respective change of procedure, and thus enable them to align themselves with the drifts and tendencies of each succeeding "change". In all these changes the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the supervision of Divine Providence, is an absolute necessity to the right leading of the child of God. God's

hand must guide and direct the drift of circumstance as the change proceeds from 'this' to 'that', and, happy indeed will be the child who can trace the leadings of his Father's hand, as the change proceeds, and as the 'old' gives place to the 'new'.

Already we have stated that the first of these changes, as outlined by James, had been instituted and established by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Lord at Jordan, and later, upon the nucleus of the Jewish remnant at Pentecost, and still later, upon the nucleus of the Gentile remnant at Caesarea. Additionally, it is promised in God's Holy Word, that when the next change is due, and God is about to invite Israel to return to his favour, there will be another out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon that rejected and cast-off people, as a result of which *"All Israel shall be saved"* and their suspended relationship with God restored under the terms of a New and better Covenant. (Ezek. 37. 20-28, and many other Scriptures). And yet further, there will be still another and later diffusion of the Holy Spirit's power among men when the wider nations of the earth are invited to turn into the Way of Truth and Righteousness and enter into the City of the Living God, and find life, peace and happiness beneath His control. *"The Spirit and the Bride say come"*. etc, etc. (Rev. 21. 17) and be thus a source of help to all who long to walk in his ways.

Thus the residue of men will seek the Lord and delight to have his Name called over them for ever. Thus, by the impartation of his Spirit, in its various and different manifestations, God is shown to lead the way and supervise the change at each stage of the redemptive Plan. This is the vital and essentially important point for us to note. As with Israel of old, the 'Glory-Cloud' must 'go on before'; so with us, (and every other child of God at any time) the leading of his Presence must point the way, and only when 'it' moves must we move forward on our way. When 'it' stays, and forbears to move onwards towards another change, we also must stay, no matter how much the 'stake' in the flesh intensifies the inward smart.

To out-pace the 'Cloud' would have meant the perils of the wilderness for Israel of old; no guidance, no protection, no food, no drink, and no priestly cleansing from sin. To seek to out-pace God today will mean (and can only mean) the perils of isolation and the wreck of all expectations when He arises "to shake terribly the earth". It will mean the withdrawal of his Guardian care, and our delivery

over into Satanic confusion and control.

God's changes have never yet been instantaneous or abrupt. Always, thus far through the ages, a preliminary indication of impending change has been given. A long period of warning preceded the Flood; a long line of prophetic testimony preceded the departure of "The Glory" from the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezek. 10. 16-22) a 'Voice of one crying in the Wilderness' preceded the coming of the Lord to his own, a period of full forty years preceded the fall of the city and the destruction of its polity! Only when the hour before appointed arrives is the judgment swift, and the work short in its execution. Until that hour God is long-suffering and wills not that any of his servants should perish by mis-judging the day and hour, but when the hour has struck the sword of judgment falls swift and sure, and the besom of destruction sweeps away the debris of the 'old', and clears the stage and site for the incoming of the 'new'.

God does not leave his servants uninformed or unguided as the era of long-suffering ends, and the sword is upraised to strike. Noah was most definitely informed of the impending Flood; Israel were also most carefully forewarned that the Glory would depart and leave the 'House' untenanted, in Ezekiel's day, and also in that of the Lord's visitation. Those who were heedful of his Word had the information essential, and the 'eyesalve' necessary to see and observe the preliminary trends and tendencies leading on to the hour of 'change'. God did not leave them in the dark as to the impending change, but no more did He commission them to seek to forestall that coming change, nor out-pace, in any way, the rumbling of his Chariot. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and without doubt warned men of the on-coming flood, but like Paul, again, without a doubt, the knowledge of the world's approaching doom would be as a stake driven into his own heart, twisted and turned about to aggravate the inward smart, as day followed day and warning succeeded only in exciting ridicule. The tears of Jeremiah only too well indicate the stake that pinned him down at that cross-road of time. And our Lord's own piteous lament over Jerusalem only shows, again, too well, the probe and pang of sorrow that was thrust through his suffering soul.

To be called upon to stand helpless and unavailing amid the gathering storm, and know that the impending out-burst of judgment will sweep away the society in which we

move, is not an easy thing to endure. To have seen the distant scene of Paradise restored, and yet be unable to make men know what 'there' impends is not a state, in itself, to be desired. Far better so it seems to us, to give voice and utterance thereabouts, than endure the stifling chill of silence and restraint. But needs must, if so be the Will of God. Only by so doing can we become recipients of the special 'Grace'—"My Grace" of which the Master spake.

The great fact is, that it is not for us, (or any one) to intermix and inter-muddle the respective phases of God's Plan, at our own sweet will and preference. It is not for us to spend our time over the Jewish element of the House of Israel before their due time arrives. God will lead the way when that time comes. A "white horse" movement will proceed from the environs of the Divine Throne when that auspicious moment comes. (Rev. 6, 1-2) and He who sits thereon will progressively be victorious until the great Israelitish 'change' has been effective through and through.

No more is it our duty to waste our time over the great Gentile residue till the Spirit of the Lord marks the time for such advance. Even if the world is suffering more today than it ever suffered before, that is no warrant for our out-pacing God. Paul had to stand and watch his people drifting irretrievably upon the rocks, knowing the while that it must bleed itself white upon the edge of the cruel Roman sword. Right willingly would he have sacrificed himself as Israel's substitute had that been possible, (Rom. 9, 1-2) but, spite of that impassioned love, it was of no avail. No more can we avert the judgments of the coming 'Change' for our own kith and kin, but, if, like Paul, we have to stand and watch, and suffer where we cannot help, it is for us to be submissive to the Will of God, and let the 'stake' pierce and twist our inmost soul until He come!

By all the evidence we have we are still living in the "taking-out-of-a-people" period! It is still the season of the visitation of the Gentiles! That this period has been of some nineteen centuries duration is of no consequence. To us it may seem long, to God it is as but a short watch in the night. But whether long, or short, there is no gain-saying the fact that Israel's alienation from her God, and the consequent suspension of her promises still continues, and that her blindness is not yet at an end. The story of the grace of God (or so much of that grace as is not obscured by

erroneous creeds) is still in Gentile hands, proclaimed as yet only in Gentile lands. From whence for long and wearied centuries the Spirit of the Lord God has been calling his Elect.

The "order of things" instituted at Caesarea and Antioch still continues, and all believers, whether of Gentile or Jewish stock, who find entrance into Christ, must do so in conformity with the conditions there laid down. Spite of the many shifts and changes in Church history and government, this is the "Order" which, beneath the surface, has remained unchanged until today, and will still continue to remain unchanged until the glory-Cloud moves on, and the Spirit of the Lord be poured out from on high upon his ancient people. There is no other interim 'Order' between the casting-off of Israel, and the calling of that people back to God, than this!

Seen in this light, God is not working upon either 'residue' of peoples. His work is still upon the "remnants" of his Elect only, called out from both sources. The "glory-Cloud" has not yet moved on to other ground, but still abides on the Gospel Church. The Creative Spirit of the Living God has not yet completed the work of this present Age—the transformation of his Elect.

(To be continued)

King Solomon has been called "the wisest fool in Judaism" and the appellation is an apt one. Solomon commenced his reign full of promise, but with all his wisdom he left the kingdom plunged into idolatry, and that was eventually its undoing.

* * *

On more than one occasion the biographers of our Lord tell us that He took those who required His aid by the hand. There is an example in the story of the miracle wrought on Peter's mother-in-law. We read that our Lord took her by the hand and lifted her up, with the result that the fever disappeared at once. Later in the chapter, we find again that Jesus put forth His hand and touched the leper so that he was healed of his malady. The touch of the hand may make a world of difference. It does not seem to amount to very much, but it may mean everything to the person who receives it, especially when the hand is that of Jesus.

THE PLOWMAN SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER

A Parable for our times

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

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

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

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

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

shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely."

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

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

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

cerned with the members of his Church more so than with the world at large.

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

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

harvest.

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

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

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

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

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

"Absolute truth can have nothing to fear from the disintegrating influence of time."

Sir James Jean

* * *

"If these little sparks of holy fire which I have heaped together do not give life to your prepared and already enkindled spirit, yet they will sometimes help to entertain a thought, to actuate a passion, to employ and hallow a fancy."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

VISION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

A Meditation on
Revelation—chapter 21

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 four-square, 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, he had passed through the lofty gateway with its attendant guardians and was standing 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 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.

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. He knew that he was looking upon the River of the water of Life.

The "*Tower of Babel*", the story of the building of which is narrated in Genesis 11, stood for something like two thousand years. Known to the Babylonians as "*E-temenanki*", the "house of the foundation of heaven and earth", it was repaired, renovated and rebuilt by successive rulers until by the 6th century B.C. it reared its topmost pinnacle 600 feet above the ground—nearly twice the height of the cross on top of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Its lowermost platform occupied six times the ground space of St. Pauls. The value of the gold, silver and precious stones with which the Tower and its associated Temple were adorned at the zenith of its glory was estimated in the early years of this century to have exceeded two hundred mil-

lion pounds (In 1958 this would be equal to something like six hundred million pounds or two thousand million dollars). It was finally destroyed in the 5th century B.C.; thus it endured throughout practically the whole of the Old Testament historical period. Of all monuments erected by man, the great Tower of Babylon is the most symbolic of man's reliance on his own power and determination to live without God—and to-day there is nothing left of it but a few pieces of broken brickwork and the remains of one corner of the platform on which it stood, about four feet high. "*Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be broken down and shall be found no more at all.*"



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 7

OCT./NOV., 1958

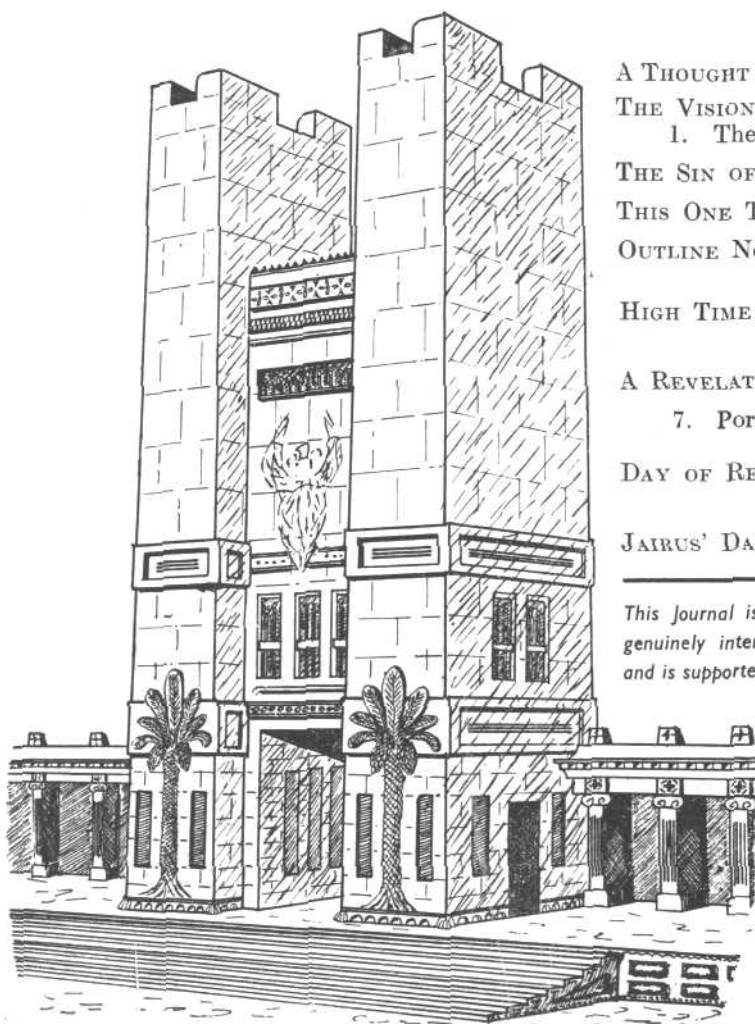
Published October 15th

Next issue December 1st

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



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

*Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—*

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

A Thought for the Month

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

(Eccl. 7. 10).

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

Now King Solomon tells us that such procedure is exceedingly unwise. He does not even recommend our sparing time to cast so much as a few longing thoughts back upon the irrevocable past. With masterly restraint of language he says "thou doest not enquire wisely concerning this". And how right he is! The successful business man may be understood if he decides to re-visit his native village and look upon the scenes of his boyhood, but should he start to run around in knickerbockers and try to accommodate his portly frame to his old school desk he will only succeed in making himself look ridiculous. And is it so very different for the Christian? We have, surely, progressed greatly in every respect since those early days. Our spiritual stature, the breadth of our theological understanding, the scope of our Christian outlook and activity, will, if we have faithfully used our privileges and opportunities, have expanded out of all likeness to, and beyond all comparison with, the crudities and immature efforts of our babyhood in Christ. Roseate as the

backward view may seem, it has no place for us now, and to achieve the aim of restoring those days and re-establishing those activities would assuredly bring disillusion and disappointment on a greater scale than anything we have ever experienced.

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

THE VISION OF JOEL

Exposition of the
Book of Joel

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 son's 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 may 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 coterpillar eaten.*" The Hebrew words refer to four varieties of the many different species of locust, the *gizam*, the *arbeth*, 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 merrymakers 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 predecessors 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 nought 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.

It is related that Nansen, the Arctic explorer, having one day bored through the ice, let down his sounding-line into the waters beneath the ice-cap. Down and down it went, but did not touch the bottom. Another line was added, and another, until all the lines in the ship were tied together and let down—but even then they failed to reach the ocean bed. When writing up the records of that day, Nansen wrote, "3,500 fathoms . . . and deeper

than that". That is exactly Paul's thought about the Love of God. It is the full measure of man's necessity—and greater than that! How much more none can ever know. Words just break down when contemplating a Love like that! When our sounding-lines have reached their utmost depth in the hearts and lives of men, all we can say is—in Nansen's words—"3,500 fathoms, and more than that"!

THE SIN OF SATAN

A study in
Ezekiel 28

In the year of Jerusalem's destruction by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, Ezekiel the priest, far away by the rivers of Assyria, uttered those memorable words of denunciation against the Phoenician city of Tyre which form the burden of the twenty-sixth to twenty-eighth chapters of his book. The idolatry of Tyre was an offence to every pious Israelite; the Tyrians' satisfaction at the miseries which came upon Israel during the closing years of the latter's national existence induced an antagonism which found comfort only in the thought that one day God Himself would intervene to punish the enemies and the traducers of Israel.

It was in this setting that Ezekiel gave voice to his message. The idolatrous Tyrians were to suffer the same fate that had already overtaken Jerusalem. Their trade would be destroyed, their possessions taken from them, their city desolated. But unlike Jerusalem, which by the promise of God was one day to rise from the ruins and recover more than her former glory, Tyre, once overthrown would remain in oblivion for ever. Never again would she sit as mistress of the seas, her merchants trading with the four corners of the earth.

The dread prediction came true. Nearly three hundred years later Alexander the Great laid siege to Tyre and eventually captured the city and fulfilled Ezekiel's forecast to the letter. From that day to this Tyre has remained in oblivion; even as the ancient seer declared; "Never shalt thou be any more."

Now here is afforded a perfect setting for that deeper instruction to Christians of after days which was being recorded by the Holy Spirit. The first part of Ezekiel's denunciation clearly refers to the city and its inhabitants and their activities and institutions. Every detail is capable of a strictly literal application and its fulfilment is recorded in history. This part of the description concludes with an account of the woes which would come upon the prince of Tyre, and chapter 28, verses 1-10, tell of the doom awaiting that potentate. At the 11th verse the prophet passes into a new denunciation which, whilst addressed ostensibly to the ruler of Tyre, employs language and allusions which cannot truthfully apply to any earthly being. The point of correspondence is that just as Tyre

was to go into oblivion for ever, so will this one of whom the prophet now speaks. Addressing the King of Tyre as a symbol, so to speak, of the one he really has in mind, the prophet, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records a vivid description of the creation and sin of Lucifer, the Prince of Evil.

A verse by verse examination of the passage will reveal the aptness of Ezekiel's words.

"*Thou seal most accurate, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty*" (Margolis). The reference is to Babylonian clay "seals"—little cylinders of baked clay with an intricate design embossed upon them, used by the owner to impress his distinctive mark or signature upon the clay tablets of that time. A "seal most accurate" would be one which was a faithful copy of the master seal, and by this reference Lucifer is pictured as having been originally a faithful copy of his Maker. Like man in later days, he was created "in the image and likeness of God." Leeser translates this phrase, "*Thou wast complete in outline*" which conveys much the same thought. Lucifer was created, like all that God has made, "very good," "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty." The word "*tochnith*" translated "sum" in the A.V. means "pattern" and in its only other occurrence (Ezek. 43. 10) is so translated, referring then to the pattern or arrangement of the Temple buildings. Thus the A.V. rendering conveys the same idea as other translations—the accuracy of this copy of the Divine pattern which was represented in this personality.

"*In Eden the garden of God didst thou abide.*" There seems no reason to doubt that this reference is to the new earthly creation described in Genesis. The story of man's original sinlessness and the introduction of evil is common to many ancient nations and the early peoples of Mesopotamia had a vivid belief in the original "garden" and the sacred tree, the curse of evil having been introduced by a serpent, thus in large measure confirming the Bible story to do with the earth and its inhabitants.

"*Every precious stone was thy covering.*" The word translated "covering" is *mesukkah*, meaning a pavilion or a tabernacle, and the description of a pavilion bearing "every precious stone" brings to mind at once the description of the New Jerusalem in the book of

Revelation, that glorious city of which it is said that the foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones, its gates of pearls and its streets of gold. Remembering that this "New Jerusalem" is to restore to mankind that which was lost in Eden, it is not an unreasonable thing to picture Lucifer enthroned in that early day of man's innocence as the lord of earthly creation for man's guidance and instruction in the ways of God. The contrast between this one who, through ambition, misused a wonderful opportunity and the One Who, having humbled Himself, became obedient to death "even the death of the cross" and afterward is enthroned for all time as the Lord of all things in Heaven and on earth, is then a particularly striking one. This thought of Lucifer's royal state is further borne out by the next clause, "*The service of tabrets and flutes was prepared with thee in the day thou wast created.*" The word translated in the A.V. "workmanship" is '*melakah*,' meaning work or business, in this case referring to the royal music, the "tabrets and flutes" of the text. Musical instruments were an essential adjunct of kingly state, and a similar reference to the "business" or "service" of the king's musicians occurs in Neh. 11. 22 and 13. 30, and in Dan. 8. 27, affording illustration of the kingly rank with which Lucifer was invested at his creation.

Now comes a reference to Lucifer's priestly function, this combination of priest and king being particularly striking when one thinks of Melchisedek, a type of Christ, a "priest upon his throne." "*Thou wast a cherub with outspread wings, and I had set thee upon the holy mountain of God as thou wast. Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones.*" This is Leeser's rendering, the majority of other versions being in agreement—the final expression "stones of fire" being a Hebrew synonym for "bright shining ones," i.e., the angels. In that case there is an indication here that this heavenly being was accustomed to consort with the holy angels of God's spiritual creation; more than that, he held high rank amongst them as an "anointed cherub" (A.V.) one therefore who exercised priestly functions. The general meaning of the entire passage, interpreting the "holy mountain of God" as referring to the perfect earthly creation in Eden, is that Lucifer was "set" to be a Priest and King to the human race, having access at all times to the presence of God in the interests of this new addition to the Divine domains.

Now comes the dark shadow of sin. "*Thou*

wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. By the abundance of thy slander (merchandise) thou wast filled to thy centre with violence and thou didst sin." In this verse the word "merchandise" is from the Hebrew "*rekullah*"—not "*maarab*" (barter) as in Ezekiel 27, nor "*sachar*" (gain) as in many other Scriptures, but is from a root which means "to go to and fro" either as a merchant or as a tale bearer or slanderer. Hence it is suggested by students that in determining the meaning to be attached to this word in harmony with its context the alternative meaning should be adopted, and the fitness of this is evident when it is remembered that one of the descriptions the Bible attaches to Satan is that of "slanderer" or "accuser".

How fitting then, is this verse, when one recalls the slander uttered in Eden; "God doth know . . . your eyes shall be opened" as though the Creator harboured base designs against His creatures. This verse may well include that great slander and famous lie first told in Eden and repeated for century after century through the ages, "Ye shall not surely die".

The nature of Lucifer's sin is not stated here; fuller details are afforded in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah; but there stands out in all its stark horror the dread declaration that this wonderful being who had commenced a life of such marvellous promise and had been so signally honoured by his Creator, had proven unfaithful to his trust. Sin had entered, and by the immutable laws of God, unless sin be eradicated, death must inevitably follow.

Hence that solemn enunciation of the only possible ending to this story, the fundamental truth that sin contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. "*Therefore brought I forth fire from the midst of thee; this devoured thee, and I changed thee to ashes upon the earth before the eyes of all that saw thee—Thou art as though thou hast not been, and shall not be any more for ever.*" Here is the doom of Satan; the fire of his own sin, proceeding from within himself, has severed him for ever from the presence and fellowship of God; devoured by that fire, and in the end of time cast as ashes upon the earth, he will be as though he had never been "and shall not be any more for ever". The continual uprepentant state of the arch-enemy of God and man is plainly inferred in these words. No hint of repentance; no indication that there is in the mind of this fallen being anything else than a determination to continue in active re-

bellion against all that is good and true and holy. A supreme example of the awful con-

sequences of sin is provided by this story of Lucifer, the fallen archangel.

THIS ONE THING

An Appraisal of
Saul of Tarsus

Saul of Tarsus had been a very promising young religious leader. As a Pharisee, he seemed destined to play a part in restoring the former glory of his sect. He had been brought up by strict parents who were careful to observe the Jewish Law and traditions. He was a native of Tarsus in Cilicia. At the appropriate age he had been sent to Jerusalem to complete his education. There in the centre of Jewish learning, Saul as a student had been instructed in the faith by the greatest scholar of his day. He would be thoroughly trained in the legal practice and religious philosophy of Judaism. He emerged from a brilliant college career fully prepared for a leading place in his nation. He was an enthusiastic young man and did with his whole heart those things in which he believed. So Paul narrates briefly the stages of his early life in *Philippians 3. 4-6*.

It is not difficult to imagine with what disgust this young pious Jew viewed the new sect of the Nazarenes. They were mostly peasant folk from Galilee, uneducated and lacking in the refinements of speech and manners of this graduate of the Temple. Jesus, the leader of the sect, had been hanged upon a tree, which was evidence to a Jew of the curse of God. To believe in and follow the hated Nazarene was the height of folly, a waste of life and the passing upon one's self of the death penalty. They were, to his young mind, a blot on the Jewish landscape, and a disagreeable interference in the religious life of his people; a source of defiance to their leaders. Perhaps afraid of the outcome of their preaching Paul was incensed against Jesus' disciples. He was determined not to rest until, like their leader, they lay dead in the tomb. The Jewish rulers supported his cause and must have been delighted to have found one so able and willing to prosecute their plans. But God had another plan for Saul of Tarsus. His great career, so wonderful in the eyes of sinful men, was brought to an abrupt and premature end. He suddenly found himself face to face with Jesus of Nazareth!

From the great moment when Saul met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, he began

to discover new values in life. Until then, life was worth his human achievement and he calculated in material things. He could look back over the long history of his nation and family and trace his pedigree for two thousand years. He took pride in his home training and college learning. He had gone from triumph to triumph with mounting popularity and accomplishment. He had almost everything he could wish for from man's viewpoint, yet in God's eyes he was poverty stricken. How different was the story of Jesus and Saul up to this time. Yet here was a man, possessed of a religious zeal for which he would yield up his life. He was thoroughly learned in Jewish theology, conversant with the Old Testament scriptures and able to argue in all the teachings of the Law and Prophets. These were things not lightly to be despised. *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . ."* Phil. 3. 7-8. (R.S.V.).

As Paul wrote those words to the Philippian church he was sitting in a Roman prison, reflecting upon his early years. He was now able to see his youthful pride in true perspective. The Law and the Prophets which he knew so well had shown up the flaws in his character but they could not remedy his weaknesses. In his letter to the Roman church he revealed the conflict which raged in his sensitive soul. (Rom. 7. 7-25). Moses had given the Law to the people of Israel, and if they obeyed, they would qualify for everlasting life. For so long as Paul trusted in the Law, he kept it scrupulously. Yet as the years passed he realised how utterly impossible it was to keep the Law perfectly. Outwardly he was a very respectable man and in the eyes of his countrymen he was blameless. Nevertheless within his mind there raged a battle between right and wrong. He knew that God was not deceived by any outward facade of words and actions. He knew devout Israelites, living in various ages, had struggled against their natural failings. But he saw that the power of sin was too strong for the good intentions and

will power of men. Like him, the "holy men" of old were all under the penalty of sin: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* (Rom. 5. 12). The rule of conduct which Moses gave to the people of Israel was the highest moral pattern that men could understand and was much greater and more full of meaning than the ethical principles of Greeks and Romans. Yet that Law, given by God, was but a form of words and Saul, like his fellow countrymen through all the history of Israel, tried in his own strength to please God. In spite of religious ritual and burnt offerings his conscience condemned him. Like many another religious person he had to learn that he could not earn God's approval. That which he inherited from Adam, like all other human beings, was a sinful mind and body which made it impossible to be perfect. The lesson for him to learn was found in the life of Abraham, whose faith and trust in the promises of God and whose complete dependence upon Him for everything in life had made him pleasing to God. Then and only then do we receive God's peace in our hearts.

As Paul observed the members of the sect of the Nazarenes he must have realised that in spite of their material poverty and in spite of all their sufferings, they were possessed of that inward peace and calm for which he had longed and struggled. Was it possible that Jesus was the Messiah and had given to these men that which the Law had been unable to give? He quickly banished the thought. But his doubts were not readily dismissed. From the time of the death of Stephen until he travelled along the road to Damascus he was oppressed not only by his unworthy condition but by fears that his opposition to the Nazarenes was mistaken.

Just when Paul uttered the victorious cry in the last verse of Romans 7 it is not easy to decide. He did not reach his ultimate goal in a single day, nor had he reached it when he penned those words to the Philippian church, *"I count not myself to have apprehended, but 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."* (Phil. 3. 13, 14). The turning point was reached when Ananias visited him in Damascus. From then onwards, only one vision filled his mind. No longer did he dream of a successful young graduate making a name for himself, but of Saul of Tarsus

learning to be selfless, and being filled with all the fulness of Christ. God used his wonderfully developed talents, and thereby he became a source of strength and wisdom to the believers and a remarkable evangelist in converting Jews and Gentiles. Paul's greatness as a disciple of Jesus Christ lay not in his natural ability but in his humility and willingness to die to self, in order that the new life of Jesus might grow within him. The great passion of his life was that he might follow in the steps of his Saviour and suffer as He had done. He desired above everything else, to have the companionship of Jesus and that the Lord's power would subdue his natural desires and strengthen him to preach the Gospel.

Human nature cries out to be praised and encouraged. Conceited hopes and cherished ambitions try to retain a small part of our affections, so that they need not be surrendered to Jesus. As long as we do not yield everything to Him, just so long are we hindered in our progress toward the mark of the prize of the high calling. He demands our "unconditional surrender" in every phase of life. When that is complete, the peace about which Paul wrote in Colossians 3. 15 will dominate our hearts and we shall experience a fuller and happier life. Sometimes the battle is long and weary, while we try, as Paul did, to fight it alone. Victory does not come to everyone in quite the same way, nor are we saved by one single act of submission at the cross. We are "more than conquerors through him that loved us" day by day. Thus at last we may say with Paul in answer to the question *"Who shall deliver me from the bondage of this death?"* . . . *"I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

"Attractive as is the proposal, we cannot "cut" repentance and get on with the Kingdom, for things will not be taken out of their Divine Order." *Paul Gliddon*

"Both teachers and learners go to sleep at their posts so soon as there is no enemy in the field." *J. S. Mill*

"I do not believe that a Christian who wishes to make his faith real needs anything except Christ's understanding of God, a mind that is not afraid to think, and a love of the brethren which comes from his knowledge of how he himself needs a Saviour..."

Dick Sheppard

OUTLINE NOTE ON THE SECOND ADVENT

The mightiest event of history since the Crucifixion is the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ to complete the work He commenced two thousand years ago. Through the centuries since Pentecost the Christian Church has hoped and looked for that day when the Lord returns to fulfill the promise He made to his earliest disciples. The apparent imminence of his Return has been proclaimed and prophesied many times during those intervening years, but the fact that so many lurid happenings have been associated with that Coming has, in this matter-of-fact day, thrown the age-old expectation into disrepute. The various attempts of well-meaning Christian students to fix upon a definite date for the visible appearance of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, and the consistent failure of those predictions, has disinclined many from paying attention to what they consider so visionary a subject.

It is true that many still expect the coming of Christ to be accompanied by terrific convulsions of Nature—rending rocks and falling mountains, hosts of trembling sinners brought up from the grave to hear their sins rehearsed and then condemned to everlasting punishment, a few saintly souls caught up to heavenly glory and the world and all that it contains burned up. All this is an inheritance from the literalistic acceptance of Bible imagery of mediæval times and it dies hard; nevertheless it is becoming more and more accepted by students that the vivid symbols of Scripture were not intended to be interpreted in so crudely literal a sense.

The return of Christ is pictured in the Bible as a time of universal rejoicing. He comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness over the earth which has as its object the extermination of evil. The time of his return is to mark the downfall of every man-made institution and system which is founded on unrighteousness. His lightnings which enlighten the earth (Psa. 97. 4) reveal the inherent rights and privileges of every man and hence his return is the signal for a great clamour on behalf of liberty. The kingdoms and governments of this present order of things will crumble and vanish away, the hills "melting like wax at the presence of the Lord" and "mountains being cast into the midst of the sea" (Psa. 97. 5 and 46. 2). Amidst the strife and confusion of this time of trouble which is the harvest of

human misrule there will ring out commandingly the voice of One having authority: "Peace, be still". And just as it was when those words were first uttered during the storm on the Galilean lake, there will be a great calm.

The return of Jesus to this earth, and his revelation to all men, is an event to be expected. Our knowledge of the spiritual world makes it no longer necessary to insist that He must be seen with the physical eyesight before the fact of his coming can be accepted, our Lord's own words to Nicodemus make it clear that one who is of the world of the spirit comes and goes "as the wind" and is not discerned as such by the natural sight. It is evident that after dwelling among men in the days of his flesh and giving his life on the cross to save men, he returned to his Father's right hand to wait while his teaching had its primary effect. The world at the First Advent was not ready for the full revelation of all that Christ can do and will yet do for man; it was ready only for the germ of Christ's teaching, and it is that germ which for two thousand years has worked in the hearts of a relatively small proportion of earth's millions while the rest have followed the laws of evil and reaped their bitter harvest.

Christ returns to establish a new order of society the spiritual administration of which will be in the hands of those who during the past two thousand years—the "Christian Age"—have come into heart harmony with him and by reason of a consecrated devotion to his message and service are thoroughly trained in every aspect of the Divine law and ways. These followers of Jesus—called variously in Scripture the "Church", the "Bride of Christ", the "Little Flock", are those to whom the educational and uplift work of the next Age can be safely entrusted. Christian disciples who have learned well the foundation principles of their faith and have manifested their profession in daily life will have achieved a balance of judgment and a clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking in many of even the noblest of men and women to-day. It is just these characteristics which will be needed in the administration of that coming day when all men will be required to hear the word of God, and hearing, make choice of their eternal destiny. It follows therefore that the first work to be accomplished by the

Lord Christ at his return is the gathering to himself of his faithful "saints" who all through the Age have been "looking for his appearing". (Titus 2. 13). In order that these may be made like their Lord, which is the promise of the New Testament, they must be "changed" from earthly to heavenly nature. Such passages as I Cor. 15. 35-38 and I Thess. 4. 14-18 describe this change to the spiritual world as the hope and destiny of the Christian church, and it is from that new environment in the spiritual sphere that these resurrected

ones, partakers of the "First Resurrection", will administer the affairs of the new Kingdom on earth, Christ's Kingdom.

Thus the world in general, a groaning creation, travailling in pain, is waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Rom. 8. 19). In that day when the power of the Almighty Father is manifest in the new social order which is the Kingdom of God upon earth, men will look up into the heavens and will realise that, even as he promised, Christ has come.

HIGH TIME TO AWAKE OUT OF SLEEP

Instruction for to-day in the light of the past

"... and that, knowing the time, it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

(Rom. 13. 11).

Those words were penned at a time when the Apostle Paul, and many of the Early Church with him, had come to realise that the promised Second Coming of the Lord to set up His Kingdom of life and light was much farther away than they had thought. In the first flush of Christian enthusiasm the early believers had expected the Return to take place in their own lifetime; to what extent Paul now realised the long period destined to elapse before that longed-for happening would materialise we cannot say, but he did at least know that he and his generation would be laid aside to await their crown of life, and many centuries pass, before the returning Lord would come to raise His faithful ones from the dead and set up His Kingdom. And if, under such circumstances, Paul could assure his readers it was high time to awake out of sleep because their salvation was nearer now than when they became believers, how much more forceful must the same exhortation be to us, we who live so much closer to the time of His revelation and His Kingdom?

Paul was probably not speaking altogether from the dispensational point of view. He must have used the words largely from the personal standpoint. He and his converts were growing old together; their first impetuous rush of youthful energy was giving place to the slower stream of age, and Paul knew that for many of them the end of life's experience was within measurable distance. Whether or no the Lord was to return within the century, or not for another thousand years or more, he knew that his companions must pass into death without seeing the fulfilment

of their hopes—and they knew it too. Hence there would creep upon some, quite naturally, a lessening of the first enthusiasm, a resigning of one's self to life as it was, a turning back, if ever so little, to the interests and distractions of this world—and a corresponding partial indifference to the Calling. So Paul deemed necessary an exhortation to continued and unabated zeal for Christ, a shaking off the bands of apathy which were slowly closing upon some, for life was hastening on and the "Day of Salvation" running its course. Only they that should endure to the end could hope to receive this "so great salvation" and to those who already were coming near the end of their allotted span that salvation was indeed nearer than when they first believed!

This almost rhythmic process, this waning and flagging of zeal and love followed by a call to awaken, a revival of hope and enthusiasm, and a consequent "reform movement", seems to be characteristic, not only of the history of the Christian Church, but of the whole history of man in his relation to God. Perhaps there is instruction for us here, and guidance for the days in which we live; for none would deny that we do sadly need the flaming torch that will rekindle hope and zeal, leading us onward into a fellowship of sacrifice and service such as that which did in fact characterise earlier days.

Very little is known of conditions on earth between the Fall and the Flood. It is clear though that the human race as a whole lapsed very quickly into ignorance of God and apathy as to the destiny of man. "Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall die" might fairly sum up their philosophy if our Lord's allusion to the days that were before the Flood is appreciated. When one remembers the great length of time that Adam

was alive and the clear knowledge of God he must have retained even in his fallen condition, it seems surprising that godlessness should so quickly become rampant, but the history of Cain's descendants shows that such was the case. Turning for a moment to the discoveries of archaeologists and geologists, it is clear that whilst a high state of human civilisation and culture prevailed over part of the ante-diluvian world, there were many peoples that had become depraved and bestial, both physically and mentally. The discoveries relating to what are known as "Neanderthal" men can only be harmonised with the Bible account by supposing them to have been more or less savage ante-diluvian tribes, and it is probable that they sank to that low stage of existence within a very few centuries after Eden. It need occasion no surprise to reflect upon the implication of Gen. 6 that by the time of the Flood God, and the ways of God, were practically unknown in the world of men.

The catastrophe of the Flood caused a swift *revulsion of feeling*. Whether one reads the Bible account as demanding that only Noah and his family survived, or whether, as some consider, the Genesis story refers only to the central "civilised" area, and outlying peoples—perhaps in China or Australasia—were untouched by the Flood, it appears that the first few generations after that event were intensely religious. It is highly probable that there was a very sincere return to God—perhaps those in the Ark realised that from the point of view of God's redemptive Plan it was "high time to awake out of sleep". We may surely take it as certain that righteous Noah sensed the opportunity to make a fresh start in the world that God had given his family. And probably there was great enthusiasm and there were high hopes when his sons set out to rebuild the shattered land of their birth. But from the records of Genesis, brief though they be, it appears that the enthusiasm waned away again, until by the time of Terah, Abraham's father, even the line of Shem through whom Abraham came had relapsed into idolatry. A new and interesting light is shed upon this idolatry from the discoveries of recent years. The period immediately after the Flood is still very largely a closed book and it is not possible to be dogmatic as to the number of centuries that elapsed between that event and the earliest reliable dates we have, at the time of Abraham. There is however a wealth of information available concerning Abraham's day and the century or so

immediately preceding him, and from that information it is fairly clear that the idolatry of Abraham's native land was a corruption of a formerly pure and intelligent worship of the true God. The elaborate mythology of Babylon, which has been the model for nearly all subsequent false religions, bears a remarkable analogy with what we regard as the truth of Scripture. It seems clear that in those centuries there had been a steady decline in understanding of God and His plans, and that the true knowledge of God had all but vanished from the earth—until God called Abraham!

Once more it could truly be said that a call came, "high time to awake out of sleep". Abraham bestirred himself to reject the worship and interests of the land of his birth and set out to follow the leading of his God.

There is no need to repeat the story here. Suffice to remind ourselves that the bright light which blazed out over the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and made their epoch one of the best known and most fully described in the whole of Scripture, a record of rare activity and great triumphs of faith, flickered out again in that darkness which settled over the tribes in Egypt; then was fulfilled the prophecy which had declared "Know of a surety that thy seed shall be stranger in a land that is not theirs, and they shall afflict them four hundred years".

At the end of those years it was again high time to awake out of sleep, for another great step forward in the Plan of God was due to be taken. God called Moses, prepared him over many years for the task for which He had called him, and sent him to Egypt to lead His people away. In the strength and power of that great awakening they went forty years in the wilderness until they reached the Promised Land, battled and fought until they had won for themselves and their children a place in which to dwell, and then—ceased from their early zeal and went to sleep again. Once more the darkness settled down, illumined now and then by fitful flashes of national revival, none of which were long-lived, until the final carrying away into Babylon at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, and the subsequent fall of that city before the conquering armies of Cyrus. Again had come the time for a fresh development in the outworking of the Plan, and again a national awakening out of sleep. The liberated captives, with songs on their lips and gladness in their hearts, pressed across the desert to rebuild their Temple and city, in full expectation that the darkness would never more close in upon them.

But, of course, it did; and it needed the preaching of John the Baptist to awaken the nation to consciousness of the importance of the time. And now the Plan was working itself out in rapid steps—John had a new, an urgent message, never before heard: “*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*” Almost before the purport of his preaching had been grasped, there came another, One Who brought life and truth to the world and called to an eternal awakening in which there should never be any more darkness at all. But those who had not heeded Moses and the prophets did not heed even although Christ rose from the dead: and of those who did at first listen to His words there were many who, as the centuries began to pile up again, left their first love: so the darkness descended. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.” The Reformation, later, was a time of partial awakening, but sleep overpowered the partially awakened ones, and it was not until the first rosy gleams betokening the coming change of dispensation, and the approaching Millennial Age, began to dawn, that the age-old call went out, this time with greater force than ever before, “It is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed; *THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND*”.

That is the call for to-day and it is more insistent than ever. It seems to be the fashion of the moment to deplore our own alleged inactivity and slothfulness in Christian zeal and witness during the years between the wars. That is really not fair. It may be that activity on an organised scale has not been pronounced, but there is no doubt that individual believers have continued to the extent of their ability in the proclamation of the Kingdom message, and little groups here and there have laid their hands to tasks that have accomplished something for the Lord and His Kingdom. We should not decry such contributions to the work of spreading the Kingdom Gospel just because they do not come within the ambit of some great and prominent Christian organisation. Neither should we disparage them because they do not attract widespread public attention or display noticeable fruitage. It has always been a case of “not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts”. And the first and most important purpose of Christian activity during this Age is the training and qualification of the Christian believer himself for the greater work of the next Age. That is the most effective fruitage of all our evangel-

istic efforts, of whatsoever kind they be.

This, then, is the background of the Apostle's exhortation to awake out of sleep. At every important time of dispensational change in past history there has been such an awakening. Now, in face of the most important change of all, the transition from “this present evil world” to the “new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”, we need to be alert and waking, quick to discern the significance of current events and eager to grasp such opportunities of service as may be open to us or such as we can create. The Apostle in writing to the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 5) lays down three vital admonitions “*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others . . . let us watch and be sober . . . and . . . be at peace among yourselves*”! There can be no marked advance, as a fellowship or as a community, in the understanding of the signs of the times unless we are united in spirit and purpose, manifesting the Spirit of Christ in our dealings one with another. Neither can there be effective joint service and evangelistic effort unless we arm ourselves with that spiritual dynamic which comes from the consciousness of a common ideal and a common purpose. Before we can wake up to dispensational light and evangelical opportunities we need a heart-searching revival of our first faith and zeal leading to a spirit of brotherliness which over-rides all other considerations and fulfils within and between us the words of our Lord Jesus “One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren”. That is the awakening that must precede our next advance in the Master's service and it is to that awakening we must now apply the Apostle's words “*Knowing the time, it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*”.

Is your trouble the *Disease of Sin*? Not its guilt and doom, of course, if you really are a believer; for that has, for you, been already dealt with “in Christ”. Yet, perhaps, sin has some daily power over you, some sinful habit holds you in bondage, and up till now, Christian though you be, you have not been able to break free. And all the while it stands written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you”—it ought not; it need not; please God, it shall not! His atoning death saved you from its penalty; and now His indwelling, resurrection life shall continually save you from its power.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

7. Portents of the Coming Change

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12. 1—9

Resuming our discussion of the statement which solved the problem of the Early Church, we note again that the next phase of the Divine Plan destined to succeed this Gospel Age—the period of the ‘taking-out of a people for His Name’—is that of the restoration of Israel and the re-establishment of the Davidic Throne. It is not stated quite so explicitly as that, but both phases of restoration lie implicit under the words of the text. James was Divinely inspired to quote and apply a prophetic text, which reads, “*In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof: and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord that doeth this.*” (Amos 9. 11-12. marginal rendering). James quotes the words somewhat differently, (evidently on sufficient authority) to supplement an observation, which, a little previously, had been made by Peter, relative to his visit to Caesarea to open the door of entrance into full Divine favour for Cornelius and his household.

“*Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name*” said James. Continuing, he says, “*And to this agree the words of the Prophet, as it is written,*” “*After this I will return . . .*” Amos does not use those precise words in literal phraseology, but they are implied most strongly in his context where, after saying “*I will sift the House of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve*” he then proceeds in his closing words to say, “*And I will bring again the captivity of My people . . . and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord, thy God.*” (Amos. 9. 9-15). Israel’s return to their own good land is taken by James to indicate the Lord’s return to His people, he therefore says, “*After this I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down . . .*” “*After this . . .*” After what? Obviously “after” the taking out of a people from the Gentiles. The next stage, therefore, of the Divine Plan destined to succeed that of the calling out of a Gentile remnant, is that of the restoration of Israel to their own pro-

mised land and the re-establishment of David’s royal throne. The restoration of these two factors of Israelitish national existence stands equated by James, to “a return of the Lord”.

Though James makes no direct reference to the Davidic Throne—speaking of the Davidic Tabernacle instead—the thought beneath it is the same. David’s “skene”, David’s Tabernacle, stands for the Royal Home, in which David dwelt, in which, and from which, went forth his royal commands, and to which came the tribute from his people and from wider nations subject to his sway. Rebuilding his Tabernacle stands tantamount therefore to the restoration of kingly rule in Israel, which, in turn, implies the restoration of the nation in a standing of grace and acceptance, so that thus the national polity shall stand complete before God and the world.

There is much basic truth embodied in this thought regarding the restoration of David’s Throne which cannot be written here—it lies too wide for our present purpose—but enough space can be found to stress the fact that God stands pledged to maintain that throne, somehow, somewhere, as long as sun and moon and the rainbow (the faithful witness in heaven) endure (Psa. 89. 34-37). But for this present period that Tabernacle, and its royal Chair, is spoken of as ‘fallen down’. Its royal prerogative has not become extinct, but is under temporary suspension only. The sublime picture of Rev. 4 and 5, depicts its restoration and re-establishment in the hands of One who is the Lion of the tribe of David, and who, immediately after the receipt of its title-deeds, sets in motion various forces and influences in the earth, which eventually result in the establishment of that Throne and Kingdom over God’s chosen people again.

It was the recognition of that fallen state of that Throne which James impressed upon the Council of Jerusalem. Its temporary suspension, together with the fall from grace, and the consequent banishment from God of the nation as a whole, let the Gentile nations into the place of authority in the affairs of the earth, (Dan. 2) and also permitted of the entry of certain Gentiles into the membership of the Church at a later time—that is. from ‘the first’; from the beginning of the adjustment when Peter was sent to Caesarea to open

the second door of entry into the Church. Used in this sense, and accepted by the Council, it gave them the solution to the problem which pressed heavy on the Jewish section of the Church. Until that moment no solution to that problem had been formulated by the presiding Elders of the Mother Church. Spite of Peter's vision and consequent journey to Caesarea, the Elders at Jerusalem deemed it essential that all Gentile believers should be circumcised before finding acceptance into true membership in the Christian fold. Gentiles must pass through a Jewish vestibule ere entry could be accorded them into the Christian Church.

The "Spirit-breathed" utterance of James stands as an acceptance of the fact that both Throne and Nation had temporarily been set aside, and neither institution now held or enjoyed the standing of former times. Therefore it was both illogical and unnecessary that Gentiles should be required to submit to the ritual of a day that had forever passed.

Thus, by much heated controversy, and more painful disillusionment, many of those Jewish believers had had to learn the same great facts that Paul had learned from the lips of his Lord, when he thrice prayed for the removal of his stake. Paul had learned the truth behind those facts in the solitude of fervent prayer, and had acquiesced readily, accepting the sufferings thus entailed as co-participation with Christ. The Mother Church had had to learn from open experience, and the recital of undeniable facts, that the entering in of the Gentile convert betokened the 'going out' of the Jewish people from the favour of God. Peter's experience at Caesarea and Paul's recital of irrefutable facts, convinced the Council—or at least the greater part of it—that the era of Jewish exclusiveness was at an end, and that the Divine intention henceforth was, that it should remain so till the full number of the Gentiles to be 'taken-out', had been accepted into grace. The recognition of that fact constitutes that Council, therefore, a vital land-mark in the transitional changes of those fateful days. From then on, every obedient believer stood convinced that the nation that bore them was doomed to destruction and that nothing that any one (or all of them) could do, could avert the doom that awaited it.

At an earlier date Jesus Himself had had to pronounce sentence upon House and Nation, and, while doing so, found comfort for himself in the prophecies. One day, the then rejected (and rejecting) people, (their long

exile being ended) would welcome his Home-Coming, and in exultant strain, shout, "*Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord*". (Psalm 118. 26; Matt. 23. 39). So also, but in simpler measure, the Council at Jerusalem accepted prophetic assurance that the rejected, estranged people, after their sieve-tossing experience among the nations, would return home again to Land and Throne, never again to be dislodged therefrom. "*After that I will return and rebuild . . . and set up . . . that the residue of men might seek the Lord . . .*" The same blessed hope, the same engrossing prospect as that envisioned by the Lord, but learned by the Council under such controversial and passion-provoking circumstances.

That was the fore-view at the onset of the Age. What is the view and prospect to-day? Between that earlier day and this lies an experience without parallel or precedent in the whole annals of time. No story of the wider nations can be compared with the harrowing record of this cast-off people's sufferings. For centuries "the tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast" found no place of rest for their toil-worn feet. Robbed, plundered, murdered, disgraced, the sport of kings and scorn of peoples—a story that has no parallel anywhere—so the long centuries passed while the Gentiles were being "taken-out" for His Name!

But though long the way and dark the night, the darksome shades began at last to pass, and twilight burgeoned into opening day. First, the ostracising fetters fell from their tortured souls in a land beyond our western sea. "All men are free and equal" ran the Charter of Independence when the thirteen federated states of America declared themselves free of British rule. "All men"—the Jew included, as well as those of other birth! That emancipatory decree set the course. Revolutionary France followed in its train. Britain also followed in its wake, and soon, the hitherto detested Jew was admitted into membership of even the very Mother of Parliaments—the British House of Commons itself! Ere long a son of Abraham became the First Minister of Britain's Queen, and director of the nation's destinies! Likewise in other parts of Europe, the gift of equal citizenship was conferred and the sons of Abraham found a home in many lands.

Towards the close of the last century a deep down smouldering yearning for the old Homeland flickered into a living spark. From it, the emotion that created Zionism burst

forth. A new desire was born among the "peeled and scattered people"—a desire to be no longer British-Jews, German-Jews, Russian-Jews, or other hyphenated Jews, but Palestinian-Jews, Homeland-Jews, with territory and a polity of its own.

Came, at last, the British Government's declaration that it viewed favourably the establishment of a Homeland for a united Jewish people on Palestinian soil, and the movement, hitherto scattered and uncertain of its aim, became a force henceforth to be reckoned with.

When the first World War came to an end, the homeward trek began, slowly at first, but with increasing momentum until, as the years went by, a considerable Jewish population had settled in the land, and made itself at home, waiting expectantly, for opportunity to knock. Opportunity came when Britain found her U.N. mandate a responsibility too great to hold. Israeli leaders on the spot acted, and the Israeli nation was born.

Once again, after a lapse of nearly nineteen centuries, Israel was a nation again, with territory and an administration of its own. Over a century and a half, the shackles of her bondage had been loosing-off, sure sign of something great to come. And now the great thing has appeared! What of it now? What does that new Israeli State indicate? Is the warfare and the bondage over? Is the day of "wandering feet and weary breast" over at last? Would God that it were! Would God that it were now time to "comfort ye, comfort ye My people"! But it is not! How can it be? Israel has gone back to her Homeland in unbelief of all that is essential to her peace. She has not accepted the God-given Lamb as her Saviour and Messiah! And that acceptance of Him is the key to everything else she needs. True, some of her brilliant leaders accept Jesus as their own kith and kin, even to acknowledge a Rabbinic greatness about Him, but as the Son of God, their long-sought, ardently-awaited Messiah-King—oh No! not that! At the worst, He is still that infamous Impostor, whom God disowned upon a Roman Cross; at best, an impetuous but misguided prophet, too moralistically advanced for his day! Right gladly do they acknowledge his influence upon the nations by what He taught, and even claim some credit for their race by reason thereof, but as for his Messiahship, that is another matter altogether!

Israel to-day dwells in that chosen land in unbelief, and therefore stands in no better

relationship before Almighty God than that which had befallen her before Jerusalem was destroyed, and her long exile among the nations began. In those far days a veil lay upon her heart, preventing her from understanding the temporary nature of her covenant relationship. (2 Cor. 3. 14). That avail remains to-day! Her 'mind' was blinded then; her mind is blinded still! Only when 'it' (her heart) shall turn to the Lord can that veil be taken away!

In those far days her unbelieving sons were broken off from the Good Olive Tree because of unbelief (Rom. 11. 20). Lacking the proper faith (in Jesus) they still remain broken off, and must remain ungrafted back into the Abrahamic Olive Tree, until they acknowledge him whom they despised. She still labours under the penal terms of a broken Covenant—as she did in Apostolic days—but has neither Temple nor Sacrifice whereby to effect her cleansing! She lacks, moreover, the holy Altar-fire from heaven, which alone has warranty to consume a sacrifice on God's behalf!

Moreover, she has established herself as a people's Government, a Democracy, a constitutional Republic, with President and Parliament of her own—the very antipodes to a Divine Theocracy! Surely, as things stand, God is NOT in the midst of her!

What would Paul say to this state of things if he stood in your shoes or mine? Would he think the need for his 'stake' had passed, and that now he could proclaim the 'unlawful' things to his heart's content? Would he consider the present set-up in Israel the sign of God's Kingdom 'Come', and of the Glory-Cloud moving on? That point must be left for consideration in the next section of this review.

(To be continued)

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

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

DAY OF REST

4. The Sabbath a Delight

A short series
discussing Sunday

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words—I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth." (Isa. 58. 13-14).

Profound truth is enshrined in those words of Isaiah! Conscientious and reverent observance of Nature's weekly rest day results in physical and mental wellbeing of an order which cannot be attained in any other way. The believer who spends his Sunday thus will find that he takes up his normal routine on Monday morning feeling, as the common saying has it, "on top of the world". This modern expression is the literal counterpart of the Hebrew idiom which is translated "to ride on the high places of the earth", and the thought which Isaiah tried to express was precisely that which is conveyed by our everyday allusion. It may be fitting, therefore, to suggest a few of the considerations that determine happy and satisfactory sabbath-keeping.

There are three foundation principles which may be taken into consideration. Sunday is, firstly, a day of *rest*; secondly, a day of *service*, and thirdly, a day of *worship*. Rest, service, worship; these are the essential characteristics of the day which God has ordained for human wellbeing.

It will be noticed how aptly this compares with the Divine commission originally given to man. That also could be summed up in three words—Labour, Service, Worship. Labour, to make use of the earth's resources and products for the sustenance and enrichment of human life; service in the brotherhood of man, a state of society in which every man is his brother's keeper; worship, expressed in the whole-hearted allegiance of every man to God the Father of all, Who has created us to have dominion over this material creation. That ideal will be fully realised when the Divine Plan is complete and evil has been driven from the hearts of men. In that fair land which Isaiah saw in vision, when sorrow and sighing will have fled away, the threefold commission will be fully observed. Men will labour, serve and worship God

six days in the week, and on the seventh they will hold holy convocation to Him in Sabbaths more glorious than anything the world has ever, as yet, experienced.

The Sunday rest enjoined upon Christians is not merely an arbitrary cessation of labour, an enforced inactivity in a world which was made for activity. The essential characteristic about Sunday is, rather, that there should be a cessation of the daily routine involved in gaining a living. In Israel's day the gathering of manna was suspended during the seventh day. The equivalent of that to-day is the abandonment of the daily struggle to live, and a resting upon that which has been gained during the six days. It is often argued that such a course is not practicable under conditions of life to-day. Public services must be maintained; water, electricity, transport, must be provided. Such arguments are often put forward by those who have personal interests militating against the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. There can be no doubt that in a Christian state of society a much higher degree of cessation could be obtained than does exist. The cancellation of unnecessary activities, including those forms of daily labour not essential to the life of the community, such as closing of shops and places of amusement, would effect a vast change in the amount of labour which "must be done" on Sunday.

Many years ago Lord Macaulay told the British Parliament "*We are not poorer in England, but richer, because we have, through many ages, rested from our labour one day in seven. That day is not lost; while industry is suspended, while the plough lies in the furrows, while the Exchange is silent, while no smoke ascends from the factory, a process is going on quite as important to the wealth of nations as any process which is performed on more busy days. Man, the machine of machinery, the machine compared with which all the contrivances of the Watts and Arkwrights are worthless, is repairing and winding up, so that he returns to his labour on the Monday with clearer intellect, with livelier spirits, with renewed corporal vigour*". Unhappily the picture drawn by the noble lord is not true of the England to-day.

Now how should this time, if thus redeemed

from the workaday world, be utilised? Not in sloth and inactivity, for that is quite out of accord with the Divine way. True, the haste and stress of weekdays can be absent and all actions performed with a leisureliness that is rarely possible on any other day, yet activity of some sort there ought to be. Such activity divides itself naturally into three aspects.

First comes that recuperation which is a necessary component of the weekly rest. As a general principle it may be concluded that any form of activity which is so dissimilar from the normal weekday occupation of the particular individual concerned as to constitute mental and physical relaxation, and to be recuperative in its effect, can be legitimately regarded as a factor making for "sabbath rest". William Wilberforce, the man who did more than any other to abolish slavery, once declared that man's power of mental endurance could only be conserved by this proper treatment of the Sabbath. He had seen men of mighty intellect whose keen minds had failed them prematurely, and he was satisfied that in every such case the cause was neglect of this Divine law. It is good, surely, to give serious thought to this aspect of the subject, and with clear knowledge of all its implications, to include in every Sunday as it comes, that variety of rest, relaxation, recuperation—physical or mental, or both—which is necessary and desirable in the particular case. In this, as in so many things, the needs of individuals will vary, and no man may judge his brother. Sufficient is it if we use our sanctified judgment to do what seem to us to be the acceptable will of God.

The second aspect of "restful activity" is well summed up in the term "good works". Our Lord performed works of healing on the sabbath as on any day; the care with which it is pointed out in several instances that the day concerned was the sabbath seems to indicate that especial attention was desired to be directed to this fact. We can manifest the same desire to assist suffering humanity and carry out such works of mercy as are within our powers. Thus Sunday becomes peculiarly a day in which we may find time to render services to those in need or in distress, to visit the sick, to set hands to works of kindness. In ways which will present themselves in their variety to the sincere Christian it is possible to devote part of the day of rest to the service of one's fellows, freely giving even as we have freely received.

Last, but by no means least, comes the supreme purpose of the day—corporate wor-

ship. It is true that those whose lives are completely and utterly devoted to the Divine service endeavour to maintain the attitude of personal worship and communion with their Heavenly Father throughout all the hours of every day. Nevertheless this privileged condition is largely individual; there is a virtue and power in corporate worship, the joining together with one's fellows in audible praise and united prayer, that is very helpful to the full development of Christian character. Whenever the possibility exists, therefore, there should be an "*assembling of yourselves together*" and an ascending before God of praise, prayer and thought in company together.

The radio service is no substitute for corporate worship. For the aged, infirm and isolated unable to reach a place of worship, the radio service is a boon; but no Christian who has the opportunity to meet and worship with others of like faith is justified in choosing the comfort of the home and the armchair instead. Perhaps those who indulge themselves in this manner do not stop to reflect that it is a sign of disrespect to the Almighty and betokens a lack of reverence for Him.

Rest—Service—Worship. Let these be the ideals we set before us in our endeavour to discern and do our Father's will, and then in our doing we shall be richly blessed. By these things shall we derive, week by week, spiritual strength to serve in good stead when the dark and evil days come down.

(THE END)

"Ye shall be My witness . . ." was the promise given by our Lord to those who were with Him before His Ascension. So often, these words are interpreted to mean that the Apostles would become preachers of the Word, but such interpretation is only part of the whole meaning of witness. Instead of confining the idea of "witness" to the evidence given in a court of law, we should remember that we use the word in other senses, as, for instance, when we speak of a spectator as a witness. Probably the best sense of the word, however, as far as Christianity is concerned, is that implied by the Psalmist when he says, of the moon, that it is "a faithful witness in heaven". That celestial body witnesses to the sun by reflecting the light of the sun. The Christian's duty, therefore, is to reflect His Lord, and to be the faithful witness of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

A Study

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 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.

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

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

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 seems possible that our Lord meant only what 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.

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

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



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 35, No. 8

DECEMBER, 1958

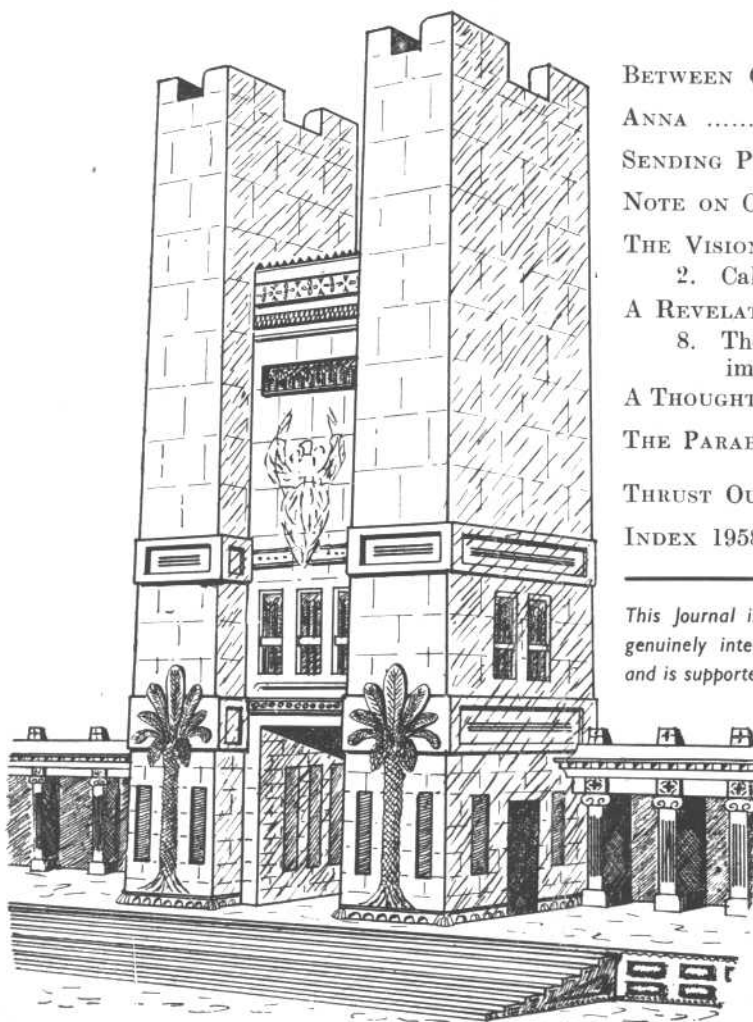
Published December 1st

Next issue January 15th

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



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union
11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow,
Middlesex

*Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—*

Pastoral Bible Institute
177 Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia

Bible Study Monthly

FOUNDED 1924

This Journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom, its circulation being largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers, and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated. Enquiries are welcomed, and all who are genuinely interested may have the journal sent regularly upon request.

Between Ourselves

Two errors appeared in our last issue. On page 139, article "*Jairus' Daughter*", John 8. 50 should read Luke 8. 50 and Mark 10. 35 should read Mark 5. 35. Some readers will have noticed these mistakes but this correction is made for the benefit of those who did not.

* * *

For the sake of those who look for this notice annually we would say that the usual Christian Home Calendar with monthly sheets, Scriptural coloured pictures and text for each day for 1959 is now ready and available from the Christian Truth Institute, 174 Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, at 3/3 each or 9/3 for three, post free. Please do not send to Lyncroft Gardens for these calendars; we are in no way connected with their sale or distribution.

* * *

At this season of the year it is usual to mention the existence of the Benevolent Fund administered by a committee the Secretary and Treasurer of which is Bro. E. Allbon, 20 Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex. Friends desiring to contribute to this Fund, or wishing to notify cases of need, are desired to write to Bro. Allbon at that address.

* * *

Attention is drawn to the index on the last page of this issue. Should any new readers desire copies of back issues containing any item which specially interests them we will gladly send any such issues on request; it is only necessary to mention the page numbers of the articles concerned and the appropriate issues will be sent by return.

Gone from us

Sis. A. Beckett (*Exeter*)

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

ISRAEL'S GOD

*Our God, in Thee alone we trust,
Though humbled, prostrate in the dust.
O God, on Thee we dare depend,
For thou wilt lead us to the end.
Our enemies on every hand
Will fall, while we with Thee will stand.
For thou hast promised so to keep
The people who in sorrow weep.
Forever shall His mercy stand;
He leads thee to the promised land;
For did not He this promise stress
While wandering through the wilderness?
Return, ye children of the Lord;
'Tis written in His precious Word;
And shall we in this evil hour
Forget the God of Israel's power?
Rejoice; thy warfare soon shall cease.
He comes, whose right it is, with peace;
And soon Jerusalem shall ring
With loud hosannas to our King.
(Elizabeth Dashwood)*

Christmas

*In despair I bowed my head,
"There is no peace on earth" I said,
"For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!"
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep.
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, goodwill to men."
(Longfellow)*

ANNA

A story of the
first Christmas

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for deliverance in Jerusalem." (Luke 2. 36-38).

So short a passage! So little said! But how eloquent! She comes in without having been previously introduced to the reader of sacred story. She goes out—and is never heard of again. But within that short space of a few minutes during which she occupies the Scripture stage, she does something that makes her brief appearance immortal for evermore.

Anna is the only one of that name in the New Testament. One in the Old Testament, Hannah, the mother of Samuel, has the same name, its Hebrew, as the other is its Greek form. In both languages the word means graciousness. Both women "spoke of Him". Hannah was the first in all the Scriptures to use the name "Messiah" to describe the one that should come. Abraham and others in earlier days had rejoiced to see His day and Moses had spoken of the Prophet that should arise, like unto himself but greater. No one before Hannah applied the word "Messiah" to Him and that is significant. Hannah was as truly a prophetess as was Anna a thousand years later. *"The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth"* she sang *"and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his Messiah"*. (I Sam. 2. 10). Now the later Anna stood in the temple courts holding in her arms the tiny babe that was the fulfilment of the prophecy. Messiah had come, and Anna knew it!

How did she know? By what process of reasoning did this aged saint connect that helpless child, with the Messiah of prophecy, the One coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of His strength, proclaiming His mightiness to save? What convinced her that here in this little family group lay, not only the doom of the mighty empire of Rome, but also of all the "kingdoms of this world" and all the

forces of wickedness and powers of evil everywhere? In what way did that small, innocent face show her the lineaments of a King?

It could only have been, as it was with Simeon on the same occasion, a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. God had answered her long-continued prayers and fasting, her patience and expectation, with a word from Himself. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ—the Messiah. He came "by the Spirit"—by the direct leading of the Holy Spirit—into the Temple just at the time Mary and Joseph were there with her first-born child. In that moment, as Simeon's old eyes fell upon the little group, there came an inward word, and his heart overflowed with reverent joy as he realised the dream of a lifetime fulfilled. So it must have been with Anna; coming in just as Simeon was pouring out his heart in his wonderful praise-prayer-prophecy, the Spirit spoke to Anna and she too knew that the consolation of Israel had come; the time was fulfilled; the hope for which the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, waited to come, was realised. God at last had visited His people.

Anna had spent a long life waiting. Eighty-four years a widow, seven years a wife before that—for such is the meaning of the Greek expression; not that she was merely eighty-four years old—so that even had she been married at the age of sixteen, a common age for Jewish girls to be married at that time, Anna must have been one hundred and seven years old at the time of this incident. It is not stated, but it is implied and may reasonably be accepted as a fact, that she had served God in the Temple and waited for the promised Messiah for at least the major portion of that time. What had she seen in all those years?

Anna was born when Judea was very different from its condition at the birth of Jesus. Rome had not yet appeared on the scene. Judea was an independent State under the rule of John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, one of the Maccabean patriots who delivered the country from its foreign oppressors. She was perhaps five years of age when Aristobulus succeeded John, and then, in the following year, Alexander Jannaeus succeeded Aristobulus. That part of Jewish history,

lying as it does between the Old and New Testaments, is not so well known to many of us as the days before Malachi or after Jesus, but in the reign of Alexander the boundaries of Judea were extended, by means of conquest or treaty, to the limits that had been reached by David and Solomon in olden times. In Alexander a Jewish king reigned from Sinai to the Euphrates, and Judea was the most powerful State in the Middle East. So influential was she, in fact, that the Roman Empire entered into treaty alliance with her—the text of the treaty, still preserved, is curiously like modern ones, both nations binding themselves not to make war upon the other and to help each other with military assistance should one be attacked by a third party—and Jewish ambassadors were in residence at Rome. It was a time of high hopes on the part of all true Jews that the Kingdom of God and the day of Israel's triumph was at hand. It only needed the appearance of Messiah to take over the reins of government. The Land of Promise as defined to Abraham—from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates—was under their control. Greek power was declining, and Rome, the only other great Empire, treated with Judea as an equal. Surely it could not be long now before the great Senate of Rome would listen with dignified respect to the orders of King Messiah, transmitted by the Jewish ambassador in the city, and Jerusalem replace both Athens and Rome as the world's seat of government. In those stirring days, ninety years or so before the angels sang at Bethlehem, men went about in daily expectation of the revelation of Messiah.

Some there were—as some there have been in every age—who knew from their deeper understanding of the things of God that the coming of the Kingdom could not be thus. History reveals the fact that behind the pomp and glitter of the rapidly growing State, the marching and shouting of armed men, the glowing speeches and lavish promises of Judea's politicians, there was a nucleus of devout souls, chiefly the poor of this world, looking for a Messiah who would be first of all a Teacher of righteousness. They knew that all was not well with their homeland and its people. They knew that sin covered them with its heavy hand, and that not until sin was removed could the glowing promises of the prophets be fulfilled. So they studied the old prophecies and told each other of the golden time that would come when God arose to shake terribly the earth and reveal to all

men the King who would reign in righteousness, even although with their limited vision they could hardly begin to see how these things could be. But they would have nothing to do with the politicians, nor yet—very much—with the established forms of religion, insincere and corrupt as they had become with the nation's rise to temporal prosperity. Zadokites, these faithful few were called in their day, and they found a substantial following among the ordinary people in that time, a century before the Messiah in whom they believed was to manifest Himself.

It is very possible that Anna came of a family that adhered to this faith and expectation. Her steadfastness through the years might very well have been due to parental influence and training. Phanuel might possibly have been an early leader among the Zadokites. And if so, if she grew up into early womanhood, married and widowed before she was twenty-four, neither she nor her fellows would have been unduly distressed or cast down at the rapid change of fortune which befell the triumphant State when Alexander Janneus died in B.C. 75 and war, disruption and anarchy set in. The enemies of the nation were not laid low after all; they had only been quiescent. Men who had so fondly imagined their victorious military Messiah soon coming to place Himself at the headship of the nations saw their territories invaded, their conquests wrested from them, and the ever growing threat of foreign oppression looming over them more menacingly every day.

In another eight years, when Anna was in her early forties, the crash came. The death of Queen Alexandra of Judea was followed by the submission of her sons to Pompey, the victorious Roman. From that time Judea became a Roman province, and hopes of the Messianic Kingdom were rudely dashed. But the Zadokites still believed, for their faith was not founded on the fortunes of war or the virtue of political arrangements. As Anna quietly went about her duties in the Temple she prayed and fasted and waited still for "He that should come", not knowing how much longer He would tarry.

Another ten or twelve years went by with Judea helpless in the grasp of her Roman master. Away in the far north-west Julius Cæsar was invading Britain, and our own ancestors in these islands were undergoing their first experience of the power which already held Judea in a grip of iron. Anna, past fifty years of age now, endured the hor-

ror of seeing the Temple itself, the centre of all her hopes and those of her countrymen, desecrated and plundered by Crassus the Roman general. Would Messiah never come? Had God forgotten to be gracious? The question must at times come to her mind but she put it from her knowing that the word of the Lord could not return to Him void, but must at the end prosper in the thing whereto it was sent.

So through the years, until Herod the Edomite came, to rule the country under title from Rome, a would-be king even although a tributary king. Perhaps at that the hopes of some began to rise again. When, eighteen years before the birth of Jesus, Herod announced his intention of pulling down the decaying fabric of Nehemiah's Temple, which had stood on Mount Moriah for five hundred years, ever since the return from Babylon, and erect a magnificent new Temple in its place, many must have wondered if this was indeed a preparation for Messiah. Anna and her friends must often have talked about it. There would be Simeon, like herself, well in the eighties; a middle-aged couple, Zachariah and Elisabeth, hoping against hope for the child that never seemed to come, but with greater intensity for the coming of Messiah; Jacob and his small son Joseph, and another Joseph, a wealthy young man from Arimathea, all waiting for His appearing and His Kingdom. As the splendid structure of the Temple grew under the industry of Herod's builders and stone-masons their hearts would

swell with anticipation and they would say one to another "Surely He will come soon!"

Then one day, coming into the Temple court, Anna saw a little group standing. Simeon, the friend and counsellor of many years, was holding a little child in his arms. His face was upturned to heaven as if in thanksgiving and praise. Anna recognised the parents in an instant; Joseph the son of Jacob, grown to manhood now, and his seventeen-year old wife Mary, both of them zealous and devout believers in the coming of the Lord, both of them brought up from childhood to look and wait for his coming. Anna had known them both since they were born—it seemed only yesterday. She had known their parents, too. She had known their grandparents. Her tired old mind travelled back over the years and she thought of her own friends of youth, long since laid aside to sleep in the hope of a promise of which they had never seen the realisation. She saw the new generation before her, the young people who were destined to carry the hope of Messiah onward into the coming years, years which she knew she herself would not live to see. A thought flashed into her mind; she looked more closely at the little group, at the rapt expression on Simeon's countenance, the sweet, eager face of the young mother, the grave, reverently proud features of Joseph; and she looked at the Babe.

And in that moment she knew that Christ had come.

"By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body . . . and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (I Cor. 12. 13).

The best manuscripts have it "and have all been made to drink one Spirit". The Diaglott renders "and all one Spirit were made to drink". But what does it mean to "drink" the Spirit? The thought is that of being, as it were, *saturated* with the Spirit in every fibre of one's being, in much the same way as a plant, being watered, takes up the water into every part, into stem and leaf and flowers. In fact the same word (*potizo*) here rendered "drink" is rendered "watered" in "I have planted, Apollos *watered*, but God gave the increase" (I Cor. 3. 6). Again in I Cor. 3. 2 it is rendered "fed"—"I have *fed* you with milk and not with meat". Having received of the

Holy Spirit to the extent of our ability, we have become, as the Apostle exhorts us in Eph. 5. 18 "*filled* with the Spirit". The thought of drinking in the Spirit must have been in Paul's mind when he exhorted "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye *filled* with the Spirit". With this thought in mind it would seem that the best translations of this expression "all made to drink into one Spirit" are those of Moffatt and the Twentieth Century, both of which have it "we have all been *imbued* with one Spirit". It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we have all been baptised into one body, and now, being one body, we all, individually, are filled, "*saturated*" with that Spirit, and so all have become in our bodies temples of the living God.

SENDING PORTIONS

A Christmas
Message

With the recurring seasons come the festive days of Christmas when an attempt is made by many to recapture the spirit of goodwill expressed in the message of the Saviour's birth. Something that often lies dormant in the heart of man is called forth, as in a moment of generosity he seeks to express his feelings in a small gift. Too often the exchange of such tokens masks a commercial or other base motive. But behind the Christmas shopping and merriment lies a long history which goes back farther than the First Advent and even farther than the advent of mankind upon earth.

The thought of "recurring seasons" brings to mind a host of memories concerning the blessings of Nature. Each breath we draw, each morsel we eat, is a token of love, planned by a wise and benevolent Creator when this planet was being prepared as a home for the human race. Too many of these gifts are taken for granted by most men without a moment's reflection upon the greatness and goodness of a loving God. The minute care and wonderful forethought which provided us with eyes and ears, hands and feet, are lost upon a busy world too absorbed in its own important and clever enterprises. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* (Jas. 1. 17). This is a principle of the natural world as well as the spiritual life. Yet apart from the "household of faith" this fact is ignored and unacknowledged.

In the natural family a tiny child for the first few months of its life has no recognition of those who provide and sustain its life. With the dawning intellect comes the first signs of appreciation of the love which surrounds it. In early years the child is still oblivious, for the most part, of the forethought and self-sacrifice of its parents and it is only conscious of all being well so long as the necessities and comforts are to hand for the taking. As the child develops towards maturity it begins to respond and reciprocate the love that is showered upon it. How rewarding for a mother to hear the baby's voice say "thank you" and for a father to accept a simple gift from a child's own hand! Just as wonderful are such moments for the Heavenly Father as He watches the first responses in His growing child. After we have learned to be thankful

for His bounty and care, we begin to desire to give something to Him in emulation of His love. Our giving does not amount to much compared with His vast treasure houses yet to His sensitive heart there is a thrill of joy at our humble efforts to imitate Him.

The next step in learning to be generous is a willingness to give to all, regardless of their relationship to us, but especially to the poor. This is also a godly characteristic and one enjoined upon Israel in their law by Moses (Deut. 15. 11). The spirit of the gift was just as important as the gift itself, and there was to be no feeling of it being given grudgingly. Here and there in the history of Israel we catch a glimpse of this principle being revived, along with other reforms. Celebration of great occasions included the "sending of portions" to each other. So it was in the days of the Jewish Queen of Persia, Esther, when the Hebrews throughout the Empire were saved from annihilation. (Esth. 9. 19). Later, at the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Law of God, under Nehemiah, the festivities were marked by the sending of portions for whom nothing was prepared. (Neh. 8. 10). Obviously it is a Scriptural truth that in one's own enjoyment thought should be given to others, who perhaps are not so well able to enjoy the festivities as ourselves.

"God so loved the world that he gave . . ." and of all the many, many gifts which He bestowed upon mankind, none is so great, so wonderful, so full of Divine love as the gift of His dearly beloved Son. It cost God much to part with the cherished companion who from the beginning of Creation had been to Him as the apple of His eye. Sacrifice therefore characterises Divine giving, and as imitators of our Heavenly Father, we must be prepared to give till it hurts. She . . . *"hath cast in more than they all"* was the Master's appraisal of the widow's mite. Self denial had prompted her gift to the treasury and it thereby meant more to God than the well advertised large donations of the wealthy.

So Christmas comes once more, to remind us of God's great gift. And we, to celebrate the occasion, will send presents to our friends and relatives in token of our love for them and recognition of God's love toward us. Perhaps we shall be able to spare some generosity for those "for whom nothing is prepared" like

God's people of old. The Welfare State and National Insurance schemes have not dispensed with the need or opportunity for true almsgiving. In any case, we can copy the example of Peter and John, who having no silver and gold to distribute to the poor, "gave such as they had".

As we once more sit down to a sumptuous meal and talk together around the family hearth, let us spare a thought for those in this and other lands who will not fare so well as ourselves during the festive season. It is Winter in the northern hemisphere and many will be cold and hungry. Many more throughout the wide world will know nothing of the "Baby that was born in Bethlehem" who became the Saviour of mankind. If we forget those who lack material comforts or who are

ignorant of the Gospel we shall have forgotten the very spirit of Christmas, which began in a stable, was nurtured in a peasant home and became a message of peace and hope and joy unto all the world.

May the spirit of giving, the joy of making others happy, the peace of the angelic messengers who sang in the skies above Bethlehem, bring to our hearts a warmth and pleasure which will extend beyond the Holydays which mark the end of the old year. For us it should continue on into the New Year, enriching and ennobling the life. As we celebrate the festival which commemorates His coming to live among us, may we have that spirit which will eventually fit us to live with Him.

A NOTE ON THE CREATION OF MAN

"My substance was not hid from thee" says the Psalmist in Psa. 139. 14-16 "when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, the days they should be fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." That is a very striking passage throwing light on the creation of man. The Evolution theory declares that the human child in the process of its development before birth passes through all the evolutionary stages of its animal ancestors; the Word of God says that God planned the structure of man's body before any part of that body came into existence. There are similarities between the physical frames of men and animals; that is only to be expected since both live under the same outward conditions and have much the same physical needs; but this by no means demands that the one is descended from the other, and the Psalm above quoted states very definitely that God planned man as a special creation. There are two interesting statements by notable scientists of a past generation which are well worth repeating in this connection. Sir Richard Owen (1804-1892), a British naturalist, superintendent of the Natural History Dept. of the British Museum, a fellow of nearly every learned Society in Britain and America and recognised as one of the authorities in this branch of learning, said "the recognition of an ideal exemplar for the vertebrated animals (animals having spines or "backbones") proves that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed before

man appeared. For the Divine mind that planned the archetype (first pattern) also foreknew all its modifications. The archetypal idea was manifested in the flesh under divers modifications upon this planet long prior to the birth of those animal species that actually exemplify it." In other words, the fact that the animal creation exhibits a constantly ascending scale leading up to and culminating in man, the crown and glory of earthly creation, indicates that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed in the mind of the Creator when the first animals were brought into being, long before man was introduced upon earth. Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), an eminent Swiss naturalist and professor at Harvard University, U.S.A., and author of many books on Natural History, said in his "Principles of Zoology" (1848) "there is a manifest progress in the succession of beings on the surface of the earth. This progress consists in an increasing similarity to the existing fauna, and among the vertebrates (animals) especially in their increasing resemblance to man. But this connection is not the consequence of a direct lineage between the faunas (living creatures) of different ages. There is nothing like parental descent connecting them. The fishes of the Palæozoic Age are in no respect the ancestors of the reptiles of the Secondary Age, nor does man descend from the mammals which preceded him in the Tertiary Age. The link by which they are connected is of a higher and immaterial nature; and their connection is to be sought in the view of the Creator Himself, Whose aim

in forming the earth, in allowing it to undergo the successive changes which geology has pointed out, and in creating successively all the different types of animals which have passed away, *was to introduce man upon the surface of our globe.* Man is the end towards which all the animal creation has tended from the first appearance of the first Palæozoic fishes".

Thus the same phenomena which has been explained by Evolutionists as an evidence of the descent of man from the lower animals

was noticed by scientists years before the Evolution theory was promulgated, (in the "*Origin of Species*", published in 1859) and was realised to be evidence of the Creator's orderly methods in creation, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear". God commenced with very humble forms of life and went on with creatures of ever greater complexity and increasing similarity to man until at last man himself appeared, the last and final work of God's hands.

THE VISION OF JOEL

An Exposition of the
Book of Joel

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 which has broken down the prophet turns his bitter gaze to the work of man which 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 of 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; 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 that 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 rearrangements and developments. 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 people's sins 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.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

8. The Christian to-day amid impending change

St. Paul's vision
of the future
2 Cor. 12. 1—9

If, as suggested in the preceding section of this study, the Spirit of the Lord—the Glory-Cloud that leads the way—is not yet poured out and resting on the returned Israeli people, now dwelling in the Holy Land, neither is that Spirit resting on the larger 'residue' domiciled in Gentile lands throughout the wide earth. The same lines of evidence which determine concerning the one, determine also as to the other. Much Scriptural evidence (in line with James' declaration at the Council of Jerusalem) indicates that the Tabernacle of David, together with its Kingly Rule in Israel, must first be restored and set up in Kingdom Power, so that through this agency, the Word of the Lord may go forth to the Gentile Residue.

Now, if it is not possible to prove that the Divine Programme has progressed as far as that, surely it is safe to presume that the stage preceding that Davidic stage is still under way. In that case, this is still the period of the 'taking-out' from the Gentiles of a people to bear God's Name, and which is being fused and blended with the Jewish Remnant into one New Man. (Eph. 2. 15). It should be obvious therefore to all who will take time to think that, as this period was ushered in by a most drastic change of procedure in the Divine dealing towards Israel of old, (so that the Church of the two Remnants might appear on the scene), so also, at the close of the period, another drastic change must occur in order that the formerly rejected people might be brought back into grace, and to their rightful place in the earth. And that the one yet to come will be as marked and definite as the one that is past, needs no undue emphasizing.

That the first Change was deep and fundamental is beyond question. It brought to an end an Institution Divinely ordained, and transformed a relationship of exclusive favour into one of definite Divine disfavour. Even though the Gentile nations (as nations) kept their course unchanged—Rome continuing to dominate and control the earth—the casting off of Israel as a nation from favour opened up and introduced the 'era of the individual believer', among both Jew and Gentile peoples everywhere. But that aspect of Individualistic standing in grace must give place again to that of a 'national' standing

under a New Covenant when the Davidic Throne is restored.

That the first change was drastic and deep from the Divine standpoint, is beyond question. Israel's long exile among the Gentiles proves it, the call of a people from among the Gentiles—the Church, as seen mainly in Gentile lands, confirms it. There is no uncertainty or dubiety about it. It stands as an unchallengeable matter of historic fact. Now the assuredness of that first change presupposes the certitude of the second. The same Divine supervision that imposed the first stands pledged to bring about the second. Spite of the expectations that the Gospel Church will continue 'sine die', that second change is quite as certain as that, at the beginning, there was a first. For the latter, as for the former, stands the testimony of a 'Thus saith the Lord'.

Israel, once more established in grace, will not again be plucked up from her homeland soil for ever. Her place among the nations will be assured, for the nation or people that will not serve her will perish. With the re-establishment of the Davidic Throne, God's Kingdom will come, and as it spreads throughout the earth will displace the present Gentile sovereignty that has existed so long among men.

Just prior to the re-establishment of that Throne, the Remnant Church, (by that time made ready for the "inheritance of the Saints in Light") will be complete, and will go up to her heavenly home, to be forever with the Lord—the first-fruits of those that slept.

If then the period allocated to the Remnant Church has not yet expired, the question might be asked "Has this period much longer to run?" Is it a period that can still be measured in centuries, or is it possible it may be measured only in years? Are there any signs or indications that it might be nearing its end? Is it possible that the first premonitions of that change are becoming visible?

In replying to these questions it is not intended to introduce chronological calculations, nor yet to fix specific dates, nor yet to say whether the intervening period will be of long duration or short. We purpose only to note patent facts, observable to all who are on the watch. Supposing Paul stood in our shoes to-day, what would his wistful eye detect in

the present set-up of circumstance? What attitude would he adopt towards an impending change? To ascertain what he might do, in the light of what he did long ago, should be of some assistance in helping us to determine what we ought to do!

There are two lines of evidence we wish to suggest for consideration,—the first concerning Israel, the other about the Christian Church. That concerning Israel is of outstanding importance, while that relating to the Christian Church, though of secondary importance only, is yet not without its bearing on the question.

Concerning the world-situation as it stands to-day—with the Bible as our guide—we would say that first and foremost among the many eventful things around us stands the fact that Israel has been permitted, after long waiting and wandering, to return to the land of her fathers. True, she has returned in unbelief, her heart still hard, her eyes still blind, and without discernment as to the purpose of her return. Yet, notwithstanding that disability, a nucleus of that people is back again in the land from which they were expelled some nineteen centuries ago! Israel is back in the one land, where, alone in all the earth, the Davidic Throne and Kingly Rule can be re-established and set up. That is to say, she has now returned—a token return—to the very spot to which the statement of James at the Council of Jerusalem distinctly referred, and to which many other specific prophecies also apply, and where alone in all the wide earth their fulfilment can take place. So long as Israel was still exiled in Gentile lands the question of its re-establishment could not possibly arise. So intimately and inextricably bound up in the purposes of God is that royal Throne with David's ancient city, Jerusalem, that its re-establishment was an utter impossibility while the city remained in alien hands. The first and fundamental condition for the re-establishment of that historic Throne, in that historic City, is the return to that long-deserted land, and to that oft-smitten city, of David's own kith and kin.

Conformably to that fundamental requirement, a nucleus of that people has now returned to the land, and in part, to the city!

No matter how, nor yet in what state of heart, the great outstanding fact of these modern days is that the long separation between the 'People of the Land' and the 'Land of the People', is now drawing to its close. True again, it is only a mere foothold that Israel holds—little more than one-

fortieth part of the covenanted area—but the fact that that long-exiled people is back again upon a mere 'token' foothold of that special land, is the one out-standingly important thing for the student of God's Word and Ways to consider. Notwithstanding also that that 'token' nucleus has been permitted to return to that 'token' area on Divine sufferance only to be confronted presently by another searching Messianic test—in which she is forecast to fail again most grievously—the great outstanding fact for world-politics, to-day, is not the H-bomb, but that that people's tossing and sifting among the nations is now within sight of its end.

How often, through the long centuries this tossed, sieve-shaken people thought to build a nest of repose for itself, saying the while, "Here let us rest", only to find God's hand thrust disturbingly under it, saying as He upset the nest, "Arise ye, and depart, this is not the place for your rest". God has ordained one exclusive place of "Rest" for this chosen people, one land alone in all the earth, and till their feet tread its desolated soil there can be no place of rest for their souls. And though now gathered to the place of God's fire and God's furnace (Isa. 31. 9) and there destined to be melted and refined as metals are purified by fire, (Ezek. 22. 17-22) still, for all that, the great fact stands challengingly clear, that the Divine hand which drove them afar has cleared a way for their return to the land of their desire. To-day, Israel again dwells where the Davidic Throne can be set up, and where 'Rest'—God's chosen Rest—can, in due time, be found! That is the great epoch-making fact of these epoch-making times! Can this be accepted as a sign of an impending change? Does the transformation in this tiny nation's historic experience indicate a turning-point in the destinies of the Gentile world?

(To be continued)

Where can we find this Throne of Grace? Is it in some far-away place, beyond the reach of time and sense? Is it in regions beyond the skies? Is the way thereto strewn with penances, and fastings? Nay indeed. "It is nigh thee in thy heart." True, Jesus, as our Great High Priest passed through the heavens, to appear in God's presence for us, but into whatsoever heart the Spirit and presence of God has come to dwell, there indeed it is Heaven below—and there the enthroned Grace of God has come to rule. In every such heart sits Grace enthroned.

A Thought for the Month

A text which has been of great help to me, and which I have remembered before the Lord in prayer every morning for the latter part of the year is Exod. 33. 14 *"My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."* This precious promise has an emphatic confirmation in Exod. 3. 12 which reads *"Certainly I will be with thee."* I have claimed this promise as mine for every day, that what no matter the experience of the day may be, at the centre I shall enjoy rest, let the circumference of happenings be what they may. If God be for me, who or what can be against me? If all things work together for good to me, then truly in everything I can give thanks. Whatever my first reaction to unwelcome circumstances, I am glad and grateful to be able to say that I have very soon said *"Return unto thy rest, O my soul."* Not to enter into this daily rest of mind and heart, I realised, would be demonstrating a lack of faith such as Israel displayed when they had to wander in the wilderness because they could not enter in on account of unbelief. Some one has said *"The Lord loves to be trusted"* and I want to please and serve Him in return for all His love to the uttermost bestowed on me.

Our Lord's example has been to me a great stimulus. Never deviating a hair breadth from the way the Father marked out for Him, He eventually came up against the stark horror of all that was involved in the course He was pursuing. Thinking aloud he said in the hearing of his disciples, *"Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify Thy name;"* and again *"The cup that my Father hath poured, shall I not drink it?"*

What it must have cost our Lord to drink it to the dregs is revealed in his thrice repeated request *"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"*.

But how could all this course of suffering glorify God? Because of the fact that the Father himself was suffering in all that the Son suffered, as the mother suffers who looks on in helpless distress at her little one bearing pain which she would so gladly take upon herself instead. At Adam's fall, the equilibrium of the moral universe had been upset, owing to the machinations of the Adversary. This could only be restored by a demonstration of the real character of God, that He was Love, and love to the uttermost. Satan

had injected doubt of God into the minds and hearts of our first parents and this has been passed on to their race. The principle involved is illustrated in the case of Job. God looks on at Job's love and faithfulness and points to him as an example, to which Satan sneeringly replies *"Does Job serve God for naught"*. The implication was that all the service and worship that God received was mercenary, because it paid. Then followed all the calamities which befell Job and yet he remained true to God throughout it all.

In like manner we each may be in the limelight, a spectacle to angels and men, and Satan and his hosts. How shall we react to untoward experiences? How very trying indeed are some of the experiences that many of our brethren are called upon to pass through and whom it may be, we remember daily in prayer. During this year I want to have my faith and love such that my reactions to anything that may come will be in the spirit of saying with Jesus *"Father, glorify Thy name"* and *"the cup that my Father hath poured, shall I not drink it."*

It is a most wonderful and inspiring thought that weak and humble as we are, the Heavenly Father is himself so humble, that he has actually in this crisis of the permission of evil, entrusted his good name with us. The question is asked by the prophet, *"who hath believed our report?"* What if nobody had believed, if there had never been the faithful remnant who accepted and upheld the honour of God, and like Job remained faithful in spite of everything? What if all had disbelieved? Unto us it is not only given but graciously given, as one translation puts it, not only to believe on his name, but to suffer for his sake.

I want to finish with this comment for the last day of the year. *"Let us, beloved brethren, make plenty of good resolves respecting what we shall be willing to be, to do, to suffer, in fellowship with our Lord; that we may by his grace make of this the best year thus far of our lives—the year of largest hopes, of largest endeavours, and by the Lord's grace of largest successes in self sacrifice."*

"This world will not be saved from its madness by a church asleep. It needs a church aflame.
Percy Sowerby

THE PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS

"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" said Jesus. The listening Pharisees derided Him when they heard that saying; they had, in their own opinion, long since learned how to make the best of both worlds. It is likely that the complacent smiles were quickly swept off their arrogant faces when Jesus proceeded to relate the story of Dives and Lazarus.

The account is preserved only in the 16th chapter of Luke's Gospel. There was a certain rich man, said Jesus, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate.

So far the story ran true to everyday experience. Beggars squatting at the outer portals of rich men's houses were a familiar enough sight in the days of Jesus. They existed on such bounty as the householder chose to give them, supplemented by the charity of passers-by. This particular beggar was like so many of them, a pitiable wreck of a man, clothed in rags, disease-ridden, his only companions the carrion dogs which were always prowling about the city and like him existing on such scraps of food as came their way. The Pharisees in the group listened to these opening words with barely concealed indifference; the situation was one with which they were thoroughly familiar and which they considered a normal feature of society. No reason existed for trying to change it or mitigate its evils. So they listened with only detached interest.

But the next words brought them up with a jolt. The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died, but he was not carried into Abraham's bosom. He was buried and found himself in Hades.

Eyebrows contracted and lips were pursed at this. There is a story in the Babylonian Talmud, a story with which those Pharisees were certainly familiar, of somewhat similar character, but in that story the Pharisee is taken into the joys of the presence of God and the publican is condemned to the torment of thirst. It is fairly evident that Jesus, who also must have been familiar with the Babylonian Talmud, deliberately based this parable upon that story but reversed the respective fates of the two characters. Knowing that, it is easy to see that this parable is intended to show up the utter unworthiness of the Pharisees

and the nation they represented, their ultimate loss of all the good things they enjoyed as the "chosen nation", and the reception into Divine favour of those previously outside the pale.

The Jewish background of the story is very noticeable. There is no mention of God the Father nor of Christ the Son; no reference to Heaven the home of the faithful in Christ, the earthly Messianic Kingdom which is to be the "desire of all nations", or the Atonement, by means of which salvation comes to man. Instead, we have Abraham, Moses and the prophets, angels, "Abraham's bosom", and Hades, all essentially matters of Jewish interest. The Hades of the parable is not the Old Testament Hades (*Sheol*—the grave) but the Hades of Rabbinic speculation, modelled after Greek thought rather than Hebrew. There is no reason therefore for thinking that the parable has anything to do with the future life or with the respective destinies of righteous and wicked after death. There is nothing said about the moral standing of the two characters. Lazarus is not said to be righteous nor Dives wicked. (The name "Dives" often applied to the rich man but not appearing in the A.V. is the Latin for "rich man" and comes from the early Latin Bibles in Britain). And even if Lazarus is conceded to be righteous there is no justification for assuming that the expression "Abraham's bosom" is synonymous with Heaven.

The rich man pictured the Pharisees and, by extension, the whole of the unbelieving Jewish nation. For more than a thousand years they had been the chosen people of God "to be a light to the Gentiles, to declare his salvation to the ends of the earth". By virtue of the Covenant made at Sinai they were guaranteed all possible material blessings, "blessed in basket and in store", safety from their enemies, and the privilege of being God's Royal Priesthood to administer His blessings to all men. They, and they alone, were to be the true children of Abraham through whom the promised blessing to all families of the earth should come. In symbolic language, they were clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. In that position the Pharisees boasted themselves. "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man". That order of things came to an end when Jesus declared

"Your house is left unto you desolate" and when, having rejected and crucified the Lord of glory, the favoured position of Israel came to an utter and disastrous end in the overthrow of the nation directly after the Crucifixion, and its dispersal among all nations. Truly "the rich man died and was buried".

Lazarus, on the contrary, enjoyed an improvement of status. His life of misery came to an end and he found himself transported into "Abraham's bosom". The allusion has two explanatory instances in the Gospels. To lie in the bosom of a superior or a friend was a mark of great favour; the custom of reclining at meals with each person's head in the bosom of his neighbour implied that the one next to the host was to be envied. At the Last Supper it is John who is found to be "leaning on Jesus' bosom" (Jno. 13. 23). Jesus Himself, in His close relationship with the Father, is said to be "*the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father*" (Jno. 1. 18). So with Lazarus; he is translated, not to Heaven, but to a position of close relationship with Abraham. That fact makes it fairly obvious that Jesus is alluding to the truth He uttered in such plain terms when on another occasion He said to these same Pharisees, again as representing their nation, "*the kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*". (Matt. 21. 43). Lazarus, then, is intended to picture the despised and outcast Gentiles who at last enter into the high calling of God, as they did do under the preaching of the Apostles, becoming spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3. 7-8). The eleventh chapter of Romans makes it clear that the fruitless olive branches were broken off and wild olive branches (i.e. the Gentiles) were grafted in. Lazarus in Abraham's bosom pictures the Christian Church of all nations and peoples classed as children of Abraham and hence, as Galatians declares, "heirs according to the promise".

In the meantime the rich man is in Hades, "in torments". This used to be a "key" text to urge the reality of the "everlasting fires", but critical study soon shows that this position cannot reasonably be maintained. The word rendered "hell" here is "*hades*", the death state, not "*gehenna*", which is final doom. Hades is a temporary condition, for the time will come that Death and Hades are to be cast into the lake of fire, (Rev. 20. 13-14) i.e. be themselves destroyed or brought to an end. Another and a most important consideration

is that the sojourn of Dives in Hades begins to have a remedial effect; the one who in his lifetime gave evidence of his inherent selfishness and lack of consideration for others in that Lazarus only got the crumbs which fell from his table is now displaying concern for the fate of his brothers. "*I have five brethren; that (Lazarus) may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment*." He still calls Abraham "Father" and the latter still calls him "Son" (vs 25) which does not look as if the rich man's case is hopeless. The word rendered "torment" in vs 23 and 28 "*in hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments*" is from "*basanos*" which properly denotes a touchstone or stone, (basonite), used for testing gold. Genuine gold, rubbed on this particular kind of stone, left a characteristic mark, hence the word at first indicated a trial or test of genuineness. Since judicial trials in ancient times almost always employed torture to extract confessions, the word when used judicially came to mean "torture", hence the translation "torment" in this instance. That it need not carry this meaning is shown by other occurrences of the word in the New Testament, such as:

Matt. 8. 6. "Sick of the palsy, grievously *tormented*."

Matt. 4. 24 "Sick persons . . . divers diseases and *torments*."

Mark 6. 48. "He saw them *toiling* in rowing."

Matt. 14. 24. "Midst of the sea, *tossed* with waves."

The rich man, then, during his sojourn in Hades, is undergoing a severe, harrowing trial which nevertheless must come to an end sometime because Hades itself is but a temporary condition. That is an apt symbol of Israel's "Hades" experiences during the period between the First and Second Advents. Scattered among all nations, deprived of citizenship and country of her own, she has been the victim of oppression and cruelty in every land. But God has declared that He will eventually restore Israel to a destined place in His purposes where she shall fulfil her original destiny to convey Divine blessing to men. "*Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee . . . and the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising*." (Isa. 60. 1-3).

The word "tormented" in vs 24 and 25 is from "*odunomai*" which signifies anguish, pain or distress of any kind, as in:

Luke 2. 48. "Thy father and I have sought thee *sorrowing*."

Acts 20. 38. "Sorrowing most of all."

Rom. 9. 2. "Continual sorrow in my heart."

I Tim. 6. 10. "Pierced through with many sorrows."

"So the rich man in his distress beheld Lazarus enjoying the felicity of communion with Abraham and cried out for some small moiety of relief. *"Send Lazarus that he may . . . cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."* And Abraham had to tell him that what he asked was impossible. *"Between us and you there is a great gulf (Gr. Chasma) fixed"* a chasm which effectually precluded any passage from the one side to the other. It was not that Abraham would not relieve; it was that he could not.

What is the gulf? The immutable purpose of God! When the Most High decrees judgment, none can set it aside. From the day that the unreasoning crowd cried "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. 27. 25) the Jewish nation entered into a condition from which they cannot and will not be delivered until in the outworking of the Divine Plan the "fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11. 25). When, at the end of this Age, the Christian Church is complete and joined to her Lord in Heaven, and the "residue of men" (Acts 15. 17) are ready to "seek after the Lord", then will God "build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down" (Acts 15. 16) and manifest a restored and purified Israel nation in the midst of the earth to play its own destined part in the

evangelising of the world.

The parable does not go that far, for there is still one lesson, the most solemn lesson of all, to be taught, and Jesus would fain leave the Pharisees with that word. The rich man was concerned about his brethren; he wanted one from the dead to go to them that in the wonder of that happening they might find conviction. *"They have Moses and the prophets"* said Abraham *"Let them hear them"*. True enough; Israel always had Moses and the prophets, and Christ said that if they had rightly heard Moses and the prophets they would have believed Him, for in those writings lay the evidence of His Messiahship. The rich man dissented; even though his brethren rejected Moses and the prophets—and he did not dispute the fact of their having done so—yet a visitation from the dead would convince them. That gave the opportunity for one of the most telling phrases which ever fell from the lips of Jesus. *"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead"* (vs 31). The whole history of Israel, from the First Advent until now, is evidence of the truth of that word. Jesus rose from the dead; they still did not believe!

The parable ends with the rich man still in Hades. But Abraham called him "Son" and he called Abraham "Father"; and Hades will one day pass away. So there is a bright gleam behind the dark horizon of the picture. There is still hope.

Q. "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left'" (Isa. 30. 21). Does this imply that we should expect audible or inward voices to guide us on our Christian way?

A. No. The verse is a Millennial promise to Israel applying after the chastening experience of "Jacob's Trouble". The context shows this. *"The people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it he shall answer thee, and though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of oppression, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee . . ."* and so on. Here is God's promise that in the time of Israel's greatest extremity, when the great forces of evil, the "hosts of Gog and Magog", are descending upon their rebuilt and prosperous land, God will await the cry of faith and will answer it. Whatever of trouble and distress is in store for the people at that time, deliver-

ance will come, and the "teachers" of Israel—the "Ancient Worthies", the resurrected heroes of old time—will no longer be despised and rejected, ("Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted?" asked Stephen at his trial, Acts 7. 52) but thine eyes shall see (look upon) thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear (listen to) their word." And those Ancient Worthies will say to Israel, "this is the way, walk ye in it". Thus will Israel, after their deliverance from their enemies and the establishment of the Kingdom, commence to walk up the Highway of Holiness of Isa. 35. 8. and be followed by all the hosts of redeemed mankind, pressing toward true conversion to Christ and perfection of life. Verses 22-23 describe the end of idolatry consequent upon the establishment of the Millennial reign, and the climax comes in verse 26 where the enlightenment of the Millennium is described as the light of the moon being as the sun, and the light of the sun being increased sevenfold, in that day when "the Lord shall reign in Zion, and before his ancients, gloriously".

THRUST OUT OF THE KINGDOM

A lesson from
past history

"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

(Luke 13. 28).

In those words Jesus closed the door of Kingdom power in the faces of confident men who had fondly imagined themselves certain of its privileges. How came it about that He could so definitely pass that judgment and deny them for ever a position to which they claimed to be the rightful heirs?

The Pharisees were the degenerate spiritual descendants of a once noble and influential reform movement. When the children of Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity, five hundred years before Christ, there arose in their midst a body of men known as the "Chassidim," distinguished for self-sacrificing consecration to God, insistence upon holiness of life and separation from the people of the land, and fervent expectation of God's Kingdom on earth when the righteous would be exalted and the wicked punished. During the dark days of Greek oppression the Chassidim, or Pharisees as they were afterwards called, became bulwarks of strength to the suffering people, and many of them suffered martyrdom in defence of their faith. It was largely in consequence of their efforts that knowledge of the prophets' teachings regarding the Kingdom was recovered and proclaimed.

But as time went on the Pharisees gradually came to a position of power and leadership in the nation, and then, like the Christian Church in the days of Constantine, they forsook their primitive simplicity and single-heartedness, failed to continue in progressive understanding of Divine revelation, and began to count as of supreme importance the letter of the Law and the "traditions of the fathers". Blinded by their own refusal to "walk in the light" they failed to recognise the evidences of the developing Plan of God revealed in Christ, and so, although so sure of their place in the Kingdom, that Kingdom was taken from them *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"*. (Matt. 21 43). They lost that position, and did not know they had lost it. They had once been God's honoured instruments in the ministry of His Plan; they now became broken vessels, and God could find no further use for them. They opposed and denied the Truth due to be understood,

persecuted and put to death the men who proclaimed that truth, and lost for ever any further share in either the understanding or the execution of the Divine Plan, then, or in the future. Instead of becoming rulers in the Kingdom, they will take their place among its subjects and learn, in that day, the lessons they might have learned in their lifetime.

What was the cause of their failure? To what must we attribute that blindness which led them to know not the time of their visitation? It was largely the fault of over-confidence! Confidence is accounted a virtue, and for those who would serve God it is a virtue when the confidence is in God and in His power. But the Pharisees' confidence was in themselves, their own wisdom, their own power, their own righteousness, and they knew not that their wisdom was foolishness in God's sight, their power was weakness, and their righteousness as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64. 6). It was the wrong kind of confidence. They *"trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others"* (Luke 18. 9-10). They relied on their relationship to Abraham. *"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man"* (John 8. 33) and their knowledge of doctrine: *"whence hath this man letters, having never learned?"* (John 7. 15). And that attitude of mind led them to the terrible position where, like one of their number in Jesus' story, they stood each before God and addressed Him in tones of irreverent familiarity: *"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"* (Matt. 18. 11).

It was that presumptuous self-confidence, leading on to overwhelming pride, that begat in them the second great cause of their failure—uncharitableness. Secure in positions of worldly honour and often possessed of worldly affluence and wealth, they cared nothing for the material or the spiritual welfare of the people. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath day they were more concerned with the affront to their traditions regarding Sabbath keeping than the relief and happiness brought to some suffering soul. When the opening of the eyes of one born blind, on the Sabbath, made it imperative that the rulers take some official notice of this new prophet that had arisen, they sought by every means in their power to entrap the once-sightless man into an admission that would deny the Divine power that was in Christ. (Luke 9.

1-41). It was this determined uncharitableness of the Pharisees that led them openly to deny the manifest power of the Holy Spirit and caused Jesus to utter those terrible words of denunciation: *"He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of age-abiding judgment"* (Mark 2. 29).

These two failings—over-confidence and uncharitableness—produced in them a frame of mind which rendered them incapable of receiving new ideas. It was not merely that they would not receive Christ and His message; the condition into which their minds had set made it that they could not receive Him and accept His words. *"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should . . . be converted, and I should heal them."* (Matt. 13. 15). In their early years they had believed in the progressiveness of doctrinal understanding, but not now. Their position and organization could only be maintained by holding rigidly to the outworn creeds of the past and stifling every attempt to introduce new wine into old bottles. Jesus drew attention to the impossibility of their receiving His message within the framework of their old system when he employed that very illustration (Matt. 9. 17). Once they had been "in the Truth" but now the clearer truth of the Kingdom at hand, and the King in their midst, had gone past them and left them behind. True, they held still to Moses and the prophets, and were faithful to the form of words which those men had spoken; but Moses and the prophets had spoken of Christ, and the Pharisees knew it not. True, they had the right foundation, the foundation of the Divine Plan as it had been revealed in earlier years. The doctrine they did have was good, so far as it went, but in Jesus' day it did not go far enough, for there was a deeper and a more spiritual revelation to be made to those who had hearing ears. They looked for another Moses and another David, and in their looking failed to see Christ, the One of Whom Moses and David both spoke.

It was not so with the "Ancient Worthies", the men who, said Jesus, would step into the places which these Pharisees had failed to attain. The patriarchs of old had confidence, but it was a confidence born of living faith in God and a humble dependence upon Him. Abraham showed that confidence when he offered Isaac, *"accounting that God was able to raise him up"*. (Heb. 11. 19) and Isaac mani-

festated the same confidence in allowing himself to be bound for the offering. (Gen. 22. 9) —for the strong young man could easily have overpowered his aged old father and made his escape from the scene of sacrifice had he so desired. Isaac's faith, no less than Abraham's was pleasing to God on that fateful day. Jacob's dying words manifested his own confidence in God's promise even although he had twice had to leave his native land and was to die in a foreign country and see the Land of Promise no more; nevertheless *"Behold, I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers"* (Gen. 48. 21). Joshua, dying, revealed the calm maturity of a one-time violently zealous character when he told his followers *"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you"* (Josh. 23. 14). Perhaps one of the grandest exhibitions of confidence on record is that of Job, who lost family, health, possessions, friends, all that makes life worth living, and then was able to say *"Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God"* (Job 19. 26). Through all his troubles—and they were many—he never lost faith. At last he received the reward of faith, for he was able to make that grandest of all declarations *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine seeth thee"* (Job 42. 5). It is by experience that we come to really know God, and therein is our confidence.

This confidence in God and in His good purposes begets the true spirit of charity towards others. If the love of God dwells in our own hearts it is impossible for us to do other than reflect some of that love to those around us. The uncharitableness of the Pharisees was because they had not love in their own hearts, and if we are uncharitable toward others the reason is the same. Abraham was kindly and hospitable to the three men who came to him in the evening—and he received a blessing, the promise of the Seed (Gen. 18. 10). The widow of Samaria shared what she had with the man of God although she was at the point of death—and she received sustenance throughout the famine and at its end the raising of her only son from the dead (I Kings 17. 10-14). Boaz was kindly and considerate towards the foreign maiden who sought his protection—and of him came Christ (Ruth 2. 12). These are but a few examples of the many cases where kindness, charity and love, built upon a foundation of complete confidence in

God and a deep appreciation of His Plan of salvation, has led the individual into a very close connection with the outworking of that Plan, and assured for him a place in the administration of the Kingdom "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13).

Finally, this outlook upon our walk with God and its application to daily life leads to true progressiveness in understanding. "New light" does not consist necessarily in the production of original and startling interpretations of Scripture requiring the immediate and total abandonment of all that has previously been believed. It does involve, very often, a modification of previous conclusions in the light of greater and more accurate knowledge, or an amplifying of what has been seen in the past, so that it reveals more deeply and more gloriously the hidden mystery "now made known to the saints". Our progressiveness so far as matters doctrinal are concerned usually lies in the direction of re-stating the old truths in terms more easily understood by us to-day; in reasoning more logically and accurately than we have in the past on the basis of the fundamental principles which always stand without change. And the real progressiveness so far as we are concerned is not along lines of doctrine at all; it is along lines of Christian experience and growth. "God hath showed me," said Peter, "that I should not call any man common or unclean." (Acts 10. 28). That is the progressiveness of understanding, of the head. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," said Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee." (Job 42. 5). That is the progressiveness of experience, of the life. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine" cried

Habakkuk in fervency of spirit "*the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will joy in the God of my salvation.*" (Hab. 3. 17-18). **THAT IS THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF FAITH**, of the heart, and that is the condition to which we must all attain if we, too, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are to sit down in the Kingdom of God and serve with Christ in the bestowment of Divine blessings to all mankind. "*Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth*" said Paul (I Cor. 8. 1). "*Love never faileth, but knowledge . . . shall vanish away.*" (I Cor. 13. 8). Of all men in the early days of the Church's history Paul was most qualified to place these things in their proper relation to each other, and without hesitation at all he declared "*The greatest of these is love*".

Let us therefore, in our walk with God, endeavour to model our lives on the confidence, the charity and the progressiveness of the Ancient Worthies, men who "received a good report through faith". So doing, we shall inherit the Kingdom. We may, if we choose, ignore these things and rely upon our head knowledge, our outward influence and power, our good works and our much speaking, but if we do, and if these things occupy our lives and our thoughts to the exclusion of the kindly, beneficent, revealing, inspiring Holy Spirit of God, then the day will surely come, as it came to those Pharisees of old, that we hear the infinitely terrible—and, who can doubt it, infinitely regretful—words of our Lord "Ye shall see *others* sit down in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves—*thrust out*".

Q. How is it that Heb. 10. 5 quotes Psal. 40. 6 by saying "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" when the Psalm says "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened"?

A. The writer to the Hebrews quoted from the Greek version in common use in his day, the Septuagint. The translators of the Septuagint, realising that the expression "mine ears hast thou opened" (*karah*, literally "pierced") would be meaningless to Greek readers unfamiliar with the laws of Moses, substituted "a body hast thou prepared me" as conveying the idea of devotion to a master's service equally well. The original allusion is to the Mosaic law of Exod. 21. 2-6 and Deut. 15. 12-17,

where it is ordained that a Hebrew servant who had the right to freedom, but because of his love for his master and his master's family refused to depart from his service, should have his ear pinned to the doorpost with an awl in ceremonial figure that he was forever a member of the household, and would then become a servant of the house for the remainder of his life. His master was in duty bound to retain him, by the servant's own free wish and desire. The Psalm speaks prophetically of our Lord Jesus, who voluntarily and freely "took upon himself the form of a servant" (Phil. 1. 2-7), and submitted himself entirely to his Father's will for the redemption of the human race. So the writer to the Hebrews makes use of this prophecy

and says "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world," he said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but—a body hast thou prepared me" or in other words, a means has been provided by God whereby his Son

can serve him in the Plan of salvation, and that the Son has willingly accepted that means, saying "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God".

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