



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

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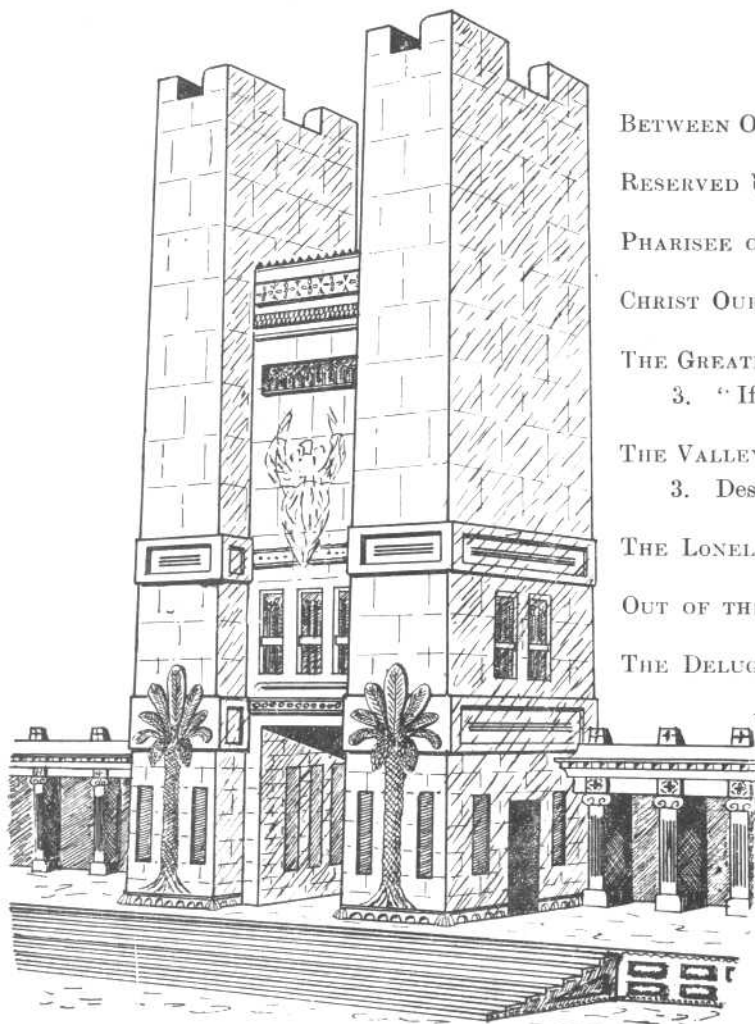
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

Bible Study Monthly

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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.

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

With this issue the "Bible Study Monthly" enters its fortieth year of publication. That a journal which derives no revenue from advertisements and relies for its publication and distribution on free-will gifts has continued for so long is a tribute to those whose generosity has made it possible. Many of the original stalwarts whose faith and zeal played a part in the founding of the journal and the activities of which it was at first a voice are no longer with us; others have taken their places, both as readers and supporters, and to such good effect that the influence of the "Monthly", if measured by its circulation, stands to-day greater than at any time in the past. In a period such as the present, when indifference to the standards of the Christian faith and a heedless disregard of the perils men are bringing upon themselves increases every day, there is more need than ever for every possible voice that can call attention to the authority and sufficiency of the "word that liveth and abideth for ever". As the "Monthly" enters its fifth decade it is with the prayer that our Master may use it increasingly in the proclamation of his salvation and his Kingdom, and that it may continue an acceptable agent for the exposition of the Holy Scriptures, that the "man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works".

* * *

For a considerable time past short expositions of salient incidents in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ have appeared in these pages; commencing with this issue similar glimpses will be featured but this time relating, not to the Lord, but to one who "suffered great things for his sake", the Apostle Paul. Under the title "Pharisee of the Pharisees", this issue presents the first of these little expositions devoted to bringing home from, perhaps, new viewpoints, realisation of the momentous events in the life of the great

Apostle.

Another new serial feature to be presented during 1963, commencing in our next issue, is an exposition of the 53rd chapter of Isaiah under the title "Man of sorrows". The question posed by the Stranger to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and afterward enter his glory?" started a new train of thought in their minds which led to realisation of a fundamental truth they had not glimpsed before. So many, even to-day, do not appreciate the vital connection between the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, and the essential part all this has to play in the drama of human salvation. It is sincerely hoped that the presentation of this exposition will prove of deep and lasting interest to many who have this concern on their hearts.

* * *

New readers may be interested to know that we can usually supply back numbers of the "Monthly" and are pleased to do so upon request; those who become readers for the first time and find one of the serial features engaging their interest may like to avail themselves of this provision in order to obtain the earlier instalments of the serial. It is only necessary to address a request to Lyncroft Gardens and the back numbers concerned will, if available, be sent.

Gone from us

Sis. I. Laycock (Dundee)
Sis. A. Sargent (Chippenham)
Bro. R. J. Towner (London)

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

RESERVED UNTO FIRE

An examination of
2 Pet. 3. 3—13

One of the most vivid descriptions of the end of the Age in the New Testament is that which forms the climax of Peter's Second Epistle, a description of the coming of the Day of the Lord in terms borrowed largely from the ancient Hebrew prophets,—and not only from them, but from pious writers of his own or immediately previous generations whose works, not especially supervised by the Holy Spirit, have not themselves found a place in the Canon of Holy Scripture. It has been pointed out by more than one theologian of modern times that this is the only place in the New Testament where the end of the world is described in terms of destruction by fire; if for this reason only the passage deserves careful attention. For all its setting of remorseless judgment and utter destruction, Peter twice alludes to the "long-suffering" of God in the same context; this characteristic of the One we serve and adore must be kept in mind as we consider the implication of a remarkable passage.

The primary purpose of the chapter is not to give a description of the Day of Judgment, but to incite the believers to continued faith and belief, and to this end, to stir up their minds "by way of remembrance" (vs. 1) that they might be "mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of . . . the apostles of the Lord" (vs. 2). This reference back to the word of the prophets helps to explain the somewhat apocalyptic nature of this chapter; the background is that of Old Testament history and prophecy, and the allusions are to be understood accordingly. Without doubt the mind of Peter has reached forward to a time in the far distant future when he speaks of the "last days". (vs.3). He is no longer expecting an immediate Second Advent. Whereas in the very early years after Pentecost the general expectation was that Christ would return in their own lifetime, the passage of the thirty-five years which elapsed before this Epistle was written had shown Peter as well as others that a long period, an entire Age, must elapse before the Return could take place. The commission to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth, was a greater thing by far than any of them had thought when first they heard Jesus utter those words.

Peter's allusions to the "thousand years" later on in the chapter show that he had learned also that the Day of Judgment itself was not to be the work of a moment, of a single twenty four hour day as has been thought by so many in the past centuries of this Christian Age; that Day itself, when at last it should come, was to be a thousand years in length and it is in that connection that he refers to the long-suffering of God as though that explains a great deal—as in fact it does.

So Peter warns against those "scoffers"—unbelievers, agnostics so far as this matter is concerned—who "*shall come in the last days . . . saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as from the beginning of creation*". (vs. 3). "Coming" here is *parousia*—presence. Where is the foretold presence of Christ, who promised that, having gone away, He would surely come again, and in that Second Coming and continued presence fulfil all the glorious visions of the prophets concerning the Messianic kingdom on earth. That Second Advent has been consistently and persistently proclaimed in the world, either as an imminent event or as an accomplished fact—where now is the evidence? That is the question put by those who believe not and upon looking around them see nothing to convince them that the world is not proceeding on its accustomed way just as it has done since the creation.

These people, says Peter in verse 5, are "*willingly ignorant*" of certain fundamental principles of history and prophecy which should have shown them the folly of their assertion. In rashly saying that they can see nothing unusual in the affairs of their day which would justify expectation of the Advent, they close their eyes to the principle enunciated by Jesus when He declared that the day of His Advent would be like the days before the Flood, in that the world was going about its normal business, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, with no indication whatever of the catastrophe of Nature which was about to break, save the preaching of Noah the messenger of God. That preaching they rejected and ignored because there was no outward evidence of its truth. "*They knew*

not" said Jesus "until the Flood came and took them all away; so shall also the presence (parousia) of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24. 37-39).

Peter accepted that allusion of Jesus as a reminiscence of true history and now weaves it into his argument. "They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the Word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished." (vs. 5-6 RSV). "Standing out of the water and in the water" in the A.V. is a bad translation—"standing" is properly "consisting of" as margin and Col. 1. 17. "In the water" is an old error carried over from the Geneva Bible of A.D. 1560. The intended implication of this verse is that the heavens and the earth were originally brought into being by the power of the Word of God—which truth is attested in detail by the eighth chapter of Proverbs and plainly stated in Col. 1. 16—that they were originally formed out of, or drew their substance from, the waters of the abyss and occupied their permanent position in the midst of those waters. At the time of the Flood, says Peter, those waters were used as a Divine Judgment to bring to an end the order of things, the *kosmos* (translated "world" in verse 6) then existing. So, he argues triumphantly, notwithstanding the unbelief of the antediluvians on account of the absence of visible evidence that judgment was imminent, the world in which they lived already possessed, stored up within itself, the agent of judgment, ready to be let loose at the right moment.

All very well, says the unbeliever, but Peter's premise is a false one. We moderns know very well that the earth and the heavens are not constructed out of water and are not enveloped in waters above and below as Peter appeared to think in company with the writer of Gen 1. 7 and the Psalmist. We know, he insists, that the earth is a spinning globe journeying through space on an annual circuit round the sun. And if St. Peter's astronomical knowledge was so inaccurate his argument falls to the ground and we need take no more notice of him. In all of which the unbeliever reveals how little he knows of the Holy Spirit's teaching in the world of men.

"Holy men of old" says this same Peter in the same epistle (1. 21) "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" The preservation of the Bible and its claim to Divine authority can only be explained and upheld by the belief that its writers were led and guided by

the Holy Spirit in the narratives and homilies and doctrines they set down on paper. It is unthinkable that erroneous doctrine or unsound ethics or historical narratives of events which never happened should be permitted to find place on pages intended for the edification and guidance of God-seeking men and women throughout the world's history. But the Holy Spirit has never undertaken to make of the Bible a final text-book of accurate knowledge in all the fields of human secular enquiry. The Apostles are reliable and infallible teachers of the "whole counsel of God" under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the things that they have written, but what they have to say is of necessity against the background of their own personal knowledge in other fields, whether scientific, philosophic, political or social, and that knowledge cannot from the nature of things be in advance of such knowledge current amongst men in their own day.

If the Apostle Peter brings in matters from the geological and astronomical fields to illustrate his argument, as he does in this instance, such illustrations cannot be expected to be other than those he had acquired in his own experience. Peter was by trade a Galilean fisherman; from early life he must have been thoroughly acquainted with the Law and the Prophets—the Old Testament. Allusions in his epistles show that he was also well versed in other Jewish religious literature of his time, and there is no reasonable doubt that during the years of his Apostleship, moving about from place to place, he acquired a fair knowledge of the educated Greek outlook of his day. Now the ancient pre-Christian view of the universe, a view that is occasionally reflected in the Old Testament, pictured the earth as a flat mass having a bowl-shaped solid vault—heaven, the firmament—superimposed over it, above which were the "waters above the firmament"; below the earth lay *sheol*, the grave—in Peter's day already being conceived as a conscious state—and below that still, the "waters below the earth". The earlier Greek view was much the same but by about the third century B.C. the spherical shape of the earth was known and becoming accepted; even so heaven was still thought to be a hollow globe inside which the earth was suspended, as the early writers said, like the yolk of an egg within its shell. Peter's description of the earth subsisting by water and having waters above and below was consistent with this, the general understanding of his day regarding the nature of the earth. The Greek scientist Thales (640-550 B.C.) had already explained the philosophy of

the earth constructed entirely of water and then made to float on a sea of water like a flat cake in a dish. All of that fits very accurately with the rendering of vs. 5 "standing out of the water and in the water", weak translation though it be. The fact that Thales and all his brother scientists, and all men everywhere including St. Peter, did not have the advantages of modern knowledge on this matter and were to that extent in error on this score, makes no difference at all to Peter's exhortation. His whole point was that the earth and the heaven were created by God and possessed, stored up within themselves, the agent of future judgment at the time of the Flood. That statement was still true; by whatever means the Flood came and destroyed the world of the ungodly, and there are a score of theories as to the precise natural cause, it remains true that God had inbuilt into the structure of Nature that which at the right time brought about the end of the "world that was". Genesis says the fountains of the abyss were broken up and the floodgates of heaven were opened. Unseen forces, there all the time but ignored and disbelieved by the men of that world because they saw no visible manifestation of their existence, were suddenly let loose and that world came to an end.

Likewise, says Peter, will it be at the end of this present Age. *"The present heavens and earth, again by God's Word, have been kept in store for burning; they are being reserved until the day of judgment when the godless will be destroyed"*. (vs 7 N.E.B.). As with the first world, so this world has within itself the agents of judgment; as with the first world, men will refuse to believe because of the absence of visible evidence even in the face of missionary preaching calling to repentance and pointing to the certainty of judgment to come; as with the first world, the crisis will come upon men suddenly and unawares. *"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the presence of the Son of Man"*.

The destructive agent is fire, a fire which reduces all things on the earth and in heaven to their primary elements. *"The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be discovered"*—laid bare—(vs. 10). This is the kind of language that is familiar enough in the Old Testament and in much of the Apocryphal books, but nowhere else in the New Testament as a picture of the end of the world. The idea of the earth being stored with subterranean fires by means of which it would one day be destroyed was a familiar one in the First Century. It was not of Hebrew origin—it

came originally from Greek thought,—but it was seized upon by the intolerant though pious writers of works like the Book of Enoch to build up a picture of the destruction of the Gentiles and of the wicked at the Last Day, which in turn paved the way for the later Christian doctrine of Hell torment. Peter probably did accept the current belief of his day that the earth was stored with subterranean fires but he certainly did not believe that the Lord intended to destroy the physical earth by those fires or any other agent of destruction. He remembered too well the inspiration of the Spirit which had led him on a memorable occasion many years previously to speak of the coming of the Lord to earth to inaugurate Times of Restitution of all things, times of refreshing and of new life upon earth, which presupposed a continuing earth from which evil would be banished. The whole theology of St. Peter is built upon the basis, not of destruction, but of reconstruction, of man and the works of man, and this passage in 2 Peter 3, so often hailed as a "proof text" of the destruction of the world by fire or its equivalent at the Day of Judgment, does in fact teach the very opposite. Peter sees the destruction of all that is evil on this present earth and the end of an evil order of things, *"this present evil world"*, that upon the same basic stage God may build a better, a *"new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (vs. 13).

A clue to this view is found in vs 10 where the A.V. has it *"the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up"*. The expression "burned up" is a doubtful reading possessing only limited authority. The word as it appears in the Sinaitic and the Vatican MSS, and as endorsed by leading authorities Tregelles, and Westcott and Hort, from their investigations, is literally "shall be found" in the sense of being revealed, discovered, made evident to the sight. Of several possible alternatives this one is the most strongly attested by scholars. At a time when popular theology demanded a fiery destruction of the world at the last the climax "shall be burned up" was too good to miss in this text, but more sober scholarship has to insist on the correct rendering first and look to modern exegesis for its meaning afterwards. That meaning is suggested by Peter's own argument in the passage. The earth, overlaid with a superstructure of evil during so many centuries, is to be stripped down to its primitive state again and a fresh start made. Just as the Flood swept the antediluvian world order away with all its works and revealed a pristine earth forming the basis of a new world for Noah and his sons to

build, so the fires of Divine judgment—metaphorical fires, but effective nevertheless—are now to sweep away every vestige of evil things and evil works from the earth and leave it revealed once again as the basic earth on which the edifice of God's eternal kingdom will be built.

The real evidence that this is metaphorical and not literal fire, sweeping away all evil things but not destroying the planet itself, lies in verses 8 and 9 and Peter's reference to the long-suffering of God. The Lord, he says "*is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (vs. 9). This sentiment follows on from his intimation that the consuming fire he is talking about is reserved for "*the day of judgment and destruction of the godless*". This is a most important point. The fire continues not only until the evil works and institutions of this present Age have been swept away to make clear the scene for the Messianic Kingdom, which is itself the Day of Judgment, but is to continue throughout that Day—which in verse 8 Peter indicates is to last a thousand years—until "*the godless*" are destroyed. Now if God is long-suffering *beyond* the end of this present Age—which is the only possible implication of verse 9—not willing that any should perish but all come to repentance, and this is the reason for God's apparent tardiness in bringing the fires of judgment upon evil—also the implication of verse 9—and yet those fires at the last do destroy the "*godless*", it is obvious that the final effect of the fire in that destruction can only come after the expiry of God's last endeavour to bring the erring to repentance, and that is at the end of the thousand years and not the beginning.

Verse 8 bears this out. Immediately following his reference to the Day of Judgment and destruction of the godless (vs. 7) Peter reminds his readers that from the Divine standpoint a thousand years is the same as a day is with men, and the apparent delay in the execution of judgment has to be viewed in this light. The hasty reading of 2 Peter 3 with mediaeval ideas of theology in mind may well leave one with a mental impression of all being accomplished within a twenty-four hour day of judgment; readers in the First Century brought up under the influence of Judaistic ideas of the Last Day might well react similarly. Not so, says Peter; remember that when the Lord speaks of a day it may well mean a thousand years of human time. A remark like that, set in this particular context which deals primarily with the final

judgment of God against all evil and the establishment of universal righteousness, makes clear that Peter is speaking of the same period which John pictures in the 20th chapter of Revelation, the thousand years of the Millennium in which Christ reigns as King and evil in the hearts of men is progressively reduced and eliminated, culminating as it does at its end in the irremediable destruction of the hopelessly wicked.

It may well be that Peter was originally even more definite and that the copying of manuscripts has clouded the sense, for at least five of the Early Fathers (Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Methodius, and the unknown First Century author of the "*Epistle of Barnabas*") all use the expression "*the day of the Lord is as a thousand years*" and it is this verse of Peter's epistle from which they have most likely taken it.

The broad conclusion then is that in this chapter we have Peter drawing a comparison between the unbelief of the antediluvians who failed to realise the onset of Divine judgment until it was upon them, and the men of this present Age who are guilty of the same fault; that just as the antediluvian judgment swept the earth clean without destroying its material fabric and enabled a fresh start to be made, so will it be again at the Second Advent; that the non-existence of outwardly visible signs of that Advent—*parousia*, presence—is no guarantee that it has not commenced, and that once commenced it will continue, as the Day of the Lord or the Day of Judgment, for the full thousand years of the Millennium during which all that is of evil will be consumed in the devouring fires of that day, and the whole order of things existing upon earth be cast into the Divine crucible, and emerge therefrom "*a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*".

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

PHARISEE OF THE PHARISEES

A story of
St. Paul

He stood by the little pile of garments, stiffly erect, his lip curling in disdain as he listened to the shouting of the mob. He had chosen this duty, the guarding of the witnesses' clothing, in order to keep away from the scene of the actual execution. Not that he disagreed with the verdict; he himself was a member of the Sanhedrin and sat at the trial of the Christian Stephen and he had given his voice in favour of the death sentence, but he nevertheless despised with all his heart these tumultuous and ignorant Jews of Jerusalem and wished sometimes he was back in his native city of Tarsus in Cilicia, where his own family and all their fellow-Jews had adopted Greek customs and culture and lived their lives on a level of dignity and poise which was completely unknown to the masses here in Judea.

He turned now and looked again towards the crowds, his well-built form standing in an attitude of impatience and his aquiline features making no attempt to conceal the distaste he felt at the whole proceeding. The man deserved his fate—he had clearly been guilty of blasphemy—and he felt no compunction or sympathy for him, but he was thoroughly disgusted with the manner in which the Sanhedrin had handled the trial and allowed things to get out of hand. Saul had wanted the evidence to be carefully presented and the connection of this man Stephen with the crucified felon Jesus of Nazareth clearly demonstrated, so that the whole affair could be made a stern warning to all who felt tempted to listen to the message of the risen Jesus so assiduously being preached in Jerusalem. He had hoped to hear a grave and solemn statement from the High Priest, to be repeated from lip to lip as the news got round, followed by the pronouncement of a salutary sentence which would send a shiver of fear into the hearts of those who professed discipleship of Jesus. This man Jonathan was not a bit like his predecessor Caiaphas, thought Saul bitterly as he turned again and looked moodily at the heap of clothes at his feet. Joseph Caiaphas was a shrewd and crafty politician and knew just how to handle the men around him; Jonathan on the other hand had first lost control of his own feelings when Stephen made that absurd claim of seeing heaven opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God, and

then allowed the unorganised rabble to take the prisoner by force and hurry him away to the place of stoning before so much as a formal judgment could be uttered. The proud claim of the Pharisees that whilst they sat on the Sanhedrin no son of Israel should have his blood shed, even judicially, until every means of avoiding that final act had been sought out and found unavailing, was a dead letter whilst these Sadducean High Priests ruled, he thought angrily. First Jesus of Nazareth; now this; even though they deserved what they received it was an offence against God and against Moses that their trial and execution should be dictated by mob law and not by the judicial procedure laid down in the statutes given at Sinai.

He shook his head as though to rid himself of the vision which remained still before his eyes; a countenance looking up to heaven, and appearing as though it was the face of an angel. A prisoner, accused of serious crime against God and Moses, by the stern law of Israel's great lawgiver commanded to be cut off from amongst the people, yet calmly standing there delivering a discourse on the purposes of God and Israel's place in those purposes which had won Saul's ungrudging admiration. That was the kind of sermon he himself liked to give and liked to hear. Stephen was a Greek Jew like himself, a man in every way superior to these clods of Judean Jews and had he not embraced this blasphemous heresy about a Son of Man who was also the Son of God he might have done great things in Israel. But he deserved to die, and for the sake of the purity of Israel's religion and the sanctity of the covenant he must die, and the sooner the whole wretched business was over and done with the better. He turned his head impatiently and through a gap in the crowd he caught a glimpse of that face again, once more a face as it had been that of an angel; upon his ears fell a faint voice borne to him on the wind "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" and then the crowd closed in again and suddenly there was a great silence.

How long Saul stood there after that he never knew. He was dimly conscious of the witnesses picking up their clothes and speaking to him, but he comprehended nothing of what they said. The mob was dispersing and going down the hillside in twos and threes and groups; the members of the Sanhedrin

were coming towards him rubbing their hands and Jonathan the High Priest, a complacent smile on his face, began to say something to Saul of a congratulatory nature. Suddenly, Saul could bear it all no longer; he nodded curtly to Jonathan, turned his back on the group and walked quickly away—quickly, as though pursued by some nameless thing whose existence he would not admit and yet from which he must try desperately to escape.

Saul of Tarsus was a man of about thirty at this time, four years after the death of Jesus. Born in Tarsus, a seaport town in the Greek-speaking Roman province of Cilicia, some four hundred miles from Jerusalem across the Mediterranean Sea, the greater part of his life had been spent under the influence of Greek life and culture. His father was a Jew of the Dispersion, of the tribe of Benjamin, and a Pharisee. For how many years his forbears had lived among the Gentiles is not known—maybe several centuries, maybe much less. But the father, though resident in an alien land, gave the lad the true training of a son of Israel, and to such good effect that at this early age Saul was already a member of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem, the highest religious court in the land. His elevation to that position must have been quite recent, for four years earlier when Jesus was arraigned before that same Sanhedrin Saul was not a member; it is quite certain that he never saw Jesus in the flesh and could not have been in Jerusalem during His ministry. In all probability he was, as a young lad, sent to Jerusalem for a few years to study under the Doctors of the Law, this being the time when he "*sat at the feet of Gamaliel*" (Acts 22. 3), returned to his home in Tarsus and was trained there to earn his living as a tentmaker (Acts 18. 3)—Cilicia was noted for its sail cloth and other materials made from the woven hair of Cilician goats and this weaving was probably Saul's trade—and returned to Jerusalem, after the death of Jesus but before that of Stephen, to take up some official position in the Pharisee community which involved his election to the Sanhedrin.

Great changes had taken place in Jerusalem in those four years. Caiaphas had been deprived of his High Priesthood by the Romans, and Jonathan his brother-in-law appointed in his place. Pontius Pilate had been recalled to Rome in disgrace, exiled to Vienne in Gaul (now France) and had died, it is said, by his own hand. His office as governor in Judea was filled by Marullus. The Emperor Tiberius had died and been succeeded by the insane Gaius Caligula. None of

those who shared responsibility for the death of Jesus remained. It was almost as if a new generation was taking over the control of Judea and Jerusalem, and the young man Saul was one of that generation, marked out for high office in Pharisaic circles. Although so young, he was probably already a widower, for one of the qualifications for membership of the Sanhedrin which was considered almost an essential was that the candidate should have been married; the fact that there is no reference in the New Testament to St. Paul having a wife would seem to infer that if in fact he had been married his wife must have died before his own conversion on the Damascus road. The tones of almost yearning affection in which in after years he referred to Timothy and Onesimus as "sons" might well point to a great disappointment in earlier life in the lack of any sons of his own. It might even be that some great untold sorrow connected with the loss of a wife at an early age may account at least in part for the bitter unsparing frenzy with which he plunged into his work of hunting out and persecuting "to the death" those who to his mind were disloyal to the Mosaic law. That he had a married sister and a nephew living in Jerusalem is known from Acts 23. 16, but no other details of his family life are recorded.

The physical appearance of this great champion of the faith has always provoked curiosity. Nothing is known for certain. There is a very common impression that St. Paul was of most unprepossessing appearance—short, dwarfish, bent of figure, hooked nose, shaggy eyebrows, and so on. All these details come from writers of the 6th and 15th centuries and appear to stem from the apocryphal 3rd century work "*The Acts of Paul and Thekla*" which is a fictional account having no authority and resting on no Church tradition at all. Nothing as to Paul's appearance comes down to us with any authority from his own or immediately subsequent times. A certain amount of play has been made with his own statement in 2 Cor. 10. 10 to the effect that "*his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*"—"to be accounted nothing of", is the meaning of the original. The verse need only mean that in the circumstances of his relation to the Corinthian Church he was far more terrible by his letters in his absence than he would be by his words at his presence. The one definite clue to his physical appearance comes from his visit in company with Barnabas to Lystra on his first missionary journey, when the pagan citizens, impressed by the miracle he had performed,

decided that the gods Jupiter and Mercury had come down to them in the likeness of men, and identified Paul with Mercury on account of his eloquence. Now Mercury in the ancient mythologies, the wing-footed messenger of the gods, was always conceived as young, tall and strikingly handsome. The Lycaonians would hardly have identified Paul with Mercury unless he at least measurably fulfilled their conception of the physical appearance of their god. That was when Paul was a comparatively young man; it is more than likely that persecution, ill-treatment and poor health through the years took their toll so that "Paul the aged" may well have come nearer to fulfilling the traditional aspect.

So Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, young, talented, ambitious, burning with zeal for the God of his fathers and intolerant of all who questioned the rigidity of the ancient traditions, a rosy future before

him and well on the way to the highest office in the land, came in touch with the message of the Gospel and the power of God, all unconscious that this thing was about to overturn his whole scheme of things and change his entire life. On the day he gave his vote for the death of the martyr Stephen he all unwittingly set in motion a chain of circumstances which was destined to make him, first, the greatest exponent of the Christian faith and the most noted missionary of all time, and then lead through persecution and prison and thirty years of indefatigable labour, to a martyr's death in his own turn. He died alone, at the hands of the Roman executioner, on the Appian Way outside the city of Rome, but the torch he lit and tended with such fiery zeal during his eventful life has never been put out, and will not dim until it is swallowed up in the greater light of the Kingdom for which he lived and died.

A NEW EARTH

Scripture does not direct our glance further than our earth, with its surrounding atmosphere. On this it points to a change, in connection with which it is, for us at least, impossible to think only of the destruction of Jerusalem or of similar events. But at the same time it leads us to expect a new heaven and a new earth, which shall be not merely the opposite, but, so to speak, the consequence, the result, of the great process of purifying and dissolution; the noblest gold, brought forth from the most terrible furnace-heat.

It is especially to the reverse side of the picture that the eye of faith directs itself with unspeakable longing. God destroys only to create something more beautiful; and upon the ruins of the sentenced and purified world His hand raises up another, which, not only for the cleansed vision of its new inhabitants, but in a reality as yet to us unknown, shall bloom in unfading splendour. If we mistake not, the last page of the Apocalypse, especially, opens up to us the prospect of a new order of things in which the old boundary line between heaven and earth is effaced, and this latter, now inhabited by perfectly redeemed ones itself has become part of heaven. It is certainly a proof of how even the science of faith does not always teach its students modesty, when we consider how many pages have been devoted by some in earlier times, to all kinds of questions,

e.g., as to the animal and vegetable kingdom, the light and food, etc., of the new world, with regard to which even no prophet or apostle has ventured to give us any indication. But if this folly is blameworthy, not less so is that of a modern, self styled science, which cannot advance beyond the old doubt as to the reality of things unseen and yet future. Deeper reflection must render the opposite in the highest degree probable, namely, that as Nature has shared in the fall of man, so shall it share in his future glorifying; and teach us to feel not only the beauty, but also the truth of the saying of Luther. "The earth as yet wears its working garb; then the earth also will put on its paschal and pentecostal raiment." In this new creation we at the same time behold the theatre of the perfect blessedness of which we have earlier spoken, and of which we in vain endeavour to shadow forth the dazzling splendour. To the question, however, what place the glorified King of the Kingdom of God will occupy in this boundless circle, the answer cannot be difficult. His kingly dominion comes to an end in the sense in which we have already spoken, but everlastingly does He remain the first-born among many brethren; their guide to the living fountains of water.

"Christian Dogmatics"
J. J. Vanooterzee (19th century)

CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

"Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." (Rom. 3. 35).

The thought behind this word "propitiation" is that of a means of blotting out sin, not that of conciliating an offended Deity, the idea upon which much erroneous Christian theology has been built. To our English minds this fact does not come so easily as it did to the first readers of Paul's epistle to the Romans, for when their eyes fell upon the word "*hilasterion*", which has been translated "propitiation", they thought instantly of the "mercy-seat" in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and so of Christ as being set forth a "mercy-seat"—a means of covering sin and reconciling man with God.

When the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, several centuries before Christ, the translators were faced with the problem of finding a suitable Greek word to describe the "mercy-seat". They chose "*hilasterion*", which was the word for an altar or other means of offering sacrifices to appease or placate the pagan gods of Greece. This Greek translation, the Septuagint, was the one in general use in the time of Paul, and he would naturally use the same term, which is quite correctly translated "propitiation" in English. In a similar fashion, centuries later, the first English translators of the Hebrew Bible adopted "mercy-seat" to express the Hebrew "*kapphoreth*" because, as it is quaintly expressed in one early rendering "There God appeared mercifully unto them; and this was a figure of Christ".

Now "*kapphoreth*" means simply and solely a place of covering, and the "mercy-seat" was so named because the sins of Israel were "covered" by the annual sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering. "*Kaphar*"—to cover—is not used in the sense of putting a roof on a house or a hat on one's head, but it is a word which implies the absolute obliteration of that which is covered. It means, primarily, to paint an object with pitch or bitumen, and is used in reference to an animal that is covered with a shaggy fur, or of the obliteration of writing by drawing the writing instrument completely over the characters. Here are some examples of its use:—

Gen. 6. 14. "Thou . . . shall *pitch* it (the ark) within and without with pitch."

Isa. 28. 18. "Your covenant with death shall be *disannulled*" (i.e., the written agreement or covenant shall be obliterated).

Prov. 16. 6. "By mercy and truth iniquity is *purged*."

It is the thought of covering, so as to obliterate completely, that lies behind the terms "reconciliation" and "atonement" in the Old Testament, for both these words are translated from "*kaphar*". Thus we have:—

Lev. 8. 15. "To make *reconciliation* upon it" (the brasen altar).

Dan. 9. 24. "To make *reconciliation* for iniquity."

Ezek. 45. 17. "The meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make *reconciliation* for the house of Israel."

Lev. 16. 6. "And Aaron shall . . . make an *atonement*."

Lev. 16. 30. "On that day shall the priest make an *atonement* for you."

Ezek. 16. 23. "When I am *pacified* toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord."

And so God says (Isa. 44. 22) "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud . . . thy sins." When the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the "mercy-seat" on the Day of Atonement he was covering over and obliterating the sins of Israel from the sight of God.

There is perhaps, more of mystic truth than we have recognised in the lines of that familiar hymn:

"The Cross now covers my sins,
The past is under the blood;
I'm trusting in Jesus for all,
My will is the will of my God."

Like John Bunyan's immortal hero, we can withstand the terrors of Apollyon only by making use of the means provided, and to translate Bunyan's symbols and the Apostle Paul's equally martial language into the realities of every day life, means that after having known Christ and entered into the secret place of the Most High we must go forth armed with knowledge—clear, definite, positive knowledge of the devices of the Adversary and the outworking of the Plan of God. Without it we can wage no efficient warfare. We need not be bigots. We need not be sectarians. We can—nay, we must, be tolerant and understanding toward our fellows. But we must *know*, and in the power of that knowledge press forward to the consummation of our glorious hope.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A study in
1 Cor. 13.13

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But before we venture to analyse that

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

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

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

(To be concluded)

We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with Him, and let Him unfold His plans little by little, and show us our share in them.

THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

A study of prophecy
passing into history

3. Descent of the Spirit

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

* * *

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

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

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

live, and I shall place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it" (37, 13-14). The same Hebrew word—*ruach*—is used in the Old Testament for "wind", "breath" and "spirit"; the Hebrew language recognises an affinity between the two ideas, that of the life-giving breath which animates a man's physical body and makes him a living being, and the Divine Spirit which is the vehicle of life from God to man. Right at the beginning we have this conception; *"the Lord formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"* (Gen. 2, 7). The whole story of man's creation is built around the central truth that all life comes from God and is continually dependent upon God; it is the withdrawal of God-given life because of sin which brings death, and death is thus the antithesis of life. So here in the vision of Ezekiel the reality is the coming of the Holy Spirit in power upon the newly awakened people of Israel to vivify them and endow them with life that they might take their rightful place in the outworking Divine purpose at the end of the Age.

This coming of the Spirit is with power. That is always the case when the Holy Spirit descends to bestow new life. The verbal form rendered "breathe" in this passage is *naphach*, which is also used for "breathed" in Gen. 2, 7 above quoted. But no gentle, quiet inflow of air is indicated here. The word has the implication of turbulence or irresistible force. Although it is nowhere else used in the sense of breathing, *naphach* is also rendered "I see a seething pot" (Jer. 1, 13); "out of his nostrils goeth smoke as out of a seething pot or caldron" (Job 41, 10); "I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire" (Isa. 54, 16); "... into the midst of the furnace, to blow upon the fire, to melt it" (Ezek. 22, 20); "Then the spirit took me up and I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing" (Ezek. 3, 12). A seething, blowing, rushing, tumultuous blast which forces its way into every nook and cranny and makes its presence known with energy and power; that is the entry of the Spirit when God sets His hand to perform a great and momentous work. So it was on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon the waiting disciples and the work of this present Christian Age began. *"And sud-*

denly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2. 2-4). That is how Ezekiel saw the four winds come together, sweep down from the sky, and breathe life into those slain bodies, that they might live. So it was that they received strength and stood on their feet, an exceeding great army.

The Hebrew prophets were very definite that the Spirit will thus one day come upon Israel and fit them for their destiny. The preceding chapter of Ezekiel's own prophecy, the 36th, is full of it. "A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new Spirit will I put within you . . . and I will put my spirit within you" (vs. 26-27). Says Isaiah "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed" (44. 3) and again "My spirit that is upon thee . . . shall not depart . . . henceforth and forever" (59. 21). The magnificent apocalyptic vision which constitutes the subject of the 3rd and 4th chapters of Zechariah culminates in a Divine declaration that the great mountain which is the symbol of evil is to be destroyed by the instrumentality of the Lord's servant—and Israel is part of that servant—"not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4. 6-7). It is by that same power and that same Spirit that the new governors of Israel in the End Time are to pledge themselves and their people to loyalty to that same Lord of Hosts (Zech. 12. 5) and it is this that is to make Israel a living force, incapable of harm from her enemies and irresistible in the work she has been Divinely ordained to accomplish—to be a light to the nations and to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49. 6). That is purified and consecrated Israel's mission in the Messianic Age, the Age which is to succeed this present one and the commencement of which is signalled by the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One thing intervenes, one obstacle the removal of which is necessary before that people, now gathering strength in what will one day become the Holy Land in truth, can experience the descent of the Spirit upon them. That obstacle is unbelief. Until the people believe, until they repent, until they come to God in faith and loyalty and trust themselves to His power and leadership, the Spirit cannot come. Never yet has an unbeliever been filled with the Spirit. Never yet has one become a member of the Kingdom of Heaven without first putting off the works of darkness and putting on the armour of light. The bones may have come together, bone to

bone, by the power of God; the flesh and the sinews and the skin may have formed around them, but not until there is faith and surrender can the Divine Spirit enter with its life-giving breath and constitute that assemblage of dead bodies a living and potent force for the evangelisation of the world. So as we look upon prophecy passing into history we can expect to see noteworthy progress in the creation and development of a nation in apparent fulfilment of all the old prophecies relating to Israel, but we cannot expect to see another Pentecost until first there is repentance, surrender, faith and prayer, and a waiting upon God just as was the case with those disciples in the Upper Room two thousand years ago. Until that position is reached the nation is not ready for its destiny and the work of the Messianic Age cannot begin.

What will bring about such a national repentance,—for national it will be. Temporal prosperity is hardly likely to do so; the tendency is usually in the reverse direction. The achieving of security from present threatening enemies, if security can be gained by the normal methods of political and military action, is more likely to breed self-assurance than to increase faith in and reliance upon God. "Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses." (Psa. 107. 12). Throughout Israel's history, when they apostatised and forsook the Divine covenant they fell into the power of their enemies and went into captivity; so soon as they turned to the Lord in repentance He delivered and restored them. The highlights of Israel's history were the occasions of their deliverance from the Philistines in the days of Samuel, the Moabites in the days of Jehoshaphat, and the Assyrians in the days of Hezekiah (1 Sam. 7, 2 Chron. 20, and 2 Chron. 32) and each time it was because they turned to the Lord in faith and He delivered them. The prophetic scriptures speak of one final trial of faith which is yet to come upon Israel, when in vision the prophets see all nations gathered against Jerusalem to battle, and God delivers. Zechariah and Ezekiel and Habakkuk and Isaiah are all quite certain about it and give, each in his own characteristic fashion and as guided by the Holy Spirit, his own vivid picture of the event. Perhaps it is in that great crisis that the faith and belief of Israel comes to the surface and God is able to come forth from His place and fight for them, as the prophets say He will come forth and fight, because at last they do cry unto Him in their

trouble and receive from Him in return the spirit of grace and supplication which, to Zechariah at least, marks the turning point in Israel's history. (Zech. 12. 10).

When will all this take place? If what is now to be witnessed in the development of Israel is indeed the clothing of the bare bones with flesh, sinew and skin, how soon before the Spirit descends to finish the work? Not before the full end of the Age, for the conversion and purification of latter day Israel, no less than their deliverance from their enemies, mark the time when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of Christ, that He may reign for ever and ever. There is much in the prophetic scriptures to fill in the details of that final troublous time when God comes out of His place to intervene in earth's affairs and set up the kingdom of righteousness which has been promised for so long.

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

THE END

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Back copies of the issues containing parts one and two of this series are available on request.

THE LONELINESS OF JESUS

A glimpse of
our Lord

Almost the first concern evinced by our Lord on entering upon His public ministry was for companionship. He gathered round Him selected companions, "*that they might be with Him*" (Mark 3. 14). His choice was made mainly from the working classes, men of action, men who toiled for a living with their hands, men who had no resources apart from what they could earn, men who had looked life in the face and knew its hardest facts.

He had little interest in rich men as such, nor in the complexities that riches bring. He desired simplicity, "plain living and high thinking", but, above all, He sought fellowship, for His life was lonely. Human relationships had been discarded; "*My brother, my sister and my mother,*" said He, "*are they who shall do the will of My Father in Heaven*" (Mark 3. 35). Apart from such, He had no intimates in life. How lonely is a life without a soul with whom one may converse in loving intimacy; such human loneliness was Jesus' lot. Did He find fellowship in those He called about Him; did they fill His need, understand Him, and sympathise? Were they not, on the contrary, self-centred, self-occupied and self-concerned?

Hear them as the storm raged about them on the Lake of Galilee: "*Carest Thou not that we perish?*" Listen to Peter, as with astonishing self-complacency he remarked: "*Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee. What shall we have therefore?*" (Matt. 19. 27). Was

there ever such a speech made to One Who had left the glory of Heaven for the sake of sinful men? Toward the end of his ministry, after more than three years of intercourse, precept and holy example, what must He have felt as He came upon them quarrelling among themselves who should be the greatest? No; He had no "brother, sister or mother" fellowship; to the last he walked a lonely path. How often we read: "*He was alone upon the land*" (Mark 6. 47); "*Jesus was left alone*" (John 8. 9); "*He departed into a mountain Himself alone*" (John 6. 15). Not that the disciples meant to withhold from their Lord the fellowship He so much desired. Indeed when many went back and walked no more with him, the twelve refused to go away, and He gladly recognised this, "*Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations,*" He said. They continued with him, but, oh, how self-occupied even in that companionship!

At length they set off on that last sad journey to Jerusalem. The end was in his view, though not in theirs. Must He face this alone? Tenderly He opened the subject to them as they went together. Surely this would draw out their loving sympathy, so He told them what was about to happen, that "*He must suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*" (Matt. 16. 21), but He was met by a rebuke; they refused to believe the news. It was so utterly opposed to all their hopes. Was such a calamity to end

their cherished visions of a glorious Messianic reign in which they were to share? Impossible; it would not be! So our Lord was left alone to his thoughts and sorrows, and they walked with him wholly out of fellowship with what so moved His heart.

With infinite patience later on He tried again (Matt. 17. 22-23). He unfolded the coming betrayal and the dreadful killing, and then the rising again. They listened in silence, and deep depression fell upon them all; "*they were exceeding sorry*"—sorry that, after all, the calamity must come, that it must be accepted as inevitable, that their prospects were an illusion, and hope was gone. They did not understand; they were so taken up with themselves that they did not enter into what it meant to him.

Again a third time (Matt. 20. 17), Jesus took them apart in the way and told it all again, adding this time the mocking and scourging, as though appealing to their hearts for sympathy. Did they extend it to him? They had had time to think and talk together, and a new aspect of the matter dawned on them. All was not so dark; He would rise again; the Kingdom would come after all. They had not followed him in vain, and while He dwelt on the betrayal, the mocking, the scourging and the death, their self-centred hearts were occupied with their place in the Kingdom that would follow! At such a time as this, two of them actually came forward with a request for first place, Jesus continued his path to the valley of the shadow alone, with no human heart to sympathise or understand or share His sorrows.

"*Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come,*" said He to them on the last evening of his earthly life, "*that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone,*" "And yet," He added, "*I am not alone because the Father is with me*" (John 16. 32). One heart fully understood and cared and sympathised with the Saviour, and one heart alone—the Father's.

When the three who were nearest to him went with him to the garden they failed him even there. They could not watch one hour. He withdrew himself—He was alone.

Thus the Lord sought fellowship with his own who were in the world—his own whom He loved to the end; the uttermost, yet whose response was so meagre, and whose love so cold. Such was his experience then; what is it now? Jesus still seeks the fellowship of his people; we who are called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1. 9). Does He receive the fellowship He seeks, or do we fail to give it to him? Is our contact with him

after all mainly selfish? Do we seek him only for what we can get ourselves, pardon, protection, help, guidance? Is our need our first concern, or is our real objective that of Paul, "that I may know him and the fellowship of his sufferings"? Are we prone to forget that our Lord seeks something from us, that, apart from us, He is still alone in relation to men, and that He longs for our co-operation in his plans and purposes, even to the extent of our suffering on behalf of others, as He set us an example? Like the disciples of old, we can be so taken up with ourselves, even though, like them, we have left all to follow him, that his thoughts and purposes and yearning desires take a minor place, and *our* needs and hopes fill all our thoughts, and even our prayers. We are so selfish in our spiritual outlook that even our most holy things are sometimes tinged with it. How often it is we seek our own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's (Phil. 2. 21), and the Lord looks to us often in vain for that understanding, sympathy and fellowship with him in his world plans, in comparison with which our little personal concerns, hopes and fears are insignificant indeed.

May He forgive us, and teach us how to enter into a life of real communion with him in the days that yet remain to us.

Jesus failed to keep many who followed Him. They turned back when His message became increasingly spiritual. Some start in the narrow way full of confidence but the path of sacrifice reveals hardship and the first love cools. They do not mean to leave Him altogether but it is so easy to drift. Relax a little, admit the life of the world, and your spiritual life is heading for shipwreck.

* * *

The Christian life must be a practical one—a living out in the daily life of the many wonderful precepts and holy maxims found in the word of God. In a day when so many amazing features of the Divine purposes have been made clear—and there has been so much to learn, and so many things to define and classify—it could become an easy matter to allow the *practice of the precepts* to fade considerably from view. From so many quarters comes the challenging appeals to "think" for oneself and to alter and adjust our thinking to this or that new definition that we could easily slide into the position of being "hearers of the word" only and not "doers," giving up all our thought and attention to rectifying our doctrinal differences in preference to every other thing.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

On Jonah

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

When Joseph Shaved

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

"After their Kind" (Gen. 1).

The oft-repeated phrase which describes God as creating birds, beasts, fishes, etc., "after their kind" means literally "in all their varieties". There are nearly 800,000 species of animals known to naturalists, and this wonderful variety of only one phase of the natural creation is but a fraction of the marvellous works of Him who is "perfect in knowledge". The Hebrew expression *lemin-ehu* rendered in this chapter "after their kind" is met again throughout Lev. 11, where the context shows up much more clearly the accuracy of the literal rendering "in all their varieties".

* * *

The Promised Land

It is not always realised that the land promised to Abraham considerably exceeded in size the greatest extent of the territory occupied at any time by the children of Israel. It was defined as extending from the great

river, the Euphrates, to the river of Egypt. This tract of land would be about one hundred miles broad at its northern end, and one thousand miles at its southern extremity, from Egypt to the mouth of the Euphrates where it enters the Persian Gulf. From north to south the length of the land would then be about six hundred miles. This makes a country about twelve times the size of England, and when it is remembered that England alone has at present a population of fifty millions, it can be seen what possibilities exist in the "Land of Promise" for that regathering and for a blossoming and budding that will fill the face of the world with fruit to use the figure of speech coined by Paul. Without doubt the great desert which at present occupies much of this area of land will become fruitful under the industrious labours of those who are to build the old wastes and repair the former desolations.

* * *

The Quails

Travellers tell us that in the spring of the year large flocks of quail frequently cross the Arabian Gulf of the Red Sea. They come in great flocks, and, wearied with their long flight across the water, they fly low, so as to be easily within the reach of man. Tristram says, "I have myself found the ground in Algeria in the month of April covered with quail for an extent of many acres at daybreak, where on the preceding afternoon there had been none." The reading of Numbers 11, 7 seems to imply that on this occasion the quail were nearly two cubits deep, and infidels have pointed to the fact as an absurdity. It would be entirely possible, however, for us to understand the narrative to signify that the great quantities of quail flew low, even within two cubits of the ground, thus ensuring a large catch on the part of the flesh-hungry Israelites. The subsequent narrative indicates that the quail were not sent regularly, but only on rare occasions—so far as appears only here in the wilderness of Paran.—Numbers 11, 31-34.

It is in the family alone that the one thing we call affection or love is divided and spread out like a sunbeam into the rainbow's seven-fold hues, there to display itself in all the rich tints of hidden beauty. So it is in the church alone that the love of God is fully seen, not merely in all its intensity, but in all its varied riches.

THE DELUGE IN SUMERIAN LEGEND

In the year 1872 George Smith, an assistant at the British Museum, was engaged in sorting and classifying fragments of cuneiform tablets when he came across a piece bearing the words "... on Mount Nisir the ship stood still. Then I took a dove and let her fly". He realised at once that he had found a tablet bearing the Babylonian version of the Flood story, and after searching for and discovering further fragments was able to piece the story together in a fairly complete form.

That the Babylonians had their story of the Flood was already well known and had been for centuries. Many ancient historians had recorded the fact and some had quoted portions of it. But this was the first time that modern scholars had set eyes upon one of the actual tablets bearing the record.

The pieces assembled by George Smith came from the library of Asshur-bani-pal, king of Assyria in the days of Manasseh king of Judah, shortly after the death of Isaiah and not quite seven centuries before Christ. They were soon found to be copies of older tablets, and to form part of a great epic poem describing the deeds of one Gilgamesh, king of Erech, at a remote time which might fairly be said to correspond with the days of Eber the ancestor of the Hebrews (Gen. 11. 14-17) a good while after the death of Noah but long before the birth of Abraham. Gilgamesh, smitten with a deadly disease, had made his way through difficulty and danger to where his ancestor Khasis-atra lived, on the other side of the waters of death, to beg of him the secret of life and health. Khasis-atra, after granting his request, proceeded to tell him how he himself in his own lifetime had been saved from the waters of the Great Flood.

Since George Smith's time a number of other copies of the story, belonging to various earlier dates, have been found. The oldest, deciphered by Langdon in 1912, was written as far back as about the time of Abraham. Some of the copies are in the Semitic language, and some are in the older Sumerian. They differ in details, as might be expected from a narrative which has been told and re-told, copied and re-copied, century after century, for several thousands of years, but the main features show unmistakably that here is the story of Noah, preserved through generations of Noah's descendants in lines other than that of Abraham and the Hebrews.

As might be expected, the accounts are set against the background of those mythologies of "gods many" that had their origin after the Flood, when the clear knowledge of God that was the possession of the sons of Noah had faded from the minds of so many of their posterity. The stories tell how the gods, angry with men, decided to destroy them by means of a great Deluge. The god of the sea, Ea, determined that he would save one man who had been faithful to the gods. That man's name is given in the Semitic versions as Khasis-atra and in the Sumerian versions as Ziudsuddu. In both cases he is represented as being the *tenth* and last king to reign before the Deluge. (Noah, it will be remembered was the *tenth* of the antediluvian patriarchs). The story follows very generally the Bible account, particularly as respects the sending forth of the birds and the appearance of the rainbow, this latter being represented as the jewelled necklace of the goddess Ishtar spread across the sky by way of guarantee that the Flood would not come again. At the end, Khasis-atra and his wife are taken to dwell for ever "at the mouth of the rivers"—the Sumerian paradise.

The value of these tablets lies in the evidence they offer that long before Abraham's time, in the country of his birth, there existed such records of the Flood of Noah. Embellished with fanciful details, incorporated into various poetic compositions with all the licence that poets take with such things, they must, nevertheless, have originated from a source which also provided the basis of the story that now comprises the sixth to eighth chapters of Genesis. We may reasonably say that the Bible account came from the hand of Noah or from someone writing during his lifetime—for he survived the Flood for some three hundred and fifty years. That account was preserved by the sons of Shem who settled in North Syria. When, after a lapse of centuries, those Semites moved down into Mesopotamia they found that the sons of Ham, who had by then set up the Sumerian civilisation, had preserved *their* story of the Flood, altered to suit their system of many gods, but substantially the same.

Most of the accounts, when translated literally, are difficult to understand. The following rendering is not a translation but a paraphrase aimed at giving the general sense of the combined accounts. The reader who is

familiar with the Genesis narrative will be able to take note of the points of similarity and difference, and realise that here, despite the differences, there is independent testimony to the antiquity, and the accuracy, of the Bible story of the Flood.

"I will tell thee, O Gilgamesh, the story of my preservation, and of the determination of the gods. The city of Shuruppak the city that thou knowest is beside the Euphrates, was already ancient, but it was a city in which men did not honour the gods. I alone serve the gods. Now the gods determined to bring a deluge. They took counsel together; Anu, the chief; Bel, the counsellor; Nebo, the messenger, Nergal and Adar, and Ea, the eternal lord. Now Ea repeated their plans in a dream. 'O thou mortal' he said, 'thou man of Shuruppak, thou son of Ubara-Tutu, build thou a vessel and finish it speedily, for by a deluge I am going to destroy all things wherein is life. Now of the vessel which thou shalt build, the length shall be six hundred cubits and the breadth and height sixty cubits. Cover it with a roof and then launch it on the deep.'

"Having comprehended this, I said to Ea, the lord 'When I have built this vessel in accordance with thy command, the people of the city, young and old, and the elders will deride me. What shall I say unto them?' Ea answered and said to me 'O mortal, speak to them thus, He that insults me shall surely be punished, for the protection of the gods is upon me, and I will go down into the deep to dwell with Ea, the lord; but upon you will be poured out a copious deluge, from that which is on high and that which is below'."

"So the strong men brought all that was needful and on the fifth day the two sides of the ship were raised. On the sixth day I fitted its beams and its roof. On the seventh day I built its floors. On the eighth day I divided it into rooms. On the ninth day I caulked the chinks and painted the inside and the outside with bitumen. Then men came bringing on their heads chests of provisions. I slew oxen and lambs and provided that there should be rations for each day. Oil and wine I collected as the waters of a river.

"So at the rising of the sun the vessel was completed and I had filled two-thirds of the ship with its lading and goods. All that I possessed of silver and gold I had laded. All that I possessed of the seed of life I had laded. I made all to descend into the vessel, my kindred and family, my servants, both men and women, the cattle of the fields and the wild beasts of the plain, and all the mariners.

"Then Shamash (*the sun-god*) declared the time had come. 'This night' said he 'It will

rain abundantly from heaven. Enter thou into thy vessel and close the door.' And there came the hour which he had declared, saying 'This night it will rain abundantly from heaven' and I ascended into the vessel and closed the doorway, and having closed the door, I entrusted the vessel and all that it contained to Puzur-Amurri the pilot.

"Then up from the horizon rose a black cloud as from the foundations of heaven. Raman (*the storm-god*) thundered in the midst of it. Nebo and Sharra (*the messengers of the gods*) marched before it, and as they came over the mountains and plains devastation came with them. Nergal the mighty came dragging all behind him and Ninurta advanced, overthrowing all that he met. The Annunaki (*spirits of the earth*) brandished their torches, and shrivelled the land with their fire; the floods of Raman (*the rain-god*) swelled up to the sky and the earth became without form and void like a desert. They broke up the face of the land and destroyed all living beings from the surface of the earth. So the fearful Deluge reached up to the heavens and all that was light became darkness. Brother saw brother no longer; the gods from heaven above were stricken with terror. To the highest heaven, the heaven of Anu, they fled, and cowered like dogs.

"Then Ishtar, the great goddess (*Venus*) cried like a child, and spoke to the gods. 'Mankind is returned unto clay; this is the evil! I declare to the gods. I gave birth to these men and now like fish they float on the waters'. And the gods wept with her and were silent in their assembly.

"For six days and seven nights the deluge continued, the wind and the water sweeping the land in their strength. Then on the seventh day the tempest, which like a besieging army had been raging, was lulled. The deluge assuaged, the sea grew calm, and the rain ceased. I looked closely on the scene; lo, there was no sound, and all mankind had returned to their clay. The bodies floated like river weed. I opened the doorway, and on to my face streamed the sunshine; overcome by sadness, I sat down and wept, my tears flooded my face. Then, gazing into the distance, I scanned the whole circle of the horizon. There was no land.

"But the vessel drifted to the land of Nisir, and the mountain of Nisir arrested the vessel and did not allow it to pass. One day, two days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow it to pass. Three days, four days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow it to pass. Five days, six days, the mountain of Nisir held the vessel, and did not allow

it to pass. Then at the dawn of the seventh day I loosed a dove, she went to and fro, and returned, for she found no alighting-place. I sent forth a swallow; she went to and fro, and returned, for she found no alighting-place. I sent forth a raven; she went, and as she went she saw the abating of the waters. She ate as she waded, and splashed, and returned not unto me.

"Then unto the four winds of heaven I loosed all the beasts, and offered a sacrifice. I raised an altar of burnt-offering on the peak of the mountain. Seven sevens of vases of wine I devoted, and sweet cane and cedar and myrtle for the fire. And the gods smelt the incense and like flies they assembled around the offering. Then came the great goddess Ishtar, the Queen of the gods, and she raised on high her necklace of jewels, the great zones that Anu made for her glory (*the rainbow*) and thus she spake.

"O ye gods, I will rather forget this my necklace of sapphires, than not keep these days in remembrance, nor ever forget them. Though the rest of the gods may come to this my offering, yet Bel, alone of gods, may not come to the offering, because Bel hath brought on the Deluge and consigned all my people to destruction."

"From afar off Bel espied the vessel, and in drawing nigh, he stopped, and was filled with anger against the gods. 'Hath any of mortals escaped? Surely never a man could have lived through this deluge!' Then said Ninurta to the warrior Bel, 'Who could have devised such a plan save Ea, the lord, for Ea knoweth all things!' Then spake Ea unto Bel and said 'O thou of the gods, thou warrior, why didst thou without understanding bring on this Deluge? Yea, let the sin of the sinner be visited upon him; let the guilt of the guilty be visited upon him; but have mercy that he be not altogether cut off. Have clemency that he perish not forever. Instead of thy making another deluge, let lions come to afflict men. Instead of thy making another deluge, let hyenas come to afflict men. Instead of thy making another deluge, let famine come, that the land may languish. Instead of thy making another deluge, let plague come and let men be decimated. Lo, I revealed not the determination of the gods; but to Khasis-atra I gave a dream, and he interpreted the secret'.

"Deliberating on this counsel, Bel came up to the vessel. By the hand he raised me, and by my side caused my wife to stand. Bent-kneed we knelt before him as our foreheads

he touched, blessing us. He spake, saying 'Khasis-atra hitherto hath been mortal. Lo, from henceforth Khasis-atra and his wife shall be equal to the gods; in the far-away land at the mouth of the rivers Khasis-atra shall dwell'. So they carried me away and caused me to dwell at the mouth of the rivers."

* * *

There are several notable points in the account. Ea, the sea-god, is pictured as being kindly disposed toward mankind, whilst Bel, the warrior god, is intent on their destruction. Was this an early effort to reconcile the apparent discrepancy between the "goodness and the severity of God"? Ea admits the necessity of retribution for sin, but pleads for mercy that the sinner "be not altogether cut off". The ordinary hazards of nature, wild beasts, famine, pestilence, are to be the Divine scourges rather than universal destruction. The poetic likening of the rainbow to the goddess Ishtar's necklace of jewels "the great zones that Anu (the sky-god) made for her glory" is noteworthy and confirms the Biblical account of the rainbow as a token of God's promise not again to destroy the earth by a flood.

"And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing." (Psalm 64. 9).

Here is a text which will find its fulfilment when the thousand year reign of Christ has begun to bring forth its fruits of knowledge and blessing for all nations. It is God's design that all men shall come to a knowledge of the Truth (1 Tim. 2. 4) and having done so to face for themselves the issue of life or death. The Psalmist speaks of that time when He has made wars to cease to the end of the earth, (Psa. 46. 9) has put down injustice and oppression and every evil thing, and shown men just what can be made of a world that is organised and governed along lines of love and righteousness. Surely the majority of men then will "wisely consider of his doing" and choose the way of life, that they might live.

* * *

The men who succeed best in public life are those who take the risk of standing by their own convictions.

* * *

He who is habitually suspicious of others is himself untrustworthy; and he who judges another, is guilty of those very faults he condemns.



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

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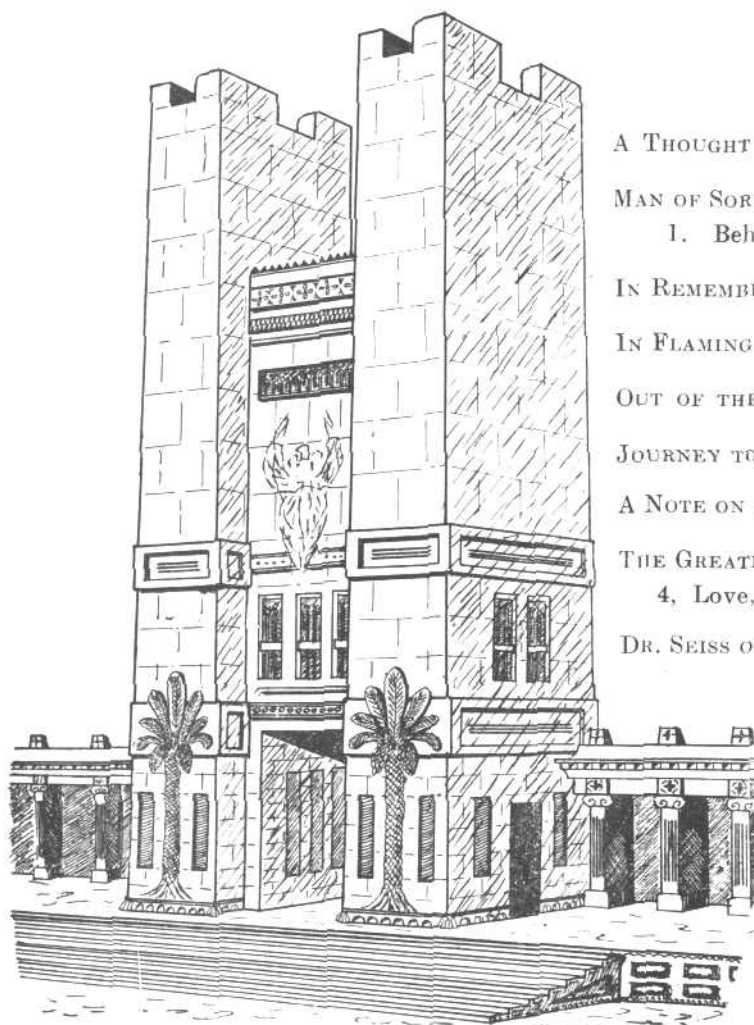
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the month

"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." (Eccl. 7. 8).

The writer of Ecclesiastes was by no means the doleful pessimist he is so often accused of being. Granted that he saw very little in this present world and present life to extol, and gave us his song in the most minor of minor keys; granted that his words read like the despairing epilogue to a play which is set against a background of dark shadows and no light at all, in which nothing has been presented that is at all worth while and enduring, all, as he himself was so fond of repeating, is "vanity and vexation of spirit" or as Ferrar Fenton has so succinctly put it "frailty and a striving after wind". Granted all this, the fact is that the Preacher—the name the writer of this strange book gave himself—was a man possessed of deep spiritual insight and profoundly conscious that only in the outworking purpose of God and the final triumphant consummation of that purpose could the enigma of human life and the explanation of human frailty and failure be found and understood. The Preacher drew attention, in those pungent, vivid epigrams which adorn his book, to the unsatisfactory nature of all the ways of man now, and then by contrast, the certainty of a better and fully satisfactory condition of things in the day that the Divine purpose is fully revealed and fully attained.

The whole purpose of the Book of Ecclesiastes is to show that no matter how frustrating and apparently pointless the present life and the present world order, it is a necessary stage in the development of man and in his onward progress to the destiny God has appointed for him. *"This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men that they might be exercised therewith"* (Eccl. 1. 13). There is no hope for the present world; it is doomed to perish and with it all the works of man which have not been wrought in company with God. But this is not the end. *"The righteous, and*

the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God" (Eccl. 9. 1), and, at the last, *"God shall bring every work into judgment, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Eccl. 12. 14). The implication is plain; that which is good shall endure, that which is evil shall not endure. That is why he says, in this text, *"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof"*. It is the life and experience and history of man and man's world of which he is speaking. The end will be better than the beginning. As Zechariah says *"At evening time it shall be light"*. And the long-sighted man is the man who realises this truth. *"The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit"*. "Patient" in that text means to wait, to tarry, to take the long view and wait for its accomplishment. "Proud" means to be lifted up in arrogance and refuse to see anything outside the immediate present and that which is of immediate advantage. The long-sighted man is better than the arrogant man because he looks beyond the situation as it is to-day and realises that in a future day God will have achieved His purpose and gathered together all things in Christ and the ideal of His creation will have been achieved. *"Behold, the dwelling-place of God is with men . . . 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. 3-4). The Book of Ecclesiastes, contrary to appearances, is really a most optimistic book, because it knows that the things which are to follow are better than the things which are now.

Gone from us

Bro. W. Watson (*Guiseborough,
late Middlesbrough*)
Bro. E. Woollard (*Hastings*)

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

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

1. Behold My Servant

The latter part of the Book of Isaiah presents a grand panorama of the Divine Plan of Salvation, the means by which that salvation is accomplished, and the nature of the world that is to witness the accomplishment of that salvation. This noble prophecy presents a picture of the "servant of Jehovah", a "suffering servant", who because of his unquestioning loyalty to his Father in Heaven and his uncomplaining acceptance of the suffering on earth which that loyalty involves, becomes the means whereby God is able to reconcile to himself "whosoever will". The story closes with a wonderful pen-picture of the new heavens and earth, cleansed from the defilement of sin, which results from that reconciliation. The end of the vision is strikingly like the closing scene of the Book of Revelation, where the Holy City has come to earth and its light enlightens the nations, nothing that defiles being able to enter into it, but only they who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The whole of this Messianic prophecy of Isaiah forms a setting for its brightest jewel, the sublime passage which constitutes the 53rd chapter and from which we have our conception of Jesus as a lamb who is led to the slaughter and a man of sorrows who is acquainted with grief. That is not the only aspect of Jesus of which we know. We realise that in his earthly life He was not always and even not habitually overshadowed by sorrow. His countenance was more often lighted by happiness and benevolence than it was darkened by grief and sadness. His relations with men were not always that of an unresisting sheep being led to death; there were times when He took full command of the situation in indignation and even anger, reproving Pharisees and priests for their hypocrisy and greed. There were times when He held his hearers spell-bound, teaching them as "one having authority". But here in Isaiah 53 we have what is intended to be a doctrinal presentation of the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world" and therefore it is only to be expected that the suffering aspect of our Redeemer's ministry should be stressed to the exclusion of every other consideration.

This study opens with verse 13 of chapter 52; this is really the commencement of the description and this is where chapter 53 should in fact have started. In verses 13-15 of

chapter 52 the voice of God is heard speaking from heaven declaring the mission of his Servant the Redeemer. Verses 1-10 of chapter 53 contain the spoken response of those on earth who understand the message and accept the Redeemer. Verses 11-12 are the closing words from God giving assurance of the triumphant fulfilment of all that the Redeemer comes to accomplish. In this chapter we have a number of vital Christian doctrines established. Foremost in the picture is the Ransom ("brought as a lamb to the slaughter", "cut off out of the land of the living" vs. 7, 8) and the Sin-offering ("He hath borne our griefs . . . wounded for our transgressions. . . His life an offering for sin" vs. 4, 5, 10). Next, perhaps, comes the human nature of Jesus, "the Word made flesh" ("His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (52: 14); ("despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows" vs. 3); Consecration ("He shall grow up before him as a tender plant" vs. 2); resurrection ("He shall see his seed, He shall prolong His days" vs. 10), and glorification ("Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great" vs. 12). This chapter is a most important one in its bearing on the Divine Plan of the ages, and it is well worthy of examination verse-by-verse in detail.

"Behold, my servant shall deal prudently. He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." (vs. 13).

Although the term "servant" in the Old Testament usually carries the thought of a slave, since most servants were bound to their master's house and family and could not leave even if they wanted to, it does also include the thought of reverential respect and obedience as from a son. Here at the outset we are reminded of that word in Hebrews "Then said he, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." Throughout his earthly life Jesus made clear that He was always consistently carrying out his Father's will and purpose. The absolute supremacy of God the Father is everywhere acknowledged. Even though for the work and duration of the Millennial Age "the Father judgeth no man but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" it comes about that at its end "then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all". But here in

Isaiah there is something more than the usual significance in the word "servant". There is no other servant anywhere in the Bible like this one. Here we have the suffering servant of God who by means of his suffering is going to restore God's erring creation to him. Abraham (Psa. 105. 6), Job (Job 1. 8), Moses (Josh. 1. 1), Joshua (Josh. 24. 29), David (Psa. 18. 1) and Isaiah himself (Isa. 20. 3) were all honoured by being called servants of God, but none of them held the position before God that was occupied by this "suffering servant". Mighty as were the works that all those men did in their several spheres, none of them could match the work done by the One who is described with such eloquent pathos in Isa. 53. "Behold my servant." The injunction is imperative. We are to look upon this One and see in him all that we need to take away the load of our sins and all that we need to show us the way back to harmony with God, and everlasting life.

He shall deal prudently—wisely, is the meaning. The word is from a root meaning to attend closely, to be circumspect. In the Book of Proverbs the same word is often used in the sense of having understanding. "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" says Isaiah in chapter 11 "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord". The rest of chapter 11 goes on to describe the practical outworking of that wisdom in the work of the Millennial Age when many are to be turned to righteousness and the stony hearts taken away from men and replaced by hearts of flesh.

Here in verse 13 the "dealing prudently", or with wisdom, would seem to have reference rather to his First Advent and his life on earth rather than his Second Advent and his reign over the nations. Even though He was to be despised and rejected and ultimately put to death his whole life was to be characterised by Divine wisdom and it was so truly thus characterised that his opponents "could not gainsay the wisdom with which he spake."

Now come three verbs, crowding one upon the other, all expressive of his ultimate triumph and glory. "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high". Obviously this must refer to the outcome of his earthly life, the glory that was to follow, for none of these things were true while He lived on earth. It might be that here we have an indication of the three steps by which the One Who died on the Cross in obedience to the Father's Will was ultimately brought to be seated at his

right hand "from thenceforth waiting until his enemies be made his footstool"—his resurrection, his Ascension, his "entry into the presence of God for us". The first word "exalted" means to be raised up, the second, "extolled" to be borne up or lifted up, as by angels or other medium, and the third just what it says, to be very high. Our Lord after his ascension was "higher than all heavens". We might very reasonably therefore take these three words as descriptive of the upward progress of our Lord after the close of his earthly life to be glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, as He prayed the Father in his Gethsemane prayer recorded in John 17. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and in earth and under the earth." (Phil. 2. 9, 10).

"As many were astonished at thee: his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men". (Isa. 52. 10).

The first phrase means to be dumb with astonishment, to be compelled to silence by the solemnity or the strangeness of what is seen. The subject of astonishment is the second phrase "His visage was so marred" and here it is very possible that the traditional view is hopelessly wrong. The word for "marred" occurs only this once in the Old Testament and there is serious doubt whether it is correct. It means, not only "marred" in the modern sense of that term, i.e. to deface, but it means to destroy utterly by decay and corruption. Such an expression carried to its logical extreme is quite out of place in any description of our Lord. There is no evidence that our Lord was in any sense unlovely to look upon. There is at least some piece of evidence to the contrary. We know that little children came spontaneously to him. Children do not come spontaneously to a miserable man and are not likely to come spontaneously to a deformed or hideous man. Jesus as a perfect man must have arrived at the maturity of human life in possession of a physical beauty far excelling anything that had been seen on earth since Adam. The sorrows and disappointments of life may and probably did leave their mark on him to the extent of a more serious and reflective mien but there is no more likelihood that those experiences, or the "going out of virtue" from him as He expended vitality for the good of others, rendered him unlovely to look upon than it does in our own cases to-day. We are witnesses that such

experiences in the life often tend to make the countenance sweeter and more attractive; it is usually bitterness and discontent which sours the visage, and that we do not associate with our Lord.

The Septuagint has it "*so shall thy face be without glory from men, and thy glory shall not be honoured by the sons of men*". This rendering must have come from a different Hebrew text than the one which declares his countenance to be in process of destruction by decay, and it makes a much more fitting commentary upon the person of our Lord, so much so that we are perhaps justified in accepting it in place of the Authorised Version. Our Lord while in the flesh did indeed manifest a glory all his own, a "*glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*" but it was not a glory He obtained from men, neither was it a glory that was honoured by the sons of men. They despised and rejected him instead. The words of the Septuagint are literally true therefore in our Lord's experience.

Some scholars consider that the word has suffered the alteration, at the hands of an ancient copyist, of one letter which has changed the word from one meaning "to anoint" and that on this supposition the reference here is not to a countenance that has been marred by disfigurement but one that has been anointed for ceremonial purification. The word in this case would be the same as that used in Leviticus for the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and elsewhere for the anointing to office of the kings of Israel. If this be in fact the true interpretation—and such cases of a changed letter altering the whole meaning of a word are not uncommon—then this verse indicates the astonishment of the beholders at seeing one among them who is anointed for the purpose of cleansing the people from sin, which is itself a fitting introduction to the sublime theme of the 53rd chapter. It is tolerably certain that the passage in the original never taught that our Lord's physical appearance would be repulsive or unattractive and if we can at least dispose of that relic of traditional thought we shall have approached to a more accurate conception of Jesus' human nature.

"So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." (chap. 52, vs. 15).

This "sprinkling" is the same thing as Moses' sprinkling of the blood upon the altar

and the people (Exod. 24) and of the blood of the sin-offering in the Day of Atonement ceremonies. (Lev. 16). It is also the sprinkling of water for purifying and making clean in Lev. 19. The sprinkling of many nations is the purification and cleansing of many nations, and the purifying agent is the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood of the Sin-offering. Hence the Apostle tells us that we have come to "*Jesus the mediator of the new covenant and the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel*". (Heb. 12, 24). Hence we are "*elect . . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*". (1 Pet. 1, 2). The Church now, and the world in the next Age, the Millennial Age, benefit from the sin-offering of Jesus and come under the sprinkling which is for purification. What a triumphant testimony this is to the final success of God's Plans. "So shall he sprinkle many nations." It is not that only a few will eventually attain eternal salvation and the many suffer everlasting loss and cutting-off. The Divine Plan is going to be gloriously successful, and "many nations", the majority of earth's children, receive lasting benefit from the ransom-sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There is a subtle allusion here to the priestly function of the "servant's" work on earth. After the institution of the priesthood, only the Levitical priests could lawfully sprinkle the blood of the offerings. Hence this servant who comes to execute the will of God in the realm of human salvation is qualified and authorised to act as a priest—as we have it in the Epistle to the Hebrews "*We have such an High Priest . . . a minister of the true tabernacle*". (Heb. 8, 1-2).

Now we are told that kings shall shut their mouths at him, seeing things of which they had never before heard, and understanding things which heretofore had never come upon their minds. This is quite clearly spoken prophetically of the far distant future when Messiah will come in the glory and power of his Kingdom. These words are quite inappropriate to the First Advent. If kings shut their mouths at him it is because they respect and honour him. So it was in the days of the patriarch Job's prosperity and glory, when he was the acknowledged lord of his community and nation. "*When I went out to the gate through the city, when I prepared my seat in the street, the young men saw me, and covered themselves; and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held*

their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth." (Job 29. 7-10). Poetically Micah says "the nations . . . shall lay their hand upon their mouth" (Micah 7. 16) at the rising up of God to fulfil his age-old promise to Israel. So here, the mighty exhibition of Divine power that will eventually reveal the all-conquering Christ to mankind will cause kings and mighty men to stand abashed and silent in the presence of One Who is to exercise all rule and all authority and all sovereignty in the earth.

"That which hath not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they understand." This is a Millennial promise also; it is easy to say, as do most commentators, that these words were fulfilled in the coming of the Gospel to the world when Jesus came, and in the preaching of the Gospel in the world throughout the centuries since, but that, although a comfortable doctrine for those who expect the world to be converted during this Age, is not the right understanding. It is an obvious fact that the kings and great ones of the earth still do not "see" and "understand" the things which heretofore had not been proclaimed. With all the making known things that beforetime had been kept secret from the foundation of the world the "seeing" and "understanding" is still not an accomplished fact. It is still mainly the "poor of this world, rich in faith" who have seen and understood; most certainly not the kings and mighty men. We are led therefore to the only and obvious conclusion, that this word will have its fulfilment in the coming Age. In that day things that the powerful and influential and intellectual of earth had either never considered seriously for a moment, or if they had, had dismissed as unworthy of further consideration, will be brought prominently before their attention and demand acceptance. "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

It requires only a moment's thought to appreciate what a revolutionary change in the thinking of educated men and women will be brought about by the Kingdom. Every one of us is familiar with the half-pitying, half-cynical, smile that comes over the face of some as we try to tell them the message in its simplicity and beauty. "Do you really believe that?" "Rather fantastic, isn't it?" "You'll never change human nature"—we have heard all the stock replies. There are so many in the world brought up in the ways of the world and according to its standards who find it

quite impossible to consider the story seriously even for a moment; it is so foreign to their way of thinking and alien to all their conception of things. That is why one can truthfully say that they have never heard or been told of these things. The message has fallen upon their ears, perhaps repeatedly, but the ears were deaf to the message; they could not receive it. Now, says the prophet, in that day when the servant of the Lord commands the attention of all men, they *will* see and understand the Truth. It is a true word, applicable in principle to men in the next Age although really intended in its fulness to the Church in this Age, which says "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him". (1 Cor. 2. 9). Isaiah first uttered those words, so well known because the Apostle Paul used them in his epistle. And Isaiah's phrase is vivid when we think of these kings who are to see and understand. "For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Isa. 64. 4). Paul's words were intended for the Church, the spiritually-minded sons of God in this Age; Isaiah's rhapsody was designed to embrace all men and to bring within its scope those who in this "present evil world" do not know God. "Him that waiteth for him" says Isaiah; this is none other than every son of mankind who ultimately inherits the earthly Paradise. "It shall be said in that day . . . we have waited for him, and he will save us." (Isa. 25. 9).

In the glorious outcome of God's redemptive Plan, when all that are in heaven and on earth join together in one vast song of praise and adoration to the One sitting upon the throne, and to the Lamb, the men who formerly doubted and disbelieved and disparaged and denied will perceive in the ways of God and the benevolence of God heights of wisdom and love such as the heart of man, unaided, could never have conceived.

(To be continued)

When we depend upon organisations, we get what organisation can do; when we depend upon education, we get what education can do; when we depend upon man, we get what man can do; but WHEN WE DEPEND UPON PRAYER, WE GET WHAT GOD CAN DO.

“IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME”

*Thoughts on the
Last Supper*

How truly wonderful it is to be able to hold things in remembrance, and to live again today with the events of yesterday, partaking once more of the thrills or pathos of that hour which gave those memories birth. All memories do not afford pleasure, for there are some things in every life which we would rather forget. That fall under temptation; that unkind or bitter word; that cold and icy look! How we would prefer to forget it and tear it from memory's page! But that side of memory's store notwithstanding, it is truly a most wonderful boon to be able to call forth from the depths of memory's chambers those episodes of life which reclothe themselves in joy and delight, whensoever time and circumstances carry us back on wings of good desire to the sights and scenes of yesterday.

Do we ever pause to think what life would be without remembrances? How different it would be if each day's experiences were faded or wiped out with every setting sun, and there were no impressions to carry forward to another day. Imagine how barren the daily round would be if there were nothing gained, nothing learned, nothing achieved, nothing experienced save the drab monotony of existence at the low level of a limpet or an oyster! No love of parents or offspring; no appreciation of home or country; no regard for truth or righteousness; no delight of colour or harmony—none of these things to call to mind, to think upon, or to link us with the past.

The chambers of remembrance are the storehouses of all the real riches of life, the treasury of sweet thoughts, ennobling influences and inspiring motives, precious far beyond gold and rubies or wide verdant acres, for thereby we are linked with our God, with Jesus, home, and loved ones, and everything that is worth while.

It is greatly desirable to remember intensively, notwithstanding that the ability to remember intensively is not a self-created acquisition. Some people are blessed with good memories, or, shall we say, with good capacity for remembering. They do not have to develop remembrance by constant repetition of things or facts, nor by any patent rule-of-thumb methods.

Quality and intensity depends primarily upon the natural endowment bestowed by

heredity or parentage—that is, upon the density and receptivity of the impression-cells of the brain with which we are born into this world of sensation and experience. Something, too, depends upon the general state of health—a tired, run-down brain being unable to receive or register adequately the sense-perceptions from external sources. The first of these situations cannot be remedied, if deficient or lacking. Something may be done to correct the second and thus make the best use of Nature's equipment.

There is one factor that compensates, no matter whether we be well- or ill-equipped by natural aptitude. That factor is “interest”. Remembrance depends more upon interest than any other single factor in life. When the whole being—heart, mind and soul—is caught up by the written or spoken word so that every pulse and desire is set throbbing and vibrating with warm sympathy and response, the impressions then received register themselves more sharply and deeply on the brain and, thereafter, in proportion to the depth of the registration, so will be the ability to remember and recall at will. Who has not seen and felt the magnetising effect of some wholly-engrossed gifted tongue as the spoken message draws the listener from his comfortable relaxed position till he is sitting forward, eyes and ears and body alert to catch every word, and note unconsciously every ardent expression in the messenger's attitude to his theme. These are the occasions which trace themselves deep on memory's tablet.

What supremely serious things affected the disciples on that tragic night in the upper room to enable them to remember their Lord and Master! Was ever such an occasion as this? Was ever such a speaker as this? Did ever so much depend upon the faithfulness of one Sufferer? What solemn words were spoken! What serious things were done! What impressive eyes looked out upon the little band! Think what that little gathering meant. The established religious usages of sixteen centuries were coming to an end, and were to be memorialised for the very last time. They were to be replaced and superseded by the first observance of a new and better memorial arising from the “better” features of God's great Plan. For those few pious souls which God had given into Jesus' keeping the

old order was beginning to pass away, and a new order to come in.

This night, as throughout the span of one whole Divinely appointed Age of time, the call to remembrance had carried back the minds of godly men to that dread night in Egypt's oppressive land when the sword of God flashed through palace and hut, leaving its trail of death behind. Thirty to forty generations had lived and died with that dread memory behind them, but none had dared to interfere or change the order which Moses had caused to be established there. So far as all outside that little room were aware, thirty or forty, or even hundreds more might be expected to pass away, and all may come and go while still calling to remembrance that same dark tragic night in Pharaoh's land. The constitution founded by God, under Moses, in Jewish belief was to be eternal. Established upon the Law of God, they could not rise to the thought that its authority could ever pass away; and they were sure that even the coming of their Messiah would only settle it upon an even surer foundation.

The little band of disciples who had come aside with Jesus into this little room had been cradled and reared to manhood in that belief, and even their learning at Jesus' feet had not eradicated it from their minds.

Now they had come to the conjunction of the Ages, and this little room was to be the sanctum of one of the greatest changes the world was ever to know.

Already they had come to this quiet room with strange thoughts and memories rushing through their minds. On the way up to Jerusalem they had heard Jesus dwell repeatedly upon his coming death, and though they had not comprehended fully what He meant, still they had heard his words. He also had invited them to share with him his Cross, his Cup and his Baptism. They had been with their Master when the hot words of righteous reproof had been administered to self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees—words such as Jesus had never used before. They had seen him drive money-changers and merchants from the Temple Courts, what time He charged them with sacrilege in the House of God. They had heard him say that that Holy House was to be henceforth left to them desolate—the Holy House wherein God had placed the only earthly memorial of his Holier Name, and from which alone in all the whole wide world, He had been pleased to accept the incense of worship! Now it was to be left desolate!

Not comprehending the deadly seriousness

of what He said, they called his attention to the stately magnificence of its stones, only to be told that a day was approaching when one stone should not be left upon another stone, so utter and complete would its desolation become. Stunned and amazed by their usually compassionate Master's words, some of them broke into his sad reverie as He sat looking from Olivet over the doomed city, to enquire more particularly what his solemn words might mean. Responding to their solicitude, He gathered together the testimony of their holy books, and showed them what God had spoken about the overthrow of Jerusalem. They heard him speak of wars and rumours of war, of famine, pestilence, and persecution. He told of an abomination that would stand in the Holy Place, and of a period of tribulation such as had not been since man lived on the earth. He likened the overthrow to the catastrophe of Noah's day, and to Sodom's fate, and dated it by telling them that that generation would not pass away till all was fulfilled.

What a strange miscellany of sights and sounds the recent days had brought into their lives, and into this night, and into this room! Away from the madding crowd into the quiet seclusion of this upper room Jesus brought his little flock to keep first the memorial of Egypt's tragic night and then to institute an ordinance to be remembered in coming days. A solemn seriousness rested on the Master throughout the night, as He spake quietly and slowly of what was on his heart. Reverently He led their memories in the accustomed way, and then, taking a portion of the remaining bread, He invoked Heaven's blessing thereupon, and passed the bread to them, saying, "This is MY body, take it and eat it". Then He took a cup and, blessing it, said, "This is MY blood of the covenant, take it and drink it". Then they heard him pray—a prayer never yet heard by mortal ears!

How reverently and sacredly impressive this quiet ceremony would be! Those gravely searching eyes; that quietly arresting voice; and the strange newness of what He did! Could they ever forget that little room? Then those words: "This do . . . in remembrance of Me". Throughout the days and years that followed they did remember him. He was to them the Lamb of God; the Prince of Life; the Lord and Master of their lives. They counted not their lives dear unto them so they might lay them down in His service!

And what of these days, and of ourselves in this remembrancing? Only in spirit can we

share that experience in the upper room, but it is still true that according to the "interest" that grips our hearts, so will the measure of our "remembrancing" be.

These many years we have come apart into our own upper rooms, and at the appointed time have taken the emblems of his broken body and spilt blood, and "remembered" him! We have shown to each other our "interest" in "the Lord's death". We have accepted the benefit to ourselves of his life and death, and have covenanted also to become "dead with him". Again, the appointed hour draws near—what will it mean to us? Again, a world order is tottering to its doom. Can we go forward into the unknown future with nothing more than him? Is He of such "interest" to our hearts that we would willingly surrender all for him? Is there one thing else that can share

our heart's "interest" with him? Does the torch of remembrance burn fiercely in us for him alone? If so, then the measure of our "interest" will reveal how much we shall desire to remember him! For what have we to remember him? Is it not for everything that is worthwhile in life? Is it not our redemption and reconciliation, for our safe-keeping day by day; for our comfort and consolation in tribulation; for the hope of attaining to a share in an inheritance in joint-heirship with him; and for the possibility that we may be found acceptable to enjoy his eternal friendship and companionship? Is there not here sufficient cause to awake the interest of the deepest springs of our life, and lead us to remember him for the things of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, and for evermore?

IN FLAMING FIRE

A Second
Advent theme

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." (2 Thes. 1. 7-8).

Many a fervent champion of righteousness has used this verse and the few which follow it in the attempt to terrify the godless into abandoning their sinful ways and rendering at the very least lip-service to God. That the Most High is hardly likely to set much value on a conversion that is inspired by fear and enforced by the threat of consequences is not always given the consideration it deserves. At the same time it has to be conceded that a scripture passage such as 2 Thes. 1. does express in so many words this same idea of a wrathful God bent on hurling his enemies into some sort of fiery doom and for that reason at least the chapter is worthy of sober consideration.

Now right at the outset let it be noted that St. Paul's main subject in this chapter is not the punishment of evil-doers at the Day of Judgment nor in fact anything to do with the end of the Age at all. What he has to say about such things is only to illustrate and pin-point his main argument. His purpose in the chapter is to encourage the Thessalonian Christians in their persecutions and trials of faith by his assurance that God will one day, as the N.E.B. has it, "balance the account" by ushering them into the destiny of glory for which

those same sufferings have fitted them, and allow retributive justice to overtake those who have been the malicious cause of their sufferings. This balancing of the account is to take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, and this is where the allusion which is now under consideration finds its place. Verse 4 of the chapter records St. Paul's own joy for the Thessalonians' patience and faith, verse 5 that they are thereby counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, verses 6-9 a reminder of the basic principle "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap" so that the believers reap the reward of their faith, and the unbelievers reap retribution and destruction, verse 10 that this climax is to be when the Lord returns for the dual purpose of taking to himself his saints and bringing to an end all evil. So St. Paul winds up his discourse in verses 11-12 with a fervent prayer that all those to whom he is writing may be found worthy of the Divine calling and all things redound to the glory of God.

An essential part of this very desirable climax is the triumph of right and the final defeat of wrong and evil. This implies that those who now suffer for righteousness' sake must one day be delivered from those sufferings and receive that on account of which they willingly suffered. It also implies that retribution must overtake those who, of malicious intent or because of hostility to God

and the principles of righteousness, caused those sufferings. There is nothing vindictive about this, neither is it a case of God seeking revenge upon those who have flouted him. This somewhat colourful passage—colourful because its imagery is taken from the poetic background of Old Testament prophecy—expresses the basic principle underlying Divine creation of intelligent creatures in his own image, that the gift of life can only be enjoyed and exercised in harmony with Divine purpose and law. Failing acceptance of that, the Divine gift is withdrawn, and death ensues. St. Paul in this chapter relates that principle to the particular case of the persecutions suffered by the Christians of Thessalonica and the inevitable outcome.

"It is surely just that God would balance the account by sending trouble to those that trouble you, and relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well, when our Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven . . ." (vs. 6-7 N.E.B.). This translation conveys the sense rather better than does the A.V., although the use of "recompence" in verse 6 by the A.V. is ethically the more correct. The tribulation or trouble which comes upon the persecutors is a just retribution and in fact is brought upon them by their own actions. This is a point which often escapes notice. Evil doing can only be productive of evil, and all evil is the product of evil doing. The evil doer therefore inevitably lays up a store of evil which, if it returns upon his own head, is a perfectly just retribution and there can be no accusation of vindictiveness or revenge on the part of the One who has required rightdoing of his own creation. From the beginning of the world men have cried out their indignation that the innocent suffer, and expressed satisfaction when the guilty receive the reward of his deeds; all this is an acknowledgement, whether conscious or sub-conscious, that the ways of God are right and that justice must eventually be done. Likewise the afflicted ones experience rest or relief from their afflictions—the word used means to loosen or slacken the tension as of a bowstring—so that they enter into a more tolerable condition. But this is to be at a certain definite time in human history, *"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven . . ."* This clearly is at the Second Advent of our Lord, the time when He returns as He promised to gather his Church to himself, bring to an end the evil institutions of man, and establish his Messianic Kingdom upon the earth. This is the revealing spoken of so often in the New

Testament, the one of which Jesus told Caiaphas he would see the Son of Man at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26. 64), and to which St. Peter referred as the immediate precursor of the Times of Restitution of all things. (Acts 3. 19-21).

We come now to the climax of St. Paul's thesis, the final judgment on evil doers and the entrance into eternity of those who are approved, and immediately we are faced with the question whether his allusions are to be taken in a strictly literal sense or as metaphors. Flaming fire, vengeance, punishment, everlasting destruction; what place have these in the scheme of things devised by the One who has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth but would rather that he turn from his wickedness and live? The immediate answer is that these things must have their place unless God purposes to allow the presence of evil in his creation perpetually, and such a conclusion is at variance with all that we know of his character and his revealed plans. It remains therefore to look at these things so far as we can from the same mental standpoint as did the Apostle himself when he penned the words.

Verses 8-10 allude to three distinct purposes associated with the Second Advent. First, He comes to "dispense retributive justice" as Wilson's *"Emphatic Diaglott"* translation has it, to those who know not and obey not God; second to associate his Church with himself and be manifested resplendently with them—this is sometimes called the "rapture of the saints"—and third, to be adored by all who will believe "in that day". The saints have believed before that day and this last aspect points to others than the Christian Church of this present Age who will come to the feet of the Saviour. Now the determining factor in all this is the time feature. Everything in verses 8-10 is governed by the one word "when" in verse 10. Just as the rest and relief of the Church from affliction is to come "when" the Lord Jesus is revealed at his Advent, in verse 7, so the taking vengeance in flaming fire on the unbelievers is to be "when" He, with his saints, is adored by all who will believe "in that day", the day of the Second Advent or Second Presence, the Messianic Age, in verse 10. It should therefore be seen that both processes, the receiving the adoration of those who will believe, and the infliction of "everlasting destruction" upon those who will not believe, takes place during the passage of that Age.

This is where the "flaming fire" comes in. The text does not say that the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, although this is—or used to be—a popular idea. It does say that He takes vengeance, or dispenses retributive justice, in flaming fire, which is a very different thing. Nowhere in the Scriptures is our Lord pictured as coming in flaming fire to gather his Church, or to raise the dead, or to usher in his Millennial Kingdom, or to do any other of the gladsome things which are associated with his Advent. Only in that aspect of the Second Coming which has to do with the destruction of evil things and obdurate evil doers is the metaphor of *destroying fire* used. This fact is sufficient to establish that the allusion is a symbol, a symbol taken from the poetic oratory of the Hebrew prophets who so often used the annihilating destructiveness of fire to picture the utter end of evil when God's time should come. The celebrated vision of Daniel recorded in his seventh chapter is perhaps the most striking example. Daniel beheld the Last Assize, precisely the same stage of the Divine Plan which we are considering here in Thessalonians, and in the judgment of the Most High a fiery river destroying that monstrous beast which symbolised to him all evil powers of this world. He saw at the same time One like the Son of Man, and the saints with him, taking possession of the kingdom and ruling for ever and ever. In the Book of Revelation we have the same symbol; all that is of evil is cast into the lake of fire under the judgment of the Great White Throne. So here, the flaming fire is the symbol and the guarantee of the destruction of all that will not come into harmony with God's holiness "in that day".

Now about the "everlasting destruction" of verse 9. The word destruction itself needs no qualification; that which is destroyed can never exist as such again. The word "everlasting" here is *aionian*; although often rendered everlasting, eternal and the like, the word is not confined to the meaning we normally attach to such terms. It does not necessarily mean endless in respect of time; it rather has the quality of permanence in respect to the Age or period visualised. Thus the term "the destruction pertaining to the age" would be a better presentation, even although the effective result is the same, for destruction is inherently final and therefore everlasting. The importance of the qualification "*aionian*" in this verse, though, is that it defines the destruction of the unbelievers as a function

of the Age which is itself the earthly expression of the Second Advent. The *parousia* or presence of the Lord Jesus will continue throughout the entire duration of the Messianic or Millennial Age—not until its close does He "*deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15. 23-28), and the Divine judgment spoken of in verses 8-9 will therefore come into operation during that Age and be completed before its end.

The destruction comes "*from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*" (vs. 9). This word "presence" is "face" or "countenance" and denotes that the destruction is, as it were, emanating from One whose face is now turned toward the earth and the things of the earth. In point of fact it implies the personal presence of the Lord or at least that He has turned his attention to the earth and its affairs. The same word is used in Acts 3. 19 to indicate the "*Times of Refreshing*" which are to come from the face of the Lord to the repentant and pious at the Second Advent. It should be well noted that from the face of the Lord at one and the same time proceeds blessing for the righteous and judgment for the unrighteous, another evidence of the many-sided nature of the work our Lord is to accomplish during that wonderful era.

I.H.S. The initials I.H.S., often seen in places of worship, are in fact the first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek capitals, I H S O U S (the H being the Greek form of the letter E). As such the three initials found place in early Christian places of worship, but as the usage of Greek declined and was replaced by Latin, the middle letter became confused with the Latin H, so that, erroneously, the symbol is nowadays often explained as standing for the Latin *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, "Jesus the Saviour of Men". In either case, however, it is a very fitting symbol for display in any place of worship.

* * *

True prayer is the process by which we learn to know God and to realize what He wants to be to us, and to take possession of the wondrous inheritance of riches and power which are ours in Christ Jesus and which He is waiting to help us work out in our experience.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

Living Faith

How much is your faith worth? George Muller of Bristol, whose children's homes and schools were such an outstanding achievement of the nineteenth century had no money but a faith worth over a million pounds in the Bank of Heaven; that was the amount which that Bank put into his hands during the fifty years or so of his stewardship. Paid out in instalments as required, of course. There were times when he and his helpers had no food in the house for the next meal of the day, and no money to buy any—yet the wherewithal always came in time and they never lacked.

* * *

God is Love

There is a common impression that the God of the early Israelites was a blood-thirsty, war-loving Deity, the "tribal God of the Hebrews," as He has been called. The Book of Exodus presents the opposite view; the God Who led them through the wilderness told them to place their entire trust in him, and eschew fighting and war, and He would lead them into the Promised Land. The people were bloodthirsty and warlike, and they would not heed his words. Interesting confirmation of these statements in Exodus is afforded by the Greek writer Strabo (54 B.C.-A.D. 24), who says of Moses ("Geography," Book 16; 36): *"Instead of arms, he taught that their defence was in their sacred things and their Divinity"* (i.e., their God).

* * *

On Study

Bear in mind that fundamental principle of all sound reasoning, that the superstructure of any system can only be brought to the same level of credibility as the premise or foundation with which it starts, and upon which it is built. If, therefore, the foundation is wrong, the whole superstructure is erroneous; and every moment of precious time spent in studying the fine-spun theories of such a system, which one has thus already proved to be erroneous, is time taken from the study of the truth, from putting on the armour of God; and is filling the mind with subtle sophistries of the Adversary, instead of the sound logic of Divine truth, and thus preparing the way for the overthrow of faith instead of estab-

lishing it in sound doctrine.

* * *

On Amos 5, 26

Obscurely translated in the A.V. it reads *"Ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun, your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves"*. The S.R.V. has it (vs. 25-27) *"Did you bring to me the sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images which you made for yourselves; therefore will I take you into exile beyond Damascus"*. The Hebrew *"sakkuth"* is the Babylonian *"sakkut"*, the name for their god Ninuras, the planet Mars. Likewise, *"kaiwan"* or *"chiun"* is the Babylonian *"kajamana"*, their god Nergal or the planet Saturn. (In the A.V. the word *"sakkuth"* is translated *"tabernacles"* from its likeness to *"sukkoth"*; and *"melech"*, king, is rendered *"Moloch"*). The new version, compared with the old Babylonian terms, shows that Israel had adopted the star-worship of the Babylonians and accepted the gods of Babylon, hence the strong condemnation Amos passed upon them.

* * *

Superstition

Words have been called *"the indestructible vesture of thought"*. The original thought may have become corrupt, obscured, or obsolete; but the word remains *"indestructible,"* and by it we may recover the thought. *"Superstition"* is such a word. It originally meant something *standing over or above*—something that remains or has taken the place of something else. It is, therefore, akin to *supersede* and *super-imposed*. So the tree stands over or above the root out of which it has grown; so other subsequent cities have stood over and buried out of sight the genuine Homeric Troy. But as the something to which the word refers is always false or delusive in distinction from the true, so (we may say) does the fungus *"stand over"* the fallen and decayed tree in whose substance it is rooted. Nature and the world, like wheat and the corn field as well as religion, are full of such false parasitic outgrowths, bred from the decay of higher organisms which only exist in lower and degraded forms—*superstition*.

JOURNEY TO DAMASCUS

A story of
St. Paul

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus is one of the inexplicable events in New Testament history—inexplicable, that is, to all save those who attribute it to the miraculous intervention of Heaven. Many an agnostic or philosopher, historian or “rational” theologian, has wrestled with the problem in the endeavour to explain the whole incident away in terms of auto-hypnotism or psychological obsession, but most retire defeated in face of the unassailable fact that a brilliant and talented Pharisee, high in worldly position and honour, destined for a notable future, whole-heartedly convinced of the falsity and menace of Christianity and determined to do all in his power to suppress it, should in one moment of time experience a conversion to the faith he was sworn to destroy, a conversion so thorough and complete that never in after life did he waver in either conviction or steadfastness—and died a martyr for the cause he embraced.

It must have been very shortly after the death of Stephen that Saul sought and received his commission to go to Damascus and apprehend any Christians he might find there. Quite evidently the persecution in Jerusalem, the first organised persecution of the Church of Christ, was initiated and conducted by Saul. Immediately following Stephen's martyrdom, Saul “made havoc of the church”, combing Jerusalem for believers in Jesus and consigning them to prison for trial before the Sanhedrin. His power to do this stemmed from the Roman principle of allowing the undisturbed practice of native religion in each of the countries under Roman government. The arrest of the Christians would have been on the pretext that they were blaspheming against the accepted official religion of Judea and although the Roman governor—at this time Marullus, successor to Pontius Pilate—was probably quite indifferent to the merits or demerits of the accusation he was unlikely to do, or refuse to do, anything that could be construed in official quarters as hostility to the religious faith of Judea. Pilate had been faced with the same position at the arrest of Jesus, and reacted similarly.

The effect of Saul's campaign was an immediate contribution to the spread of the Gospel. Many of the believers left Jerusalem

to avoid the persecution and became missionaries of the new Faith. “They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8. 4). The rapidity with which the faith of Jesus Christ spread through the Roman empire within a few years of the Crucifixion has always been a matter of wonder to scholars and historians. It reached and took root in the British Isles within twenty years of Pentecost, and Britain to the Judeans was at that time more remote and unknown than Patagonia is to us now. Damascus was the capital of Syria and the most notable city of the seaboard lands; it is probable that many believers fled there and established a healthy Christian community. Such a consequence of Saul's Jerusalem campaign did nothing to improve his temper. If the birds were flown he would go after them. In the certainty of his conviction that these men were dangerous heretics he intended to leave no stone unturned to seek them out and bring them to justice. He approached the High Priest Jonathan for the necessary letters of recommendation and authority with which he could establish himself with the ecclesiastical authorities in Damascus and carry out his intentions there with their full approval and backing.

So it came about that a little procession left Jerusalem by the Damascus Gate and took the road heading north through Samaria and past the Sea of Galilee. The bystanders would conclude that the travellers included some person of note for they were mounted on asses or mules, whereas the ordinary traveller or the peasantry would normally go on foot. The man in the centre, mounted on the best mule, was clearly a Pharisee, and a forbidding-looking one at that. His companions were Levites of the Temple guard, strong burly men with a few servants and attendants. The convoy disappeared in the distance and the bystanders shrugged their shoulders and returned to their own interests.

Something like a hundred and fifty miles separates Jerusalem and Damascus. Saul and his companions could not expect to complete their journey in less than a week. At night-fall they would put up at a convenient wayside inn and resume their way in the morning. The muledrivers and the Levites would get on together well enough; there was plenty of variety in the minor incidents of the journey

to interest them and at night they would gather round the fire in the yard of the inn and entertain themselves and each other. With Saul the position was different. He had none of his own kind with him; as a Pharisee he felt it necessary to maintain a position of remoteness from his subordinates, and whether he was riding on his mule during the day, or seated by himself in a corner of the inn through the long evening, he had only his own thoughts for company.

That might well have been the Divine provision for Saul of Tarsus, leading his thoughts into a position where the revelation so soon to be made to him should strike in the most effective fashion. It was inevitable that his active mind during the long hours of the journey should be occupied with the object of his mission and all that had led up to it. Sincere and zealous for the God of Israel and the Laws of Moses the man of God as we know Saul to have been, the sterling candour and honesty of his mind must continually have been exercising itself with the contrast between the requirements of that Law and the hypocrisy and dishonesty of his fellow-Pharisees and Sadducees. He could not but be conscious that there was a tremendous gap between his own understanding of how the righteous son of Israel should serve God and the miserable exhibition of greed, hate, injustice and every evil trait manifested by the rulers he had left behind him at Jerusalem. He must have known, and admitted to himself his knowledge, that these men, *professed keepers of the Law though they were*, themselves stood far from the portals of the Kingdom of God. If anyone had ever told him of the words of Jesus "*The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof*" he would most certainly have admitted to himself that the condemnation was just. And from that point he must have reflected on the contrast presented by these simple Christians whom he had vowed to destroy—their purity and uprightness of life, their steadfast loyalty to all those righteous deeds which were incumbent on every Jew, their insistence that there must one day be due retribution for every good and evil act, their fervent conviction that the kingdom which was to exalt the people of God and bring to pass all God's purposes and proclaim His salvation to the ends of the earth was certainly shortly to appear. Had it not been for their espousal of a crucified felon as their Messiah, their proclamation that the Son of God must suffer

and die for man before He could redeem and restore man, that sacrifice must precede glory, he could almost have thrown in his lot with them. So he might well have mused as the little party passed through Shiloh where once the Tabernacle of God had stood, and Samuel the lad who became the greatest of Israel's Judges spent his boyhood. With disdain he looked upon the Samaritans as he journeyed through Samaria and his eyes lighted upon Mount Gerizim with its ruined Temple; never, thought he impetuously, would he tolerate any challenge to the traditions of Moses and the Law which God gave the leader on Mount Sinai. Samaritans,—Christians,—all were the same to him. He came within sight of the Sea of Galilee but the glimmer of its blue waters only reminded him of the Prophet who came from Galilee and like some of his brother Pharisees in earlier years he might have muttered to himself "search, and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" and then perhaps, Bible student that he was, remember that Elijah the Tishbite, the prophet who converted Israel, came from Galilee, and that Jonah the prophet, who converted the Assyrians, came from Galilee, and angrily turn his thoughts into another channel; but every time he came back to the same maddening conundrum. Why, if he and his were the true worshippers of God, did their work and actions so deny the principles which he knew to be inherent in the Mosaic Law? Why, if the Christians were so deluded and blasphemous, did their lives exhibit such evident manifestations of the spirit of the Law? Why, if Jesus of Nazareth was the blasphemer and the seducer Saul verily believed him to be, could he have inspired his followers with a zeal and devotion and tenacity which Saul would fain have seen amongst his own people? He lay, sleepless through the long Syrian nights, his mind racing over the dark sayings of the Law and the prophets, words he knew so well and understood so little. "*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously.*" "*He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*" "*All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.*" "*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.*" "*Unto us a child is born, and his name shall be called the Everlasting Father. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*" "*He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken; and he*

made his grave with the wicked." Over and over again the words repeated themselves, tantalising him almost beyond endurance with their contradictions. The Messiah when He came must live forever; how could he die? The Sent of God comes to exalt Israel over the nations and put down all evil with firm hand. How could He suffer death at the hands of men? So the burning questions tormented his fevered brain and all the time he saw before him the face of one who, radiant as an angel, looked up into the heavens and claimed to behold the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God and in the horror of that blasphemy he gave his vote for the condemnation of the offender and watched him put to death pleading Divine forgiveness upon his murderers—Saul turned over wearily and rose from his hard couch to prepare for yet another day's journeying under the blazing Syrian sun.

So he went on, leaving the gleaming waters of the Lake of Galilee behind, up into the Syrian mountains and at last, one day at noon, topped the last eminence and beheld, spread before him in the plain below, the beautiful city whose loveliness was renowned throughout the East. There, he may have thought, as the little convoy stopped to rest and he looked down upon the view, were the Christians he had come to hunt out and take back with him bound to Jerusalem. In the excitement and fervour of his work he would forget the questions and thoughts which had tantalised his mind; he would stop trying to reconcile those contradictory scriptures that had burned themselves into his brain by day and flickered across the screen of his consciousness at night. He would

A flash of light, vivid, searing light which rose up and outshone the hard, brassy glare of the Syrian noonday sun; a white hot, gleaming screen which blotted out earth and sky and burned itself into the eyes of Saul even to the extent of causing physical pain. He was dimly conscious of the asses and mules standing stock still, of his companions prostrating themselves on the ground in terror; then, his gaze drawn irresistibly upwards to the almost unendurable glare above him, he beheld, with a shock that pierced through his very being, a Form whose own glory exceeded by far that of the shimmering light around him—and at that Saul himself veiled his eyes and fell to the ground and there lay, fearing to look again upon that Majestic Presence, still, silent, his mind racing, waiting.

A sound, as of a distant wind, coming near-

er; the rush of many waters, a swelling crescendo of rolling thunder, taking the form of a voice, a heavenly voice, shaping itself into words, awe-inspiring words that yet seemed to have in them a tinge of gentleness, almost as if they breathed assurance with their enquiry.

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

Persecuting God? He, Saul, the zealous upholder of the Law and of the true faith? Persecuting the One to whom he had devoted his whole life and all his energies, for whom he was willing to do all and dare all and lay down life itself if need be? Persecuting the Rock of Israel whose enemies he was even now engaged in hunting down and punishing? How could such things be? It was unthinkable. Then who was this One whose solemn Voice had reached his stricken mind, whose awful Presence had appeared before his amazed sight? Had he indeed beheld God, and lived? Had the Most High verily appeared to mortal man? And if not, then who?

"Who art thou, Lord?"

"I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

The shock with which Saul of Tarsus must have heard those words might well have unhinged the mind of a lesser man. Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified felon, the imposter who had claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah that should come, and who had been executed for his blasphemy? Taken down from the cross, his dead body certified by the authorities, and interred in a tomb, his delusions and claims silenced for ever—*there, in that glory*, at the right hand of God? Only a little while ago he had watched Stephen lift his face to heaven and declare that he saw heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God and he had judged him guilty of blasphemy and condemned him to death; now he himself had undergone the same experience and he himself had with his own eyes seen heaven opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. *"Jesus of Nazareth"*! Had the answer been *"The Word of God"* he could have understood it. Had it been *"Your Messiah, the Coming One"* he would have rejoiced and looked for his speedy descent to take the glory of His Kingdom. Had it been *"the Arm of the Lord"* *"the Hope of Israel"* *"the Son of God"* he would have understood those terms and bowed himself in submission. Had the Presence even announced Himself as Michael the Archangel, the Captain of the Lord's Host, he would have rendered humble adoration and

awaited the heavenly message. But no; "*I am Jesus of Nazareth*"—there, with God

When they picked him up from the ground he was blind. The intensity of that scorching glare had destroyed his sight. The men with him had dropped to the ground when first the light flashed—they saw the radiance but they did not see what Saul saw. As they lay they heard a noise but they distinguished no words. Now the light was gone and the solemn rumblings died away. The sun shone brilliantly down upon the familiar landscape and everything was as it had been before—except that little group of wondering Levites leading in their midst a broken and sightless man.

So Saul entered Damascus, walking on foot, holding the guiding hands of his erstwhile despised subordinates. One might ask how it was they did not set the blind man upon his mule for the remainder of the journey—surely that would have been the most convenient way to get him to a place where he could be cared for. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that Saul himself, under the effect of his experience, insisted on completing the journey on foot, in token of his humiliation and submission. He left Jerusalem an arrogant, self-assured Pharisee. He entered Damascus a bond-slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three accounts of this incident in the Book of Acts—one, the narrative of the happening in chapter 9, another, as recounted by Paul in his defence before the Jerusalem Sanhedrin years later, (chapter 23) and a third, in his speech before King Agrippa just prior to his voyage to Rome (chapter 26). In none of these does Paul say that he actually saw the Lord, only that an overpowering light shone around him and his companions. The evidence that he did in fact behold a form enshrined in that supernatural radiance lies in his statements elsewhere in the New Testament that he had actually seen the person of Christ and that he saw him "*as one born out of due time*", as though his eyes had been enabled to witness an Appearance which in the ordinary manner no man would expect to do until in his own time he was born into the heavenly world "*beyond the Veil*". The Apostle John tells us (1 John 3. 1-3) that "*it doth not yet appear what we shall be but . . . we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*". This celestial glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is of necessity something no human mind can visualise for we have no basis of comparison. The mediæval idea that Jesus preserves the fleshly body of His humanity to all eternity, even though in a "glorified"

condition, has only to be mentioned to be dismissed, for the conditions of life in the celestial world and in the Divine Presence are such that, as Paul himself told the Corinthians, "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*". (1 Cor. 15. 50). Our Lord's celestial glory at the right hand of God the Father is one that cannot be discerned by the human faculty of sight. It remains then either that the risen Lord manifested himself in some such fashion as God revealed Himself to Moses on Sinai or the angel Gabriel to Daniel, in which some kind of physical manifestation perceptible to the human optic nerves represented the reality of the Being behind it, or in some wonderful fashion Paul was literally translated for the moment into the world of the spirit and received a sense impression which in the ordinary way he would have been quite incapable of accepting. His reference in 2 Cor. 12 to his having been translated into the "third heaven" and hearing "unutterable things which it was not possible for a man to relate" goes to show that such an experience did befall the great Apostle on at least one other occasion. If this is so, and if of all men Saul of Tarsus is the one who alone has seen into the mysteries that lie beyond the barrier of human sense and retained a recollection of what he saw, then how apt his expression, referring to this event in his life "*last of all, he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time*" i.e. prematurely (1 Cor. 15. 8).

One thing is certain. The sight which Saul witnessed on the Damascus road was one which convinced him utterly and irrevocably that the man Jesus of Nazareth who had been put to death in Jerusalem was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. For the rest of his life he never wavered in that belief. Nothing of the evidence against the claims of Jesus, satisfactory as it had been to him previously, now weighed the slightest against that fixed conviction. He had all to lose and nothing to gain by accepting Christ. The whole of his career and prospects, his power and honour, was thrown away in this whole-hearted acceptance of the crucified one. He lived with the events; he had access to all the evidence for both sides of the question; he could question and obtain information from living men who had been the principal actors in the drama. His own personal zeal for the principles of Phariseeism and the Law of Moses and the traditions of Judaism strongly predisposed him against the claims of Christianity. But despite all this, that thing which happened to him on the road outside Damascus convinced

him so completely that his whole future life and work was devoted to the preaching of that Gospel which previously he had condemned. One of the strongest evidences for the truth

of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead lies in the conversion and conviction of Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Church.

A NOTE ON ACTS 17.28

"In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said 'For we are also his offspring.' Forasmuch then as we are the children of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Who were these poets of the Greeks to whom Paul referred, and what was the propriety of his appealing to pagan writers to declare the fact of man being the offspring of God? Paul was an educated man and it was quite natural that he should draw upon his classical knowledge, when talking to educated men of this world, philosophers and the like, to support the truth he was proclaiming to them. In this speech before the Athenians on Mars Hill he gave voice to the most profound of dispensational truths, explaining the whole purpose of God for this Age and the next, and the reason for God's apparent silence in the past. And at the centre of that truth lay the fact that men live, and move, and have their being in God, and cannot live eternally without him, for they are in the last analysis the offspring of God and owe their life to him. In making that statement he drew upon the considered conclusions of the Greek philosophers themselves, and quoted them to support his point. He was not so petty-minded as to ignore the insight of those philosophers because they were pagans and knew not the God of Israel. Even although the very words he quoted *"For we are also his offspring"* had been addressed to Zeus the principal god of the Greeks, and not to Paul's God at all, he gave those men credit for their perception.

There is a lesson here worth taking to heart. We can take the words of these Greek poets, as did Paul, and apply them aright, because their authors had grasped the true principle, that men receive their life from God and owe their being to him, and in the last resort are his children. The Prodigal Son in the parable was still his father's son when away there in alien land, wasting his substance in riotous living. And in these quotations to which Paul referred we have but to change the name of Zeus and there is not one word with which we

would disagree.

There are two poets, either of whom Paul may have had in mind when he made this remark; perhaps he had both. He says *"certain also of your own poets"* using the plural. One of these was Aratus, a Greek poet and astronomer who was born in Paul's own province of Cilicia about three hundred years before. This Aratus became Court physician to one of the Macedonian kings and his works were esteemed so highly by the Romans in Paul's day that at least three men of letters produced Latin translations of them. The passage in which Paul's quotation occurs is from a kind of technical poem dealing with astronomical matters, called the *"Phenomena"*. It runs:

... With him, with Zeus, are filled
The paths we tread and all the haunts of men.
He fills the sea, and every creek and bay;
And all in all things we need the help of Zeus,

For we too are his offspring."

The other was Cleanthes, who lived at about the same time as Aratus, and who was a leading member of the Stoics at Athens. In his *"Hymns to Zeus"* occur these lines:

"Most glorious of immortals, many named;
Almighty and eternal, thou, O Zeus,
The God of Nature, guiding with thy hand
All things that are, we greet with praise.
'Tis meet that mortals call on thee with one accord,

*For we thine offspring are, and we alone
Of all who live and move upon this earth,
Have had from thee the gift of god-like speech."*

The fact that we can thus identify the poets whom Paul is reported as quoting on that historic occasion, and read for ourselves the very lines he had in mind, is an undesigned confirmation of the accuracy of the *"Acts of the Apostles"*. This apparently quite casual allusion, coming to us down the ages, bears with it this testimony that it was no idle embellishment of a writer of fiction; it was a verbal transcription of words that were actually spoken before that distinguished audience in Athen two thousand years ago.

THE GREATEST OF THESE

A Serial Study
in 1 Cor. 13:13

4. Love, the bringer of Perfection

The main proof that Paul is not merely contrasting the *Charismata* in their various forms with the inward grace of Love (as this comes to be reflected in the various acts that make up a Christian's life) is found in Paul's statement in verse 12. Here two phrases are found which indicate, for the faithful foot-step follower of the Lord, that all imperfection and present indefiniteness is at an end. He will there see the realities of the Divine Plan "face to face", and will "then know even as he has been known". By whom has Paul been known while here on earth? Was he merely stating, that he hoped, one day, to be fully understood by those brethren, such as the Corinthians, who had so grossly misunderstood him and his work? Not a bit of it. At the very moment when the Corinthians misunderstood there was another place where he was fully known and fully understood, by Someone whose knowledge of all things pertaining to the Plan had then come to the "full". That Someone was his Lord. He knew Paul through and through. Paul hoped, one day, also to attain to such understanding that he too would "know" to the same degree, as his Lord had known him. But to "know" as he had been "known" would imply that he had been both "like" and "with" his Lord in the heavenly glory. Then he would have reached the vantage ground of being "face to face" with the Divine realities that had thrown their shadows backward into his earth life, where he had seen them as an indefinite reflection in the mirror of the Word in these present misty circumstances.

In some way therefore, this preview of that perfect state must tie up with his contrasts between Love and the 'other things'—the mysteries, the "*gnosis*" and the tongues—to give 'sense' and direction to his argument. Each one of these "other things" had stood for a 'way of life' for countless millions of the world's inhabitants. But Paul claims that the 'way of Love' would be the better way—a more excellent way. And yet the common view of man that more excellent way is not apparent yet—it is not yet made manifest. Darkness still reigns over the minds of men, and binds them to the 'other things'. Only to the spirit-enlightened mind of Paul, as he looks forward to the future day, has that Way of Love any semblance of reality, and even then he sees it but "in part". But the big jump

forward of his mind to that future day, when all preparation begins to give place to the "*teleion*"—"the perfectness", which is to be the climax and culmination of all the long preparatory work of God—shows that he is really contrasting the whole Plan of God—and Love, the motive force of the Divine Plan—with the spirit of priest-craft or culture-craft which had been the animating force of all these human institutions. Men had tried to explain the problems of the Universe, the mystery of God, and the riddle of human life, and had become inextricably entangled in their webs of philosophy. God himself would, one day, explain all these complicated enigmas of life and existence, and bring light out of this present darkness and gloom, and show men where they were wrong in their reasonings. By that happier day Paul would have arrived 'face to face' with the Divine realities and would then 'know' even as he had been known, and that which was 'perfect' having come for him, it would then begin to ripple out to all the dark places of the earth, and cause the knowledge of the Glory of God to be known by all.

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

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

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

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

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

Further God will restore man to his dignity. The ancient human ways of life dragooned and regimented men en masse. The idol worshipper was not asked to decide if he agreed to or approved the system to which he belonged—there was no option left to his choice. For the least demur the penalty was death. Compulsion surrounded him on every hand constraining him to yield obedience as his fathers, and his father's fathers, had done. The Way of Love will meet him as an individual. God will tell him he is free—a free-man of his wide domain. He will be free to choose the object of his own desire. This he never was under the old system of idolatry. There had been no more liberty than a beast

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

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

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

From the Fountain of eternal good, will come forth the Attribute that will have played a Creator-Father's part, and have linked

together in one happy universal family every creature that his Hand has made whose choice it was to live in that happy home.

In this gladsome Paradise Paul will have found himself "face to face" with all these great realities—he will "know" as he was

fully known—and for him, as for countless myriads besides, that which is "perfect" will have come. The "Way of Love" will have become the "Way of Life" for every willing soul. Surely it is "the most excellent Way!"

The End

DR. SEISS ON 2 PET. 3.7

Dr. Joseph A. Seiss was a noted Lutheran minister of Philadelphia, U.S.A., a century ago, editor of the "Prophetic Times", a prolific writer and a convinced exponent of the pre-millennial Advent of the Lord Christ. As early as 1856 he pointed out that the Second Advent must take place in several stages, first, an invisible coming "as a thief" in which He would take his Church, then a bringing the world into judgment, mankind being quite unaware of what is happening, refusing to believe, and finally his appearing with his Church to establish his Kingdom. The following extract from his writings comments upon one aspect of these later events, in that judgment.

* * *

God never obliterates His own creations. The dissolving fires of which Peter speaks are for "the perdition of ungodly men," and not for the utter depopulation and destruction of the whole world. They may consume cities, destroy armies and effect some important meteorological and geological changes; but men and nations will survive them and still continue to live in the flesh. The earth is to be renovated and restored from its present depression and dilapidation, and thus become "the new earth" of which the Bible speaks. It is to pass through a "regeneration" analogous to that through which a man must pass to see the kingdom of God; but there will be a continuity of its elements and existence, just as a regenerated man is constitutionally the same being that he was before his renewal. It will not be another earth, but the same earth under another condition of things. It is now labouring under the curse; but then the curse will have been lifted off and all its wounds healed. At present, it is hardly habitable—no one being able to live in it longer than a few brief years; but then men shall dwell in it forever without knowing what death is. It is now the home of rebellion, injustice and guilt; it will then be THE HOME OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is now under the domination of Satan; it will then come under the blessed rule of the Prince of Peace. Such at any rate, is the hope set before us in the Word of God, and this I hold to be "the world to come" of which the text speaks. It cannot be anything else. It cannot be what is commonly called heaven, for the word *oikoumene* cannot apply to heaven. It is everywhere else used exclusively with reference to our world. Neither can it be the present Gospel dispensation, as some have thought, for that began long before this epistle was written and could not, therefore, have been spoken of by Paul as yet "to come". We are consequently compelled to understand it to mean our own habitable world in its Millennial glory. And as the prophecies concerning the Messiah's eternal kingship are here referred to as having their fulfilment in the subjection of the Millennial world to his dominion, we are furnished with another powerful argument of Scripture in favour of the doctrine of Christ's personal reign as a great Prince in the world. Indeed, the Bible is so full of this subject and its inspired writers are so constantly and enthusiastically alluding to it that I am amazed to find so many pious and Bible-loving people entirely losing sight of it. Ever and anon the Scriptures return to it as THE GREAT AND ANIMATING HOPE of the Church in all her adversities and depressions, and it does seem to me that we are depriving ourselves of much true Christian comfort by the manner in which we have been neglecting and thrusting aside that glorious doctrine. My present object is to show, from the Scriptures, and by just inferences from them, what sort of a world this "world to come" is, and to describe, as far as I can, what we are to look for when once this earth has been fully subjected to that Divine King whose throne is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of whose kingdom is the sceptre of righteousness.

Dr. J. A. Seiss, D.D.



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

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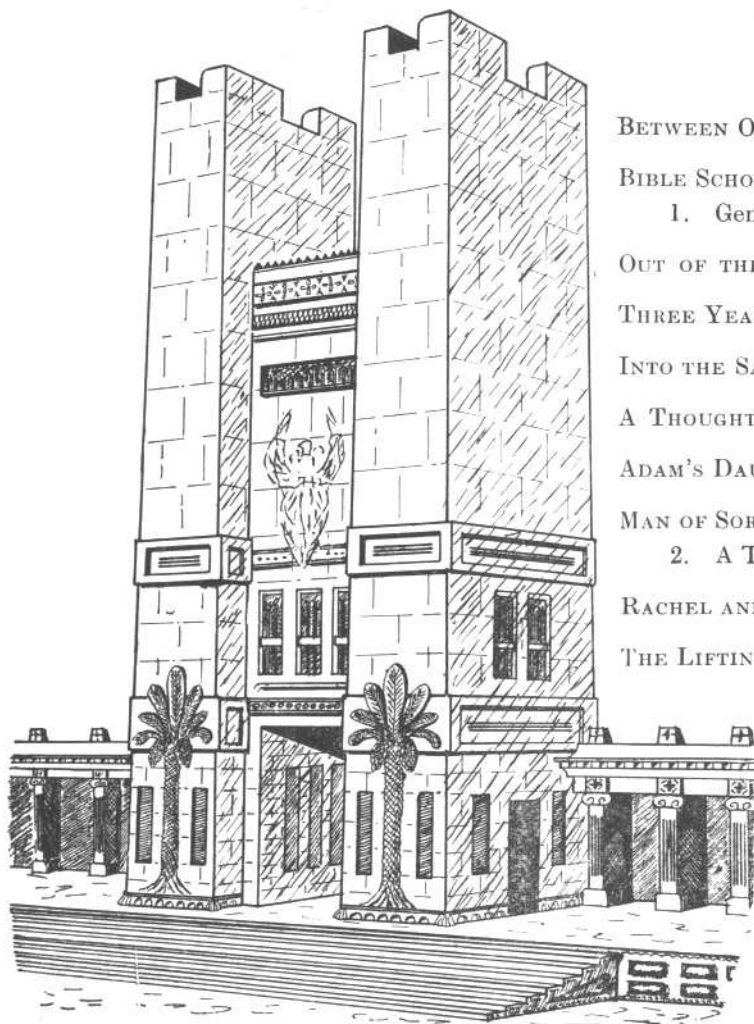
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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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

The Bible School series on the Five Books of Moses, temporarily halted some while ago upon arriving at the end of Genesis in order to allow for other planned features, is resumed in this issue and will continue through the Book of Exodus. It is believed that this series will prove deeply interesting, dealing as it does with some of the most spectacular examples of Divine intervention in the affairs of man in the whole of recorded history.

* * *

The article "Three Years in Arabia" on page 47 of this issue is the third in the series on the life of St. Paul which commenced with the Jan/Feb issue. For the benefit of new readers who may like to read this series from the start we will be pleased to send either or both of the Jan/Feb and March issues upon receipt of request for same.

* * *

From time to time we reprint small quantities of some of the serial features appearing in the "Monthly" for the benefit of some who like to have them in booklet form. At the moment there are three such booklets in stock—our funds do not allow us to supply these at no charge as we do the "Monthly", but we are pleased to despatch these booklets at the following prices, inclusive of postage, and we feel that new readers who did not see these serials when they appeared in the "Monthly" will find them of considerable interest.

"The Mission of Jonah". The full story of Jonah and his experiences with a close examination of the well-known apparently miraculous element in the Bible narrative. 80 pages 3/- (40 cents).

"The Tragedy of Samson". The life, achievements and failures of the famous hero in narrative form. 52 pages 1/6 (20 cents).

"The Tower of Babel". The story of the Tower and its history through subsequent

ages as revealed by modern archaeological research. 52 pages 1/6 (20 cents).

The three booklets together would be sent for 4/6 (60 cents).

* * *

We are pleased to give publicity to the following two functions. Will those interested please write to the organising secretaries concerned and not to Lyncroft Gardens, since the "Monthly" has no responsibility for either function.

London Convention

The usual August Bible Students Convention will be held (D.V.) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1 from Saturday, 3rd August to Monday, 5th August. The sponsoring brethren extend a warm invitation to all to join with them in fellowship on this occasion. It is also their desire that a baptismal service should be arranged for any who wish to symbolise their consecration to God. However we can only make arrangements for such a service if we receive a request before 15th May. Providing we do, appropriate arrangements will be made and further applications will be welcome thereafter. Write direct to the Convention secretary, Bro. D. Walton, 25, Brushwood Drive, Chorleywood, Herts. to whom also enquiries concerning the convention should be addressed.

Maran-atha Conference

The 1963 "Maran-atha" Conference will D.V. be held from Monday, June 24th to Monday, July 1st at "High Leigh" Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts. All who love the Lord and his appearing are earnestly invited to spend this week of holy convocation together and with us. For reservations and all other information address the secretary, Mr. F. B. Quennell, "Sevenoaks", Pewterspear Lane, Warrington, Lancs.

BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

EXODUS

Part 1. General Survey

OUTLINE. The first book of the Bible is strictly historical, covering a period of between three to four thousand years, virtually half the span of all world history. Exodus, which follows it, relates the events of only eighty years, and takes the Bible story forward only to the time of Moses. Although three-quarters of Exodus is narrative, the purpose of the book is not really historical; it is an account of the manner in which God took the second great step in the outworking of His plan for human salvation. The first, of course, was the call of Abraham, his selection as the progenitor of men who in every generation should be men of God, the bestowment of the promise that in him and his seed would all nations of the earth eventually be blessed, and the confirmation of that promise to his descendants, Isaac and Jacob, from whom it passed to the twelve sons of Jacob who became the direct fathers of the nation of Israel. Exodus tells how that nation came into existence and commenced its journey toward its destined home, the "Promised Land". It shows how the nation became the covenant people of God, bound and devoted to Him by an arrangement which could have constituted them in a peculiar sense the visible manifestation on earth of that Divine Kingdom which is eventually to include all right thinking men and women within its compass. Israel as a nation never measured up to the Divine ideal; nevertheless the events described in the Book of Exodus were in a very real sense a tremendous step forward in God's preparation for the world that is to be when Jesus Christ as King takes control of a weary and despairing earth and makes it the place of light and joy it is intended to be.

Exodus picks up the thread of history from the point at which Genesis drops it. Genesis closes with the death of Joseph in Egypt, seventy-one years after the family of Jacob had abandoned their home in famine-stricken Canaan and taken up residence in north-eastern Egypt under the protection of the friendly Hyksos Pharaohs of the 15th Egyptian dynasty. Exodus opens at this same point and tells how the family of Jacob multiplied into a great people of several millions, and how the friendly Semitic rulers were succeeded by hostile native Pharaohs

who oppressed the Israelites until Moses arose among them, a national leader who eventually led them into the deserts of Sinai where God met them and made them a nation. It goes on to describe how in that desert they received the law of God and promised to become God's people in truth; had they kept that promise the Book of Exodus might have ended with the story of their triumphant entry into the land they set out to attain, but that was not to be. Unbelief, hardness of heart and apostasy were to form the subject of the later books of from its promised inheritance for another forty years, and the events of that forty years were to form the subject of the later book of Moses. So Exodus ends, three months after the departure from Egypt, in front of Mount Sinai, the law given and accepted, the ritual of worship laid down and the central sanctuary of God erected, and as yet no hint of the forty years of hardship and heartbreak which still lay before the people who had so lightly taken the service of God upon themselves without realising or reflecting what self-discipline and devotion it was going to demand of them if they would inherit the salvation of God. That was the tragedy which inspired Dr. Becher Webb to write the trenchant words

"Just to have known themselves to be but men,

Just to have let Him lead them by His hand;

Just to have had a little faith, and then

All had come safely to the Promised Land."

STRUCTURE

The Book of Exodus divides naturally into four main sections;—

Chapters 1-11 Moses — Forty years at Pharaoh's court in Egypt. Forty years in exile in Midian.

Chapters 12-19 Moses challenges Pharaoh. The ten plagues. Moses leads Israel out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, a journey of three months.

Chapters 20-29 Israel encamped around Sinai. The Law is given and the covenant made.

Chapters 30-40 Construction of the Tabernacle, the transportable

sanctuary which served Israel as a visible centre of worship during their travels. Completed ten months after the arrival at Sinai.

ORIGIN

The name of the book, "Exodus", is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word "*exodos*", meaning "a going forth", given as title to the book by the Alexandrian Jews who first translated the Old Testament into Greek some two hundred and fifty years before Christ. The original Hebrew title was *Ve-eleh Shemoth*, "These are the names", the first words of the book. The ancient Hebrews, like the Babylonians and Sumerians, were accustomed to use the first few words of a literary work as its title. There is every probability that it was originally written on papyrus in the same manner that so many Egyptian documents of the same period were written—some such documents have survived and exist still in our own day. Papyrus was a writing material something like very stiff parchment made from the stems of the papyrus reed, which grew in abundance in the Nile. The stems were dried, split into thin sections, laid close together in two layers crosswise and gummed together to form a hard but flexible sheet, the surface being well rubbed down until perfectly smooth and made capable of receiving writing executed by a quill pen and ink.

There is no reason whatever to doubt the generally accepted tradition that the book was written during the lifetime of Moses and almost certainly by Moses himself. Modern scholarship has at times disputed this, just as it disputes the traditional authorship of nearly every book in the Bible; it asserts the fitness of applying to the Bible the tests of criticism which it applies to any other book, ignoring the fact that the Bible is not like any other book. It stands unique among books. It is not necessary to demand absolute and mechanical Divine inspiration for every word in the sacred record to support its own claim to be the living Word of God. It is not really necessary to require for the Book of Exodus more than that it is a careful and accurate record of the events with which it deals, compiled by a right-thinking and sincere man of God whose spirit-filled mind made him conscious of the importance of what he was doing. But having agreed that position, it is necessary to accept the book for what it purports to be, and realise that the work of its writer was overruled and guided by the Holy Spirit so that it

should play its intended part in the instruction of God's people through all the ages afterward. It must be accepted as true history, miracles and all, and then studied in the light of all that we know of God's ways and power, all that men know of human discovery in the world of Nature and the history of the past, in order the better to understand the true nature of those wonderful events of three thousand years ago.

The likelihood that Moses himself wrote the entire book, from his own knowledge and observation, during the long span of his life, is so overwhelmingly great compared with any other possible candidate for the honour that it is hardly worth considering alternatives. Moses was educated and experienced, for the first forty years of his life, in all the learning and wisdom of Egypt. (Acts 7. 22). That of itself means that he must have been thoroughly acquainted with literature in at least four languages—Egyptian, Babylonian, Hittite, Syrian—beside his native Hebrew. He was without doubt an accomplished writer—some scholars used to say that writing had not been invented in the days of Moses, but with so many examples of written tablets and documents more than a thousand years older than Moses now in museums, that theory has been exploded—and would be well able to produce a work like Exodus. He was in the centre of the events with which the book deals and in fact some of the contents of the book could have been known only to Moses himself. A sober consideration of the subject leads to the reasonable conclusion that Exodus was compiled and written by Moses, probably during Israel's forty years in the wilderness, and that when Joshua led the exultant hosts across the Jordan into the Promised Land they carried with them among their greatest treasures, the original copies of the first two books of the Bible, Genesis and Exodus.

PROBLEMS OF THE BOOK

There are two main problems which cannot be claimed to have been satisfactorily settled as yet. One relates to the period of time the children of Israel were in Egypt, from the entry under Jacob to the Exodus under Moses; the other relates to the number of men and women who participated in the latter event. The twelfth chapter states that the period in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. Such period is difficult to reconcile with certain Scripture allusions and with the latest findings in contemporary Egyptian history. Sundry variant readings of ancient texts, other than the Masoretic on which our

Authorised Version is based, can reduce this period to two hundred and fifteen years although these variants are probably of somewhat doubtful authority. This alternative does better fit the apparent facts of the case, although it introduces the seeming unlikelihood of the comparatively small company which came into Egypt with Jacob having increased to the two or three millions demanded by the Exodus account in little more than two centuries. The arguments for and against these alternative possibilities will be set out more completely later in this series.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

AND PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

The scene is set for the first part in ancient Egypt, in all the magnificence but cruelty of its civilisation, with Israel a nation of slaves, oppressed and downtrodden by their captors. The friendly Pharaohs, of the same Semitic race as the Hebrews, who had welcomed Jacob and his family into Egypt, had now been expelled, and a ruthless native Egyptian monarch was in control. In this unhappy state Israel cried out to heaven and God bent down to intervene and save. He raised up Moses the Deliverer; but before Moses could be qualified and fitted for the almost superhuman task of creating an organised nation from a rabble of slaves, he must first be trained in a hard school—first by forty years in high honour at the Egyptian court, gathering the knowledge and wisdom he would need, and then forty years a nomad shepherd in the desert of Sinai, acquiring knowledge and experience of a totally different kind. Only then, a mature man of eighty years of age—human physique and length of life was of a different order in those days—did Moses approach Pharaoh with a demand for the slaves' freedom. That demand being refused, Divine judgments in the form of the renowned Ten Plagues came upon Egypt until at last the people were allowed to go. So they crossed the Red Sea into the deserts and mountains of Sinai in expectation that within a short while they would be in possession of their Promised Land.

Three months later they reached Mount Sinai in the middle of the Sinai peninsula and there they camped while Moses, alone in the Mount, received from God the Law by which Israel was henceforth to be required to live. Here was negotiated the Covenant between God and the people whereby they became a dedicated nation pledged to represent God in the earth and accept Him as their Guide and Leader and King, ultimately to become His

agents in the then far distant future work of displaying the light of God to all nations and declaring His salvation to the ends of the earth—a destiny they failed to achieve through unbelief and which has since passed in great part to the Christian Church. Here, instructed by wisdom from above, Moses led them in the construction of the Sanctuary, through which by means of an ordained priesthood they could come to God in orderly fashion and express in ritual and ceremony both their repentance for sin and their thanksgiving for the goodness of God.

This is where the Book of Exodus ends. The people have been delivered and have become a nation. They have no country as yet; that has still to be attained; but they have God and that is much more important. Slaves no longer, they enjoy the freedom which is the possession of all who have given their lives in dedication to God Most High, and with that dedication there comes consciousness of purpose. "*A people for a purpose*"; that was the watchword which electrified all Israel at Sinai. It was not merely that they were going to be led to a land which should be theirs as a national possession, a home in which they could settle and take root and bring up their children. It was also a place where "*Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.*" (Isa. 27. 6). In the fervour of that vision they all shouted as one man, so that the crags and peaks of Mount Sinai rang again, "*All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient.*" It was Israel's tragedy that they utterly failed to keep that promise, so that at the last, fourteen centuries later, Jesus had to say to their descendants, sadly, regretfully, we may be sure, but none the less firmly and finally, "*The Kingdom of God is taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*" (Matt. 21. 43).

But Moses and the people at Sinai knew nothing of this. Hopes ran high, that day of the Covenant. None doubted that henceforth all was well; the future opened before them in golden vista. Who would have imagined, then, that within a few days, even before they had departed from the sacred mountain, unbelief and apostasy would raise its ugly head among them and sully the fair vision of the future that had been theirs.

So the actors cross the stage, most of them in martial array. Moses, the clear-eyed visionary who led without faltering; Pharaoh, the proud opponent whose pride was humbled to the dust; Aaron, the well-meaning but somewhat vacillating brother who became

the nation's first High Priest; Joshua, the stalwart young soldier who eventually picked up the torch of leadership when at the last it fell from the fingers of the aged Moses. Behind them come Caleb the rugged man of faith, Bezaleel the craftsman, Miriam the sister of Moses and Zipporah his wife, Pharaoh's

daughter his protectress and Jochebed his mother, and a host of others whose names will live forever because they played a part in the greatest drama of Israel's history, the Exodus from Egypt.

(To be continued)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

Alongside God

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

* * *

Prejudice

Luther, who was used so mightily to uncover and publish the splendid truth of Justification by Faith, also wrote the following: "*People give ear to an upstart astrologer who strove to show that the earth revolves and not the heavens of the firmament, the sun and the moon. Whoever wishes to appear clever must devise some new system, which of all systems is of course the best. This fool wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; the sacred Scripture tells us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still and not the earth*".

The man referred to in this quotation was Copernicus, one who did much to give to the world a truer and more complete picture of the universe. Since that time many more facts concerning the movements of the heavenly bodies have been discovered. In the light of the present day Luther's words seem more

childish than childlike. No doubt he felt strongly on this matter and said what he thought was right, and yet the view that he expressed has been shown to be false.

* * *

The Flood

A tablet giving a list of medical remedies, found at Ur of the Chaldees and written about the time of Abraham, states that its contents were first given "*by the mouth of the ancient sages who were before the flood, that was in the city of Shuruppak*". The man who takes the place of Noah in the Sumerian legend of the Flood was said to have been a citizen of Shuruppak (a city on the Euphrates midway between Babylon and Ur) and here it was, these legends say, that he built the Ark which afterward drifted to Mount Nizir in Armenia. These stray finds, one after another, help to corroborate the Biblical story, and create a link between the historical times which we know and that dim time before the Flood of which no details survive—not even in the Bible.

* * *

Light On An Old Testament Story

The mysterious destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem (2 Kings 19) has provoked considerable speculation as to the agency used by God to bring about so remarkable an event. It has been suggested that the *sirocco*, or hot desert wind, was responsible for the untimely death of these men; on the other hand doubts have been expressed as to the likelihood of any such result attending the hottest of hot winds. It is interesting, therefore, to know that Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who explored oriental countries as far as China in the 13th century, relates how sixteen hundred horses and five thousand men in the Persian province of Kirman, at the southern end of the Persian Gulf, were caught by this same desert wind and suffocated, not one of them escaping.

THREE YEARS IN ARABIA

A story of
St. Paul

It was not that Ananias doubted the Lord, or questioned his wisdom, or wondered if he had interpreted the mind of the Spirit aright. It was just that the message and the commission was so unexpected and incredible that he was surprised into faint expostulation, almost as though all the ethics of the case were suspect. As a servant of the Lord he was prepared to go anywhere and do anything that he was bidden, but normally he was able to see the end to which his efforts were tending. As a Christian his work was to convert men to Christ and then act as pastor to lead them in the way of Christ. Ananias had been long enough in the Way himself to know that the essential prerequisite of all to whom he thus ministered must be repentance, and the full, whole-hearted acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his saving power in the life; after that a fixed conviction that all salvation is through Christ and that one day Christ would return to earth in the glory of his Kingdom and reconcile to himself everyone of earth's multitudes who could possibly be persuaded to turn from their evil ways, and live. But for the present the call was restricted, confined to those relative few who would give themselves wholly and unreservedly to the service of the Master, that they might live and reign with him in the administration of his Kingdom when the blessed day should come. So it was with astonishment and perhaps dismay that his Lord in the familiar vision gave him a totally unfamiliar and unexpected instruction. *"Go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth and hath seen in a vision a man called Ananias coming in and putting his hands upon him, that he might receive his sight."* (Acts 9. 11-12).

Saul of Tarsus! Ananias was thunderstruck. This was the man who had come into Damascus with the avowed intent of harrying and persecuting the disciples of Jesus and taking them prisoner to Jerusalem. In his own congregation Ananias had some who had fled from Jerusalem to escape the terrible evils that were being inflicted upon the Christians there by this same Saul. Whether Ananias had heard anything of the circumstances of Saul's arrival and of his blindness does not appear, but that he knew of his reputation and of his

mission is plain, *"Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name."* (vs. 13-14). Ananias was a man of faith and of trust; he knew and served his Lord in implicit confidence, but this mission cut across all that he knew or could imagine of the Master's actions and interests. The less any of them had to do with this arch-persecutor of the saints the better. To go and seek him out was only asking for trouble. Surely the Master knew how inveterate an enemy to His cause was this man!

Jesus' words cut across his thoughts—and words which must have enshrined a great deal more information than is recorded in the short account of Acts 9, for when Ananias did at last go to Saul he knew what he evidently did not know at this moment, that Jesus had appeared to Saul in the way. *"Go thy way"* was the calm rejoinder *"for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake"*. And at that Ananias hesitated no longer. If Saul was indeed a chosen vessel then, despite all outward appearances, he was the Lord's, and Ananias must haste to receive him into the community of the faithful. Explanations could wait; the Master knew what He was about, and the servant could do naught but obey.

So it came about that the blind Pharisee, sitting quietly in the house of Judas as he had sat, silent and fasting, for three days past, heard an unfamiliar voice, a voice of calmness and sweetness, uttering words that he had never heard applied to himself before. *"Brother Saul"* they said *"Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit."* How did this man know—how did any man know—that Jesus had appeared to him in the way? That must have been the first thought which flashed across the keen, perceptive mind of Saul. That he had been led into Damascus a blind man might well have become generally known, an item of gossip. Something of the vivid light and thunderous noise out there on the hills above the city might have been recounted by the

men of his party; but none of them knew of his sight of the risen Lord or of the words he heard. How then did this stranger know anything about it? *"That appeared to thee in the way as thou camest"*! If, during those three days' meditation, Saul had wondered whether after all the whole thing was a chimera of his imagination, Ananias's words must have settled the question for him. Only the Lord himself, the One who had appeared to and spoken to Saul, could have imparted the information to this Ananias. There was no alternative; he could only accept the fact, and believe.

What went on in Saul's mind during those three days can only be surmised. His creature comforts would be well looked after by Judas, who was evidently his pre-arranged host in Damascus and sure to be, like himself, a Pharisee and in sympathy with his mission. What Judas thought of receiving a Nazarene into his house and watching him receive his fellow-Pharisee as a convert to the hated faith can only be imagined; it may be that Saul did not continue in the hospitality of Judas beyond that point. But during the three days his mind must have been exclusively concerned with the amazing thing which had happened to him and all that it implied. The Old Testament prophecies must have come to him in a new light. The baffling questions which had tormented his mind during the journey were baffling no longer; the answers were all falling neatly into place. He began now to see what was meant by the sufferings of Christ which he must undergo, and only afterward enter his glory. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah became luminous and full of meaning, the blindness and hardness of heart of those who had rejected the Lord's Messiah stood plainly revealed to him and he realised how he himself had been one such blind and hard of heart. Those three days were by no means the end of Saul's soul-searching and he was not yet ready for the work of his life, but he was prepared to accept induction into the Church of Christ at the hands of the saintly Ananias and that was a momentous thing.

So he listened to the quietly spoken words *"Brother Saul . . . be filled with the Holy Spirit"* and as he listened, a peace came over his soul such as he had never known and something like scales fell from his eyes and his sight returned and he looked up into the face of the man above him and he knew that his past was over and done with and he was now Christ's bondsman for ever and he rejoiced, with a humility that was new and

strange to him. Saul the leader became Saul the led. He came into Damascus to take Ananias and bring him to the Sanhedrin but Ananias had taken him captive and was bringing him to Jesus. He had lost Moses and the Law, but he had received Christ and the Spirit. His thoughts were still in a chaotic jumble, but even as he began outwardly to behold his surroundings, so inwardly he began to glimpse something of the things of the Spirit.

A certain amount of quasi-medical speculation has centred upon the "scales" which fell from Saul's eyes. The Greek word indicates something which stripped or peeled off, like a skin. Something of a similar nature is recorded in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit in Nineveh who likewise was blind and received his sight. It is said that records of the same affection were left by Hippocrates, the reputed founder of medical knowledge, who lived in Greece about 400 B.C. Suggestions have been made that the physical effect of the blinding light shining upon Saul's upturned eyes out there on the Damascus road was to cause some disease of the eyes which resulted in the formation of the scales which afterward fell away. Some have connected this possibility with Saul's "thorn in the flesh" and hazarded the suggestion that he afterward suffered from glaucoma or other affliction affecting his sight; several allusions in his epistles do support the likelihood of such being indeed the case. On the other hand one might well question whether the Lord would see fit to strike with near blindness the one He had chosen for a demanding and exhausting life of service as the price of the revelation he was to behold; Saul's weak eyesight might well be attributable to more normal origins and although his eyes might quite possibly have been inflamed and temporarily injured by the experience, as would those of any man exposed to intense and searing light, the three days' blindness could conceivably have been, in part at least, of a psychological nature, and the emotional effect of the coming of Ananias, his words and his actions all that was needed to complete the cure and give Saul his sight again.

For a short time, "certain days", Saul remained with the disciples at Damascus. Of Judas, his erstwhile host, we hear no more. He had evidently washed his hands of the renegade. But Saul had found new friends, and was rapidly assimilating himself to their fellowship. He was baptised at once; his strength of character and firmness of decision

is shown in his insistence upon that act before he so much as broke his three days' fast. The same resolute pushing forward which had made him so dangerous an enemy to the Christian faith was now being turned to good account and was very shortly to make him an even more dangerous enemy to the opponents of Christianity, first in Damascus itself, and then in the outer world.

There is a certain amount of uncertainty about Saul's next move. According to vs. 20 of chapter 9 he "*straightway preached Christ in the synagogues*" that is, to the orthodox Jewish community, and to such good effect that the Jews took counsel to kill him and he was let down by night over the city wall in a basket and escaped to Jerusalem. After a short time at Jerusalem he aroused the enmity of the Jews there and had once again to escape, this time going to his native city of Tarsus, where he drops out of the New Testament story for a time. On the other hand he himself, writing to the Galatians many years later (Gal. 1. 17) says that immediately after his vision of the risen Lord he went into Arabia for three years and returned to Damascus, then going to Jerusalem to see Peter and James. It seems evident that this three years in Arabia must have come immediately after his reception into the fellowship of the Damascus disciples but before he started preaching in the Damascus synagogues, and therefore should be placed between verses 19 and 20 of Acts 9.

Where was the "Arabia" into which Paul went and why did he go there? Perhaps the second question is easier to answer than the first, and certainly of greater importance. Almost certainly Saul, after his conversion, impressed with the magnitude and majesty of

the Divine commission he had received and conscious how much he had yet to learn, felt the need for a prolonged period of meditation and study. "*I conferred not with flesh and blood,*" he says to the Galatians "*but I went into Arabia, and returned after three years*". Those must have been three years of quiet but intense study and thought, going over the whole of the Old Testament prophecies, already so familiar to his mind, but now in a new light and against a different background. Formerly he could only see Moses, now he could see Christ in all the Scriptures. There is not much doubt that the outlines of all those brilliant arguments and expositions of the Pauline books in the New Testament—Romans, Ephesians, Colossians and so on—were drawn during those three years in Arabia. The term was a vague one at the time, and it covered a long stretch of territory from the wilderness east of Damascus right down through Edom into Sinai, and Paul may, as has been so often suggested, have spent the time on the slopes of Mount Sinai itself or he might merely have lived a secluded life, unnoticed and unknown, in one of the country villages or Bedouin encampments on the east side of the Jordan not a hundred miles from Damascus itself. It matters little; there, in the place of his choice, he came to know the leading and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and there he was transformed from the efficient organiser and bigoted zealot he had been in former days, to the most indefatigable missionary and profound theologian the Christian Church has ever known.

And so, when he was ready, and the Holy Spirit so directed, Saul came back to Damascus.

(To be continued)

Jehovah In certain quarters considerable stress is laid upon this word as the proper name by which the Almighty God should be known. It is not generally realised that this word does not date earlier than the sixteenth century, and had its origin in a misunderstanding of Hebrew pronunciation. The ancient Israelites had a reverential objection to uttering the name of God which to them, without its vowels, was represented by the letters Y H V H and if uttered at all would have been pronounced YAHVEH. In order to guard against inadvertent utterance of the sacred name it became usual in writing to substitute the vowels from the word

Adonai (Lord). Through the ages even this vocalisation was lost and it was a sixteenth century scholar, Petrus Galatinus, who in 1518 published a work in which he coined the name Jehovah and applied it for the first time as the name of God. As a word, the term rests on no earlier authority and should not be regarded as anything more than a transliteration into English—and a bad transliteration at that—of the substitute word which the Jews reverentially used in place of the "incommunicable Name", the Name they would neither pronounce nor write down because it was the sacred name of God.

INTO THE SANCTUARY OF GOD

A plea for
beauty in worship

Our God loves things of beauty and dignity. He has ordained his creation to be majestic and awe-inspiring; on this our earth He has devised Nature, fair and pleasing in her outward aspect, so that men may find pleasure and happiness in their allotted sphere. To men He has given attributes and powers which render them capable of appreciating the dignified and the sublime, and drawing inspiration and enlightenment from the solemn and the serious, as well as gaiety and happiness from the light and pleasant. Therefore we ought to say that in our worship and devotion we should surround ourselves with that which is beautiful and dignified, that the thoughts and prayers of our hearts may find suitable setting in the sights and sounds which our senses convey to us.

Lack of beauty and dignity in worship is a great loss. Fellowships accustomed to meet in halls and rooms oft-times inadequately or even quite inappropriately furnished for Christian devotion often do not realise how great is the loss. In reaction from formalism and ceremonial some go to the other extreme—quite a natural thing to do—and forget what a stimulus there is to prayer and praise when offered to the Father in surroundings that remind us of Him.

Those ancient exemplars of ours, the "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12. 1), knew full well the value of beauty and dignity in their surroundings when they came together to worship. They were well taught by God himself by means of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, a simple, dignified, but beauteous structure that enshrined in its snowy curtains, its play of colour, the sheen of gold and silver and polished copper, this immortal truth that God loves beauty. It would have been so easy to make the Tabernacle plain and squat and ugly—instead it must have formed a wondrous sight set in its quiet beauty amid the rugged grandeur of Shiloh, and, in the earlier days, amidst the mountains and deserts of Sinai and the road of the wanderings.

Then when Israel's first wildness had been tamed, and as a united nation they came together to worship their God, with what pride must they have viewed the edifice built by Solomon. Not the beauty of simplicity which they had seen in the Tabernacle, but the majesty and dignity of a House which should

fitly be for the dwelling of the Most High. *"The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness; but I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever"* (2 Chron. 6. 1).

In prophetic mood the sweet singer of Israel caught up the strain when he looked on the City of Peace, as yet uncrowned with its loveliest jewel, the Temple, and declaimed: *"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the City of the Great King"* (Psa. 48. 2). That is how it must have appeared to Jesus on those occasions when, rounding the bend in the road from Bethany, and looking down, before His eyes:—

*"Like a fair vision in the morning light
Lay the proud city of Jerusalem,
In all the beauty of its soaring towers,
And flashing domes, and marble palaces.
A diadem on Zion's holy hill,
The glorious Temple in its splendour shone
With sheen of gold, and pinnacles of snow."*

What wonder that the Psalmist felt constrained to cry out in exultation: *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed"* (Psa. 65. 1). That glorious city, and in later days its magnificent Temple, was the visible embodiment of Israel's worship; pulses were quickened, and hearts beat faster, as men lifted up their eyes to the city wherein God had set his Name. And who shall say that some lives were not inspired and quickened to more devoted service, and some timid hearts were not encouraged to greater deeds of heroism and sacrifice, after the outward sight of Jerusalem the Holy had been translated into a vision that illumined their inmost soul and remained with them for ever?

But Solomon knew that his beautiful Temple was only a shell, a casket, of no value except it held the precious jewel. That dead building must be the repository of a living faith and a centre of living worship. *"Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built"* (2 Chron. 6. 18). So he prayed that his house might become a house of prayer. How clear it is that he expected his Temple to become an inspiration to sincere prayer and devotion for all Israel. Its

gold and silver vessels and furnishings, sculptured palm trees and pomegranates, its tapestries and apartments, its ceremonial and ritual, all meant nothing, and less than nothing, except they were conducive to a deeper and more spiritual understanding of God, and to more reverent and soul-satisfying worship on the part of the people. That was his desire.

That he had interpreted aright the needs of Israel is clear from the songs of David. Yearning after just such a place where God could be worshipped in spirit and in truth, the man after God's own heart had sung: "*I was glad when they said unto me 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'*" (Psa. 122. 1). He was glad! Have you ever felt that quickening of the pulse, that eager anticipation, as you enter the place where your fellows are gathered together to worship the Father in sincerity and reverence? I have sometimes found myself in a strange town where the surroundings seem alien and unfriendly, and have come upon a church, standing silent and serene, and felt a strange little surge of emotion, as though that building were the one place in all that town into which I had a right to enter; for it represented the things of God, and "*this is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven*" (Gen. 28. 17), and if perchance one should enter in and become at one with the atmosphere of the place—the quietness, the dignity of ancient things, the soft light stealing through stained glass windows, the great Bible on the reading desk—how easy to come into tune with those fervent words of three thousand years ago: "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth, yea even faineth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*" (Psa. 84. 1-2). That is the true spirit of worship—the intense, deep longing to be in the House of God and engaged in His business. That is our place, our home, and there it is that we shall find rest to our souls. The more that we can take to ourselves the restful spirit of a place of worship, the more shall we enter into communion with our Father.

Do we not well, therefore, to seek the promotion of this spirit of worship by every means within our power, and if our surroundings can be made more conducive to satisfying and restful worship, do we not well to use our Divinely given instinct for beauty and dignity to that end? When the inspired writer voiced those beautiful words in which he exhorted his hearers to worship the Lord in the beauty

of holiness there can be little doubt that the magnificent setting of the Temple was in his mind. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name," he cries. "Bring an offering *and come into his courts*. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth" (Psa. 96, 8-9). Behold the stately progression of worship! Acknowledge God first, the One Who is worthy of all praise and worship; then prepare the offering. With that offering in the hand, enter into the House of God, the place that is set apart to him for worship and devotion. In that setting, and in a spirit of reverence, and with a consciousness of sincerity of heart; trusting in the justification which is by faith; rejoicing in hope of his glory; in such holiness, within and around, "*come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker*" (Psa. 95. 6); and in that solemn atmosphere we shall hear the voice that speaketh from Heaven as we have never heard it before.

Having then made our House of God, humble though it may be, as outwardly fitting and appropriate to our worship as circumstances may permit, let us come into it as though the Father himself waits there to receive us—as indeed He does. That grand old sixteenth-century Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe, to whom the world owes so much of astronomical knowledge, declared: "*I always put on my court robes when I enter my observatory, because when I study the stars I stand in the Court of the King of Kings.*" What a grandeur of simple dignity. Who shall say that the Father of all men did not take notice of that act of worship performed by a courtly old man who realised, as David of old, that the sublime majesty of the heavens speaks indeed of the eternal presence of God. Grievous loss it is that in these more hurried and less dignified days even some ministers of God tend to forget the solemnity of the task they undertake week by week. Thirty years ago the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead in his book "*How can I find God?*" speaking of typical Sunday services he had known, said of the minister, "*one cannot help feeling that he would collect himself with greater care in order to enter the presence of his doctor.*" How often do we all fail after the same manner!

The finest example of the value of beauty and dignity in worship and of ritual and ceremonial in preparing the heart for personal communion with God is given us in the vision of Ezekiel's Temple. There we have depicted the worship of the Messianic Age,

and although it may be urged that the descriptions in those last chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy are symbolic expressions of spiritual truths—as indeed they are—yet there can be none among us who do not form a mental image of a wonderful edifice with its River of Life flowing outwards to the Dead Sea, and the Trees of Life on the banks thereof, and look to that as a kind of central feature of the new world that is to be. The Word tells us that all men will go up to Jerusalem to worship—a formal although spontaneous expression of love and loyalty to the Father of all; is it not reasonable to conclude that there is much in Ezekiel's vision that will become translated into literal reality, and that, "in days that are yet to be", away there in the heart of the

Promised Land, in surroundings of incomparable grandeur and dignity, there will be worship which shall lift the hearts of the worshippers to true communion with God the Father of all. There upon Zion's hill, resplendent in beauty and glory, will stand that majestic meeting place which shall visibly symbolise that the dwelling place of God is with men, and they shall have become His people, and He shall have become their God, and He himself shall have wiped away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain, because the glorious Mediatorial work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ shall have made "all things new".

A Thought for the month

"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine". (1 Tim. 4. 13).

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

The pity of it is that so many who lay supreme stress upon the doctrinal aspects of the Divine Word and the importance of an accurate intellectual understanding of the philosophy of the Plan of Redemption are themselves such poor advertisements for the efficacy of the things which they believe, and which so dogmatically they claim that a godly number of the flock are repelled and driven over to the purely devotional side, to their own loss and damage to the cause which

we all serve. If it is true—and it is true—that "my people perish for lack of knowledge" then we cannot afford to ignore those things in the Word which are generally classed as doctrine. But unless we can hold each other's divergent conclusions on such matters in proper respect and so arrange our affairs that we can both make proper progress in our own personal understanding of doctrine and at the same time preserve the essential "unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace", which is the hall-mark and evidence of our Divine sonship, then neither doctrine nor devotion will do us any good at all. The attitude that is manifested all too often by the more bigoted of the Christian fellowship reminds irresistibly of St. Paul's words, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another*". (Gal. 5. 15).

Perhaps we can learn a lesson along this line from Moses, in Israel's opinion the greatest man who ever lived or ever would live. With all his tenacity and strength of character, all his knowledge ("learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and in the lore of God besides), all his walking and talking with God, one whom the Lord "knew face to face," he was so intrinsically modest and humble that he was known as "the meekest man in all the earth". Does that fact persuade us that knowledge of doctrine, of the Divine mysteries, essential as it is in one who is called to be a Christian minister, is effectual only when it is combined with, and subject to, sincere humility and an abiding submission to the wisdom of God? So too, St. Paul himself, who

more than any of the Apostles has defined and expounded the doctrines of the Christian faith, described himself as "less than the least of all saints", "not meet to be called an apostle". (Eph. 3. 8., 1 Cor. 15. 9).

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

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

ledge even although they do have to attain the mark of perfect love. At the same time, just as it is obvious that an elephant which persisted in drinking no more water than would satisfy an antelope would soon cease to count for anything in this world, so one who has the capacity and ability and desire for an extensive understanding of the intellectual and doctrinal features of the Divine Plan must of necessity pursue that aspect of the Christian life to the full extent of his powers. Of such come those who stand as lights to the Church in the onward progress of understanding and enlightenment. It is to the clear-sightedness and intellectual insight of such that the Church owes the periodic advances in the Truth, the coming of new light on the Word of God, which have marked certain significant points in the history of the Age. It may be no exaggeration to say that the devotional leaders preserve the faith and steadfastness of the Church against the wearing down processes of daily life, whilst the doctrinal leaders beckon on to new heights of understanding which in turn gives new grounds for hope and expectation. All are members one of another and we shall find at the end that the processes of both head and heart will have played their part in bringing us to the glory land.

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

Little Points in a Big Programme

- (1) A little more love for everybody.
- (2) A little closer cleaving to God's Word as my guide.
- (3) A little wider open purse in helping to support God's cause.
- (4) A little softer heart towards sufferers around me.
- (5) A little more readiness to see the viewpoint of others.
- (6) A little more freedom from the poison of prejudice and ignorance.
- (7) A little better remembering of the Lord's Day (every day) as a day of spiritual

privileges.

- (8) A little more time spent in prayer and meditation in the Scriptures.
- (9) A little more obedience to the commands of the Lord in His Word.
- (10) A little sweeter heart towards those who antagonise me.

In the high heavens, and in the depths of our hearts, Grace abounding has mounted its Royal Throne, and has brought the unfailing resources of Omnipotent Power to the aid of Almighty Love.

ADAM'S DAUGHTERS

A
Digression

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

Our correspondent asks "What is the 'Book of Jubilees' and is it a genuine book regarding the Creation story? Can you give some information in your columns regarding the matters mentioned in the cuttings?"

* * *

The "Book of Jubilees" is a work that is thought to have been composed by some pious Jew in the time between the return from the Captivity and the First Advent, probably about 400 or 300 B.C. It is certainly not part, and never was part, of the Bible. It is one of the numerous "apocryphal" works which were produced at that and subsequent times, based on the Bible narratives amplified with much legendary material. The book is interesting and can be useful to the research student but has no Divine authority and stands on the same level as many other literary works produced by godly men.

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

Septuagint, which fact sometimes renders "Jubilees" useful in considering difficult Old Testament texts. This however is likely to be more of interest to the student than the general reader.

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

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

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

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

2. A Tender Plant

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (53. 1).

It is an appealing question. It almost implies that none can be found to believe, and yet the story is a true one and the revelation waiting to break through to those who will bend their minds to consider. The speaker has changed his standpoint very rapidly from the one he occupied in chapter 52. Then, he gloried in the prospect of kings and great men shutting their mouths and giving heed to the coming of the Servant for their salvation and their instruction. Now, he bewails the fact that none will listen to the good tidings nor lift their eyes to the glorious vision resplendent in the skies. Very evidently the prophet has turned away from his contemplation of the glories due to be revealed in the Millennial Age, and bent his gaze again upon the nearer prospect, the darker days of the First Advent, with all that they hold of sorrow and suffering and death for the Anointed Deliverer.

The word rendered "report" means tidings or news, and is so translated in Psa. 112. 7 and Prov. 25. 25. Here it quite certainly denotes the declaration of the office and work of Jesus and the preaching of His Gospel, as is evident from Rom. 10. 16 "*They have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report*". The prophet, coming back as it were from the world of the future into the world of the present, is suddenly struck with the realisation that the glories which are so real and so precious to him and his fellows mean nothing to the world in general. He does not claim the message as his alone; he has fellow-believers and fellow-prophets. It is not "my" report, but "our" report. He pictures himself as one only of a dedicated company who have seen the light themselves and want to make it known to all and sundry. After all, Israel was a consecrated nation, intended by reason of election and training to receive the Servant when He came, in the way He should come. Isaiah really had a right to expect that the joyous declaration would be received with acclamation by his countrymen. Their ritual sacrifices on the Day of Atonement had pointed forward to this reality. They should know by now that only by suffering and sacrifice could there be cleansing from sin. But Israel did not believe,

and Isaiah and his fellow-prophets found themselves but voices crying in the wilderness.

We often find ourselves in the same position. The faith is so real and logical and convincing to us, we fail to realise that it does not seem so to others. The promise of future restitution and, above that, the glories of the High Calling, take clear and definite shape in our minds but to others it oft times appears fantastic and improbable and all our arguments unconvincing. And we find that hard to understand. Why cannot these people see the same things that we can see so well? That is an old question but it will not be fully answered until we are beyond the Vail. Suffice it now to realise that, as with Jesus during his life on earth, so with his followers since, "*the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*".

So Isaiah is driven to proclaim his message to an unbelieving generation, knowing not to what extent his words would ever find lodgment and bear fruit. He must have thought of it as a witness to the people, a prophetic fore-view that would be better understood and appreciated after the fulfilment had come. He could not have known of the Divine purpose that his inspired and glowing words should be preserved and recorded for all succeeding generations and taken by other zealous servants of God to the uttermost ends of the earth. Yet so it has been. Wherever the Gospel has been preached this 53rd chapter of Isaiah has been preached too, one of the Scripture's brightest jewels.

By way of doctrinal digression, it has been pointed out that there are no less than eleven expressions in this chapter referring to the vicarious nature of our Lord's sufferings while in the flesh. The modern schools of thought which portray our Lord as an inspiring example of right living but deny man's fall into sin and the need for a Redeemer must dispense entirely with this chapter and blot it out from the Divine revelation before they can begin to sustain their contention. The eleven points are:—

"He bore our griefs."

"He carried our sorrows."

"He was wounded for our transgressions."

"He was bruised for our iniquities."

"The chastisement of our peace was upon

Him."

"By his stripes we are healed."

"Laid on him the iniquity of us all."

"For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

"Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin."

"He shall bear their iniquities."

"He bare the sins of many."

All of this is very closely associated with the typical ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, and the Priesthood which conducted those ceremonies. "Transgression"; "Iniquity"; "Sin"; these are words that are frequently used in the Leviticus accounts of the laws concerning the offerings, and it is only appropriate that we should meet them again here. If we could only but realise it, the whole of the complex ritual associated with the Day of Atonement has the reality toward which it pointed clearly set out here in this chapter. Isaiah 53 is in very truth the prophetic counterpart of Leviticus 16, and all that there is in that 16th chapter is presented in new guise here in Isa. 53.

"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." (vs. 2).

The word translated "tender plant" comes from "suckling" as in "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings" in Psa. 8. 2, and refers to the young saplings that grow up from the stump of a tree which has been felled. In our own day such shoots are still referred to as "suckers". This is a picture of the coming of Christ which is similar and yet in marked contrast to Isa. 11. 1 *"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots"*. In that chapter the "Branch" comes forth to glory and power, the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him leading him to judge the poor with righteousness and slay the wicked with the rod of his mouth. Isaiah has passed over the day of humiliation and suffering and sees only the triumphant Kingdom beyond, when Messiah shall reign gloriously and all the nations flock to his banner. In this verse of the 53rd chapter the same "rod of the stem of Jesse" is depicted as a sapling growing out of dry ground to disesteem and spurning. Its growth and development is to be under unfavourable circumstances. But it is the same shoot. It will go on growing until it has survived the winter and passed into the light and sunshine of the spring, and it is then that the fully grown tree will spread abroad its branches in invitation to all creatures. Just as the stone which

Nebuchadnezzar saw in his vision became a great mountain that filled the whole earth, so here we have the picture of a tender sapling which thrust its roots into the soil and its leaves into the air until it has filled the whole face of the land, and, like Israel in her own destined times, blossomed and budded and filled the whole world with fruit.

The background of the picture is the allusion in Isa. 10. 34 to the fall of the Davidic kingly rule under symbol of the cutting down a great cedar in Lebanon by the ruthless invader. The cedars of Lebanon were the mightiest trees known to the ancient world. It was only fitting that these proud monarchs of the forest, standing erect in their towering majesty over all the other trees, should be chosen to picture the royal authority of the house of David, who "sat upon the throne of the Lord" and ruled Israel in the name of God. The apparent permanence of those cedars told fitly of the throne that was to endure for ever before God. But Isaiah in his day knew that because of faithlessness the throne of David must be overthrown, the upstanding cedar be cut down. That was the theme of his prophecy but he did not end there. The throne of David would one day be re-established, when "he whose right it is" appears to claim His possession. So in verse 34 of chapter 10 the prophet sees the Assyrian and Babylonian invaders ravaging the land and taking the people captive and destroying the kingly power, and he says *"he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one"*. Immediately following, in the first verse of chapter 11, comes the golden sequel *"and there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse . . ."* Like the tree of the Babylonian king's vision, which was cut down until seven times had passed over it, and then was to sprout again, so it is here. The great cedar of Lebanon which was the kingship of David's line was cut down by the oppressors of Israel. Zedekiah was the last king; but a tender sapling out of that cut-down stump would one day arise to grow into a cedar mightier by far than that which had flourished and perished.

So out of the apparent barrenness and failure of God's promises there grows the "root of David". Christ is to be as a root out of dry ground. The learned men of our Lord's day were quite unable to understand how Christ could be both David's son and David's Lord, even though Jesus quoted the Old Testament Scriptures to that effect and they had prided themselves on understanding the

Old Testament Scriptures. This "rod out of the stem of Jesse", this "tender plant" or sapling from the cut-down stump, is also the root itself! *"I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star."* *"All things were made by him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."* Unless Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Lord from heaven, is the root of David as well as his Son, the whole of our faith is founded upon a falsity and we are of all men most miserable. The only possibility for salvation of this fallen race of which we are members lay in the active intervention of God from heaven. *"God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . ."* *"He Who was rich, for our sakes became poor . . ."* Without the root there could never have been the tender sapling growing up into maturity to the lasting benefit of mankind.

The "dry ground" is the "dry and thirsty land, where no water is" of Psa. 63. 1. The Psalmist longs and seeks for God but sees no evidence of his presence, until he finds him in the sanctuary and remembers him on his bed, meditating on him in the night watches. Unless we search for God, and finding him, hold him fast, even the promises and plans of God are as dry ground to us, barren and profitless. But for those who will have it, there is a root in that dry ground which contains within itself the springing life that is to burst forth into the light of day, bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel, and causing, at last, the desire of all nations to come. To those who know these things, the dry ground has indeed become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.

(To be continued)

RACHEL AND THE STOLEN IMAGES

The story of Jacob's flight from his uncle Laban, when with wives, children and cattle, he determined to return to his own country, comes readily to mind and one remembers how Laban pursued the runaways greatly distressed at the loss of his images or "teraphim" which Rachel had stolen. Gen 31. 19 tells us "And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's". Rachel had the images, and Laban had to return home without having found them.

What were those images? Why did Rachel steal them, and why did Laban, going to shear his sheep, discover his loss and manifest such distress of mind?

It has been known for many years that these "teraphim" were miniature images of gods and were kept in the house to be a kind of guardian deity. They were thought to ward off evil and to keep the household in health. When any undertaking was planned special ceremonies were conducted before them, and thus Laban, prior to commencing his sheep shearing, which was always an important event, found to his dismay that the usual ceremonial could not be observed, for the deities of his household were gone.

The discoveries of recent years have given the clue to Rachel's object. Some years ago, research in Northern Mesopotamia revealed written records of a great nation which in Jacob's time occupied the region in which Laban and Jacob lived and kept their flocks. These people have been given the name

"Hurrians", and they are the same as the Horites and the Hivites of the Old Testament. Laban, living among them, was subject to their laws and must have adopted many of their customs. Among those laws there is one which states that possession of the family gods or "teraphim" entitled the holder to a son's share in the father's estate. Here then is the reason for Rachel's theft. By securing and retaining possession of Laban's teraphim she could justly demand a share in her father's property at his death. Doubtless she was anxious to provide for the future of her son Joseph, fearing that Jacob's other ten sons might deprive him of a share in Jacob's possessions. It may have been that the jealousy which was openly manifested in later years was present even then, and Rachel sought this means to ensure that her own son would not be "left penniless".

Her theft was of no avail. Soon afterwards Jacob commanded all the "strange gods"—"the teraphim"—in the hands of his people to be given up and had them buried; a sign that the old beliefs of Laban's house were banished for ever. (Gen. 35. 2-4). A little while longer and Rachel herself was dead. Neither was her scheming necessary, for Joseph became the most powerful man in the most powerful empire of his day—Prime Minister in the land of Egypt—and so far from losing his inheritance amongst his brethren, he became their preserver and the means of establishing Israel in the place where they grew into a great nation.

THE LIFTING UP OF JESUS

An exposition of
vital doctrine

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

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

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

These two texts are not harmonious if read in the light of orthodox teaching. The first indicates that God has provided a means of salvation, but that the onus of obtaining the same is put upon the one who sees himself smitten by sin and under sentence of death. He must do something himself if he is to obtain relief. The other text indicates something different, for it tells of an active work by Jesus which will result in his victory over all the forces which have hindered, and would hinder men from seeing him, and then obtaining those blessings which God has set in him. The first passage is the better known, and it has determined much of the theology of Christendom. Had the second been more properly understood the result would have been widely different.

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

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

provision for them, especially of the Manna, saying they would rather be in Egypt. God sent fiery serpents amongst them as a punishment. The fact was that many of that multitude who had been sentenced to wandering in the wilderness and to death some thirty-nine years before had not yet died, and now God brought them into tests which demonstrated that they were still of the same disobedient and unbelieving spirit which they had manifested a generation earlier, and which brought upon them that sentence of death in the wilderness. God had said: "*As truly as I live, your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness . . . doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb and Joshua*".

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

It was to this incident that Jesus referred when He said to Nicodemus: "*Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up*". There could be no special point in his referring to the lifting up of the serpent if He meant only the fact of his being put to death on a cross; evidently it was his intention to show that in his lifting up He, too, should be as one bearing sin. It is a graphic picture, but it tells as perhaps no other illustration could, not only of the fact of the ransom price being provided, but that the poison of sin can be eradicated, and the sufferer completely healed. God has provided not only for the forgiveness of the sinner, but also for the breaking of its power in the lives of those who accept the salvation He has provided in his Son. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.*" This text tells of the cost to God of his provision for human salvation. The Bible explains quite simply that the love of God was so great for mankind

that He gave his Son, the dearest treasure of his heart, His greatest gift, for its salvation. The sacrifice was great, but it was made greater by reason of the shameful death which was necessary, and the cost to the Son was great too, for He gave all He had, and for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might be rich. Not only did his future depend upon His fidelity when it was put to the test, but the way in which the sacrifice was to be made entailed great suffering. In his lifetime He was spoken of as in league with Satan, from whom it was said He received His power. At his trial He was called a blasphemer. These were dreadful and awful calumnies uttered by wicked men, but to be crucified as a sinner was far, far worse. Surely his Father would not permit this. He was so conscious of his own innocence; He had never caused His Father a moment's doubt or anxiety. He had been loyal to his task and faithful and trustful throughout. "I do always those things which please him" was His outspoken conviction. Why, then, should He go out of this life with such a stigma upon him? Branded as a sinner, would it not appear that Satan had won the contest and secured a notable triumph in His death? He had come to show how sin and death could be conquered, and should He, the would-be conqueror, succumb as a victim just as millions of the human race had done before him? Must He hang there, not only the object of men's hatred, but as a sinner in his Father's sight? No wonder He prayed so earnestly: "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me*". But so it was to be. Jesus, in the manner of his death, was to be made to appear as if He were a sinner.

After the resurrection of Jesus the proclamation that God had made him a Prince and a Saviour was made by the Apostles, and since then thousands have heard something of the righteousness in the earth, and that the power of sin would be broken, and all the forces of evil, which had kept men down, would then be restrained, and liberty to serve God and find eternal life would then be possible. He knew, too, that He would be chosen of the Father, even as now, to reveal unto men the beauty and grace of his character, but with this difference—that whereas now the spiritual perception of most men was so dulled by the poison of sin that understanding was impossible—then the blinded eyes should see, faculties so long blunted by human frailty would be awakened to full power, and not a handful only of Gentiles would be enquiring

for him, but the whole Gentile world would be drawn to Him, and He would teach them of the love of God for all men, for all the power of the Kingdom would be in His hands. Meanwhile, if it was his Father's will, Jesus was content to declare his message to the few. Now was the opportunity for him who hated his life in this world to secure the life eternal: *"If any man serve Me let him follow Me, and where I am there shall My servant be"*. While it was his Father's good pleasure that the door of opportunity should remain open, He must wait until his day should come to be lifted up in power and glory and establish His Kingdom.

Thus it is seen that the two texts considered

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

In the beginning

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In those few words is enshrined the story of countless ages. Long before man came into being, long before the infinite variety of animal and vegetable life which now inhabits this planet was brought forth, the work of God was going steadily forward. In the mighty crucible of Nature He was moulding and fashioning a fitting home for humanity, compelling the tremendous forces of the Universe to work together in slow but ceaseless motion until after the lapse of ages upon ages the angels looked down upon this solar system of ours with the parent sun majestic in the centre of its family of circling worlds.

The Earth was one of those worlds. Long epochs had yet to pass before even the humblest form of life could appear on its troubled surface. Great eruptions of Nature from within, avalanches and floods from above, all combined to keep this new world in a state of perpetual unrest. But eventually there came a time when the tumult was stilled, when the boiling seas subsided and the land had some measure of peace from warring elements, and in that eventful day life was born on earth.

No man saw it come. No human history can go back to those first beginnings when lowly creatures of the seashores were the lords of material creation. Long years afterward the chronicler wrote *"And God said, Let the waters bring the moving creature that hath life . . . and it was so."*

So passed the centuries, the millenniums,

the epochs during which God worked silently, in that orderly development which characterises all his works, preparing a home for a new creation which He purposed. At length the watching angels saw a new wonder at which they shouted aloud for joy. Beings—intelligent, perfect, capable of love and gratitude, worship and service—made to be the crowning glory of that creation which had taken so long a time to bring to this climax. *"The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy."* (Job 38. 6). With what serene pleasure must the Father have gazed upon the first material beings and foreseen the wonders of a future age when the earth shall be fully perfected, and when mankind shall have achieved the Divine ideal and attained to the image and likeness of God.

This blessed law of Christ, the Law of Love, should rule in all who have taken by consecration the name of Christ. Its hallowed influence should radiate from us, not only among the brethren, but also out upon the world, as a powerful witness to the effect of the grace of God in the heart. Thus we shall demonstrate to them that the love of God received into a life brings peace and harmony and happiness; that it makes noble, devoted, faithful husbands; more kind, loyal and tender wives; more obedient, loving children; more kind, good neighbours; and that it pours "oil on the troubled waters" of all our experiences, bringing blessing wherever it reaches.



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

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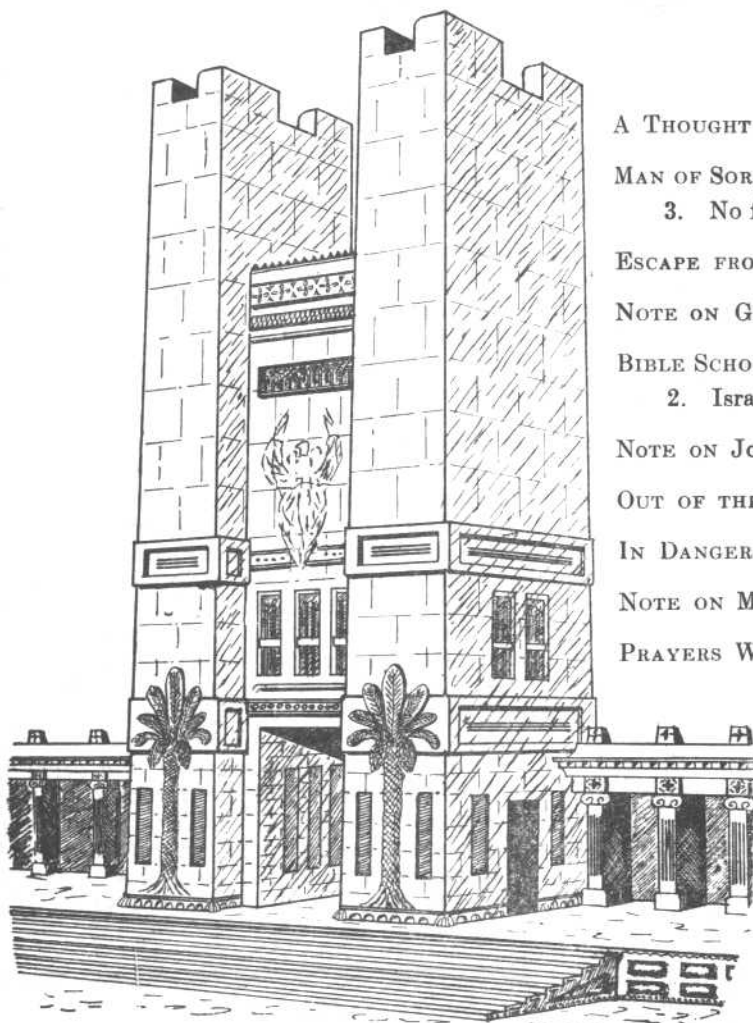
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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A Thought for the Month

"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 1. 13).

Throughout the ages the progress and development of Christianity has been marred by doctrinal strife. Intolerance, discord and persecution has stained many a fair page of the Church's history with its indelible markings. Men and women whose loyalty to the cause of Christ was beyond question have nevertheless so utterly failed to grasp the essence of Christian teaching that they have soured their lives and blemished their good works with the evil fruits of religious controversy. And realising, as one must do, that the seed of these things lies in individual conscientiousness and zeal for the Truth it is a matter for wonder that greater thought has not been and is not being given to the essential place of theological teaching in the Christian life. That it is an important—perhaps the most potent—of the external forces shaping and influencing our development cannot be denied. That it is of all aspects of our fellowship together the one most productive of misunderstanding, division, and the waxing cold of that love which constitutes the evidence that we have passed from death into life, is unhappily only too true. That we in this day have been blessed with an insight into the deep things of God far exceeding the portion of past generations is so tacitly accepted that the position is never questioned. Yet current thought still tends to gravitate to the extremes; we are told on the one hand that salvation comes by reason of an intellectual appreciation of true theology, and by means of which faith remains unshaken in the evil day; upon the other hand that doctrinal understanding is of such relatively little importance that nothing more than a mental acceptance of Jesus Christ, coupled with a life

of good works, is asked of those who would follow in the steps of the Master.

Somewhere between these extremes the truth must lie, and it is with sober and reverent minds that we should enquire, first as individuals, and then in communal discussion, if we are to occupy our rightful place as ambassadors for Christ to this generation. The Apostle Paul, writing to his son-in-the-faith Timothy, leaves us in no doubt as to his own outlook on the matter. *"If anyone . . . will not give his mind to wholesome precepts—I mean those of our Lord Jesus Christ—and to good religious teaching, I call him a pompous ignoramus. He is morbidly keen on mere verbal questions and quibbles, which give rise to jealousy, quarrelling, slander, base suspicions, and endless wrangles; all typical of men who have let their reasoning powers become atrophied and have lost grip of the truth."* (1 Tim. 6. 3-5 N.E.B.). That is all too often where the doctrinal enthusiast finishes—the doctrinal enthusiast, that is, who finds no place for the other side of the Christian way. That other side is defined by St. Paul in this same passage *"Pursue justice, piety, fidelity, love, fortitude and gentleness. Run the great race of faith and lay hold of eternal life. For to this you were called . . . Turn a deaf ear to empty and worldly chatter, and the contradictions of so-called 'knowledge', for many who lay claim to it have shot wide of the faith."*

Gone from us

Sis. A. Firmstone (Tewkesbury)
Bro. F. Stratton (Reading)

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

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

Part 3. No form nor comeliness

"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." (vs. 2).

This is the idealised form, comeliness, beauty, of the Messianic King of Jewish hopes, that the prophet declares is absent from the Man who has at last fulfilled the prophecy. It is manifestly illogical to take these words as descriptive of our Lord's personal appearance when one remembers that He was humanly perfect as was Adam before his transgression, and that the physical aspect of Jesus must have been one of overpowering beauty and majesty. It is unthinkable that the Son of God should walk this earth in any form other than one suited to the fact that He was indeed the Son of God. It is a significant fact that the alleged descriptions of Jesus dating from the days of the Early Church all present Him as possessed of grace and beauty; it was not until later centuries, when the dark influence of a gloomy asceticism was fastening itself upon the Church, that the conception of Jesus as physically unlovely and even repulsive took the lead, and texts like this were taken out of their poetic setting and interpreted in a grossly literal sense.

The glory of Jesus was not of this world. That was the great truth over which Israel stumbled and fell and that is why they saw no beauty in Him to desire. A king must, in their eyes, be possessed of outward majesty and glory; he must be arrayed in costly raiment and flashing jewels; he must have courtiers and servants and a shouting crowd to attend him wherever he went. There were three things, yea, four, said the Wise Man in Proverbs, which "go well" and are "comely in going". A lion, which is strongest among beasts, took his admiration; a greyhound, a he-goat, and a king, "against whom there is no rising up". (Prov. 30. 29-31). He looked on the outward appearance and marvelled at the strength of the lion, the speed of the greyhound, the irresistible force of the he-goat, and the power of the king. These things, he said, are "comely"—but there was none of that comeliness in the demeanour and the life of the Prince of Peace.

Neither was there the kingly glory and power which shall in truth be manifested in the days of the Kingdom. *"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory*

and majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness" (Psa. 45. 3-4) are words spoken of this One Who "had no form nor comeliness", but they are words which wait yet for their fulfilment. Isaiah saw in vision the glory of Lebanon, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, resplendent earthly reflections of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God (Isa. 35. 2) but that again was a vision of the far-distant future, and there was no glory of Lebanon and no excellency of Carmel and Sharon when the Man of Galilee climbed their slopes and wended his way through their valleys. The time for his glory had not then come and there was no reflection of that glory on the earth, and so it was that men, gazing upon him, saw no form nor comeliness, no beauty that could make Him desirable in their eyes.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (vs. 3).

This is the most bitter prophecy of the Old Testament. From the very beginning, when amid the loveliness of Eden the first guilty pair stood and heard the sad tones of God passing sentence, there had always been the promise of a coming Redeemer. It is fairly evident from Eve's words at the birth of Seth that when Cain was born she had seen in that, to her, wonderful event the fulfilment, or beginning of fulfilment, of the Divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. That early hope was dashed when Cain became a murderer and was banished from the company of peace-loving men; but with the coming of Seth the hope revived, and from that time onwards the world was never without those who looked for the coming of the Deliverer. The ancient mythologies of Babylon, reaching back to the shadowy times before Abraham, pagan though they were, show unmistakable traces of the belief, persisting even though men's ideas of God had become woefully distorted. When Abraham made his bold venture of faith and left his native country for the land of promise, it was because he believed in the Coming One, and so to him came the promise that in his own seed would the word be fulfilled and deliverance come. Throughout Israel's long history

the flame of expectation never died down; always were they a people chosen by the Lord to hail and receive the Deliverer when He should appear, and under his leadership become a light to the nations, to declare his salvation to the ends of the earth. That was the hope that kept them separate from the nations around them, that held them, despite their many shortcomings and failures, a people for a purpose, fashioned and developed by virtue of many and varied national experiences for the part they would be called upon to play when Messiah should appear.

And to Isaiah fell the bitterness of proclaiming in advance that it was all to be of no avail, that when the supreme moment of Israel's existence had arrived, they would turn away from the Deliverer and fail at the very moment of achievement. He would be despised and rejected of men, and all the glorious things associated with his Advent vanish away like the morning mists. They would fail to recognise the time of their visitation, and the magnificent opportunity pass them by forever—for even then the Divine sentence was in process of formulation "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof".

The fulfilment of the prophecy is too well known to need detailed exposition. Jesus was in truth despised and rejected of men, and had the fate of the Kingdom of God rested with the ecclesiastical leaders and the political rulers and the bulk of the ordinary people of the First Advent, then that Kingdom indeed was doomed. But in his infinite wisdom God has entrusted the destinies of his outworking Plan, not to the great and the wise and those chosen by popular acclaim, but ever and always to an inconspicuous and uninfluential minority who at certain times in earth's history have been called "the Remnant". A remnant they have truly been, on more than one occasion when the earth has been all but in darkness and it has seemed as though the Plan of God was sinking into irretrievable ruin; but always there has been new life springing out from that remnant, a revival of God's work in the midst of the years, and an upsurge of spiritual vitality that has carried the Plan of God into another phase and another dispensation. So it was when Jesus was despised and rejected by the many; there were a few who did accept Him and did realise that his coming meant salvation for the world, in due time. And from the hearts' loyalty and lives' devotion of those few is born all that we possess or know of Christian faith and

hope to-day.

The story is not ended yet. It is still possible to despise and reject him. Even to-day the worldly wise and great and influential, the leaders and the controllers of this world, like their prototypes of two thousand years ago, do not understand and have no use for the teachings of the Man of Nazareth. The popular voice is no more disposed to consider his claims than it was then. If we would be of those whom God will use to carry the interests of his Kingdom into the next Dispensation, we also must reconcile ourselves to being of the "Remnant". But even so we may yet fail to retain the coveted honour.

Those who despised and rejected Jesus at the First Advent, and were in consequence themselves rejected, were not so judged because of lack of knowledge, or unsoundness of theological outlook. On matters of the Law, and of doctrine, and of righteousness before God, the scribes and Pharisees had much in common with Jesus. He certainly condemned them for their narrowness and rigidity in the interpretation of the Mosaic Law but He did not dispute the soundness of the theological ground upon which they stood. It was not their orthodoxy or their beliefs which cost them the Kingdom; it was their failure to appreciate and manifest and practice the mind of God—which in our day we would call the spirit of Christ—that led to their rejection and thrusting out from the Kingdom. "Go ye, and learn what that means, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice'." That was the stumbling-stone. They despised and rejected Jesus because He manifested a spirit of love and tolerance and mercy, and with all their doctrinal orthodoxy they could find no room for those virtues. So they rejected Him, arrogantly, scornfully, and at the end, maliciously; and so He in turn rejected them, sadly, regretfully, but firmly.

So it will be with us. Like Paul, the most intellectually minded of all the apostles, we may understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, but without love it profits us nothing. If we refuse to have our lives guided by love, tolerance, and mercy, and insist instead upon the empty shibboleths of intellectual understanding and a mechanical memorising of Scriptural doctrines, we shall without any doubt at all end up where the Pharisees did—outside the Kingdom. Our Lord will be just as sad and regretful as He was in the case of the Pharisees, but He will be just as firm. The Millennial work of the future needs many qualifications, some of them of a nature that

cannot be learned out of a book. Unless we have well learned, and practiced in our own lives, that spirit which pervaded the life of Christ we shall not be fitted for the Church's future work, and it will become true of us as it was of them "the Kingdom of God is taken from you". We also shall have become of those who "despised and rejected" him.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (vs. 4).

This is the first of three verses each of which affirm most definitely the substitutionary character of our Lord's sufferings. It was not just that He endured similar sufferings to those of mankind. It was that He did in truth take upon himself the sufferings that men ought to have endured. This is not a popular doctrine nowadays. Men prefer to think of Jesus—if they think of him at all—as an example, a mentor, a Leader Who shows the way, One of Whom they can speak admiringly or respectfully as pre-eminent, but they do not like to acknowledge that He endured sufferings that are rightfully theirs, that they are under that kind of obligation to him. Men do not care to admit that they are sinners, and especially do they object to admitting that they are helpless sinners, and that only Christ can lift them out of that hopeless state. It is not unusual to see a very small and perhaps obstinate child refuse its father's proffered assistance in its efforts to walk, and insist on taking a few tottering steps by itself. That may be a good thing in the case of a child learning to toddle, but it is not a good thing for a man who needs to walk in absolute righteousness before God.

One might very properly ask at this point in what way was it that Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows? Men in all ages have had plenty of their own which they have had perforce to bear and it is self-evident that Jesus did not carry the griefs and sorrows of mankind to the extent that they had none themselves to endure. The cynic might well suggest that if Jesus had never lived the nett difference to any man in this respect would not have been noticeable. The truth of the matter is that all grief and sorrow arises from the presence of sin, and it was man who sinned and men who continue to sin. Hence that which Jesus undeniably did bear was rightfully the responsibility of men, for Jesus himself knew no sin. As one translator puts it "It was *our* griefs he bore, it was *our* sorrows he carried". That reflection leads us to the realisation of another fact, that the sin of man

has consequences which cannot be confined to the sinning one. The fathers eat sour grapes, but they are the children's teeth which are set on edge. It is when men comprehend that fundamental truth that they will understand why God has decreed righteousness the law of his creation and has outlawed sin. It is then that they will understand why Jesus bore their griefs and carried their sorrows. He, the sinless One, living in a sinful world, willingly sharing in all its life and all its affairs, could do nothing else but take upon himself that share of the world's distress. It is when men realise that, that they will come with breaking hearts to acknowledge their own unworthiness and to render their allegiance to him. "In all things" says the writer to the Hebrews "it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

And He still bears our griefs, still carries our sorrows! Does anybody imagine that because He has now been exalted "higher than all heavens", resplendent in the glory of his spiritual nature, that He no longer feels the woes of men here on earth in the flesh? The parable of the lost sheep should quickly refute any such reasoning. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, as Jesus did declare, then surely there must be abiding sorrow over the sinners who have not yet repented. It is true, of course, that Jesus no longer bears the sin of man in a sacrificial sense, for all that was finished at the Cross, but it must be true that He still takes upon himself the burden of our griefs and sorrows and gives us instead, if we will, that strength and consolation which can come only from him. That was his mission from the start and remains his ministry, to bind-up the broken-hearted, to comfort all that mourn, to pour in the oil of joy in exchange for mourning, to give the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. We ought to bear in mind that in taking upon himself the burden of the world's distress our Lord did not assume it merely for the short space of three and a half years whilst He walked as a Man upon earth. He took it for all the time that had and has yet to elapse before sin and the results of sin are forever banished from the earth. Throughout all this present Gospel Age He has carried the griefs and sorrows of all his disciples and been to

them a Shepherd and an Elder Brother, guiding and guarding them in times of difficulty and danger, consoling and cheering them in times of distress and tragedy. In the next Age, the Millennial Age, there will be griefs and sorrows, also, as men and women find for themselves that the consequences of their past lives of sin weigh them down like the heavy burden carried by the hero of *"Pilgrim's Progress"*, until, like Christian in that immortal allegory, they cast it down at the foot of the Cross where Jesus stands waiting to bear it on their behalf. How could He be a merciful and sympathetic High Priest in that glorious Age if He did not remove the burden from humanity's shoulders and assume it himself, if He himself is not affected by the effects of sin in the lives of those to whom He has become a Mediator and whom He is trying to lead up the Highway of Holiness to full reconciliation with God? Surely this fourth verse of Isaiah's fifty-third chapter must be in process of fulfilment through all the long centuries, all the time that any of those for whom Christ died are still weighed down with the grief and sorrow that comes because of sin.

These things must be true of the Church also. Those who are the Master's disciples now, consecrated to his service, trusting in his promise that if faithful they will one day share with him in his glory and be manifested with him to raise fallen mankind up to the glorious liberty of the children of God; what of these? They also will bear the griefs and sorrows of mankind in that day. They also will be merciful and sympathetic priests, able to help and guide the willing of earth's unfortunates, able because they themselves have passed this way before. It is a solemn thought, that we cannot be of use to our Lord in that future unless we have in this life been made perfect through suffering as He was. That does not necessarily mean a life of physical suffering, nor yet of mental suffering, although something of both does usually enter into the experience of each disciple. It does mean suffering in the sense that we have shared in the griefs and sorrows of this sin-sick world, that in our own small way we have followed in the footsteps of our Saviour and been as He was in the world. We too must enter into the world's distress and feel deeply for all men in their sorrows if we are to be of the character needed in that day. Do our hearts ache for the injustice and oppression that comes before our notice every day? Do our minds cry out in protest at some flagrant example of misery or cruelty inflicted perhaps by heartless men or

soulless institutions and governments? Do we long for the wisdom and the power to go out into the world bringing happiness and health where now there is sorrow and sickness? These are the things that must possess our inward being like a burning fire if we will be of those who in the next Age will come forth armed with all wisdom and power to do these very things. To-day they are considered by men as signs of weakness, for love and mercy and well-doing are despised and the contrary attributes of selfishness and callousness exalted as desirable standards by which to live. So it is that in this day, as in that of Isaiah, the one who carries the burden of others is despised as one to whom even God is indifferent. Men in Jesus' day could not understand how such an One could enjoy the favour of God whilst bereft of all outward indication of Divine favour. They looked upon his life, spent chiefly among the outcasts and the poor, the uninfluential in earth's affairs, and his death, that of a common criminal, without any kind of spectacular deliverance such as the past heroes of their own history, such as Daniel, Job, Joseph, had experienced, and they could only esteem him stricken and smitten, deserted by God. They were quite incapable of comprehending how God could possibly be interested in such an one. God was, to them, a militant, war loving God, indulgent to his own people and a relentless foe to his enemies, justifying his worshippers on the basis of correctly performed ritual and sacrifice and condemning all others on account of failure to observe the Law. Temporal welfare and the favour of God went hand in hand, and the manifest disfavour of God could only mean that there was wickedness in the object of disfavour. Small wonder that, looking on the Man of Sorrows and seeing nothing of the spiritual glory, they esteemed him "stricken and afflicted of God".

(To be continued)

Although there must be trying experiences, there is also possible to us a great joy as we realise how we may have partnership with our Lord's sufferings, — broken with Him — with the knowledge and anticipation of being raised with Him to co-operate in His future work of blessing. *"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8. 18). *"If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him"* (2 Tim. 2. 11).

ESCAPE FROM DAMASCUS

A story of
St. Paul

A ripple of indignation passed over the synagogue. This man was voicing the most outrageous heresies. It was not that he had espoused the cause of the crucified Nazarene; these orthodox Jews of Damascus knew that several prominent Pharisees of Jerusalem had already done that, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, Jerusalem Pharisees both and members of the Sanhedrin, had acknowledged their belief in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. For all its bigotry and formalism, organised Judaism allowed considerable latitude in matters of belief to the individual, and it was possible to be a passive believer in Christ without risking excommunication or loss of office. At Jerusalem in fact, a *"great company of the priests were obedient"* to the new faith (Acts 6. 7). But no one had as yet suggested this to be anything else than another new sect of Judaism; a few peculiarities, an undue and altogether mistaken reverence for the man who had been crucified, but, now that he himself was safely out of the way, not likely to threaten any established institution. The top ecclesiastics in Jerusalem, the High Priest, the Sanhedrin and some of the more prominent Scribes and Pharisees, seemed most unaccountably disturbed over the development and were doing all they could to suppress it, but really these Jews who accepted the claims of Jesus seemed in all other respects orthodox enough; they upheld the law of Moses and refused to have anything to do with Gentiles. They kept the feast days and observed the usual customs. So far as the synagogues up and down the land went there was nothing to bar a "follower of the Way", as they called themselves, from participating in the worship or taking a leading part. But this man was going beyond all that others of the persuasion had heretofore practised, and beyond all the bounds of decency. The Galilean disciples had proclaimed, as the basis of their faith, their belief that they had seen the crucified Jesus walking the earth after his death, talking with them, eating with them, and behaving generally as a man behaves, a thesis which could be tolerated on the basis that Elisha had been known to restore a man to life and what had happened once could happen again. Saul the Pharisee had shifted the grounds of argument to something much more dangerous; he claimed to have seen this same Jesus resplendent in heavenly glory, standing at the right

hand of power, and was making it all too obvious that the new faith so far as he was concerned was not going to be a divergent sect of Judaism but was going to challenge Judaism, overthrow it and supersede it. They were compelled to sit in their own synagogue and listen while the man before them *"preached Christ that he is the Son of God"* (Acts 9. 10).

This was quite a departure in Christian evangelism. Peter and John and the others in their public ministry had not stressed the Divine Sonship of Christ; rather they had dwelt upon his office as the Divine Messenger, the One that should come. *"This man hath God raised up"* they said. God had exalted him to be a Prince and Saviour. He was the foretold prophet like unto Moses; when they did use the term "Son" they softened the effect by referring to him as *"his Son Jesus"* without any inherent suggestion of Divinity. Perhaps at that early stage they had hardly grasped the deeper truth themselves. But Saul had. His experience on the Damascus road, coupled with three years' study and meditation away in Arabia, had shown him in crystal clarity that this One who appeared on earth in form as a man and after his death as a man had revealed himself in glory from his resumed station at the right hand of God could be no other than the pre-human Word, the manifestation of God to man, the heavenly Son of God. Upon that basis Saul built his message and his listeners knew that here was a challenge to their whole system of belief and way of life, and they bristled with anger.

Neither indignation nor anger availed them against the remorseless logic of the arguments which Saul had at his command. The word used in Acts 9. 22 *"proving that this is very Christ"* comes from a root implying the accurate and intimate fitting of one part to another; in this connection it describes the building of conclusions upon arguments, the erection of doctrines upon underlying theses. Without doubt Saul brought to bear all his own not inconsiderable knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures, and when to that was added the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit by which he was guided the result was a dynamic which could not be resisted. Even before his conversion Saul would have been a formidable antagonist to engage in debate, but now there was more than a keen, intellectual

mind buttressed by the gift of rhetoric and profound knowledge of the subject. Behind Saul stood his unseen Master, imparting to him, a spiritual discernment and a force of conviction which nothing in Damascus could hope to withstand. So the more extreme among the leading Pharisees and Scribes plotted to solve the problem by deliberately encompassing Saul's death.

How the assassination was planned to be carried out is not stated. Saul became apprised of the conspiracy—he knew his men well and was probably only too familiar with similar schemings in previous days—and decided that it was time to leave Damascus. To do so openly was impossible; the city gates were being watched and Damascus was completely surrounded by a high wall. The Christians were equal to the occasion; dwelling-houses joined to the inside, with windows piercing the wall, were not uncommon. Through such a window the Apostle was put and lowered to the ground outside; thus alone and without possessions, in the darkness of the night, he stole away from the city and headed on foot towards Jerusalem.

This was not the return journey he had planned. More than three years previously he had set out from Jerusalem expecting to be back in a few weeks at the head of a procession of captives, entering the city amid the plaudits and congratulations of the ruling officials and doubtless in expectation of further honours to be bestowed in recognition of his services. Now he was making his way back alone, unknown and unrecognised, with small prospect of any better treatment at Jerusalem than he had received at Damascus. In all this experience Saul must have perceived the Divine law of retribution in operation. He condemned Stephen for declaring that he beheld heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; he saw the same thing himself not many weeks later. He went to Damascus the persecutor; he left Damascus persecuted. He purposed to take Christians bound to Jerusalem for punishment; he began to realise now that in all probability bonds and imprisonment were to be his own lot before Jerusalem had finished with him. But he did not falter; he knew that his path must inevitably take him to Jerusalem. His departure from Damascus was not a flight; he journeyed now to meet the next stage of his experience as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

That experience opened with a crushing disappointment. Of course Saul expected to be

cold-shouldered by his former friends and associates. He was to them a renegade, a traitor, and they wanted nothing more to do with him. His career lay in ruins, his reputation and influence gone, and no door even of hospitality open to him. He entered Jerusalem penniless, friendless, alone, without even knowing where he would lay his head that night. But he must have consoled himself with the thought that he could claim the fellowship and hospitality of his brethren in the faith, those whom once he persecuted but now recognised as fellow believers. He thought of the friendliness and Christian love extended him by Ananias and his fellows at Damascus, their solicitude for his safety, and zeal in aiding his escape from that city, and he must have looked forward to a similar fellowship in Jerusalem. So immediately upon his arrival *"he assayed to join himself to the disciples"* and in that effort, educated and shrewd man of the world that he was, manifested an unexpected ignorance of human nature. Even although the bitterness and terror of his persecuting was three years in the past, how could he have expected them to receive him? He had no sponsors; none to speak for him or endorse his claim to discipleship. The story of his conversion three years previously would certainly have come back to Jerusalem and be known to the brethren, but Damascus was a great distance away and how could they be sure they had the story aright? *Much more likely that this was a trap of some kind into which they could easily fall and be taken. So "they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple"*.

Did that bitter experience break down the last remnant of the one-time arrogant Pharisee's personal pride and self-will, and bow him to the dust that he might become the submissive bond-slave of Jesus Christ for ever? It was now three years since he had seen the vision and counted himself commissioned an ambassador for Christ, and what had he achieved? His preaching at Damascus had ended in an ignominious flight from the city; a similar endeavour to preach to the Jewish upper classes here in Jerusalem was clearly out of the question; now even the believers themselves wanted nothing to do with him. Not only was there no shelter for his body, there was no prospect of an opening for the exercise of his mind and his talents in the one cause which meant anything to him. Discouragement and frustration oppressed his mind; the work of three years appeared to have been wasted, and to a man in his middle

thirties three years is a long time when that man is aching to make of his life a thing mighty in the service of the purposes of God.

This was Paul's darkest hour and the dawn was not far away. Seemingly by accident, but of course in Divine Providence, and without doubt precisely at God's appointed time, he met an old acquaintance, Joseph Barnabas, himself a Christian and well known to the Christian community in Jerusalem. Where and how these two men first met is not known; Barnabas hailed from Cyprus which is not far from Saul's birthplace, Tarsus, and Barnabas could probably in earlier days have had business on the mainland which would take him to Tarsus and in such case he would certainly have contacted the Jewish colony there and could thus have known the youthful Saul. Barnabas was one of the earliest converts after Pentecost and was in Jerusalem at the time—Acts 4. 36 records how he sold his land and donated the proceeds to the needs of the fellowship—so that it is perhaps more likely he was in Damascus during Saul's sojourn in that city and knew him there; he appears from Acts 9. 27 to have been quite well-informed on the details of Saul's conversion and work at Damascus. At any rate, Barnabas proved a real friend in need; he took Saul to the apostles and certified his sincerity. With that recommendation the church was content to receive the newcomer into their fellowship and Saul found at last the haven his soul desired.

He only stayed in Jerusalem fifteen days (Gal. 1. 18). Saul's turbulent spirit, allied with his irrepressible zeal, quickly got him into trouble with the Jews, and here again, as at Damascus, they plotted to kill him. Once more he had to flee for his life; once more the brethren rallied round to assist him and got him away to the seacoast where he could get a boat to his native Tarsus. It is possible that the Christians at Jerusalem were not altogether sorry to see the back of their rather embarrassing new convert; they had been enjoying a relatively peaceful time, free from persecution, prior to Saul's arrival, and the commotion he was creating in the city was not likely to be appreciated by these who knew what persecution meant. St. Luke was probably quite unconscious of a certain unintended humour in his narrative when immediately after his account of how the brethren succeeded in getting Saul out of the country, he says, "*then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria . . .*" (Acts 9. 30-31). Really the brethren had seen

very little of Saul; he says himself that he only saw Peter and James the half brother of Jesus among the leaders. Peter seems to have given him the hospitality of his own home and the two men must have had much to say to each other. Saul must have learned a lot about the Lord's life and sayings from Peter on this occasion, and fifteen days seems a remarkably brief time for Saul to confer with him and also whip up Jewish opposition to the point of plotting his death. Perhaps as the boat sailed away from Judea he reflected that twice now his life had been saved by men and women whom once he had persecuted unto the death; he was being given a lesson on returning good for evil.

So, for the second time, Saul was to be laid aside from the work he had been commissioned to carry out, remaining quietly at Tarsus, learning to wait upon his Lord for instruction and guidance, wondering probably why he seemed so definitely to be obstructed and frustrated in every endeavour to commence the work to which he had been called. Maybe a lesser man would have grown tired of it all by now and concluded that he was not really called to this work after all, and turned aside to some other interest. Not so Saul; the vision he had seen on that memorable occasion outside Damascus remained with him still; he knew on whom he had believed, and waited now in quiet submission for the summons to action which he felt sure would eventually come. And although he could not possibly have known it at the time, forces were already in operation in a completely new centre of missionary activity that would very shortly demand of him all that he had to give. Those few months in Tarsus were the last quiet, peaceful days the great Apostle was ever to know.

(To be continued)

Study will not suffice for the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures. We must entreat God day and night, that the Lion of the tribe of Judah may come to us and deign to open the seal of the Book.

Origen.

It is in prayer that God shows his face to His children, that they have visions of His beauty, and glory, that the sweet things of His love come down as gifts into their hearts, and that they are transformed into His likeness.

A NOTE ON GEN. 1.6-8

In the second creative day God made what Genesis 1. 6-8 calls the "firmament" the expanse of air which surrounds the earth. The Hebrew word is *raqia*, which means something stretched and beaten out, as a piece of gold beaten out into a thin wide sheet, or a veil stretched out over an empty place. The A.V. term comes from the Vulgate, and is the Latin "*firmamentum*", meaning something solid or firm; this was due to the early belief that the sky was a solid vault in which the sun, moon and stars were fixed and which had portals through which the winds could blow upon the earth. Yet there is wonderful truth in the Genesis record. The firmament or atmosphere was to divide the waters below from the waters above. It is a familiar sight to watch the rain clouds sail by floating upon the upper air like ships on the sea; it is not always so easily recognised what colossal forces are involved. The amount of water vapour carried by the atmosphere over each square mile of the earth's surface amounts to the staggering total of 70,000 tons. If it all came down at once there would be some extensive floods, but no, the air holds it up and allows that which is necessary for the welfare of the world to come down as rain. Truly Job said "*dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge . . . hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, as a molten looking-glass*" (mirror)—Job 37. 16-18. The air we breathe is so familiar a thing that we do not stop to consider how vital it is to life and what evidence there is of Divine planning in its provision. There is just a sufficiently thick belt of it around the earth to suit the needs of man and all animals. Two miles up breathing becomes difficult; at an altitude of

six or seven miles human life is impossible without artificial aids. We must live, and move, and have our being in this close compass. And yet this atmosphere of ours is enough to shield us from so many natural forces which would otherwise harm or destroy us. Cosmic rays, reaching us from outer space, would speedily destroy all life upon earth were it not for the atmosphere which captures and renders them harmless before reaching the ground. Meteors and shooting stars are burned up and disintegrated by the air long before they reach the earth's surface—just as well, for every day some twenty-five million meteors, mostly tiny ones, enter the earth's atmosphere and unless burned up would finish on the surface of the earth. The air tempers the sun's heat by day and conserves it by night; without it we should be alternately scorched and frozen. It provides oxygen for men and animals to breathe and carbon dioxide for plants to take. It was when air was breathed into Adam's nostrils that his bodily organism went into action and he awoke and became a living soul. It is when a man's breath goeth forth that he returns to his earth and in that very day his thoughts perish (Psa. 146. 4). The air is the vehicle of natural life to man; in just the same way the Holy Spirit is the vehicle of Divinely given life to man. It is not without reason that the Hebrew word *ruach* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *pneuma* in the New Testament mean both breath and spirit. In the minds of the inspired writers there was no real difference. The life that is in man, although outwardly sustained by the air around us, is also sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. In him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28).

He has chosen us to be his ambassadors in the world, invested with power to speak and act for Him, and to draw upon all his resources. An ambassador is one of the most important officers of the Crown. To be successful he must be able to let his own personality and his own thoughts and opinions sink into the background, so that he may be open-minded, able to place himself in another's position and see things through his eyes. His first concern must be to know his King, so that he may get a clear conception of his mind, the direction of his thoughts and desires, so that he can

identify himself with his royal master; because in the capacity of his representative at the foreign court, his sovereign will be identified with him. The power of the King, the resources of the King are behind him, as long as he faithfully represents him. And he must have complete faith in the King and also in his resources. Doubt anywhere would hinder, perhaps ruin his chances of success, for if he doubted he would not be able to speak with that assurance which creates confidence.

From "Evidences of things not seen"

BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

EXODUS

Part 2. Israel in Egypt

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND. The first two chapters of Exodus cover the period between the death of Joseph shortly after the entry into Egypt, and the eightieth year of Moses' life when as a shepherd in Midian he received the Divine call to return and lead Israel to the "Promised Land". The events of this period include the birth of Moses, his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter, his forty years at the royal court and forty years more as a shepherd in Midian, all against the background of Israel's oppression.

The interval between these two points of time, and therefore the number of years the Israelites dwelt in Egypt, is a matter of debate and cannot be said to have been decided beyond all possibility of doubt. Logical deductions from the Bible go to show that it was a period of either 215 or 430 years; the latter figure is stated in the Authorised Version of the Book of Exodus but there are arguments against the generally accepted reading of the text. The point is not of great importance to the general reader but it is to those interested in the relation between the Bible and history, and especially to students of Bible chronology. Among the latter, discussion and dispute have endured almost since the beginning of the Age, but it is only during the last thirty years or so that increasing knowledge of Egyptian history has thrown real light upon the problem.

Exodus does not name any reigning monarch, known or unknown to history, or contain any definite statement which ties the events it records to any particular period in history. Reference is made (1. 8) to a "new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph", one who became an oppressor, and also (2. 5) to the "daughter of Pharaoh", without giving their names. Several cities or places are mentioned (Pithom, Raamses, Succoth, Etham, Pi-hahiroth, Baal-zephon, Elim) but the dates of the founding of such of these as can be identified are either not known with sufficient certainty or go back too far in history to afford any guidance. Apart from chronological indications in the Bible, correlation of the narrative with known ancient history is all that yields any basis for conclusions.

Several Biblical chronological indications

exist, as follows:—Exod. 12. 40-41 "*The sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years . . . that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.*" Gal. 3. 17 "*This I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul.*" (The law was given at Sinai three months after the Exodus but St. Paul here dates the commencement of the four hundred and thirty years, not at the entry into Egypt, but from the covenant with Abraham some two centuries earlier).

Gen. 15. 13-16 "*He (God) said unto Abram, know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years . . . but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again.*"

Acts 7. 6 "*And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years*" (Stephen here is quoting the Genesis passage).

1 Kings 6. 1 "*. . . in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign . . . he began to build the house of the Lord.*"

Num. 13. 22 "*Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.*"

There is a fundamental difference between the Masoretic text, on which the A.V. is based, and the other two great versions, the Septuagint and the Samaritan. The latter renders Exod. 12. 40 "*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, and of their fathers which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.*" This includes in the period of "sojourning" the times of the fathers of Israel, i.e. Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, and the place of "sojourning" covers Canaan in addition to Egypt. The Alexandrian Septuagint has the same rendering; the Vatican Septuagint has "in the land of Canaan" but omits "and of their fathers". Since the Septuagint was the version in common use in the days of

St. Paul, his application of Exod. 12. 40 to the period from the covenant with Abraham to the Exodus is probably taken from that. It is true that the patriarchs were "strangers and sojourners" in the land of Canaan (Gen. 23. 4; Gen. 47. 9; Heb. 11. 13) so that the Samaritan and Septuagint rendering is reasonable.

The Genesis statement is equally ambiguous. *"Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years . . . but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again."* (Gen. 15. 13-16). This seems on the surface to predict a four hundred years' affliction in Egypt itself, during which there would be a time lapse of four generations only. Stephen at his trial used this passage, rendering it more emphatically *"... they should bring them into bondage and entreat them evil four hundred years."* (Acts 7. 6). It must be noted that in no event can the "affliction" possibly be extended to a duration of four centuries; the early years in Egypt were spent in prosperity under the favour of the reigning Pharaohs. It was only following the death of Joseph and his generation, at the very least nearly a century after the settlement in Egypt, that the "new king" arose, who "knew not Joseph", and the times of affliction began. On this account it has been felt by many scholars that the four hundred years is not intended to denote the duration of the affliction, but the period of the entire "sojourning". "Strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall serve them, and they shall afflict them; four hundred years." There was no punctuation in the original Hebrew so that this arrangement of the sentence is just as likely to represent the sense as that now appearing in the A.V. Since there was a lapse of 25 years between Abraham's entry into Canaan, when God made the promise, and Isaac's birth, 60 from thence to the birth of Jacob, and 130 for Jacob's age at the entry to Egypt, there are 215 left for the sojourn in Egypt. The problem to be solved is therefore whether Israel's residence in Egypt was 430 or 215 years.

The notable increase in knowledge which has characterised research into Egyptian history during the past forty years throws a great deal of light upon the subject. It used to be thought that the Exodus probably took place during the 19th Egyptian dynasty and that the Pharaoh of the Oppression was Rameses II (1301-1234 B.C.), his son Merneptah being the one under whom the Exodus took place. It is now known quite definitely

that the Israelites had become well established in Canaan by the time of Merneptah and the investigations of many men in many fields have related the events of the Book of Exodus to the time of the 18th dynasty, the great conqueror Thothmes III (1501-1447 BC) being the Pharaoh of the Oppression and his son Amenhetep II (1447-1423 BC) the one who was compelled to "let the people go". Prof. Garstang's investigations at Jericho some thirty years ago set the seal upon this conclusion and the fact of the Exodus having taken place at or about 1440 B.C. is now generally accepted.

This brings 1 Kings 6. 1 into line. The Exodus is there stated to have been 480 years before the commencement of Solomon's temple in the fourth year of his reign. Solomon ascended the throne of Israel around 961-969 B.C. so that his fourth year is near enough to the time indicated.

It is not so easy to fix the date that Jacob and Joseph came into Egypt. The general background of the latter part of Genesis favours the view that the rulers of Lower Egypt at the time were the Semitic Hyksos (miscalled "Shepherd Kings") who invaded Egypt from Syria, ruled for about a hundred years, and were expelled by native Egyptian warrior-kings. The Hyksos regime began about 1670 B.C. and ended about 1570 B.C. On this showing the Israelites could not have dwelt in Egypt for much more than two centuries, so that the shorter period of 215 would appear to be the more likely. Fortunately, there is one apparently casual reference in Genesis which affords a positive clue. When, in the story of the twelve "spies" sent to reconnoitre the Promised Land, during the journey to Canaan after the Exodus, the narrative tells of their coming to Hebron (Num. 14. 22) the chronicler interjects a casual remark by way of explanation, *"Now Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt."* It seems a pointless remark, of no particular interest, and yet it is the one Biblical clue to the date of Jacob's descent into Egypt that we have.

Zoan is the name given in the Old Testament to the Hyksos capital in Egypt, known to history as Tanis. This fortified city was built in the eastern Nile delta near the sea, almost at the entry to Egypt from Syria and Canaan, and from here the Hyksos Pharaohs ruled Egypt. It must have been to Tanis that Joseph was brought as a slave and where he afterwards rose to power. It was Tanis to which the sons of Jacob came to buy corn and

to which Jacob came at the last. The land of Goshen, in which the sons of Jacob settled and multiplied, lay around the city to the east and south. It is recorded that Tanis was founded by Salitis, the first Hyksos Pharaoh, at a date which is believed to be about 1675 B.C. On this basis Hebron was "built" about 1683 B.C. From the geographical references in Gen. 13, 18 and 23, 19 it is evident that the town did not exist in the days of Abraham. The district was originally known as the "plains of Mamre", after Mamre the Amorite (Gen. 14, 13, 24) who dwelt there when Abraham first came into Canaan from Haran. Its later name, Kirjath-arba, meaning the village of Arba, was from Arba a Canaanite, ancestor of the tribe later known as the Anakim. Each time the locality is mentioned in Genesis under either of its primitive names the comment is added "*which is Hebron*" as though, writing at a later date when the old names had been forgotten, such explanation was necessary. When Abraham buried Sarah his wife there, it was called Kirjath-Arba (Gen. 23, 2). When Jacob returned to Isaac his father after his long sojourn in Haran, a hundred and thirty years later and only about twenty-five before he went into Egypt, it was still Kirjath-Arba, and the place of Isaac's residence. (Gen. 35, 27). A few years later, however, Jacob sent the youth Joseph "*out of the vale of Hebron*" to Shechem (Gen. 37, 14) and this appears to be the time when the name "Hebron" was coined, or at least first employed.

When the Israelite hosts stormed the town centuries later upon their invasion of the land it was in the possession of the Anakim, the descendants of Arba. (Joshua 15, 13). But "Hebron" is not a Canaanite word. According to Prof. Sayce it has the same philological basis as Khabiru or Hebrew, meaning "confederates". The fact that Isaac, wealthy in flocks and herds and a great power in the land, joined by his son Jacob, equally prosperous after his sojourn in Haran, were established at this spot as their headquarters with their interests and possessions extending for many miles northward and westward, provokes surmise that the building of Hebron might well have been the work of these two during the twenty years they spent together before Isaac's death.

Be that as it may, the evidence in Genesis is that the founding or building of Hebron as a town of that name took place after Jacob returned to Isaac but before Joseph was sold into Egypt. Num. 14, 22 fixes it at seven years

before the founding of Tanis which itself was certainly only a little more than two centuries before Amenhetep II in whose days the Exodus took place. This consideration points to the shorter period of 215 years as the length of the sojourn in Egypt.

The principal objection levelled against this is the apparently phenomenal increase of Israel from the "seventy souls" who came into Egypt with Jacob to the two or three million who went out in the Exodus. It is frequently asserted, all too hastily, that such an increase is unlikely enough even in the space of four centuries and is virtually incredible in the short time of two hundred and fifteen years. When the question is soberly and dispassionately considered it can be shown that the criticism is not sustained.

According to Genesis 46 "all the souls which went down into Egypt with Jacob" numbered seventy. This chapter explains that these were the male members of Jacob's family down to his grandsons, with one daughter, Dinah, and one granddaughter, Serah, who were probably included because unmarried. Beside these seventy, there were their wives, and Jacob's daughters and their husbands. (Gen. 46, 7 and 26). To some extent Jacob's daughters and granddaughters through his four wives would probably have intermarried with his sons and grandsons, but many of them must have married other men of Jacob's establishment and when the family migrated into Egypt the majority at least of their servants, cattlemen and shepherds must have come with them, for Jacob brought with him "*their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan.*" (Gen. 46, 6). The total number of men and women that came into Egypt might therefore have been several hundred, even if restricted to those connected by marriage. (It is considered by some that in fact Jacob may have brought anything up to five hundred persons into Egypt with him).

There were at the Exodus 603,000 adult men above twenty years of age, (Num. 38, 26) which with women and children implies a total population of nearly three millions. The question at issue is whether so great a number could have arisen from the comparatively small number of immigrants in a little over two centuries.

The rate of growth of populations is dependent upon many factors and the influence of some of them is still only partially understood. Fundamental principles are that the increase during a given period of time is

dependent upon the number who die as well as the number that are born, and the number of generations which live simultaneously. This latter depends upon the average length of life and the average age at which children are born. At the present time the average length of life is about 60-70 and the number of generations three. A man usually lives to see his grandchildren but not very often his great-grandchildren. Conditions were different in the days of the Exodus. From data given in the five Mosaic books it is evident that the normal life span was in the region of 110-140 years and that successive generations were little more than 20 years apart, hence there could well be—and were—six or seven generations living simultaneously. Those facts had a marked effect upon the total number of people living at any one time.

Nine individuals of Jacob's family, alive during the period under review, have their ages at death recorded in Genesis, Exodus or Numbers. The minimum age was 110 and the maximum 147. The average of the nine is 123. It is sometimes suggested by critics that these records are not to be taken seriously and that in fact men did not live so long. No evidence has or can be adduced to support this criticism, which from its nature can be no more than a matter of opinion. In fact there is independent evidence to support the Bible record, inasmuch as Egyptian inscriptions at the period in question confirm that such length of life was not uncommon. A papyrus of the 12th Dynasty—some while before Jacob came into Egypt—written by an heir to the throne, Ptah-hotep, complains that he is 110 years old and his father is still reigning as Pharaoh. The latter therefore must have been at least 140 and apparently still going strong. In the time of the 18th dynasty, during which Moses was born and the Exodus took place, many inscriptions contain references to lives of the length of 110 years. Near Thebes there is the tomb of an 18th dynasty notable, Aahmes, admiral of the fleet, who started life as a young naval officer under Pharaoh Aahmes I, fought for him against the Hyksos, served two successive Pharaohs, Amen-hetep I and Thothmes I, and was eventually appointed to the position of Admiral of the fleet at a time when he could not have been less than 84 years of age. Moses was born at about the time of that appointment, thus creating an interesting parallel between these two men, both of whom succeeded to the greatest and most arduous works of their lives in their eighties, when men to-day would be consider-

ed beyond active service.

Alongside this extended length of life has to be placed the evident fact that men married and began their families at an early age by present standards. Sufficient data can be deduced from the history of Jacob's sons to establish this conclusion. The narrative of Genesis 38 implies that in the 32 years during which Jacob's family dwelt in Canaan his son Judah had married, had two sons who had married, a third son who attained marriageable age, and then two children of the next generation born. Benjamin was born at the beginning of this period (Gen. 35. 19) but by the entry into Egypt, some thirty years later, had ten sons and probably a proportionate number of daughters. (There is no need to suppose that Benjamin or any of Jacob's sons necessarily confined themselves to one wife; polygamy was common among the Israelites for a long time after this). All the available evidence goes to show that the descendants of Jacob married early and had many children; according to Genesis the twelve sons of Jacob had between them 51 sons. In the normal course of Nature any community produces males and females in about equal proportions so that Jacob's grandchildren must have numbered about 102, an average of more than 8 per family. (Pharaoh Rameses II, 400 years later, had 161 children by several wives!)

Taking all this as a basis for calculation it can be shown that, starting with so few as 70 couples, each couple of each generation marrying at 20 and having eight children over the ensuing 30 years, which is by no means improbable, the average length of life being 100 years, then at the end of 215 years the then living population would be in the order of four millions. There would have been eleven generations of first-borns, proceeding from first-borns, and four generations of last-borns proceeding from last-borns. It is not always realised that if the period between first born and last born is for example, 30 years, then the youngest child of the last born will be born 60 years after the eldest child of the first born, although both belong to the same generation. In the next generation the disparity becomes 90 years, and so on. Many of the relationships implied in the Bible narrative become logical once this fact is appreciated. Thus Jochebed, born to Levi in Egypt, could well be younger than her nephew Amram whom she married, and the two of them well able to become the parents of Moses and Aaron at an age no greater than that of Jacob and Rachel when their sons Joseph and Benjamin were born.

Aaron, in the third generation from Levi, married Elisheba in the fifth generation from Judah, Levi's younger brother by about two years, and even so was probably older than his wife.

The reference in Gen. 15. 16 "*In the fourth generation they shall come hither again,*" is corroborated by the historical references in Exodus. Taking the twelve sons of Jacob upon their settlement in Egypt as constituting the first generation a number of lines of descent which are given—including that of Moses—give the fourth generation as living at the time of the Exodus, whilst others give five, six or seven. Bezaleel, the architect of the Tabernacle, was sixth in descent from Judah; Achan, living at the same time and about his equal in age, was only fourth. It is sometimes suggested that the lines of descent given

are not complete; that names have been omitted from the genealogies so that the period may have been much longer than is apparent. Whilst such omissions may well have occurred in some cases, there are a number of father-to-son sequences which must be accepted as complete if violence is not to be done to the requirements of the narrative.

The balance of probability, therefore, appears to lie in the direction of the shorter period of 215 years in Egypt, with the Exodus taking place at or about 1440 B.C. Upon this basis the historical background of the Book of Exodus can be matched with known Egyptian history and a great deal of light thrown upon the life of Moses, and it is against this background that these notes are written.

(To be continued)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

"Mysterious people" might the pensive unbeliever say within himself, "mysterious people. Moving amongst us, and yet not seeming to be of us. Passing through the world without seeming to be deeply concerned in its forms and fashions, its prizes and blanks; tranquil amidst its struggles, free amidst its bondage; wrapped up, it should appear, in thoughts of your own which work in you pursuits of your own. Happy in yourselves, and never so happy as when shedding quiet blessings on all around you. How have your ways won on me, durst I but say so. How has your simple character told its tale on me, more touching than all the arguments of philosophy, more convincingly than all the logic of the schools. How have you almost persuaded me to be a Christian." (Author unknown)

* * *

"I have found a Ransom"

Job 33. 24.

Elihu's discourse to the friends of Job includes a reference to the redemptive work of Christ so remarkable for so early an age that many commentators refuse to interpret the words according to their plain meaning. It is only when the knowledge of the Divine Plan reveals the literal truth of Elihu's statement that as a result of this "ransom" the flesh of man shall be fresher than a child's and he shall return to the days of his youth, that the beauty of this passage is fully appreciated. "*If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious*

unto him and saith 'Deliver him from going down into the pit. I have found a ransom'." The word translated "deliver" means "to buy back for a price", having much the same meaning as "anti-lutron" in the New Testament; and the word "ransom" has the significance of "atonement". Thus in these far-off days when the world was young we have a plain statement of earthly restitution to be effected as a result of a giving of a "Ransom for All".

* * *

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

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

IN DANGER OF GEHENNA

A comment on
Jesus' teachings

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

* * *

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

The first instance in which it is employed is St. Matthew 5. 22. Christ is comparing his laws, the laws of the kingdom of heaven, with the laws given of old time by Moses. Moses had said "Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment". "But", continues Christ, "I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a mere expletive of disgust and contempt, like the odious expletives which we may hear any day in our own streets) shall be in danger of the Council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of *hell-fire*". The general sense of the passage is that, whereas Moses condemned murder, Christ condemns the angry passions in which murder takes its rise. Even an angry emotion was henceforth to be regarded as incipient murder; and if that angry emotion found vent in angry and malicious words, words which smote and wounded a neighbour's heart, it was to be held a still heavier crime, worthy of a still severer punishment. This, confessedly, is the general sense of our Lord's saying; but He casts his thought in a technical and figurative form which needs a little explanation.

In every Jewish city there were courts of justice which had the power of life and death; but, though they could condemn criminals to death by the sword, they had no authority to inflict that death by stoning which was the most ignominious punishment known to the Hebrew code. Only the Sanhedrin, the supreme council at Jerusalem, could inflict that penalty. But the Sanhedrin, besides con-

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

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

to all the horrors of hell if, in a moment of angry impulse, he let the word Fool, or any other word, slip from his lips. On the other hand, if for "hell-fire" we read "Gehenna of fire", and understand that, while the first punishment is that which a local court may inflict—death, and the second that which only the metropolitan court can inflict—death by stoning, the third to be cast out, unburied, into the accursed valley of Hinnom, we at least restore something like scale and proportion to the sentence, though the punishments still look, if not far too heavy, far too material and external for the sins.

And, indeed, if any man really studies these words, he soon finds it quite impossible to take them in their literal sense. In *that* sense they are not true. No Jew, no Christian was ever brought before a local court of justice, and condemned to be beheaded simply for indulging in an angry thought or feeling. No Jew, no Christian was ever called before the Sanhedrin, and condemned to be stoned to death simply for calling his brother Raca. No Jew, no Christian was ever put to a shameful death, and then denied decent burial, simply for calling his brother Fool. And no man who reads these words with the understanding can for a moment suppose that Christ meant these

sins of anger to be brought before courts of justice, and to be visited with punishments so disproportioned and inappropriate. The most savage judge who ever disgraced the bench would not have doomed men to death for an angry feeling that was never uttered in word or action, nor to a death in the last degree shameful for uttering an angry word. And would Christ, the Lover and Redeemer of men? Does that sound like the "sweet reasonableness of Christ"? If not, you may be sure that He who taught all things in parables is uttering a parable here. There is no thought of hell in his mind; there is no thought even of literal courts of justice. He is simply teaching an Oriental people, in the Oriental forms with which they were familiar, that every sin, however inward, will receive its due recompense of reward; that the heart is the fountain from which all sin flows; that in God's sight the murderous wish, scheme, bent, is murder; and that every utterance of it, whether in word or deed, since it deepens and confirms it, will entail a still severer punishment. "Be angry, and you will suffer for it; let your anger mount to utterance, and you will suffer the more; every new access and expression of evil passion will plunge you still deeper in sin and misery". This is what Christ meant; *this* is the law of anger as interpreted by him.

NOTE ON MARK 5.39

It is interesting to notice that the word used for "sleepeth" in the account of Jairus' daughter is one that in the New Testament is never used to indicate death; always to denote natural sleep. It is *katheuso*. The word which is used in the story of Lazarus—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him out of sleep" is *koimao*, which is used often as a synonym for death beside its normal meaning of sleep. Thus Acts 13. 36 "David fell on sleep", 1 Cor. 15. 20 "Christ . . . the first fruits of them that slept" 1 Cor. 15. 51 "We shall not all sleep", 1 Thess. 4. 14 "Them that sleep in Jesus", are all from *koimao*. It is this latter word which passed into Latin as *coemeterium*, from which we get our English word *cemetery*—place of sleep. It would appear that no conclusive evidence exists in the Gospels for the customary impression that Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He Himself said "*the maid is not dead, but sleepeth*". It seems probable that she was in some kind of

trance or coma, and that our Lord awakened her from it. The friends and neighbours, convinced that the girl was dead—for they "laughed him to scorn" when He said that she was not—would probably not believe anything else but that He had in fact raised her from the dead. Hence Jesus cautioned them not to make the incident generally known, a caution they promptly rejected.

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

PRAYERS WITHOUT WORDS

A meditation on
Rom. 8, 18-27

It is as necessary for the Christian to pray as for a child to prattle to its parents. And it is as vitally important for the child of God to make known its wants as for the human child. In consequence of this need to communicate with his Father, the Christian is reminded that he may "pray without ceasing" and that while watching and working, he may take time off from service to go aside to pray.

But just as an observant mother will know, at times, what the unspoken desire of her child is (or will be) so there are occasions when our moods are of more moment than our words, for indeed as there may be words without prayer, so contrariwise there may be prayer without words and it is to the Christian's advantage that the Father of Love and Compassion understands more perfectly than any man or woman the unspoken (and sometimes unspeakable) desires of his child.

The devout Christian often prays most deeply when he does not speak at all. Occasions arise from time to time when he is far too full for words. Like the dull movings of deep waters "too full for sound or foam" the Christian's heart is deeply moved, and it is the very depths and fulness of these hidden tides which make his lips so hopelessly inadequate to utter all he feels. There is much truth and fitness in the poet's expressive words:—

*"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."*

This inability to give utterance to the deep things of the spirit is not just the same thing as the handicap of a poor vocabulary. It is not akin to the difficulty of the tongue-tied or untaught son-of-the-soil or man-of-the-street. The lips of him who guides the plough or drives the loom, may fail to form his prayer because he has no range of words from which to choose. Education may have been too scant. Contrariwise the human metal may suffer from lack of refinability or be unable to take literary polish. Hence his lips may not frame a prayer because the equipment of the man is unequal to the task. Yet this ill-equipped

soul may pray in its own way. The down-cast eyes, the up-raised touching hands, the reverential pose, may say more than a host of words. But when personality is deep and emotional desire is strong, and the lips are trained ordinarily to express the rising or falling mood, it will be the deep swell of some more acute crisis that seals the lips, and bars the egress of the worded prayer.

These deep-felt motions may come late or early in the Christian life. Indeed, it may be in such a soul-storm that the Christian's religious life begins. Words may be few—or absent—because the issues are so great. There is a prayer where words are few, when penitence first stirs the sinful heart. Perhaps it needs the smiting hand upon the breast to emphasise the unuttered pathetic plea. Or in such a case, if lips do speak, seven words contain more prayer than reams of polished phrase. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a prayer of fundamental depth. It comes from the deep places of an unregenerate but humbled heart, and mounts up to the high courts of Heaven. The God of all love and grace, the God of heaven and earth, bends down to hear that prayer, while angels of light rejoice together as the sinner's prayer mounts to their ears. Ten thousand words could say no more at such a time than ten mere syllables have said. It is not the ample articulation of the lips, but the inward chastening of the heart which best expresses the deep inner need. A groan, a sigh, a tear, has greater worth than all the verbiage of a lexicon.

Provision has been made by God to meet that need. A Saviour, and a sacrifice for sin, stand ready to move at its call. No cry, however short, can escape the human heart, for relief from sin that will go unheard, or unanswered. Thank God for the sinner's right to speed his penitential call right through to the courts of heaven, not because it is a galaxy of words, but because it is true prayer, and voices his intense needs. Most Christians may look back to that supreme moment at the penitential crisis of their lives, and call to mind the great relief when contact with the Lamb of God was made. No spate of words, but precious blood, gave solace in the deep distress.

The wordless prayer of which we write lies further on the Christian's path. It is the token

of maturity and rich growth in grace. It tells of days and years of God's creative work, in tempering and refining the metal of the inner self. It speaks of yearnings and desires, God-fostered, which reach up and out for holiness and truth. It shows developed sensitivity to the "Absolutes"—to utter sinfulness, and complete sinlessness. It has grown to hate the one, and love the other. Loathsome sin is now more loathsome still; and holiness has become an increasing delight.

What cause can seal the lips and tie the tongues of Christian so far grown in grace? Ought they not, in weal or woe to find cause enough to pray and praise with heart and voice? Why should the lips of saints at any time fail to voice forth their prayer or praise? It is the strong flow of the deeper tides within the heart that seals the lips. At times when the good gifts of God have been profuse, and ample store of grace has stirred the depths, the very volume of the gratitude may be too deep to find expression other than in the words "thank God, thank God, thank God". The repetition of the two short words may wing more praise to heaven than strings of loftier sounds. And God will know how much of gratitude is meant.

More frequently the deep tides flow when other causes operate. More often it is sin and sorrow which stirs the depths. We may have listened to creation's groans; we may have felt our lack of strength to ease or aid when suffering called, and this, re-acting back upon our own tense heart, has loosed wild notions and desires too deep for words.

This is the sphere the Apostle's words explores. Creation groans in travail to be set free. Creation is bound in chains of vanity—vain hopes, vain works and vain pursuits. The grace-grown Christian views the havoc of human sin where countless thousands mourn. He sees aggression down the years ride roughshod and unchecked, leaving behind it trails of blood and broken hearts. He sees the profit-snatcher take his filthy gains while starving children cry for bread. He sees the sanctity of wedlock and home dishonoured; he sees wealth squandered in gambling and drink; he sees the bloom of health fade as disease saps the strength. He sees the whole world treading its dead-end trails. He sees pompous little men rise up to power only to fall again. He sees men barter life for some small wealth, some little pedestal, some tawdry name, and as, for ages, fathers did, so children do to-day. The dictum of the ancient sage upon their dead-end pursuits was that it was vanity

through and through. "*Vanity of vanities, it is all vanity.*" And vanity it is and was from morn till night, for rich and poor, while ages come and go.

No child of God can see the naked world and be unmoved. He knows the whole creation had been committed to this vain life, by Divine intent. He knows creation groans in pain and anguish day and night, but never finds relief. He witnesses the frustration and futility of universal life, and knows that no man can emancipate himself, much less his kin. He knows relief will come some day—some better day—it is to-day that often weighs upon his heart! He knows that he and other sympathetic souls must stand idly by, and only watch as wild humanity grows wilder still. He hears their deep universal groan, and as they groan, he does the same. "Oh if only something could be done! If only men could hear and turn away from sin" he groans within himself. Men, without hope, groan and groan again—he cannot help but do the same, though hope lives in his breast. "... *not only they but ourselves also . . . groan within ourselves waiting for . . . redemption*" (Rom. 8. 23).

No man with the "Christ" spirit in his heart can hear this universal groan without groaning too. And when that spirit is of ample growth the groaning will be ample too. His growth in Christ will be the measure of his sympathy for a world chain-bound in sin. The pity for Jerusalem which swept the Master's heart was a like pity that will oft weep over a world, self-doomed to death. The Christian who is much grown like Jesus will be much touched, like him, with human woe.

It thus befalls that every convulsive pang this sad world feels sends sympathetic pain into the Christ-like heart, and wrings from it both sigh and groan. But the Christian sufferer is helped by hope—that blessed hope—that deliverance one day will come. Hope salves the chafed spirit and helps him wait with more patience for that better day. Expectation relieves the acute tension of the strain, but expectation is not redemption nor release. That which we long for has not come. It is as yet but a sure hope. At most, this hope brings hearts-ease to the aching heart, but leaves it still to groan. But we have other help at hand.

"Likewise the spirit ALSO helps" us in our lack of strength. It helps the Christian when his heart is over-wrought with sympathy and pain, too full for words or speech. It helps him when some acute spasm of world distress wrings from him sigh or groan. And when that

sigh or groan escapes, He who has trod this path before, accepts it as a prayer. The Searching Eye will read the anguish of his soul, and understands the language of these unworded signs. He knows the sorrows of the world more deeply than his followers do. He tasted their sorrows to the point of death in order to become a sympathetic High Priest. He came to earth to cause men to know that God was sympathetic too. From the beginning of sin's awful reign God's sympathy for sinful men began to operate. The spirit of compassion was manifest to Mother Eve. This Spirit of compassion was the Spirit of the Oathbound Covenant. That same Spirit of the Covenant under-lay the gift, by God, of his dear Son. And it was the compassion expressed in that Covenant which took Jesus to his death. It is the self-same spirit of that Covenant, the desire to bless, that throbs in every Christian heart. This is the Holy Spirit of the Living God—it is the Spirit of his Christ. It dwelt without measure in our blessed Lord. It dwells in varying degree in every other child of God. It emanates from God—it enters into us. From this almighty fund of sympathy comes our help in time of need. It helps us when we hear the world's deep groans. It helps us when we see its sinful plight. It smooths for us the difficulty of "desiring to bless". It "helpeth our infirmities"—our "asthenia"—our lack of strength, our inability, when "work of hand" is unequal to "desire of heart". This weakness it is that makes us groan, and say with warmth, beneath our breath "If only I knew what to do—or how to help them in their sore distress." At such a time, in such a state, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." We yearn to bless, but we are too inexperienced to bless. We desire to bless, but we have no power with which to bless. The pent-up sigh, the unspoken groan tells what we would do, if hand and heart could work in step. And from its lofty throne above, the eye that searches every heart takes note of what it sees, and He who has the power to bless looks down and says, "yes, that child of Mine desires to bless; he has in him the spirit of My purposes. He only needs to bide My time. I see at times the tension of his soul—I hear again the groaning of his heart. This spirit of compassion is what I want to see. This anguish of soul endears him to My heart. It compensates for all his weaknesses."

Thus the falling tear, the aching heart, the

stified groan, what time he sees the world's distress, becomes a prayer of greater worth than ten thousand ostentatious words. The spirit of compassion thus evinced, wins the Divine acceptance for the child—it makes intercession for his saints in accordance with his Will.

The world around us is in dire distress today. Its sorrows deepen like a flood. The sluice gates of evil are unlocked. The universal groan goes up from all the earth, louder and deeper each passing day. "Who will break our bonds? Who will smash our chains? Who can set us free?" . . . What child of God can hear this cry and not feel his pulse-beat quicken, or his heart-strings quiver? What "hopeful" saint can see the "hopeless" mass, and not yearn for its release.

This is a day, beloved in the Lord, when growth in Christ-likeness may go on apace. The "Image of his Son" may be wrought within at speed. The circumstances are full ripe for the Spirit of God—the Spirit of his Covenant—to work deep and strong. Compassion for a sinful world can transform the wakeful heart. He who understands what is "on foot" may co-operate with God. The compassion of every soul should be white-hot, then the hammer of discipline and anvil of sorrow will do the rest. May God speed this work of Grace, for the day of Redemption draweth nigh.

When hearts are fraught with pain as humanity mourns, there may rise a prayer for God's Kingdom days to come, without the breathing of a word, and as we pray thus for God's Will to prevail, the depth of sigh or groan will be the measure of our transformation into the Image of God's dear Son.

Spiritual and earthly are all of one and if men are unable to appreciate the reality of spiritual things it is not because it is unnatural for them to do so but because they have lost the link that binds the two worlds together. Whilst it will always be true that the purely natural, material man will never understand or be able to visualise accurately the things of the spirit, he will when restored to the Divine image realise and know that there is a spiritual order of things, transcendently high above the natural. He will believe and accept the fact.



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

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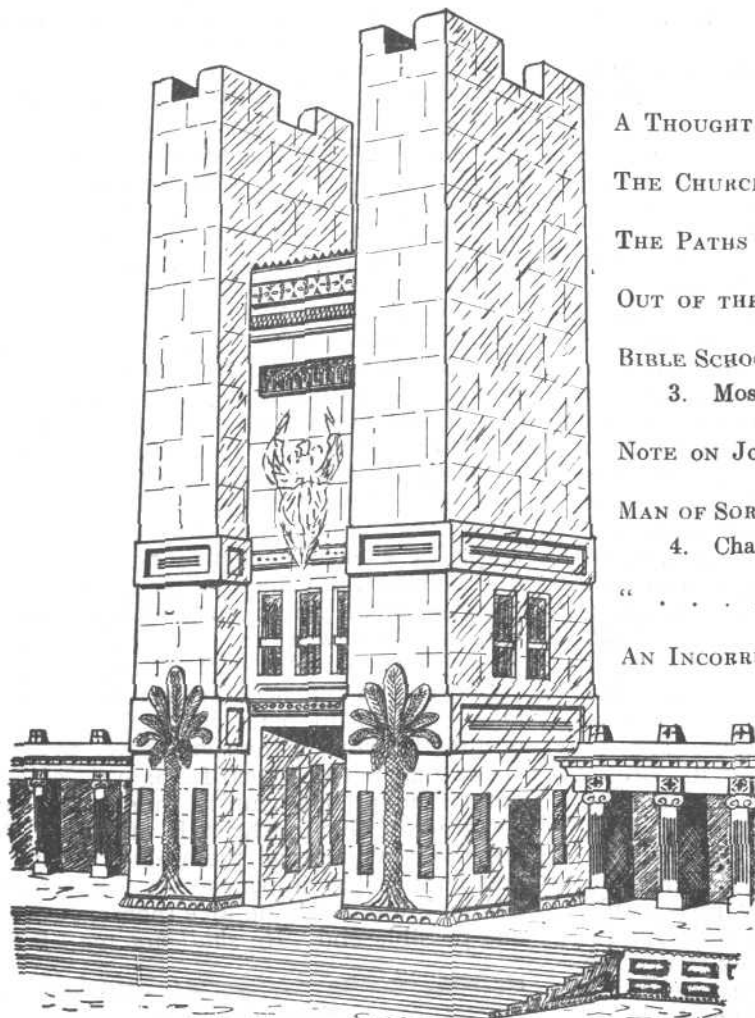
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the Month

"The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. 16. 4).

That text as it is rendered in the Authorised Version looks suspiciously like an attempt to make God responsible for the existence of evil, both in the heart and in the world; from what it is an easy step to assert a moral obligation upon God to recover all men from evil and usher them into everlasting bliss at last irrespective of their own wish or will, and this has been a tenet held by some Christians in almost every generation since the beginning of the Age. Quite apart from the oft-debated question whether all men will or will not eventually be saved—and since the deliberate expunging of the 42nd article in A.D. 1562 that has to be regarded as an open question in orthodox Church theology—it is altogether out of accord with the known character and attributes of God to picture him as in any sense of the word initiating or introducing or actively pursuing evil or evil works in order to accomplish his purpose. Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of his throne, and He is of purer eyes than to behold evil. When God created, He saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. Evil is an intrusion subsequent to the time of creation, and had its origin in the deliberate and conscious rebellion of created beings against the laws of God. That their Creator did not stamp out the rebellion at once and nullify its effects in the creation it threatened does not make him responsible for the introduction of evil but only for its permission, for toleration of its existence for a span whilst He works out his purpose among the rebellious ones, allowing them to learn by bitter experience the destructive effect of evil and by his persuasive love be induced, if capacity for repentance be not entirely destroyed, to renounce evil and be restored to harmony and reconciliation with him. The word "himself" in the text more properly

denotes purpose or destiny, and other translations render the phrase more lucidly; thus Margous has *"the Lord hath made all things for his own purpose"* and Leeser *"for us destined end"*. Here is enshrined an important principle, that of purpose in all that God does. The whole progress of Divine creation from the moment when the first atoms appeared out of nothingness to the time yet to come when the temporary intrusion of evil will be a thing of the past and every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, is the embodiment of a great purpose existing in the mind and Will of God and therefore certain of realisation. Within that purpose lies the end of evil. The Septuagint renders the verse *"All the works of the Lord are done with righteousness and the ungodly man is kept for the evil day"*. There is expounded the law of retribution. What a man soweth, that shall he reap. The wicked are kept for the day of evil that both evil day and evil men, if such there then be, shall perish out of God's universe together. That will not be until God has used every weapon in his armoury to induce the erring one to repent, and be reconciled, and take his rightful place in God's creation. It will be the work of the coming Age to demonstrate that not one son of Adam is left without abundant opportunity thus to accept of the grace of God in Christ. If, after that, there are those who prove themselves completely and irrevocably impervious to the entry of Divine life and Divine love there can be only one possible end. *"He shall not see life."*

Gone from us

Bro. F. Turner (Welling)
Sis. A. Major (Warwick)

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

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

A story of
St. Paul

Something like five years had elapsed since the martyrdom of Stephen and the journey of Saul to Damascus which resulted in his conversion. For Saul they had been five eventful years, first his short time with the brethren in Damascus, then his three years in Arabia preparing himself for his life's work, after that his equally short stay in Jerusalem and his flight, and for the remainder of the time a quiet residence in his native town of Tarsus in Cilicia. Five years gone, and as yet nothing definite achieved, and still no positive lead as to the future. The Apostle must have been sorely puzzled; the circumstances of his call were such as to indicate in no uncertain terms the importance of the Lord's purpose for him. The need was so obviously there; the gospel of the Kingdom was to be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and he was ready to play his part in that preaching, the more especially since it did not seem as though the other disciples, still at Jerusalem, were particularly concerned about leaving that centre of the faith to extend its power and influence into the farther territories of the wider world. The ways of God are passing strange, Saul must have thought. The harvest was great and the labourers few; even Jesus had bidden his disciples to lift up their eyes and look on the fields, and see that they were white already to harvest, and exhorted them to pray God that He would send forth reapers to gather in that harvest. Well, here he was, an ardent reaper, burning with desire to take the message of life and salvation to all whomsoever he could persuade to listen, wheresoever he should find them, and yet for all his zeal and eagerness and readiness the door remained obstinately shut; the word to go forward remained unspoken. Nothing is said as to the results of such missionary work as he may have carried on in and around his home town of Tarsus; he was of course well known there and although he may have been tolerated because of his connections and friends in the city it was probably true, as it was of Jesus in Nazareth and Capernaum, that no prophet has honour in his own country. So Saul must have remained, frustrated and yet, we must believe, assured that God would reveal his will in his own due time and that as a faithful servant he must patiently bide that time.

Now, at last, his faith and trust were to be

vindicated and his eager spirit given the sphere of action he so ardently desired. For five years past the stage had been in process of being set, the place of his service being prepared. Right back at the beginning, when the persecution he instigated in Jerusalem at the time of the death of Stephen led many of the Christians to seek refuge in far off lands, that preparation had begun. A few of those Christians from Jerusalem had reached Antioch, third city of the Empire and political capital of Syria, some four hundred miles from Jerusalem. There they had settled and there they had exemplified and preached their faith to such good effect that within that five years there came into being a flourishing Christian community which had the distinction of including within its numbers a substantial proportion of Gentiles—pure-blooded Greeks. (Although the account in Act 11. 20 uses the term Grecians,—*Hellenistos*—meaning Jews of the Dispersion, Greek Jews, the A.V. is at fault and the correct term is Greeks—*Hellenes*—definitely indicating true Gentile Greeks). It would seem from verses 19-20 that at most places in which they found themselves the refugees from Jerusalem confined their missionary activities to their fellow-Jews but those who settled at Antioch, perhaps because it was so predominantly a Greek and Roman city, extended their preaching to include non-Jews, with a most spectacularly successful result. "A great number believed, and turned to the Lord." (vs. 21).

Antioch was at that time a magnificent city of half-a-million inhabitants, ranking politically next to Rome and Alexandria in importance, the official residence of the Roman governor of Syria and a busy commercial centre. It was adorned with many handsome buildings and public monuments and was in no respect inferior to Rome itself in splendour and luxury. It is not surprising therefore that all the pagan religions of the world were represented at Antioch; the city boasted temples to every deity known to the Greeks and Romans and many others too, among which the synagogues of the orthodox Jews stood in almost equivalent splendour, for the Jews of Antioch constituted a wealthy and prosperous community. It was in no mean city, therefore, that the first Gentile Christian church had its birth and rose to a position of

influence among the general community of believers.

It was inevitable that news of these developments should reach the Church at Jerusalem, still recognised as the central authority by virtue of the continued residence there of the twelve apostles. The acceptance of Gentiles as fellow-believers and fellow-heirs was as yet an unacceptable proposition to the Christians of Jerusalem, brought up as they had been under the discipline and restrictions of the Law of Moses, and further investigation and consideration was obviously indicated. So they determined to send a commissioner to Antioch to find out at first hand just what was going on and report the position. The mission was evidently projected in a spirit of love and helpfulness, for the messenger chosen seems to have been under no obligation to return at all quickly—in actual fact he was away more than a year.

The one chosen was Barnabas, Saul's old friend. Himself a Jew of the Dispersion and a native of Cyprus, he was probably better fitted than most of them to undertake a mission like this to a virtually Gentile city where his contacts would be mainly with Gentiles. Barnabas is described here as "*a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.*" It is evident from various references in the Book of Acts that he was held in high esteem by his brethren.

So Barnabas went to Antioch and joined himself to the Church there and laboured with them. Continued success crowned their efforts and again "*much people was added unto the Lord.*" Barnabas began to feel the need for more help—perhaps the high degree of culture and education in the city, the intellectual level of many of the potential converts, so different from the simple peasantry of Galilee and Samaria, or the insular Jews of Jerusalem, pointed to the desirability of an apologist having greater educational attainments than Barnabas felt he himself possessed. At any rate, he bethought himself of his friend Saul, living in obscurity in Tarsus, and determined to bring him to Antioch to assist in the growing work. Without much doubt the thought was instilled into his mind by the Holy Spirit, for the time had now come when Saul must take up his destined vocation. The long time of training and preparation was ended; now the call to action was to be given. So Barnabas made his way the sixteen miles to the seaport of Seleucia and found a ship which would take him the hundred miles across the Mediterranean to

Tarsus in Cilicia

The day had been much like every day for a long while past, Saul reflected as he sat, quietly reading the Holy Scriptures. His work for the day was done—his trade of tent-maker was standing him in good stead these days and although it was commonly only a meagre remunerative occupation he was able to provide for his modest needs and still leave time for further study and consideration of the Word of God. Some day, he firmly believed, all this study and meditation would prove to have been worth while and have fitted him for whatever work it was that God would ultimately direct him to do. The waiting time seemed long and unnecessarily protracted, but the One he served knew best and would reveal his will in due time. His thoughts strayed for a moment to that last night of his short visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, when he was in the Temple praying, and saw in a vision the Lord Jesus commanding him to make haste and get out of Jerusalem, and giving him that staggering promise "*Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*" He had departed and come to Tarsus, and for two years now had watched and prayed and waited, but no indication had come. Sometimes he had gone down to the sea not far from the city and looked across the sparkling Mediterranean, watching the merchant ships coming in and going out, bound for Alexandria and Rome and the cities of Greece, fascinating lands of the Roman Empire with peoples of many races, none of whom had heard the only Name by which men may be saved. Sometimes he had climbed the slopes of Mount Taurus behind the town and looked inland across the mountains and valleys of Asia and wondered if that was the way he was going to be called to go. But no word had come and he was still reading the Book which told of God the Author of salvation and still harbouring within his breast the burning message of the One who came to earth to bring the word of salvation. He felt like Jeremiah of old "*his word was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.*" Saul stirred in his seat as a knock sounded on the door of the house. He heard voices—that of his housekeeper alternating with deep, resonant tones which somehow sounded vaguely familiar, and his own name being mentioned. He looked up as the door of his room was flung open and his eyes took in, with astonishment changing to warm pleasure, the stalwart form of the man who had

befriended him in Jerusalem those two years ago.

It is not likely that Saul hesitated before agreeing to accompany Barnabas back to Antioch. His alert mind would discern instantly that here was the call he had been awaiting; here was the commencement of his being sent "*far hence unto the Gentiles*", here in a city through which Gentiles of all nations were constantly passing. There was probably a hurried leave-taking of relatives and friends, a quick packing of a few essential belongings, and then Saul was on shipboard and on the high seas again, not as a fugitive this time but a man setting out on the greatest adventure of his life. When the ship reached the Antioch port of Seleucia and the gang-plank was thrown across it was almost certainly Saul who was first ashore.

So, at last, Saul was fully accepted into the community of the believers. The greater part of his newly found brethren knew nothing of the old persecuting Pharisee; the few at Antioch who had originated from Jerusalem and remembered the martyrdom of Stephen and the havoc their new leader had then made in the Church were by now fully reconciled to the evident fact that this man was a chosen vessel unto God to preach his Word among the Gentiles and they were thankful for his fellowship and his help. For an entire year the work proceeded without interruption and with continuing success and steady increase in the number of the believers. It is remarkable that no indication of hostility on the part of the orthodox Jews of Antioch is given. Unlike almost every other place in which the Apostle afterward laboured, Antioch seems to have tolerated and accepted him. The fact that this city was the political capital and seat of Roman government and that any kind of public disorder would have been more sternly and ruthlessly repressed than elsewhere probably had something to do with it, as would also the greater pre-occupation of Antiochean Jewry with commercial activities and money-making. Religion, other than the purely formal kind, most likely played only a secondary part in their lives.

It was at this time and in this city that the name "Christian" was coined and first used. It was not originated by the believers themselves; the form of the word is Latin and not Greek or Hebrew and it is more likely that the term arose among the general population of the city in reference to the constant dwelling of the believers upon the name of Christ—which at that time had not attained the

status of a proper name; the word only means "the Anointed" and conveyed that meaning to Jewish Christians. The only proper name by which the Lord was known was the one given to him at his birth, Jesus, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua, a name which was common in Israel anyway. The believers themselves still referred to their faith as "the Way" and if they called themselves anything at all it was "brethren of the Way". The usual term applied to them by others was "Nazārenes" but from now the word "Christian" began to come more and more into common use. Perhaps the greatest memorial to Saul's twelve months' labour in this Gentile city is the fact that "*the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*".

It was at some time during this period that a further commission came to Antioch from Jerusalem and Saul met some of the brethren whose doubts upon the occasion of his last visit to the Holy City had precluded their acceptance of him. Now there were no doubts; they knew him to be one of themselves and fellowshipped with him accordingly. These men possessed the prophetic gift and during their stay one of them, Agabus, his perception of the future sharpened by his spiritual attunement with the Holy Spirit, declared that a wide-spread and serious famine was imminent and would affect all the Roman world. Such happenings were not infrequent; it only needed a year of bad weather over Egypt and the Middle East to throw the whole grain-producing economy of the Roman Empire out of gear and something like near-starvation for much of the town populations was the result. St. Luke records the realisation of Agabus' prophecy in the same verse by the terse comment "*which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar*" (Acts 11. 28). Claudius reigned A.D. 41-54 and his reign saw several famines, a notable one affecting Judea and Syria being recorded by Josephus as occurring in about A.D. 45. The visit of Agabus to Antioch must have occurred in A.D. 41, and the immediate response of the church was to build up a relief fund for the benefit of their poorer brethren in Jerusalem. Barnabas and Saul were appointed to carry the money to Jerusalem evidently with the idea that the recipients would have time to buy in stocks of food before the famine came upon them.

So Saul returned to Jerusalem the second time. There was no opposition and no incident; evidently the two messengers did not engage in any kind of preaching or

evangelism. They may not even have met the church. Their mission was to the elders, and having delivered the gift and the greetings of the church which sent the gift, they probably were eager to get back to their own sphere of labour and did not delay to depart.

They took back with them a companion, John Mark, nephew of Barnabas and son of his sister Mary, in whose house at Jerusalem, tradition has it, the Last Supper was held. Mark would be about twenty-four years of age at this time, probably already collecting the material for the Gospel which bears his name, although many years were yet to pass before that, the first of the four Gospels to see

the light of day, was to be written. Why he decided to go with them is not stated but in all probability he also wanted to have a part in taking the Gospel to the far places of the earth and the opportunity of joining up with Saul and his uncle, and labouring with them in a virile and active community like Antioch, was too good to miss. So three earnest and zealous men travelled back the four hundred miles to the northern city to take up their places in the expanding work of the first church to send out missionaries to the Gentiles.

(To be continued)

THE PATHS OF MERCY AND TRUTH

An
Exhortation

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

It is extremely sweet doctrine to be assured that every step of the consecrated life is under the control of our loving Father in heaven. At all times it is comforting to be reminded that "All things work together for good, to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose," but it is especially helpful to have this assurance repeated frequently in seasons of trial and difficulty. Most of the children of God are such leaking vessels, that the sweetness of the morning's promise is apt to be forgotten before tired eyelids close for the night's repose. And for that reason every consecrated child of God needs the frequent reminder that every phase of his life is under the supervision of an eye that never sleeps; that all the way he is kept in the hollow of a hand that never grows weary. It is not that we want to forget that sublime fact—it is not that we find any pleasure in the slips of memory which afflict our advancing years. But because the summers and winters steal by with increasing speed (or so it seems) and because modern life is so full of responsibilities of so many kinds, the things that belong to the higher life seem at times to be crowded into a very small corner of our day, even if they are not fully crowded out for a time. But no true child of the Father in heaven is ever averse to being reminded again and again of that loving Father's care. He will find it soothing to his heart, after a worrying day, to be told again that he is one of the sheep of his pasture; that the Lord is his Shepherd and that whether his pathway lies through the

green pastures or the valley of shadows, the Lord is with him to keep and protect him all the way. When, during the day, the tender spirit of the "New Creature" has been wounded by the instability or harshness of some poor son of Adam, how good it is to be told of a Friend who standeth closer than any brother, to whisper a word of comfort to our aching heart. It is the perfect end to any day to be able to listen to the gentle assurance of tongue or pen that no act or word need have cost us our Father's smile. Not that the day's page would not show blot or smudge (for indeed, no day is entirely free from shortcoming or failure) but because by the grace of God, so many of his paths are paths of mercy. Long ago, the Father of Mercies made provision for our need. He sent down from heaven a Saviour, who, by his death, can save his people from their sins. Himself without sin, yet in his compassionate love for men, became himself the bearer of their sins. He gave himself, the "just for the unjust that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3. 18). He reconciled us by his death; He now lives to save us by his living, loving care (Rom. 5. 10). The path of mercy, from our first feeble Christian days, till now, is hedged about by his precious blood. It is a scarlet trail, for precious blood made possible our first faltering step in Grace, and precious blood has made safe our every further step.

From those first feeble feelings after God, when escaping from the darkness of sin, till now we know our God (and also are known of him) the blood upon the lintel has been the constant pledge of our security and safety. No day has passed but that we have drawn upon

the store of compassionate mercy—yet our constant claims have not impoverished the store, nor exhausted its supply. New every morning, and fresh with each evening's shades have been these resources of grace, for that precious blood was of compensating worth for every man, and for all time, and so, because Divine Law was satisfied, Divine Grace has been free to come to our relief, abundantly—yea, more than that, we have received super-abundantly of his Grace. Thus, many paths in our lives which the Lord has directed have had their commencement in his Mercy, while all along the way, the shady bowers and quiet resting places have been fragrant with his Grace.. Let us thank our Gracious God for his Goodness.

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

But redeeming Love was but the prelude to Paternal Love. We learned another transcendent Truth that He who redeemed us at such infinite cost desired to have us as his sons and daughters. He called us to follow in the footsteps of his First-born Son, that we might enter the innermost circle of his family, and be the Father's eternal delight. Our gracious God caused his beloved Son to become unto us a channel of Wisdom, Justification, Sanctification, and ultimate Redemption. And in order that all these steps of Grace might be realised in us, and experienced by us, He gave us Truth accordant with each step. He taught us not only to learn the Truth, but also how to profit by that Truth. Knowledge thus acquired, then rightly applied, became in us "Wisdom". Knowledge that the Victim died for sin (and that means, among other things, for *my* sin; for *our* sins) led us humbly to seek our acquittal at God's hands, so that

henceforth there should be no condemnation laid to our charge.

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

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

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

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

It behoves every one who aspires to the prize of our high calling to brace himself for the severer conflicts and trials of faith and patience that may suddenly and without a moment's warning be sprung upon him. In the battle of this day, as in all battles, the effort of the Enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord's people; and the only preparation, therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God—the Truth and the spirit of Truth.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items.

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

"It shall greatly helpe to understande Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or wrytten, but

*of whom,
to whom,
with what words,
at what time,
where,
to what intent,
with what circumstances,
considering what goeth before,
and what followeth."*

* * *

To know Good and Evil (Gen. 3. 24)

An interesting line of thought is afforded by the assertion of scholars that the expression "is become" (*hayah*) in Gen. 3. 24 is in the preferite or "past" and is more correctly rendered "the man who was like us as to his knowledge of good and evil. . ." The importance of this lies in the fact that it was not the declension of humanity into sin that made him "become like one of Us"; on the contrary, it took him farther away from God. Rotherham remarks that "man in this verse is intended to refer to the species and not to an individual" (Adam) and viewed in this light the indication would be that man in his primitive state, before the Fall, was made like the "*elohim*"—the angels, in so far as his (progressive) knowledge of evil was concerned. The angels gained their knowledge of the distinction between good and evil by logical reasoning on the basis of the laws of God. Had man continued in harmony with his Creator he would have done the same, but he chose another way instead, and in consequence is reaping the fruits of that way—the way of bitter experience. Therefore is man barred from the Tree of Life—the powers of ever-continuing earthly life—until he has been reclaimed from the power of sin, brought into harmony with God, and regain the standing he lost in that early Paradise.

* * *

The "Only Begotten of the Father"

The term "only-begotten son" was in use among the Jews as an expression descriptive

of the "best-beloved" son. In both the Old and New Testaments it is used in this fashion. Genesis 22. 2, where Abraham's "only" son is referred to, is an example—for Isaac was not Abraham's only son in a literal sense. The Septuagint renders "only son" by "beloved son" in this Scripture. A New Testament instance is found in Heb. 11. 17. There are at least two examples in the writings of Josephus ("*Antiquities of the Jews*" Book 1, chap. 13. 1, and Book 20, chap. 2. 1), which is a confirmation of the custom. How apt then is the reference in Scripture to Jesus being the only begotten or best beloved son—as the writer of Proverbs 8 has it, "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him."

* * *

Agur and Lemuel (Prov. 30. 1 and 31. 1) were two kings of Massa, a tribe descended from a son of Ishmael (Gen. 25. 14). Although they are not named as such in the Bible, their names appear in certain South Arabian rock inscriptions from which it may be deduced that they were Arab chieftains known in some way to King Solomon. Perhaps the short discourses accredited to their authorship were brought to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba when she visited him, as samples of the wisdom of her land; for the Queen of Sheba (Saba in the inscriptions, in southwestern Arabia) was herself an Arab ruler.

* * *

Sentiments recorded of a saintly Moslem Arab woman, Rabiah al-Adawiyah (A.D. 717-801) would do credit to any one professing discipleship in the Christian way. Asked whether she hated Satan, her reply was "*My love for God leaves no room for hating Satan.*" She dreamed that the Prophet Mahomet asked of her love for him; she said "*My love for God has so possessed me that no place remains for hating aught or loving any save Him.*" Another of her sayings was "*I have not served God for fear of God, or love of Paradise, but only for the love of Him and the desire for Him.*"

* * *

The law of God, by the hammer of affliction, or by the smiting of judgment, may break the heart; but our hearts may be bruised and shattered by calamity and yet remain as frigid as an iceberg. It is the work of grace that is just as powerful to break the heart as to heal it.

BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

EXODUS

Part 3. Moses in Egypt

THE OPPRESSION

"And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation." (1. 6). That simple statement marks the end of an era. None who had known the old life in Canaan were left in Egypt. Joseph and Levi died something like seventy-five years after the settlement; the other sons of Jacob probably passed away at much the same time. Benjamin, ten years younger than Joseph, may have been the last to go. Their deaths coincided with a time of war and unrest. The Hyksos Pharaohs were being actively assailed by the native Egyptian warrior Aahmes, who eventually expelled them from the land and became the first Pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty. The Israelites saw this conflict at first hand, for the land of Goshen lay immediately adjacent to the Hyksos capital at Tanis, and the fiercest phase of the battle was around that city. After the expulsion things settled down very quickly in Egypt and this is the period to which verse 7 applies. The Israelites were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied, waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them. The expression "exceeding mighty" refers, not to political power as a people, but to individual physical strength. The unusual virility already manifest in Jacob and his family is evident also in his further descendants. The land of Goshen, situated in the fertile land of the eastern Nile delta, brought forth every kind of produce luxuriantly and gave ample support to their flocks and herds. It seems clear that they kept aloof from the political scene and were not involved in the warfare between native and foreign rulers and were left alone when at length the foreigners were expelled and Aahmes began to consolidate his newly-won empire.

"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph." (1. 8). This introduces a new era, that of the Exodus. It is a favourite theory that this statement indicates the change of dynasty and that the "new king" was Aahmes himself. This is unlikely. Aahmes had been warring against the Hyksos for many years and it is in the highest degree improbable that he was unacquainted with Joseph who had been so prominent on the political stage. He could easily have been a

young child at the time of the seven years' famine but must in any case have been well informed about Joseph's part in the salvation of Egypt. It is fairly evident that some time has to be allowed for the prosperity and the increase of Israel to become noticeable before the apprehensions of this "new king", expressed in verses 9 and 10, could be justified. A more likely supposition is that the "new king" who first introduced the policy of oppression, was Aahmes' grandson, Thothmes I, the father of the "Pharaoh's daughter" who rescued Moses, and in whose reign Moses was born. This would allow something over a century for the prosperity and increase of Israel, enough for five successive generations, and enough too for much of the memory of their fathers' faith in God to evaporate. The Israelites whilst in Egypt adopted many Egyptian customs and a great deal of Egyptian religion. There would always have been some like the parents of Moses, who retained faith in the God of Israel and believed that one day the nation would return to Canaan, but the majority were probably well content with their lot and rapidly becoming Egyptianised.

The words of Pharaoh in 1. 9 "*Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we*" have been consistently misunderstood to imply that they were numerically superior to the Egyptians. The word "*rab*" rendered "more" really means "many" and is so translated 220 times out of its 232 occurrences. "Mightier" is *atsum*, denoting physical strength and substantiality. Pharaoh's concern was that the Israelites had become "many" and were physically far superior to the lightly built Egyptians. He foresaw a future problem and menace here which he proposed to counter at once. It is unlikely that the Israelites numbered more than a few hundred thousand or so at that time but their rate of increase was spiralling up in much the same way that world population is doing to-day, and Pharaoh was looking to the future.

The first move was to put the people to forced labour in the public works—buildings, canal digging and so on. It is probable that, again at first, the duties came by rota, each man having a term to serve on the king's work and a term looking after his own

flocks and herds. This phase passed quickly into one amounting to virtual slavery in which the hapless Israelites found themselves torn from their homes and farms, and herded into gangs under "taskmasters" (1. 11) who afflicted them. The word for taskmasters is one often found on the ancient Egyptian monuments, and extremely frequently in the time of Thothmes III, the Pharaoh under whom Moses fled to Midian. This verse states that they "built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Rameses". The word means store cities, places for the laying up of such things as munitions of war. This verse has been one of the arguments for holding that the Exodus did not take place until the time of Rameses II of the 20th dynasty, two centuries later, since that Pharaoh claimed the credit for building the city of Rameses. It is known now that in fact the name was one applied to Tanis at a much earlier date, and in fact is referred to in Gen. 47. 11 as the place to which Jacob came when he entered Egypt. The Israelites enlarged and extended the buildings of the city under the Oppression. Pithom has also been identified in what was then the land of Goshen, both cities forming defence posts against possible invasion from the East.

The latter half of chapter 1, vs 15-22, has the rather strange story of the Hebrew midwives. Dissatisfied with the effect of his edicts against the Israelites, Pharaoh sent for the midwives and commanded them to destroy the male children at birth. Much perplexity has been caused by the fact that there were apparently only two midwives concerned, Shiphrah and Puah. It would seem as though considerably more than two women would be needed to meet the requirements of so rapidly increasing a people as Israel at this time. Students have suggested that these two were the leaders of a kind of fraternity or guild of midwives and were summoned before Pharaoh in that capacity to receive instructions which they were in turn to pass on to their colleagues. Another suggestion is that the king's edict was intended to apply to the sons of the chiefs among Israel only, those who would be potential leaders among the people, and that the rank and file of the nation were not affected. Considering that Pharaoh needed the Israelites for slaves and thus would not be likely to cut off the supply by this drastic means, there may be something to be said for the latter suggestion. On the other hand the purpose of the move was to slow down the rapid increase of Israel and this would not be met by the diminution of the

sons of chief men only; it is possible that the earlier suggestion is nearer the truth. In any case, the command had no effect for the midwives disregarded the instruction and at last Pharaoh was driven to instruct his own native subjects themselves to administer the law by drowning the Hebrew male children when they could.

Two strange expressions appear in this passage. "When ye do the office of a midwife" said Pharaoh "and see them upon the stools" (vs. 16). The literal meaning is "upon the stones" which does not make sense. It is thought that "abnaim" has been substituted for "banim" and that the correct rendering would be "when ye look upon the children" which makes the entire verse intelligible. The other is the statement in vs. 21 "it came to pass, that because the midwives feared God, that he made them houses". The meaning is that because of their loyalty God gave them families and so established their position in Israel.

The Oppression lasted for about one hundred years, through the reigns of four Pharaohs. During its course Moses was born, grew to manhood, left Egypt and dwelt in Midian, and at the time ordained by God came back as the Divine agent of Israel's deliverance. Chapter 2 tells the story of the birth of Moses and the first eighty years of his life.

MOSES IN EGYPT

Chapter 2 opens with the statement that a man of the house (tribe) of Levi took as wife a daughter of Levi (Dr. Young insists that this should be the definite article—the daughter of Levi). These were the parents of Moses, Amram the grandson and Jochebed the daughter, respectively, of Levi son of Jacob. Both were born in Egypt. Levi himself lived about 76 years after the entry into Egypt (Exod. 6. 16) so that Jochebed need not have been more than 80 or 90 at the birth of Moses, no more than Sarah at the birth of Isaac and not much more than Rachel at the birth of Benjamin. Elder children in the family whose names are recorded—there may have been others—were Aaron and Miriam; the latter must have been about seventeen years of age at the time, this being demanded by the word for "maid" in 1. 8 ("almah", denoting a girl of marriageable age).

Amram and Jochebed were pious folk and determined to save Moses alive. As the writer to the Hebrews says (Heb. 11. 23) "they were not afraid of the king's commandment". It is evident that they had acted similarly three years earlier in the case of Aaron the elder

brother of Moses. They occupied a responsible position in Israel; Amram was at this time the head of the tribe of Levi and ranked as a prince in Israel, one of the twelve leading men, his father Kohath having been dead more than twenty years.

In consigning her child to the mercy of the river Jochebed must have acted under some sort of Divine guidance. In the ordinary way such action must have spelt eventual death by drowning or otherwise. It is true that Miriam was posted to keep watch but this only supports the view that the parents expected something to happen. The expectation was fulfilled when the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river to bathe and found the child.

The daughter of Thothmes I was the famous Hat-shep-sut, who after his death ruled Egypt for some thirty years. At this time she was probably comparatively young and was married to her half brother Thothmes II, son of her father and a harem girl, and a physical weakling. Hat-shep-sut must have been the one who found and adopted Moses, and her marriage to the weakling Thothmes II may well be the answer to a question which has often been put and never satisfactorily answered; why did a daughter of Pharaoh, a princess of the land, choose to adopt and bring up as her own son a foundling Hebrew child which was under royal sentence of death anyway? Hat-shep-sut had no son of her own—later on there was a daughter, Nafrura, who died young—and her husband Thothmes II eventually had a son by another harem girl who became the next Pharaoh, Thothmes III. It may well have been that Pharaoh's daughter, despairing of presenting her ailing husband with an heir who should be of royal blood, and finding this healthy looking babe in the river, conceived the idea of passing him off as her own and eventually making him the heir apparent to the throne. One might well ask what other motive this highly-born princess could have had in acting as she did. And if this be the correct hypothesis—and it is difficult to construct another fitting the apparent facts so well—the temptation that presented itself to Moses as he grew up to manhood was a far more crucial one than is popularly supposed. The opportunity was his, upon the death of his alleged mother's husband, Pharaoh Thothmes II, of himself becoming Pharaoh of all Egypt, with all of the power and glory which that implied. As the reputed son of Hat-shep-sut he would possess a royal title to the throne which the

man who did eventually succeed, Thothmes III, son of a concubine, did not have. One wonders if the writer to the Hebrews had access to some details now denied us when he said of Moses "*By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of the anointed greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.*" (Heb. 11. 24, 26).

The stratagem by means of which the child was returned to his true mother is well known. Miriam, hovering near by, was despatched to fetch her mother and Jochebed found herself commissioned as nurse to the child which was in reality her own but was to be known to the world as the son of the princess and probably of her consort. This condition of things endured in all likelihood for only a very few years; when it was time for the child's education to begin he would be handed over to the court officials and Jochebed saw him no more. She must have felt, however, that this situation was of God and under his control and created for a great purpose, and was content.

Pharaoh's daughter called her adopted son "Moses", because, she said, I drew him out of the water. The princess was being rather clever here with a double play upon words. In Hebrew "Moses" is "*mosheh*" which is close to "*mashah*", to draw out. In Egyptian his name is close to "*mesu*" which means "son" and is itself derived from a root meaning to produce or to draw forth. *Ra-mesu* (Rameses) for example, means "son of the sun", a name borne by many later Pharaohs. It looks as though the child received an Egyptian name which sounded normal enough in Egyptian ears, but recalled the circumstances of his birth to those in the secret.

Five years or so after the child's birth Pharaoh Thothmes I, father of Hat-shep-sut, died, his daughter having acted as regent, ruling jointly with him, during that time. The weakly Thothmes II became nominal Pharaoh but his masterful wife remained the real ruler and arrogated to herself all the attributes and powers of Pharaoh. Under her wise and efficient administration Egypt enjoyed a relative freedom from war and some appreciable advance in the arts of peace. The Queen promoted an expedition of exploration to remote lands—probably eastern Africa or western India—which returned after several years with many hitherto unknown products

to enrich the glory of Egypt. Moses as a young man may have taken part in this expedition; Josephus asserts that he led a victorious army into Ethiopia and the tradition upon which he drew may in fact have been a distorted memory of this project.

After fourteen years Thothmes II died and Hat-shep-sut was left a widow. Moses would at this time be about twenty years of age. If the Queen did actually intend putting him forward as the rightful Pharaoh this would have been the time but in fact nothing of the kind happened. What she did do was to marry her stepson Thothmes III, the offspring of her husband and the harem girl Eset, a mere lad at the time, proclaim him Pharaoh and continue her own authoritative rule. It looks very much as if this was the time that Moses, being "come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter". Perhaps by now he had come to know the truth of his birth and already felt within him the stirring of that urge to be God's servant in the deliverance of his people which shaped his whole future life. He

need not necessarily have left the royal court and may have remained in high honour but the succession could have passed over him.

Twenty years later Hat-shep-sut also died leaving Moses without his royal protector. It is a remarkable circumstance that if the Exodus was truly in 1440 BC as is most reasonably thought then the Queen's death was in the fortieth year of Moses' life, the precise moment "*full forty years old*" (Acts 7. 23) that Moses had to flee Egypt on account of the slaying of the Egyptian. At this point in Exodus 2 (verse 15) Pharaoh's daughter no longer appears, but "Pharaoh" is in evidence seeking to slay Moses. This Pharaoh was Thothmes III, freed from the domination of his wife-stepmother and doubtless bearing no love for Moses anyway.

So ended the forty years' of Moses' life at the Egyptian court and the opening of a new one in a totally new environment, bringing with it new experiences.

(To be continued)

A NOTE ON JOHN 21.5

"Children, have ye any meat" is the Authorised Version's way of recording the question addressed by the waiting Lord, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, to the unsuccessful toil-weary fishermen after their night's fruitless work. While it is fairly obvious that Jesus was asking if they had caught any fish, He does not use the word usually equivalent to "fish" (*Ichthys*) but an entirely different and unrelated word (*Prosphagion*). This word has caused the translators and commentators no end of trouble, as reference to the various translations will show. We append a few of these translations to show the line of thought the various versions give.

"Children have ye aught to eat."

"My children, have you anything to eat."

"Children . . . have you any food there."

"Children, have you any food."

"Children, perhaps you have nothing to eat."

"Lads, have you any meat."

"Lads, have you got anything."

"Lads, have ye caught anything to eat."

"Little children, have ye any viands."

Obviously all the translators are referring to the fish they thought to have been in the net—and while Jesus is also referring to fish, He did not put his question that way. He used a word which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament, which really means "to eat with or alongside".

The force of this word was brought out very

vividly to an Englishman, resident in an official capacity in Palestine, during a journey from Tiberias to Jerusalem. He was well acquainted with the Arabic version of the New Testament and knew the Greek "*Prosphagion*" had been translated by the Arabic "*Idiam*", which, he had been led to believe, was more a classical word than a word of current usage. He had to stand in a crowded bus for about half the journey, but at Nablus—the nearest to Shechem, the Sychar of Jesus' day (John 4. 5)—a seat next to a Palestinian Jew became vacant.

Availing himself of this seat, he heard the Jew ask one of several boys who came round the bus offering food for sale, for two small loaves. On the top of each loaf was a "*kufta*" (or rissole) evidently intended to be eaten with the loaf. The Jew did not want the "*kufta*" and demanded the loaves without them. Indignantly the boy refused to accede to his demand, blurting out with considerable vexation, "What, sell my loaves without their '*Idiam*'?—never!"

The Englishman was greatly interested in the little episode. Here he had the key to the word which Jesus used. "*Prosphagion*" meant "something to eat with the bread", to make the bread go down—exactly as we to-day would eat butter, cheese, jam, and even meat and fish to help the bread along its way.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

Part 4. Chastened of God

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (vs. 5).

This is the second verse affirming the substitutionary character of our Lord's sufferings. He suffered these things by the hand of man and he endured them on behalf of man. Zechariah, more than two centuries later, must have remembered this passage when he cried "They shall look upon the one whom they pierced and shall mourn for him". The word here rendered "wounded" means "pierced" and has the significance of being thrust through with a weapon in a manner that inevitably causes death. Psa. 22. 16 uses the same word when in that noble lament that has so often been taken as prophetic of Jesus' sufferings—it certainly does at least refer to the sufferings of Israel as a nation—the Psalmist sings *"the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and feet"*. That prophecy was of course fulfilled literally in the case of Jesus on the Cross, as were so many of the other prophetic declarations of the 22nd Psalm. It is by no means unreasonable therefore to conclude that Isaiah, inspired as he was by the Holy Spirit of God, did have that Psalm in his mind as he uttered, and perhaps wrote, the splendid words of his 53rd chapter. The Lord's servant of Isa. 53, despised and rejected, is the same as the one who cries his solemn lament in Psa. 22. And just as in Psa. 22 the lament changes at the end into a joyful expression of faith in the eventual outcome, a confidence that at the end God will deliver and vindicate his loyal one, so in Isa. 53 the well-nigh hopeless strain turns at the end into a song of praise to God who has set the insignia of royalty upon the despised and rejected one, and vindicated and exalted him at last in the sight of all people. There is a correspondency between Psa. 22 and Isa. 53 that is well worth studying.

When Zechariah spoke of the great mourning that is to sweep regathered Israel in the last days (Zech. 12) consequent upon their looking upon the One Whom they had pierced, it is this final vindication which he sees. Isaiah and the writer of Psalm 22 saw this final glorious outcome from the standpoint of God in heaven; the faithful servant who had endured unto death, innocently, willingly taking the

place of the sons of men who themselves had merited this judgment, exalted at last to the right hand of the majesty on high, as the writer to the Hebrews puts it. Zechariah, on the other hand, is standing on the earth at the Last Day. He sees the regathered and resurrected Israelites of all nations gathered around their King, the once rejected and crucified Saviour, and now they are weeping tears of contrition and repentance. Through that mourning will come cleansing, and ultimately reconciliation with God and a lifting of the burden of all their transgressions and all their sins. It is in that sense that He was pierced for their transgressions and for those of the whole world.

"Bruised for our iniquities". The Hebrew is far more forceful. *"He was crushed."* It is the strongest word the Hebrew language has to denote severity of suffering unto death. Isaiah uses the word elsewhere. In 3. 15 he says *"What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces . . . saith the Lord."* That was a question addressed directly to those who were oppressing the people of the Lord and destroying them by their rapacity. Again, in describing the coming doom of the Egyptians, he says in 19. 10 *"they shall be broken in the purposes thereof"*. Pierced to death for our transgressions; crushed into lifelessness for our iniquities; that was the destiny to which his great love for the world of men which God had made led him, that He might eventually save that world. To say that He died for our sins is a simple truth but a tremendous understatement of the facts. It was in conditions of well-nigh inconceivable suffering that our Lord gave his life in our behalf. He did not merely die for us; He also suffered for us.

"The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed". Here we begin to enter a new realm, the consequences of these things to us. This word, the chastisement of our peace, means literally the chastisement by which our peace is effected. The word does mean to chastise as with whips and is so used in the memorable passage where Rehoboam promised his subjects that where his father Solomon had chastised them with whips he would do so with scorpions. The expression really does refer therefore to a scourging inflicted if not by way of punishment at least in order to coerce into submis-

sion. But the word is derived from a root which means "to instruct"; the dividing line between chastening and instruction is very thin in the Bible. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is a maxim that has support in the Old Testament. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth". We might therefore, without wresting the meaning of this verse, take it to give some indication at least that the chastisement laid upon our Lord was in some sense a means of chastening or instructing the sons of men in the way that leads to peace. That brings us very near again to the doctrine of the Sin-Offering. "He hath made him to be sin (a sin-offering, this word means) for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him". (2 Cor. 5. 21). Once again we have to remember that it is by means of the "Ransom for All", our Lord's actual death on the Cross, that all men without exception are released from the death imposed on them through Adamic transgression, and restored to conscious life in the resurrection to receive the opportunity of reconciliation and lasting life guaranteed them by that Ransom; but it is by the Sin-Offering, pictured in the Levitical sacrifice in our Lord's conscious pouring out of his life unto death (Isa. 53. 12) that men will receive the power and inspiration necessary to reap the benefit of the Ransom and walk up the Highway of Holiness to perfection of life. That is why, here in verse 5, Isaiah tells us that both the suffering and the discipline which alike are included in the word "chastisement" is laid upon him that we might eventually attain peace. In those stripes which fell upon him we shall at the end be healed. The Book of Hebrews declares this same thing. "It became him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 2. 10; 5. 8-9). There is much in the mystic power for righteousness set free by the Sin-Offering that we do not as yet understand, but one of its most obvious aspects is the moral appeal to men's better nature engendered by the realisation that He did indeed willingly bear our griefs and carry our sorrows and accept our chastisement. It is that more than anything else which will lead men to cry out rapturously "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us.

This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation". (Isa. 24. 9).

There is a cryptic word in the Book of Proverbs which has some connection with this theme. "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise." (Prov. 15. 31). That word "reproof" is the same that is here rendered "chastisement", and it has the same underlying meaning. The "reproof of life" is that stern discipline, chastening, amounting when necessary to chastisement, which leads the subject of the "reproof" to life. The following verse declares that the one who refuses instruction is a despiser of his own soul. The one who willingly becomes subject to the reproof of life, the discipline, chastening, which is necessary to eternal life, shall abide among the wise—a clear reference to those who at the consummation of the Divine Plan in the end of the Millennial Age will be adjudged worthy. So we can look upon our Lord as one who willingly took upon himself the obligations and duties, the humiliation and suffering, of those who must receive chastening at God's hand that they be reconciled to him and fitted for their eternal inheritance. He stooped down to us and became as one of us, that we might be lifted up to him and become like him, sons of the living God.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (vs. 6).

Irresistibly we are reminded here of the good Shepherd, the One who gave his life for the sheep. It is because they have strayed, strayed away from the safety of the fold, and strayed into danger, that He is called upon to give his life in their defence and for their recovery. One of the most revealing discourses of Jesus, penetrating into the very centre of fundamental doctrinal truth, is that which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel. The reclaiming power and love of God, manifested in Christ, toward unregenerate man is shown forth in three illustrations of everyday. The one hundred sheep, of which one was lost—and found; the ten pieces of silver, of which one was lost—and found; the two sons, of which one was lost—and found; these three witness to the one great and indisputable truth, that none will be lost for want of the selfless love of God, reaching out into the dark recesses of sin to draw the wanderer back to himself. The old orthodox theology made it a hard thing to evade the stern barrier of Divine Justice and

enter at last through the golden door into the bliss of heaven; the plain teaching of Jesus as revealed in the Gospels is that it will be, on the contrary, a very hard thing to escape from the encirclement of Divine Love and fail to inherit the green fields and sparkling streams of Paradise. The Son of Man, like the Good Shepherd of Luke 15, has come forth into the world to seek and save that which was lost, and resolute indeed must be the man who wills so to steep his heart in sin and steel himself against every form of righteousness that the love of the Redeemer has no effect upon him. We must hold very rigidly to the Divine declaration that nothing unclean or defiled by sin shall enter the Kingdom of God; none save those reconciled to God by faith in Jesus Christ and acceptance of him as Saviours shall ever be admitted to the glory of God's favour and attain everlasting life. Nevertheless we do not have to conclude that on this account the number of the redeemed is to be few. The "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" has to be reckoned with. He has decreed that the whole earth shall one day be full of his glory. He has declared that his word does not return to him void, but prospers in the thing whereto it is sent. It is when we ponder Scriptures like these that we realise what tremendous force and power for good is let loose in the world when God sets himself to recover his lost creatures, and how hard it is going to be for any man to remain wilfully and incorrigibly obdurate in the face of that out-reaching love.

That some will be thus wedded to their sin, despite all the efforts made on their behalf and opportunities put in their path, seems fairly certain from the general tenor of the Scriptures. Some there will be, it would appear, who will fulfil the dark words of Rev. 21. 8 and meet their end in the utter destruction which is the reality behind the lurid symbol of the fiery lake. We can only hope, and we have good reason to believe, that the number will be small compared with the vast numbers of redeemed and reconciled mankind. The parable of the sheep and goats related in Matt. 25 gives no hint as to the relative numbers of the two classes, the ultimately saved and the ultimately lost but we are on reasonably safe ground when we conclude that there will be a great number of sheep and relatively few goats.

But meanwhile the sheep are lost; they wander still in this world, waiting for the shepherd to find them and lead them home, and not even conscious, for the most part, that

they are lost and need a Shepherd. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way." How like the bitter words of Rom. 1. 28 "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things . . ." and so it goes on until the dreadful climax in 3. 23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". There are the lost sheep, far from the warmth and light of the Father's home, and here is the Shepherd, making his way through this dark world to find the wandering ones and bring them safely back.

But it is not just a question of picking up the straying sheep and carrying it back and putting it down in the sheepfold just as if nothing had happened. Sin and the effects of sin are not dealt with so easily and casually as that. Lest anyone, reading without considering, should think that is all that there is in the Luke 15 story, the Lord adds an epilogue. The sheep has been restored, safe and sound, and there is rejoicing. "Likewise" said Jesus, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth". Of little use is it bringing home the straying sheep if next day it is going to get lost again; or finding the lost piece of silver only to mislay it again; or greeting the returning prodigal if a week later, refreshed and revitalised, he sets out once more on a fresh career of dissipation and debauchery. There has to be repentance for past sin and there has to be atonement for past sin. The insult to God's holiness is not lightly to be set aside, and the damage to the sinner's character is not easily rectified. So the Saviour not only carries the exhausted frame of the sinner back to God; He also bears the burden of his sin. That is what this verse says. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The literal meaning of the Hebrew phrase is that "the Lord hath caused to meet him, the iniquity". Iniquity has met him in the road and blocks his way. The word really refers to such things as the old-time avenger of blood meeting the man for whom he is searching and whom he means to slay in satisfaction for the murder of a kinsman. The custom is alluded to in Num. 35. 19. "The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him." That word "meeteth him" is the same as "laid on him" in Isa. 53. And in Isa. 53, the implication behind the expression is very clear. The One who goes forth to seek and save the sinner is met in the way by the sinner's own sin, and that sin overcomes and slays him. "Christ also hath once

suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3. 18). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree . . . by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop (*episkopos*—guardian or overseer) of your souls." (1 Pet. 2. 24-25).

Sin met him in the way—and He went forth, calm and resolute, to meet it. He knew that it would encompass his death, but He knew also that only thus could He defeat sin and break its power. We think too often of Jesus the bearer of sin in the sense that Divine Justice demands a sin-bearer before the sentence on a guilty race can be lifted. We think not often enough of the fact that Jesus must bear the sin of the world in order to break the power of sin over the individual. Divine forgiveness of sins is ineffective until the sinner repents; and after repentance Divine Justice has no further claim. There is no reopening old scores once the repentant one has entered into a condition of reconciliation with God, only the inevitable working out of retribution for the deeds done in the body, which none can escape. So it is of the more importance that we consider the bearing of sin by Jesus as it affects the repentant sinners rather than as it affects God. We want to know just how it is that this amazing manifestation of Jesus' love for mankind can result in the reconciliation of man to God and the renunciation by man of all evil.

There is a story, said to be true, of a missionary some century or more ago who devoted his life to teaching a primitive tribe of head-hunters in Eastern Asia. Slowly he weaned them from their savage practices and by his love and kindness endeared himself to all their hearts. Suspicious of strangers they remained, but for their pastor and shepherd they had nothing but the tenderest feelings of love, and they listened patiently and attentively as he talked to them of the love of Christ and attended their ailments and helped them in their troubles.

Before his coming the tribe had an annual ceremony at which a human victim was sacrificed, in the belief that by this means the weather would be propitious and the crops successful. The missionary had persuaded them to abandon that savage practice, not without considerable reluctance on their part, for they could not be sure that the orderly succession of sowing and reaping would go on uninterruptedly without the customary offering to the powers of Nature. When the

harvests were good, all was well, but in years of drought and failing crops the men of the tribe were restive and it took all their teacher's influence to keep them from a relapse into the old bad ways.

Years passed by, and then one day a deputation waited on the missionary. The old urge was back, and they insisted that they must be permitted to hold their ceremony and sacrifice a victim. In their reverence and respect for the one who had devoted his whole life to their welfare they had come to him for permission, but his permission they must have and they would not be gainsaid. The old man realised that this time he would not be able to resist them and turn them from their purpose; their hearts were set upon sacrifice and a sacrifice they must have. He bent his head in silent prayer, and turned then to face the waiting deputation. "You shall have your request," he told them sadly, "but on condition that you follow my instructions to the letter." Overjoyed at having achieved their purpose, they assented gladly. "Tomorrow," said the old man, "you will go at the appointed time to your usual place of sacrifice. There you will see a man standing clothed in a scarlet cloak and his head covered with a scarlet hood. Do not attempt to look upon his features, but without delay do you accomplish your design. Now go, my children."

At the set time next day the tribesmen went up to the place of sacrifice. There stood the victim, just as the missionary had told them. With shouts and cries of exultation they surged forward. The man appointed for the purpose swung his great sword, and with one stroke cut off the head of the motionless figure before him . . . the scarlet hood rolled off and the horror-stricken natives looked upon the features of their beloved pastor.

It is said that never after that day did the people crave after sacrifice and idolatrous ceremonies. Through all their generations they cherished the memory of a man who, when he could save them from themselves in no other way, did it by laying down his life, a willing sacrifice.

In all our philosophising about the Atonement and the meaning of our Lord's death for man, it may be that we are never so near the truth as we are when we read that little story. Had there been another way of saving mankind, surely God would have taken it. Maybe it was because there was no other way, because only by giving his life as the supreme sacrifice, that Jesus came out into the world to find lost mankind, and, coming out, met sin

in the way, and gave himself to be overcome by sin and return to his Father's house bringing the lost ones with him. All we, like sheep,

have gone astray—but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(To be continued)

“ AND PETER ”

A story of the
tenderness of Jesus

In the grey light of an early dawn three women approached timidly to a rock-hewn vault on an errand of love. They had come, as early as the Sabbath laws and the darkness of night allowed, to complete a work performed in haste before the Sabbath day began. When the One they loved and followed had been lowered from the Cross and borne to His quiet resting-place, these ministering souls had enfolded in the winding-sheets some small supply of aromatic spice. The near approach of the day of rest had cut short the embalming work, and the body of the Lord had been laid aside and left until the law permitted this service to the dead to be resumed (Luke 23. 56). With astonishment they found the sealing stone removed; by whom, or how, they did not know. Peering into the dark recess, they thought to see the swathed recumbent form of their beloved Lord, upon which, with busy hands, they hoped at length to complete the needed work. Entering within, they found not the body of the Lord, although the grave-clothes lay in their place. To their surprise a living angel from on high replaced the holy dead, whose radiant form struck wonderment and awe into their hearts.

Sensing their fear, the angel spoke, and told them that their Master was alive again, just as He had told them in earlier days. "Go tell these things to His disciples, and Peter, and tell them He will see them in Galilee." ". . . and Peter! . . ." "To His disciples, and Peter . . ." as though, for his grievous sin, Peter would think he had now no right to esteem himself the Lord's disciple.

These were the angel's words, but they revealed the Master's love. He who told the angel to say that He proposed to meet them in Galilee was He from whom those two comforting words had come. Jesus did not forget the broken anguished heart which wept so sorely at its fall. Jesus had known His man prior to those searching days. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" said Jesus to His then braggart friend (Luke 22.

32). Jesus knew His man, even though he failed and fell, and knew how to soothe and heal his broken heart.

But the Lord did more than that. Somewhere before that first day was done, the Lord had found Peter alone, and disclosed Himself to Peter's tearstained eyes. "*He was seen of Cephas*" (1 Cor. 15. 5). "*The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon*", replied "*the eleven*" (Luke 24. 34) to the returned ones from Emmaus.

What passed between the Lord and the stricken penitent is veiled in sacred obscurity, but who can doubt that no words of chiding or reproof passed from the Master's lips, but words of soothing tenderness that fell like healing balm on Peter's wounded heart.

". . . and Peter!" Let us write it now "and John! . . . and Mary! . . . and Frank! . . . and Harriet! . . . and . . .!"—every one who in times of strain has failed and fallen to the dust. It needs not to have been Peter's grievous sin, but each one's own particular slip—that rapier word! that chilling glance! that wounding act! that seeming wrong! sad sequence of a moment's lack of thought.

When the chastened heart, in retrospect, looks back upon its hasty fall, let it remember that a watchful eye has seen it all, and in assuring answer to its tears will say again, ". . . and Peter" ". . . and John" ". . . and Harriet" "and . . . and . . ." And so He keeps His "own" by His own word, in His own way.

Joy of heart lies in the fact that every hour of life we can be dispelling shadows. We must feel joy before we can radiate it. The world is scintillating with gladness, if we only have eyes to see it. There is the joy of Nature and of Beauty; the joy of human companionship and spiritual fellowship; the joy of worship and communion with Infinite Love; and the joy of partnership with Infinite Power. How can we be miserable?

AN INCORRUPTIBLE CROWN

An encouragement
to endeavour

"Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. 3. 11).

The possibility of losing the crown of life, even though that crown seem to be almost within one's grasp, is a very real one. Whenever the New Testament speaks of the award that awaits faithful disciples the conditional nature of that award is stressed. It is not the one who enters into a covenant with God, and is accepted by him in the High Calling, who is to receive an abundant entrance into the Kingdom, but the one who wins his Lord's approval by patient continuance in well-doing. He is the one who eventually receives the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love him. In the meantime, during the span of the life time, be it short or long, during which that consecration is being worked out, there is always the possibility of the promised crown being lost. Not that God is ever unfaithful or that He will change his mind or vary the terms of the offer. His unchangeable Plan ever stands and so far as He is concerned the acceptance of a disciple into the race for the prize is as good as saying that the prize is already won. What He has promised He is abundantly able to perform. The decision rests with us. If we continue, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny himself (2 Tim. 2. 13). But if we deny him, then He cannot do other than deny us, for He ever respects our free will and if we deliberately take ourselves out of his love and care by repudiating the terms of our covenant with him there is really nothing He can do about it—not in this present Age anyway.

The loss of a crown is rarely so simple a matter as this. The responsibility for the change of mind or loss of faith which involves such disaster is all too often to be laid at the door of others, and in the last analysis, the great Adversary of God and man, Satan himself. That is why the risen Christ in his message to the Church at Philadelphia, and through that message to all Christians everywhere, beseeches us earnestly *"Take heed that no man take thy crown"*. There are so many in this world who can, wittingly or unwittingly, become the means of robbing the unwary disciple of his promised crown. It is not that they win it or even desire it for themselves but their influence on the life can be such that they have taken the crown from the one who might otherwise have had it, and destroyed

his hopes of joint-heirship with Jesus the Lord.

It is a very appropriate symbol of the Christian life, this metaphor used so much by the Apostle Paul. It was taken from his knowledge of the Greek games of his day. All the early Christians were familiar with the games. They occupied as prominent a place in the life of the people as does organised sport in the world's social life to-day. In one respect they differed. The competitors were required to go into very strict training long before the day and encouraged to lay aside every other interest in order to be as fit as possible for the event; when then the great day came they were expected to manifest much more than usual physical prowess in order to gain the approval of the judges.

In the great national annual games of the Greeks—the Olympic games, recently revived in Western Europe, was one such event—preparations began ten months beforehand, and those chosen to compete in the actual contest were already known to be fit men and measurably prepared for the trials of strength and endurance they would be called upon to undergo. In like manner, we are told, no man can come to Jesus except the Father, who is overseeing the interests of his work in the world of this Age, draw him. Who does the Father draw? Quite obviously those whose hearts are already turned toward him to some extent or who are seen by him to possess those qualities and that disposition which will make them amenable to his leading and his instruction when once they have been brought face to face with Christ and have accepted him. Right at the outset we have to accept the fact that God, who knows every one of his creatures so well, is busy, through the medium of his Holy Spirit, ceaselessly working in the world, selecting those whose hearts are likely to be responsive and bringing them into touch with his truth. That is where the work of his ambassadors, his witnesses, comes in. They are agents of the Holy Spirit, sharing in this search for likely candidates for the great contest.

Now here is a candidate who has heard the call, and answered it, and has progressed through the successive stages of repentance, belief in and acceptance of Jesus and his redemptive death, justification through faith in him, and consecration of life to be dead

with him. Not all who are led by the Spirit of Jesus, who are "drawn" of God, progress even to this point. Many are called, but not so many accept the call. Some there are, like the rich young ruler, who come within measurable distance of the High Calling and appreciate something of its glories, but turn away at the last moment, unwilling to pay the price that is asked. But here is a candidate who has done all these things and has been entered for participation in the race. He is accepted by the Father as a member of the Church in the flesh—he has come "into Christ"—he has been buried with him by baptism into his death and has risen to walk with him in newness of life—old things have passed away and all things have become new, for he is now a "new creature in Christ Jesus"—and as he walks on to the course and crosses the starting line he squares his shoulders for the effort and hears the judges' assuring admonition "Fainful is he that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5. 24). In his own zealous and hopeful condition of mind the prize is already his, for he fully intends to complete the course and win the crown.

Now there were two kinds of races to which allusion is made in the New Testament and the peculiarities of each should be kept in mind if we are to draw right conclusions. There was first of all the short foot races, in which a number of competitors ran to determine who could reach the finishing line first, and the first one to do so was acclaimed victor and crowned with the laurel or parsley wreath (the "crown" which is referred to in the New Testament). The other was the much longer course, usually of many miles in length, in which the object was to show how many of the competitors could summon sufficient endurance to run the whole distance. In this case each one who "finished the course" received a laurel wreath as victor; those who dropped out by the wayside through inability to finish the course were losers, and received no wreath.

The first, the short race, is the one mentioned in 1 Cor. 9. 24 "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain". Now this must not be interpreted to mean that of all who enter the race for the prize of the High Calling only one disciple will eventually win that prize; such a thought is an obvious absurdity. The Apostle's meaning is that just as in a worldly race each competitor, knowing that the first past the tape will receive the prize, puts forth every possible en-

deavour to run his best, hoping thus to outdistance his rivals, just so, says Paul, should the Christian run, putting forth every endeavour. As he says in another place "this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in God in Christ Jesus". (Phil. 3. 14). "So run, that ye may obtain." The other type of contest, an example of which was the well-known Marathon, in which all the contestants sought to stay the course and all who did so received crowns, is a much closer analogy to the life of the Christian and this is the one alluded to by Paul in 2 Tim. 4. 8 when at the end of his life he looked back and said "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day". He knew that he was close to death; he knew that he must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ and that decision would then be pronounced as to his worthiness or unworthiness of the crown of life, he knew that now, so late in his Christian life, so near to its end, the things that now lay in the past must determine the issue, and looking back over the way he had come he exulted in the knowledge that his faith had held firm, his integrity before God was inviolate, he had finished the course and come to the end of the way still trusting in Christ, and therefore without any doubt the wreath of victory was his—even although its actual bestowal must wait for the end. Paul had once referred to the possibility of his becoming a castaway (1 Cor. 9. 27) and that knowledge was always with him through life as it must be with us; but now that he realised within himself the end was at hand, he rejoiced in the knowledge that he had finished the course without falling out by the wayside and so losing his crown, or giving heed to men who might seduce him from the course and so in that way rob him of his crown. "Take heed, that no man take thy crown."

We are in the same position as Paul. While we are yet in the running of the race, still on the course, there is always the possibility of our turning aside and failing to finish. It is only when we arrive at its end that we can say as did Paul "I have finished the course and now the crown is mine". We do well to remember that the judgment is given, not on account of the work which we have done or the knowledge which we have gained, but purely on account of our loyalty to our Lord,

our faithfulness to our covenant, and our sincerity of purpose. Whilst we retain these things we are still on the course and must eventually reach its end and win the promised crown. But until then the snares and delusions of the world, the flesh and the Devil, the effects of disillusionment and discouragement and unbelief, will always be seeking to destroy our faith and draw us away from God, and that means becoming unfit for his purposes, and unworthy of his Kingdom, and in the end involves the loss of the crown. It is only he that endureth to the end who is to be saved. *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation"* (or proving) says the beloved James *"for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of righteousness which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"* (Jas. 1. 12). Note well that the crown is bestowed *after* the man has been tried (tested, proven worthy) and the plain implication is that if he does not stand the proving and the trying process, then he loses the crown. Exhorting the elders of the Church to faithfulness in the discharge of their duties, Peter says (1 Pet. 5. 4) *"When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"*. That is conditional upon faithfulness to their charge. And to seal all these words with his own approval, our Lord says to all his Church and each member thereof *"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev. 2. 10).

In the clear light of so many Scriptures how plain it is that our whole Christian calling is altogether and completely conditional, and that we have it within our own power to make or mar our future, to win or to lose the crown of life. To be sure, there is room in the "Church of the Firstborn" beyond the Vail for all who may be drawn of the Father, hear the call, accept same, and enter into the Narrow Way that leads to life. It is quite unthinkable and quite out of accord with the fundamental principles of the Divine Plan to consider that the Father would call any who remain faithful and yet could not at the end be awarded the prize for which they had run and which they have merited. Whatever may be the truth regarding any question of a pre-determined limit to the number of the "Elect" or of God's foreknowledge regarding the number who will eventually be faithful, we must hold as an essential article of faith that all who are called, who enter, and are faithful, will receive the promise. There can be no shadow of doubt about that.

Upon the other hand, we should not interpret the Scriptures to teach that each one who receives the call and is accepted by God as a member of the New Creation must inevitably progress the whole length of the course and receive the crown. That is equally a violation of fundamental Scriptural principle. So far as the Father is concerned, it could well be said that the entry into the race is as good as the end of the race, for having once accepted a human heart in his covenant the Lord guarantees that He, on his part, will abide faithful. His power will bring us through "more than conquerors" if we allow him. But this is an agreement between two parties both having free-will. God can guarantee his own part; He cannot guarantee ours. He abideth faithful and bestows upon us the inestimable blessing of his Holy Spirit to be a guide and a counsellor through life, but with that the issue rests with us. It is only if we abide faithful also that the end of the course can be attained. To what end God does or can see that end before we have reached it, and know the result of our race before that result is attained, is not really of consequence so far as we are concerned. What we do know and what the Scriptures constantly warn us against is the possibility of our falling away from the faith we have accepted, by so doing demonstrating our unworthiness for the purpose for which God is calling us, and so, inevitably, losing the crown which otherwise we might have had. "No man" said Jesus *"putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."* He knew, only too well, the danger that would confront all his followers in after days, of setting out with high hopes, and then, for one reason or another rejecting the High Calling into which they had entered, and losing everything. The Father requires of us faith, belief, sincerity. These are the essential factors which will carry us safely through all the besetments of life and bring us at last into the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, at that right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.

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



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

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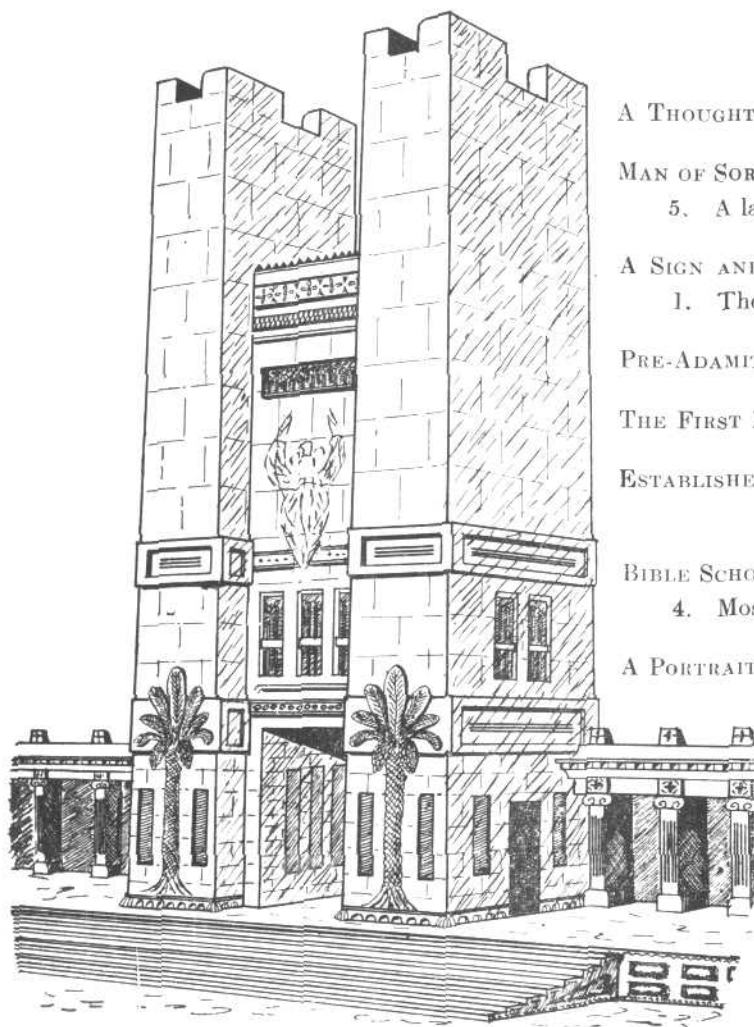
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Thought for the Month

"The kings of the earth set themselves; and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed" (Psa. 2, 2).

The noble words of the Second Psalm are not always given the attention which is their due. That they constitute a foreview of the world situation at the end of the Age is obvious from the reference to the Son receiving his power and commencing his reign over the nations. This is the time when, despite all the opposition and intransigence of the kingdoms of this world, the Divine Lord from heaven commands earth's warring factions to recognise his supreme authority, and submit to the righteous administration of his kingdom on earth. This is an event which will surely come, in the evening of human sovereignty in the world, the time of which it is said *"the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 11, 15). The powers of this Age will not give up without a struggle; they will assemble themselves in battle array before the heavenly forces, but the weapons of heaven are greater by far than all the scientific weapons of man, even of man in this present and imminent future time, and the forces of heaven will prevail. The vision of Rev. 19, where the kings of the earth and their armies are gathered together to make war on the Rider on the white horse, who appears with his followers from the celestial world, is the splendid imagery of that struggle.

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

"The kings of the earth and of the whole world" says the Revelator (16, 14) are gathered together to the battle of that great day of God almighty.

Recent events pinpoint the grim significance of that phrase. There is a tendency among many students of the prophetic word to water down the universality of this opposition to God and his Kingdom. Quite understandably, many Christians feel that their own country and countrymen are not so heinous in the sight of God as their country's political opponents. Britain and America, and to a lesser extent Christian Europe, seem to many of us to be more on the Lord's side than those other great world powers who may be more vocal in their objections to Christianity. The hand of the Lord will fall more heavily upon them than upon us; we may even get into the Kingdom relatively unscathed! How history does repeat itself! The Jews of old felt exactly the same about the Gentiles; too wicked to live and the Lord would punish them, and exalt his own people. But instead—*"the Kingdom of Heaven is taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21, 43). Still stand the words of the revealing angel *"the kings of the earth and of the whole world"*—there is no duplication in the Greek; the statement means the kings of the entire inhabited earth—admitting of no compromise. That is why the current nuclear test ban agreement between America and Russia is of such moment. True it may be that the immediate cause of this measure of agreement is the menacing shadow of Red China, rapidly moving to a position of equality in strength with the other Powers and numbering within its frontiers nearly one third of living mankind. But if two such Powers, despite their differences, begin to find common cause in face of the threat from the third, how long before all three line up together in face of the greater threat from Heaven—and Revelation 19 find its fulfilment in reality?

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

Part 5. A lamb to the slaughter

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." (vs. 7).

In all his sufferings there was never a word of complaint that passed the Saviour's lips. That is the thought behind this declaration that although he was oppressed and afflicted he "opened not his mouth". Jesus said so often and emphatically that He had come to do the will of his Father, and in the carrying out of that will He found no cause for remonstrance or unwillingness with the Father, no shadow of impatience or reluctance, no whisper of complaint or question. His meat was to do the will of the One who had sent him, and to finish his work. Nothing else mattered. That is a lesson we do well to take to ourselves. All too often we accept with gladness and thanksgiving the sunshine and flowers of the Christian way but directly the shadow of adversity falls athwart our pathway we commence to grumble and complain. We do need so to prepare ourselves in the sunny days that if in his providence darker and stormier times are to come upon us we take those seasons of adversity in just the same thankful and loyal spirit in which we formerly received the good things. It is not often—in our own country at any rate—that oppression and affliction comes upon the child of God in consequence of his faith; not real, intense oppression and affliction, anyway. We have not been called upon to suffer for his sake as some of our forbears were called upon, or even as some of our own brethren at this present day in certain other lands. And it behoves us therefore, while being humbly thankful that our Master has seen fit to withhold such experiences from us, so to school ourselves that we shall bear them without complaint, without opening our mouths, if such things should come. In the meantime we do well to remember that in many of the experiences of every-day we do tend to become impatient and quarrelsome, with each other if not with our Lord, and it were good for all of us that we learn well how to endure the harder things of the Christian life without the opening of the mouth.

This prophetic picture of the being brought as a lamb to the slaughter is the basis upon which the entire later picture of Jesus as the

"Lamb of God," the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world" is built. Isaiah's words here are in turn taken from the Passover sacrifice, the lamb that was slain to become the symbol of deliverance from Egypt. Grammatically the phrase should properly be translated "He is brought as *the* lamb to the slaughter," and the reference is not to any casual lamb, taken to a slaughter house in everyday life, but to the Passover lamb itself, ready on the fourteenth day to be slaughtered so that Israel could be delivered. Without the blood of that slain lamb on the portals and lintels of their houses there could be no salvation. Without the Divine acceptance of that proffered sacrifice there could be no call to come out of Egypt and meet with God before the holy mount. Without the outward evidence that the Lamb had indeed been slain the destroying angel had no mandate to withdraw his sword. It was supremely important for every Israelite that he not only trusted in the blood of the slain lamb but that he made a public exhibition of the fact on the doorposts and lintels of his house in such fashion that the angel could see it. It was not so important at this moment that the Egyptians see it as that the Divine Messenger see it. And so it is with us; important though it is that we heed well the exhortation to be his witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth and so confess Jesus before men, it is even more important that in the privacy and sanctity of our homes we confess Jesus before God. Our knowledge of the Divine plan will not save us; our many and wonderful and mighty works will avail us not; our profession of consecration before God will not be accounted of any worth, if we have not accepted and confessed Jesus the Son of God and the Saviour of us all.

That confession needs to be of Jesus the despised and rejected, the oppressed and afflicted, too. It is not sufficient to own him only when He appears as the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, or when He is seen a King, mighty to save, travelling in the greatness of his strength. These things are true of Jesus, but they belong to an Age yet future, and for the present we have to remember that He is still despised and rejected of men, and the servant is not to be greater than his lord. There is a tendency

to-day in some quarters to represent Christianity as something vigorous and militant in the physical, worldly sense, something that is very much akin to this world as it is with its soldiering and its prize-fights and its hail-fellow-well-met, and to put aside the sacrificial and suffering aspect as a regrettable lapse into effeminacy and weakness not to be tolerated in this modern age. Evangelical campaigns publicise their champions in photographs which represent them something of a cross between a gymnasium instructor off-duty and an advertisement for somebody's toothpaste. We know that a Christian should be healthy and vigorous, self reliant and upstanding. We have an Apostolic admonition to rejoice continually and quite obviously that rejoicing should find outward expression in our features. We should be pleasant and cheerful in our dealings with all men. But these are not the things which necessarily denote the true followers of the Master. There is sorrow and sadness for the sin and misery of mankind which must find its place in the Christian life, and become an evidence of the "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (Col. 1. 24), as well as the brightness and cheer which at the right time and in the right place evidences that inward joy in the Gospel which is the possession of us all. There are the shoulders bowed down with other men's burdens, health and vitality freely given in the service of one's fellow-men, evidence of those who are walking "as He walked" and are pouring out their lives unto death as He did. This modern world takes little heed of such and it is a tragedy that the modern professedly Christian world is becoming infected with the same spirit and in the effort to show that Christianity is not the sombre, jaundiced, sanctimonious thing that was so often represented as such a century or more ago, has gone to the other extreme and rejected the inner life for the purely superficial. In our happiest and most cheerful moments we do well to remember that we are followers of the One who went quietly, silently but resolutely, as the lamb to the slaughter.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken." (vs. 8).

As we come to this eighth verse it begins to be impressed on our minds that we are now reading a description of the trial, death and burial of Christ, written some seven hundred years before the event. It is impossible to read

verse 7 to 9 without noting how accurately the prophecy was fulfilled in history. His passive acceptance of arrest and being brought before the judges; his silence before them; the injustice of his so-called trial, they are all here. The sentence of death and its execution, innocent though He was of any crime, and the burial of his body in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea; all is faithfully forthshown in this remarkable prophecy. No wonder the agnostics and the critics have been hard put to it to explain this chapter away. There is no way of accounting for its existence but by admitting that the words were framed by one who has the power to see into the future—and only the Most High can do that.

This eighth verse pictures the trial and death of Jesus. The first phrase is more correctly translated "He was taken through oppression and judgment". The word "judgment" here has the meaning of a judicial sentence, as when a Judge of the High Court "delivers judgment" at the end of the case he has been hearing. This verse tells us that Jesus, having been taken by his enemies "as a lamb for the slaughter" was led through the remainder of the bitter proceeding, still unresisting, still silent, through the oppression of the mock trials before the Sanhedrin, before Herod, before Pilate, and finally through the last scene of all, when Pilate "gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23. 24). He was taken through the oppression of the trials, the mocking, the scourging; hostility of the priests and the clamour of the crowd, but it was his Father Who was taking him by sure and safe guidance through all the pain and shame of his death into the glory beyond. He was taken through the unjust sentence that was passed on him by the Roman governor, a judgment that was dictated not by Roman law nor even by Roman policy, but purely and simply because of the craven fear of Pilate, confronted by a raging mob and ready to do anything to allay the tumult. But it was the Father who was leading him through that, and when Pilate asked "knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" and He replied, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19. 10) Jesus spoke a true word. The powers of Heaven were in control of all that was being done, and guardian angels led Jesus from scene to scene of the sad story until all that was written had been fulfilled.

This is where the prophet cries out in his

own deep distress "Who shall declare his generation?". The question remains unanswered until later in the chapter—but the answer is in verse 10. In the meantime there is a certain amount of divergence in the meaning claimed to lie in the question. The phrase itself can be interpreted in several ways. Did Isaiah mean that no man could declare the details of his birth and origin, wrapped as it was in mystery? This word "generation" could legitimately bear that meaning; "Who shall declare his birth?" It is not likely that many in Israel remembered the events of thirty-three years before, when certain shepherds claimed to have seen a vision of angels and gone in consequence to worship the newly-born Messiah in a manger, and wise men from the East had appeared in Jerusalem enquiring for the one born King of the Jews. And even though a few, getting on now in years, could be found to tell of those days, still the mystery of his ultimate origin remained unsolved. Israel had been familiar for centuries with the idea of Divine Wisdom personified into the Logos, a kind of abstract power operating in the world and the affairs of men on behalf of the Deity, who Himself could not be conceived as having any possible contact with this world. But even though John declared that this One Who had appeared amongst them was the Logos made flesh, the Wisdom of God identified with personality and standing before them a visible expression of the glory of God, it was all too much for them and they could not understand it. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" said John, where "comprehendeth" has the sense of receiving into one's self or absorbing and encircling the subject. It was not only that the darkness failed to understand Jesus in a purely intellectual sense; the darkness failed to receive the light in any sense whatever, because the light was of another world and had no point of contact or sympathy with the darkness. So it is very true that no one in the day of Christ could "declare his generation", his origin, or understand anything about it at all. He came from God, but how and in what way they knew not.

Another way of considering the question is to take it as referring to his death without leaving descendants. That, to a Jew, would be a strange and inexplicable thing in regard to one claiming to enjoy the favour of God. This One was cut off in the flower of his age and left none of his own behind him. That, to those whose eyes were never opened to the spiritual calling and the new understanding

of God's purposes which Jesus came to bring to light, must have constituted a serious barrier to belief. The more reflective would read the 10th verse of Isaiah's 53rd chapter with its promise "he shall see his seed" and realise in a new light the immensity of the Divine Plan, but for the vast majority it always remained true that in this sense also they could not "declare his generation".

The third and probably correct application of this text is that which sees here a condemnation of the generation that crucified Jesus. Nothing like it had been seen before; no crime had ever been so heinous as this, no people so guilty. "*The men of his age who shall describe?*" is how one translator renders the question, and there is much to recommend this view. Jesus himself condemned that generation and wept over the doomed city and its heedless citizens. "*Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?*" lamented Israel in the sorrowful dirge known as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. "*Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow*" (Lam. 1. 12). Those words were first spoken by Israel, rejected and done to death by the ruthless nations who were her neighbours. In later years the words became true of Christ, and Jewry herself became the persecutor and murderer. Through all ages since, the generation which crucified Christ has been held up to despise and contumely. He was unjustly tried and unjustly put to death; who can put into fitting words the contempt and condemnation all future ages shall manifest toward that guilty generation. That seems to be the intention of the words.

So the tragedy proceeded to its ordained climax. "*He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken*". So far as man was concerned this was the end. So far as man could tell there was no further hope after one had been cut off out of the land of the living. "A living dog is better than a dead lion" was their proverb (Eccl. 9. 4). The gates of the land of the shadow of death had closed upon him and there was an end of all the golden promises and hopes of future deliverance. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24. 21). Even the disciples lost faith in that dark, bitter hour. He was cut off out of the land of the living; he had been alive but now he was dead. True, it was for the transgression of the people that he had been stricken, but He was dead now and of what avail had it all been?

Perhaps a few among them, reflective, remembered that after the sacrifices had been

all burned on the altar in the yearly ritual, one appeared from the unseen place beyond the Vail of the Tabernacle, arrayed, no longer in linen garments of sacrifice, but in new and dazzling robes of glory and beauty, and brought blessing to the people. Some there might have been who remembered that beside the dying priesthood of Aaron there was also the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek, a royal priest, one who ever liveth. Perhaps here and there a loyal heart, grappling with the problem of this tragedy which had shattered all their hopes, began to wonder if, after all, the

story was indeed finished—whether the last three verses of Isaiah 53 yet remained to be fulfilled in some wonderful manner that would reverse the entire position and turn their sorrow into joy.

Whether or no there were such, there remained now only one last prophecy of dark things to be fulfilled before the tide was to turn and the meaning of all things be made plain. He was yet to make his grave with the wicked; but after that the world was to see the salvation of God.

(To be continued)

Rest

Intervals of rest fall to the lot of all who bear the cross. Even in the midst of the desert our gracious God is able to provide for us a place of repose; the storm does not rage incessantly; peaceful hours intervene unawares and the burden upon our shoulders becomes for a while a resting pillow for our heads upon which we insensibly gather recruited strength. At one time the Keeper of Israel sends us bodily slumber in the midst of our sorrows, and what a welcome guest may it not prove to us, particularly when spiritual conflicts threaten to confuse the senses and absorb the spirits! At another season, a sympathising Jonathan visits me in my out-cast condition, and by his affectionate conversation imperceptibly removes my depression. At other times, some consoling truth of revelation is, by a text or hymn, suggested to my mind and hope diffuses its mild and cheering light in the midst of my darkness. In short, the very days of storm and tempest have their hours of repose and mercy. Therefore let no one be anxious, however steep and thorny his path, however dreary and rough his road. When his weary knees are ready to sink, God will know how to provide him a resting place and he will be able to say, "*I laid me down and slept; I awakened, for the Lord sustained me.*" Although these may be only short pauses, still they remind us how easily He could, if He pleased, at any moment deliver us out of every trouble, and a believing assurance of this is sufficient to overcome every anxiety and fear.

Unity and Uniformity

Does oneness mean uniformity? We answer, "No." Variety is the keynote of all we see around us. The botanists have divided the vegetation in the world into families according to their individual characteristics. In the same natural order we may have creeping plants, upright plants, climbers and other varieties. What then is his reason for putting these in one definite order. It may be the shape of the leaf, or the way the leaves may grow on the stem. It may be the shape of the flower or how it grows on the stem. Some plants, though different in flower, may be grouped together according to the veining in the leaf. Nevertheless there is a general principle in all plants which is true of all, but only in this aspect is there a oneness.

Variety also is manifest in all the other beauties of nature which frequently pass unnoticed.

The human family is even more diversified than the vegetable or animal kingdom, yet they have much in common. They all come from our first parents. Whatever the colour of skin or mode of life, they are all subject to the same natural laws. The law of heredity affects the black as well as the white races. They have all one blood (and it is interesting to note that the blood of human beings is different in composition to that of animals). Their organs are the same, their bodies function in the same way, the only difference in their make-up is the question of education, religious belief or the development of mind.

All are not teachers. Teaching, St. Paul declares, is a special gift (1 Cor. 12. 28-30). A teacher is one who, being fully consecrated and brought into submission to the Divine will and enlightened concerning the Divine

Plan, God can, and is pleased to use in instructing his Church. And the basis of such selection may be a keen, penetrating mind or other naturally or supernaturally imparted endowment and qualification.

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

A study in
Isaiah 19

Part 1. The casting down of Egypt

The nineteenth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy was spoken in the ears of Israel at a time when Egypt, the great earthly power in which they had trusted for so long, was declining to its fall. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the nation that had held their forefathers in bondage and from which they had been delivered by a signal exercise of Divine power should be the very nation to which they would turn for protection only four centuries later. For something like four more centuries Israel flirted with Egypt, making agreements and alliances and generally looking to Egypt for the help they should have expected from God, and then Egypt and Israel fell together and the people of the Lord found they had been trusting, as Rab-Shakeh the general of Sennacherib's host on one occasion taunted them with trusting, on a broken reed which would pierce the hand of the man who was foolhardy enough to lean upon it.

Isaiah never wearied of warning his fellow-citizens of the weakness of Egypt and the folly of trusting in the Egyptians. His warnings were very generally unheeded and so disaster came upon the nation. The same warning comes to us; we have the same God and He still abides by the same principles. He will still deliver the nation that puts its trust in him, and disaster will still overtake the nation that puts its trust in the arm of the flesh. Egypt in prophecy usually pictures the secular world in contrast to the Christian community which has separated itself from the world and no longer holds to its standards. So often, though, members or sections of that community do leave somewhat of their high ideals and lose something of their high faith, and begin to trust to an extent in the standards and policies and weapons of this world. When they do so, the burning words of Isaiah are to the point and applicable to them. "*Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord . . . When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together.*" (Isa. 31, 1-3). It is impossible not to notice the military "flavour" of these verses. If there is one particular aspect of this mod-

ern world that is represented more than others by Egypt, it is the military aspect, the policies and principles and activities that have to do with war between nations. Israel looked to Egypt for protection because Egypt was a powerful military nation, and Israel had forgotten that her own mission was to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the rulership of God, a rulership which has no place for armed conflict between men. That is one of the greatest failures of organised Christianity to-day; in the face of the apparently overwhelming nature of those militarised forces which threaten our own orderly way of life they know of no effective defence than resource to the same weapons. It is not surprising therefore if, despite the rightness of the cause, they ultimately find that trust in carnal weapons and the policies of the unregenerate man leads to the same type of disasters in our day, that this same trust brought to Israel in their day.

Isaiah's nineteenth chapter had a message for his own generation and it has a message for us. In both cases the message is prophetic; it spoke, and speaks, of things to come. Like so many of Isaiah's visions, the Holy Spirit showed him, first, a picture of his own day and the consequences that would arise out of the political situation then existing, and then, by a swift transition of scene, took him forward into the world's day of judgment and showed him how the same wrong principles, followed this time by all the world, would bring about even greater trouble, but that behind it all was God, waiting to bless all his creatures when the due time for blessing had come. In this particular chapter the first fifteen verses picture the decline and fall of Egypt, from Isaiah's own day to her utter subjugation by Rome six or seven centuries later, and the last twenty verses picture the Divine restoration of Egypt in the days of the Kingdom—an Egypt that is no longer a symbol of militarism or of the policies of this world, but has become a co-partner with Israel the restored people of God, and is herself also blessed with the honoured title, given her by the Most High himself, of "Egypt my people". It is obvious from what we know of history and of the Divine Plan that this sequel must take us into the Millennial Age for its accomplishment, and it is in the golden

days of that blessed Age therefore that the chapter closes.

"*The burden of Egypt*" (vs. 1). This word "burden" is one that, from a root meaning something carried or lifted up, had come to signify a message delivered, an oracle or a prophecy. We sometimes use much the same term when we speak of the "burden" of an individual's message. In many cases, but not in all, the message is a condemnatory or warning one; but the idea of the word is really that of the charge laid upon the prophet himself to deliver the message and in this case the theme is a message concerning Egypt which Isaiah is under strong obligation to deliver.

"*The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt.*" (vs. 1). This is quite a remarkable passage. The next fourteen verses describe the literal ravaging of Egypt by her literal enemies, the Assyrians, but here the Lord himself is pictured as leading the attack and, in his entrance to the land, destroying the idolatry thereof. Now that is just what we must accept, that the Lord God is overseeing and overruling the affairs of the nations in order to bring into full effect the provisions of his great Plan. In another place the Assyrians are called the "rod of God's anger" and even in the narratives of their impact upon the children of Israel it is plain to see that, all unknowingly, they were being used as his instruments in the diverting of human affairs to work out his own ultimate purposes. So here, now that the time had come to show Israel, and us through Israel, the futility of the arm of the flesh, and the sin of ignoring Divine principles, the Lord allowed the Assyrian hosts to achieve successes they had never achieved before. In the spirit of prophecy, and the symbolism of the vision, that fact was shown in symbol by the Lord, the God of Israel, riding upon the heavens in his war-chariot of thunder clouds, advancing upon the proud empire of the Pharaohs with the multitudes of the Assyrian host behind him; and at that sight the gigantic, impassive statues of all the gods of Egypt took fright and fell down prostrate in their places, and the glory that was Egypt passed away for ever.

Just so will it be when the last great conflict of this Day of Trouble comes upon the world. The battle is called the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty. It is a conflict between contending factions among mankind but it is the overruling power of God that has caused the elements of that conflict so to con-

verge together that the battle takes place when it does. The contestants do not know that; their motives are greed and hate and lust for power, just as were those of the Assyrians advancing to the destruction of Egypt in Isaiah's day; but all unknowingly they will be fulfilling the purposes of God, and when the conflict is ended it will be the voice of God that calls for peace and commands the allegiance of the shattered remnants of both sides.

Now in verses 2 to 13 Isaiah declares that the Egyptians will fight the Egyptians; there is to be civil war amongst them, and the wisdom and discretion of their governors will vanish. They will seek to idols and wizards and the supernatural forces of evil in their extremity, as did Saul in his, when he visited the witch at En-dor. The people would be given into the hand of a cruel and fierce ruler and the land would languish. The Nile, upon which the prosperity of Egypt depends, would fail to send down sufficient water and there would be consequent famine; the industries of fishing and clothmaking from the native cotton and other textile plants would dwindle and disappear. The princes of Egypt would become as fools and the whole nation as incapable of guiding its own destinies as is a drunken man of walking a straight course. The picture is that of a people, highly organised in science and art and industry, as was Egypt, whose whole economic structure has broken down and which is very near to complete disintegration. It is the picture of a nation having a glorious past, but no future. The melancholy catalogue ends (vs. 15) with "*Neither shall there be any work for Egypt which the head or tail, branch or rush* (king and prince, artisan and labourer, the "head" and the "tail" of society) *may do*". For Egypt it is the end.

Ezekiel saw the same thing at a time when the sentence was in process of execution, and he said of Egypt "*It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel . . . but they shall know that I am the Lord their God*". (Ezek. 29. 15-16.) That word stands as condemnation not only of Israel's confidence in Egypt three millenniums ago, but of the spiritual shortsightedness of every Christian in this day who trusts in worldly policies and national armaments to defend God's cause. And it stands as condemnation of every Christian body that trusts in the arm of flesh rather

than in the Lord their God.

Historically, events came to pass just as Isaiah had foreseen. At just about the time he uttered the prophecy—certainly not many years later—the military power of Assyria, which had been steadily increasing for several centuries, for the first time came into collision with the military might of Egypt. At this period Egypt was governed by a powerful Ethiopic dynasty (the 25th dynasty of Pharaohs) and the warlike Ethiopians, always superior in military skill and energy to the more peaceable native Egyptians, formed the mainstay of the Egyptian forces. These Ethiopians were not like the natives of Ethiopia to-day; they were a highly civilised and physically powerful race, and for a long time dominated Egypt in the north and exercised a profound influence upon the history of nations. They were descendants of the sons of Cush who had migrated in ancient times from the Persian Gulf along the coast of Arabia and crossed the Red Sea into Africa. The Ethiopian viceroy in Egypt was Sabaca (called "So" in 2 Kings 17. 4, where he is shown as conspiring with Hoshea King of Israel against Assyria). The failure of that conspiracy and the consequent fall of Samaria and captivity of the "Ten Tribes" laid the way open for the Assyrian advance upon Egypt, and within a few more years Sargon of Assyria was besieging the southern Palestine city of Ashdod preparatory to invading Egypt itself. (Isaiah 20. 1 refers to this event; *"In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against it, and took it"*.) This was the first outward evidence to Israel of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the 19th chapter. Six years later Sargon died and Sennacherib succeeded him; almost at once he was in the field and reduced Egypt to subjection, but suffered his memorable defeat outside Jerusalem when his army was destroyed in a single night by the "angel of the Lord". (Isa. 37). After that for twenty-six years there was a cessation of Assyrian aggression both in Egypt and Judea, which is remarkable when it is realised that this coincides with the latter years of the reign of Hezekiah, and God had promised him, after his miraculous recovery, that there would be peace in his days. (Isa. 39. 8). Sennacherib never tried conclusions with the Lord God of Israel again, but after his death, his son and successor Esar-haddon (Isa. 37. 38) invaded Judah, took Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, then only twenty-three years old and already an idolator, prisoner to Babylon and went on into Egypt. This time the country

was devastated. Esar-haddon well fills the role of the "cruel king" prophesied in Isa. 19. 4. The ancient city of Memphis, the capital ("Noph" in Isa. 19. 13) was completely destroyed and all its treasures, dating back for more than two thousand years, taken to Nineveh. Thebes, the second holy city (the "populous No" of Nahum 3. 8) suffered a like fate, and for the second time—the first being the short-lived rule of the "Shepherd Kings"—since the sons of Ham entered the country a few generations after the Flood, Egypt became subject to an Asiatic power.

There were times of rebellion and of temporary national independence. Native Pharaohs exercised control and held the foreigners at bay for a generation or two, but the doom of Egypt had been pronounced and slowly she sank under the pressure of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and finally Roman invasions until all pretence of national sovereignty was completely lost. To this day Egypt, the greatest military empire of the ancient world, remains a "base kingdom", a pawn and a catspaw for the great powers of the earth.

It is just at that point that the vision changes. *"In that day"* cries Isaiah suddenly *"shall Egypt be like unto women, and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it"*. In one swift flash the Spirit-illuminated mind of the prophet was carried forward from his own day to "that day"—the Millennial Day is always in his mind when he says "in that day"—to a greater Egypt which, like its prototype of old, has come to the brink of destruction because of its reliance on the gods of war. But this time there is a difference. This greater Egypt, this military organised warlike world of the Last Day, broken down and at its wits end in consequence of the havoc wrought by its own internecine conflicts and the terrible effectiveness of its engines of war, is in terror of the land of Judah! That is a situation which can only have its application to the greater world, Egypt at the Time of the End, for it has never been true in history previously. From the time that Israel established itself in the land, through all the chequered history of the Judges and the Kings, the Captivity, the days of the Maccabees and then of the Dispersion, there has never been a time when Egypt went in terror of Judah. In terror,

successively, of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam, yes, but never of despised Judah. It is only now, when Israel is again established as a nation, and a vigorous, and self-asserted nation, that even the modern literal Egypt shows any signs of apprehension. The fulfilment must be a future and not a past event and therefore takes its place as an element in the order of events that characterises the dawning of the Millennium. And the association of the name of the Lord of Hosts with the cause of the "terror" certifies that it is not going to be in consequence of any temporary political or military success the present State of Israel is destined to achieve, for that State is founded, like all the Gentile powers, on that very principle of military force that stands condemned in the sight of God, the very principle that in this our day is entering into judgment. It is going to be in consequence of the fact that Judah is backed by the power of God.

The conclusion, therefore, is that this "terror" with which "Egypt" views Judah refers to the same thing that is described in Zech. 12. 6. *"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, on the right hand and on the left; and*

Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place." The "terror" is due to the fact that a righteous nation, led by the "Ancient Worthies", will be taking up its destined work and impressing the peoples around with a consciousness of the fact that God is working mightily in earth's affairs and that the days of injustice are numbered.

The Authorised Version inserts a paragraph mark at this point, indicating that a new section of the narrative now begins. That is rightly done, for at this point the reconstruction of this world-Egypt, that has seen the sign of the Kingdom in the fact of restored Judah, commences. From now on, the healing and reconciliation of Egypt commences, and this is Millennial work indeed. The language of Egypt becomes the language of holiness; the cities of Egypt are sacred to the Lord; the altar of offering is set up in the midst of the land and the stone of witness at its border. The Saviour appears, and the Egyptians hail him and worship him; there is no more any war or enmity between the nations but all are one in the brotherhood of mankind and all are blessed of God. These are the things that Isaiah saw and recorded in verses 18-25 of this thrilling chapter, things that we shall go on to examine in the detail that they deserve.

(To be concluded)

Pre-Adamite Man

The theory of a pre-Adamite man has been made the basis of several rather bizarre variations from the plain Genesis account of man's creation. They stem back to Isaac de la Peyrere (1594-1676) a French Calvinist who in 1655 published a book devoted to showing that Adam was the progenitor of the Jews only, and that the Gentiles are all descended from a pre-Adam man. Gen. 1. 26, he held, referred to the creation of the ancestors of the Gentiles on the sixth creative day and Gen. 2. 7 to the creation of Adam, father of the Jews, on the seventh creative day. Some of the early 19th century attempts to reconcile the popular view of Genesis with the then new discoveries of Neanderthal and Paleolithic man, ancient remains of true men, made use of this thesis and it became a popular thing to credit any discovery of alleged ancient man to a pre-Adamite creation.

From this it was an easy step to claim that the "sons of God" of Gen. 6 were really "sons

of the mighty", half savage giants descended from the pre-Adamites who seized and married the daughters of Adam and brought about the reign of terror which ended at the Flood.

Now that it is no longer considered necessary to insist that true man appeared on this earth for the first time so recently as 4004 B.C., (Archbishop Usher's date), and particularly since some of the supposed skulls of "primitive man" have been shown to be those of apes after all, the basis of much of these arguments has disappeared. A careful study of the available evidence leaves it perfectly feasible to accept the Genesis story as literally true and still consistent with the physical facts; one human pair could well have been the ancestors of all the human beings who have lived. It is hardly likely that the Holy Spirit would have allowed St. Paul to propound a theology based upon this foundation if in fact it had not been literally true.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

A story of
St. Paul

The assembly sat in silence, heads bowed in prayer and meditation. The Church at Antioch was a large one; many Jews and many Gentiles had come together to constitute a healthy and active Christian fellowship. Under the wise guidance and instruction of their Elders, Barnabas of Cyprus, Saul of Tarsus, Simeon, Lucius and Manaen, they were making rapid progress in the knowledge and practice of the Christian faith. Already they had implemented one of its main obligations in sending a generous gift of money to their less fortunate brethren in Jerusalem threatened by famine. Barnabas and Saul had been their ambassadors on that occasion and now, that mission accomplished and the messengers returned with their report, the Church was considering what outward activity their Lord would have them next undertake. So they sat, as they had sat for more than a few meetings now, quietly listening as first one and then another rose to expound their views and outline their proposals, and afterward alternately joining in prayer for guidance toward a right decision or silently considering the things which had been said.

The extension of the work of the Gospel was in all their minds; the injunction left by their ascending Lord as a commission binding upon his disciples until the end "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" lay before them, a challenge not to be ignored. Barnabas had told them of his own native country of Cyprus, lying only a hundred miles across the sea opposite their home city, unevangelised, waiting for Christ. Saul had spoken of the wider Roman world, the provinces in Asia and in Greece dotted with cities and towns the homes of God-fearing Jews and pagan Gentiles, a widespread field of missionary endeavour waiting to be harvested. The ordinary occupations of life were forgotten and every other obligation even to the taking of food and rest and sleep was reduced to the minimum in the intensity of their seeking Divine guidance. Thus they fasted, and thus they prayed, until at last the thoughts of the many began to channel into one agreed direction and the light commenced to dawn and they knew that the power of the Holy Spirit of God was at work within them all leading to a clear perception of the Divine Will. So they discerned the voice of the Holy Spirit directing them to commission Barna-

bas and Saul, their well loved and trusted elders, with John Mark as companion and assistant, to the first missionary enterprise ever to be organised.

It was perhaps natural that Cyprus should be the first objective. Barnabas was senior of the two in length of Christian service and possibly of age, and Barnabas would naturally have thought of his native land. Saul was very soon to take the lead, but at this time he was evidently following the other's guidance. The name of Barnabas in the Acts narrative always precedes that of Saul until the incident at Paphos, which now was imminent. So they sailed the hundred miles across the blue sea, forerunner of all those Christian adventurers who in after times were to traverse the seas of the world to bring the Gospel to strange and unknown races of people which heretofore had walked in darkness and sat in the shadow of death.

The work seems to have started on a minor key. Landing at Salamis, the capital city of the island and its chief port, they preached in the synagogues of the Jews. There is no record of the results; perhaps there were no results to record. Old associations die hard, and although their mission was equally to Gentile and Jew it is perhaps only to be expected that they would tend first to associate with those who at least worshipped the same God, and attempt to build upon that common basis. Be that as it may, there is no record of a Christian community being established in Salamis — probably both Jews and Gentiles in that busy port and market of exchange between ships from west and east and south, between Rome and Antioch and Alexandria were too busy making money to pay much heed to the rather inconvenient views of these three travelling preachers with their talk of giving up all for Christ's sake and devoting life to his service. The rest of their ministry in the island is summed up in one sentence in Acts 13. 6 "*And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos*". That was a land journey of about one hundred miles, the entire extent of Cyprus from east to west, and in all that journey wherever and to whomsoever they preached the Word of Life there seems to have been nothing of sufficient moment for St. Luke to record. It was only upon arrival at their last place of call, the town of Paphos, that they seemed to find a flicker of interest,

and that, not from a Jew but from a Gentile.

Sergius Paulus was the Roman pro-consul, or governor, of Cyprus, and therefore the most important political figure, responsible directly to the Emperor for the administration of the country and the preservation of law and order. Nothing is known in history regarding this man although an inscription has been found at Soli in Cyprus giving his name and rank. Luke calls him a "prudent" man, meaning that he was a wise and just administrator—Rome did produce such rulers as well as corrupt ones like Pontius Pilate and Felix. News of the missionaries having reached his ears, the governor invited them to his residence with the object of hearing what they had to say. Upon keeping the appointment Saul found that he was not going to have things all his own way; there was a rival already in the field in the person of Bar-Jesus, a soothsayer, a Jewish renegade. The word "sorcerer" in the Authorised Version is the same as that used for the three wise men in the Nativity story and does not imply the practice of magical arts so much as foreseeing the future and being well versed in "other-worldly" knowledge. It is clear that Sergius Paulus was already to some extent under the influence of this man, and he, having no intention of conceding his position to the newcomer, entered objection to Saul's teaching.

The miracle performed at this time by Saul, the first of many during his life's work, must have profoundly impressed the witnesses. Following his stern denunciation, one in which the would-be magician was openly branded a child of the devil, the unhappy man was smitten with near blindness and reached out for someone to lead him. It is evident that the infliction was of a temporary nature only—Saul's words indicated that—but that fact in no way mitigated the evidence of Divine displeasure. The astute Roman rapidly realised his mistake in giving credence to this charlatan and as quickly professed faith in the teaching brought by one who gave this convincing evidence that he was in truth a messenger of God Most High. But that was all. The pro-consul became a believer, but nothing is said about any general acceptance of the message at Paphos, as is in fact recorded of other places visited. It does not seem as if any decided success attended this visit, despite the impression produced by the miracle. In fact the really noteworthy circumstance associated with Paphos lies not in the realm of conversion at all, but in the change of Saul's name to Paul.

No one knows how or why this change came

about. At this point in the narrative, Acts 13. 13, Saul as a name is dropped and never resumed. From now on the Apostle is always referred to as Paul. Why he thus changed his name no one really knows. The Hebrew name Saul is an understandable and obvious one for a child born into the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe which gave Israel its first king. "Paul" in the New Testament is the Roman Paulus, which is said to mean "least", and the Apostle's adoption of the name is suggested to have been a token of his humility. There does not seem to be much substance in that suggestion. Others have surmised that Paulus was his family name, a kind of surname, but there is no evidence whatever to support that hypothesis either. Much more likely is that Saul, realising his life's work was going to take him increasingly into the Gentile world, and coming into contact here at Paphos with the Roman, Sergius Paulus, formed the impression that this Roman name, so like his own, would be a better one by which he might be known to the Gentiles, and without more ado decided to make the change. The coincidence of its occurrence just at the time he found himself associated with a man named Paulus seems to be too much of a coincidence not to hold some connection.

So Paul "and his company" left Paphos and sailed nearly two hundred miles across the sea to Perga on the mainland, in the Roman province of Pamphylia. It was whilst at this town that John Mark decided to leave them and return to Jerusalem. No reason is given for his action; it is evident that Paul was considerably displeased for it was many years before he was willing to accept Mark as a co-worker again. Had Mark's motive merely been to avoid the continuing and increasing trials of the journey he would most likely have returned to the home church at Antioch. The fact that it was Jerusalem to which his steps were turned makes it more likely that in the rising tide of persecution which was now afflicting the Christians in Judea he felt it his duty to be in a better position to protect his mother Mary and so returned to be with her.

There does not seem to have been any spectacular success at Perga. A little community of Christians was formed, for Paul visited them on his way back, but after Mark's defection there is nothing more said about Perga. Paul and Barnabas were soon on their way again. A long trek of a hundred and twenty miles over the mountains lay before them, and at the end of the trek, a place for which they hoped great things, Antioch of

Pisidia. (It is to be noticed that there were two Antiochs, the city of that name in Syria from which Paul and Barnabas had started, and this one in the province of Pisidia which lay many hundreds of miles distant. Both places became the seats of flourishing Christian churches). Up to date this first missionary journey had not yielded any really spectacular result. In no case, either in the various towns of Cyprus, nor yet in Perga, is there any statement of the formation of a Christian church. Small communities must indeed have been left, for later visits were made both by Paul on the mainland and Barnabas in Cyprus. It is probable that all the Apostle had to show for his labours up to this point were small handfuls—maybe only a

dozen or so at each place—who were prepared to accept the message he brought them. Perhaps even this very minor achievement was part of the Divine provision for Paul. He was to learn that the work of the Lord flourishes best with small and insignificant beginnings, and that “*not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit*” the purposes of God are executed.

But the dawn was growing brighter. At Antioch in Pisidia the Apostle to the Gentiles was to meet the first of those searching experiences which combined both acceptance and rejection, the joys of widespread conversion and the sharpness of bitter opposition, which were to become so much a part of the pattern of his life hereafter.

ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHENED, SETTLED

*A word of
exhortation*

“The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.”—

1 Pet. 5. 10.

The above words were penned by the Apostle Peter who, after years of experience in the Master's service and under His discipline, through much tribulation had evidently reached the blessed experience of one established, strengthened and settled in the faith and in the practice of the principles of the gospel. Peter had much to suffer and endure in his continuous effort to overcome. In common with all our Lord's disciples, he had much to bear from without, in the way of reproach, and sometimes of persecution, for the Truth's sake. But he had probably much more to contend against from within. His disposition was naturally impulsive, wavering and difficult to bring under restraint, even when the Truth was clear to his mind and when his affections were fastened upon the Lord.

It should be the aim of every truly consecrated saint to reach this desirable state of strength and settled establishment in the faith. This condition cannot be reached at a single leap; it is gained by a gradual steady growth under the discipline of suffering—as the Apostle says, “after ye have suffered awhile”. “Now,” as Paul remarks (Heb. 12. 11, 12), “no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” “Wherefore” with him we would add, “lift up

the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.”

Are you weary and disheartened in the journey, discouraged at your slow progress, and almost overwhelmed with the cares and various besetments of this life? Is a lethargy and indifference creeping over you, cooling your ardour for the Master's service, relaxing your energies in that direction, and enlisting your interest more and more in other matters? Then beware! It is high time to wake up. Be sober; be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes he goes about as a roaring lion, and sometimes as a skulking serpent in the grass.

Sometimes, lion-like, when we are off guard he springs upon us unawares, stirs up the devil of the old nature, and unless desperately resisted he will take full control and drive us on to ruin. Or he will endeavour at least to run us off the track of the narrow way. Sometimes, serpent-like (2 Cor. 11. 3) he assumes a pleasing and seemingly reasonable aspect, and endeavours to beguile us from the way. If we permit ourselves to be so off guard either by neglect to feed upon the truth, or by indifference to the reception and cultivation of its spirit, we may be sure that our ever vigilant adversary will gain an advantage over us which we may not be able to resist.

Our only safety, then, is in giving earnest heed to the Apostle's counsel. Be sober, be

steadfast in the faith, be vigilant, and resist the adversary. We find foes within as well as foes without with which we must not deal too gently. The human nature which we covenanted to crucify must not be too sensitively regarded by ourselves, though we should be careful and thoughtful in our dealings with others. We must let the human nature die, and rejoice to see the new nature triumph over it. We must look our old nature squarely in the face, and thankful for a brother's or sister's kindly showing of the same; and even the heartless rebuke of an enemy, or the impatient criticism of an unwise but well meaning friend, should be soberly considered and profited by, though it may severely wound the sensitive flesh. All this is a part of the crucifying process, a part of the humbling under the mighty hand of God—under the discipline of his truth. If we study it carefully and cultivate its spirit day by day, seeking constantly to purge out all that is contrary to it, our characters will mature, ripen and grow more and more like the glorious model given for our imitation. Our convictions of the truth will become more settled and clear; our faith in God and in the power of his love and grace will be more and more established; and our constant effort to learn and to do the will of God will harden into habit, and thus we will grow strong in the Lord and be able to strengthen and confirm the faith of others.

If we have cares, we are invited to cast all

our cares upon the Lord, knowing that He careth for us. We have the encouraging assurance in the midst of present trials that we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away, if in steadfast sobriety and humility we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, having first been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and thus through faith having gained the privilege of working it out. We are comforted in the midst of trials with the blessed assurance that while God resisteth the proud, and they also resist him, He giveth grace to the humble. Let us humble ourselves therefore, dear fellow members of the called and Anointed Body, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. Let us bear in mind that not all of the suffering and cross-bearing comes from the world's opposition to the truth, but that much of it must necessarily come from our faithfulness, not in excusing and cultivating but in humbling and subduing the evil propensities of our fallen nature. *"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh unto the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*—James 1. 23-25.

Divine Guidance

A very great mistake which some have made, in view of the conflicting ideas as to what is truth, has been to discard every human instrumentality and expect God's guidance through the Bible alone. Such forget that God gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; that we are exhorted to build one another up in the holy faith and to esteem the servants of God for their work's sake. Ever since the Church has had an existence, God has raised up from its midst as special servants of the body, some who have special teaching ability. Blessed is that servant who at the Master's appearing is found giving the meat in due season to the household of faith (Matt. 24. 26), and no less blessed are they of the faithful household, who, like the "noble Bereans" of old, search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so—who prove all things, as the apostle exhorts, and hold fast that which is good.

There is a tendency to behold with such whole-hearted regard the spectacle of the dying Christ on the Cross as to forget the value of his life. Whilst we must hold very tenaciously to the oft-repeated Scriptural truth that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" and that only through faith in the saving power of his death can anyone attain reconciliation with God and everlasting life, still does it remain true that unless we give due heed to the lessons of his life and so learn to walk as He walked, we shall never progress beyond the immature stage of personal adoration which was all that the three Wise Men achieved.

* * *

Jesus failed to keep many who followed him. They turned back when his message became increasingly spiritual. Some start in the narrow way full of confidence but the path of sacrifice reveals hardship and the first love cools. They do not mean to leave him altogether but it is so easy to drift. Relax a little, admit the life of the world, and your spiritual life is heading for shipwreck.

BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

EXODUS

Part 5. Moses in Midian

THE FLIGHT FROM EGYPT

Moses was "full forty years" old when it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. We are indebted to the New Testament (Acts 7. 23) for that knowledge and although there is no such statement in the Exodus account, which only declares that he was "fully grown", the fact that it appears to have been Moses' fortieth year when the Queen who had been his protectress died does make this the most likely time for this great change in his life. To what extent Moses had previously interested himself in the distress of his own people does not appear; If Josephus' assertion that he spent most of his time in foreign parts in the service of the State is correct it is possible that in fact he knew very little of what went on. It might well be that only after Hat-shep-sut's death and possibly his own consequent loss of such royal dignity and office as he possessed—for her successor, Thothmes III, would undoubtedly have no time or place for his predecessor's protégé—did Moses really find out for himself just how sore was the distress of Israel. Stephen's statement, that it came into his heart to visit his brethren, no less than the Exodus account which pictures him as going out to see for himself the burdens upon the people, appears to indicate that he was not up to that point really familiar with the position. And the angry retort of the offending Israelite "*Who made thee a prince and a judge over us*" does not read as though Moses was known to them as a man of high office. The whole setting of the story seems to depict Moses at this time a man occupying no position of authority among the Egyptians and simultaneously viewed with suspicion by the Israelites. When he slew the Egyptian overseer in defence of one of them he received no thanks and was evidently betrayed by one of his own kin, for Pharaoh heard of the matter and set the forces of the law in motion to apprehend Moses for punishment. Rejected alike by Egyptian and Israelite, Moses had no option but to make himself scarce. He may have had some idea of uniting Israel under his leadership in a revolt against the Egyptian authority and so gain their deliverance by force of arms, but the incident of the slain Egyptian speedily showed him there was no hope of any such national upris-

ing with any prospect of success. So he fled to Midian.

The Midianites were descendants of Abraham through his wife Keturah. It is probable that there was an admixture of the progeny of Ishmael son of Abraham by Hagar, for both these people dwelt and multiplied in the Sinai peninsula whilst Israel was in Egypt. Racially they were akin to the children of Jacob and they worshipped the same God. They had retained the nomadic habits of their fathers and roamed the whole of the Sinai peninsula with their flocks and herds. As a people they were proud and independent, owing no allegiance to Egypt but serving as a useful means of communication between Egypt and Canaan. It was a company of Midianitish merchants which had carried the lad Joseph down into Egypt as a slave nearly two centuries previously. The copper and gold mines in Sinai which were worked by Egyptians drew much of their labour from men of Midian. So Moses in fleeing to Midian would find himself among a people already friendly disposed towards him, of kin racially and of the same religious faith, where he would be safe from the avenging power of the Egyptian authorities.

This flight probably seemed like the end of all things to Moses. So far from delivering his people from the power of Egypt, he himself was a fugitive from Egyptian justice, with no prospect of ever going back. He could not have realised it at that time, but his very going to Midian was an element in the Divine purpose. The forty years he spent in the land of Sinai, leading the life of a nomad shepherd amid its mountains and valleys, plains and deserts, gave him a knowledge of the country which he was later to find invaluable when he came to lead the hosts of Israel through this very territory on their way to the Promised Land. In all his previous thinking Moses would not have dreamed that his people must take this way through the wilderness and mountains; there was a recognised route between Egypt and Canaan across the flat lands near the sea—called in the Old Testament "the way of the Philistines" because it traversed their territory—and he must have reckoned on using that when the time came. The journey to the Promised Land by that route would only have

occupied a few weeks. In fact, whilst Moses was dwelling in Midian, Pharaoh Thothmes III led an army into Syria by that same route and reached Canaan in only nine days. Moses, going into Midian to exile, could have had no conception how important that period of his life was to his ultimate mission of delivering Israel from bondage.

LIFE IN MIDIAN

In every respect there was now a complete reversal of the conditions of life for Moses. From a position of importance and authority he became an outcast and a nobody; from wealth and comfort to poverty and hardship; from the luxurious city life of Egypt to the utilitarian conditions of Bedouin encampments. But there must have been much that he placed on the credit side. The temples and gods of Egypt were gone; in their place he lived amongst a people that cherished simple faith in the God of Abraham, and at night he could look up into the starry sky and realise that here amid the realities of Nature he stood indeed in the presence of God. To what extent Moses was a truly pious man prior to his life in Midian we have no means of knowing but it is at least possible that his vision of God was rather that of a God of battles, terrible to his foes and jealous for his own people and very apt to use the weapons of coercion rather than persuasion. His upbringing in the court of Pharaoh must have inclined him rather to the view that the promised return to Canaan would be more in the nature of a Divinely directed military operation rather than anything else and the idea that there were other and more vital factors inherent in the true worship of God may not as yet have occurred to him. It is in fact quite likely that Moses' thinking and planning had up to then taken the form more of organising a nation along traditional lines complete with military strength and rely on that for the promised deliverance, much as his modern counterparts in the present-day State of Israel are doing to-day. The sojourn in Midian revealed to Moses greater depths in the Divine purpose for Israel. He left Egypt a statesman versed in the wisdom of this world, imbued with the desire to create a new earthly nation with the help of God. He came back from Midian a prophet and servant of God guided by the Holy Spirit, entrusted with the responsibility of organising Israel into a Divine theocracy which should hold the standards of righteousness before all the world.

MOSES' MARRIAGE

Somewhere in the wilds of Sinai, at some time during his wanderings, he sat down by a

well—an oasis where water flowed and trees cast their shade. To the same well, at the same time, came the seven daughters of a local Midianite chieftain with their father's flock, for the evening watering. The momentous results consequent upon that meeting justify the conviction that here was an example of the Holy Spirit of God in active operation; the life of Moses thereafter was to experience many such instances. There is some doubt as to the identity of the chieftain concerned. In Exodus 2 he is called Reuel and referred to as the father of the seven maidens. In Exodus 3, 4 and 18 the name is Jethro and it is in connection with this name that the title priest or prince of Midian occurs. (A.V. has priest but the Hebrew word can bear either signification; in those early days the two offices were usually combined in one person. Priestly functions among the Bedouin were of a simple nature). Later on in Numbers and Judges, the name is Hobab; he is said to have been the son of Raquel or Reuel. Whether Jethro is the same as Reuel, or another name for Hobab, is difficult to determine. In all cases the individuals thus named are said to be 'father-in-law' to Moses, on account of his marriage to one of the daughters, but here again the word only means a kinsman by marriage, and could equally well be translated "brother-in-law" where relevant. It would seem however that Jethro was only a minor chieftain. His daughters, seeking to water their flocks, were unceremoniously thrust aside by other Midianite shepherds, doubtless with the usual Bedouin contempt for women, and this would not be likely were their father a man of authority. Neither in such case would he be likely to employ his own daughters as shepherdesses, work usually done by men. In this instance however the Midianites' incivility was countermanded by Moses' gallantry. He turned the men aside and himself saw to the watering of the maidens' flocks. They went home full of praise for the Egyptian stranger who came to their aid and were met with reproaches for neglecting the Eastern hospitality appropriate to such circumstances. Before long Moses was in the family circle and accepting a position as shepherd to Jethro's flock.

It was perhaps inevitable that he should marry one of the daughters. There is no indication that he married in Egypt and it seemed now as if his destinies were set in Midian. The marriage may not have been for a number of years. He was forty years in Midian and at the time of his return to Egypt it would seem from the narrative in Exodus 18

that his first-born son was still a lad. He took Zipporah his wife and Gershom their son back into Egypt with him in preparation for the Exodus but seems to have sent them back to her father before the Exodus actually took place. When she rejoined him in Sinai a short time later there were two sons, so that Eliezer must have been born in Midian whilst the Exodus was actually taking place.

These are the only two recorded children of Moses. Their descendants can be traced to the time of David when Jehdeiah represented the line of the elder brother and Shelomith that of the younger (1 Chron. 24. 20 and 25. 21). Nothing of moment is known about them. It is rather remarkable that lineal descendants of the man whom all Israel in all generations regarded as the greatest who ever lived and was certainly, under God, the founder of the nation, should themselves have been quite undistinguished men. The genius of Moses died with him; the torch he carried was picked up by others, not of his seed.

Later on during the journey to the Promised Land, there is a rather puzzling reference to Moses having married an Ethiopian woman. (Num. 12. 1). Ethiopia is a Greek word and the corresponding term in Hebrew and Egyptian is Cush. The Cushites, inhabiting what is now known as Ethiopia, were descendants of Ham. Zipporah was not a Cushite. It has been surmised that Zipporah died early in the forty years pilgrimage and that Moses married again, the Cushite being one who had joined her fortunes with Israel at the time of the Exodus. Another and less likely one is that he was already married to the Cushite before he fled from Egypt—there was a close connection between the two countries at the time and the Cushites were racially close akin to the Egyptians—so that after the Exodus he had two wives. What is perhaps more likely is the fact that Kenite, the tribal name of Jethro's family, has at some time become confused with Cushite, a somewhat similarly spelt name in the original. In general the great patriarchs of Israel were careful to marry women only of Semitic race even though not Israelites.

The family of Jethro, the Kenites, lingered long in Israel. From time to time they appear in the stories of the Old Testament. Jael the wife of Heber, Kenites both, were concerned in the overthrow of Sisera and so rendered great service to the nation (Jud. 4. 11 and 5. 20). When King Saul campaigned in Sinai against the Amalekites he spared the Kenites still living there on account of their historic

connection with Israel. (1 Sam. 15. 6). Later on Rechab became the first recorded temperance advocate (2 Kings 10. 15) and his name survives to-day in this country as that of a temperance friendly society known as the Order of Rechabites. Jehonadab his son helped Jehu in that iconoclast's fanatical purge of anti-God elements in the northern nation. The last recorded scion of the house of Jethro and Hobab is Jaazaniah in the days of Jeremiah (Jer. 35. 3) eight hundred years after the Exodus. They were still at that time living in tents. The nomadic habits of the Kenites had not been eradicated after nearly a millennium of life in a settled agricultural country. While Israel around them built and occupied houses in towns and villages, the Kenites still clung to the habits of their ancestors in Sinai in the days of Moses.

PHARAOH OF THE EXODUS

Thirty-three years after Moses fled to Midian the Pharaoh who sought his life died. Thothmes III ruled Egypt for fifty three years and is considered to be one of the most brilliant and successful Pharaohs—counted in terms of military exploits—of history. His hatred of his former stepmother and wife, the "Pharaoh's daughter" who had adopted Moses, caused him to erase her name from as many of her monuments as he could, in consequence of which she was more or less unknown to history until recent times. Exodus notes the events in these words "*And it came to pass in the process of time (in Hebrew meaning a very long time) that the king of Egypt died. And the children of Israel sighed by reason of their bondage. And God heard ... and God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them*" (Exod. 2. 23-25). But it was still to be another seven years before the deliverance.

The deceased Pharaoh was succeeded by Amen-hetep II, who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, the one who hardened his heart and would not let the people go. His record in history agrees with his character as revealed in Exodus. He was a ruthless despot, cruel and merciless in battle, given to unnecessary bloodshed in war. The policy of slavery was continued by him and probably the hardships of Israel intensified. Now, for the first time, it is said that the cry of the people went up to heaven, and God heard. That is significant. It can only mean that something like an incipient religious revival began to permeate Israel. Memories of the age-old Divine promises given to their fathers began to be revived. Talk of the distant land of Canaan from which their

forebears came, but which they had never seen, became rife. The promise of a deliverer, coming from whence they knew not, was conned over and discussed. Men began to be in expectation, and, at last, to hope.

Some among the leaders of Israel must have kept in touch with Moses all this time. That is evident from the fact that Aaron his elder brother—by now the titular head of the tribe of Levi—went to meet him and confer with him just prior to his return to Egypt. Perhaps by now Israel was looking for a leader to bring the awakening national aspirations to a focus and organise a movement for independence. The older men among them would remember the Moses of forty years previously and commend him as the man. It might be

that for a number of years prior to his return to Egypt Moses was being urged to leave his seclusion and assume a leading role in this movement for freedom. Forty years ago he might have acceded to such a proposition, but not now. His life in Midian had taught him otherwise. He was now the servant of God and the work was God's work. He must wait for the sign and the commission and not move until God gave him orders to move.

But God was moving. Exodus 2 closes with the momentous declaration "*and God came down to deliver them*". To Moses, waiting there in "the backside of the desert" came God with instructions for action.

(To be continued)

A PORTRAIT OF ST. LUKE

Luke, the Evangelist, physician and historian, is said by tradition to have been a painter, and perhaps in the picturesque qualities of his writing we may trace the origin of this pious opinion. There is a legend that he painted the portrait of the Virgin, and certainly the greater part of the little we know of our Lord's mother is due to St. Luke, who preserved for us the Magnificat, and drew in words that poetic picture of the Nativity adorned with the Nunc Dimittis and the Benedictus which pictorial art has never ceased to reproduce. There is always a widespread desire to discover the personalities of great writers, and surely there is no one who has any feeling for Christianity but must regret our ignorance about the four Evangelists. Luke is the only one of whose character it is possible to form any definite idea. Even in his case we must rely mainly upon conjecture, for the modest chronicler of the Acts of the Apostles has purposely withdrawn himself from the gaze of his readers. He never tells us who he was, nor asks for our sympathy or our praise for the many hardships which he and Paul bore, and the many heroisms they displayed together. He never even betrays his presence except by the use of the pronoun "we". All we know for certain is that the "beloved physician" never failed his friend, but was alone with him when he made "ready to be offered". There is no direct evidence as to whether he was a Jew or a Greek, but many authorities adhere to the latter conclusion. Luke shows little sympathy with the Jews as a nation, and always paints them as hindering

the work of the Church. On the other hand, he betrays some tolerance for the heathen religion around him, and a just and sympathetic comprehension of the attitude of the Roman Governors towards the new faith.

But whether he belonged to "the people" or "the nations", the historian was an artist—a man of great literary genius, whose heaven-instilled purpose, while it inspired his work, never for a moment obscured his artistic skill. The object of the book of the Acts is, as we read it, twofold. First, the author desires to draw a picture of the early Church while it was still but an offshoot of Judaism; and secondly, to describe the bursting of the Judaic bonds by the real hero of the book—Paul. Inspired by his wonderful—we are tempted to say his Greek—love of beauty and happiness, Luke begins with an exquisite picture of the early Christian community. An ideal social life prevailed among the brethren. "*No man lacked anything*", for "*they had but one heart and one mind*". No one "*called anything his own, but they had all things in common*", and "*breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*". We are told that "a great peace was upon them all", and that they possessed singular gifts of healing. Their increasing influence with the people disquieted the authorities, who, "doubting how far this would grow", summoned the apostles to appear before them and tried to bind them over to silence. Peter and John, however, replied to their accusers with light-hearted courage saying, "Whether it is right in the

sight of God to hearken unto you more than to God, judge ye", and so far impressed the learned Gamaliel with their assurance that he begged his brethren to let them alone lest they themselves should be found fighting against God. When persecution threatened them Luke shows us the disciples assembling themselves together and praying that God, seeing their peril, would grant unto his servants that with all boldness they might speak his word by stretching out his hand to heal, that signs and wonders might be done by the might of his holy child. In the next picture which Luke puts before us the state of the Church is somewhat changed. The brotherhood has been greatly enlarged, and we trace some diminution in the early simplicity and joyousness. There arose, we are told, a murmuring among the Christian poor because some were bettered cared for than others;—evidently there is no longer community of goods. Certain men are chosen for the work of practical philanthropy, among them Stephen, who by giving offence to the orthodox Jews, becomes the first martyr. In presenting Stephen to his readers Luke departs a little from his ordinary method of character-drawing. Generally he adheres strictly to the dramatic method, and allows his characters to reveal themselves by their own words. But in the case of Stephen it is not so, and the world knows Stephen better by what Luke tells us than by the long discourse which is reported as his. We are convinced by his biographer rather than by his eloquence that *"he was full of faith and power"*, and that his hearers *"were not able to resist the wisdom and power by which he spake"*, so that *"all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel"*. By the description of his actual martyrdom this impression of spiritual fascination is confirmed in the reader's mind and perhaps the picture of Stephen *"looking into heaven"*, seeing the *"glory of God"*; and forgiving his enemies, while they, *"cut to the heart, gnashed upon him with their teeth"*, is for mere beauty of depiction the finest passage in the Acts. This moment of tragedy is the one which Luke chooses as the one in which to present Paul. *"The witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul"*.

Once more the scene changes. Henceforward the reader's interest centres round Paul,—his conversion, his perils, his trials and his defences. As we read Paul's words as recorded by his friend it is impossible not to wonder to what extent they have been modified by pass-

ing through the medium of another mind. Was Luke's report always accurate? Verbal accuracy was surely impossible. It is out of the question. If a speech took some hours to deliver it is not possible to compress it into a short paragraph and maintain verbal accuracy. All the same, the short report may be a true one. A man may give in ten minutes an account of a speech he has heard in the House of Commons, and may convey truly both the subject matter of what was spoken, and also the manner and mental characteristics of the speaker, though he give up all attempts at a literal repetition of the sentences. Such a report could not be called imaginary, though it makes of necessity some tax upon the understanding and imagination of the reporter. The account would remain essentially true, and in this matter of essential truth, so far as Paul is concerned, every reader of the Bible who has the smallest grasp of character is in a position to verify Luke's account. Is the Paul whose adventures we follow in the Acts the same perfectly original character who reveals himself to us so unreservedly in his letters? Undoubtedly he is. No one could fail to recognise the great Apostle.

Nevertheless, every portrait reveals the painter to some degree, and in all Luke's sketches of character we see the same aversion to dogmatism, and the same fair attitude toward "those of the contrary part". He dwells particularly upon any sympathetic allusion to the classical standpoint made by the apostles, repeating with evident sympathy the words spoken by Paul suggesting the nearness of God toward those philosophers who had "felt after him"; and again, when Paul prevents the populace from worshipping him, we catch a glimpse of Luke's artistic appreciation of the joyousness inherent in a point of view which, however erroneous, bore testimony to the goodness of God, *"who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not himself without a witness in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."*

All through his book Luke shows the characteristics of a man of much education. He seems almost to share the High Priest's surprise at the eloquence and force of Peter and John, *"seeing that they were unlearned and ignorant men"*, and he displays that distrust of the multitude so common in men of exceptional gifts exceptionally cultivated. Witness his allusions to *"fellows of the baser sort"*, and his account of the mass meeting of the Ephesian silversmiths, where *"some cried*

one thing and some another, for the more part knew not why they were come together". The sudden changes of mind observable in crowds strike the historian's notice. He describes how the barbarians of the island on which Paul was shipwrecked, on seeing him bitten by a snake, concluded that he must be some murderer flying from justice whom vengeance had overtaken. *"They looked that he should have swollen and fallen down dead suddenly; but after they had looked a great while and seen no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god."* Again we see a trace of the same feeling in the almost satirical account of the behaviour of the Jewish rabble before Gallio, when with utter inconsequence they beat Sosthenes in the Judgment Hall because they could not be revenged on Paul, and we feel that Luke is not wholly out of sympathy with the supercilious Gallio,

who looked on at what he considered a quarrel *"about words and names and their law"*, and *"cared for none of these things"*. To Gallio himself it can never have occurred that his name would be known two thousand years later solely in connection with a petty riot he hardly noticed, any more than it occurred to Festus how bitterly the course of history would satirise his contemptuous summing up of Christianity as a question of Jewish "superstition" and of "one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive". Man has a treacherous memory. It is hopeless to say what he may remember, or to gauge how much he will forget. Agrippa, Felix, Festus, Gallio would have been as dead men out of mind but for Luke's pencil. Luke showed wherein lies *"the artist's vantage o'er the king."*

The brightness of His glory

From whence did the writer to the Hebrews obtain his description of Jesus the Son in Heb. 1. 3 *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person"*? Nothing like it occurs in the Old Testament. A very similar phrase is found in the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, one of the books of the Apocrypha. In a passage devoted to the praise of Wisdom personified (Wis. 7. 26) we are told that Wisdom is *"the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness"*. This evident application of "Wisdom" of pre-Christian literature to the person of our Lord is an additional justification for the suggestion that "Wisdom" in the eighth chapter of Proverbs is in fact descriptive of the office of the Son prior to his coming to earth. "Wisdom" and the "Word" or "Logos" was "made flesh" when Jesus came to earth as man, as St. John explains in the first chapter of his Gospel. Proverbs 8 tells of his existence with the Father *"or ever the earth was"* and the apocryphal Book of Wisdom, although not of the inspired books of Scripture, supports Proverbs 8. Hebrews sets the seal by likening our resurrected Lord, set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, to that Wisdom which is the brightness of his glory and the image of his person, using the language of Israel's sacred writings of olden time.

Thank God, and take courage (Acts 28. 15).

Let us have a positive and confident faith in our privilege of calling upon the Lord for "grace to help in every time of need". Desiderius Erasmus, when confronted by Luther with the scornful assertion that "You desire to tread upon eggs without crushing them, and among glasses without breaking them," replied cautiously, "I will not be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, at least so far as the age will permit me". Where then was the faith which enabled Paul, in braving the terrors of stormy seas and unknown lands, the bitter opposition of Jews and the relentless intolerance of false brethren, to exclaim triumphantly "I can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth me." Says one, "I will not be unfaithful," but in supreme confidence the other declares, "I know him whom I have believed . . . I am ready to be offered." If we look down into the stormy waters upon which we are treading we can do naught else but sink, but if with quiet courage we look up to the stars and remember that away in the heavens are the things which endure, we shall forget the threatening gulf below us, and the great waters which mount up to the heavens will serve but to bring us nearer to God, for we shall be riding always upon the crest of the wave.



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

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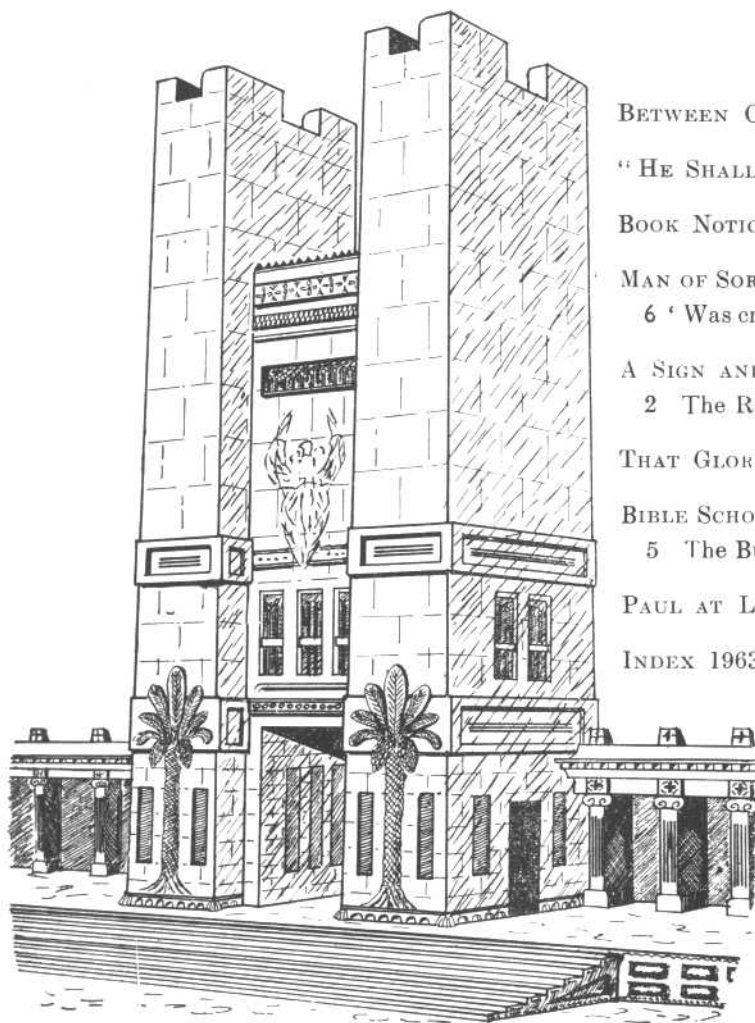
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BETWEEN OURSELVES

Who missed last issue?

The Post Office have returned to us a copy of the Sep./Oct. issue with the address label torn off so that we have no clue as to whom the copy was sent. If the reader who did not get Sep./Oct., No. 6, will let us know, a copy will be despatched by return.

* * *

It is usual at this time of the year to mention, for the benefit of those who are interested, the special fund administered by Bro. E. Allbon and to say that contributions will be warmly appreciated and acknowledged if sent to Mr. Allbon, 9 Esher Close, Nyetimber Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis, Sussex.

* * *

Will readers in the United States and Canada who send gifts to the "Monthly" by means of Post Office International Money Orders please note that usually the Post Office in passing us the money give the name of the sender but not the address. In consequence we sometimes have difficulty in identifying the sender and are unable to acknowledge the gift. May we ask that anyone on the North American continent paying in money to their Post Office for transmission to us also advise us separately by letter that they have done so, in order that we may be in no doubt as to the identity of the sender.

* * *

Recently published reprints are available in booklet form as follows, and will appeal to all who are interested in the Old Testament. Prices include postage.

The Tower of Babel. 52 pp paper 1/6 (20 cents). Story of the Tower illuminated by modern discoveries.

The Tragedy of Samson. 52 pp paper 1/6 (20 cents). Vivid narrative of his life and the lessons to be derived therefrom.

The Mission of Jonah. 80 pp paper 3/- (40 cents) cloth 5/- (60 cents). Independent testi-

mony to the truth of the Scripture account.

* * *

We would like to make it plain that we are at all times glad to receive the names of readers' friends who themselves would like to become regular readers of the "Bible Study Monthly" upon the usual terms—sent without charge, and costs of publication and despatch dependent upon voluntary contributions. It is requested only that names are not sent unless it is definitely known, or there is very good reason to suppose that the intended recipient would certainly be interested and willing to become a reader. We do not wish to dissipate funds in sending unwanted copies; moreover it is not unknown for some to have an objection to receiving literature which they have not requested. Nevertheless, if on this basis any reader cares to send such names and addresses we shall be more than pleased to add them to our readers' list.

* * *

At the close of the year we express our very sincere recognition of the many letters of appreciation received from readers during the year. The "Monthly" has no full-time staff and the whole of the work involved, secretarial and editorial, has to be done in "out-of-business" hours so that it is not possible to reply to such letters; this short note therefore is our acknowledgment and assurance that all such letters are read and afford encouragement for the future conduct of this little effort in the Master's service.

Gone from us

Bro. L. Rutherford (Bournemouth)
Bro. A. W. Parker (Aldersbrook)

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

"HE SHALL BE GREAT!"

A Christmas
Message

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest." (Luke 1. 32).

In this world men are accounted great because they have achieved some noteworthy thing that has produced immediate results. A skilful general wins a crucial battle—he is accounted a great soldier. A commercial magnate welds a number of trading organisations into one enormous unit, controlling a major part of some vital commodity—he is a great business man. A shrewd and plausible politician rises to the top by his astute handling of foreign affairs—he is a great statesman. None of these is called great while as yet he is in the state of progress towards his goal, while his plans are developing, but only when he has "arrived". The world demands, not only success, but the visible evidences of success, before it will bestow its diploma. The man who patiently and zealously builds for the future, knowing that his goal will not be reached in his own lifetime, and that the fruit of his labours will only be reaped by posterity, is never esteemed great whilst yet he lives, even though recognition may come after his death, when at last the realisation of all his dreams is there for all to see.

So be it then, with our Lord Jesus Christ. Of all great men He is the greatest. He came down from Heaven to achieve the greatest work of all time, the redemption and reconciliation of mankind and the consummation of God's creative Plan. His greatness was not recognised then, but in days to come it will be plain for all to see. "He shall be great"—that is the promise and it cannot fail of fulfilment. Men, and angels too, will join together in worship and adoration, praising and blessing the name of the Son, that name which is exalted above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

At the time of His birth there was no evidence of coming greatness. He was born in the meanest of mean circumstances, his mother of the lowly descendant of a once kingly line from which all the insignia and trappings of kingship had long since departed; born citizen of a conquered and subject people; born into a humble workaday environment. What promise of greatness reposed here? His only credentials were those

declared by an old priest and an aged women Temple attendant, neither of them of any moment or influence in the world of big things. Who would have thought that this infant son of a village maiden would start a fire that was destined to sweep the world and never be put out? Who would have thought that this tiny babe was foreordained to outlive all the kings who ruled at his birth and to succeed to the kingship of the world when all their thrones had been swept away? Who would have thought that this little life so quietly and unobtrusively come into the world would catch up and knit together so many other lives through generations yet unborn and make of them a mighty striking force, a power so great that even the proud gates of hell will not prevail against it? That was to be the outcome, an outcome that has not been fully realised even as yet, but an outcome that will surely one day cause all men to recognise the true greatness of that Light which two thousand years ago came into the world.

We do perceive that greatness. To us He is already great. How could it be otherwise? We know of the mighty power that descended upon the Church at Pentecost and has remained since with all whose lives have been given to him. True, we do not yet find it possible to perform mighty outward works and so far as the world is concerned there is still little evidence of the power working within. But the power is there, a power that is preparing us and fitting us for the full revelation to all men which is to come "at his appearing". And without the long years of that inward working in our hearts and minds we would be quite unready for the duties and responsibilities which will devolve upon us directly the Messianic Kingdom is established in power and the word of the Lord begins to go out to all people.

During the first few years of this century a young man in his early thirties resided in London. He was poor, made so by his chosen way of life, for he was a student, studying and equipping himself with the intention of one day delivering his people. Day after day he could be seen in the reading-room of the British Museum, groping after the knowledge that was to give him ability to choose and judge aright when the time of power should

come. No one who came in contact with him took him very seriously; he was just an enthusiast riding a hobby-horse of his own and he would never achieve anything great in this world. His name was quite unknown to the people who mattered, and only a very few people knew he existed at all.

There came a day when as a mature man of forty-seven he stepped to the front of the dais before a wildly cheering crowd of elected representatives packed into a great hall in one of the world's capitals, and uttered a few simple words. "*We will now proceed*" he said "*to the drafting of the constitution of the new Republic*". From brief notes on a few papers held in his hand he sketched the outlines of the creation which he had been planning and for which he had been equipping himself through those arduous years of study in London and Paris. To-day, less than fifty years later, the power set up by Vladimir Lenin on that historic night in 1917 controls nearly half the world, and has transformed a feudal, benighted, ignorant people into a community of States which together form one of the world's great Empires.

Lenin is rightly esteemed one of the world's great men. Whether the social system he founded is a good thing or a bad thing for the world does not alter that fact. He was an atheist and his achievement was a purely material one, but from the world's standpoint he was a great man. But no one esteemed him such in those early student days; only after the fruit of his labours appeared in the creation of the Soviet State and its continuance against its enemies was that recognition granted.

So will it be with our King. He was despised and rejected of men, accounted a dreamer and an enthusiast, ignored and unheeded, in the days of his flesh. His followers too, in like manner, are accounted fools, for his sake. The world does not really believe that the saints are going to reign. Men do not take seriously the oft-repeated declaration that in a day yet to come the Lord Jesus will assume his great power and command all men's obedience. The disciples of Jesus go about their studies and their training, conspicuous only by their poverty in the things of this world, and their absolute devotion to the ideal they have set before them, and the world smiles tolerantly and takes no further notice.

One day our King will stand up, a nonentity in the counsels of the world no longer. He also will proceed to the creation of a new social order, one which will embrace, not half

the world as does the Soviet system, but the whole of the world. "*His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.*" The kings of the earth will fight against it, just as the Western powers tried to fight at first against the new Russia, and they will fail to arrest its progress. The Rider on the White Horse will cleave the heavens in his descent to the last great battle and the powers of this world will give way for the last time. The kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ—and He shall reign for ever and ever.

"*He shall be great!*" The promise stands, disbelieved and disowned by the world of men. They will believe, in that day when He stands up to command obedience. There will be no uncertainty about the matter then, no disputing. The benefits of that Kingdom will be abundantly manifest to all, and in their joy and exaltation of spirit men will declaim to the heavens "*This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*"

BOOK NOTICE

Atlas of Mesopotamia. (Prof. A. M. Beek). Thomas Nelson & Sons, 70/-. A very fine compendium of information on the ancient lands of Sumeria, Mari, Assyria and Babylonia and their history, from pre-historic times to the fall of Babylon. The full story of archeological research is brought completely up-to-date in the fields of religion, law, economics, daily life and about all that has to do with the varied peoples who have inhabited the land. Frequent references to the authorities responsible for the discoveries, the facts and data given is a very valuable feature to students, as is also the index of all Bible references to these lands. The text is accompanied by 296 photoplates, arranged in full pages, some of the reproductions being full page size, which enables detail to be examined in a manner not possible with the usual books on such subjects, and 22 maps in full colour, the whole being supplemented by a detailed subject index. An invaluable help to Old Testament study. The book measures 14 inches by 10½ inches and is handsomely bound, forming an ideal present for anyone interested in Old Testament backgrounds or in the history of past times. Obtainable through all booksellers.

MAN OF SORROWS

A Study in
Isaiah 53

Part 6. "Was crucified, dead, and buried"

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." (vs.9).

This word was literally fulfilled when Jesus was crucified in the company of two thieves and afterwards buried in the tomb of the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea. That is a surface interpretation which can be accepted as a very true one since so many of the Old Testament prophecies are declared by the Apostles to have been literally fulfilled in the experiences through which our Lord passed. But we should not be content with this merely surface explanation. The sublime words of Isa. 53 must surely enfold a deeper and more profound theme than the mere burial of the Lord's body in a particular tomb. The expression is really a continuation of the theme which pervades all the chapter from the first verse. It tells of the apparently inexplicable and yet undeniable fact that He, the Lord of all righteousness, spotless in his unblemished purity, became so identified with sin and sinners as in the end to suffer and die and be buried just like the grossest of sinners. No penalty that men could visit upon evil and evildoers was wanting in his case—who knew no sin. The Old Testament abounds with assurances of Divine favour and watchcare exercised toward the righteous, but none of that was extended towards him. He suffered as though He were the vilest of sinners and He died as though He were one not fit to live. So far as man was concerned He was as one not fit to live and He was cut off from the land of the living. One assigned, or appointed, him a grave with the wicked; that is the literal meaning of the first phrase of the verse. He was appointed to that destiny. In the sight of men He was as the evil king of Isa. 14 who is *"cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch . . . thrust through with a sword, that go down to the sides of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet"*. That was the viewpoint from which the world looked upon Jesus and the people of his day were as little concerned about him after his death as they were over the bodies of criminals thrown into the fires of Gehenna, the burning valley.

The Father took a different view. "The wages of sin is death" says the Divine law and although in the sight of men this one had gone

into death like the wicked and with the wicked, He did not remain in death. *"It was not possible that he should be holden of it"* says the Apostle. His association with criminals was only apparent and not real, and the Father gave testimony to the righteousness of the Son by raising him from the dead. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but that grave did not hold him, because He himself is righteous. The people had treated him with the same contempt as did their ancestors with Urijah the prophet in the days of Jeremiah, they having *"cast his dead body into the graves of the common people"* (Jer. 26. 23) and thought by that to make an end of Jesus and his inconvenient teachings. So man proposed, and God disposed, and on the third day the stone was rolled back and the Lord of Glory came forth.

The expression "with the rich in his death" looks beyond the literal fact of Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and the costly spices and fine linen in which the Lord's body was enshrouded. That may very well have been the immediate fulfilment but there is something more fundamental. The Scriptures refer several times to the fact that even the rich man—in the riches of this world—must eventually leave everything behind and go down into the land of forgetfulness. *"If his children be multiplied"* says Job *"it is for the sword; and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. . . . Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the day; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. The rich man shall lie down . . . he openeth his eyes, and he is not. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth, for God shall cast upon him, and not spare."* (Job 27. 14-22). Despite his riches, he lies down in death and is forgotten. *"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him . . . that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption."* (Psa. 49. 6-9). To the world it seemed that the death of Jesus was like that. True, he had not accumulated earthly riches, but it seemed equally true that all he had striven for during his lifetime had been wasted. He died without having achieved his purpose. "We trusted that it had been he

which should have redeemed Israel" said the two disciples sadly on the road to Emmaus. They had expected, but now all hope was gone and his life was as if it had never been spent. In that sense He made his grave with the rich in his death—the fruits of his life's endeavour dissipated to the four winds and He himself, lying, like all men of all preceding generations, lifeless in the grave.

"Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." The word "because" in this verse is better translated "although". Notwithstanding the viewpoint from which men had looked upon this thing, it is true that in the final outworking of the Divine Plan only sinners—wilful and incorrigible sinners—meet this fate. Jesus was righteous, and in fact should not have made his grave with the wicked and rich in this fashion. It was all a part of his taking the sinner's place and becoming identified with the burden of the world's sin. But it was an unjust fate; no law of God demanded this ignominious and humiliating end to his earthly life. He took it upon himself willingly, partaking of the same that, being made perfect through sufferings, he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (vs. 10).

Here is a prophecy of the dying sufferings of the Messiah. At the very last the Father takes upon himself the ultimate responsibility for all that has happened. *"Thou couldst have no power at all against me"* said Jesus to Pilate, *"except it were given thee from above"*. The Father, Who is the Creator and sustainer of all things, declares His acceptance of full responsibility for everything that happens in His creation. God is not the author of sin, and those who claim that He is, and because of that is morally obligated to recover every one of his creatures from the thralldom and power of sin irrespective of their own wishes in the matter, do greatly err. But God takes responsibility for the fact that sin is allowed to remain in the world and evil men are permitted to practice evil deeds. He could end all that in a moment by the exercise of his will, and because He does not do so He accepts responsibility, knowing that the eventual outcome will justify the wisdom of

the course He has taken. So it is true to say that it pleased the Lord to bruise him in the sense that the Father deliberately allowed that "bruising" to take place, and did not lift a finger to stop it. None would claim that God took pleasure in the harrowing scenes of the trial and crucifixion, but we ought to realise very clearly that God did look upon the whole transaction with the serenity of infinite wisdom, knowing that the end of the story would be glory. And in the meantime He gave strength and comfort to the Son as he drank to the bitter end the cup which the Father had poured for him. Father and Son were in complete harmony and full understanding the one with the other during the whole of that dark time.

This is the time when Jesus uttered the sad words *"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me"* (Matt. 26. 38). It is so easy to assume that Jesus was troubled in mind at the thought of the physical sufferings he was so shortly to endure; one wonders if our thinking has not been altogether along wrong lines, unduly influenced by what would undoubtedly have been our own reaction under similar circumstances. Jesus was more than man and he had a wider mental horizon than has been the possession of any man. He lived before the world was; the whole wide creation of God had been his sphere of action. Even in the bitter moments of the betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion, that fact must have made an inestimable difference. Men who enter into what they know is to be suffering ended by death cannot visualise, because they do not know, what lies beyond death. Jesus did know, and his knowledge of the other world must have been a wonderful stay and strength in the midst of his physical suffering. But there was another suffering to be endured, one that perhaps was much more crucial to him. How would his disciples behave after he was gone? Would they show themselves men of stamina and courage to continue the work he had begun? He must of necessity leave them to plant the seed of his word in the world after his death, and in the power of his Spirit lay the foundations of the Church, without which the Divine Plan for all mankind could not go into effect. Were they capable of discharging the commission he must now of necessity leave to them? Were these the thoughts which caused Jesus' soul to be "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?" The men he had chosen were so little conscious of the position in which their Master

was placed that they could sleep soundly while he endured his Gethsemane agonies; in a few hours' time one of them was going to deny him in public and they all were going to forsake him and flee for their lives. Was this the cup he had to drink and from which he desired to be saved if it were the Father's will? If so, the expression "he hath put him to grief" takes on a new and a terrible significance. That grief was caused, not by the Master's enemies, not by wicked men, but by his own disciples and companions. He might reasonably have expected to yield up his human life on the Cross fortified and comforted by the presence of the twelve who had in the past continued with him in his temptations, his trials and difficulties. He might have hoped that the last sight his human eyes would behold as the shades of death came down would be the stalwart company of men who were to proclaim and establish his message in the world. But it was not to be. A few women, and the faithful John. That was all. It cannot be held that Jesus lost faith, even for one moment, during that climax to all his sufferings; but that he must have suffered intense grief at the defection of those who should have been his comforters during that time is undeniable.

It was at this moment that Jesus uttered the oft-misunderstood cry "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" which H. G. Wells once referred to as "that eternal enigma to the faithful". Granted that many earnest Christians have been puzzled by that cry, it is still true that had H. G. Wells' knowledge of the Bible been anywhere on a par with his undoubted literary abilities, he would not have made that scathing remark. The explanation sometimes offered, that in order fully to take the sinner's place Jesus must experience, if only for a moment, the withdrawal of the Father's favour, and feel himself disowned and deserted by God, is quite untenable and, to a degree, irreverent. It implies that for a moment our Lord's faith failed. It implies that Christian men who have suffered martyrdom for their faith without having any sign of deliverance by God, and yet have remained firm in faith and confident of the Father's smile right up to their dying breath, were superior to our Lord in faith, which is an absurd and impossible conclusion. Whatever Jesus meant by the words, he could not have meant that he harboured any doubt as to his Father's continued favour and strength. To his last moment he knew that God was with him.

The right answer is that Jesus uttered the words not as an indication of lost faith, but as an affirmation in the sight of all spectators that his faith still held. It is well known that the words Jesus uttered are the opening words of the twenty-second Psalm. Jesus deliberately quoted the opening verse of that psalm. Now that fact is of tremendous significance, for the twenty-second psalm is a very special psalm. It is the traditional psalm which was sung or quoted by the children of Israel when hard pressed by their enemies, when escape seemed hopeless and death stared them in the face. The first eighteen verses of the psalm are eloquent of despair, as though God had deserted his people and left them to their fate. Then verses nineteen to twenty-two express the continued faith of Israel that despite the apparent indifference of God, yet God does care and is mindful of his people's plight, and will eventually deliver. Finally verses twenty-three to thirty-one tell of deliverance accomplished, the enemies of Israel scattered, and the people of God triumphantly exalted. It thus follows that the crying out of the first verse of Psalm 22 at a time of extremity was tantamount to an avowal of faith that, despite the apparent hopelessness of the case, God would surely deliver at the end.

We have the authority of the New Testament for saying that Psalm 22 is also intended to be prophetic of Christ. So when Jesus cried the words, they conveyed to the ears of the listeners his own implicit faith that although he was at that very moment going down into the darkness of death, he knew that the Father would raise him from the dead and exalt him to his own right hand. Like Israel in their battles, his enemies had for the moment gained the upper hand and there was no immediate salvation from their murderous designs; he must inevitably perish at their hands. But that was not the end; the promise of God would surely be fulfilled, and as a witness to that sure fact he cried the words which told all Israel of his faith that "*the third day he shall rise again*".

(To be continued)

The name "Calvary" in Luke 23. 33, applied to the hill of the Crucifixion otherwise called Golgotha is taken from the Latin Vulgate translation. It is the Latin word *calvaria*, which is a translation of the Greek *kranion*, in turn a translation of the Aramaic "*golgotha*"—"the place of a skull".

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

A study in
Isaiah 19

Part 2 The raising up of Egypt

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called, The city of the sun." (Isa. 19. 18, margin).

Six times in this passage does Isaiah use the expression "in that day". Each time it is used to introduce one of the characteristic features of Egypt's conversion and reconciliation to God, using Egypt as the symbol of the world of mankind "in that day". Particularly does Egypt picture the military and warlike aspect of the world, and hence this reconciliation that is pictured in this nineteenth chapter does show up in brighter relief than other prophetic writings the fact that "in that day" nations will no longer be at enmity but will live amicably and at peace with each other, in the knowledge and reverence of God.

In this 18th verse the stage of "terror" described in the preceding two verses has passed. The world is no longer in fear of this new thing that has come into the earth. They have now become used to the idea of a central world government operating from Jerusalem under the direction of the "Ancient Worthies", and although they do not as yet comprehend a great deal of the law that is going forth from Jerusalem they do, at least in the main, realise and accept the fact that it is going to be for their good. The world will be so sick of war and destruction by that time that it will at any rate be thankful to know that the time for that has passed, and that real security of life and limb and prospect of physical well-being is henceforth its lot. That realisation will undoubtedly sink first into the minds of most men before the deeper implications of this Millennial Day will have impressed themselves, and men appreciate that they are called and required to come to the Lord Jesus in full surrender of heart and life if they are to continue in the enjoyment of these blessings.

Five cities are to speak the language of Canaan. That the world will speak a "new language" is fairly easy to appreciate. Men are to have turned to them a "pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent". (Zeph. 3. 9). This promise indicates how the law of the Lord and the word of the Lord, going out from Jerusalem, will be understood and re-echoed by the world, and its terms repeated

to each other by them, so that no man will need to "say to his neighbour 'know the Lord' for all shall know him, from the least of them unto the greatest". (Jer. 31. 34). But what is the meaning of the somewhat strange expression "five cities" and why is it that one of them is called "The city of the sun"? (The text rendering "city of destruction" is incorrect and has been replaced by "city of the sun" in the margin). It seems a strange limitation; had it been seven cities the idea of universal turning to the Lord could well have been attached to it in accordance with normal Scripture symbolism. None of the orthodox commentators has any suggestion to make. But during the preparation of this treatise one interesting fact came to light. In ancient times Egypt was divided for political purposes into forty-two provinces, twenty-two in Upper Egypt and twenty in Lower Egypt, each province having a capital city, sacred to one or another of the Egyptian gods. Of these forty-two provincial capitals, just five are mentioned in the Bible, and one of these five is the city of On, which in after days was called Heliopolis, a Greek word which means "city of the sun". The five cities so mentioned are:—

No (Greek *Thebes*) Jer. 46. 25, Ezek. 30. 14, Nah. 3. 8.

Hanes (*Herakleopolis*) Isa. 30. 4.

Noph (*Memphis*) Isa. 19. 13, Jer. 2. 16, 44. 1, 46. 19, Ezek. 30. 13.

On (*Heliopolis*) Gen. 41. 45, 46. 20.

Zoan (*Tanis*) Num. 13. 22, Psa. 78. 12, Isa. 19. 11, 30. 4, Ezek. 30. 14.

These five cities were scattered over the country, one in the Delta, two in Lower Egypt and two in Upper Egypt. Is it possible that we have here an indication that the "cities of Egypt", the nations of mankind in the dawn of the Millennial Age, will only speak the "language of Canaan" by coming into contact with the Word of God? Five cities out of forty-two are symbolically to speak the new language. Five cities only of those forty-two are mentioned by name in the Old Testament; none of the others have any contact with its narratives or its prophecies. One of the five, at least, is definitely identified by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, as Heliopolis, or On, the city of the sun, a city which from ancient times had been sacred to

Itum, the god of the setting sun. If this is indeed the intention then we have in this verse a plain intimation that the world's salvation in the Millennial Day will depend upon two things; contact with the holy people of the Holy Land, and contact with the Word of God which is to be proclaimed from that land. The "five cities" of that future day would then automatically include all of mankind who have come into contact with the means that God has provided for their reconciliation, and those who will not avail themselves of those means and will not "make contact" must perforce remain unreconciled, until and unless the remedial judgments of the Millennial Age effect in them a change of heart.

"In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them" (vs 19-20). Moffatt puts the first phrase very clearly "an altar to the Eternal in the heart of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Eternal on the frontier". There are two separate erections indicated here; "altar" is "mizbeach", meaning an altar for sacrifice or offering, and used in the Bible to describe the brasen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, the incense altar in the Holy, the brasen altars of Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples, the idolatrous altars of the land, and so on. "Pillar" is "matstebat", a monument or memorial set up to commemorate some event or agreement, such as the pillar set up by Absalom to keep his own memory alive (2 Sam. 18. 18), the pillar set up by Jacob to mark the spot where God had talked with him (Gen. 35. 14) and the pillar he set up to be a witness between himself and Laban (Gen. 31. 45). It is necessary to realise therefore that this verse speaks of an altar of offering being set up in the centre of the land of Egypt, and a pillar of witness at the border or frontier between Egypt and Judah. Like the preceding and succeeding verses of this chapter, this verse is symbolic. "In that day", i.e., in the Millennial Age, there will be the altar of God, the place of approach to God, the place where acceptable offerings may be presented before God, in the very heart of the formerly evil and godless world of mankind. The world will no longer be able to ignore the message; neither will the Lord's messengers be uni-

versally despised and rejected. The time will have come when will be fulfilled the words of the Psalmist *"Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar"* (Psa. 51. 19). The coming of perfect men to God in wholehearted consecration of life will be a common-place in that glad day, and this offering of perfect manhood to do the will of God will be a symbolic "offering of bullocks" upon the Millennial altar. The fact that a few verses farther on the Egyptians are pictured as being converted to the Lord shows that this symbolic altar "in the midst of the land" does denote the avenue of approach to God which will be open to all men during that Age.

The pillar at the border speaks of something different. It is this pillar that is the "sign and witness unto the Lord of Hosts" of vs 20 "for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them". The clue to the meaning of this symbolic "pillar" is probably to be found in the story of Jacob. When parting from Laban his father-in-law he set up a pillar to mark the boundary between their respective domains and to be a witness of the covenant they had made between themselves. *"This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham . . . judge betwixt us."* (Gen. 31. 52-53). That pillar stood as the sign and witness of a covenant of peace between Jacob and Laban, entered into in the name of God and with the blessing of God. So here in Isaiah, the pillar on the border of the land is a sign and a witness to a covenant of peace between Judah and Egypt under the power and protection of God. It is a sign and a witness of an alliance formed between the righteous nation which represents the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth and the unrighteous world which, although it has opposed and fought that righteous nation in the past, is now to be blessed by it and led into the way of the truth. The world of mankind will be crying to the Lord "because of oppressors" and He will send them "a Saviour, and he shall deliver them". That Saviour, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent when He is revealed in glory with all his saints for the salvation of the world.

How clear it is, therefore, that, as the next

verse tells us (vs 21) *"the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it"*. Thus is pictured the reconciliation of mankind to God and their eager coming to the source of instruction and blessing that they might learn of the laws of God's Kingdom and willingly align themselves with them. It will be a time when, at last, men will perform before God what they have covenanted to do; a time when righteousness prevails and there is the tremendous force of public opinion encouraging men to walk in right ways instead of leading them to wrong ways as at present.

"And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them." (vs 22). This is a further light on the characteristics of the Millennial Day; it is a time of discipline, of "stripes" for the wayward and rebellious, and it is not by any means going to be "roses, roses, all the way" for those whose hearts and minds have been degraded and brutalised by sin. The rule of the Millennial Age will be benevolent and merciful, but it will also be firm and just, and there will be many who will experience chastisement, chastening, "smiting" in the process of their recovery from sin and evil. But the smiting is to heal, according to this verse; it is not punitive but reformatory and we do well to take careful note of the fact for it represents a very important principle in the Divine dealings with mankind. The whole purpose and all the arrangements of the Millennial Age are for one end only, for the reconciliation to God, and the eternal salvation and everlasting life, of "whosoever will", of all who can possibly be persuaded to abandon sin and turn themselves to accept Christ and serve the living God. Speaking of a similar process with the Holy Nation at a slightly earlier date, God says through the prophet Ezekiel *"I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me"* (Ezek. 20. 37-38). In that instance the reference is to the purifying of regathered Israel preparatory to their appointment as the earthly missionary nation that is to take an important part in the conversion of "Egypt", but the principle is the same. *"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth"* is going to be as true of Israel and of the world of mankind then as it is of the Church

now. And the general result, as predicted by Isaiah, is that "Egypt", mankind as a whole, will return to the Lord, and He will heal them.

"In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt into Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance'" (vs. 23-25).

A wonderful conclusion to the chapter; a picture of universal peace! Throughout Israel's history Assyria and Egypt were alternately at warfare with the nations around Palestine, or with each other, marching and counter-marching across the fair lands of Judah and Israel and ravaging wherever they went. The picture of a highway between the territories of these two great empires, with the citizens of both passing and repassing upon their lawful business, must have seemed a very unlikely one, especially in the days of Isaiah, when Assyria and Egypt were locked in a death-grip which had to end with the crushing of one. But that is what Isaiah saw, a day when the contending factions of mankind would have resolved all their enmity and jealousy into that calm and quiet fraternity which is to be the hallmark of the next Age. The highways of that day will be the highways of peace, and war and violence will be no more.

Perhaps there is a covert allusion also to the outcome of the conflict that brings about the end of the Gospel Age and prepares the way for the Millennial Age, the conflict that Daniel describes under the symbol of a battle between the "King of the North" and the "King of the South". Assyria and Egypt, geographically north and south of Palestine, could well fill that role in symbolic imagery. Whoever and whatever are the powers and forces in the end of this Age that are represented in Daniel by those two kings, it is certain that their violence and their warfare will not extend beyond the close of this Age, after Armageddon. "In that day", the Assyrian and the Egyptian will be equally conscious of a great chastening that has taken away from them all desire for further sallies at arms. The highway connecting Assyria with Egypt will be a quiet, a peaceable, and a joyous one.

The next verse adds the connecting link

that makes this possible. Assyria and Egypt are made one because of Israel between them acting as peacemaker. Thus is symbolised the beneficent work of the Holy Nation, regathered Israel, under the guidance and instruction of the glorified Church, working zealously to weld all men together into a brotherhood that is to endure for all eternity. Israel, says the prophet, is to be the third in this earthly trio, a blessing in the midst of the land. The picture of a nation of peacemakers in the midst of the earth, playing their part in the reconciliation of men to God, is one that is very vividly shown in this verse.

So the Divine blessing comes upon a world made new. The earth has yielded its increase and justified the declaration God made so long ago "I will make the place of my feet glorious." *"Blessed be Assyria the work of my hands."* Mankind will have come to perfection and entered into sonship; with sin cast away, and evil a thing of the past, they will have become sons of God on the human plane, and God says of them *"Blessed be Egypt my people"*. Israel, the missionary nation, comes in for the closer and more intimate word. Her work finished, God says *"Blessed be Israel my*

inheritance". Perhaps we ought to realise that the earthly nation that has carried out this missionary work on earth is, after all, only working under the control of the Church of Christ, glorified in the heavens, and maybe much of what is credited in this chapter to Israel belongs properly to the spiritual Israel which will be ordering these things from above. At the same time it should be fairly clear that this nineteenth chapter of Isaiah is looking at things practically exclusively from an earthly point of view and describes the work of God as it will be observed and appreciated by men upon earth. If there were nothing else in all the Scriptures to tell of the hope for mankind that is to be realised in time to come, this glowing passage should be enough to convince us that God has planned for the conversion of symbolic Egypt to Himself. He will bring to an end all war and strife and tumult, and all those things that have made the world, in our day, a replica on a greater scale of Egypt as it was in its relation to Judah in the days of Isaiah the prophet. And He will have reconciled "Egypt" and purged it of all its sin.

(THE END)

THAT GLORIOUS HOPE

*An encouragement
to steadfastness*

These words were written by William Andrews a little over a century ago. They show how some Christian men at that time were already anticipating the clear knowledge that came with the later years of the century and demonstrate the truth of the Scripture which declares that the path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The understanding of the Christian's hope as seen by William Andrews could hardly be better expressed to-day, except that we now see the fulfilment of some of the things to which he then looked forward.

* * *

"And as the hope of the sleeping saints is the resurrection, so the hope of the living is to be clothed upon in the translation, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life . . . 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorrupt-

ible, and we shall be changed.' This is the hope of our calling—the living hope unto which we are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—the hope of life, not of death. And if the faithful who sleep in Jesus, sheltered from the storms, and freed from the pollutions of this evil world, think it long till their Lord appears . . . how earnestly should we stretch forth the head to catch the sound of His approaching footsteps—we, to whom the battle is fierce, and the burden heavy, and the strain of sin deep in the soul. Oh, how has the Church ceased to war against death, yielding herself in passive hopelessness to its usurped dominion, and accounting its rest her chief reward, instead of pressing forward to that 'manifestation of the sons of God', in the glory of the resurrection, for which even the earnest expectation of the creation waits!

"And not for our own sakes alone, nor for the sake alone of the sleeping saints should we long for the return of our Lord and Saviour; but that the earth, now groaning and travailing in pain, may be delivered from the

curse. For the promise that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head includes in its large reach of blessings the redemption of man's inheritance by the casting out of him who usurped it, and the purging away of all the evil with which his slimy presence has defiled and infected it. The earth was made for the revealing of God's glory, through the possession and enjoyment of its manifold treasures, free from all curse, by man standing in his allegiance to his Maker; and though the purpose was frustrated by the fall of the first Adam, it shall be accomplished in the second, who will cause the Father's will to be done forevermore. He has already in his own person triumphed over the seductions of the serpent, and proved himself against all temptation the obedient Son, worthy to take up the forfeited sceptre of man's dominion, and rule in righteousness for God; and He now waits only for the completion of the company of joint heirs that shall rule with him, to come forth to redeem and purify and bless his purchased inheritance. They are right who are looking for righteousness and peace to fill the earth, and make glad the obedient nations; but they are wrong who look for it before the Man who is the heir shall come forth to make it His own eternal dwelling place. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, to pay the price of the redemption; and then crowned with glory and honour and invested with the right of dominion over all the works of God's hand; *'but now we see not yet all things put under him'*, and his next step shall be His actual and visible government of the creation. It is an idle dream which now possesses so many that the Church is to bring in the Kingdom in the absence of the King. There is not one word for it in all the Scriptures. It contradicts the exhortations for continual watchfulness for Him—not for death, but for Him who is the conqueror of death—which imply the possibility of His coming in any generation, and therefore the certainty of His coming before the long, fixed period of the Millennium, which is the time for rest, not for watching. It is inconsistent with the foretold humiliation and sorrow of the Church during the whole of this dispensation in which she is to walk in His footsteps, and be perfected by the fellowship of His sufferings; it robs her of the blessed hope by which alone she can be purified, and toward which the Apostles ever struggled to lead her—the hope of being like Him and seeing Him as He is; and it entangles her in world

schemes and alliances, and so eats out all faith in the heavenly citizenship. The nations are to be blessed; and the earth, unto the uttermost parts of it, to see the salvation of God, but it shall be when the time comes that the saints possess the kingdom (Dan. 7. 22); which is not during the Bridegroom's absence, for then the Church is the desolate widow called to fasting and mourning, and the word to her ever is, *'Be patient unto the coming of the Lord'*. The last temptation by which Jesus was assailed when He was led up into the wilderness is now spreading its cunning seductions all around us, and we are looking to gain the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, before the time that the Father shall give them to His Son.

"The one great hope for the whole creation, towards which, blindly and unconsciously, if not with intelligent desire, all are reaching forward, is the 'marriage of the Lamb'. It is the hope of the Bride who shall then be one with the Lord in all His glory, and power, and fulness of blessing. It is the hope of the nations, who shall then know the blessedness of righteous rule. It is the hope of the sore-burthened earth, which longs to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And it is the hope of the Lord Himself, whose heart yearns over His Church, purchased with His own blood, but still lying in the desolateness of death, or amidst the defilements of this evil world, and whose word of promise is, *'Surely I come quickly'*. Let our response ever be, *'Even so, come Lord Jesus'*. Let our hearts be broken through our sympathy with the burdens and sorrows of all, and let us utter in His ear continually the cry that shall hasten the common deliverance."

Surely it takes years of Christian experience and overcoming to be able to say from the heart that "All things come of Thee". There is no second cause to the true child of God, but rather the daily faith that every experience is ordered of the Father because He sees that it works out for our highest good, now and hereafter. But the difficulty is sometimes properly to value an experience and so the Lord is patiently teaching us in the hope that we will soon be able joyfully to accept his providences in our life and gladly embrace them, knowing that they will work out the peaceable fruits of righteousness in us.

BIBLE SCHOOL ON THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES**EXODUS****Part 5 The Burning Bush**

The opening of chapter 3 marks the end of the forty years in Midian. Moses was now eighty years old, virile and active in his work of supervising the stock-rearing interests of his father-in-law Jethro, who was probably not far off a hundred and twenty years of age. To all intents and purposes Moses would seem to have settled for life in Midian with no likelihood of return to Egypt although he may not have been altogether cut off from his own family. The allusion, in chapter 4, 14, to Aaron coming to meet him seems to indicate that his elder brother knew where to find him and the fact that there was a constant coming and going of Egyptian officials and others between Egypt and the Midian copper mines renders it by no means unreasonable to think that despite his long residence in the wilderness Moses had been kept in touch with the condition of things back home.

Chapter 3, 1 tells how Moses led his flocks "to the back side of the desert and came to the mountain of God, to Horeb". This is the first of many geographical allusions in the Book of Exodus which, when understood, prove how intimately the writer of Exodus knew his territory. These indications form one of the strongest links in the chain of evidences demonstrating the Mosaic authorship of Exodus. The Midianites inhabited the southern part, particularly the south eastern portion, of the Sinai peninsula. Mount Sinai, in the centre of the southern half, lay in their territory, and the famous copper mines of Serabit al Khadim, from which the Egyptians obtained much of their copper and precious stones, about forty miles north of Sinai. The word rendered "desert" is *midbar*. Of each of the twenty-two different Hebrew words descriptive of the earth's surface in its various aspects, *midbar*, usually translated wilderness, denotes the wild open spaces, grass grown and bush covered, the type of land normally wandered over by nomadic tribes as distinct from the settled lands of agricultural people. The word therefore accurately describes the enclosed acacia covered valleys of southern Sinai and the word "backside" which in Hebrew idiom means the west, points unerringly to that part of Midianite territory which lay around "Horeb the mountain of God", part of the Sinai range

only three miles away from Mount Sinai itself, and overlooking a long curved plain, some ten miles long, by one mile wide where ample pasturage for Moses' flocks could be found.

Here it was, one day, that Moses, busy about his duties with the flocks of sheep and goats which were his care, saw the Burning Bush. "*The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed*" (3. 2). Moses turned aside to examine this wonder at closer quarters—and heard the voice of God speaking to him out of the midst of the bush.

The Old Testament story of the Burning Bush is often regarded as a miracle, but there is no statement to that effect in Exodus. We have just the plain unvarnished statement that Moses' attention was attracted by a flaming bush which appeared to continue burning without being consumed, and upon staying to view the strange sight became conscious of the voice of God commissioning him to return to Egypt and deliver the people of Israel. The Hebrew word here rendered "bush" is the one for acacia. In ancient times—and until the middle of the nineteenth century—the peninsula of Sinai was thickly covered with acacias, so that this part of the story rings true. As to the nature of the phenomenon, the account is silent, but an incident witnessed by the modern author, Louis Golding, and related in his book "*In the steps of Moses the Lawgiver*" might very well explain what happened to Moses. Golding was in this very district, in one of the wadis or dry water-courses on the slopes of Mount Sinai. It was the evening of a hot day and the wind, blowing down several intersecting wadis, had formed a miniature whirlwind, sucking up sand from the ground. As the whirlwind moved along it enshrouded a solitary acacia tree and there remained for a short time. Simultaneously the sun shone out from the clouds and illuminated the whirling sand so that from the point where Golding and his companions stood it seemed as if the entire tree was a mass of shimmering golden flame. After a while the whirlwind left the tree and the phenomenon ended; but

for a short time the observers witnessed something which might easily have been the same thing that was seen and recorded by their illustrious forerunner three thousand years previously.

It is more than likely that what Moses saw was some natural phenomenon of this kind; nothing in the account contradicts such a conclusion. What is of greater importance is the fact that very evidently Moses heard the voice of God speaking to him at this time. Whether it was in fact an audible voice on the air appearing to emanate from the burning bush, or an impression produced upon the mind of Moses in so clear-cut a manner that to him it was as a voice speaking, is of no real consequence. The point to stress is that this was no psychological experience or hallucination, in which Moses might interpret a subconscious urge to go back to Egypt and deliver Israel as the voice of God speaking. This was definite Divine intervention. As the account says, it was the angel of the Lord speaking to Moses. The whole tenor of chapter 3, 1-5 shows that. Moses did not want to go to Egypt; he neither believed he was the man to deliver Israel, nor did he believe that if he went Israel would take any notice of him. The fire and zeal of earlier years had burned low; forty years a nomad shepherd in Midian had taught him many things but it had also blunted the edge of his perception of Israel's parlous condition. His desire for Israel's deliverance was probably as keen as ever but he now believed that God must do the work by another man. His life was two thirds gone, he was more a Midianite man than a Hebrew, more a nomad shepherd than a city dweller, and the leadership of so great a project, attractive as it may have been in earlier years, was now a prospect from which he shrank. "Who am I" he said to God "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (3, 11).

Perhaps Moses had to be brought to this point where he must set his hand to the plough, if he set it at all, solely in the power of God. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was to be entirely and altogether the work of God, and Moses was to be only the instrument. Perhaps Moses had to be convinced that whereas he had no confidence in his own adequacy he could have complete confidence in the power of God. It is noteworthy in chapter 3 that God tells Moses of His intentions in terms which leave no room for any power save His own. "I am the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. I have seen the affliction of my people. I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them into a good land. I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppressed them. I will send thee unto Pharaoh". (3, 6-10). It was the last declaration which jolted Moses and called forth his expostulation of unworthiness, and God abruptly cast his words aside with "Since I will be with thee" (v. 12—not "certainly" as in the A.V.). Since God will be with him why will he either doubt or dissent? Since God will be with him what possible weakness or failure could there be? This was the first hurdle Moses had to cross, his own lack of self-confidence, the consciousness of his own weakness and insufficiency. So far from that being a drawback, said God, it is really an advantage. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness. Moses' objection fell to the ground.

He was ready with another. If he was not to go to Israel in his own name and claim leadership in his own strength, in whose name should he go. "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (3, 13). That question throws a flood of light upon the condition of Israel as to their conception of God. National tradition must have preserved the knowledge of God who called their forefather Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, preserved their fathers in their generations and brought Jacob and his sons into Egypt. But all that was a long time ago and the gods of Egypt were probably much more real to them now—and these gods were all known by name. Which of the many gods was He that would deliver them from Egypt. How would they know Him and how could they picture Him. Was He after all some strange god of the desert who they had not known heretofore? What guarantee could there be, if they trusted themselves to Him at the word of Moses, that He could indeed prove greater in power than all the gods of Egypt and lead them assuredly into the Land of Promise? Moses foresaw a sceptical reception if he turned up in Egypt with this story of a God who had spoken to him in the wilderness and commanded him to go back to Egypt and bring the people of Israel out from under the hand of Pharaoh.

The Divine reply to Moses gives us one of the most sublime passages in the whole Bible. "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I

AM say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you". In those words, rightly understood, God asserts His own eternity and in fact removes himself from association with any question of designating names. The word used there is *hayah*, which is the present tense of the substantive verb "to be" in the first person. The substitution of the third person for the first gives *yahweh* which has become transliterated, clumsily, into the English word Jehovah and used in some circles as a proper name for God. It is in fact nothing of the kind. The word should always be rendered, as in fact Dr. Moffatt usually renders it, "*the Eternal*". That is the only possible manner of referring to, or describing, God, who is from everlasting to everlasting, having no beginning and no ending, who is, and was, and shall be, the Almighty. That is the only way of differentiating God Most High, maker of heaven and earth, from all the false gods of the nations, all of whom had their own names and characteristics and none of whom are eternal. To give God a name, as men and false gods have names, is to bring him down to the level of those false gods and make him one among them. A little thought will usually be sufficient to show how meaningless must be a proper name applied to God, who is himself the maker and sustainer and container of all things. The idea frequently encountered that God intended Moses to understand this term as a proper name—the "name" of God, probably comes from the Lord's word in 3. 15 "*This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations*" but the word for "name" here—*shem*—is based on the idea of renown or fame, as when we say "he made himself a name", and "memorial"—*zeker*—is remembrance or memory. "For ever"—*le-olam*—extends the name and the memorial, the fame and the memory, into the illimitable future, into a continuance without a stipulated or visible ending. In what clearer terms could there be conveyed to mortal man the realisation that in all his endeavours to know or visualise or define God, the Creator, the Almighty, the Heavenly Father, call him what we will, the one simple expression "*the Eternal*" includes all and sets him for ever apart from every other object of veneration and every other form of authority that has existed or can arise amongst man.

So Moses received his answer, to go to Israel and tell them that the Eternal, who in ages past had led Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, was moving now to lead them, and

because He is the Eternal, all that He decrees must surely come to pass and all that stands against his Will must surely in the fulness of time be broken. That is a truth we may do well to take to ourselves to-day when so much that is in the world of men seems to be destructive of the things of God with little outward sign that matters will ever change.

Moses was to go into Egypt, to gather the elders of Israel, to tell them of his experience and conversation with God, and with them to go before Pharaoh and demand the liberty of the people. And Moses listened and his heart failed him and he replied dejectedly "*they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee*" (4. 1). And the gracious Lord gave him two signs, two miracles, to strengthen his wavering faith.

It is at this point we enter the realm of the miraculous in the Book of Exodus. It is of little use attempting to whittle away the apparently incredibility of these things by finding natural explanations. There are many wonderful happenings or unusual happenings recorded in the Scriptures and popularly believed to be miracles which are nothing of the sort and not claimed by Scripture to be anything of the sort. Sooner or later an understanding of the true nature of the apparently incredible story is attained. But equally there are accounts of happenings which must rightly be classed as examples of Divine manipulation of natural forces, not necessarily because no other explanation meets the case, but because there existed a need for manifest Divine intervention in the matter in hand. So it was here. Moses stood in need of some definite outward evidence of the reality of the Divine power in which he believed but which he had never seen in operation. The demonstration must of necessity be allied with an act of faith in order to make it a vital factor in the developing resolution of Moses. God told him to cast his shepherd's staff on the ground. He did so, and it became a living serpent, from which Moses backed in alarm. That was the miracle. Now came the act of faith. He was told to pick it up by the tail. That is the wrong way to pick up a poisonous serpent and invites trouble. Moses knew the only way to capture or kill a serpent without risk of being bitten was to grasp it immediately behind the head. But faith was developing. He picked it up by the tail, and it became a staff again.

The other sign followed quickly. Obedient to the command, Moses thrust his hand into

his clothes. When he withdrew it the flesh was covered with leprosy. Again as instructed, he replaced his hand and upon again withdrawing it the leprosy was gone.

These were the evidences Moses was to offer to a primitive and untutored people to prove his commission from God. Such signs to-day would not convince sophisticated man—but they are not offered to-day. They were designed for an age when they could be of use. And as to the likelihood of such things having actually happened, Moses is the narrator and he was alone when the occurrences were said to have taken place. The power which manipulated natural elements to turn water into wine at Cana of Galilee, and to restore whole flesh to the decaying body of Lazarus after he had been dead for four days, could be just as effective in transforming the carbo-hydrates of a wooden staff into those comprising an animal body and infusing it with temporary life, or first corrupting and then restoring the healthy flesh of Moses' hand in a few moments of time. One hypothesis explaining the narrative of chapter 4 is that Moses, in the ecstasy of spirit evoked by the apparition of the burning bush, imagined it all and really believed it when he told the story afterwards. That does not explain how his brother Aaron was able to repeat the wonder in the sight of Pharaoh and his court later on. It is a much more likely conclusion that the wonder actually happened just as Moses recorded it and that it was a manifestation of the power of God, for it then takes its place in the whole procession of Divine interventions by means of which Pharaoh was at last induced to let the people go and they reached, at length, their Promised Land.

Moses was not yet convinced. He thought up a new objection. He was not eloquent; he was slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. How could he be expected to persuade either the people or Pharaoh? The answer reads short and abrupt—a human touch, almost as if the Lord was losing patience with his reluctant ambassador. *"Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Eternal? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say"*. (4. 12). Those few words incidentally place the commission of Moses on the same miraculous basis as the signs he had just witnessed. The same Divine power could just as easily take a tongue that by nature could not speak, and make it speak. Just as miraculously because just as much a manipulation

of Nature.

Moses capitulated, but with, it is to be feared, somewhat of bad grace. The expression in 4. 13 *"Send, I pray thee, by the hand thou wilt send"* can only mean a somewhat reluctant admission that if God will not send anybody else, well then, Moses is his servant and must accept the commission but really God would be much better advised to find somebody else. And at that God lost patience with him—at least that is how it seemed to Moses and how he put it in his narrative although in fact we know that God never loses patience—and told him that he would be taken at his word and the commission to deliver Israel would be shared with his brother Aaron. God would speak to Moses but Aaron should be the spokesman to the people and to Pharaoh.

That was the end of the interview. The voice from heaven spoke no more; the radiance of the burning bush died away; Moses stood alone beside that solitary acacia with the beetling crags of Mount Horeb towering above him and no sound in his ears but the cries of the goats as they straggled across the green plain. He must have realised, as he looked upon the peaceful scene, that the quiet and settled life he had led for forty years was ended, that now he had received the call to action. Henceforth life was to be filled with labour and sacrifice and suffering, but at the end of it all the realisation that the dreams of his early life had been fulfilled and the Lord by his hand had delivered Israel. Like the young maiden Mary, at a time then still far distant in futurity, he might have breathed to the heavens beyond those high peaks of Sinai *"Behold the servant of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word"*.

(To be continued)

The first gush of enthusiasm in the Lord's service, much as we may and do appreciate it, may be but the hasty production of the shallow soil of a heart which immediately receives the truth with gladness but, having no root in itself, endures but for a time, and afterwards, when affliction and persecution arise, immediately is offended. (Mark 4. 16-17). Such characters cannot stand the fiery tests of this "evil day" whereof it is written—*"The fire (of that day) shall try every man's work, of what sort it is"*. (1 Cor. 3. 13).

PAUL AT LYSTRA

A story of
the Apostle Paul

It was not the mere fact that he was speaking to a great crowd which impressed Paul with a sense of exhilaration. It was something else, an indefinable presence which seemed to be overshadowing him, waiting to exert power in some momentous fashion. True, this concourse in which the men and women of Lystra had been brought together in order to hear the message of Paul and Barnabas was a noteworthy thing in a city composed almost entirely of Lycaonians, neither Jews, Romans nor even Greeks, and owning only scanty allegiance to the Roman Empire anyway. As the Apostle looked down upon the upturned faces beneath him and observed the attention with which the people hung upon his words, and their apparent receptivity of the Gospel message, he must mentally have compared them with the cities he had already visited. At Antioch of Pisidia he and Barnabas, attending the synagogue services like all good Jews, had been invited to address the congregation of the faithful. As here, so there, he had received the close attention of his hearers, Jews of the Dispersion, Hellenistic Jews for the most part. Warming to his subject, he had given them a rousing sermon which took them back to the birth of their nation at the coming out from Egypt and led to the time of their famous King David and the promises of God which centred in David and David's seed. From that it was a simple thing to tell them of the events which had taken place in Judea in their own day, of the coming of John the Baptist and then of Jesus of Nazareth, of His life and untimely death, of His innocence and unjust condemnation. Having thus gained their interest, in his own masterly fashion Paul had connected the giving of the promise to David, that of his seed God would raise up to Israel a Saviour, with the fulfilment of that promise in Jesus, whom God had raised from the dead in order that He might accomplish the salvation foretold. Then in his own inimitable fashion he had issued the ringing challenge "*Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, to you is the word of this salvation sent*". As, now, Paul's gaze roamed over the crowd at Lystra hanging on his words, memory must have flickered back to Antioch, how he had laboured hard to present his message to his Jewish brethren, only

to find that the Gentiles were the more receptive, asking for more of these words to be preached the next Sabbath, so that when the time came he found gathered "*almost the whole city together to hear the word of God*". Again he felt the surge of triumph which flooded his mind as Jews and Gentiles alike acknowledged their acceptance of the message and the call, professed their faith in Jesus the Saviour and came together in that spontaneous Christian fellowship which developed into the Church of Antioch at Pisidia. And again he felt the bitter disappointment when the unbelieving Jews, determined to get rid of him, made representations to the civil authorities and had him, with Barnabas, expelled from the city. Here at Lystra, speaking now to just such an attentive audience as he had first found at Antioch, he wondered if events were going to repeat themselves. Expelled from Antioch, he and Barnabas had trudged sixty miles along the high road to Iconium where again they went into the synagogue. Again they were invited to speak, again found a great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believing—and again a vicious opposition built up by those who did not believe, so that they were constrained to leave the newly formed Church of Iconium and take the high road still farther into the unknown. Was Lystra to repeat the heart breaking sequence and send them once more upon their way with yet another group of immature believers in Christ left to grow in the faith as best they could?

Once more Paul felt that quick stab of feeling, the certainty that this time there was a difference. The power of the Spirit was moving in a different direction; God about to manifest Himself in a manner not yet experienced. Paul's mind was still upon his subject, the clarity of his exposition unimpaired and the word finding its way into hearts and minds, but apart from a relatively few Jews this audience was composed of men of another race, and Paul could not be sure to what extent the fundamentals of his appeal were being understood. Was he talking to them in a language they could understand? Did the story of a dying and resurrected Saviour, the fulfilment of Divine promise and the embodiment of Divine purpose, mean as much to them as it had done to the Scripture-trained

Jews and proselytes of Antioch and Iconium? That was the question which oppressed his mind as his glance swept over the throng, and it was when that glance intercepted and was arrested by a gaze equally compelling that Paul suddenly knew why and in what manner this day was going to be different.

The man lay there, on a little strip of matting, twisted feet hunched up underneath an ungainly body, right in the front line of the crowd just as he had been dumped by his friends. The trouble was obvious; his feet and legs were hopelessly deformed and had evidently been so from birth. From babyhood to manhood he had never walked, never stood on his own two feet, always had to be carried from place to place or make his own way by laborious and painful crawling. But it was not his misshapen limbs which caught and held the Apostle's glance; it was his eyes, fixed upon the preacher with a burning, painful intensity which told more than any eloquent speech how much the spoken words meant to him. In that one moment of time a link was forged between the two men which excluded all else, a link which immediately became a channel for the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul had stopped speaking—abruptly broken off in mid-sentence. The crowd stood rigid with attention. Those eyes were fixed on him still, eyes mute with unspoken question and appeal—and with something else. Paul could see it; faith reaching out towards the deliverance it already knew would surely come. Paul realised within himself that the time was at hand for a demonstration of the reality of that saving power inherent in the risen Christ about which he had been discoursing to these Lycaonians.

Slowly Paul raised his hand until he was pointing directly at the afflicted man. The onlookers watched, fascinated. He saw, first wonderment, then hope, last of all certainty flicker into those steadfast eyes. He saw an unconscious effort to move those useless limbs "Stand upright on thy feet!" The command rang out over the heads of the audience. The crowd at the back surged and jostled to see what was going on. Those near the cripple gazed in fascinated attention. The man looked around at the curious faces, made a little movement of his hands, stretched his body—and got to his feet. For a moment he stood, uncertainly. Then, he took a few faltering steps: his confidence grew, he turned towards the crowd and in a surge of emotion leaped into the air. He wheeled back towards

the watching Apostle and raised his hands high in the air in acknowledgment and gratitude. A hubbub of excited comment arose from the crowd

This man was healed because he had faith to be healed. So says St. Luke in his chronicle of the events. There were no Christians as yet in Lystra; this was the first impact of the Christian evangel on the city, so the faith this man manifested was not as yet an instructed faith in Christ. The pagan gods of Lystra could not and did not heal; it was not faith in them which effected the healing. The man must have been a Jew, a Jew of the Dispersion, and the faith he had must have been faith in the God of Israel. But there is more to it than that. The account says that Paul perceived "*that he had faith to be healed*". His faith told him that the power by which alone he could be healed was of God but through the risen Christ whom this visitor to his city was preaching. It was not until the cripple realised for himself and accepted for himself the fact that God was in Christ reaching out to the world of men for reconciliation and healing, whether of mind or body, that he felt the lifegiving power energise his muscles and he was able to stand, and leap, and glorify God.

This was perhaps the first outward demonstration in St. Paul's career of the fundamental truth which he came to understand so well and which forms the basis of all his teaching. That life comes to man from God through Christ, who is the manifestation of God to man and the only channel through which life can come. There are so many occasions in the Book of Acts where the Apostles insist that there can be no life or salvation without faith in and acceptance of Christ. Jesus himself laid down the same principle. "*He that hath the Son hath life, but he that hath not the Son shall not see life*". One might ask why this apparently arbitrary dictum should be so stressed. Why must it be that "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*"? (Rom. 10. 10). The answer is that because all life comes in the first place from God, and all life is sustained by God, and Jesus is the channel by which all that is of God comes to man, faith and belief is the only means by which that channel can be opened into the mind and heart and body of man. The degree of subnormal life which unregenerate men now possess is like that which the cripple had before his healing—defective,

incapable of full expression and full use, forever restraining the man from attaining his full development. Later on Paul was to enshrine this principle in one of his grandest utterances. *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6. 23).

The reaction of the people gave Paul his opportunity to drive home the deeper aspects of this truth. After the first moment of stunned silence, pandemonium broke loose. Never before had such happening occurred in their city. There could only be one explanation. *"The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men."* It is to be feared that Paul's preaching had not as yet reconciled them to the falsity of their many gods. They jumped to the conclusion that Barnabas was Zeus, the principal god in the Greek pantheon, and Paul, because he did most of the speaking, was Hermes, the messenger of the gods. (These are the Greek names as given by St. Luke in the original; the A.V. has adopted the Latin equivalents, Jupiter and Mercurius). Without more ado the High Priest of Zeus set about acknowledging this signal honour conferred upon the city by collecting oxen and garlands and preparing to offer sacrifice. His enthusiasm was probably considerably increased by the fact that, according to the ancient historians, Zeus had once before, many ages previously, visited the district in the guise of an old man and had been treated rather unceremoniously by the citizens. Finding only one old couple who would give him hospitality Zeus took his revenge in the fashion quite normal with the proverbially short-tempered supreme god of Greece. The priests and people of Lystra were not going to be caught a second time, and so Paul and Barnabas found to their dismay that they were being accorded full divine honours. The sheer horror with which Paul and Barnabas must have realised this situation can perhaps be fully appreciated only by members of the Jewish race brought up, like Paul and Barnabas, to believe in the unity of God who alone is the object of all worship. To be adored as gods must have sent a wave of revulsion through every fibre of their being, and the instinctive reaction is immediately understandable and in full accord with what might be expected. Directly the Apostles realised what was happening they ran in among the people, crying out *"Why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God,*

which made heaven and earth and the sea, and all things that are therein. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; nevertheless He left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14. 15-17). A wonderful sermon that, and the more telling because of the circumstances under which it was delivered. Perhaps as a sermon it is as appropriate to the Twentieth Century as it was to the First. The God whom Paul preached was not as the gods of the Greeks, as Zeus and Kronos and Uranus and the rest of them, heedless of the welfare and happiness of mankind, capricious, unjust, lustful, cruel. The stories of Greek mythology show how far the pagans were from thinking of God as inherently good, benevolent, loving, planning and working for the welfare of mankind. But that was God as Paul saw Him and as he preached Him. Later on as his theology developed he was able to shew—as he does shew us in his Epistles—how that, in Christ and by means of Christ, the Father will reconcile to Himself every one who has any capacity whatsoever for right doing; how that the experiences of this present life are but one part of a mighty purpose which is being steadily worked out with the object of preparing and fitting for his ultimately designed place in God's creation, every one to whom God has given the blessing of life, and will elect to use that in God's way. He whom I preach, Paul might have said, has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth but would that he turns from his evil ways and lives; made man for a definite purpose and to occupy a definite place in His creation and works to see that purpose accomplished.

So the little group of converts at Lystra entered into the joy and zeal of their new fellowship in the light of this revelation of the nature of God. It was not long before the revengeful Jews from Antioch and Iconium had traced Paul to Lystra and inflamed the people against him. Those who yesterday had been about to worship him as a god were now found stoning him and leaving him for dead. But Paul was not to be disposed of so easily. He was soon on his way to Derbe, twenty miles distant, where he preached again and waited until tempers had cooled. It was at Derbe that he first made the acquaintance of Gaius, who was probably converted at this visit and afterwards became one of the Apostle's travelling companions in Greece.

Derbe was the end of the journey. The

missionaries had been away from their home church for more than a year and probably Paul felt that it was time to report progress. They retraced their steps through Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia and so to the sea coast, confirming the disciples in each city "*and exhorting them to continue in the faith*". From the port of Attalia they took ship the two hundred and fifty miles back to Antioch in Syria, where their brethren eagerly awaited them.

It was not a long journey, as journeys go. About eleven hundred miles altogether—not much more than a trip say from London to Cardiff, thence to Glasgow and back to London. But it was the first missionary enterprise of Christian evangelists and it resulted in the establishment of at least half a dozen or more new centres from which the Christian faith

would afterwards extend in turn. In later days Gaius of Derbe and Timothy of Lystra were to become well known in the Church as men who laboured abroad in the work of the Gospel, co-workers with the great Apostle. Paul and Barnabas must have set foot in the familiar streets of Antioch again with a feeling that it had all been well worth while; they had tasted success and failure, acceptance and opposition, the joys of Christian fellowship and the hardships of persecution. They had sown the seed; now it must be left to God who giveth the increase. That must surely have been their inmost thought as they rehearsed before the Church "*all that God had done with them*", and how in this first missionary journey He had "*opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*".

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