



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

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CONTENTS

THE COMING OF THE KING

1. Purpose of the Second Advent... 3

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

1. Ch. 1. 1-7 7

- Book Review 10

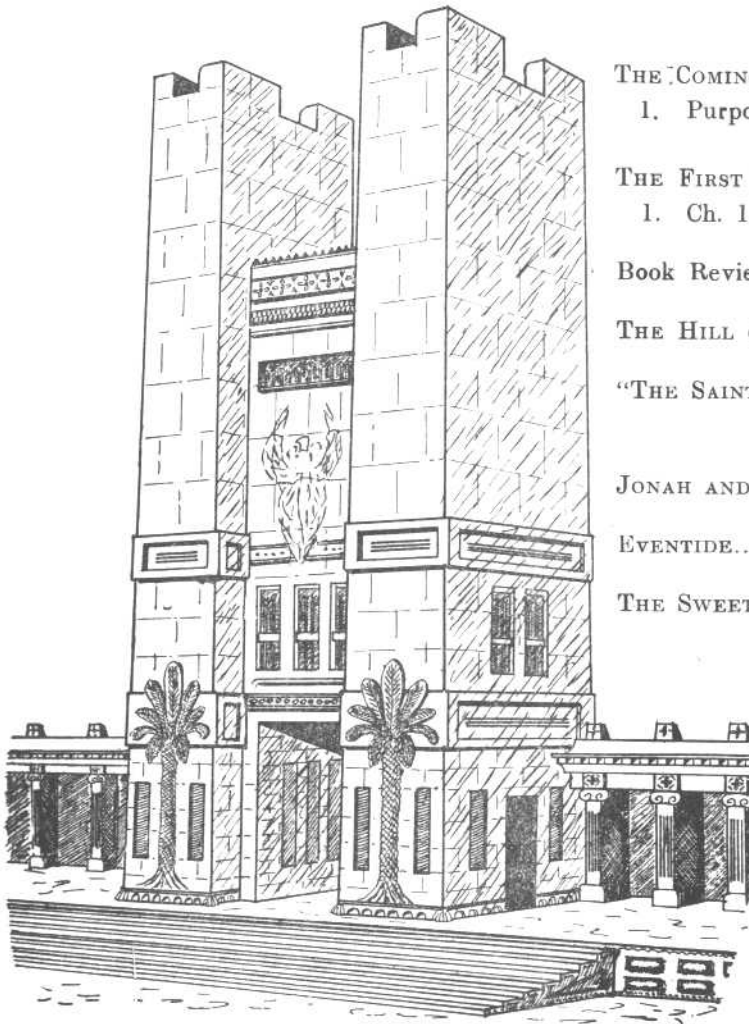
- THE HILL OF OLIVES 11

- "THE SAINTS SHALL JUDGE
THE WORLD"..... 13

- JONAH AND HIS GOURD 15

- EVENTIDE... 17

- THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF
PLEIADES..... 19



*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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NEW FEATURES FOR 1966

The Bible School in the Five Books of Moses concluded *Exodus* in the last issue for 1965 and is now temporarily suspended in the interests of other planned features for 1966, which include:—

"*The Coming of the King*". A series devoted to consideration of what both Old and New Testaments have to say concerning the Second Advent. Isolated articles on various aspects of this subject have appeared at various times in the near past but it is a long time since a complete treatment was featured, and it is to be expected that some additional clarity of perception is possible now. There are of course admitted differences of thought on this momentous subject but there will be no attempt at controversy or criticism in this series, and it will be for each reader to consider to what extent the exposition given is in line with his own understanding of the revealed principles of the Word and is of assistance and encouragement.

"*Studies in the First Epistle of John*". This is a commentary upon the entire Epistle and is based upon the conviction that the Apostle John, son of Zebedee and brother of James, and personal disciple of Jesus, was the author; that it was written before the close of the First Century, and that the heresies against which it declaims were present in incipient form even at that early date.

"*Eventide*". We have many readers who have served the Master for greater or lesser time but are now in the evening of their years and not able so easily to follow the more expository types of articles. This new feature is a special word for all such, born of the spiritual maturity of one whose ministry has already extended over more than half a century.

GALLERY OF THE PAST

For the interest of readers there is appended hereunder brief details relating to individuals of past times who are quoted or otherwise referred to in the pages of this issue.

* * *

Clemance. (p 16). Dr. Clement Clemance, B.A., Congregational minister, Camberwell, London, latter half 19th Century, notable for sermons on human destiny in 1877 at Ministers' Conference, Nottingham.

Hafiz. (p 18) Mohammed Shem-ed-din Hafiz, AD 1305-1390, celebrated Arab poet, born and lived at Shiraz, Persia. Leading Moslem theologian and scientist.

Jerome. (p 15). AD 346-420. Latin theologian. Reputed one of the greatest of the "Latin Fathers". Translated Bible into Latin from original tongues; mainly responsible for the Vulgate. Author many commentaries and Church histories. From 386 to death was head of monastery at Bethlehem.

Nero. (p 7). Emperor of Rome AD 54-68. Initiated Christian persecution AD 64 following the Great Fire of Rome. St. Peter martyred about AD 64; St. Paul about AD 68, under Nero.

Niebuhr. (p 15). Barthold Niebuhr, AD 1776-1831. Danish historian, specialist in ancient history and archæology.

Pliny. (p 18). Gaius Plinius Secundus, AD 23-79. Contemporary with St. Paul. Roman politician, barrister and historian. Most famous for his "*Natural History of the World*" in thirty-seven volumes, which is still extant and in English translation. Perished during the eruption of Vesuvius which overwhelmed Pompeii and Herculaneum in AD 79.

Gone from us

Sis. S. Holowitz (London)

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

THE COMING OF THE KING

I. The Purpose of the Second Advent

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

"... sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead..."

So runs the well known Creed; most Christians pay lip-service to the words even although many give but little attention to the fundamental truth it enshrines, and some do not even believe that the event will ever happen. The doctrine of the Second Advent lies under a double cloud; in the first place the Augustinian theology, of a post-Millennial Advent requiring the world to be converted and the Church to rule the nations before Christ comes, is still, after fifteen centuries, the accepted standard. In the second place the failure of many unjustified expectations of the Advent, unjustified largely owing to incorrect systems of Biblical interpretation, has had the effect of bringing the subject into general disrepute, both among Christians and non-Christians. Despite the sincerity and fervour of the not inconsiderable body of Christian students who do maintain and preach the certainty of the Second Advent these two factors still preclude the Christian's brightest hope, as it has been called, from becoming an accepted object of prayer and expectation in Christian communities generally. Every time that the Lord's prayer is repeated the worshippers voice their plea *"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"*, but all too often they either miss the purport of the words or do not really mean them. Jesus Christ made it perfectly clear that the only means by which either element in the prayer can be realised is His personal return to the world of man to bring sin and death to an end and complete the Divine purpose for this terrestrial creation.

Much of this apathy and scorn is directly due to the failure of Christian thought to keep up-to-date. Apart from the work of a minority of ministers and students and relatively minor groups there has been no change in the understanding of the subject or in the terms in which it is visualised and expressed for upwards of a thousand years. The general idea is still, as it was in mediæval times, that upon a certain future day Christ will appear visibly, descending from the sky in human form to the accompaniment of angelic trumpets, for the purpose of conducting the "Last Assize" when—all during the scope of a solar

day of twenty-four earth hours—He will raise the dead, examine every human being as to the deeds done in this life, take the worthy back with Him to heavenly glory and consign the remainder, the unregenerate, to everlasting damnation, rounding off the process by the destruction of this earth and all material things in a universal conflagration. About the only concession to modern thought which this century has made is to express some doubt as to whether after all the fires of Hell are literal—and quite a few very sincere and worthy ministers still insist that they are! The idea of purpose in creation, or the use God will make of the redeemed after all this is over, is not so much as broached; neither is the fact that whereas the Fifth century, and the Fifteenth, for that matter, had no idea that the universe contained anything else besides this earth and the sun as its satellite, we now know that the creation is vaster by far than our minds can conceive. To think that the Deity can be satisfied with bringing into existence a handful of creatures on this speck of dust which we call earth when even men today are hoping and planning to do great things in remote parts of outer space is no evidence of Christian intelligence. It is rather an indication of unthinking egocentrism.

The necessity—and the certainty—of the Second Advent stems from the purpose of human creation. Man has been designed to occupy a definite and unique place in the Divine scheme of things. No other conceivable order of sentient beings, fitted as they might be for their own ordained place, can or will fill the position intended for man. The Bible does in fact indicate that the mode of existence we know is not the only one; that this earth is not the only scene of life, that there is at the very least one other world not perceptible by human senses, the citizens of which are always and altogether in absolute harmony with each other and with God—so much so that the ideal is set before men that God's will might eventually be universally accepted here as it is there. The main principle of the Second Advent, then, is that it is the process by which that object is to be accomplished.

The Second Advent is the logical—and necessary—sequel to the First Advent. This

is not the place to enter upon a consideration of the philosophy of the Atonement, and there is much in that tremendous subject which even yet is far from clear. The Scriptures are positive that enduring life can only come to man through Christ, involving intelligent acceptance of the fact and full acquiescence in the Will of God, and that in order to recover men from the power and effect of evil it was necessary that Christ allow Himself to be put to death, giving His life a willing offering for the benefit of humanity. But the death and resurrection of Christ occurred nearly two thousand years ago, and today the world seems farther from the Divine ideal than ever. Obviously there is a further chapter in the book before the finale, another scene in the drama which has to be enacted before all that was ensured by the life and death of Christ blossoms and fruits into the reality of human maturity, and the dark shadow of evil flees, to return no more. That chapter, that scene, is the Second Advent.

The intervening time, this Christian era, between the two Advents, has not been a time of inactivity. It is seeing the development, and will see the completion, of the Christian Church. There is still a lot of rather hazy thinking over this question of the Church, and many still follow St. Augustine in hoping and working for the time when the whole world of man shall be included within its membership. That hope seemed logical enough in the great theologian's time when Christianity was expanding by leaps and bounds and seemed destined to assume the reins of world control, but it appears a forlorn hope now when non-Christianity is increasing faster, relatively to the increase in world population, than Christianity. The whole concept is in error. The New Testament presentation defines the Church as that company of convinced and dedicated followers of Christ in this Age who will become His lieutenants and agents in the work of world conversion and reconstruction in the next—the Age of the Second Advent. Once that fact is realised it can the more easily be seen why the New Testament says that the “*saints*”—the Church—shall “*judge the world*” (1 Cor. 6. 2) in that Age; that they shall “*live and reign with Christ a thousand years*” (Rev. 20. 4). There has always been a degree of perplexity among expositors of the older school over the apparent anomaly of nations remaining on earth to be ruled *after* the Day of Judgment and the resurrection of the Church, when, according to the old theology, earth's

affairs are finally wound up. Jesus' words in Matt. 19. 28 concerning His disciples ruling and administering His laws during the “*regeneration*”, which means a giving of new life, at a time when according to mediæval theology all opportunity for gaining new life had gone because the Second Coming was a matter of the past, does not easily fit into current theology. But when it is seen that the Second Advent and the Millennium are synonymous terms so far as time is concerned and that the Day of Judgment involves more, far more, than the mere arraignment of men before a tribunal and passing judicial sentence on their past misdeeds, the door is opened to a wider and far more rational and satisfying view of God's purposes.

The Second Advent, then, should be viewed as a period, a span of time during the whole of which the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested in the earth, in power, in a manner which has not been true of preceding times. This period commences as this present Christian Age draws to its close and continues until the Divine purpose is fully realised, until every man who can be persuaded to yield himself and his life and his potentialities into full acquiescence with the will and purpose of God has so done, until every trace of sin and evil has been banished from human society, until not one remains among all of God's human creatures who is not consciously, intelligently, willingly—yea, and enthusiastically—in fullest possible accord with His plans and designs. Everlasting life is a conception almost too hard for the human mind to grasp; everlasting continuance in the growth of knowledge, in the accumulation of experience, in achievement following achievement, is an idea even more difficult to receive, but nothing less than this is the destiny of every man,—if he will, for God will coerce no man, and loyalty to Him and co-operation with Him must be of love and free-will, not of fear and compulsion. So there may be some at the end who will not accept life in this creation which is all of God, and will deliberately cast away the blessing of conscious existence. But of those who align themselves with the Divine standards it shall be true that, as Isaiah the prophet foretold twenty-five centuries ago, “*the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away*” (Isa. 35. 10). For this will be the consequence of the Second Advent.

The commencement of the Advent, the time at which it must be said that the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the earth has become a fact, obviously implies that this present world-age dominated by man is then approaching its imminent end. There is no need to tie this down to specific years and dates—the endeavour to do that in the past has led to some mass disappointments and invoked a certain amount of ridicule upon a good many quite sincere people who started as prophetic students and finished up as prophets. It is much safer and altogether more satisfactory to take note of the order of events and the nature of the various factors which go to make up the work of the Second Advent. The first overt act—and this is stressed repeatedly in the New Testament—is the resurrection or “change” of the Church, the joining of all those dedicated believers, of whatever generation between Pentecost and the end, to the Lord in Heaven. St. Paul describes this in 1 Cor. 15 as a change from the terrestrial state of being to the celestial, a change not only of habitat but also of nature. The celestial is of a superior and totally different order of being, and the celestial world, as real to its own citizens as the earth is to humanity, is one in which powers and potentialities, and consequently activities and achievements, are upon an immensely wider basis than are those of man upon earth. Since the Church is to have a great deal to do with the work of Christ in the earth during His Advent it is obvious that this change to spiritual conditions must precede the visible establishment of the Messianic Kingdom and the commencement of the Millennium.

The second aspect of the Advent, and one that must become evident in its early days, involves that restraint and overthrow of the powers of evil in the world which must logically precede the open manifestation of the Kingdom of Christ in power. The rule of the Millennial Age is to be a righteous and just rule in which men may live their lives and go about their business in peace and security without the threats and dangers of oppression, violence and war which overshadow life as it is lived in the present. That means not only the supersession of present day political and commercial powers by the superior power of Christ but the suppression of all those harmful institutions and petty forms of evil which wreak such havoc upon the ordinary man. The Divine rule of that coming day is “*They shall not hurt nor destroy*” (Isa. 65. 25) and the power of the Prince

of Peace will be abroad in the earth to ensure that condition. There must therefore be expected, at the beginning of the Advent period and therefore more or less at the ending of this present Age, a joining of battle between the incoming forces of righteousness and the doomed forces of evil in the earth. This is depicted in many a strongly metaphorical passage of Scripture—the descent of the Rider on the white horse from Heaven to do battle with the kings of all the earth in Revelation 19, the binding of Satan with a great chain in Revelation 20, the revealing of the Lord from heaven in a setting of storm and tempest to execute judgment upon all things evil, in Daniel 7 and 2 Thess. 1, the consuming and destruction of the “Man of Sin” by the spirit of the Lord’s mouth and the radiance of His presence in 2 Thess. 2, and many others. The reality behind the Biblical “Armageddon” is nothing so grossly material as a mere blood bath of contending military forces—it is the final conflict at the end of this Age when the defenders of earth’s corrupt and doomed systems of oppression and injustice find all their boasted strength powerless against the heavenly weapons of earth’s new Ruler—weapons they can neither understand nor overcome.

It is only when this suppression of the powers of evil has been accomplished that the revelation of the returned Christ to all men can take place. This is the supreme hour when, to adopt Scriptural metaphor, the Son of Man takes His seat upon His throne of glory and before Him are gathered all nations. This is the third stage of the Advent and the one which is to endure throughout the whole period of the Messianic Age, until its close when the Son shall have “*delivered up the Kingdom to the Father . . . that God may be all in all*” (1 Cor. 15. 24-28). But that will be when the entire work of the Advent has been completed, when the Day of Judgment has run its course and is at an end. At the time the King takes His place upon the throne of His glory that consummation is still a thousand years away. In the meantime the whole world of man is to come under a system of education and discipline such as never has been dreamed of before, and the laws of Creation, which are the laws of God, made plain to all so that none may ever be able to plead ignorance or inability. This is the truth which lies behind all the vividly materialistic pictures of the Messianic Kingdom in the Old Testament—the lion shall lie down with the lamb and so forth—and the more sober state-

ments of the New Testament which depict the dead of this world rising to newly awakened consciousness, hearing the voice of the Son of God calling them from their graves, and taking their stand before the Great White Throne of Rev. 20 to have the standards of Divine Law set before them for final acceptance or rejection—the “judgment” of the “book of life”.

An adequate perception of the manner in which Christ is manifested to mankind during His Second Advent rests upon a careful consideration of much Scriptural metaphor and analogy and its relation to what is known of the celestial order of existence. Jesus Christ appeared on earth in human form in the days of His First Advent for a purpose that was at that time fulfilled. His position as supreme over the whole of Divine creation, which it were the height of conceit on man's part to imagine could not ultimately embrace intelligent beings physically different from man but equally children of God and made in His image and likeness, precludes the dogmatic assertion that He must of necessity retain human form or lineaments. His presence could conceivably be visibly manifested through chosen earthly instruments exerting His authority and representing Him amongst men, and His Advent still be as real as if His Person was visible to human eyes. A clear understanding of the relation between the celestial and the terrestrial worlds and their respective orders of life, and of the manner as well as the purpose and time of our Lord's Return, is very necessary to the Christian who would be like the “scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of heaven” mentioned by Jesus, who “bringeth forth out of his store-room things new and old” (Matt. 13. 52) and truly understand the significance of the day in which he lives and his own position in relation to the Divine Plan.

That is why Jesus laid so much stress upon watchfulness. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh” (Matt. 25. 13). “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13. 37). He likened the Second Advent to the days of Noah. Men would go about their customary pursuits, eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, heedless of the signs that a new and hitherto unknown power was coming into earth's affairs, for deliverance on the one hand, for judgment on the other, to bring an old decaying world to an end and establish a new, virile, youthful one. All too often do men

think of the Deluge story as one of unreasoning Divine petulance with a sinful world and a wrathful destruction; in reality the story is one of clearing the ground for a fresh start. That is the position today. Christ comes, not to sweep the earth away with a besom of destruction and end all further hope of human development and achievement, but to replace this admittedly very unsatisfactory order of things by a “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3. 13), under which all who so will may attain the Divine ideal and enter upon their inheritance. Only when that consummation has been attained may it be said that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2. 10-11). Only then will the day of the Second Advent come to an end and be merged with eternity, into which will enter the sons of men, mature at last and fitted for their destined place in creation.

The source of all this is in the Bible. To some degree it is in the Old Testament and to a much greater extent in the New. There is much of immature and old conceptions to unlearn and discard; a certain amount of unhelpful modern thought also to reject. There is a great deal to be gathered from the painstaking and careful examination of the many passages which deal with one or another of the several aspects of the Second Advent, and the relating of these to the light of modern knowledge. This will be the object of succeeding chapters. The subject is one of far-reaching importance; today, more than ever before, there is a need for clarity of vision and sound conviction on the age-old expectation of the Church—our Lord's Return.

(To be continued)

“Paradise in Eden”. On account of the sudden passing of Sister Margaret Black, of Texas, U.S.A., author of the book of poems bearing the above title, the remaining stock of the book is being dispersed at the price of 11/6 post free instead of the former list price of 23/-. British friends desiring copies may send their orders to the B.F.U., if desired and the book will be sent direct from U.S.A. and reach the recipient about six weeks later.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part I. I John 1:1-7

John's epistles were written in the serenity of old age. The words run on in easy, undisturbed flow, with no outbursts of ebullient zeal or passionate declamation as might be expected if the pen was being wielded by a younger man. The great days of John's activity were over, and his life now was given up to exhorting his brethren in brotherly love and Christian consistency. The doctrinal disputations and the opposition of false brethren belonged to a bygone time; his letters were addressed, not to immature fledglings in the faith, requiring care and attention lest they be ensnared by the specious teachings of their opponents or drawn away from their profession by the persecutions of civil rulers, but to mature Christians of many years' standing, men and women who had known and laboured with the "beloved disciple" over many decades of years. It is very probable that he composed these gems of thought as his final exhortation before the Lord should call him home.

We do not know exactly when these epistles were composed, but it might have been somewhere round about the year 90 A.D., when John himself was about eighty-five years of age, during a time when the Church had a rest from persecution, for there is no hint of persecution in any part of the epistles and no exhortations such as might be expected if the brethren were undergoing such trials. The time of writing must therefore have been some while after the terrible days of Nero and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D.70). Sometime between 80 and 90, therefore, fifty years after the Crucifixion and twenty years after the death of Paul, John, probably by then the only surviving Apostle, sat himself down to write these precious words to the Church.

Where were they written? Again, we cannot be certain. The tradition is that they were written at Ephesus. The New Testament tells us nothing about John's movements after the Council of Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15, which would have been held in or about A.D. 51. He does not seem to have been at Ephesus when Paul took leave of the elders there for the last time, in A.D. 58 (Acts 20). But Ephesus was a notable centre of the Church for a considerable number of years afterwards. Timothy was its elder for a long time. Prob-

ably John took up residence there after the destruction of Jerusalem and spent perhaps twenty-five years there in devoted service before he died. He may have even written these epistles in anticipation of exile or martyrdom, and in such case he would obviously have expected these letters to constitute his final leave-taking of his brethren in the flesh.

Why were they written? That, at any rate, is an easy question to answer. They were for the comfort and admonition of his brethren and for all who should come after them and read his words. They were written in fulfilment of his commission as an Apostle, not only to his own generation and people, but also to all who in every place and in every time should call upon the name of the Lord. They were written that we who live nearly two thousand years later may derive Christian instruction and enlightenment from the Spirit-filled mind of the "beloved disciple". "He being dead, yet speaketh."

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1. vs. 1-3, omitting the parenthesis which is verse 2).

"That which was from the beginning"—not only Christ as a Person, but as the glorious Divinity Whom we acknowledge and revere. The use of the term "that" instead of the personal pronoun "He" indicates that John is including all that Christ stood for, all His Gospel, all the treasures of wisdom laid up in Him, all His reconciling power and all that His redemptive sacrifice will yet achieve for the sons of men. All of this was provided and foreseen in God's Plan for the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" and it is all this that John is going to declare unto us. But the centre of it all is the Person of Christ; the focal point of all that he is going to talk about and to which he is going constantly to point is the Man of Nazareth, Jesus, Who gave Himself a Ransom for All and, being resurrected, is drawing all men unto Himself (John 12. 32).

The beginning, then, to which John refers must be that beginning when the Son took His place beside the Father and commenced

to exercise those mighty powers which have resulted in creation as we know it. "*Without Him was not anything made that was made*" (John 1. 3). The "Wisdom" passage of Prov. 8 has its application here. "*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, or ever the earth was . . . then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him*" (Prov. 8. 22-30). The Jews of old looked upon this passage as describing the embodiment of the Divine mind and wisdom directed towards this earth, its creation and its affairs. We know that they were right, and that Jesus our Lord is the embodiment of the mind of God so far as this creation in which we live and move and have our being is concerned. In just what way the "*Logos*", as the Jews termed this personification of Divine Wisdom, commenced to exercise the powers that we believe the Logos did exercise from the beginning of creation we do not know. God speaks of Him as His "only-begotten Son" and that definition we must accept and there leave the matter. It touches upon mysteries too great for us. But John in his gospel brings it into the realm of understandable things when he says that the "*Logos was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth*" (John 1. 14).

We may not easily understand just how the Logos was, in the beginning, the manifestation of God to His creation, but we do know that in the person of Jesus of Nazareth He appeared to us in form as a man, having laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was (John 17. 5), taking upon Himself the bondsman's form for the suffering of death (Phil. 2. 7) and moving amongst us, seen and heard of all. There was a heresy current among the early Christians of John's day called Docetism which claimed that Jesus of Nazareth was not really the Christ at all, that the Christ had entered into a human Jesus at Jordan, inhabited his body, phantom-like, for three and a half years, and departed from it when that body was nailed to the Cross, so that it was only the human Jesus who died. There are many varieties of such "phantom" theories in Christian theology and they are all wrong and dishonouring to God. Jesus Himself said plainly "I leave the Father and come into the world; again, I leave the world and go unto the Father" (John 16. 28), and at that the disciples exclaimed "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb" (parable). They could understand that; so John here in his epistle is

able plainly to say that this very One Who was from the beginning is the very One Who, in the days of His flesh, we saw with our eyes, and heard with our ears, and handled with our hands. Acceptance of that plain Scriptural truth is essential to a right understanding of the Divine Plan of salvation.

"*Of the Word of Life.*" How often it is that the Scriptures associate the three words—Word (or Logos)—Life—Light! "*In Him was life*", says John, "*and the life was the light of men*". That was the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The same "that" which we have here in the beginning of the epistle; the "that" which was from the beginning and was made flesh and appeared unto us. This is really a three-fold definition of Christ's appearing and His message. As the Word, or Logos, He came to us from the Father, speaking in the Name of the Father. As the Light, He is the Light of the world, enlightening men with the knowledge of His truth and dispelling the darkness of ignorance and superstition and fear. As the Life, He is the source of all that men have to hope for in the coming Age, when He Himself is to be the everlasting Father (Isa. 9. 6) giving life to the willing and obedient of all mankind. It might truly be said that in these three words is summed up all His great works of three Ages—in the past, He was the Word of God, the Logos, by which Word all that has been made was made, the all-sufficient agent of the Father, the personification of the Father's boundless creative energy and activity, of His infinite Wisdom and Power. In the present, He is the Light, shining first into our hearts to give knowledge of His glory and grace, and through us to pierce with its streaming rays the darkness of this world's sin and death, bringing comfort and hope to weary souls. In the future He will be the Life, calling all men from the grave and the sleep of death, setting their straying feet on the high road that leads to eternal life itself, revivifying with His mighty power not only the dead hearts of men but also the wasted and despoiled earth itself so that the desert may blossom as a rose and the land shall yield its increase. When death shall be no more and the heavenly Jerusalem reign supreme over the peoples, when the River of Water of Life glints its sparkling waters back to the blue sky of God's faithfulness above, and the Trees of Life give their fruit for the sustenance of all men, then indeed will Christ be the Life in which all will move and find their being.

The subject is so entrancing and glorious to

John, and he is so anxious to impart his assurance to his readers, that he has to throw in a parenthesis between verses 1 and 2, a parenthesis which does not break his chain of thought but intensifies what he has to say. For, he says, "*the life WAS manifested*, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you, that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us". He repeats himself time and time over in his eagerness to impress his points. The tremendous wonder of the revelation of Christ to the disciples was that they *saw*; they *heard*. To a Jew that must have been a tremendous thing. The nations round about them were accustomed to seeing the images of their gods, but the child of Israel grew up and lived all his life in the teaching that God is invisible and cannot be seen by mortal eyes. Even Moses was permitted but a glimpse of His passing glory, for "there shall no man see me, and live" (Exod. 33. 20). And now God had found a way to reveal Himself to His worshippers. The Word, made flesh, could be seen and heard of men, and it was a wonderful thing. Peter was smitten with the same awe when he said "we were eye-witnesses of His majesty . . . and this voice that came from heaven *we heard*, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1. 18). The Logos was manifested, was seen and heard, and they would never lose sight of that great truth.

From verse six the beloved apostle begins to talk of fellowship. The theme is linked up with his previous words. In the first few verses of the chapter he has shown how the Word, the Logos, was manifested in the earth, that He was Life and the source of life, and then that that Life was the light of the world. Now he passes on to show the connection between that life and that light, and the fellowship which we claim with God and with our brethren, and which, truly entered into, is the hall-mark of our acceptance with God. "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*" (1 John 3. 14). But such a fellowship is not easily entered into nor lightly bestowed; and the word itself implies much more than is generally supposed.

"*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not tell the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (vs: 6-7).

What is that fellowship with Him?

The word really means communion, and

that in turn is the same thing as common union. The bread which we break, asks the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The same word in the original there, is here rendered "fellowship". "By whom ye were called unto the fellowship—communion—of His Son Jesus our Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 9). This fellowship with God is something much more deep than a mere feeling of oneness arising from our desire to work the works of God. Abraham was called the Friend of God; David a man after God's own heart; Daniel one "greatly beloved"; and all of these entered into close converse with God and some considerable measure of understanding and knowledge of Him. But none of them—nor any others in Old Testament times—entered into the fellowship with God which John is talking about here. *This fellowship, this communion, is reserved for those who in this Age come to God to be included in that "people for His Name" (Acts 15. 14) which He is taking out from the nations to become His means of world blessing and world conversion in the next Age. And the proof of this lies in the fact that the indispensable foundation of this entering into fellowship is that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son first cleanses us from all sin. We cannot enter into this fellowship with God until that has taken place. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5. 1). None of the heroes of Old Testament times—even although they were justified by faith (Jas. 2. 21)—could know this reconciliation to God by faith in Christ, because Christ had not yet appeared and the Ransom had not yet been given. Even Abraham, and Samuel, and Daniel, must wait until their resurrection into the Messianic Kingdom for that justification.*

John tells us that we cannot walk in darkness and have communion with God at one and the same time, and that if we say we can, we lie, and do not the truth. The fact ought to be self-evident; but of course we tend greatly to walk in darkness without admitting or even realising the fact. We are so apt to make the best of both worlds, to reconcile the irreconcilable, to take the standards of God on our lips and by way of profession, and in action to give tacit acceptance, at least to some degree, to the standards of the world. John condemns that. He demands nothing less than absolute sincerity; only thus can

we hope to walk in the light. Paul, too, is equally emphatic. "What fellowship" he enquires scornfully "hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor. 6. 14-16). There can be no two ways about this; if we would enter fully into communion-fellowship with God then we must renounce all those things which are not of God and give ourselves completely and unreservedly to His service, faithful to our covenant for the rest of our days. That is consecration.

It is thus that we are enabled to walk in the light, for God is light, and he who walks in fellowship with God cannot help but be walking in the light. "He that followeth me" said Jesus, "shall not walk in darkness, but

shall have the light of life" (John 8. 12). John's Gospel is full of these little sayings of Jesus concerning light and the way of life: it is a theme on which his heart was evidently set. "If any man walketh in the day, he stumbleth not, but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth" (John 11. 9-10), and logically then, "he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12. 35). To have fellowship with God means to dwell, by faith and in the spirit of the mind, in "the light which no man can approach unto" to be in the presence, again by faith, of Him "Whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (1 Tim. 6. 16).

This is the position we must occupy if we would have fellowship with God, and that is why it cannot be that we have fellowship with Him if we are still walking in darkness.

(To be continued)

BOOK REVIEW

"Christ's Return to Rule the World" (Arthur Longley) 116 pp., post free 11/- (2 dollars) from Inspired Word Book Sales, 161 Hessle Road, Hull, Yorks.

This pungent and forcefully written work is devoted to one definite aspect of the Second Advent—the impact which the return of Christ will make upon the world and the manner in which He will assume command and transform confusion into order. The general presentation accepts all the Scriptural descriptions as strictly literal—the sun being literally darkened, the Lord and His followers making a physical landing on the Mount of Olives, and so on, but there is no exposition of the Scriptures dealing with such manifestations, this not being the object of the book. The author does point out very succinctly that whatever the true nature of God, of Heaven, of the powers and conditions of the celestial world, we as humans must necessarily visualise them in terms of human experience and analogy, or, as he says, in three-dimensional terms. On this basis one can perhaps forgive him for the assertion that heaven

must be a place located somewhere amongst the stars. His description of the manner in which the Messianic Kingdom will take over earth's rulership from the present powers is vivid and impressive. He feels that the Christian Church generally has failed dismally in not proclaiming the Second Advent as the answer to The Bomb, and that "one of the weaknesses of Second Advent preaching to-day is its failure to emphasise the blessings which will come to the human race when Christ returns". The reviewer must dissent from the statement on p. 47 "Christ's Kingdom is not the regeneration of humanity but the re-organisation of society, the rebuilding of a collapsed civilisation" unless he refers to the usual idea that the Kingdom is here now in the hearts of men. The great point of the Millennium is that it *does* regenerate humanity. The book is a call to Christians to bring belief in the Advent into vital relation with practical everyday circumstances and as such is of considerable interest.

(Order from Hull, not from B.F.U.)

"If He had not come!" Let the words sink deep into our heart of hearts as we survey the barrenness and emptiness that would have been, and then let us lift up our hearts and thank God that "He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty, might be made rich", God gave His best Gift, when He gave His Son to come to earth, to redeem and restore fallen man.

The true doctrine of Christian liberty is not our right to think for ourselves, but the right of the other man to think for himself. There is no danger now that our right will not be insisted upon and enforced, particularly if our thinking happens to fall in with that of the majority. It is the other man's liberty that is in danger, particularly if he is in the minority.

THE HILL OF OLIVES

*A theme from the
life of Jesus*

"Oh for the wings of a dove to fly far away and be at rest! Fain would I fly from it all, and live within the desert." How often have we expressed similar sentiments; the surroundings from which the Psalmist would escape have their counterpart in the hurly-burly which makes up life in this post-war world. "I have seen violence and strife in the city; day and night do these encompass it upon her walls; and wrong and trouble are in her midst; mischief is in her midst; guile and deceit depart not from her street." We think of another and greater than David who trod those same streets; how much more must His perfect nature have revolted against the squalor, the selfishness and the scheming which met him at every turn. The Psalmist said "I would spend my night in the wilderness" (Leeser), but Jesus, to whom came trial and temptation in the wilderness, found sanctuary elsewhere. He spent many of his last days in this same city, but at night he left it and its distractions and ascended the "Hill of Olives". The calm dignity which elevated him far above the treacherous priests and the angry mob, and which called forth the exclamation "Behold, the man" was surely the outcome of those quiet hours spent in solitude upon Olivet. We say "in solitude" but we realise of course that while apart from human companionship, it was here that Jesus drew very near to His Father.

The record says "He went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives" and again "at night He went out, and abode in the mount of Olives". In John 8. 1 (Moffatt) we read "So every one of them went home, but Jesus went to the Hill of Olives". Here Jesus was "at home"; after the strenuous labours of the day—teaching in the Temple, healing the sick, comforting the sorrowing, bearing with his disciples, and meeting the scorn of the "learned ones", Jesus found rest on Olivet. The tired limbs, the throbbing brow, the aching heart would preclude all possibility of sleep, but Jesus found rest and refreshment, not in sleep but in quiet and undisturbed communion with His Father in Heaven.

Centuries earlier, David, taking flight from Absalom, mounted the ascent of Olives, weeping as he went, until he reached the summit "where God was worshipped". Doubtless he worshipped God on this occasion, and later

when he was "a little beyond the summit" he received a gift of "asses for the king's household, bread and fruit for the troops, and wine for those who faint in the desert". Thus weeping was turned to joy upon Olivet. Do we ever mount the ascent of Olives weeping? The trials of this life, at work or in business, the multitude of problems which confront those responsible for the home, all tend to weary and depress us; but when we can leave the "city" and ascend the hill of Olives, "where God is worshipped", there we can release the mind from its burdens, there we find rest and peace, all the weariness and the heartache melt away, and we regain our poise and sense of proportion. Here too we find "asses for the King's household"—aids for our heavenward journey—bread and fruit for the soul, and wine to drink when we faint in the desert.

There are three aspects of this hill which may be used to portray differing experiences in drawing near to God. From Jerusalem, figurative of all that is worldly, the pathway dips steeply down to the Kidron valley, then upwards to the garden of Gethsemane. From thence it continues to the summit, then down again to Bethany. Bethany—the scene of some of the happiest and most blessed of our Lord's earthly experiences, but also of the saddest. Can we visualise the scene as the golden sun is setting over the great city? The humble home, kept clean and bright by the practical and industrious Martha, is filled with the sound of happy voices. Left behind are the labours of the day, and Jesus, with Lazarus by His side and Mary at His feet, converses quietly with them and His disciples. Martha, mindful of the needs of the natural man, enters with refreshments, and for a while a fitful silence reigns. Supper over, the murmur of voices in pleasant conversation rises again, giving way anon to the sound of voices blended in the sweet harmony of psalms and spiritual songs. Would that we might have been there; but it was not always thus. Gone now is the sound of happy voices raised in song, the lowly home is now filled with the sound of mourning. Lazarus is in the tomb, and Mary and Martha, hope all gone and faith departed, wait with heavy eyes turned towards the pathway along which their Lord will surely come. With his presence faith

revives a little and hope stirs again, but silence reigns as the Lord of all the earth weeps over that sad scene; but by the mighty power of God sorrow is turned to holy joy.

Space does not permit us to recount the scene at the house of Simon where Mary anoints the feet of her Lord, but the lesson is known too well to need reiteration. Sufficient to note that Jesus knew that the hour of His last ordeal approached, as He commended her loving gesture. As the time drew nearer Jesus increasingly sought the sanctuary of Olivet and Bethany; it was on Olivet that He wept in sorrow over Jerusalem and foretold the destruction of the temple; it was here too that He uttered that wonderful discourse concerning His return and the end of the Age.

To Jerusalem went Jesus for the Passover, but after the Last Supper and His valediction He was drawn again to Olivet. There, in the garden of Gethsemane, He reached the awful crisis of His earthly sojourn, but with the ministry of an angel of the Lord His strength and courage returned. How he must have longed to continue over Olivet to that sweet haven of rest at Bethany; but to the cruel city He returned, there to suffer and be condemned to a criminal's death. But the power that raised Lazarus from the dead brooded over the Son of Man and brought Him forth from the grave, the first born of a New Creation. After a little while came the glorious culmination of the greatest chapter in the world's history; Jesus left this earth to enter the Heavenly courts, to receive a name which is above every name. Not from the city which had hailed Him as king, not from the Temple which was so defiled, did He ascend, but from Olivet. Opinions may differ as to the exact spot at which Jesus made His departure from this earth, but to Him Olivet and Bethany were all one.

We like to think of Him walking over Olivet for the last time, leading His disciples along the familiar pathway to Bethany, there to bid farewell to those dear ones who had contributed so much to His earthly comforts and joys, then retracing His steps towards the summit, taking leave of His friends and brethren from that hill which had witnessed His greatest joys, His deepest sorrows and closest communion with His Father.

If we would follow Jesus into the heavenly realm we must follow Him daily up the ascent of Olivet, and continue on to Bethany; then when the time comes for us to follow Him through Gethsemane we shall pass the crisis safely, and wing our way from Olivet

to dwell with Him through eternity. Maybe much water must flow beneath the bridges ere this day comes; who knows what lies before us as we seek to follow our Master to the end? Even as Olivet and Bethany brought to Jesus the highest joys and deepest sorrows, so we too may find that, as we seek to draw near to God and faithfully keep His law, we shall ascend the heights and plumb the depths. The Apostle Paul followed Jesus up the ascent of Olivet, and on to Bethany too. He soared up into the third heaven to view scenes kept from the eyes of angels; he too was plunged into the depths as he came to "know the fellowship of His suffering". He must have spent many a happy hour at "Bethany"; it was he who urged the brethren at Ephesus to "*converse with one another in the music of psalms, in hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life*", and likewise to those at Colosse to "*teach and train one another*" in the same. Should we occupy our time thus, there would be less time for unseemly arguments about so-called "essentials to salvation".

Even as Jesus sought the quiet joys of Bethany as an antidote to the restless excitement of the city, so we should find time to relax and rejoice and, to the best of our ability, converse with one another in the music of psalms and hymns, and in songs of the spiritual life. We must not be surprised, however, if we find our deepest sorrows at Bethany too. In worldly affairs the greatest sorrow, the sharpest pang usually comes from those who are nearest, so in the spiritual life it may be among our brethren that we shall experience the greatest heartbreaks, the deepest distress; so did our Master before us. It matters little whether the sun shines or heavy storm-clouds gather overhead, on Olivet we can rise above the "seen" things, and, with the eyes of faith, behold the things as yet "unseen". Going on to Bethany, whether it be to songs or to sighing, we shall find our Master there to share both joys and sorrows; then when our time comes to face the last ordeal, we too may mount the ascent of Olivet weeping, but in Gethsemane we shall find the ministering angel, and gain strength and courage to face the loosing of the silver cord, and in the resurrection morning reach the summit of Olivet whence we shall enter into everlasting joys.

When God stretches forth His hand, it must mean salvation to the individual.

“THE SAINTS SHALL JUDGE THE WORLD”

A Foreview of the
Golden Age.

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world . . .” (1 Cor. 6. 2).

St. Paul's casual remark to the Corinthian believers highlights in sharp relief what seems at first sight to be an instance of utter conceit—that certain men and women, Christians though they be, shall at some future time be entrusted with the responsibility of judging their fellows in matters connected with the issues of life everlasting. The remark seems the more out of place when it is remembered that the general Scriptural presentation is that Jesus Christ is the judge of all men when the time for judgment has come.

In reality the declaration is in no way out of harmony with the revealed purpose of God and neither does it savour of conceit or any improper sentiment, once there is a proper understanding of what is involved in the judgment to which St. Paul refers, and the purpose of the Age in which it is to be true.

The judgment is, of course, that of all the world during the Millennium, when the Heavenly administration of the Lord Christ rules the earth. It is a basic fact of theology that His Church will then be associated with Him in that sphere of rulership. The judgment is not an unqualified judicial condemnation; it includes the entire process by which man, standing before God, will be subjected to the entire process of education and discipline for which that Age is designed. *Krino*, which is the word here employed, denotes the picking out, selection, choosing, approving, of those who measure up or can be made to measure up to a displayed standard, the intellectual sifting and weighing up of the evidence upon which the final decision must be based. The substance of this “judging”, therefore, is to educate, to persuade, to convert, and only at the end of the process to give the final decision which means life or death for the individual—and that final decision in the Scriptural picture is the prerogative of the Lord Christ. The spirit in which, and the intention with which, the work will be conducted is indicated by the words of Jesus *“The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.”* (Luke 9. 56) and of St. Paul *“(God) will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (2 Tim. 2. 4).

It is in this light that our Lord's words to

His disciples must be understood; *“... ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”*. (Matt. 19. 28) and Rev. 20. 4 *“they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years”*. There is a difference between earthly and heavenly ideas of rulership and of thrones. With man the words denote a lording it over one's fellow men and usually not to their advantage. With God they indicate service and sacrifice for the benefit of the ruled. *“The princes of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant”* (Matt. 20. 25-26) is the principle laid down by Jesus, a principle He Himself exemplified by His washing of His disciples' feet.

“Ye which have followed me”; it must also be remembered that those who in the Lord's sight have shown their fitness for this admittedly exalted position of responsibility in the next Age do not attain it easily. This is not a question of favouritism or of a reward for lip service or mere profession of godliness. The whole purpose of the dedicated Christian life in this Age is the development of qualities, and assimilation of experience, which will produce the sterling character needed for the position of wise and just administrators in that Age. It means devotion to the ideal and complete dedication to the service of God, and none can say who among us will be found fitted for that high destiny when the time comes. As Guy Schofield says at the end of his book *“The Purple and the Scarlet”*, speaking of some such at the beginning of this Age and the suffering they endured, *“Inasmuch as they were instruments, lesser people, while revering them, must also pity them, for their lot was hard. Inasmuch as they were mortals caught up from their amiable lives to go a-soldiering a tremendous campaign, we must bow our heads before them. For no triumph has been like their triumph, nor did any seed-sowing yield so great a harvest . . . Believers will call them instruments of Providence, but it is a terrible thing to be an instrument of Providence.”* Those who are to lead and teach the world in the coming Day do not reach

their positions by an easy path. "Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom" (Acts 14, 22).

It is a mistake to think that God has no use for any who do not become "saints" in the New Testament sense here and now, and live their lives in the intensity of devotional observance. Just as it takes all kinds of men to make this world, and all men do not share the same function and place, so the Divine scheme of things provides for a variety of station and duty, and all creatures supremely happy in their appropriate environment. None can ever attain to enduring life without intelligent acceptance of Christ and His supremacy, but within that acceptance will be found loyal citizens of the Divine empire on various planes of being, working together in complete amity and harmony for the common good. It need not be thought strange therefore that from the same stock of mankind is taken one company of the redeemed to be eternally associated with Christ in one of the "many mansions" He declared exist in His Father's house (John 14, 2), and another company in a somewhat different "mansion" equally part of creation and equally a part of Heaven. That the "Church" is complete and ruler over the nations during the Millennium is definite Scripture truth. That there are masses of mankind ready to enter into enduring life at the end of the Millennium long after the Church as such is complete is an equal Scripture truth. Beyond that point we enter into the everlasting years about which the Scriptures say little or nothing, but there can be no doubt that in the glories of that eternal world or worlds in which sin, suffering and death have no place, all creatures will find utter content and abundant scope for their initiative and activity.

In our own day the ambition of some men is to become astronauts and soar away above their fellows in the heights of space. The remainder do not envy them; they are perfectly content to follow their own chosen activities on earth. Those who go and those who stay each fulfil their chosen tasks and in them find their lives' satisfaction—to the extent, that is, that any man can find true satisfaction in this very unsatisfactory world. Future ages will be different in that respect. It is written, under the picturesque metaphors of an agricultural people of long ago, "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as

the longevity of a tree shall be the longevity of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." (Isa. 65, 21-22). That is a Messianic foreview and will become reality in the next Age.

St. Paul's words regarding the "saints" who shall "judge the world", therefore, will find substance in that wise, just and inherently benevolent Administration which, under the direction of the Lord Christ, will take over this well-nigh ruined world at the end and introduce what St. Peter called "a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3, 13). The whole object of that Administration is to evangelise the world, to preach Christ and assist all who are willing to overcome their ingrained habits of wrong and build up characters strong for righteousness. It will be a day of self help; we are familiar in our own time with Alcoholics Anonymous and Smokers Anonymous and so on, organisations of men and women, slaves to some habit which they wish to break, banded together for the purpose of helping each other by encouragement and example to achieve their objects. We may see, in that Age, a Wrong-doers Anonymous, the membership of which extends to practically the whole world—for it is not probable in practice that a very great proportion of humanity prefers sin for its own sake. The programme is a very extensive one; the saints may be appointed to rule the world but they are going to have to work very hard in doing it. There is a great deal of ignorance and prejudice and selfishness to dissipate and much instruction in the principles of right living to be inculcated. The sights are set high—nothing less than the conversion of "whosoever will" to the service and worship of the Lord Christ, which in itself implies unequivocal harmony and co-operation with one's fellows in every affair of life.

It is evident that this rulership must come to an end. There is and can be nothing permanently immature or incomplete in Divine creation. The necessity for the Messianic reign and the ministrations of the Church in that reign lies in man's own immaturity and failure to develop along right lines without such ministrations. The day must eventually come when each man has taken the final and irrevocable decision—for Christ or against, for the principles of righteousness or evil. Since life comes only from God, and evil is inherently destructive, it follows that at the end the only ones who continue into enduring life are those who have accepted Christ

and attained harmony with God. And at that point the saints who until then have ruled the world must step aside and leave all men in possession of their maturity in Christ, fully fledged citizens of Divine creation. That is what Jesus meant in His parable of the Sheep and the Goats, where the King is depicted as saying to those who have thus attained, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25. 34) That is what St. Paul meant when he said of that same

climax *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all"* (1 Cor. 15. 24-28). The Millennial reign of Christ over the earth is an event in time, the final phase in man's preparation for his destiny. At the end of that reign man steps into eternity; he needs the ministrations of the Church no longer. The grand design is completed; man, at long last, has attained the full image and likeness of God.

JONAH AND HIS GOURD

An Old Testament Story

The Book of Jonah tells how the prophet, disappointed because his predicted destruction of the wicked city Nineveh had been averted by the speedy—and unexpected—repentance of its citizens, sat himself down outside the city in the hope that God might after all reconsider, and inflict the judgment Jonah felt they so richly deserved. Thus waiting, the tropical sun beat down upon him and he was *"exceedingly glad"* of the shade provided by a "gourd" which grew up above his little shelter. Alas; a horde of caterpillars appeared, biting into the succulent stem, and the plant withered away, and Jonah was exceedingly angry. Answering his petulance, the Lord said *"Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which was a son of the night, and perished as a son of the night (Heb.) and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"* (Jon. 4. 10-11).

The key to the story is this expression "son of the night"; the impression given by the A.V. is that the gourd grew in one night and perished the next, but the Hebrew usage implies that the plant was the "son" of the night-time, i.e. that it belonged to the night and was therefore of a transient nature. The saying was a metaphor, adopted to point the moral of the story, which was to contrast Jonah's solicitude for a humble plant, which was destined to die anyway, with his indifference to the fate of the Ninevites.

The Hebrew name of this plant is *kikayon*; it is most likely the castor oil plant, which in the Middle East grows rapidly to the size of a small tree and is used as a windbreak, having large fleshy leaves offering considerable

shade. It has the peculiarity of withering extremely quickly when cut. An old description by Niebuhr (1776-1831) tells of one he saw which was eight feet high, the flowers and leaves of which withered in a few minutes when gathered. Jerome (346-420) says of it *"It is the same as in the Syriac and the Punic is called el-keros, a shrub of upright growth, with broad leaves like a vine, and yielding a dense shadow. It springs up so rapidly that in the space of a few days where you saw a tender herb you will be looking up to a little tree"*. The doubt as to the identity of Jonah's gourd with this plant is due to the fact that mediæval scholars confused the then Arabic names for the castor oil plant and the vine-like gourd plant, which had very similar spellings, and adopted the gourd. The point is only of academic importance but the modern view is that *kikayon*, (Egyptian *kiki*) is the castor oil plant.

This incident of the swiftly growing shade tree and its equally swift demise is the climax to the story of Jonah. The prophet felt that God had cheated him. He had gone through well-nigh incredible adventures and been put to a considerable amount of personal inconvenience in coming to Nineveh and proclaiming the imminence of Divine judgment upon the Ninevites on account of their sins; bearing in mind the savagery with which these Assyrians had treated his own people for several generations past it is perhaps understandable that he was only too anxious to see the judgment executed and this nation exterminated. Most unexpectedly the Ninevites had repented at his preaching; in consequence God had lifted the threatened judgment. They were not to be destroyed after all, and Jonah was exceedingly angry. He knew that God was like this. *"Was not this my saying"* he

protested "*when I was yet in my country; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil*". In disgust he went out of the city and sat himself down on the hillside to see what was going to happen.

It was at this juncture that his own personal comfort began to be affected. He had built this little booth outside the city and there he sat, fuming inwardly and baked by the Mesopotamian sun outwardly. The plant grew up outside his booth and quickly provided some much needed shade, and Jonah was "*exceeding glad because of the gourd*". He began to look upon it almost as a friend. Then came disaster. A caterpillar ("*worm*" in A.V.) appeared; this is probably a generic name implying a host of the particular species. The plant was attacked and within a few hours it had withered away. And once again Jonah was exceedingly angry with God, this time not because He had not destroyed, but because He had destroyed. And that gave the Almighty His opportunity.

"*You have had pity on this gourd*" He accused "*on which you bestowed no labour, neither did you make it grow, which is but a son of the night and destined anyway to perish as a son of the night . . .*" It was but a part of the vegetable kingdom, created to serve men and animals in the grand scheme of Nature, and having served, to pass away like all other plants of the earth. "*And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons so ignorant of true values that they cannot distinguish between their right hand and their left, between what is right and what is wrong?*" Jonah's desire for vengeance upon the Assyrians for the wrongs they had committed in the past blinded him completely to the fact that they had now repented and from King down to commoner had prostrated themselves before God in sackcloth and ashes, pleading that God would turn from His fierce anger, and they perish not. (Jon. 2, 5-10). Jonah was not prepared to give the Assyrians another chance; God was so prepared. That was the difference. One of the most profound truths in Christian doctrine is enshrined in this second chapter of Jonah with its momentous climax "*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not*". It must be noted carefully that it was not merely the fact of repentance for the past which lifted the judgment; they "*turned from their*

evil way" and "God saw their works", the practical change of life and conduct. It was that which caused Him to relent.

It must be remembered that our Lord said of these same Ninevites "*The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here*" (Luke 11, 32). Here is His own endorsement that the story is true, that the repentance was a true repentance, and that there is to be a sequel in that Day which Jews as well as Christians know as the Last Day, the Day of Judgment, the Day when all men must face reality in the presence of the King, the Lord Christ. And if, in that day, which we must equate with the thousand year reign of Christ over the earth, the Ninevites are to condemn First Advent Jewry for their rejection of Christ, it follows that their own acknowledgment of Him still stands, and their repentance is still valid. The Ninevites in the day of Jonah merited judgment, immediate and complete, for their savage deeds, and that judgment was proclaimed. But God looked down upon them and saw them for what they were, children of ignorance. They had never had the saving power of God preached unto them. So God deferred the judgment and destroyed them not. But that is not the end. They have yet to learn of Christ as the First Advent Jews could have learned of Christ had they a mind. They have yet to prove the sincerity of their repentance. Dr. Clement Clemance, the celebrated London Congregational minister of three generations ago, laid down a basic principle in his book "*Future Punishment*" that "*no human spirit reaches the crucial point of its probation till it has come into contact with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance or rejection*". God looked forward beyond the times of ignorance when the Ninevites could not discern beyond their right hand and their left to a day when they would be brought into contact with those claims and on that basis confirm their choice for eternity. Jonah was not prepared to go that far; but God is, and "*the Son of Man came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*".

Of all religious unrealities, this to me is the most offensive, the sorrow that moans over the ravages of sin and crime, but will not stretch a finger to rebuke it or a hand to relieve it.

(A. J. Gordon)

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

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

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

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

How true is this little episode to the throb of life for you and me in our little crowded day. Perhaps we too may have been seeking to find some hearing ears, or to pour the oil of gladness into some burdened heart. And perhaps our words have been received with gratitude, or perhaps—a more saddening experience—they have been laughed to scorn, or rejected with a superior curl of the lip. In any case this thronging world with some one or more of its many toys comes thrusting in—the daily Press, the Radio, the business tie, the family ailment or the common task—so that we cannot get the opportunity to unburd-

en our hearts as we would. We have wanted to tell Jesus all about the episode—how we had been overjoyed or saddened by the experience, but ever as we sought to frame our prayer some pressing thing would thrust itself upon our service and attention, and prevent us from reaching the Master's ear.

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

*"Come ye yourselves apart and rest awhile
Weary, I know it, of the press and throng;
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust*

*of toil,
And in My quiet strength again be strong.*

*Come ye aside from all the world holds dear,
For converse which the world has never
known;*

*Alone with Me, and with My Father here;
With Me and with My Father, not alone.*

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

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

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

THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF PLEIADES

From the beginning of history men have studied the stars, their arrangement and their movements, and woven into the glittering glory above their heads a wealth of imaginative romance and fable. Some of the oldest and most widely told stories known to mankind have been thus immortalised upon the face of the sky. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Scriptures themselves contain various references to the "story of the stars" and make use of them to illustrate some of God's dealings with men.

The well-known passage in the 38th chapter of Job commencing "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" is one of the finest of such passages. The opening expression is well known, and is often quoted; the remainder of the passage not so often read, and much of the interest attaching to the Divine words to Job is thereby lost. It was when, at last, both Job and his three friends had nothing further to say, that the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and demanded of him (Job 38, 31-32): "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

There can be no doubt that Job himself understood the import of the questions perfectly, or the Lord would not have asked them of him. That Job drew correct conclusions from the conversation is evident by his frank confession afterwards: "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee . . . wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42, 2 and 6). We do well, therefore, to try to see these things as Job saw them, and draw from them the lesson for ourselves that he drew for himself. It means exploring somewhat unfamiliar ground, and delving a little into the ancient myths and stories associated with the constellations, but if we can discern behind these things something of that glory light which shone into Job's heart and gave him compensation for his sufferings, our search will have been worth while.

It is necessary to keep in mind throughout this study that the purpose of the Lord's questions to Job was to demonstrate that the

ultimate truth respecting the great mystery of the permission of evil remains with God Himself; and that He has the power to achieve the triumph of righteousness and will accomplish that triumph, in due time. As Job's attention was directed to these various constellations in turn, the ideas associated with them came into his mind, and from those ideas he discerned the lesson God would teach him.

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" The more popular name of this constellation is the "seven stars", although the majority of people can discern only six. In ancient times they were thought to have an influence especially beneficent to mariners, this legend being due to the fact that they first appear in May when the favourable season for voyages, in the early days of the world, was due to begin. Pliny, who lived at the time of the First Advent, says (*Natural History*, Book 2) that the rising of the Pleiades on May 10th brings Summer, and their setting on November 11th marks the beginning of Winter. The idea that some mystic benign influence radiates out to earth from the Pleiades is also expressed by various Arab poets, one of whom (Hafiz) alludes to them as the seal or earnest of immortality. The word translated "sweet influences" is "*maadannoth*", one which has given the translators a great deal of trouble. It is considered by some authorities to have been misspelt, and they read it "*maanaddoth*", which comes from a root, "*anad*", meaning "to bind on". On this basis Margolis, Leeser and Ferrar Fenton translate "chains", and Rotherham "fetters", and it is then suggested that the appearance of the Pleiades in a cluster, like a delicate necklace, is referred to. On the other hand, the Authorised Version, standing by "*maadannoth*", has the advantage that this word comes from a root meaning "pleasures", "delight", "delicacy", and can be construed to indicate the operation of an influence radiating happiness and pleasure, and making for prosperity. This view well accords with the ancient tradition regarding the Pleiades, and gives point to the Divine question which made it plain that Job himself was powerless to "bind" those same "sweet influences".

What is the moral? It surely is that the sweet influences of the Love of God, shed

abroad upon mankind, taking root in the hearts and lives of believers, and bringing forth fruit unto God, *can never be "bound" by man*. The sad time of sin and death stands between humanity and the Kingdom, for a while, but, like mariners on the hazardous deep, men can look up to the heavens and reflect that the sweet influences of the Divine care are constantly streaming down from above, and that they guarantee mankind's safe arrival at length at their "desired haven" (Psalm 107. 30). Job, probably familiar with the seafaring tradition of those influences, and certainly well acquainted with Arabic thought—for Job was an educated Arab—must surely have read this lesson into the question which came to him from above, and drawn no little comfort from the thought.

"*Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?*" From reverently thankful thoughts of the loving Watch-care of God, Job's mind swung instantly to a vision of rebellion and sin—and sin's penalty. The constellation Orion is the most notable one in the heavens, and almost everyone has had Orion's head and arms, feet, girdle and sword, pointed out at some time or another. Orion, said the ancients, was a giant, and a mighty hunter, who once lived upon earth. He was greatly renowned because of his prowess in the chase, and eventually became a personal attendant to the goddess Diana. Having committed a great offence, he was bound to the heavens by means of strong chains, there to remain for ever as a warning to others of the consequences of sin. (The student will readily recognise the likeness between this story of Orion and the Biblical story of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord" of Gen. 10. 8-9. Nimrod's death is not mentioned in Scripture, but ancient traditions are that Nimrod met his death in consequence of some great sin, and that he was bound to the heavens for his impiety). Looking up into the night sky, then, the peoples of old would gaze upon the mythical giant, arms and legs outstretched, suffering his perpetual sentence, and reflect upon the power of God Who ordains an inescapable penalty for sin.

To Job, then, came the question: "*Canst thou loose the bands which I have placed upon evil?*" No less certain than the love of God is the retribution that must follow upon deliberate, wilful sin, and no man can loose the chains which God has forged for the ultimate restraint of sin.

"*Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?*" The A.V. translators, not knowing how to render the Hebrew word "*mazzaroth*",

left it untranslated. There seems little doubt that it refers to the twelve signs of the zodiac. The zodiac is that broad path across the heavens which is apparently traversed by the sun in its daily journey. Month by month, as the earth travels around the sun, the latter is set against a background of groups of stars which vary according to the relative position of sun and earth. To an observer upon earth it is as if the sun enters into one constellation after another in order, and the ancients separated these constellations into twelve "signs", into each one of which the sun enters at a certain season of the year. The force of the question then was this: "*Canst thou bring forth, and present to the sun, each successive one of the twelve signs in its due time in the sun's outward journey?*" The evident answer is "No". No man has power to retard or advance the majestic course of the procession of heaven which has been ordained of old by God. *So with the ages and dispensations of the Divine Plan*. Just as the twelve signs follow each other in ordered succession, likewise do those epochs which God has devised for the accomplishment of His purposes for mankind, and no man can either alter their order nor stay their course. "The days are *prolonged*, and every vision faileth", wailed the unbelieving captives in the days of Ezekiel. Resonant with faith came the prophet's rejoinder: "The days are *at hand*, and the effect of every vision" (Ezek. 12. 22-23) "The vision" came the word of the Lord to Habakkuk (Hab. 2. 3), "is yet for an appointed time . . . Though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry. *Can we bring in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by our own efforts, in advance of God's due time? Can we bring out Mazzaroth in his season?*" By no means; God alone can, and He will, at the time prefixed.

"*Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?*"

With their usual charming inconsistency, the A.V. translators have given us here the Greek name of the constellation which was known to the Hebrews as "*Aysh*", and, in England, variously as the Plough, the Wain, or the Great Bear. The later Greeks pictured it as a wagon drawn by horses, which gave rise to the English idea of the Wain (Old English for wagon), and of the Plough. The ancient Greeks called it the Bear, because, as they said, this constellation was none other than a nymph named Callisto, who, to escape the attention of her suitors, was changed into a bear and placed in the heavens. The Arabs, however, had a very different name

for this group. They called it the Bier, and pictured the four main stars as forming a bier upon which a deceased person was being taken to burial, and the three stars behind as the mourners who follow, "daughters" or "sons" of the bier. It is much more probable that Job would be accustomed to the Arabic idea in preference to those of foreign lands, and this is confirmed by the fact that the Hebrew "*Aysh*" is derived from the Arabic word for "bier".

Unfortunately, nearly every translator of note has adopted the Western European name—the Bear—for this constellation, and whilst this is a perfectly correct thing to do in a translation meant for English readers (the expression "bier" would leave most readers wondering what constellation is meant), it does have the effect of obscuring the real meaning of the question. Perhaps Young's translation best brings out the thought, in rendering "and *Aysh* for her sons dost thou comfort?" Coming at the climax of this four-fold inquisition, this can bring a wonderful picture before our minds. The bier, symbol of death and the grave; the mourners, sons or daughters of the bier, symbol of all the heart-ache and sorrow that death brings in its train; can Job, *can any man, guide these things into the glories of that day when death shall be no more?*" Once again, the answer comes, sadly and sorrowfully, "No". Only God can guide the bier and its mourners into the glorious day of life and joy. Only God can "bring to pass the saying that is written 'Death shall be swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. 15. 54). Only by His power shall it ever be that the 'ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads' (Isa. 35. 10). As Job looked up and saw the symbol of death engraved upon the heavens, beheld it night after night moving on its slow course around the sky, he must surely have reflected on the inexorable law, "death leads all to *Sheol*," but remembered then that one day the great God of all men will break the power of death and restore to man the dew of his youth. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," said Job, "until my change come" (Job 14. 14).

Thus, then, there is in this short passage of two verses an epitome of four fundamental features of the Divine Plan. The loving watchcare of God is over all His creation, His Holy Spirit ceaselessly active in pursuance of His wonderful designs for human happiness, "sweet influences of Pleiades" which no man can hope to bind or restrain. His manifest judgment against sin, and the certainty of retribution upon the one who sets himself deliberately against the goodness of God, cannot be frustrated or defied by any, in this world or the next: none can ever hope to "loose the bands of Orion". Then the fixity of the Divine purpose: "By myself have I sworn, saith God" (Gen. 22. 16)—and the certainty of every feature of His Plan coming to pass in His own due time; every age and dispensation succeeding its predecessor in orderly sequence, no man having the power to haste these things or to accomplish the work of any Age in his own strength: no man can "bring forth Mazzaroth in his season." Lastly, the enthralling theme of Resurrection and Restitution. Only God can do that, only He Who promised that He would in the fulness of times "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3. 20-21). God, too, watches that Bier with its three mourners, wending its way across the dark night sky of earth's present evil world; but God is guiding it with a sure hand, and that Bier will one day come forth into a fair pleasant land where the dead will be raised up and life enter into them; and the mourners will rejoice, for "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 4).

These are the words God spake to Job on that memorable occasion. To him, as to us, they conveyed a message of hope, a confirmation of the Lord's great promise made to Moses in an hour when it almost seemed as if His great Plan *was* in danger of frustration, "*As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah*".

For no man, **NO MAN**, shall ever be able to "bind the sweet influences of Pleiades".

A physician may despair of his patient, a teacher may fail with his pupil, a country may be able to do nothing with an evildoer, but the soul-winner, who has learned of Jesus Christ and His service, knows no such experience.

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



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

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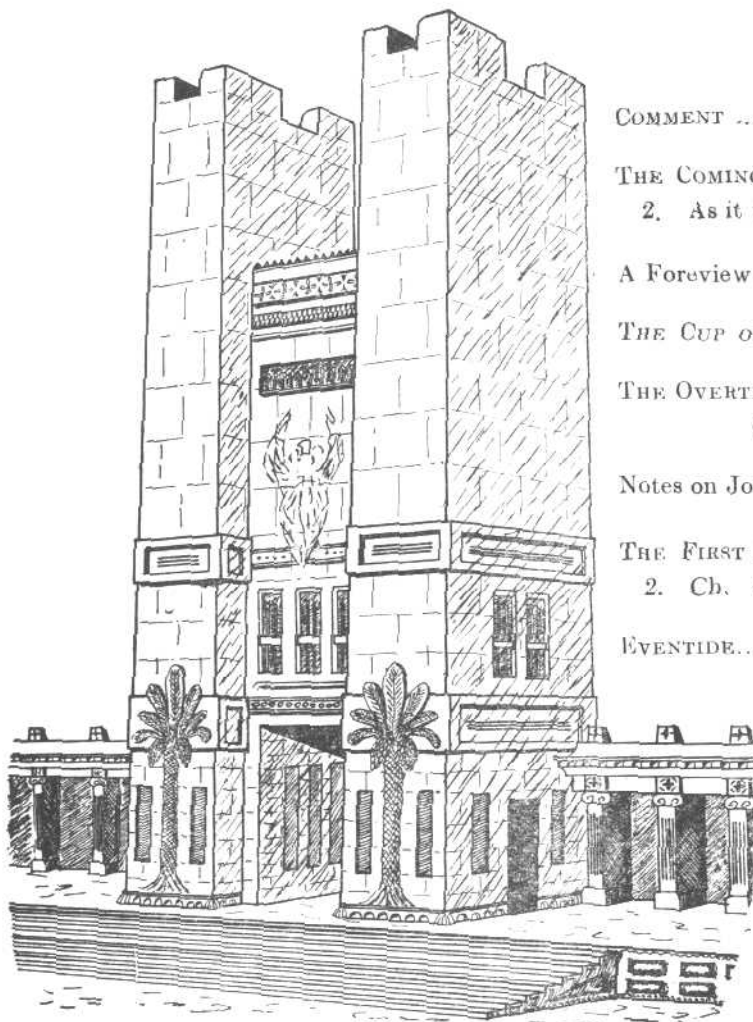
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CONTENTS

COMMENT	22
THE COMING OF THE KING	
2. As it was in the days of Noah.	23
A Foreview of the Future.....	27
THE CUP OF OUR LORD	28
THE OVERTHROW OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH Part I. ..	32
Notes on John 17 & Isa 18.4.....	35
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
2. Ch. 1.8-10 & 2.1	36
EVENTIDE.....	39



*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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COMMENT

A speaker at a recent educational conference in the north of England stressed the importance of guarding against the creation in children's minds of "the neurotic image of a watchful, vengeful and punishing God". Whether the same stricture should apply to the inculcation of respect for the criminal law of the land, which would seem to justify the same description with the substitution of "State" for "God", the speaker did not go on to say; his principal object appeared to be the discrediting of the historical accuracy of the Bible and its relegation to the realm of fairy-tale and folk-lore under the erroneous impression that it upholds the neurotic image of which he speaks. But his primary point is important. All too often God is preached as prone to favour one and condemn another, unduly severe on what might appear to be very human failings, and above all things bent on making entrance into heaven the attainment only of a select few. It cannot be repeated too often that what is often called Divine punishment for sin is not the arbitrary infliction of penal vengeance by a kind of super High Court judge but the natural and inevitable consequence of man's own actions. The Divine law is "what a man soweth, that shall he reap"; the reaping is not always realised in this life but it must be at some time in the individual's onward experience. And when men realise the truth of Jesus' word that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account for in the Day of Judgment they will realise that the Bible is not fairy-tale and folk-lore after all.

But having said that, it must also be well borne in mind that the original purpose of God in giving existence to the human race at all was not that He might lose most of them again in some kind of eternal place for failures, but that He might perfect forms of intelligent life to fill and use aright His creation. The vastness of even this material

system which our senses can perceive is beyond the range of man's observational achievements to date; the more our astronomers pierce into the depths of the Universe the more they find lies beyond their reach. The idea that God is only interested in creating a few beings on this planet and in preserving for ever only a small percentage of these few is going fast and the sooner it is quite gone the better. Mankind has a destiny. A very famous and much-loved minister of thirty years ago, Dr. F. B. Meyer, hinted at the role that may be fulfilled by some of the sons of men in the Divine creative plans of the future (see the quotation on page 27 of this issue) and the number of Christian people who share that view of the future life is growing apace.

There is nothing neurotic or vengeful in the Bible presentation of judgment for sin. It is part of man's education, for his maturity, for his eternal life in creation and his usefulness in God's further creative plans involving fresh life. And the earlier the age at which children are taught that fact the better it will be for them in this life and later. Which is where we came in.

GALLERY OF THE PAST

For the interest of readers there is appended hereunder brief details relating to individuals of past times who are quoted or otherwise referred to in the pages of this issue.

Bryce, Lord James (p. 25) 1838-1922. British MP and Cabinet Minister, author and anti-quarian. One-time British Ambassador to U.S.A. Created Viscount 1914.

Gone from us

Sis. H. Pateman (Nottingham)
Sis. L. Elliott (Dumfries)

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

THE COMING OF THE KING

2. As it was in the days of Noah

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

Students are well aware that there exist apparently conflicting Scripture statements respecting the manner of the Second Advent. Upon the one hand there are passages which depict the coming of the Lord as quiet, unobtrusive, like a thief breaking into a house at dead of night so that only those who are awake and watching know of His arrival. On the other hand there are vivid descriptions of a spectacular descent from Heaven in the full view of all mankind, accompanied by the heavenly hosts to the sound of trumpets and shouting so that no one can be ignorant of the event. It is said in some places that His Church will be waiting on earth to be gathered to Him as He arrives, and in others that they will already be with Him as He journeys to earth and participate in the glory of His coming. Some pictures shew Him coming for judgment and destruction, men crawling into the caves and holes of the rocks to escape His accusing eye; others present a coming for blessing and reconstruction, whilst men and all Nature rejoice at the prospect. A rational and accurate view of the Second Advent has to take into account and give proper weight to all these varying descriptions and weave them into a harmonious whole.

The short answer to these apparent paradoxes is that the Second Advent spans a period of time within which a number of widely dissimilar events find place. When this fact is accepted it becomes possible to build an understanding of the subject in which each plain statement, each vivid metaphor, each Old Testament allusion, can make its contribution to the complete picture.

Within such a framework it is obvious that the aspect of the Advent which is described as sensed only by the few, the "Watchers", and not realised by the many, must come first before any kind of spectacular revelation to all men. Likewise the statements that He comes to gather His saints to Himself and close the career of the "Church in the flesh" must have their fulfilment before there can be any possibility of those same saints returning with Him to be openly revealed to all. This unobtrusive and generally unheeded aspect of the Advent is therefore logically the first to be considered.

The commencement of the Second Advent is marked by a condition in which the Lord

comes "as a thief", recognised only by His own. The basis of this is to be found in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the most complete exposition of the Advent in the New Testament. *"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. but know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh"*. (Matt. 24. 42-44). Referring back to this warning in his letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul said *"yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night . . . destruction cometh upon them . . . and they shall not escape . . . but ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief . . . therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch"* (1 Thess. 5. 4-6). Rev. 16. 15 associates this thief-like coming with the gathering of the nations to Armageddon, the period which leads up to the end of this present Age. This exhortation to watchfulness for an expected event, the time of which is not known, has its basis in the Old Testament where the city watchmen are pictured as straining their eyes for evidences of the near approach of the expected King. *"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence . . . till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth"* (Isa. 62. 6-7) and its ecstatic climax *"Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; . . . for they shall see, eye meeting eye, the Lord returning to Zion . . . and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God"* (Isa. 52. 8-10).

That this watchfulness of the faithful, rewarded by realisation of the Coming One's presence in the earth to execute the Divine purpose, is accompanied by ignorance and indifference on the part of the world in general at this early stage of the Advent is shewn by means of two striking parallels in history to which our Lord drew attention. *"Of that day and hour"* He said *"knoweth no man . . . but as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be . . . they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage . . . and knew not until the flood*

came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be". "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed". (Matt. 24. 36-39. Luke 17. 28-30). The truth behind these allusions is a very important one. It enshrines the Divine principle that before judgment descends there is proclamation of the coming crisis, and an opportunity to repent and be delivered. The stories of Noah and Lot have one thing in common. A man of God is made cognisant of the coming event; he accepts the fact and proclaims it. His contemporaries in general are indifferent and unbelieving until after the prophet and those who share his faith are delivered into a place of safety. Then the indifferent multitude is overtaken by the event and their world comes to an end. It is not only the unexpectedness of the catastrophe to which our Lord alluded but the fact that a few knew about it in advance and were thereby delivered.

The natural forces which were to bring to an end the antediluvian world were present in the earth whilst Noah was building his Ark, but only he and the few with him knew and believed. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet . . . prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Heb. 11. 7). The time came when God called him into the Ark "and" says the old historian "the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7. 16). Seven days elapsed during which there appeared no physical evidence to substantiate his belief and prediction; nevertheless those forces were working silently behind the scenes. On the eighth day the heavens opened and the deeps heaved up their waters and that world came to an end.

So with the case of Lot. According to St. Peter (2 Pet. 2. 7-8) Lot was a just and righteous man continually distressed in spirit by the lawlessness with which he was surrounded. Like Noah, he was apprised in advance of the fate overshadowing Sodom; in just the same manner the subterranean powers which were shortly to blow the Cities of the Plain sky high were gathering strength. Lot and his daughters, the only ones who believed, were led out of the doomed city by the celestial messenger to a place of safety. As with Noah, there was a short lull, this time a space of six or seven hours apparent inactivity, and

then Sodom blew up.

There is one apparently casual word in the Genesis story of Sodom's destruction which establishes that six or seven hours lull and provides a parallel to the most famous of our Lord's allusions to His Second Coming, the one in which He likened it to the "astrape", the emergence of dawn from the East rapidly growing into full meridian day. The account in Genesis 14. 15 says that the Divine messengers, after their night's hospitality at the house of Lot, gave the word to leave the doomed city "when the morning arose". The words are "shachar" and "alah"—"when the dawn came up". This expression denotes the moment of dawn when, in that latitude, the first shafts of light appear on the eastern horizon, always within an hour of 6 a.m. (The same word for the same phenomenon appears variously in the Old Testament as "dayspring" (Job 38. 12) "wings of the morning" (Psa. 139. 9) "eyelids of the morning" (Job 41. 28) etc. The messengers bade Lot "flee to the mountain" for refuge; he obtained permission to take refuge instead in the "little city" of Zoar because it was nearer and more convenient. He was to make haste; the threatened destruction could not be initiated until he and his daughters were safely within Zoar. The narrative then continues "the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar" (ch. 14. 25). Here the words are "shemesh" and "yatsa", "the sun had gone forth over the land"; this refers to the full blaze of the solar orb at the meridian—noonday. The implication of these two verses is that Lot's flight from Sodom to Zoar extended from dawn to noon—six or seven hours. Although the site of ancient Sodom is only known approximately and that of Zoar is unknown a comparison of the topography of the district with details given in the narrative favours the conclusion that the cities lay some twelve to sixteen miles apart so that several hours journey on foot is indicated.

Jesus may well have used this illustration of the days of Lot in relation to those of His own Advent, in knowledge of this fact. The Divine messenger, come for deliverance and also for judgment, was present in person and in plenitude of power, when the dawn—the "astrape" of the New Testament—rose over the mountains of Moab to the east of Sodom, but his first work was to deliver the faithful; the rest were ignorant or else unbelieving. That deliverance effected, the messenger returned to the city, not this time for deliverance, but for judgment; "then the Lord rained

upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven". The analogy with the order of events of the Second Advent is perfect.

Some such picture, then, may have been in our Lord's mind when He made His historic reply to the disciples' question put to Him shortly before His death: "*when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy presence, and of the end of the Age?*" (Matt. 24. 3). Jesus' very lengthy discourse occupies the whole of Matthew's twenty-fourth chapter. After a fairly extensive preamble covering the period between the First and Second Advents, with allusion to the tribulations which were to come upon the Jewish people (vss. 5-22) and a brief intimation that only after the Gospel had been preached in all the world "*for a witness*" would the end come, He sketched briefly the evidences of the successive phases of His Advent. The first of these is contained in vss. 23-28 and the gist of this is that claims would be made for the appearance of Christ in this spot or that spot, as though He could be located within earthly limitations as in the days of His First Advent, and that such claims were not to be believed. "*If they shall say to you, behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not*" (vs. 26). The word for "desert" here means a solitary or uninhabited place, but not necessarily arid; it could equally well be green and pleasant and in fact refers mainly to the wilderness east of Jordan where John the Baptist and some of the old Hebrew prophets lived and conducted their work, and into which the people went in order to hear them. The initial coming of Christ is not to be in the style of those men, as the visible centre of a multitude, plainly to be viewed before them and known of all, as were John, Elijah, Moses and others. Neither is He to be manifested in the "secret chambers". The A.V. rendering gives a misleading impression. The word is "*tameion*" which is used in the New Testament, the Apocrypha and the Septuagint for the family private or inner apartment of the house (Matt. 6. 6, Luke 12. 3)—particularly of the bride chamber (Tobit 7. 16); sometimes of the storeroom or barn (Luke 12. 24, Deut. 28. 8). This was the room in which honoured guests were received to meet the invited company, as in the feasts which Jesus attended in the houses of Matthew, Zaccheus and Simon of Bethany. Just as on the one hand this initial phase of His Coming is not a general public spectacle, equally so it is not a private phys-

ical appearance to a selected circle of intimate followers reminiscent of the days when they sat at a feast and listened to His words. And in one eloquent metaphor Jesus lifted the whole conception of His Coming to the plane of celestial values by likening the first phase of His Advent to the oncoming dawn, which in the latitude of Jerusalem is seen at first only by those watching for its onset, and by the sleeping masses in general only after it has already measurably flooded the skies with light.

"*As the brightness*" ("lightning" A.V.) "*cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the presence*" ("coming" A.V.) "*of the Son of Man be*" (vs. 27). This refers without any doubt to the dawn; "*astrape*", here rendered "lightning", refers to any brilliant or blinding radiance, whether lightning or not, as in Luke 9. 29 (*glistering raiment*) Luke 11. 36 (*bright shining candle*) Luke 24. 4 (*shining garments*) Acts 9. 3 (*shined a light from heaven*) Acts 22. 6 (*there shone a great light*) Deut. 32. 41 (*glittering sword*) Hab. 3. 11 (*glittering spear*) 4 Macc. 4. 10 (*angels all radiant in armour*) but the sun's light is the only such radiance that originates in the east and passes to the west. In thus comparing His Coming with this light of dawn in the east Jesus associated the idea with watchfulness. Only those who watched would be aware that His Coming had become a fact, just as only the watchmen in Israel ever actually witnessed the rising light of the "*astrape*" in the east indicating that the night was past and day had come. "*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh*" (Matt. 25. 13) "*What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch*" (Mark 13. 37).

The full force of our Lord's meaning can only be grasped when the nature of sunrise in Middle Eastern latitudes is appreciated. Dawn is a fairly leisurely process in this country but the nearer to the tropics, the more rapid is the transition from total darkness to full daylight. A few quotations from travellers who have actually witnessed sunrise in and near the latitude of the Holy Land illuminate the words of Jesus in Matthew 24.

H. V. Morton, in his book "*In the steps of the Master*" says: "As I sat on the stone thinking of these things, a light began to fill the sky. The sun rises over Jerusalem from behind the Mount of Olives. I turned my back on the city and, looking up over the Mount, saw a great fan of light pulsing up from the east. The fire filled the sky and turned the

little clouds in its path to pink and gold, but the high ridge of the Mount, almost black against the palpitating light, hid the sun from view. . . . The sun topped the crest of the Mount of Olives, and, looking again towards Jerusalem, I saw the highest buildings gilded with light though the wall was yet unlit. In a few seconds a flood of light fell over the city, ran down the wall and into the valley of the Kedron. It swept up the stony flanks of the opposite valley, and I felt my face and my hands warm in its light.

"How often must Jesus and the disciples have watched this splendid sight from the Mount of Olives. They must have seen the city ramparts light up with the first rays of the sun. They must have seen, just above the Garden of Gethsemane, the towering white and gold mass of the Temple. They must have seen a priest come out on a pinnacle, as he came every morning, to look towards the east and report, before the first sacrifice of the day, 'The sun shineth already!' They might even have heard in the still air of dawn the daily cry from the assembled priests: 'Is the sky lit up as far as Hebron?', and the daily response of the watcher from the pinnacle: 'It is lit up as far as Hebron!'"

The same writer describes sunrise at Gaza, a little to the south of Jerusalem:

"And now, as we went onward, I saw a gathering tumult in the east. A white, palpitating light was filling the sky. It was like something approaching at great speed, a mighty army with its chariots and its horsemen. Swords of light thrust their way upwards, catching stray clouds and turning them to banners of pink and gold. Then, like an orange flung into the air, the sun leapt up, fully armed, into the sky: it was warm, and the dead earth was instantly, vividly, and rather violently, alive."

Lord James Bryce, describing his ascent of Mount Ararat in 1876, thus describes sunrise as seen from his position halfway up the mountain (*Transcaucasia and Ararat*):

"About 3 a.m. there suddenly sprang up, from behind the Median mountains, the morning star, shedding a light such as no star ever gives in these northern climes of ours, a light that almost outshone the moon. An hour later it began to pale in the first faint flush of yellowish light that spread over the eastern heaven, and first the rocky masses above us, then Little Ararat, throwing behind him a gigantic shadow, then the long lines of mountains beyond the Araxes, became revealed, while the wide Araxes plains still lay dim and

shadowy below. One by one the stars died out as the yellow turned to a deeper glow that shot forth in long streamers, rosy fingers hovering above the snows on the mighty cone; till at last there came upon the topmost slope, six thousand feet above us, a sudden blush of pink. Swiftly it floated down the eastern face, and touched and kindled the rocks just above us. Then the sun flamed out, and in a moment the Araxes valley and all the hollows of the savage ridges we were crossing were flooded with overpowering light."

Helen McLeod, recording her life in New Guinea (*"Cannibals are Human"*, 1962) describes dawn at Port Moresby. "The eastern quadrant of the sky flushed rosily, shafts of sunlight burst through and the clouds were alight with flame. Then the tropical sun blazed forth, flooding the bay with colour and light. Wild birds wheeled in the sky and shoals of flying fish leapt in bursts of silvered brilliance from the water".

In everyday life few of the people in Jesus' day actually witnessed this wonderful phenomenon, for their sleep was broken only by the full blaze of the sun as its light swept over the sky. Hence the Scriptural association of the coming of day with the "watchers" and that somewhat cryptic message in Isa. 21. 11-12 "*Watchman, how far gone is the night*" and the watchman's reply "*The morning is at hand*". Only the watchers saw this glorious effulgence of golden light rising fan-wise in the east and moving visibly across the sky towards the west, turning the clouds in its path to pink and white and bathing the whole land in its glow. The watching priest, stationed on a pinnacle of the Temple, cried out in a loud voice that the light was come and his colleagues below immediately commenced the ritual of the morning sacrifice. Presently the full blaze of day would be shining upon the people as they awoke from sleep and betook themselves to their accustomed tasks. This emergence of light from the east, followed quickly by the sun itself, is referred to in Mal. 4. 2 "*the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings*"—the great fan of light spreading over the sky being likened to the wings of some great celestial creature. It must be remembered that Mal. 4 is a prophecy of the Second Advent and that it is only to "*you that fear my name*" that the Sun of righteousness thus arises, and not to all, thus confirming the implication of Matt. 24 that not humanity in general, but only the watching Church, perceives this first phase of the Advent. It is here that every reference to the

need for watchfulness and to His Coming as a thief in the night, silently and unobtrusively, finds full application without doing any violence to those other Scriptures which picture the later phases of the Advent as outwardly spectacular and universally known.

Before passing on to those aspects our Lord ended this description of the initial stage of His Coming with what seems, on the surface, to be a totally irrelevant remark "*For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together*" (ch. 24. 23). The expression was obviously intended as a comment upon His previous words and to give additional point to the stress He had laid upon the necessity of watchfulness and spiritual insight at the critical time. It appears that this saying was a common proverb in Israel in His day, derived from the marvellous powers of vision possessed by the eagles—more properly vultures—of the country and the rapidity with which they swept down upon their prey. Travellers and naturalists have remarked on the phenomenally keen sight of these creatures, recording instances when camels or other animals have lain down to breathe their last below a sky without sign of inhabitant, yet within a few seconds the vultures are swooping down from all directions upon their feast, almost as though they possess supernatural powers of sight. This is our Lord's meaning; it is not a public appearance in "the

desert" or a face to face personal meeting over the feasting table in the "inner chamber" which brings the true-hearted ones together in their joint realisation of His Coming, but their powers of spiritual vision. The fact of the Advent is discerned, not by the natural senses but the spiritual, not by the eyes and ears of flesh but by those of faith, faith which is soundly based upon an understanding of the essential differences between the natural and spiritual worlds, and knows that His celestial being and glory is one that "*no man hath seen nor can see*" (1 Tim. 1. 16). But although unseen by man, that glory and that world is none the less a real glory and a real world. In some manner, we know not how, the powers of the celestial realm approach and make contact with this terrestrial order as the purpose of God progresses towards the elimination of evil and the supremacy of good. It may be that what we call the beginning of the Second Advent is the initial contact which that world makes with this; the Power directing that contact, and thereby setting in motion the forces which are eventually to result in the kingdoms of this world giving place to the power of the Kingdom of God, is in Person the One who promised His disciples so long ago "*If I go away, I will come again*". So, like the dawn flaming over the mountains in the sight of His watchmen while the world is still asleep, He comes.

A Foreview of the Future

"We are to be priests and kings. There are vast spaces in the universe that may have to be evangelised or ruled or influenced for righteousness. It may be that important spheres of ministry are needing those to fill them who have learned the secret of victory over materialism on the one hand, and over the power of Satan on the other. We know that there was war in heaven before Satan and his angels were cast down to earth, and there may be another, and yet another. Therefore earth may be the school, the training ground, the testing place for the servants and soldiers of the hereafter. This thought need not be in conflict with the ideals of rest and

worship which we are wont to associate with the future life. Eternity will give opportunities for all. But, if it became Him of whom and through whom are all things to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through the suffering of temptation, it stands to reason that his comrades and soldiers must pass through the same, that they may become more than conquerors, and, having overcome, may sit with Him on His Throne, as He overcame and is set down with His Father on His throne."

(Dr. F. B. Meyer. "*The Call and Challenge of the Unseen*")

Somewhere in every vexed, feverish day get a little "silent time" for prayer. It will bring heaven down into your heart and make you strong for service.

How easy it is to start bragging about our advantages instead of counting them loss. Paul did not say how much he had given up for Christ; he spoke of his light afflictions.

THE CUP OF OUR LORD

A memorial
consideration

"The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18. 11).

The incident that drew this remark from the Lord's lips is a well-remembered one. It was at the time of His arrest in the Garden. The little party was leaving Gethsemane, and in so doing approached and met the party of soldiers that was on its way to effect the arrest. Simon Peter, having possession of a sword, and burning with zeal to defend his Master, drew it, and struck the High Priest's servant. He succeeded only in cutting off his ear, whereupon Jesus commanded him to put up his sword, forbidding him to strike further blow in His defence. *"Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* Thus did He indicate that this Cup of which He spoke was an experience which He was called upon to encounter and endure.

The Cup is figurative. Quite a few Scriptures refer to it in this way. To drink of this cup, the cup of our Lord, signifies acceptance of, and willingness to endure, certain experiences as a Christian and as one of His followers. Jesus asked the two sons of Zebedee *"Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?"* Quite confidently they answered Him *"We are able"* whereupon Jesus rejoined *"Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with"* (vs. 23) and in saying that, He was telling them, although they knew it not at the time, that they were to taste of inward affliction and desertion and bear their share of outward affliction with Him. That was a typical example of many such little words that Jesus had with His disciples as He tried to prepare their minds for the life of patient endurance that was to be theirs in future days, after He had left them to return to His Father.

It is significant that the shadow of the Cross had fallen upon Jesus as He sat with His little company around the table in that upper room. As we read the accounts of the events that led up to this time we can see something of what Jesus endured, as, for instance, His setting his face *"steadfastly"* to go to Jerusalem, knowing full well what was before Him of shame and injustice and suffering and death. There is the human touch of the sug-

gestion that His brethren and family go on before, so that He could slip into the city unnoticed. Then the public excitement of His later entry in kingly fashion, when riding upon an ass He presented Himself in formal fashion to Israel as their King. *"Hosanna to the Son of David"* they shouted *"Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!"*—that picture fades, and we have another; the Lord is washing the disciples' feet, a lesson for them and for us. Finally the betrayal, and the arrest, and the denial by Peter, all just as Jesus had foretold it. All these things became part of the Cup which our beloved Lord must needs drain to the end.

It was the concern of Jesus to clarify in the minds of His disciples, as much as possible, the things that He must suffer, and so to prepare them for the worst. They were so slow of heart and mind to receive these things in those carefree days before the event. Like Peter, they all wanted to say *"this shall not be unto thee"* and dismiss the subject. But Jesus continued to turn their minds to these things. Can we not see Him now, sitting there in the upper room with His disciples? Can we not see Him performing that symbolic act that gathered up the meaning of what He had been doing and would be doing in pouring out His soul unto death? He took a Cup, and when He had thanked God for it He gave it to them! He made the wine in that Cup a symbol, a symbol that would best symbolise what He was giving to them spiritually.

This then is our participation with Him in His experiences—His Cup! The Apostle Paul reminds us of this in 1 Cor. 10. 16 *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"* In this mystic common-sharing we partake with Him of the fruit of the Vine. Into that Cup which He held had gone all the experiences of the mystic Vine in the past—for He is that Vine of which we are the branches (Jno. 15. 5) and we can very truthfully say that the soul or life of the Vine was there in the Cup. The essence of its fruitage was there in the Cup. Many things had worked together to produce that fruitage. There was, first of all, the kind of soil in which the Vine grew. Then there was the attention of the husbandman and the oft-times pruning, that it bring forth good fruit. The storms which beat over it, the sun-

shine and the rain, all had their part to play. Finally there was the crushing of the grapes in the winepress that the rich juice might be extracted and afterward become wine. All these things had gone to determine and enrich the quality of the wine which Jesus now was giving to His disciples. Everything of the past in the growth and development of the Vine or the experiences that befel the Vine had gone into the Cup. Here is a lesson for us! Since we covenanted to be footstep followers of Jesus and branches of the true Vine, all the experiences we encounter, whether on the hilltop or in the valley, whether bitter or sweet, are necessary to the triumphant completion of our calling. All are planned to work out some necessary fruitage of character in our hearts and lives.

At that Memorial Supper Jesus was putting to their lips an invisible cup of which the material cup was but a symbol. Into that invisible cup all of the past experiences of His life had been gathered. All that Jesus had said, and suffered, and prayed, and done, and was, went into the chalice which He was now putting to their lips. Thus they drank of His life. Thus they accepted Him and thus they identified themselves with Him in that acceptance. No wonder Jesus said, afterwards, as they were walking together to Gethsemane "*I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*" (Jno. 15. 1). So He came to the great climax "*herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit*".

In the silent years at Nazareth, when Jesus lived in obscurity, maybe working and helping at the carpenter's bench. His hands rough with toil, we can visualise Him dealing with the commonplace things of every day. He must have known the hardship of poverty, the dull and narrow life of a country village, and perhaps the responsibility of supporting a family of younger brothers and sisters after the death of their father. But with the vision of the future all the time in His heart, unuttered though it was, he conquered the commonplace things and prepared Himself a way to take the Cup. Many of us, perhaps most of us, have to live out our lives in the same dull obscurity, battling with the business of making a living, toiling in some factory, field, office or home, dealing with the sordid and scarring things. Yet all the time there is a vision of something better and nobler held in the heart unexpressed, the vision of our glorified

Lord, and our being together with Him. We are captivated with His word. He has put the chalice to our lips and we too drink of His victory over the commonplace.

Now Jesus lays aside the commonplace things of life and goes out to proclaim his message, and to enter more deeply into the soul of the people. It was in this mood that He came "from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him" (Matt. 3. 13). He had been baptised into the world's toil; He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4. 15). Now He would be baptised into the world's SIN. Isaiah foresaw this, saying "*Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*". (Isa. 53. 4, 5, 6). John is calling a nation to repentance, his throbbing words smiting the hearts of the people, and they come to his stream, the Jordan, for the baptism of repentance. Now Jesus enters that stream. He, with conscience unstained and character untarnished! He, who needed no repentance! He, the holy, the harmless, the undefiled! He, the sinless, enters that line, that queue, waiting for baptism. She may be a harlot standing ahead of Him and he a publican who is following behind Him; the publicans and the harlots believed John. Jesus became one of them and was baptised into John's baptism of repentance! The identification is complete! He has taken the sinner's place! "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" (2 Cor. 5. 21). All this was a portion in His Cup; especially so is it for us and on our behalf.

There came a reaction to this identification of Himself with the sinner. Jesus left men and the habitations of men and continued the struggle in the wilderness. Was *this* the way to complete, absolute, identification? Yes! This was the poured-out Cup that the Father handed to His Son. "*Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" (Luke 4. 1). For forty days He faced the issues, and then came hunger, and with it came the first insidious suggestion.

"*You need not go back! You are the Son of God; that is enough. Stay out here, feed yourself by miracle, and live as the miraculous Son of God.*" It was the voice of the Tempter!

The temptation to live apart, to feed oneself on spiritual miracle, is one of the most real temptations of the spiritual life. To hear and receive the approbation of man on account of the things you discover from God

is seductive indeed. Jesus brushed the suggestion aside. He would not be content with being the Son of God; He would also be the Son of Man. He would live, not merely by the food the earth brings forth, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Father, and that meant, for Him, identification with men and the redemption of men at great cost to Himself. That was the Cup! "*The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many.*" (Matt. 20. 28).

The Tempter suggested another means of proving His authority. If you must go back, why stand down with the people? Why not rise to a pinnacle? Your way is too costly! Why not worship me *and take possession now?*" Says Jesus, "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve." He put this suggestion aside also; He knew that the way He had chosen would drive Him into a position that would finally mean crucifixion. He had been baptised between two sinners. This choice meant that He would now be crucified between two thieves. But He held to His resolve to be the Son of Man and bear all that men bore, and more.

From this Jesus went straight to the synagogue at Nazareth and announced His programme "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*" (Luke 4. 16. 21). This is the Son of Man speaking. This announcement of His programme brought surprise and delighted wonder from His fellow-townsmen until He went on and revealed to them how wide His message really was. It was as wide as the human race—God cares as much for the Gentiles as for the Jew. There were many lepers and widows in Israel but even so the prophets went to others, Gentiles, a widow of Sarepta, and Naaman the Syrian. That changed matters! They arose in anger and led Him to the brow of the hill with the intention of casting Him headlong over the precipice; but He, passing through the midst of them, and in the majesty of His bearing holding them powerless, went His way.

All this went into the Cup. When we, too, are called and commissioned, and the cold prejudices close in and endeavour to quench our spirits, let us drink of His calm and courage, and so, passing through the midst of them, go our way. Let us fulfil the heavenly vision no matter at what cost to ourselves. Like the Apostle, let us "press toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3. 14). "*This one thing*

I do"—that is the keynote.

But after this there came a season during which Jesus was immensely popular. The multitudes hung upon His words, words that fell like dew upon their thirsty souls. The healed ones went everywhere telling of His power and compassion. And the people found in Him a new authority, the authority of REALITY. When they saw Him breaking bread to the crowds in the wilderness they came and tried to make Him a king by force. That was how it was that Jesus, perceiving their intention, withdrew Himself to the mountains again. He would hold to the high purpose of the Father's Will for Him even though it meant crucifixion. The EASY way to power was resolutely put away; He would take the long road to His Calvary. All the decisiveness and completion of consecration went into the Cup when He rejected a throne for a Cross.

When these moments come to us, brethren, when we are offered the easy and dazzling way and we willingly choose the hard way, then we too drink of the chalice into which this trial has gone. Surely it is then that we find we are ready for further trials, with Jesus our Lord. Then it is that we can say with the Apostle, "I (am) determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2. 2).

There was an occasion when Jesus, beholding the city lying in all its splendour and magnificence before Him, paused on the side of the mount and wept over the city. Think of the courage of that hour when He bade them "take these things from my Father's house" and drove them out. All this, too, went into the Cup. As with Jesus, so his followers need a stout heart combined with gentility of disposition. "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" One writer has said "*I love the Christ of the searching eye, the blessing hand, the tender, terrible prophet pronouncing woes to the city and then weeping over it. I love the Christ that allowed the returning storm to beat upon Himself on the Cross so as to complete our redemption*". Let us drink of these qualities and be strong, for we shall need to be bold as a lion albeit as meek as a lamb.

Seated with His disciples in the upper room, and knowing that the Father had given all things unto His hands, knowing that He Himself had come from God and was returning to God, He rose from supper, laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel began to wash the disciples' feet. He was so conscious

of greatness that He dared to be humble. Into His Cup had gone majesty of soul linked with lowly service. You, my dear brethren, who share the dignity and honour of Sonship with Him, you have need to learn what constitutes true kingliness. It is "the power to bend and serve". As James says (4. 10) "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up".

Gethsemane! All the pain, the agony, the spiritual loneliness of that hour go into the Cup. Was He afraid to die? Hardly; it was with that intention that He came, to lay down His life. Is it surprising that the Redeemer, who in His determination to go on to the end despite what wicked men might do, seemed to be looking in on men at their worst, should ask "if it be possible, let *this* cup pass from me". This is the hardest thing that any reformer or bringer of new ideas has to face; that although His idea is light to those who can receive it, it is darkness to others who are willingly blind. But there is no other way. This is the Cup that is poured. The tragedy and triumph is not in the agony but in the out-come. Calm and collected He stands and says "Arise, let us be going . . . he is at hand that betrayeth me". ALL THAT WENT INTO THE CUP! Those of us who meet our lesser Gethsemanes drink from that chalice into which the richness of that hour had gone, and we too can say "Arise, my soul, let us be going to meet our Cross". Having drunk, we meet it with calm.

Standing before Pilate, arrayed in mock royalty, He afforded the Roman soldiers a supreme opportunity to show their contempt for the Jews. Putting a crown of thorns upon His head, a stick in His hand for a sceptre, they hailed Him as King of the Jews and then spat in His face. They had often wanted to do that to the Jews, now they would do it to their King. The racial contempt that was directed toward the men who were crying for His blood He bore on their behalf. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. All of that went into His Cup.

He heard His words twisted and distorted to other meanings. "*I will destroy this temple that is made with hands and in three days I will build another made without hands.*" He was being crucified on mis-quotation and He was not nervously anxious to explain. He let it go. He could wait. He knew that every lie would break itself on the truth, and He answered not a word. The Governor marvelled! And this went into the Cup. "*Let us consider*

him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb. 12. 3). Those of us who have had our words mis-quoted, our best actions misunderstood, our best motives misinterpreted, and have suffered, if we drink of this Cup into which patient triumph has gone, and share with Jesus this poise of heart and resignation to our Father's Will, we shall say "Am I not to drink of the Cup my Father has handed me, with thankfulness?" He is nailed to the Cross! His good name is taken away; He is a malefactor. His disciples have fled; He is alone in His agony, beaten back, so to speak, into the dark until it seems that God too has gone—for from His lips comes the cry "*My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken me?*" Everything seems gone.

But not quite!

Two words remain; "MY GOD". They could not snatch *them* from His lips and heart. In quiet confidence He says "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.*" Nothing more bitter could have gone into the Cup!

A tomb held Jesus—but not for long. The most glorious fact of human history was yet to go into the Cup. Out of that tomb He arose, laid aside His grave clothes, and came forth triumphant and resplendent. He is risen!

My dear brethren: IF into that Cup has gone everything that life can possibly meet:-

Its commonplaces; its obscurity; its toil; its temptations; its blind prejudices; its bid for compromise; its lonely determination; its Gethsemanes; its hours before unjust judgment seats; its Cross-forsakenness; its death:

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there has also gone into it the most complete triumph that can possibly come. *He arose!* Nothing else now matters. GOD'S LAST WORD IS RESURRECTION.

Let life do its best, or worse, this saving truth will be at the end of each one sharing with Jesus in this Cup. The life of Jesus and the Cross of Jesus raises every question about life that can be raised and raises them in the most acute form. The word "WHY" upon the lips of Jesus as He hung upon the Cross epitomised all the questions that ever trembled upon the lips of perplexed humanity. WHY does God permit evil? WHY? If there is a God, WHY this, and WHY that? The Resurrection answers them all. God's last word is *resurrection*. That is the finale of His work for mankind and it is in the Cup. Jesus prayed "Glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world WAS". When He had taken the Cup He thanked God for it.

He took it all as from the Father's hand. He thanked Him for it, and lo! everything was transformed. We all have to bear our cross; let us do it thankfully; for only those who have learned triumphantly to thank God for

it all, can turn life from a senseless suffering into a sacrament. Let us each and all decide for ourselves "*the Cup which my Father hath given me, SHALL I NOT DRINK IT?*"

THE OVERTHROW OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

A historical study in two parts. Part I.

Second only to the story of the Deluge is that which recounts the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain as an example of Divine judgment upon a community which it were better should die rather than live in increasing depravity. The spectacular nature of this event, the obliteration of an entire countryside with all its inhabitants in a holocaust of fire, imprinted itself so deeply upon the minds of men that its physical nature became a symbol of judgment upon evil to succeeding generations for hundreds of years. It is not always realised that the mediæval doctrine of Hell fire owes its origin to Biblical metaphors which themselves are based upon the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Two thousand years after the catastrophe, John the Revelator framed some of the most picturesque symbols of the Book of Revelation in its light—both the smoke of great Babylon's burning, going up for ever and ever, and the Lake of Fire into which is cast all that is evil for utter destruction, are derived from this story in Genesis. It happened in the dawn of written history, and the narrative which records it is archaic, but the account contains so much of interest and importance for the study of Christian doctrine, that it is well worthy of close examination.

The story goes back to the nineteenth century B.C. when the patriarch Abraham and his nephew Lot, heads of nomadic groups embracing a large number of servants, shepherds and retainers, with extensive flocks and herds, were established in Canaan between Bethel and Ai, about ten miles north of Jerusalem—which at that time was a small village and citadel from which its priest-king Melchisedek ruled the surrounding peoples. The land was inhabited quite sparsely by Amorites and Hittites but it was becoming apparent that the combined flocks of the two patriarchs demanded more than the immediate district could provide and that one of them must move. Abraham gave Lot first choice of territory. The latter "*lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that*

it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) as the garden of the Lord, . . . Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east . . . and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. 13. 10-12). So far Lot seemed to have used his opportunity well; he had chosen a land so fertile and productive that it could fitly be compared by the narrator with the "garden of the Lord", i.e., the Garden of Eden. But the story goes on to say that there was something very un-Edenic involved in the choice. "*The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*" (ch. 13. 13).

More complete details of this beautiful land appear in Gen. ch. 14. It is there called the Vale of Siddim (from the Hebrew "*Sid*"—lime or chalk, abundant in the area) and there were five cities, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar. The term "city" can give a wrong impression; the Hebrew term denotes a walled or enclosed collection of buildings, or even a single building, as against an open hamlet or village. Populations in Canaan were very thin at this period and, despite the popular idea of vast centres of civilisation suffering a cataclysmic overthrow it is certain that the Cities of the Plain were only quite small communities of probably not more than a few hundred inhabitants each. According to the tenth chapter of Genesis, the famous "Table of Nations", they were Canaanites, descendants of Ham the youngest son of Noah. The same chapter gives the name of another city in the confederacy, Lasha, (ch. 10. 19) which incidentally helps to locate the geographical position of the lost cities, for this name survives in that of the peninsula called Ha-lashan—the Mountain of Lasha—at the southern end of the Dead Sea. There has for generations past been some controversy as to whether the site of the catastrophe is to be looked for at the north or the south end of the Sea. Protagonists for the north point out that if Lot left the vicinity of Bethel, travel-

ling east, it would be the north end, near the mouth of the River Jordan, to which he would come. Abraham saw the conflagration from his then home at Hebron some thirty-five miles away, and only the north end is visible from Hebron. Upon the other hand the topographical details in the story and the geologic evidences on site point to the south end. Needless to say, no traces of the five cities now remain. Modern research has established on geologic grounds that the site must definitely have been at the south end, where the modern Israeli town of Sodom now stands.

Here, in this lovely valley, some fifteen miles wide by twenty-five long, Lot lived for twenty years. On the west rose the highlands of Canaan to a height of four thousand feet and on the east a five thousand foot mountain, affording protection from cold winds but ensuring plentiful rainfall. To this day an abundance of streams flow from those same heights, now bare and rugged but then clothed with trees, into the Dead Sea. But it was not then so much a salt sea as it has become since; much of its present mineral content comes from the seven-mile cliff of solid salt called Mount Sodom at its south-western corner, and the sea did not reach that cliff until later times. So Lot found life easy and exceedingly pleasant in the valley, where the sun shone warmly all day and the nights were scented with the perfumes of tropical flowers and fruits. The New Testament tells us that he was a righteous man and sadly vexed by the ungodliness of the community in which he lived; his vexation was not sufficiently harrowing to induce him to leave that society and find another home where life might be harder but the atmosphere decidedly purer. He evidently did preach the righteousness of God to his lawless fellow-citizens, for we have their own word for that in Gen. 19. 9, so that we may take at their full value the words of St. Peter when he says of him in 2 Pet. 2. 8 "*that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds*".

The only incident of that twenty years which has been recorded is the invasion of Canaan by four kings from the Euphrates valley, headed by Chedorlaomer (native name Khudur-Lagamar) of Elam. Genesis 14 tells the story. The invaders moved down the eastern side of the Dead Sea, subduing the tribes in their path, struck westward in the direction of Egypt, returned to the western side of the Sea, defeated the Amorites and found them-

selves confronted by the combined forces of the five Cities of the Plain, intent on defending their own possessions. The defenders were no match for the invaders and the upshot was that the cities were pillaged, and many captives, among whom was Lot and his household, forced to accompany the victors homeward. Abraham, thirty-five miles away at Hebron, received news of the happening and gave pursuit with a band of armed followers. Overtaking the Elamite forces near Damascus he defeated them and recovered the captives and the spoil. Even this experience did not deter Lot from continuing to dwell in the pleasant valley; he went back to Sodom and dwelt there until its destruction.

So it came about that Abraham, sitting in his tent door at noontime one day, looked up and saw three strangers standing before him. With the traditional courtesy and hospitality of the east he immediately rose and begged them to refresh themselves and rest in the shade, while he had a meal prepared of which they might partake before proceeding upon their way. The simple account in Genesis 18 declares that it was God who thus appeared to Abraham at this time. In theological language this is called a theophany—a manifestation of the Deity in terrestrial form to man. The three men looked like ordinary men and they were dressed like ordinary men of the country and period, but they were in fact visitors from the celestial world. Abraham did not realise the fact at first; he did before they parted.

The meal ended, the men "*rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way*". (18. 16). It is unlikely that there was any road or even track between Hebron and the Vale of Siddim; the Amorites and Hittites of the Hebron highlands who were Abraham's neighbours were racially distinct from the Canaanites of the Vale and the two communities could have had nothing in common. The one was composed of hardy, vigorous nomadic stock raisers labouring for their bread and breathing the pure keen air of the mountains, the other of luxury-loving, indolent town dwellers living on the bounty of their soil and basking in the enervating hot humidity of the valley and seashore.

From Hebron a traveller would have to make a precipitous descent of four thousand feet over rocky and mountainous country, and from the purely human standpoint the men had a gruelling time before them. Abraham probably took them to a point which is

about four miles east of the present town of Hebron where they could commence the descent of a rocky gorge, the bed of a mountain stream which has its commencement there, eventually to *dehouch on the shore of the Dead Sea*. From there they would have to make their way around the shores of the Sea and through the Vale of Siddim.

Only two of the men set out; the third remained with Abraham. The patriarch quite likely watched their progress until a bend in the winding gorge hid them from sight, turning then to face his companion. In that moment he knew Him to be the Lord. It may have been something in His bearing; it may be in the words He spoke; it may have been Abraham's own intuition, sharpened by many years' communion with God. Whatever the reason, the patriarch knew that he was standing in the Divine presence.

The story is narrated as though God Himself was standing there in person talking to Abraham. The speaker is consistently denominated "the Lord", the Incommunicable Name (transliterated badly into English as "Jehovah", but printed "LORD" in the A.V.) being employed. That does not mean that the Deity abdicated His Throne in Heaven, or as some may prefer to put it, gave up His eternity and omnipresence to be contained within the physical frame of a human being located on a mountainside in ancient Canaan. Divine revelation tells us that the only manner in which God, unseeable and imperceptible by human sense, can be manifested to man is through the Son, Who in His own Person reveals the Deity. For that reason it is most reasonably considered that the "Word", who was "made flesh" at the time of the First Advent, and moved among men as Jesus of Nazareth, had, in this earlier day also, taken upon Himself terrestrial habiliments that he might be seen by, and eat and talk with, Abraham. He thus could manifest the Deity to Abraham just as surely as to the disciple Philip at a later time when He told him "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14. 9).

The ensuing conversation (ch. 18. 17-33) is one of the most remarkable passages in the Bible. It manifests what almost appears to be Divine reluctance to execute judgment on the wicked cities if by any means some extenuating circumstances could be found. "*Because their sin is very grievous*" said the Lord "*I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it; and if not, I will know*". In a very human kind of way it is as though He wished to ascertain

whether the depravity of these people was really as bad as had been reported. Abraham was under no illusion; he knew that if the Lord really did go down to see for Himself how matters stood there could only be one decision—judgment, swift and comprehensive. And he was fearful for the fate of any like Lot who might still be at heart loyal to God. So he made his plea, "*Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked. Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city*". He pleaded for the sake of his hypothetical fifty and closed his plea with a word that has become immortal; "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*"

The Lord met Abraham's concern for those few righteous with magnanimity far greater. "*If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes*." The patriarch's plea was accepted and granted in full and abundant measure. Grati-fied though the old man must have been, he was conscious of a nagging feeling that there probably were not fifty righteous in the city. "*Peradventure*" he hazarded "*there shall lack five of the fifty righteous; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?*" The Lord was no less considerate. "*If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it*." Abraham was still doubtful. He came down successively to forty, to thirty, to twenty, and each time the Lord followed him down. "*Oh let not the Lord be angry*" he pleaded "*and I will speak yet but this once. Peradventure ten shall be found there*". Who amongst us that knows aught of the love and compassion of God for His erring children can doubt that the eyes of the majestic Figure facing Abraham were dark with sadness and the voice heavy with infinite regret; "*I will not destroy it for ten's sake*".

The patriarch was silent; he felt within himself that there were probably not even ten, and that the Lord knew it too, and that Sodom was doomed. "*And the Lord went his way . . . and Abraham returned unto his place*."

The episode was not enacted without purpose. We have in this short account of seventeen verses a perfect exposition of the lengths to which God will go before passing final judgment upon sin. If the presence of a few righteous could be shown to mitigate something of the corruption of the city then God would allow full credit for that and give the inhabitants another chance. It was only when all hope and possibility of reform was extinct that He left them, sorrowfully we may be sure, to their fate. "*Behold*" He said to guilty

Jerusalem through the prophet Ezekiel at a much later date *"this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her . . . and they committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good"* (Ezek. 16: 49, 50). The remarkable thing is that, in the same chapter, God indicates that their judgment is not irrevocable; a day will come when the Sodomites and their fellows are to *"return to their former estate"*—*gadmah*—a term which means the original or pristine state of the subject. The people of the Plain, destroyed in their degradation and sin, are at some time in history to be restored to the pristine condition which was theirs before the indulgence and corruption of their life of ease had done its fell work,—for even the Sodomites were better men, at one time in their lives' experience, than at the time of their destruction. One has to remember that the worship of God—*El Elyon*, the Most High God—was prevalent in Canaan at this time. And if words mean anything at all this Divine declaration through the prophet Ezekiel can only imply that God in His Wisdom sees the possibility of repentance and reform in these and therefore in the apparently most degraded of human beings, and will not let go His hold until every avenue of persuasion and conversion has been explored and found unavailing. So the judgment, although penal, will eventually also be remedial. Hope, at

least, remains. The authority of Jesus Himself stands for the fact that the men of Sodom will come in contact with His message in the Messianic Day of Judgment, and will find that Day "more tolerable" than those of later days who had greater opportunity—for Jesus said plainly that had His mission been directed to Sodom instead of to the Jews of the First Century then Sodom *"would have remained until this day"* (Matt. 11: 23). That implies they would have repented, had Jesus Himself gone to them. And if they repented, they would have been saved. And if there is no provision in the purposes of God whereby the message which would admittedly have saved them, had they been given it, shall at the last be presented to them before the final decision, there is no escape from the terrible question "Why were the words of Christ not preached in their streets and why were His wondrous works not done in their sight?"

The two men disappeared on their way to Sodom; the Lord went His way, and Abraham returned to his tent. The world slept, and as it slept the subterranean rocks far beneath the surface of the lovely valley strained and groaned against the increasing tension which within a few hours more was to bring about the fearful cataclysm that for the moment then subsisting was to become God's agent of judgment.

(To be continued)

NOTE ON JOHN 17

The authenticity of John 17 as originating from our Lord has often been challenged on the grounds that in verses 2 and 3 the third person accusative and the appellation "Jesus Christ" are used.

But if we place verses 2 and 3 in parentheses, as being a brief explanation by the writer of (1) the Sonship of Christ against Gnostic tendencies and (2) eternal life, then verse 4 follows naturally after verse 1 with its theme of glorification. The integrity of the prayer, therefore, remains unimpaired by the apparent difficulties of verses 2 and 3.

(Note:— Jesus has the power (1) over all flesh, yet also (2) to give eternal life. Material and spiritual faculties are thus combined).

R. J. Owen

NOTE ON ISA 18.4

The ancient name of a Hebrew calendar month, *Tzah*, hitherto unknown, has recently been deciphered on a clay jar found at Arad in Israel. The present names of Hebrew months were derived from Babylon at the time of the Captivity and up to the time of this discovery only three of the original names were known. The interest attaching to this discovery is the light it sheds on Isa. 18: 4 where the prophet is made, in the A.V., to refer to a "clear heat" after rain where "clear" has been rendered from "*tsach*". No one has ever suggested exactly what was meant by a "clear heat". Now that the meaning of "*tsach*" is known the rendering is obviously "the heat of (the month) *tzah* after rain", from which it is deduced that *tzah* was one of the summer months following the spring rains.

When the heart is in harmony with all that is known of God's will, then the combination of circumstances by which all ways but one are closed may be taken as indicating divine leading.

Each of us is a frail boat cast on a vast sea wherein is all manner of rocks and dangers, shoals and difficulties, yet the Pilot is always available at any hour of the day or night.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 2. I John 1.8-10 & 2.1

Now John verges on important doctrine. He begins to talk about sin. Sin is a dread reality in the world and in our lives. Men to-day decry the idea and even Christians are oft-times disposed to treat sin as something inherent in our nature which we will one day outgrow. Human development will leave sin and the effects of sin behind, say some. That is a dangerous error. There is no substitute for the plain Bible teaching that man was originally created perfect and sinless, that sin came in from outside and was willingly received, and that in consequence all men are born under the reign and power of sin, with the effects registered in their minds and bodies. Therefore from their very birth all men are sinners. And just as sin came in from outside, so only from outside may come deliverance from sin. The way back to the perfection and sinlessness of the first man can only be by the power and help of One Who Himself was never sinful, who knew no sin, but who is "able to the uttermost to save those who come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7. 25). But not unless we recognise the fact that we *are* sinners and that all the world stands guilty before God can we honestly and sincerely accept the only way of freedom from sin that is possible, and so attain, at length, to the perfect state which is the Divine desire for us.

Some there were in John's day among the ranks of the Christians who began to argue that those who had been justified by faith in Christ and freed from Adamic condemnation were on that account without sin and that the indwelling Holy Spirit constituted their bodies sinless vessels—perfect, holy unto God. Therefore, argued they, there could be no such thing as sin in the life of the child of God. A specious argument, having a semblance of truth, but truth misapplied. And how easy, after that, to go on and assert that the body's imperfections, the slips and stumblings and faults and the things that in other men would be counted as sin, were on this account altogether ignored by God and therefore whatever was done in the body was of no consequence. So, in a very short time, it fell out that some among the Christians became guilty of the grossest acts of sin under the impression that since it was only the body that thus transgressed it was not the believer who sinned at all.

But:—

*"If we say that we have no sin
We deceive ourselves*

And the truth is not in us. (Vs. 8).

*If we say that we have not sinned
We make Him a liar*

And His word is not in us. (Vs. 10).

If we confess our sins

*He is faithful and just to forgive us our
sins*

And to cleanse us from all

*unrighteousness.
(Vs. 9).*

John cuts through all the theological argument and gets right down to the root of the matter. Even although we have been justified; even although we are no longer under condemnation; even although we have been accepted as sons of God and because of that acceptance God esteems us according to the intentions of our will and not according to the deeds of the body, it remains true that we are still in the flesh, still subject to the weaknesses and imperfections of human nature, and still liable to stumble and fall. True, we have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and King, and endeavour to put His principles into practice in our daily lives; but there is always the possibility that in consequence of some one influence or another that bears upon us in the ordinary conduct of life, we may become temporarily blinded to, or diverted from, our course, and be guilty of some action that, because it is out of accord with what we normally realise is right, is sin. There are plenty of misdemeanours of which we are liable daily to be guilty which in the Lord's pure sight are classed as sin, because they constitute violations of Divine law. That is why we have a throne of grace to which we may come daily in time of need. That is why we have an Advocate before the Father, a helper, one to stand by our side, as John goes on to tell us in a little while. A sinless man needs none of these things. A sinless man needs not to come before the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, or to claim access to the Holiest of All by faith in Him. He can come as of right, for a sinless man is the completeness of God's purpose with any individual, and when he is sinless and has demonstrated that he will always remain so, he takes his place in God's permanent creation, on his own

merit, and has the fullest of fellowship with his Creator and Father. Paul was in no doubt about this matter. He found a law in his members (Rom. 7. 21) that, when the will to do good was in him, evil was still present with him, so that the good he would do, he often failed to do, and the evil he would not do, that he did. Paul knew full well that despite his wholehearted allegiance to his Lord and the inestimable gift of justification which was his, the processes of sin were still at work in his body and that until the day of his death he must carry that burden. "*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" he cries, and gives the answer to his own question—"*God, through Christ Jesus our Lord*". And in the comfort of the assurance of that sure and certain deliverance at the end of his earthly course he reconciles himself to the knowledge that in the meantime "*with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin*" (Rom. 7. 25).

It is in this sober appraisal of our true position as men and women of this world whose hearts the Lord has touched that we find our true strength. We do not delude ourselves with the false security of a fictitious perfection and righteousness which we do not possess, neither do we suffer ourselves to be cast down at the thought of a weight of sin and imperfection of which we cannot be relieved. Our sins exist truly enough, but God has cast them all behind his back (Isa. 38. 17). Our bodies are imperfect and frail, without strength, mentally and physically, but God has promised to clothe the mind with a new body, which is neither imperfect or frail, in due time. Our character development, our growth into the likeness of Christ, the result of all our strivings and efforts and prayer in our walk before God, will all be carried over into the spiritual world and impressed upon the new spiritual body, but the weakness of the old human body will be left behind. Then we shall indeed be able to rejoice in the fact that we are without sin; but as for the present, if we claim to be without sin, we both deceive ourselves and make God a liar. On the other hand, if we recognise the true position, and remain contrite and repentant before God for every respect in which we fall short of His ideal for us, for the little failings as well as the big faults, then He is indeed faithful and just to forgive us those things and to cleanse us from all the unrighteousness which must inevitably cling to us if we fail thus to walk in holiness before Him. The Word that is life and light to us can only re-

main so if we prepare the way and maintain the way by repentance and confession. That is the privilege and responsibility of the disciple; the heart thus open to the power of the Holy Spirit becomes a receptacle of Divine life and a medium for the shining of Divine light.

"*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (ch. 2. vs. 1).

For the first time in his epistles John uses a personal mode of address. "Little children"; it is a tender and appealing word, one that must have been specially close to the heart of the beloved disciple, for he adopts it more than any other. He calls his readers "young men" and "fathers" once each, he calls them "brethren" twice, he calls them "beloved" four times, but this term "little children" is used no less than nine times. No matter how far advanced in the worldly tale of years, no matter how mature and advanced in the Truth, to him they were all "little children". He had known them from their early days in the faith, had ministered to them, taught them and watched over them; many of them he had watched grow up from childhood into youth and from youth into middle age. Dark hair turned to grey and fair hair to snowy white, the fresh bloom of maidenhood and early manhood became faded and the smooth skins wrinkled and old, but still they were to him what they had been at the beginning—little children—and he loved them. So now, when the light was beginning to fade out in his own sky and the end seemed very near, he summoned his remaining strength to set down on paper the exhortation he had given so persistently in past years "these things I write unto you that ye sin not".

Perhaps he felt as Paul had done thirty or forty years earlier. "As my beloved sons," Paul had written, "I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1 Cor. 4. 14). There were so many who would gladly assume the duty and privilege of instructors and teachers, discoursing, expounding, lecturing to the flock upon the various features of the Divine Plan and holding their hearers' interest by the eloquence or force of their utterances. There was apparently no lack of that kind of ministry in Paul's day even as there is no lack of it to-day. What was more sorely needed for these immature babes in Christ—and for all the community of

believers whether babes or mature—was the loving care of a father in the faith, one who could discern with unerring eye the varying needs of each member of the family and see that the need was met. That was John's preoccupation too. He had stood by on one memorable occasion and heard the Lord give his fellow-disciple Peter a commission; "feed my lambs": but he had never interpreted that injunction as being obligatory upon Peter alone, and now, sixty years after the words had been spoken, and all his companions in the joys and sorrows of those early days were lying in the grave, he was still continuing in the spirit of those words: "My little children".

"*That ye sin not*"! It seems a strange injunction to lay upon a community of Christians. Evidently there was the possibility of their sinning; otherwise the words would have no meaning. It is clear that John was fully conscious of the likelihood of some of them being so overtaken, if he uttered no warning. The whole of this second chapter is written under the burden of a great urgency; there is an intense awareness of the necessity of a plain statement of the position, and an impassioned appeal for the viewing of the matter from John's own standpoint and to hear his advice. The closing words of the chapter breathe his confidence that those to whom he writes will profit by his words and not fail him, but in the meantime he spares no pains to make plain to these his "little children" the ever-present menace of sin and the many unsuspected forms in which it makes its insidious approach to the believer.

John could not but have felt something like Ezekiel of old. "*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel—if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned*" (Ezek. 3. 17-21). It was the mission and the responsibility of John to watch for the lives and the souls of these his "little children", as "one that must give account" (Heb. 13. 17) and he was by no means unmindful of his responsibility. Just as Ezekiel of old spoke the message that was in him without fear or favour, crying the word of the Lord to all who would listen, so did John seek with entreaties and persuasion to exhort his flock to that constant vigilance which alone would ensure their freedom from the delusions and the subtleties of the Adversary.

Here is a theme that it is well should be laid on the hearts and minds of everyone who is privileged to be a servant of the believers in

spiritual ministry. How often do the Scriptures exhort all such to feed the flock of God with all that is pure and holy! How often, too, is this fact, of the ever-present danger of falling away from the faith, stressed as being an important aspect of such acceptable ministry. The work of the Christian elder to-day must needs include the uncompromising warnings so characteristic of the Hebrew prophets of old, for the same sins are with us in our world and human nature is still the same and ever prone to fail. Is that why Paul, writing to his son-in-the-faith Titus, defined in unusually clear and definite terms just what are the duties of an elder in this connection? "*These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke, with all authority. Let no man despise thee,*" he said, and went on to list out those things in detail. They are:

Denying ungodly and worldly lusts,

We should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world,

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity,

And purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 3. 15).

A brief epitome of the Divine Plan as it affects the Church; an abstract of all that the Apostles have said in all their epistles to guide that Church in its progress through this world and to the end of its course. In all of this, even although sin is not so much as mentioned, the thought of the constant conflict against the evil forces that would rob the Christian of his inheritance is implied, and the implication heavily underlined.

But suppose, despite all the fatherly care and all the instruction and all the warning, someone *does* sin! Whether the "sin" that the Apostle has in mind is one of deliberate, flagrant defiance of God, one of outrageous and blatant immorality, or, to go to the other end of the scale, some petty failure to live up to the standard of Christianity or a temporary indulgence in some weakness of the flesh—and John does not define what he means by sin—suppose one does give way before the machinations of the Evil One, or perhaps, is "drawn away of his own desires, and enticed" (Jas. 1. 14)? The possibility of disregarding the Apostle's advice and falling into the snares from which he would save his readers is clearly implied in these verses; but if so, is the case then hopeless? Does the faithful father in God wash his hands of the erring

one and does God reject him for ever? This is a question of doctrine and the answer is important!

It is because the answer is so important that the Apostle is so definite in his ruling. "If any man sin," he says, "we have an advocate with the Father . . ."

For the moment we will go no further than that statement. What merit or potency is there in this office of advocate with the Father that it should be invoked here in the case of the disciple who has sinned? Remember at this point that at our consecration the Adamic condemnation was removed. There is no question of the previous sinful condition being imputed to the repentant believer. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after

the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8. 1). No advocacy with the Father is needed for those things, for they have already been done away in Christ. This Advocate stands ready for the aid of the believer who, despite his consecration to God and his acceptance into the High Calling and his possession of the indwelling Holy Spirit, has nevertheless come short of the standard, has sinned. John tells us in chapter 1 that not one of us can claim to be free from that handicap and that if we do so claim we deceive ourselves. Not one of us can say we are without sin. For all of us, therefore, the Advocate must stand ready, for every time of need, throughout the span of our life in the flesh.

(To be continued)

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

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

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

What then must have been the consternation in the mind of one pious son of Israel when his own very brother—his own mother's kindred son—came to him exultingly and most persuadingly said "We have found Him"—"We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets, did write. Jesus of Nazareth . . ." (John 1. 4-5). Can we won-

der at the humorously doubtful nature of the rejoinder? Nazareth—a mere village place, far out of the beaten track; a mere cipher in the history of Israel! "Jesus of Nazareth! can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Unabashed at his brother's seeming levity, Philip quietly said "Come and see". Suiting the action to the word Philip quietly led his brother along, but not before Nathaniel had enquiringly stepped aside beneath the shelter of a near-by tree. Fortified by this resourceful experience, Nathaniel went along to see for himself this animating cause of his brother's newly-found enthusiasm. Forestalling all introductory greetings Jesus said, even while Nathaniel still approached, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" An Israelite, true to the name, neither caught nor catching other men with guile! What a commendation for a careful man! "Whence knowest Thou me" asked Nathaniel surprisedly. "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" was the ready reply. That was enough for that pious soul.

Here he was face to face with One who could read the motives of the heart, through an external act. Unknown to himself those searching eyes had seen him sheltering in his quiet retreat, and understood why he had gone aside. Willing to be convinced, yet not ready to be duped and led astray, this true son of Israel undoubtedly had lifted up his heart to heaven for guidance and safe keeping in this crisis hour. If, as Philip said, the Christ

had truly come, even though unostentatiously, he wanted with all his heart to welcome Him; yet, if his brother had been deceived, he wished to escape the entangling net himself and break the deception also that held his brother in its thrall.

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

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

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

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

*But what to those who find? ah this
Nor tongue nor pen can show,
The Love of Jesus, what it is
None but His loved ones know.*

Perhaps it is true to say that what I want Him to be to me will depend in the main on what I want to be to Him. Am I satisfied to know Him as my distant Friend—my occasional Friend, to whom I turn my heart just once in a while—just now and then; or do I want Him for my near, my most intimate and desirable Friend, to whom I turn myself many, many times a day, from whom I can scarcely bear to be parted even by the urgent

task of the daily round? Even here there is a tie that binds, and if that tie is one of true affinity, then as the magnet draws the steel so shall He and I be closely drawn together. Have I truly learned to sing:—

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew with me the cords of love
And thus He bound me to Him.
And round my heart still closely
twine
Those ties which naught can sever,
For I am His and He is mine
For ever and for ever.*

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
He gave His life to save me:
And not alone the gift of life
But His own self He gave me.
Naught that I have my own I call
I hold it for the Giver,
My heart, my strength, my life,
my all
Are His and His for ever.*

*I've found a Friend, O such a Friend,
So kind and true and tender
So wise a counsellor and guide
So mighty a defender!
From Him who now doth love me so,
What power my life can sever?
Shall life or death or any foe?
No! I am His forever.*

Surely at some time we have found Him to be all that! but what have I found in Him today? What has "my finding" brought to me in the hurly-burly of this fitful day?

*If I find Him, if I follow
Is He sure to bless?
Saints, Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs
Answer Yes!*

*If I ask Him to receive me
Will He say me nay?
Not till earth and not till heaven
Pass away!*

"We have found Him of whom . . . the prophets did speak."

Of intercourse we have enough, perhaps too much. Of communion, how very little. So little of Christ's offering is comprehended, that when believers meet they have scarcely anything of Him to share.

To gain proficiency in the Word is indeed the work of a lifetime; but every day should see a closer approximation to that proficiency, and will, indeed, if we are faithful students and faithful servants of the truth.



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

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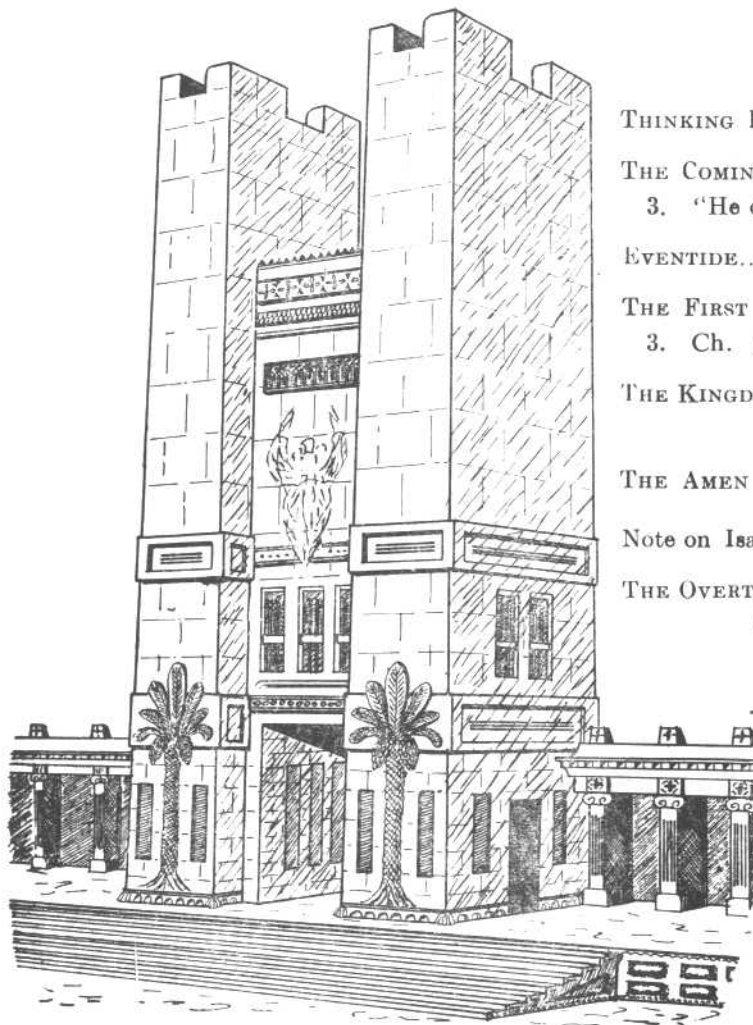
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CONTENTS

THINKING POINT.....	42
THE COMING OF THE KING	
3. "He cometh with clouds"	43
EVENTIDE.....	46
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
3. Ch. 2. 1-2	48
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN - PRESENT OR FUTURE ?	50
THE AMEN	52
Note on Isa. 40. 3	55
THE OVERTHROW OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH Part 2. ...	56



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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THINKING POINT

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" (Eph. 4. 3).

Unity is a fashionable word in Church circles at the moment. Leading figures in many of the larger denominations have lent their names and bent their activities toward the promotion of organic union between groups which have worshipped and worked apart for generations or centuries past. A Roman Catholic priest has preached in Westminster Abbey, the centre of the Protestant faith in England, for the first time since the Reformation—and started a fair amount of discussion and dissension in so doing. Some Christians are anxious for the union of all sects; others are equally against it, and in the haze of conflicting views the basic principles tend to be overlooked or ignored.

The alleged "divided" state of the Christian Church on earth has long been a stock excuse for people who do not want to "go to church". It is rarely more than an excuse; most of them would still abstain from church-going if in fact there was only one united church. The man who will not guide his life by Christian principles because his fellow-men elect to follow half-a-dozen different forms of worship and avenues of Bible interpretation is not ready for Christianity anyway and his attendance at any church while in that frame of mind would give no particular satisfaction to the Most High. The "man-in-the-street" usually neither knows nor cares what led to the formation of the various denominations in the first place, and his expressed opinions on this subject are of no particular importance and may be ignored.

The case is different with those who do count themselves part of the Christian community. When these labour for organic unity they do so usually for one of two reasons, either feeling that the unity between His followers for which Christ prayed cannot be realised unless it be evidenced as a visible

physical community, or else in the endeavour to combine the dwindling number of Christians under one central control in order to present the best face to the world and make the maximum impact. This latter view is one that is exemplified in modern commercialism with its tendency to aggregate small bodies into increasingly larger powerful groups, but it is not God's way for His Church. Christianity is intended for all types and varieties of men everywhere and its predominant quality is that it can be expressed in any language and presented in form suitable to any culture or level of intellect. That is why there is value in the multiplication of denominations and sects, for each can present the essentials of the Faith in a fashion all its own and suited to a particular class of believers. There is a world of difference between the ritual of an Anglican service and the devotional atmosphere of a Quaker meeting, but both can be manifestations of the Holy Spirit "dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12. 11).

This is not disunity. The unity for which our Lord prayed is the unity of the Spirit, that sense of oneness in vital things which every Christian feels toward every fellow-Christian of whatever school of thought, a oneness that transcends all denominational affiliations. This unity is one that is already in existence and has existed from the beginning, but it is a unity that is not demonstrated by the outward aspect of great organisations or spacious church buildings. Therein lies its power. The Kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal—and the whole was leavened. The names of the members of the Church of the Firstborn are not inscribed as a whole upon any church roll; they are "written in heaven", and only the Most High perceives the real extent and strength of His people.

For "Gone from us" see back page

THE COMING OF THE KING

3. "He cometh with clouds"

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

Several times it is said of our Lord's Second Advent that He comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. This imagery is taken from the seventh chapter of Daniel where "one like the Son of Man" comes thus and is brought near before the "Ancient of Days" to receive the dominion of earth and an everlasting kingdom that shall never pass away. Behind this lay the memory, deeply engraved on Israel's national consciousness, of the cloud and fire of Mount Sinai where God first revealed Himself to them and fixed for ever in their minds the idea that His presence and power, His judgments and His blessings, were concealed in and revealed by the dark storm clouds and the fiery radiance that crowned the Mount.

It is probable that the early Christians, familiar as they were with the symbolism of Old Testament prophecy (technically called "apocalyptic") understood these allusions in a metaphorical sense, but it was perhaps inevitable in later centuries, as the interpretation of Old and New Testament passed increasingly into the hands of Western theologians unfamiliar with ancient Hebrew thought-forms and influenced greatly by the limited knowledge of the physical universe characteristic of the Middle Ages, that men should tend to understand them in a purely literal manner. Examples of mediæval art abound in which the Lord is depicted descending towards the earth seated or standing upon a cloud, or cleaving the skies with an attendant train of angels surrounded by a mass of stormclouds interspersed with strokes of lightning. It becomes necessary in this our day to re-examine this conception with great care if the true purport of these statements is to be understood. The Old Testament is full of allusions to the power and presence of God as manifested in cloud and fire. The majesty and solemnity of massive storm-cloud formations with their attendant crashing thunder and brilliant lightning—so much more intense in tropical latitudes—must have suggested to men at a very early date the idea of God coming upon them for judgment. The spectacular scenes at Mount Sinai during the Exodus, where for some three months the Israelites, encamped in the plain below, saw the summit of the mountain shrouded by masses of clouds from which appeared light-

ning and fire accompanied by thunder, and knew that within that fearsome place Moses was as it were face to face with God, was sufficient to fix this conception of the Deity in the minds of all Israel for ever. So the "pillar of cloud by day and the flaming fire by night" which was with them through all the forty years' wanderings, and led them at last to the Promised Land, was in truth a manifestation of God to them. The same visible Divine glory which gave them blessings of confidence and leadership in the wilderness was the executor of judgment upon the rebellious, as in the case of Korah and his followers, when the same glory blazed out from the Sanctuary and destroyed the enemies of the Lord. So the cloud and fire very soon became both symbol and manifestation of the invisible God moving into action for blessing and judgment.

The same idea is exemplified in the recorded visions of God seen by some of the Hebrew prophets. Ezekiel, beholding in the open desert the glory of the Lord, saw it against a background of cloud and dazzling light—so intense that he could see little else but the shining cherubim, attendant upon the chariot of God. (Ezek. 10). Isaiah, seeing a parallel vision in the Temple at Jerusalem, experienced the same combination of radiant glory and obscuring cloud—the Temple was filled with smoke, he says, remembering how in earlier times the Divine Presence was a "cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night" (Isa. 4. 5). But the most eloquent exposition of this poetic representation of God arising to action is surely that in Psalm 18, especially impressive as rendered by the R.S.V. "*the earth reeled and rocked; the foundations of the mountains trembled . . . smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him. He bowed the heavens, and came down; thick darkness was under his feet . . . He made darkness his covering around him, his canopy thick clouds dark with water. Out of the brightness before him there broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire.*" This is what the prophet Joel had in mind when he described the coming of the Day of the Lord. "*I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke*" (Joel 3.

30), the piled up masses of dark cumulus thunder-cloud being the "pillars of smoke" to which he referred.

This is the foundation upon which is built Daniel's vision of the coming of the Son of Man as described in the seventh chapter of the Book of Daniel. The same background of storm-cloud and fire surrounding the majesty of God Most High, the fire darting out from before Him to consume the powers of evil represented by the mystic "beasts" of the vision, and the clouds providing a setting for the resplendent figure of the triumphant Son of Man coming before the Most High to be formally invested with the Kingdom of earth and to receive the allegiance of all its inhabitants. The same combination of judgment and blessing, in fire and cloud; the same basic idea that the majesty and the Person of Deity, not to be perceived directly by mortal man, is both concealed by, and manifested in, the cloud and the fire. And this same conception is carried into the New Testament, for the prophetic words of Jesus, and the ecstatic outburst of John the Revelator, both take their inspiration from this vision of Daniel. "I say unto you" declared Jesus to the High Priest at His arraignment *"hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Matt. 26. 64) and at that the High Priest rent his clothes, and cried out *"He hath spoken blasphemy"*. Caiaphas knew full well what the words implied, that Jesus laid claim to being in His own person the fulfilment of Daniel 7, that He himself was the "Son of Man" seen in vision by the ancient prophet. And because Caiaphas knew that the prophetic vision was of the Messiah and he would not admit that the prisoner before him could possibly be Israel's Messiah, he charged him, logically enough from his own standpoint, with blasphemy. A few days earlier Jesus had said a very similar thing to His own disciples. Describing to them the order of events of His Advent, and following that aspect of the Advent which concerns His revelation of Himself "as a thief" to His own watchful adherents prior to the general revelation to all, He said *"and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Matt. 24. 30). John's outburst in the Book of Revelation is very similar, *"Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kind-*

reds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so; Amen." (Rev. 1. 7). Now both of these statements combine the symbolism of Daniel 7 with that of Zech. 12, in which at the Last Day the people look upon the One whom they rejected and break down in an agony of mourning and repentance for their blindness and folly. The prophetic visions of Daniel 7 and Zech. 12-14 are thus linked together as having joint reference to this outwardly spectacular aspect of the Second Advent and it is because of this that a clear understanding of these "clouds of heaven" is so important.

It will not fail to be noticed that in these references to the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven the picture is that of something that is universally seen or discerned. Whereas the returning Lord comes first to His own followers, the Church, "as a thief", in such fashion that only the "watchers" are apprised of His coming and the world in general see and hear nothing untoward and know not what is going on, when He comes "in the clouds of heaven" the whole world will know about it. There will be no doubt as to the fact of His Advent; moreover, there will be obvious signs of repentance and acceptance of Him as Lord, and that denotes what may be termed an advanced stage in the succession of events which comprise the full range of the Advent. It is very important to note here that the "mourning" of Matt. 24. 30 and the "wailing" of Rev. 1. 7 is not, as is sometimes thought, a sign of terror or consternation but one of repentance and acceptance. Both these texts derive from Zech. 12 and must therefore bear the same meaning as the "mourning" of that chapter, and that quite clearly is a mourning of repentance. The coming in the clouds of heaven therefore must refer to a point in the end of the Age when resistance to the incoming Messianic Kingdom has measurably subsided and the time has come for earth's new King openly to take His power and commence His beneficent administration. There is a factor in Jesus' words to Caiaphas which highlights this point. Caiaphas himself, and presumably the members of the Sanhedrin sitting with him, are "hereafter" to see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. To do that they must be here on earth, alive and in possession of their normal senses, and Caiaphas and all his colleagues are dead, have been dead for nearly two thousand years, not to be raised from the dead until the "resurrection at the last day", to use the words of Martha attest-

ing her faith at the awakening of Lazarus. There must therefore be a sense in which the "coming in the clouds" is continuing even after the general resurrection of the dead has commenced, and this itself is a process which does not begin until the earliest phases of the Advent have become a fact and the power of the Messianic Kingdom is operating in the earth.

Notwithstanding this consideration, it is clear that the coming in the clouds must at least begin to have its fulfilment before the general resurrection, for there is one more New Testament allusion back to Dan. 7, and that is the description in Revelation 14 of the harvest of the earth. Here, in a definite "Second Advent" sequence, the Revelator sees "a white cloud, and upon the cloud one like unto a Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle". (Rev. 14. 14). This visitant from the skies proceeds to reap the harvest of the earth and immediately thereafter follows the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God, clear symbols of the man-made strife and turmoil which forms so great a part of the judgment with which this Age will end. The "white" cloud is one that is gleaming and glistening—the same allusion appears in Matt. 17. 2 and several other instances—and here there is the same association of cloud and light, betokening coming judgment and blessing, that we have in the Old Testament. It is to be noted here that the A.V. has incorrectly rendered verse 14 "one like unto the Son of Man" as it has in Dan. 7, whereas in both instances the Greek and Hebrew is in the singular "a son of man", a man-like being, one of the sons of men. The application of the expression to our Lord, who called Himself "the Son of Man" is correct, but it is a matter of interpretation and not of translation. John saw a resplendent king-like figure in the form of a man on that cloud; like Daniel, who saw the same human figure in his vision, he knew it to be a symbol for the personal coming and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, resplendent in His Divinity, without any reference to whether the appearance is literally visible to the natural sight or not. Every element in the vision is a symbol of a more profound underlying reality.

This fact helps to illuminate 1 Thess. 4. 17 where the members of Christ's Church, at the time of their resurrection, are said to join the Lord "in the clouds". It is a fundamental of Second Advent theology that the first event of the Advent is the raising of the "dead in

Christ" and the "change" of the living saints that they might together be translated into the clouds to meet the Lord. In olden times when Heaven was believed to be "just beyond the bright blue sky" it was natural to think of these as the literal clouds, and the meeting as taking place in space just beyond those clouds, en route to that heaven. Now that it is more generally realised that the resurrection of the "saints" is a "change" to a celestial state and a totally different order of being in which terrestrial objects and conditions have no place, that conception is not so fitting. There may well be thought something incongruous in the idea of that wonderful meeting with our Lord in all the glory and power of celestial nature having to take place within the confines of a bank of fog floating only a mile or so above the surface of our planet. When it is seen that the usage of the symbol is to indicate that the meeting takes place out of the view of men and within the bounds of that period of combined judgment and blessing which is pictured by this "coming in the clouds" the way is open to a more spiritual and satisfying view of the "rapture of the Church".

The underlying meaning of all these allusions likening the Second Advent to the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, then, embraces the progressive fashion in which the Advent is perceived by humanity in general. There are two associated principles, judgment and blessing, and God, unseen, is behind the sending of both. His storm-clouds of judgment and His bright light of blessing advance swiftly upon the world and men perceive their onset but do not see the Power behind them which is driving events on to their inevitable climax. What they do see is the figure of a man, one like a son of man, one like themselves, who once dwelt with them on earth and shared their sorrows and healed their diseases and finally was put to death by them because they could not understand Him, and who now comes again to them having all power in heaven and in earth to rule them in justice and wisdom until the last trace of evil has been purged away and the human race has attained its destiny. They do not see all this at once; at first the clouds do no more than mark the disappearance from the terrestrial scene of those who have been watching for His appearing and have already seen the astrape, the early dawnlight, flaming over the eastern hills to tell that the time has come. It must be so, for those who thus go to meet their Lord "in the clouds" must later on

be revealed with Him to all the world as His associates and willing followers in the work of world evangelism which will then commence. And so the picture of the one "like a son of man" appearing in the clouds for judgment and blessing merges with those of passages like Rev. 19 and Zech. 14 where that same son of man becomes a Rider on a white horse descending from the heavens, accompanied by armies of His followers, to the execution of judgment and the termination of the Age preparatory to the blessing that will follow.

The clouds of heaven, then, picture the onset of judgment and blessing associated with the end of this Age when the works of man perish in utter confusion. In the early stage of this period the resurrection and "change" of the Church takes place, thus fulfilling 1 Thess. 4. 17. Next comes the disintegration of world institutions and the "kingdoms of this world". Men will only gradually come to see that this disintegration is inevitable and that there is "no way out", the expression which is the literal sense of Jesus' words in Luke 21. 26 describing this time. Only then, when the Rider on the white horse is apparent to men and they realise that the powers of Heaven are concerned in this cataclysmic downfall of human institutions, will it be true that they "see the Son of Man" in "power and great glory". But once they have thus seen the Son of Man they will not lose the vision, for the time of judgment will pass and the time of blessing will come. The Son of Man will still be in the clouds of heaven, no longer against the dark background of stormclouds, but resplendent in the radiance of light. This is where the Millennial Kingdom is established in power and this is where

Caiaphas will experience the fulfilment of Jesus' words of so long ago. Awaking from death he will see for himself the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. For men like Caiaphas they will still be clouds of judgment, for even then it must remain true that what a man soweth, that he shall also reap, and retribution for the past cannot be avoided even although repentance may ultimately bring cleansing and a fresh start.

In a sense the Son of Man will remain seen in the clouds of heaven during the entire Millennial Age, in that the glories of that Age and the progressive elimination of evil will be tangible evidences of His presence. Elihu's magnificent conclusion to his defence of God in the debates of Job (Job 37. 21-24 LXX) is the finest Biblical expression of this truth. *"For the light is not visible to all; it shines afar off in the heavens as that which is from him in the clouds. From the north come the clouds shining like gold; in these, great are the glory and honour of the Almighty. We do not find another his equal in strength . . . wherefore man shall be in awe of him and the wise in heart shall reverence him."*

After the storm, the calm. After the darkness, the golden light of Messiah's kingdom. The light is there, mingled with the storm clouds, but it has not yet penetrated all the darkness, and the people who sit in darkness have not yet seen the great light. But it will come. *"From the north come the clouds shining like gold."* Nothing can hinder their advance. And in the glory of those shining clouds men will see the power of God and know that, at last, the Lord from heaven has returned to earth and established that new order of things which the prophet so long ago promised would be *"the desire of all nations"*.

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

"Lord, if . . ." so spake two pairs of quivering lips in Bethany as Jesus came, at length, to wake "our friend Lazarus" out of sleep. ". . . if Thou hadst been here" how different the situation would have been! How sorrowfully, yet chidingly, spoken the words "my brother had not died"! That the gentle reflective Mary should re-echo Martha's opening words goes most clearly to indicate how frequently, amid paroxysms of grief they had reiterated these sentiments each to each. And very naturally too! Had He not sent by the lips of their messengers the most comforting assurance that "this sickness was not unto

death"? Yet during His tarrying Lazarus had died! Notwithstanding His word of assurance Lazarus was dead, and had been laid in the tomb! Why had He not taken more seriously the tidings concerning the illness of His friend? Why had He not accompanied, with speed, the return of their messengers? Why . . . ? Why . . . ? Why . . . ? "If . . ." "If . . ." "If . . ." "If Thou hadst been here my brother had not died"!

It is so easy, and almost inevitable, in times of sorrow or suffering for puny man to question the ways of higher Providence, and to assert that if this or that had been done when

we thought it should how different the outcome would have been!

Things had been moving to a climax in Israel. Sign after sign, testifying to the Messiahship of Jesus, had fallen on unseeing eyes. One last witness—a sign of surpassing magnitude—was put into motion by Divine Providence. Lazarus, Martha, Mary, and Jesus had their parts to play therein—Lazarus to die, Mary and Martha to weep, and Jesus to weep, then to restore. A man, four days dead, was to be awakened, revived and returned to his home and place in life, as if decomposition had not laid its destructive hand upon his person.

A like happening had occurred before in Galilee, when Jesus halted the cortege and restored to a widowed mother's care her only son. But that had taken place in Galilee, and malicious tongues could talk it down and rob it of significance. Something must be staged, enacted and exhibited in Jerusalem, for only in Jerusalem were prophets and righteous men fated to perish, and the culminating sequel to this final sign was to be the death, in Jerusalem, of the latest and greatest of God's messengers—His holy and well-beloved Son. The enacted "sign" must therefore be set in old Jerusalem, and forced home with decisive impact upon the Council of the nation assembled there.

Let us not think of this tragic episode, therefore, as merely casual, or that it "just happened—so". Jesus knew from its very onset that it was intended, in some unmistakable way, to enhance the glory of God, and hence the fuller content of His reply to and through the messengers *"This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby"*. Also to Martha Jesus said *"Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?"* And so she did when the tomb gave up its dead and the semblance of the great resurrection truth which Jesus had previously taught her was bodied forth before her astonished eyes!

Events were moving to a crisis in Jerusalem and Israel. Many former signs had been of no avail to convince the nation of Jesus' claim to Messiahship. In the ordering of a higher Providence one last and vital witness to this heedless people was ordained and the home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary selected for its setting. Lazarus in particular was greatly honoured as Heaven's choice of victim for the seeming tragedy, to be compensated later by an unparalleled act of deliver-

ance from death and the tomb. And Jesus, though weeping in sympathy with those that wept, had hither come as the finger of God (see Luke 11. 20) to demonstrate resurrection power and to kindle to a brighter flame a resurrection hope.

Truly *"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform"*.

Divine Providence! Mysterious, wonderful oversight in human life. Yet as with Martha and Mary, so little comprehended, so little understood! And why? To draw out faith, to develop trust, to encourage assurance! to persuade that it is better to

*"walk in the dark with God,
Than go alone in the light,
To rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight"*.

How often has this mysterious oversight touched down into our little lives to shape our "means" and "ends". That otherwise unaccountably strange first contact with the Truth; that seemingly chance meeting with this brother or that; that fitly spoken word in that address; that presumed loss or bitter disappointment; that enfeebling sickness and tardy restoration; and a hundred other inexplicable incidents of life! How much easier to reproduce the two sisters' chiding words and reiterate their "ifs" and "whys", than bow submissive to the over-ruling Hand. How much easier to chafe and fret than to rest in His Love and trust to His care!

Providence is a great and effective teacher; its lessons are ever new and fresh, based ever on the little episodes of life, but governed always by the great principles. How do we react to it?

Perhaps it may be well to change the terms, for Providence is Omnipotence, Omniscience, Universality—it is high and deep, it is wide and broad, and we are but frail and weak and small and insignificant. But Providence is my Father and I am His child! That relationship is more to the level of my mind, for behind it I know is a Father's Love which seeks ever the best interest of His child.

But my Father is that Providence which rules the world, the sun, the moon, and stars, and all things that exist! Happy child with such a Providence to shape its ends!

Even, *"behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face"*.

*"Thou great and good, Thou wise and true,
Thou art my Father and my God;
And I am Thine, by sacred ties,
Thy son, thy servants, bought with
blood."*

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 3. I John 2. 1-2

"An advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (vs. 1).

The word that is here translated "advocate" is the same one that is rendered "comforter" in John 14, and 15. Jesus foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit to the help of His disciples in the words "the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name . . ." and so on.

The Greek word is well known; it is *parakletos*, and it means, literally, one called or sent to stand beside a man in his time of need. It was the word used to describe the pleader or "defending counsel" in the Greek courts of law and its application here is very obvious. When the Lord was about to leave His disciples He promised them that He would not leave them helpless; He would send a *parakletos*, one to stand alongside and be their ever-present help in time of need. We all bear witness to the fulfilment of that promise. We all testify to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, guiding, guarding, illuminating, instructing, and at the end making us spiritually fitted for the "inheritance of the saints in light". That is the office of the Holy Spirit during this Age, and this work of the Spirit has been accomplished in full degree. The word "comforter" in the Authorised Version does not adequately express the meaning of the term. The Holy Spirit is a guardian, a defender, an instructor, a counsellor, a source of power and a vital force that makes the weak strong and timorous courageous. Even the more modern version of "Helper" does not express all the meaning; in fact no one English word can possibly define the many-sided work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and perhaps we do well to think of all the terms which express the full manifestation of this wonderful influence by which we live and by which we will, one day, gain the victory.

Now the use of the same word "*parakletos*" in its application to our Lord, Jesus Christ the righteous, has a rather more restricted meaning. John is here talking of one aspect only of the Christian life, albeit a most important aspect. He is telling us of the Christian who has stumbled or turned from the way and has committed sin, and he says that such an one has a "*parakletos*", an Advocate, with the Father, Who is the Supreme Judge.

Now here the term is used obviously in the strict legal sense which it bore in everyday life in John's time. If any man sins, he has a "defending counsel" in Jesus, One to stand alongside and plead his cause. The basis of the defence, of course, is that the offender has already been justified by faith in Christ and has not renounced that justification, or, if he had in fact renounced it in the committing of the sin in question, has now sincerely repented and seeks to claim again that justification by a renewal of faith. By no stretch of the imagination can we picture the Advocate taking up the case of one who is unrepentant. (It must be remembered that this whole passage concerns only the Church, the believers in Christ Jesus, and not the world nor that provision for humanity which is the purpose of the Millennial Age). Justification, and the subsequent consecration of the believer, has placed him in a position where the Father accepts his sincerity of heart and his purity of purpose and intention instead of demanding perfection of conduct, and ceases to hold against him that error and sin which is attributable to the weakness of the flesh, to "Adamic" sin. The Advocate urges the principle enunciated by Paul in Romans 7, that sin, dwelling in the flesh, leads the believer to do those things that of his own will and desire he would not do, and precludes his doing fully the good that he would do, and that this is evidence of the believers' desire and intention to do good and his capability of doing good when, at the end, the hindrance of the weakened Adamic flesh has been removed. The Father, Who has already said that He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would that he turn from his wickedness and live, assents to the rightness of the Advocate's presentation of the matter, and counts the sin that has been committed as those that had already been blotted from the record at the time of justification. So, continually, the Advocate stands beside every member of His Church, claiming each as one for whom He died and who has accepted that death for himself and in the power of that acceptance has become one of Christ's own.

The Apostle proceeds in his exposition of this great truth by going on to say "*and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*"

(vs. 2). John is not particularly talking about the world in this chapter—in fact he is not talking about the world at all—but lest any should think from his main theme that Jesus is the propitiation only for those who are His now, the members of His Church, John hastens to add that He is in fact such for the sins of the entire race of mankind. The death of Jesus is equally applicable to all, whether or no they come to God during this Age; all will receive its benefits, either now, or in the future Age.

This word “propitiation” is capable of misunderstanding. The modern meaning of the word is to conciliate an offended or angry person by means of offerings or bribes, to placate. That has arisen from the use of the Greek word (*hilasmos*) in the early centuries to denote the giving of offerings and sacrifices to pagan gods in order to “propitiate” them, to turn away their anger, to cause them to look with favour upon their devotees. From this the idea has grown up quite naturally that Christ was a propitiation for our sins in that He gave Himself as a blood-sacrifice to an angry God who thereby appeased His wrath and turned to look with favour and graciousness upon the former objects of His displeasure. Now that may be all right with pagan gods, but it is certainly quite out of accord with the known character of our God. Mediæval theology made much of this idea in its conception of the doctrine of the Atonement, and much of it has survived into our own day, but the appeasement of Divine wrath by the offering of a blood-sacrifice has nothing in common either with justice or morality, and the Divine Plan is solidly founded on both. And it was a far-seeing man of God who declared, long before these times of John, “*thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” (Psa. 51. 16-17). So that the particular meaning of propitiation for which we are indebted to the pagan worship of Rome and Greece is one that we must definitely reject, hallowed though it be by long usage.

In these latter days those who have clearer knowledge of the Divine Plan can see that our Lord Jesus gave His humanity, not as such a sacrifice, but as an “*anti-lutron*”, a “corresponding price” wherewith to redeem man out of the bondage of sin and death, and make fallen man His own property, as it were, that He might enjoy the legal as well as the

moral right to raise all men from the dead, teach them of His ways in His own way and time, and present them at the last before the Father’s holiness, perfect and sinless. Paul’s allusion in 1 Tim. 2. 5-6 is taken from the Roman custom of manumission, the system by which slaves could be freed. The ransom money for the slave was paid into the temple treasury and from thence to the owner of the slave, who in this manner, by means of a kind of legal fiction, sold the slave to the god. The slave thus regained his freedom by becoming the property of the god. So, says Paul, “*Christ died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living*”. The price He paid in the giving of His human life was the price whereby Adam and all his posterity condemned in him are redeemed from the power of sin and become the subjects of Christ.

A much more accurate understanding is ours if we keep to Bible usage and compare the equivalent meaning of the word in the Old Testament. The act of “making reconciliation” upon the Brasen Altar (Lev. 18. 15) or of sprinkling the blood of the sin-offering “to reconcile” in the Most Holy (Lev. 6. 30) or to “make an atonement for sin” (Lev. 16. 6, etc.) is denoted by the Hebrew word *kaphar*. Now *kaphar* means, primarily, “to cover”, and its derivative words are used in the sense of covering over the Ark of Noah with pitch (Gen. 6. 14) or of obliterating the writing on written documents. From this comes the thought of atonement being a covering of the sin so that it is no longer seen or recognised by God. The place in the Most Holy where the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice was called the *kaphoroth* or “place of covering” for this reason (translated “mercy seat” in Exodus and Leviticus in the Authorised Version).

When the translators of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, came to this word “*kaphar*” they used the Greek “*hilasmos*” and its allied words as its equivalent and so convey the same meaning, and this is why the “*kaphoroth*” or “mercy seat” of Exodus is called the “*hilasterion*” or “propitiatory” in Hebrew 9. 5. From all of this it is plain that the real thought behind the word propitiation as used in the New Testament is that of a *covering for sin* and a *means of reconciliation with God* rather than that of a bribe intended to allay Divine wrath. And this makes John’s words here so much more luminous, and connects the two verses together. If any man sin, we have an

Advocate, one to stand beside us to help us before the Father—and that Advocate is the One who both covers that sin and is the means of the reconciliation of the sinner with God. It is not the Ransom that is in view here so much as the office of Jesus on our behalf in His resurrection life after the Ransom has been given. The Ransom was efficacious to us when we accepted Jesus at the time of our justification and our consecration; John is now talking of things that happen subsequent to that time, during the period of our Christian walk and life, and it is during that period that we need His office of Advocate.

The position of the world generally is not quite the same. Whereas members of the Church are reconciled to God at the time of consecration, of coming into Christ and acceptance into the High Calling, and therefore are honoured with the title of sons of God (1 John 3. 1. Gal. 4. 5) and have no need, as did the house of servants, of a Mediator to stand between themselves and God, mankind are not reconciled until they attain actual perfection at the end of the Millennial Age. They are therefore in the same position as was Israel in the wilderness. They will have

a covenant which will promise them life but will not be able, at first, to keep that covenant. Just as Israel on that account needed a Mediator to make the covenant with God for them on their behalf and thereafter to stand in God's presence in their stead, and transmit God's commands and laws to them because in their imperfection they were unable to receive them directly from that Holy God, so it will be with man in the Millennium. They will have the Lord Jesus Christ to be their Mediator, the "one Mediator between God and man" of 1 Tim. 2. 5, to stand as it were before God in their stead and transmit to them God's commands and laws. Israel never did progress to the point where their Mediator could step aside and leave them standing before God in their own righteousness. Man in the next Age will achieve that standard; the day is to come when the great Mediator will cease His Mediatorial office and leave mankind, "whosoever will", standing in the full power of earthly perfection before God, keeping His laws in their own righteousness, and so, at last and in their turn, becoming Sons of God.

(To be continued)

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN – PRESENT OR FUTURE

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3. 1-2).

The expression "kingdom of heaven" is a familiar one in the New Testament and it is understandable that several views as to its precise meaning exist. To the Jews at Christ's First Advent it definitely meant the kingship of Messiah upon earth, the period when He would reign on David's throne and exalt Israel to the headship of the nations. The phrase really defines the royal power which is from heaven or comes from the heavens and can quite reasonably be applied to the whole of the Divine sphere of rulership and thus can cover, not only regenerated humanity at the climax of the Divine plan so far as it relates to man, but whatever there may eventually be of intelligent life in any part or aspect of Divine creation. All must be part of the Divine empire and it would be rather short-sighted on our part to conclude that God the infinite Creator will only manifest His creative power in human life here upon

earth. But from the point of view of the New Testament the Kingdom of Heaven can only refer to the operation of that Kingdom so far as man is concerned; the mission of John the Baptist, and later, of Jesus of Nazareth, was to mankind and mankind alone.

In this sense the Kingdom of Heaven commenced its sovereignty among mankind at Pentecost, and continues extending its sway until "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord" at the end of the Millennium. But the development of the Kingdom in history is in two phases; one, the formation and completion of the Church, which occupies the present "Gospel" Age, and two, the calling and reconciliation of mankind in general to God, a work which is to have its greatest scope and reach its climax in the still future "Millennial" Age.

There is a tendency to separate the work of these two Ages into virtually watertight compartments and speak as if there is no sense in which the Kingdom is in operation until the Second Advent of Christ, when the visible Kingdom amongst men on earth is

established. St. Paul plainly tells us (Col. 1. 13) that God has (already) translated us into the Kingdom of His Son. This means an actual and factual transfer from the Kingdom of darkness, and is a present fact in the experience of every consecrated Christian who has "come into" Christ. The lawyer who "answered discreetly", was "not far" from the Kingdom of God (Mark 12. 34) which means that in his perception of Jesus' message he was almost at the point of entry. To-day, two thousand years later, only the smallest fraction of earth's millions have so much as heard of the Kingdom of Heaven, much less had opportunity to enter in. The key to this apparent paradox is found in St. Paul's words to the Athenians, recorded in Acts 17. Prior to Pentecost, God had not moved actively for the world's redemption, but on and after that historic scene in the upper room in Jerusalem, He "*commandeth all men everywhere to repent*". From that time and forward, throughout all the Gospel Age and all the Millennial Age, the call to repentance has been going out and will go out. And there is a corollary to the call; "*because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness*" (Acts 17. 31). Men are called to repent because there is to be a final judgment before this three-thousand year day of repentance and conversion is ended, and the sooner any man who at present is unreconciled to God comes into the state of reconciliation with Him the better it is for that man.

Nevertheless it must not be assumed that Jesus and the Apostles had no other idea in mind, when they talked about the "gospel of the Kingdom", than this process of coming "into Christ" which is peculiar to this Age and concludes with its termination. Jesus came as the promised Messiah, and a Messiah without a Messianic Kingdom, an earthly dominion of righteousness, is unthinkable. That was the only kind of kingdom the Jews of the First Advent knew of or anticipated, and when John, and Jesus, announced that the Kingdom was at hand *that* was the kind of kingdom they expected. Nor were they mistaken; it was after Pentecost that those who profited most by Jesus' message realised there was a spiritual counterpart to the earthly Kingdom of their dreams, and the spiritual counterpart must be developed first, and hence the earthly Kingdom was still some distance away in the future. The preaching of Jesus was intended to combine the hope of both aspects of the kingdom; He knew, none

better, that only a few of those who listened would embrace the spiritual call; the many would come along later in response to the earthly call. Nevertheless it was one command and one invitation, on one basis, and that remains unchanged until the end of the Millennium. "*Repent, and be converted; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" What God does with the repentant and converted one depends on what in His Wisdom He sees He can do with him; it depends on whether the man comes to God in this Age or the next; whether he is of the clay that can be shaped and fired into a vessel of greater honour or lesser honour (2 Tim. 2. 19-21) and so on.

There is a fallacy in the view propounded by St. Augustine fifteen hundred years ago in his endeavour to refute the doctrine of the Millennium, viz., that the Kingdom of God is here now in power, and that the conversion of the nations now proceeding is the evidence of this. The Kingdom of God is not here in power; the reign of Christ over the nations has not begun; the Church has not yet received any kind of power over the world. But the Kingdom is here, and has been since Pentecost, as an acknowledgment of God's supremacy in the hearts of believers. "*The Kingdom of God is within you*" said Jesus to some who challenged the fact of its presence (Luke 17. 21). It is not yet here in outward manifestation.

Jesus and His Apostles had all these aspects of the Kingdom in mind as they taught and wrote. There are approximately 124 occurrences of the expression "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God" in the New Testament. A reasonable analysis of these occurrences shows them distributed thus:—

Twenty-six refer to the spiritual kingdom in men's hearts now.

Forty-two refer to the celestial destiny of the Church, beyond the Vail, after the Second Advent.

Twenty-five refer to the visible kingdom to be set up on earth during the Millennium. Thirty-one are indeterminate and could not dogmatically be placed in any one of the above categories; in a good many cases these examples refer to the entire conception of the Kingdom embracing all three aspects.

Those who have Christ, know that He is with them, in the home, in the office, in the factory, or on the land-following the plough.

THE AMEN

A consideration
of a great theme

In most Christian communities it is usually the custom, at the close of some fervent prayer, or at the end of some impassioned exhortation, for the congregation (or at least the greater part of it) to give expression to their appreciation and approval thereof by the exclamation of a deeply-emphasised "Amen". There may be differences in the volume of the vocal sound expressing this approval and endorsement, according to the nature of the occasion, or to the canonical laws governing the character of Divine Worship, but, almost everywhere, we may safely say, in louder or more subdued measure, the close of the fervent prayer or the intense appeal will call forth the pent-up responsive utterance of the devout "Amen" from all whose hearts are warm towards the Most High and His beloved Son.

This fervent word, in and around which such sacred associations are woven, is not a native English word, nor is it even a modern word. It dates from a distant antiquity. It is almost as old as the human race itself. It is derived from an ancient root which was common to several of the primitive Semitic languages the original meaning of which was "to prop" or "to support". As time elapsed it took on new and wider meanings. It came to carry, also, the thought of verbal support—"assent" or "endorsement" of some spoken word, as for instance, in the people's response to the Levitical adjuration recorded in Deut. 27. 15-26. Here it bears the thought "so let it be". Again, when Nehemiah made appeal to Israel to discontinue taking usury from a poorer brother in Israel, the whole people gave assent to his appeal by a mutual and national "Amen". Here it would carry the thought "so will we do". (Neh. 5. 13). And on the occasion of the homing of the Ark, when the sons of Asaph had sung the anthem of thanksgiving composed by David for the great event, the people responded by a great Amen! Here it would express the thought "So say we all".

Thus, in seasons of devoted worship, or times of national crisis, the fervent Amen of the whole nation or of the whole congregation was the response to the like fervent appeal made by the appointed servant of the Lord, to "do" what the Lord would have them do or "be" what He would have them be.

When the centralised form of worship located at the Temple gave place to the widely distributed worship of the synagogue, every appeal by the synagogue authorities was answered by the local congregation's "Amen". In this way every responsible citizen of Israel admitted and acknowledged his responsibility before the Lord, and re-affirmed his desire to live at peace with God. Having been reminded of Israel's unique prerogatives, and of her special standing before the Most High God, every acclamation of the "Amen" was tantamount to a solemn vow, re-affirmed and renewed, by every member of the congregation. It carried with it the prayer—"so let it be", "so will we do", "so say we all".

From the Jewish synagogue this conception passed over into the Christian Ecclesia.

"It was a custom which passed over from the Synagogue into the Christian assemblies that when he who had read or discoursed had offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others in attendance responded 'Amen', and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own." (*Thayer's Lexicon*, p.32 under word Amen).

In this way, the Jewish ceremonial practice, epitomised by a word far older than themselves, found an entrance into the Christian communities everywhere. It is thus an ancient word heavily encrusted with reverential thought that finds expression on our modern lips when even we, ourselves, respond to the spirit of the fervent prayer or to the ardent exhortation.

In the days of the early Church the place of the "Amen" in the act of worship was a most important one. It was no mere trifling part of the ceremony to be performed or neglected at will. Even Paul himself—opposer of ceremonialism and formalism though he was—calls it "The Amen" (1 Cor. 14. 16). The mutual response, at the right moment, of every heart and voice, in unison, was accounted to be of far greater importance than the exercise of some Spirit-bestowed "gift of tongues", if that exercise, for the time being, was in an unknown tongue. Better far to have the whole audience answer with its great "Amen" because it understood—so Paul said—than have its ear regaled with incomprehensible oratory.

"How shall he that filleth the place of the

unlearned say "The Amen" at thy giving of thanks, seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest?" asks Paul (1 Cor. 14. 16).

According to the testimony of some early Fathers in the Church, the expression of the congregational "Amen" was not by any means a weak or feebly-whispered response, but a mighty shout that made the rafters ring—a tide of sound that echoed and re-echoed, back and forth, till the very building shook. Gratitude for what the Lord had done for each and all, released the pent-up feelings of the whole personality in a great shout of such lusty magnitude, that it might well be called a "Grand Amen". If these records present a true picture of the scene, no wonder Paul, in words both simple and profound, depicts it as "saying the Amen".

Early in the second century Elders and Bishops in the Church began to claim the right exclusively to expound the Word. Her ablest scholars—so they said—must be thus authorised to enable the Church universal to parry and withstand the assaults of her pagan foes. But, while conceding this for the common good, there was one thing the congregation would not concede. It would not relinquish the privilege of voicing its great "Amen". Call this vocal climax of the worship "formalism", if we will, but, we must not forget that the "Amen" seemed to mean much more to the early Church than it means to us to-day. To us, to-day, the force and meaning of the word "Amen" has been greatly whittled down and almost lost. It has come to mean, with passing years, little more than "so be it", or "so let it be". It expresses the assent of the audience to the spoken word—the hearer's response to the prayer, the benediction, the doxology, or the personal appeal. This definition has not the ancient force of that which inspired the early Church, nor even the Jewish Synagogue. To them the sharing of the great "Amen" was tantamount to the making of a vow, or the submission of an oath to the Lord. "*He—who says Amen*", writes one commentator, regarding both the Synagogue and the early Church "*thereby asserts that his statement is binding*".

Perhaps we may better understand what the "Amen" meant to the early Church, if we consider this forceful word as it fell from the Master's lips. Jesus used it as no other man had used it before His day. With Him, it never came as a climax to a statement or to a prayer; always, it preceded some solemn utterance. With Him, it was not used responsively to what another said, but only to

emphasise what He Himself was about to say. "*Amen, Amen, I say unto you*" was His usual mode of stressing some great truth. To Him it meant, This is the Truth, this alone is Truth, and this is the whole Truth.

Among men, the teacher reasons his way from the shadow of the circumference towards the light at the centre of things—Jesus went through to the centre at one step and spake there in the full blaze of the Light. He had no "ifs" nor "buts" nor qualifying phrases to introduce. He could use the imperative, and say "it is thus and so". He spake as the Voice of Authority, infallibly, which knew the "Truth Absolute", and stated what it knew with emphasis. To Nicodemus He said "*Amen, Amen, I say unto thee, we speak what we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen*" (John 3. 11). How authoritative and awe-inspiring, therefore, were those themes to which Jesus linked this solemn affirmation. Let us recall a few. "*Amen, Amen, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live*" (John 5. 25). "*Amen, Amen, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep*" (John 10. 7-16). "*Amen, Amen, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life*" (John 6. 47-51). Always it is Truth Absolute, spoken by the voice of Absolute Authority.

How poor and feeble, against this weight of emphasis, is the word "verily", or our own phrase "so be it", or a more recent "indeed and indeed". Truly we have lost much of the force and meaning of the Master's Amen.

The Early Church, at least in Apostolic days, was not permitted to forget this emphasis. Of this we have an instance in 2 Cor. 1. 15-22. Paul had been charged with prevarication with saying one thing and meaning something else. He had intimated that he might call at Corinth on his journey into Macedonia (1 Cor. 4. 19), then, when his visit there was accomplished, return again to Corinth and probably winter there. (1 Cor. 16. 5-6). Circumstances had made the two visits impossible—and thus the cause of the accusation arose! In self-defence Paul says "Do I purpose according to the flesh—that is, to please myself—that with me there should be (the duplicity of the double tongue) the yea-yea, and the nay-nay?" For Paul the course of life was mapped out by the Lord ("if the Lord will", 1 Cor. 4. 19; "if the Lord permit" 1 Cor. 16. 7), and he knew it was not for him, without the Lord's approval or ordering, to take one step here or there, or bind himself to take

this course or that. He may form a preference, or even express a fond desire (Acts 19, 21), but it was not within his province to bind himself by emphatic promise, or excuse himself by definite refusal to do this thing or that. All the supervision of his life was in the Lord's prerogative, and subject to His oversight.

The Corinthian complainants had not learned this truth sufficiently to bow to the Lord's control, and were blaming Paul for "running off" his word. It did not seem to have occurred to them to charge the blame up to the Lord, or up to God, who had supervised Paul's course. Taking cover under this omission of theirs he would have them know that like as they accounted God to be faithful (actuated by a singleness of purpose) so, in like manner, "our word to you is not yea and nay", and that he was not one whit more unmindful of his promise than God was of the promises He had made.

Carrying their minds to higher ground he then cites the facts of the Saviour's life to prove that the Christian life is not based on irresolution or inconstancy. "*For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, . . . was not yea and nay, but in Him is (only) yea.*" Indeed, had Jesus of Nazareth, at any stage of His exacting career, been of an irresolute or inconstant disposition (the yea-yea and nay-nay attitude) He could never have won through to attain the high dignity of "Son of God". Had there not been firm determination to do the Will of God, at all cost, and against all who would oppose, it could not have been said of Him that He had been "*declared to be the Son of God . . . by His Resurrection from the dead*" (Rom. 1, 4). With Him, in full degree, had been the "yea"—the positive—disposition, throughout His earthly life. And, surely, not less positive is the exalted Son of God than was the Man of Nazareth! There was, therefore, no ground for asserting vacillation or prevarication concerning the Supervisor of the Church, and since the oversight of Paul's little life was in that Supervisor's hands, there could be no charge of inconstancy or inconsistency laid against His "orderings". Paul wanted these meticulous brethren to understand that every promise or proposal made by one to another should be made subject to God's control, and accepted without recrimination, even if they could not be fulfilled, provided always that such non-fulfilment were in full accord with the Will of God.

Paul then moves to still higher ground, and

brings to the accusing brethren's attention a universal aspect of the Word of God made certain by the unchanging constancy of the Son of God. "How many soever be the promises of God", he says, "in Him is the 'yea'." God has made many promises at various stages of His Plan. First, came the hopeful promise to Mother Eve, that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. Then, in due course, came the Oath-bound promise to Abraham, repeated and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob that in their seed all the nations should be blessed. After that the promise came to David, that, of his seed, should come forth Israel's Royal King. Meantime to Israel itself the Voice of God had made many promises, assuring them that they should yet attain their rightful place among the nations of the earth. And to the Church of Christ exceeding great and precious promises have been made. Yes! God has made many promises—but over against them all there stood for ages one effective embargo—all men were under the curse! The condemnation for Adamic sin stood in the way, and few indeed of these promises could be realised and inherited till that condemnation was taken out of the way. By His Sacrifice, consummated at Calvary, and presented at the Throne of God, that embargo was removed, and the whole wide range of promises was confirmed and made unfailingly sure. (Rom. 15, 8). Jesus Christ, the Risen Son of God, now stands for ever forth as the "Confirming Yea" to every promise of the Most High God, to whomsoever made. His glorious exalted life, following his vicarious death, is the sure pledge that all God's purposes will stand, for the constancy still prevails in Heaven as prevailed between Jordan and Calvary. Then by a few well-chosen words Paul shows the great sequel to all this constancy. "Wherefore also, through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." To-day the "Amen" rises from small upper rooms, from small, insignificant companies, but its volume will swell to the ends of the earth, as, first, the Seed of Abraham (in both its parts) enters into its inheritance, and through them, the nations of the earth find their way into the City of God. All the wide world will make the rafters of the universe echo and echo again as they volley forth the "Grand Amen".

There is one further aspect of this ancient theme in which a universal fact becomes also an incomparable Name! Jesus illustrated this extension of a fact into a Name when He said "*I am . . . the Truth . . .*" (John 14, 6). Jesus

had stood forth as a Teacher of Truth, presenting to all who could hear the facts and verities of the truth; but, in reality, He was more than a teacher of truth. All the facts and verities of truth met and centred in His person. All the many-sided facts of man's alienated life pointed to their need for Him. All the many-sided facts of His spotless nature and sinless sacrifice pointed to His ability to meet man's need. All man's need, and all God's provision met in Him. In Himself He was the consummation of very fact. He was indeed the Living Truth. Through Him shall yet be the Universal Amen, to the praise of Almighty God, but He also, in Himself, is the Great "Amen". *"These things saith The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness . . ."* (Rev. 3. 14). Exactly as the Name given to Him at His birth (Jesus) was an indication of what He was come down to earth to do (*"call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people*

from their sins" Matt. 1. 21), so also, the Name given Him in His exaltation is an indication of what He has done. It has a sense of finality and completeness about it. It tells of a task completed in the interests of a purpose that for ever "IS"—a purpose that knows no change or variation, worlds without end, of which every segment is certain and sure, because of what He did.

God only is competent to confer such a Name, for none but He can fully understand the greatness of the task that has been done. By the conferment of that Name, God has set forth His estimation and approval of the universal work that was achieved, and of the certainty that exists. It is as though the Eternal One, to sustain our faltering faith, has said, through the bestowment of that Name *"Yea, it is so! it is sure! it cannot fail; in Him is the final word!"*

NOTE ON ISA. 40. 3

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

In the first place, the "voice" is Isaiah himself. The second part of the Book of Isaiah, commencing with the 40th chapter, is a treatise outlining the principles upon which God will reconcile the world to Himself, by means of the service, devotion and suffering of a consecrated people, the "suffering servant" of the prophecy. Isaiah was the means used to introduce this theme into the records of the revealed Plan of God, and, knowing as he did that his people were far from understanding the part to be played by sacrifice and suffering in the reconciliation, their minds being full of visions of the glory of Israel's coming reign over the nations, he realised that in his day he would never be more than a voice crying in the wilderness. Nevertheless, he delivered his message to such good effect that his book became the finest and most detailed exposition of the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," in the whole of the Old Testament.

The second fulfilment of these words is found in the person and work of John the Baptist, as he himself claimed. He also was a herald of the Messiah, and of the Messianic Kingdom, and although his message reached a wider circle and attracted a more general attention than did that of Isaiah, it did not result in the conversion of the nation. It merely prepared a "remnant". *"He was a*

burning and a shining light and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light," said Jesus. Nevertheless, he remained long enough to point out the Lamb of God, manifested amongst men, and then his work was finished.

The third fulfilment is obvious in the work of the Church during the Gospel Age, and particularly at its end. Once more the "herald" declares the coming of the King (*"There standeth one among you whom ye know not"*) and the imminence of His Kingdom. Once more the voice is one which cries in the wilderness yet gathers together a nucleus which shall be the "people for a purpose" for the incoming Age. Once again the message goes out continuously until the greater John Baptist is able to turn and declare: *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"*. Although the Church will be glorified before the revelation of Christ to the world takes place, the "voice in the wilderness" message will be taken up and continued by the earthly "people for a purpose", regathered in the Holy Land, and their message will find its glorious climax in the proclamation of the Law from Zion when Isaiah's prophecy will be literally fulfilled.

The records of the history of the Church preserved through succeeding centuries make it plain that the strength of any Christian community could be measured by its ardour in prayer.

THE OVERTHROW OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

A historical study in two parts. Part 2.

The sun hung low in the west. It was "even", the time immediately before sunset and the consequent swift onset of total darkness, when men repaired to their homes and closed doors for the night. Lot was seated in the "gate"—the market place—of Sodom; doubtless was about to make his way into his own house. His eyes lighted upon two strangers coming in from the country. With the same courtliness manifested by his uncle earlier the same day he rose up and invited them to accept the hospitality of his house. They demurred, but he insisted, and presently they were seated at his table.

Chapter 19 says that these two men were angels. The narrative clearly indicates that they were the two whom Abraham had directed on their way earlier that afternoon. In that case they must have been angels. The "heat of the day" in ch. 18 at the time of their visit to Abraham is an expression for noon. By the time the fat calf had been selected, slain and dressed, the meal prepared and eaten, the conversation recorded in ch. 19, 9-15 conducted, and the visitors ready to depart, at least three hours must have elapsed. The two men were last seen by Abraham a few miles outside Hebron about 3.0 p.m. or later. "Even" is 5.0 to 6.0 p.m. and at that time the same two men entered the gate of Sodom, thirty-five miles distant across a rugged mountainous terrain, involving a journey that no human being could have completed in less than twelve or fifteen hours! Celestial messengers, these men, possessed of powers surpassing those of terrestrial beings, in contact with this world for the duration of their commission but possessed of powers appertaining to another world!

It was not long before the men of the city were hammering at the door, demanding that the visitors be given up to them. Lot knew what that implied and he remonstrated with his unruly fellow-citizens, declining to betray the hospitality he had extended. His opponents reiterated their demand and began to threaten force; the situation was evidently serious, and Lot had to take steps to defend his guests.

Lot has been severely criticised by modern European Christians for his action at this point in offering to deliver up his two young daughters to the rabble by way of appease-

ment but the stricture is less than just. Semitic peoples have always held the obligations of hospitality so binding that any conceivable course of action, even to that involved here, was held to be not only honourable, but incumbent, upon a host, if necessary to the defence of his guests. Lot only did what any right thinking man of his race and day would do, and his action was rather to his credit than otherwise, hard as it might be for those involved, for it demonstrated that he still retained some of the standards of his old upbringing in the family of Abraham.

The sacrifice was not needed. The angels took a hand. They smote the men outside the house with some impairment of faculties so that despite their endeavours they could no longer find the door. The narrative says "blindness" but it seems to have included some inability to control their movements so as to approach the house. Until this point Lot had thought his visitors to be ordinary travellers but now he must have begun to wonder who they really were. Their next words would most certainly have created a sense of shock, for Lot could not have had any previous intimation that the time of Sodom's judgment had come. "*Hast thou any here besides?*" they asked "*son-in-law, sons, daughters, whatsoever thou hast, bring them out of this place; for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it.*" (ch. 19, 12-13).

It must have been a stunning blow for Lot. All that he had accumulated these twenty years past was to vanish in a moment. He was already a wealthy man, rich in flocks and herds and retainers, the head of a large tribal household, when he settled in the vale of Siddim. To what extent he retained those interests after he became a city-dweller we have no means of knowing, but he was almost certainly still a rich man. Now it was all to go; all he could hope to preserve was his life and his own family. It is rather surprising that none of his servants or employees shared his faith; maybe any who did maintain their loyalty to God had long since left him and gone back to Abraham, and his only servants were natives of the Plain. It is noteworthy, however, that he neither expostulated with the messengers nor disbelieved

their message. He accepted fully and without question the truth of what they declared. It is noteworthy also that he did not, as Abraham had done a few hours earlier, plead for a respite on the ground that there might be a few righteous left in Sodom. He evidently knew quite well that there were none such. So without further ado he went out, middle of the night though it was, to urge his sons-in-law to join him in immediate flight from the doomed city.

These sons-in-law have given students a certain amount of trouble, usually resolved by crediting Lot with four daughters, two married, living elsewhere, and two unmarried, living at home. In fact there were only two daughters and the perplexity is due to confusion between ancient Eastern and modern Western marriage customs. In those early times a woman "given in marriage" was subject to a marriage contract for a period—usually a year—spent in her father's house prior to the full marriage, but in every respect as binding as the real marriage. The words here rendered "sons-in-law" and "married" are those normally used in the O.T. to denote this position. Literally, they are "those making affinity" who "took his daughters". We may say therefore in our usage that the girls were betrothed and the marriage contracts had been agreed. They lived at home, and thus Lot logically went out that night to the bridegroom's homes to plead with them to flee also. *"But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law."*

Frustrated, Lot returned home. The rest of the night passed uneventfully. *"But when the morning arose"* the angels urged Lot, his wife and his two daughters to flee at once. There could be no further delay. This expression "the morning arose" refers to the moment of sunrise, which in that latitude is always about 6.0 a.m. Even then, Lot "lingered", reluctant at the last moment to abandon his worldly goods and possessions, little comprehending the nature of the catastrophe which was impending. So the angels took his hand and those of the womenfolk and hurried them, as it were by main force, out of the city. The rising sun flamed over the eastern mountains and the sky was radiant with light—the light of the last day for the Cities of the Plain.

"Escape for thy life" urged the angel. *"Look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."* But Lot was fearful. *"I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take*

me, and I die." This repeated reference to "the mountain" is intriguing. It occurs also in Gen. 14 where those who escaped the Elamite invasion fled out of Sodom to "the mountain". The use of the singular shows that this was a particular peak and not far from the city. Sixteen miles or so from where Sodom probably stood, to the east and on the Moabite side of the valley, there is such a prominent mountain, rising five thousand feet above the level of the plain and dominating the countryside. Here, if anywhere, was the obvious refuge from the coming catastrophe, but Lot shrank from the ordeal of the climb. He pleaded instead that he might be allowed to take refuge in the little town of Zoar and that town be spared from destruction. The angel granted his plea with the injunction that he must haste thither because the overthrow could not be executed until he was safely inside. So Lot made his way to Zoar.

"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar" says the narrative (ch. 19. 23). Here again there is a time indication. The expression "risen upon the earth" refers to the sun at the meridian; "shemesh"—the sun's orb, not merely sunlight, "had gone forth", and this implies that Lot's flight from Sodom to Zoar occupied five or six hours. The fact that Zoar was not destroyed shows that it was situated at some distance from the other cities; no trace of it has ever been found although there is a legendary site several miles from the present south shore of the Dead Sea. The river Zered flows into the sea near this point from a narrow valley which goes up into the mountains of Moab and it is probable that Zoar was somewhere at the mouth of this valley and so some twelve to sixteen miles from Sodom, thus accounting for Lot's five or six hours journey. In such case Zoar would lie under the flank of the mountain in which Lot and his daughters eventually made their dwelling.

In one moment judgment descended. *"Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from God out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground . . . and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."* Four hundred square miles of fertile park land and four built-up towns were swallowed up in a raging inferno of fire, from which nothing that lived survived.

The timing of the cataclysm was of God; what was the nature of the agency He used?

Now that the geology of the district has been thoroughly investigated—largely on behalf of modern commercial interests—the answer is relatively simple.

The Dead Sea lies in a gigantic crevasse in the earth's surface where the underlying rock, under tremendous strain, is unstable and subject to periodic earthquakes. Ages ago the subterranean strata over the entire area became a repository for mineral oil, bitumen, sulphur and natural gas, all of which accumulated under pressure as it does in any of the world's oilfields. Some of this mineral material found its way to the surface and was put to use in historical times. The "slime-pits" of Gen. 14 in the Vale of Siddim were bitumen wells worked by the inhabitants, for bitumen was a much used material in building construction. Of such importance were these natural products that in later days the Hebrews had four technical terms to define the varieties, all of which appear in the Old Testament—*zepheth*, liquid petroleum or mineral oil; *chemar*, mineral pitch or bitumen; *kophar*, resinous or bituminous liquid used for painting and varnishing, and *gaphrith*, a general term for sulphur and all bituminous or oil-based substances. The word "brimstone" in the narrative is this "*gaphrith*".

With this accumulation of explosive and combustible material underneath their land the Sodomites were literally living upon a volcano. It only needed something like an earthquake, creating a few fissures in the earth's crust, and a chance igniting of the pent-up gas and oil as it escaped, to send the whole area up in flames. That is what most probably happened. Earthquakes are not uncommon in the Jordan valley and quite a number have been recorded in historical times; several are mentioned in the Old Testament. An earthquake occurred; zig-zag cracks appeared in the ground, the stored-up gas and oil was ejected at high pressure, in which case it would most likely ignite spontaneously as it met the atmosphere, and the entire valley became a roaring furnace.

The conflagration probably lasted for weeks. In modern times, when an oil-well catches fire—a not infrequent happening—steps are taken to extinguish the blaze although the operation is an extremely difficult and dangerous one. In the case of Sodom the fire had to burn itself out and that stage might not have been reached until a considerable proportion of the subterranean deposits had been consumed and the underground

pressure reduced considerably. Chapter 19 tells how Abraham made his way early the following morning to his customary place of prayer overlooking the plain; from Hebron he could not see the valley where the cities had stood but above the hills on the skyline he saw the smoke ascending into the heavens "*like the smoke of a furnace*". The effect of such a conflagration could easily rise to twenty thousand feet and be easily visible at Hebron—it probably darkened the skies all over Canaan.

Lot's wife perished in the catastrophe. She "*looked back from behind him*"—literally, "from following him". The expression implies that although she started out with her husband and daughters she changed her mind half-way and went back towards the doomed city. She may have been a Canaanite, a native of the Plain; her identity is unknown, but evidently her sympathies were with the people of Sodom and she did not really believe there was going to be any destruction. By the time Lot entered Zoar she was well on the way back to Sodom, "*and*" says the narrator laconically "*she became a pillar of salt*". A feature of the eruption would be the vast quantity of molten mineral matter flung into the air and descending like a burning rain, smothering everything upon which it fell. A similar thing happens in volcanic eruptions. When the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were excavated the preserved bodies of some of their citizens were found, encrusted with the volcanic pumice dust and lava which had overwhelmed them during the eruption of Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Mingled with the oil and bitumen which destroyed the cities of the Plain were great quantities of mineral salts and it was thus that Lot's wife met her end, buried beneath a mass of semi-molten mud which hardened as it cooled and remained, just one of many such monuments in the ruined valley. Near the modern town of Sodom there is a six hundred foot cliff seven miles long known as the Mount of Sodom of which the upper four hundred feet or so is composed of limestone conglomerate interspersed with bitumen and sulphur, beneath which lies a hundred and fifty feet of clear solid salt. This cliff represents a "cleavage" in the strata; below the waters of the Dead Sea the same layers of limestone and salt continue. When the Vale of Siddim came to its fiery end, millions of tons of that salt must have gone up into the heavens in molten condition and descended over the whole area. To this day pillars and

columns of fantastic shapes, composed of this mixture of salt, sulphur and bitumen, abound around the southern shore of the Sea. It must have been to one of these that Josephus the Jewish historian referred when, repeating the story of Lot's wife, he said "*for I have seen it, and it remains at this day*" (Jos. Ant. 1. 12. 4).

It must have been at some later time that the sea invaded and covered the ruined plain. Several references in the O.T. (Deut. 29. 23; 34. 2; Zeph. 2. 9) indicate that it was for many years a desolate waste without any growing thing. By the time of the Exodus, four centuries later, the sea was there and was known as the Sea of the Plain or the Salt Sea. The boundaries of the land allotted to the tribe of Judah in Num. 34 are consistent with the shore-line as it exists at present. Josh. 15. 3 and 18. 9 refer to the north and south tongues of the sea in a fashion which would be meaningless unless the Vale of Siddim had by then been flooded and the site of the cities submerged. Some time during the life-spans of Isaac and Jacob, or whilst Israel was in Egypt, there must have occurred a general sinking of the floor of the valley so that the waters of the Dead Sea came in and covered it. The sinkage need not have been very great; the depth of water over the lost cities at the present time is only about three feet in the summer and thirteen in the winter.

Lot eventually went up into the mountain to dwell, "*for he feared to dwell in Zoar*" (ch. 19. 30). The reason for his fear is not stated. Maybe the spectacle of the continuing fire not many miles away reminded him that Zoar was also in the plain and possibly in danger; perhaps he was apprehensive of his Canaanite neighbours in the city and felt he must get away. At any rate, he and his daughters took refuge in a cave remote from all human habitation, and there he dwelt, bereft of his possessions and reduced to the bare essentials of living.

The expedient by which Lot's daughters each became the mother of a son by their own father is not always rightly appraised. The normal reaction is to quote this sequel to the story as an evidence of the extent to which the low moral standards of Sodom had permeated the household of Lot, but this is not necessarily justified. It has been suggested that the elder girl's remark "*there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth*" indicates that they believed the cataclysm had destroyed all mankind and that the survival of the human

race depended upon their father and themselves alone. That is not likely. They must have known at least that men and women still lived in Zoar, the town they had just left. From their cave on the mountain, five thousand feet above the level of the sea, they would be able to look down, not only over the whole extent of the ruined valley, but right across it to the opposite mountains rising up to Hebron fifty miles away. They knew that their kinsman Abraham lived there with his household, surrounded by the Amorites and Hittites, and they could easily see for themselves that the highlands of Canaan had been untouched by the disaster. The more likely supposition rests upon the strong feeling, common to all Semitic peoples, that dishonour attached to the man who failed to perpetuate his seed in the male line. The daughters' justification for their act was "*that we may preserve seed of our father*". They evidently saw no prospect of linking up with any other community of men, and held the abnormal circumstances to justify the expedient. In the days of Sodom the world was younger than it is now, and some present-day restrictions on inter-marriage did not exist; continuing degeneration of the race which has made such necessary had not then progressed so far. Abraham and his brother Nahor both married their own nieces; this was by no means an unusual relationship at that time. The marriage of full brother and sister was common among the Pharaohs of Egypt centuries later. 2 Sam. 3. 13 shows that a union between Amnon and his half-sister Tamar would have had the blessing of King David their father, and that was nearly a thousand years later. What is really difficult to understand is why Lot did not decide to make his way back to his uncle Abraham at Hebron. It is true that the Sea lay between them, but he had only to descend the mountain and make his way northward, crossing the Jordan more or less where the children of Israel did in later years, and then ascend the Judean hills to Hebron, a journey of not more than a hundred miles. He knew the country—he came to Sodom from that direction when first he parted from Abraham. Whether he was too ashamed to go back, or the shock he had received forbade his descending to the lowlands again, necessary if he was to get to Hebron, is impossible now to determine. The story leaves Lot, with his daughters, and their baby sons, in that cave high up above the ruined plain and the invading sea, and there, as far as we know, the man who tried to com-

bine his duty to God with his love of the good things of this world, and met disaster in so doing, breathed his last.

The two sons, we are told, became the progenitors of the twin nations of Moab and Ammon. It is a geographical fact that these nations did occupy just that land where Lot and his daughters took refuge. Moab possessed the territory between the river Zered, where Zoar stood, and the river Arnon, half-way along the Dead Sea, with the mountain of Lot right in the centre. From the Arnon to the river Jabbok, farther north, lay the country occupied by Ammon. The Moabites and Ammonites, distantly akin to the Israelites, were multiplying into sizeable nations whilst Israel was in Egypt and were more or less constantly at war with Israel for a thousand years thereafter.

The fiery end of the Cities of the Plain was never forgotten; it became a representation of the ultimate judgment of God against evil, and allusions to the event are found throughout the Bible. Typical is the prophecy of Isaiah describing the destruction of world evil immediately prior to the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, in his chapters 34-35. *"It is the day of the Lord's vengeance and the year of recompence . . . The streams thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."* (Isa. 34. 8-11). That description is based on what happened at Sodom. Malachi is another. *"The day cometh that shall burn as an oven . . . and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."* (Mal. 4. 1-2). That reference to the Sun of righteousness may well be derived from the rising sun which gave light to Lot in his flight and when it reached the meridian became the signal for judgment. When St. Peter told the Thessalonians that the Lord Jesus shall be

revealed from heaven in flaming fire to inflict everlasting destruction upon the wicked (2 Thess. 1. 7-8) he could very well have taken his metaphor from this same Old Testament story. In the third chapter of his second epistle, after alluding to the end of the antediluvian world by the agency of water he goes on to speak of the present world as *"stored with fire"* against the day of judgment which marks the coming of the new world *"in which dwelleth righteousness"*, and the language he employs makes it difficult to resist the conclusion that he is using the circumstances of the overthrow of these cities as the basis for his allusion.

Jude speaks of these ill-fated cities as *"suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"* (Jude 7). The word *aionian*, used here, does not mean eternal in the sense of perpetual but as age-enduring. Isaiah's use of *"olam"* for *"ever"* in *"the smoke thereof shall go up for ever"* has the same meaning. The literal fires of the Plain died out long ago but it is true that in a metaphorical sense the smoke goes up for ever in that the memory of this momentous judgment will never perish.

But that does not mean the end of the Sodomites. The arm of God is still stretched out to save, if salvation be possible. Ezek. 16 states plainly that Sodom is to return to her *"former estate"* and be joined with Israel and Samaria in a new covenant with the Lord. That word *"former estate"*—*gadmah*—means the original or pristine state of the subject. The people of the Plain, destroyed in their degradation and sin, are to be restored to the pristine condition which was theirs before sin entered and degradation had done its work, for even the Sodomites must have known a stage of childhood innocence. And if this be the intention of God, as He declared to Ezekiel it is His intention, it can only mean that in His supreme wisdom He sees the possibility of repentance and reform in even the most degraded of human beings and will not let go His hold until every possibility of conversion has been explored and found unavailing. Even with the men of Sodom.

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.**

Gone from us

Sis. S. E. Barber (*Dewsbury*)
 Sis. D. Eldred (*Bexleyheath*)
 Sis. A. Hawley (*Poynton*)

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



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

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CONTENTS

THE COMING OF THE KING

4. "Higher than all heavens" ... 63

"THE ANOINTED CHERUB

THAT COVERETH" 67

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

69

"THE REST OF THE DEAD"

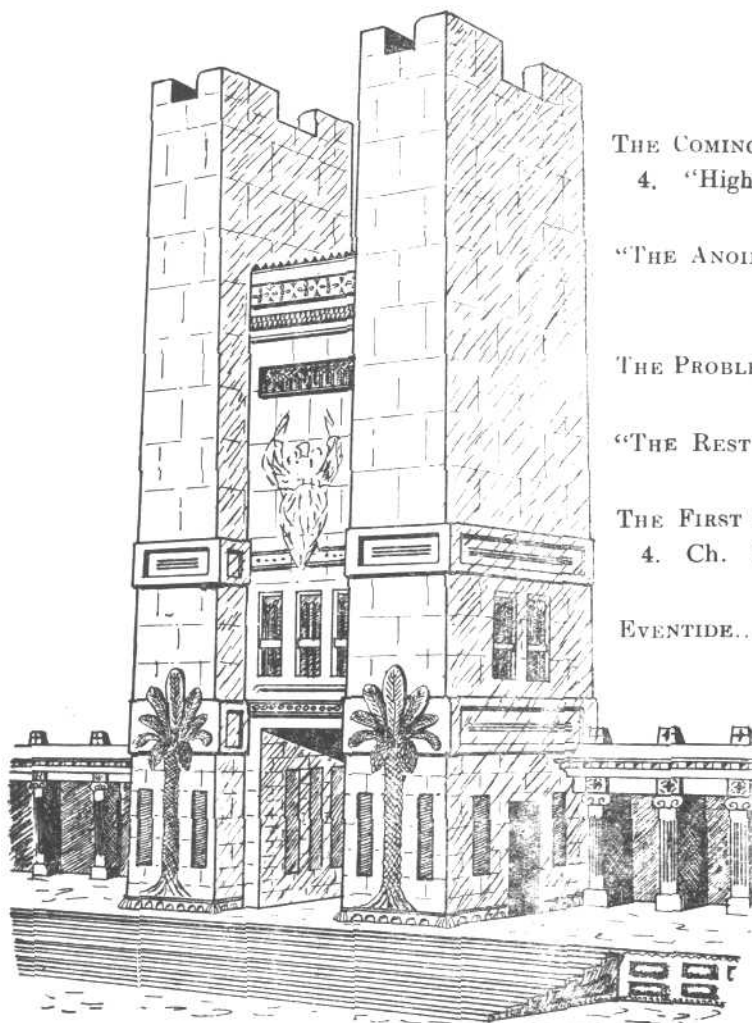
73

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

4. Ch. 2. 3-6 ... 77

EVENTIDE...

80



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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RENEWAL REQUESTS

Once every year we do ask each of our readers to confirm that they still desire the "Monthly" to be sent, unless during the preceding six months or so we have already received intimation to that effect, or we have other evidence of continued interest. The prompt return of the "renewal slip" enclosed with the "Monthly" at that time is much appreciated since failure so to do leaves us in something of a quandary. We do not wish to send copies to waste nor to obtrude them where there is no longer interest, and the return of the slip is the only means we have of taking action. Prompt return is particularly important in the case of overseas readers when it may take two or three weeks for the query to reach the reader and an equal time for the reply to come back. Not infrequently we have sent the succeeding issue with a reminder that no request for renewal has been received only to find a few days later that the request has been on its way and has "crossed in the post".

Readers whose code number on the address label lie in the 1000-3000 or the 9000 series will receive their renewal slip in the September issue and those in the 5000-8000 series in March.

* * *

BEREAN MANUAL REPRINTED

There will be some among our readers who in their early days set much store by the reference book known as the "Berean Manual" or "Berean Comments", out of print now for more than forty years. Our friends in Chicago have had this book reprinted. For the benefit of readers on this side of the ocean we are carrying a stock and can supply immediately upon request. The book measures $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2} \times 1$ inch, is well produced and handsomely bound in red cloth with title gold blocked, and the price is 32/- inclusive of postage.

* * *

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The article appearing in this issue under this title will shortly be available as a separate four-page leaflet. The cost is unknown at this stage, being dependent upon the demand, but if those interested will write in at once stating the quantities in which they may possibly be interested we will notify the appropriate cost within a few weeks when the probable demand has been gauged.

GALLERY OF THE PAST

For the interest of readers there is appended hereunder brief details relating to individuals of past times who are quoted or otherwise referred to in the pages of this issue.

Copernicus. Nicolaus Copernicus 1473-1543. Polish astronomer. Founded modern astronomy by declaring earth and planets move round the sun.

Eudoxus. 407-355 B.C. Greek mathematician who studied motions of planets and taught in Athens.

Galileo. 1564-1642. Italian scientist at University of Pisa. Developed work of Copernicus. Condemned and imprisoned by Inquisition in 1633 for denying earth centre of universe. Later released.

Hipparchus. 160-125 B.C. Greek astronomer at Alexandria who developed complete theory of planets and sun circling round the earth.

Kepler. Johann Kepler. 1571-1630. German astronomer whose discoveries respecting motion of planets became basis of Newton's formulation of law of gravity. Protestant Christian, suffered severe persecution.

Maedlar. 1846. German astronomer at Dorpat Observatory, Russia.

Ptolemy. Claudius Ptolemy. c.A.D. 120-160. Greek astronomer and historian of Alexandria who elaborated work of Hipparchus and published comprehensive books on astronomy from which the system became known as the "Ptolemaic Cosmogony" and remained orthodox belief until Galileo.

Seiss. Dr. Joseph Seiss. Lutheran minister of Philadelphia second half 19th century. Looked for pre-millennial advent and earthly Messianic kingdom.

Wright. Thomas Wright. c.1700-1750. British astronomer of Durham. First to discover true nature of the "Milky Way".

THE COMING OF THE KING

4. "Higher than all heavens"

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

A number of years ago there was published a book which set forth the views of twelve Christian ministers on the characteristics of Heaven. In nearly every case they pictured it situated a long way from the earth, somewhere in space, beyond the reach of telescopes or cameras, but having a definite geographical location so that presumably if one had some means of travelling through space and could live long enough it might be possible to take a journey to Heaven and come back to Earth. Of course none of the writers suggested as much but that is what would logically be implied. Even although some of them stressed the fact that Heaven is a "spiritual" realm, inhabited only by "spiritual" beings, the idea of locality in relation to the earth and the sun and the stars remained. It is difficult for anyone to think of Heaven in any other terms. The well-known hymn, "*There's a home for little children, above the bright blue skies*", is a tolerably correct reflection of the idea that exists in most minds respecting Heaven. Somewhere up there, beyond the sun and the moon and the stars, there is, suspended in space, the golden floor which constitutes the land of Heaven; there stand the hosts of the redeemed round the Throne of God. Somewhere in the upper skies shines resplendent that Holy City of which God and the Lamb are the eternal light.

When considering Scriptural teaching regarding our Lord's return to earth at His Second Advent it is important that we clarify our ideas, as far as possible, about the nature of Heaven. Naturally enough, the way in which we visualise it in our minds will affect and colour our understanding of what the Scriptures say about His return. If, for example, we believed that Heaven was on the moon, we would picture His Coming as a simple journey through space for two hundred and thirty-eight thousand miles from moon to earth, and easily imagine Him cleaving our atmosphere at the end of the journey and landing upon earth in full view of those who happened to be on the spot at the time. In just such a manner as 1 Thess. 4. 17, and Matt. 16. 64, would indicate if interpreted strictly literally. We are saved all that since we do not believe that Heaven is on the moon—which is just as well, since man, in his inexhaustible hunger for exploration, will

probably be effecting a landing on that satellite before many more years are out. And yet, if the place to which our Lord ascended when He "appeared in the presence of God for us" is not in fact a physical locality in our Universe to which men might conceivably travel if they had the machine and knew the way, and from which our Lord does travel when the time comes for Him to return to the earth, how and in what terms are we to picture His coming? Putting it crudely, where does He come from and how does He get here? The answer to that question might help us to understand the manner of His coming more clearly. We might well question now whether the time has come when, in the development of our understanding both of Divine revelation and natural science, it is necessary to consider from a new angle Scriptural statements such as that Christ "ascended into Heaven" and "sat down at the right hand of God"? A clearer appreciation of what really happened to our Lord when the cloud veiled His ascending form from the eyes of the disciples on Olivet, cannot fail to be enlightening when the manner of His return to earth is considered.

It is difficult to think of the Second Advent except in terms of some kind of journey from a distant part of space. The very fact that our Lord's spiritual presence is with us all through the centuries ("*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the Age*") implies that His Second Advent is a personal coming to the earth, something more than merely being present in thought and care for His Church. One truth upon which all agree is that for thirty-three and a half years the Son of God was literally present in the earth, communing and associating with men, and that after the Olivet scene following His resurrection He was thus literally present no longer. Even although during those last few weeks He was for the most part invisibly present, there came a change at Pentecost. Thereafter He was in the earth no longer; He had "ascended into Heaven".

It may be useful at this point to trace the progressive development of human beliefs about Heaven. From earliest times the place of the after-life has been visualised as lying just outside the boundaries of the known physical creation, transcending this earth in all the things which make for happiness and

contentment, but essentially of the same physical nature as this earth. As men's knowledge of the universe widened so their ideas of the place of Heaven perforce receded farther away. The earliest beliefs in this direction we meet with are those of the Sumerians about 2500 B.C., who placed the home of the gods upon the snowy summit of Mount Algard, on the frontier between Iraq and Iran (Persia). It soon ceased to be the site of Heaven when the later Sumerians became more familiar with the district and could even climb the mountain's slopes. For centuries afterwards, though, it was venerated in Babylonian legend as Mount Nizir, where the Ark came to rest. So heaven was transferred to the south, at the other end of the Persian Gulf, "beyond the mouths of the rivers" (Tigris and Euphrates) as the legends had it. But before long Sumerian merchant vessels were ploughing the waters of the Gulf on their way to India and Ceylon, and Heaven had to be moved again. The Greeks fixed its new site on the heights of Olympus, where they placed the home of the gods and the eternal abode of the blessed, and that did duty until some hardy adventurers, greatly daring, climbed to the summits of the mountains and found no marble halls, no playing fountains, no rich feasts of food and drink of life, no gods and no goddesses—nothing but a line of jagged, snow-clad peaks across which the wind howled and chilled them to the bone. Even so, the later Greeks went on believing that somewhere in the earth there existed a mountain, higher than all the rest, whose proud summit jutted into the fair land of the blest where the gods and their favourites dwelt in eternal felicity.

But men were beginning now to study the heavens in a spirit of scientific enquiry. The first great Greek astronomer, Hipparchus, a century and a half before Christ, accounted for the motions of the sun and planets by developing suggestions made by another, Eudoxus, two centuries earlier. According to his theory the earth was the centre of creation. The moon, sun, planets and stars revolved around the earth in a succession of concentric orbits not very far away. Outside these orbits there were three great crystalline spheres or "heavens", something like vast glass envelopes completely encircling and enclosing the earth, sun and stars. The surface of the third and outermost of these three spheres was the "sphere of happy souls", the eternal abode of the righteous. This was the accepted scientific view of

astronomy at the time of the First Advent. A century later a then leading astronomer, Claudius Ptolemy, elaborated the system in his writings from which it is now generally known as the "Ptolemaic cosmogony", and this remained accepted scientific belief until the seventeenth century when it was superseded by the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo. As late as 1626 John Speed's map of the world—now in the British Museum—showed these concentric spheres with the place of heaven marked!

The Christian Church in the early centuries of the Age grew up against the background of this system, and thus the idea of Heaven being somewhere out in space, on the uttermost of these spheres, became firmly fixed. The principal reason why the Catholic ecclesiastical authorities persecuted Galileo in the seventeenth century for denying the Ptolemaic theory by declaring that the earth and the planets were really moving round the sun, and the earth was not the fixed centre of the universe, was because it upset their theology in so far as the place of Heaven was concerned. In demolishing Ptolemy's crystalline spheres Galileo and his predecessor, Copernicus, had unwittingly demolished Heaven as well!

It was in consequence of this rapidly expanding knowledge of the heavenly bodies that in 1750 Thomas Wright, a British astronomer of Durham, hazarded the theory that the constellation known as Pleiades is the centre of the universe, and that all other stars, including our sun and its planets, circle around that central point. His thesis was not accepted but in 1846 it was elaborated and revived by a German astronomer, Prof. Maedlar. Dr. Joseph Seiss, a noted Lutheran minister of Philadelphia, came across the idea and concluded that here, surely, was the ideal place of Divine rule. He wrote "*Science has discovered that the sun is not a dead centre, with planets wheeling about it, and itself stationary. It is now ascertained that the sun also is in motion . . . around some other and vastly mightier centre. Astronomers are not yet fully agreed as to where that centre is. Some, however, believe they have found the direction of it to be the Pleiades, and particularly Alcyone, the centre one of the Pleiadic stars . . . Alcyone, then . . . would seem to be the 'midnight throne' in which the whole system of gravitation has its central seat, and from which the Almighty governs His universe . . .*"

But as with Ptolemy, so with Maedlar. So

far from Pleiades being the centre of visible creation, current discovery has established that it is but a member of our own "galaxy" or cluster of stars, and not even at the centre of that. Pleiades is in fact a relatively near neighbour of our own sun, and with the sun is itself revolving round some other and greater centre. And even that does not locate Heaven, for outside our own galaxy there are other galaxies, great "star-cities", at a distance so great as to defy the imagination. The extent of creation is unplumbed and unknown, and Heaven as a geographical location farther away than ever.

Against this should be set the sublime words of Solomon in 2 Chron. 6. 18 "*But will God in very truth dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built?*" Speaking thus at the dedication of the Temple, the Israelite king glimpsed a truth which all the seekers after a geographical heaven have passed over—that God "*dwelleth not in temples made with hands*" (Acts 7. 48). He exists from eternity, before any part of the material universe came into being. He cannot be contained within the structure of that which He created. It is with this in mind that enquiry into the "going" and "coming" of our Lord Jesus Christ must be made.

In the search for Scriptural allusions that may help us to understand these things a little more clearly we are led quite naturally to the experience of the Apostle Paul when he was "*caught up*" to the "*third heaven*" and heard "*indescribable things which it is not possible for a man to relate*" (2 Cor. 12. 4 Diaglott). The Apostle cannot be expected to have been wiser in things scientific than his own generation and the "*third heaven*" of which he speaks is, of course, the third sphere, the heaven of happy souls, of Hipparchus and Ptolemy. That is where St. Paul must of necessity have visualised the location of Heaven. Whether he was literally translated to the celestial world "*out of the body*" or merely experienced a vision "*in the body*" he himself knew not and it has no bearing on the matter now at issue. The fact remains that he perceived and retained a definite mental impression and memory of sights and sounds unlike anything occurring in human experience, and in consequence no words or analogies existed in human experience whereby he might describe them to his fellows.

To illustrate: Two hundred feet below the

surface of the sea all sunlight is so filtered out that only blue is left. All things there appear in various shades of blue. A diver, cutting his hand, sees the blood emerge as blue. Men have descended to that depth with floodlights and colour film cameras and found that when their powerful lights are switched on, the seabed and all its myriad forms of life show up in a magnificent and resplendent blaze of all colours. Suppose there had been on that seabed a race of intelligent beings, accustomed to spending their lives in that environment of blue, knowing nothing else, and one of them coming in contact with the scene thus illumined by floodlights. How could he describe to his less fortunate fellows, afterwards, what he had seen and the glory of the reds and greens and yellows? He could carry the brief vision in his own memory for ever, but it would be to him, so far as his companions were concerned, an "*indescribable thing which it was not possible to relate*". So must Paul have felt when he penned those words.

The spiritual world from which our Lord comes at His Advent, then, is something so different from the world we know that we could not understand or visualise it even if the Scriptures tried to describe it. It is not just that the trees are greener and the streams are clearer and the gold is brighter and the music sweeter. It is described in the Scriptures by many such devices but only because that is the nearest we can get to comprehending it. As Paul said to the Corinthians "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him*". Yet he goes on in the very next breath to declare "*But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit—for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*". And if that last remark means anything at all it must mean that those who are the Lord's disciples should expect to comprehend at least the fundamental principles of the spiritual realm even though they may not visualise its citizens and its landscapes.

Landscapes? Yes, landscapes! for the spiritual world must be a real world, as real to its citizens as is ours to us. The fact that it may not be found on Ptolemy's crystalline globe, or in the Pleiades, or anywhere else in this physical creation of which we are a part, does not detract from its reality, nor, be it said, from a certain similarity which must subsist between that world and this. For this world is a copy of that. When God made man, He said "*Let us make man in our image, after our*

likeness". In some very definite sense man's world is modelled after the likeness of that which God had before created for the celestials. At the very least, man is in the image of God and of the angels in his love of beautiful things and inspiring things; in his urge to create, to build, to accomplish; in his impulse to happiness, to joy, to laughter. Then there must be in that world, too, beautiful sights and inspiring sounds, things to create and build, purposes to accomplish, events that evoke happiness and joy and laughter. How inconceivable it is, when one comes to think it out, that God should make it possible for men to have laughter and merriment on earth if in all the long ages that preceded man's creation there had never been laughter and merriment in Heaven! The sights and sounds and surroundings of that world must assuredly be as real and substantial to its inhabitants as those of our world are to us, even although we may, with the aid of all that human science can give us, range throughout the whole wide domain of the starry heavens and never catch a glimpse of its splendour nor sense one note of its celestial harmonies. *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* It is not just distance in space, measured in so many millions or quadrillions of miles, that bars us from reaching the golden gates. It is something much more fundamental, a barrier that can never be crossed except by those who experience the reality of the Apostle's words *"We shall be changed"*.

What if that "change" is a change to life on a different "wave-length" so to speak, as if one had switched from the Light to the Home programme on the radio. That may be a difficult thing—it may even seem a ludicrous thing—to contemplate. But it may serve to indicate a possibility. It is a common experience in everyday life to switch on a television receiver and "tune in" to a particular wave-length. The room is filled with music—a definite world of sight and sound is created and is perceptible to the eyes and ears of the observer. Almost everyone realises now that simultaneously with that programme other worlds of sight and sound, inaudible and unperceived, are pulsating through that room, not seen or heard only because the force that creates them is on a different wave-length. They are just as real, and in other rooms, on correctly tuned receivers, are yielding sight and sound just as evident. Each receiver can discern only that to which it is adapted and tuned.

If the spiritual world can, by analogy, be

pictured as something like that, and existing, not in some other part of the material universe, but as it were upon a different wave-length, then, imperfect and to some extent inaccurate as this analogy must be, it can at least serve to free us from the geographical limitation which has of necessity shaped men's thoughts in the past, and help us to visualise that world as divorced from this, and yet in a sense superimposed upon it. If such a conception in any way approaches the truth, then our Lord Jesus Christ, Who left the earth and ascended to the right hand of God, effected that transfer of His personal presence from earth to Heaven, not by continuing his upward progress through the cloud that received Him out of the disciples' sight to some far distant point in outer space, but by passing into a world which is just as near to us here, and at the same time just as far away, as the unheard radio programme is near and yet far from the one that fills the room in which we may be sitting.

Likewise, at His coming again, He can, for a period at least, be present on the scene of earthly affairs without having necessarily come "into tune" as it were, with the material creation of human sense, and therefore unperceived by human senses, even as during most of the forty days between His resurrection and ascension. Only upon occasion then did He become apparent in a terrestrial body, the rest of the time He was out of this world and yet still near His disciples; only at the end of the forty days did He leave them to return to the Father. All the evidence goes to show that our Lord "descends from heaven", not by a physical journey from some recess of outer space into the solar system and so to the earth, but rather by something analogous to a change of "wave-length".

Perhaps the analogy is too hard to grasp. Perhaps it is not a very good one after all. But that our returning Lord comes, not from somewhere else inside our universe, but from a spiritual realm which is altogether outside it, ought to be realised as a fact even if we cannot fully comprehend it; and that in turn should help us to understand why the early stages of His Advent are described as being thief-like, unobtrusive, not detected by human eyes and ears but by the mental and spiritual faculties, rightly appraising the signs of the times. The outward manifestations, appealing to the natural senses, come later.

(To be continued)

“THE ANOINTED CHERUB THAT COVERETH”

A consideration of Ezek. 28

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

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

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

Here is afforded a perfect setting for deeper instruction to Christians of after days. The first part of Ezekiel's denunciation clearly refers to the city and its inhabitants and their activities and institutions. Every detail is capable of a strictly literal application and its fulfilment is recorded in history. This part of the description concludes with an account of the woes which would come upon the prince of Tyre, and chapter 28, verses 1-10, tell of the doom awaiting that potentate. At the 11th verse the prophet passes into a new denunciation, which, while addressed ostensibly to the ruler of Tyre, employs language and allusions which cannot be truthfully applicable to any earthly being. The point of correspondence is that as Tyre was to go into oblivion for ever, so will this of whom the prophet now speaks. Addressing the King of

Tyre as a symbol, so to speak, of the one he has in mind, the prophet, speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, records a vivid description of the creation and fall of Lucifer, the Prince of Evil.

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

“Thou seal most accurate, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty” (Margolis). This reference is to Babylonian “seals”—little cylinders of baked clay with an intricate design embossed, used by the owner to impress his distinctive mark or signature upon the clay tablets of that time. A “seal most accurate” must indicate a faithful copy of the master seal. By such an expression Lucifer is pictured, like man in later days, created “in the image and likeness of God”, like all that God has made, “very good—full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty”. The word “tochnith” translated “sum” in the A.V., means “pattern” and in its only other occurrence (Ezek. 43. 10) refers to the pattern or arrangement of the Temple buildings. Thus the A.V. rendering conveys the same idea as other translations—the accuracy of this copy of the Divine pattern which was represented in the personality of Lucifer.

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

“Every precious stone was thy covering.” The word translated “covering” is *mesukkah*, meaning a pavilion or a tabernacle, and the description of a pavilion bearing “every precious stone” brings to mind at once the description of the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation, the glorious city of which it is said that the foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones, its gates of pearls and its streets of gold. Remembering that this “New Jerusalem” is to restore to mankind that which was lost in Eden, it is

not an unreasonable thing to picture Lucifer enthroned in that early day of man's innocence as the lord of earthly creation for man's guidance and instruction in the ways of God. The contrast between this one who, through ambition, misused a wonderful opportunity, and the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it is said "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" is then a particularly striking one. This thought of Lucifer's royal state is further borne out by the next clause, *"The service of tabrets and flutes was prepared with thee in the day thou wast created"*. The word translated "workmanship" is *"melakah"*, meaning work or business, referring to the royal music, the "tabrets or flutes" of the text. Musical instruments were an essential adjunct of kingly state, and a similar reference to the "business" or "service" of the king's musicians occurs in Neh. 11. 22 and 13. 30, and in Dan. 8. 27, affording illustrations of the kingly rank with which Lucifer was invested at his creation.

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

Now comes the dark shadow of sin. *"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. By the abundance of thy slander thou wast filled to thy centre with violence and thou didst sin."* In this verse the word "merchandise" is from the Hebrew *"rekullah"*—

not *"ma'arab"* (barter) as in Ezekiel 27, nor *"sachar"* (gain) as in many other Scriptures, but from a root which means "to go to and fro" either as a merchant or as a tale bearer or slanderer. Hence it is suggested by students that in determining the meaning to be attached to this word in harmony with its context the alternative meaning should be adopted, and the fitness of this is evident when it is remembered that one of the descriptions the Bible attaches to Satan is that of "slanderer" or "accuser". How fitting then, is this verse, when one recalls the slander uttered in Eden: "God doth know . . . your eyes shall be opened" as though the Creator harboured base designs against His creatures. This verse may well include that great slander and famous lie first told in Eden and repeated century after century through the ages, "Ye shall not surely die".

The nature of Lucifer's sin is not stated here; fuller details are afforded in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah; but there stands out in all its stark horror the dread declaration that this wonderful being who had commenced a life of such marvellous promise, and had been so signally honoured by his Creator, had proven unfaithful to his trust. Sin had entered, and by the immutable laws of God, unless sin be eradicated, death must inevitably follow. Hence that solemn declaration of the only possible ending to this story, the fundamental truth that sin contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. *"Therefore brought I forth fire from the midst of thee; this devoured thee, and I changed thee to ashes upon the earth before the eyes of all that saw thee—Thou art as though thou hast not been, and shall not be any more for ever."* Here is the doom of Satan; the fire of his own sin, proceeding from within himself, has severed him for ever from the presence and fellowship of God. Devoured by that fire, and in the end of time cast as ashes upon the earth, he will be as though he had never been "and shall not be any more for ever". A supreme example of the awful consequences of sin is provided by this story of Lucifer, the fallen archangel.

It is in the "littles" of this life that we show our worth; our standing; our make-up. It is a great thing to regard each day as the best in one's life; a small New Year full of promise, a new opportunity to correct a fault, a new chance of rising higher. Life can never be dull if we have this outlook.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

The presence of evil in a creation which is claimed to be ultimately controlled by a perfectly moral Supreme Being is a paradox that has exercised the minds of philosophers and theologians alike in all ages. No one has yet found a complete explanation. Faith may rest itself upon the reflection that all God's ways are just and right, and some at least may accept that in the problem there must be factors which are beyond the scope of human intellect to appreciate or understand, but still the thought comes "Why is there evil at all?" If God designed the world and created man to inhabit and use it, why did He allow the admittedly disruptive power of evil to influence and modify what He had made?

Before progress can be made towards even a partial understanding of the problem an underlying question must be answered. What is evil? The word is used very commonly and in various connections, but in general it is equated with principles or practices which produce human disadvantage or unhappiness. There is moral evil and physical evil; evil in a religious sense and evil which has to do with codes of human conduct or the effect of human actions; evil for which man is responsible and evil that he cannot control. Whatever the definition, there is a tacit agreement that evil should not be. Men would prefer to live without it, even although in many of their thoughts and words and actions they contribute to the furtherance of things that are admittedly evil.

Evil is not the same thing as sin, although the two principles are related. Sin, in its turn, is not solely a theological concept, although many people have not thought of it in any other connection. Sin is always evil, but evil is not always or necessarily sin. It is not possible to consider the one without the other because of their close connection and it is not possible to bring the question of evil into proper focus until first there is a clear view of the nature of sin.

Any consideration of the problem of evil and sin must admit the reality of God. If there is no Supreme One, if the universe is not controlled by an omnipotent and perfectly moral personal Being, if all that our physical senses reveal to us is no more than what someone has called "a fortuitous concourse of atoms", and the life that is in us nothing more

than a form of chemical reaction between those atoms, then there can be no such thing as sin, and no such thing as evil. If men are but animal creatures that by reason of superior physical or mental development have crawled a bit higher out of the primeval slime than have other less able living things then the survival of the fittest is the only law of life, and victory in the battle against hostile environment, or competing living forms, the only virtue. There is no reason for any other law and nothing abnormal in the suffering of the innocent if all at the end are to return to their dust again, with neither future prospect nor present purpose in their having lived at all. The very fact that men recognise the reality of evil and the desirability of a moral law which makes for the wellbeing of individuals and the orderly conduct of communal life is itself an evidence that there is an ultimate standard of right and an ultimate goal of attainment which is not derived from the physical creation we know, nor yet from the mental faculties of man, but from a power exterior and superior to this creation and those mental faculties. Man can only believe in evil if, whether he realises it or not, he also believes in God.

It follows that any consideration of the problem of evil must also take into account the implications of the future, of life after human death, of all that is known respecting the purpose of God in creating man. If life as men now know it is only part of the story, only a preface to greater things yet to come, then the apparent hopelessness and injustice of evil not rectified before death is at least relieved by the possibility of eventual emergence from its power and effects after death.

There are certain natural catastrophes which are in themselves great evils when they are destructive of human life. Earthquakes, tornados, great floods; these cannot be controlled or averted by man, and when they occur and bring death and destruction in their train, this is an evil. Until we know more about the processes involved in bringing man's home to the maturity God undoubtedly intends we cannot say why this must be so. Closely allied with this aspect of the subject is the apparent suffering inherent in the animal kingdom, "Nature red in tooth and claw", one creature preying upon another in

order to sustain its own life and fulfil its own function in the scheme of Nature. To what extent this also has its place in the ultimate state of creation is likewise unknown; the prophetic pen pictures of the Old Testament insist that in that time "*nothing shall hurt nor destroy*" and picture the carnivorous beasts living in amity with their erstwhile victims—"*the lion shall lay down with the lamb and the leopard shall eat chaff like the bullock*". Until we understand much more of the mystery of life in its myriad terrestrial manifestations it is impossible to say why such colossal numbers of living creatures are born only to serve as food for other living creatures, or even to say dogmatically what degree of suffering and therefore evil is involved in the process. The type of sense-perception with which we are familiar in ourselves does not necessarily apply to creatures lower down in the scale of life.

These possible aspects of evil are as nothing, however, compared with evil as it exists among men and is contributed to by the actions of men. "*Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn*" is a trite but true saying, and not only in respect of deliberate acts of cruelty or oppression. Disease, pestilence, famine and other disasters affecting individuals or communities all have their origin in sin, either of commission or omission on the part of men, of contemporary or perhaps long antecedent generations. It is from this standpoint that the problem of evil has to be approached. Before asking why God did not prevent the happening it is necessary to ask what man has done to prevent it, or even what man did do to cause it. The idea of sin has been associated with disobedience to a code of laws imposed by God, but this is very far from the correct definition. Sin is the violation of any principle which God has set for the orderly conduct of His creation. Whatsoever is against the laws of Nature or the principles of right dealing with one's fellows, that is sin. The laws of Nature are the laws of God; the inward instincts of right and wrong were originally implanted in our ancestors by God. The extent to which we violate either those laws or those instincts, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to that extent we sin, and the result is evil. Evil, affecting not only ourselves, but oft-times others; evil the consequences of which may extend into whole communities or endure through many generations.

The story of Eden and the Fall enshrines the profound truth that the Most High creat-

ed man sinless at the first and placed him in an environment to which he was completely adapted, with power to live everlastingly providing that he observed the laws of his being and fulfilled the purpose for which he was created. Man failed to keep those laws, and the measure of that failure was the measure of his disobedience to God. That failure introduced death, its logical and inevitable consequence, and every manifestation of evil which now exists amongst men. Alluding to the Genesis story, St. Paul says "*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*" (Rom. 5. 12). The short answer to the question why evil is present in the world is that man himself introduced it.

This does not offer the solution of the problem. Sin and evil are inherently destructive and God did not create only to destroy. Why did He so make man that he is capable of sin? If the living of life, individual and communal, in accordance with the laws of creation ensures continuing life without inharmoniousness or disorder, injustice or disruption, why not make man so that he could do naught else than follow right ways. A little reflection shews that the bondage of such a constraint would be more than any intelligent mind could endure. To live at all under such a condition would relegate man to the level of the brute beast, or one of those mechanical robots which begin now to figure in modern flights of pseudo-scientific fancy. Man is the head and crowning glory of terrestrial creation, and it is fundamental that he must have complete free will and power to accept or reject for himself his offered place in creation. He must accept his destiny by his own personal choice and of his own volition, and this involves the introduction of evil in the world if man or any section of man does elect to travel the way of sin.

But this does not imply lasting harm to Divine creation. The originator and controller of all things is God, and His is the authority and the power to establish the principles upon which His creation is to operate. The revealed word of God is definite that evil is permitted only temporarily and that for a wise purpose, that the time comes in the history of human development when evil is to be eliminated. It is true that in the meantime the innocent suffer with the guilty and sometimes more than the guilty, but this is inevitable because in the Divine wisdom and order all men are interdependent. "*None of us liveth to himself*" (Rom. 14. 7). Each man

is a member of that unity which is the human race, and the entire race is one component part of that greater physical entity which is this earth with all its variety of sentient life, plant life, and basic substance, all of which are interrelated and must function together to maintain their continued joint existence.

A time feature is therefore introduced into the problem. The present condition of sin and evil will not be for ever. "*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*" (Psa. 30. 5). This general experience with evil which is the lot of all men can in the economy of God be turned to good account as an educational influence. If man, having at the commencement of human history chosen the way of sin, is allowed to continue in that way until the full consequences of his choice become manifest, in the wreck of his world and the degeneration of his moral character, and is then presented with an experience of the world under Divine mandate with the opposite principles operating, he becomes possessed of a basis upon which he can make an intelligent choice for good or evil, so he may take up his place in the opening vista of the illimitable future, if he takes it at all, as of free will and in full sympathy with the governing principles involved.

This full experience of a world with evil and one without evil, must of necessity extend beyond the bounds of the present life. Many come to the end of their days without seeing the light; many never have it presented to them and are born and die in helpless ignorance, sometimes prematurely cut off by one of the many manifestations of evil—cruelty, disease, violence—which abound. There has to be a further stage in which the reverse side of the picture is presented. There must be a future life, or a period in future life limited as to time, in which progress towards the Divine ideal can be continued, or initiated if progress has not yet started, under Divinely supervised conditions where the outward environment is one of good rather than evil, and where no individual can be hindered from advance by the evil-doing of another. Such an order of things will obviously not be instituted by man. Neither the past history of the race nor its present condition give any ground for hope that at some future time man will have extinguished all evil, internal and external, and established an era of universal righteousness. Such a system, founded on justice and love and backed by adequate power to render effective its decrees

and warfare against every form of evil, must originate from above, from the powers of the celestial. Even if men did achieve measurable success in conflict with the darker side of their natures they could do nothing for the millions who have died under the reign of evil and now lie in the grave. Only God can raise the dead! And the Divine purpose includes all men of all generations, all who have known life, the dead as well as the living. It follows then that there must come a time in human history when the dominion now exercised by the most powerful among men, and exercised all too often for evil ends and to the detriment of those dominated, will be taken from them and vested in One who can be completely trusted to rule in righteousness and equity, and undo all the harm that has been wrought by evil since the world began.

This is an integral feature of the Christian faith. The Lord Christ, in the world's extremity, is to institute such an order of things and administer world affairs through the medium of His own appointees, men and women whose lives' work and experience have fitted them for the task, who are incorruptible, wise and just, inflexibly set for the principles of right doing and determined in the prosecution of their mission to crush all evil. It means a tremendous educational programme, a world-wide evangelistic work, physical and mental as well as spiritual healing and rehabilitation. It means the resurrection of the dead, that none of earth's millions may be deprived of the opportunity of this salvation. It means a great call for conversion and allegiance to Christ the Lord, for only in Him and through Him can life flow to any man. And at the end it means the straight choice between alternatives with no possibility of avoiding the issue. "*I have set before you this day life and death, good and evil; choose life, that ye may live*".

It is true that this implies a continuance of probation into the future life. This, although not usually embodied in contemporary Christian theology, is held by many to be scripturally sound and the only real answer to the problem of the unevangelised and all who by virtue of present world evil have been hindered or prevented from obtaining a knowledge of the Divine purpose or hearing the call to believe in the Gospel of Christ. There must always be progress and development in the future life; until the irrevocable decision has been taken in the light of full knowledge there must always be the possibility of re-

penitance and conversion. The stories of the Prodigal Son and of Jonah at Nineveh shew that God will accept repentance no matter how late in the day. All these considerations establish in no unmistakable fashion that the probationary stage of man's existence is not completed until the world has experienced one era dominated by evil and another era dominated by good, and every man in the light of that dual experience has exercised his power of freewill and made his choice.

So evil, because it is inherently unstable, must at the last disappear. Men who live, and who live on into timeless eternity, advancing, progressing and achieving without end, do so because they have become spiritually one with the Lord Christ and receive continuing life through Him, the channel of life. The last book of the Bible closes with a picture of the sons of men entering the Holy City free of all defilement and uncleanness, worthy citizens of the land into which nothing can enter that is of evil. *"The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it . . . and there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth . . . but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Rev. 19, 24-27).

The fact that hardship and suffering, inseparable from a world such as this in which evil subsists, in itself is of value in developing and strengthening character and the finer qualities of the mind, sometimes provokes the suggestion that in some manner beyond our understanding evil is a necessary factor in the development of man toward the ultimate ideal. From this it is argued that God is responsible for evil and that it is in fact an element of His deliberate purpose. Should this hypothesis be a true one it would do no more than deal with the problem of present evil. If there should be nothing more in the Divine mind than the formation of a limited number of creatures on this one planet in all the immensity of creation the idea might not be too objectionable, for even so evil would still one day come to an end. But

no sane view of the creative work of God can maintain that there is to be nothing else besides mankind and the earth, that the wonderful potentialities for intelligent life manifested in individual personal beings could be limited to one insignificant speck of dust in all the universe. And if on this account evil is to be thought of as recurring, time after time into all eternity, as successive new communities of intelligent creatures awaken to conscious existence, in or on other spheres of life, the whole conception of things like sorrow, unhappiness, injustice, cruelty, death, vanishing out of God's creation, has to be abandoned. At any one time, somewhere in the universe, there will be sighing and weeping, strife and bloodshed, disease and death. In a very real sense the mediæval idea of Hell would be restored. The entire principle is illogical, alien to the known character of God, and on this account ought to be rejected out of hand.

That evil has intruded itself into God's creation is an indisputable fact to which humanity is witness. That it is no more than an intrusion, and that it will eventually be eliminated, is essential to any right conception of the nature and character of God, and of normal order in His dominion. The answer to the question "Why does not God do something about evil" is that He is doing something. He is dealing with men in such fashion that at the end they will see evil for the foul thing that it is, and will willingly and intelligently renounce it and become sons of the Living God. *"I have come"* said Jesus *"to seek and to save that which was lost"*. The triumph of His coming is forthshown in the inspired words of St. Paul *"... the goodwill which God purposed to exhibit in Christ, in view of that Divine Order which was to mark the completion of the Ages, when He should make everything, both in heaven and on earth, centre in Him"* (Eph. 1, 10 Twen. Cen). At the end, God will be universally acknowledged, and evil will be no more.

It will be as when sunshine draws forth the glory of colour in a landscape that has been lying under a pall of cloud . . . Under the direct rays of the Sun of Righteousness buds of earth will become flowers of heaven. Vision will beget likeness, and likeness, again, give clearness to vision, their endless interaction securing endless progress towards the inexhaustible fulness of Christ. (Robert Law)

The sweetest perfume that the home circle ever knows arises from the deeds of loving service which its members do for each other. The sweetest perfume of our homes do not arise from elegant furniture, soft carpets, elegant pictures, or luxurious viands. Many a home, having all these, is pervaded by an atmosphere as tasteless and odourless as bouquets of waxen flowers.

"THE REST OF THE DEAD"

A consideration of Rev. 20. 5

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Rev. 20. 5).

Obviously it is not the First Resurrection! Verse 4 has already described that, and verse 6 goes on to say more about it. The First Resurrection is the resurrection of the Church, which takes place at the return of the Lord, and in advance of the resurrection of the world, which is usually known as the General Resurrection. If the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" is to be deferred to the end of the thousand years and the Church is raised at the beginning, John surely should have said "This is the second resurrection".

It may be noted that the sentence "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" completely breaks the sense of the passage. Verse 4 speaks of the exaltation of the Church and concludes by saying "they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years". Were the expression about the rest of the dead not there, the narrative would go straight on to say "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" and so on. The whole passage is connected in a logical manner. Now verses 7-9 go on to say that at the end of the thousand years Satan goes out in an attempt to deceive the nations, who apparently have been in the earth all the time during the thousand years. And since the main object of this thousand years is for the reconciliation to God of whosoever will, and at the end of that period the issues of life and death are to be decided for every human being, and evil be brought to its end, it is obvious that the phrase as it stands cannot possibly be true.

We come therefore to examine the text itself. The *International Critical Commentary*, which is probably the best existing authority on purely textual matters, says briefly that the sentence is "an interpolation". Unfortunately it does not give much information wherewith to buttress this very definite statement. That has to be sought elsewhere.

No manuscript of the New Testament earlier than the 5th century contains this sentence. That of itself is significant. It was during the 5th century that opposition to the doctrine of the Millennium came to a head. The Sinaitic MS., 4th century, the Vatican

MS., 1160, 5th century, and the Syriac Peshitto, 6th century, do not contain the passage. (The date of the Syriac is sometimes given as 2nd century, but the original Peshitto of that date did not contain the Book of Revelation, which was added to it in the 6th century). It is found in the Alexandrian and in the Ephraemi, both of the 5th century, and statements are sometimes made that it appears in the Vatican 1209 of the early 5th century, but this is not correct. Vaticanus 1209 ended at Heb. 9. 13 and no later part of the New Testament appeared in the original manuscript. Revelation was added to this MS. in the 15th century to make it complete, and it is this late addition, of no value for the present enquiry, that contains the phrase in question.

There are very few MSS. earlier than the 4th century in existence, so that we are left with the position that no 4th century MS. has the disputed phrase, whilst of MSS. written during the 5th and 6th centuries some contain it and some do not. It seems quite clear therefore that it was during the 5th century that the words were first inserted.

It has been noticed by scholars that when the interpolation is removed, the passage in Rev. 20 describing the exaltation of the Church to her position of reigning over the nations takes the form of a set of seven couplets, which further strengthens the case for regarding it as an interpolation. The passage then reads thus:

1. *"And I saw thrones, and they (that) sat upon them,
And judgment was given unto them:*
2. *And the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,
And for the word of God:*
3. *And which would not worship the beast,
Neither his image,*
4. *Neither had received his mark upon their foreheads,
Or in their hands;*
5. *And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;
This is the first Resurrection.*
6. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection;*
On such the second death has no power,
7. *But they shall be priests of God and of Christ,*

And shall reign with him a thousand years."

How did the sentence get there? It was probably added, perhaps as an interlineary comment, by some transcriber who thought that such an observation was called for. Later on, when the usefulness of this addition to the theology of the day became apparent, it would be incorporated in new copies of many manuscripts and gradually become general. In the 4th and 5th centuries the doctrine of the Millennium was under a cloud; the original sharp outlines of Paul's teaching respecting the Day of Judgment and its purpose was becoming blurred over by later speculations tending to stress the Church's present glory and power. The missionary zeal that had fired the Early Church with the desire to lead men to Christ and save them, and hold out the hope of the High Calling of this Age as God's great work for the present, had given place to a complacent satisfaction with the world as it is, and much attention to Church organisation and the extension of its influence in temporal matters. Constantine had long since established Christianity as the State religion, and the times of persecution, except for short periods, were past. Church dignitaries found the doctrine of the Millennium increasingly distasteful; they wanted to reign now. St. Augustine, the great theologian of orthodox Christianity, wrote his celebrated work, *"The City of God"*, in 420 A.D. and virtually transferred the reign of the Church into this present Age, leaving no place for the Millennium and its work. The Council of Rome, under Pope Damasus, in A.D. 373 formally denounced Millennial belief as heresy and from that date the decline of belief in the coming Age of righteousness commenced, not to be revived on any large scale until the dawn of the 19th century. With this interpolation added it became easier to interpret Rev. 20 as applying to this new idea of the Millennium, the reign of the Church over the nations during this present Age, and the resurrection of the dead at its end, which then became the Day of Judgment of mediæval theology.

St. Augustine explained the "First Resurrection" as the resurrection of believers in this life from the death to sin to the life of faith in Christ, and the binding of Satan as the overthrow of his power by reason of the rising power of the Church in the world and the "Christianising" of the nations. The thousand years, he said, was to be taken as a figure of the time between the First and Second Advents, and at the Second Advent would

come the Last Judgment and the second resurrection of the dead. Continuing, he says (*"City of God"* 20. 7) *"Of these two resurrections John the evangelist, in the book of Revelation, has spoken in such a way that the First Resurrection has been misunderstood by some of our people and turned into fables. Those who, on the strength of his words have surmised that the First Resurrection would be a corporal one have, among other reasons, been mainly moved by the number—a thousand years—as though there were destined to be a Sabbath rest of that duration for the saints, a holy vacation after six thousand years of labour . . . and that the saints are to rise again to keep this Sabbath. Which opinion would be at least tolerable, if it were understood that the saints would enjoy spiritual delights from the presence of the Lord. For we ourselves were formerly of this opinion. But when they say that those who then rise again will spend their time in immoderate carnal feasting . . . such things cannot possibly be believed except by carnal persons."* From this extract it can be seen how popular belief in the Millennium had degenerated into a hope for "good times for the saints" on a purely material level. The high ideal of service for humanity in that day, the extending to all men of the blessings of knowledge and recovery from sin, had become lost. Augustine poured scorn upon the carnal views of the Millennium that prevailed in his day and proceeded to do away with the doctrine altogether.

The theologians of the 4th and 5th centuries could find some earlier basis on which to build their views. Apocryphal literature circulating among the Jews during the few centuries around the time of our Lord had much to say respecting the Messianic Age, which was to be inaugurated by the Advent of Messiah, who would exalt Israel to a place of rulership among the nations, rule as their King, put down the opposition of their enemies, and at the end of His reign—put variously at periods ranging between four hundred and a thousand years—hold a Last Judgment and destroy all the wicked. After that would come a new world of everlasting righteousness in which evil would find no place. We, looking back now, can see how accurate that expectation was, once the fact that the reign of Messiah is to commence at His Second Advent and not at His First is seen. But the Jewish hope envisaged only one Advent. It was easy for the Church of the 5th century to claim that Christ had indeed come

to reign at His First Advent, but that the Church, not Israel, was to be joint ruler with Him over the nations. It was not difficult either to find chronological proofs to support this claim. The work called the "Assumption of Moses" (written probably during the lifetime of Jesus) says that Divine intervention for the setting up of His Kingdom would come seventeen hundred and fifty years after the death of Moses, which pointed to A.D. 350 as the date. The chronology of the day gave times varying between A.D. 350 and 500 as the end of six thousand years from Adam, and with this material at hand the claim that the Millennium had already begun was easy to promulgate. The symbolic language of Revelation lent itself to the new principle of interpretation, and so the inserted passage became firmly fixed.

Andreas, Bishop of Cæsarea, about A.D. 550 wrote, in his commentary upon the Book of Revelation, chap. 20, "Some confine this thousand years to the short period of our Lord's ministry, from His baptism to His ascension to heaven, being no more than three years and a half. Others think that after the completion of six thousand years shall be the first resurrection from the dead, which is to be peculiar to the saints alone, who are to be raised up that they may dwell again upon this earth, where they had given proofs of patience and fortitude, and that they may live here a thousand years in honour and plenty, after which will be the general resurrection of good and bad. But the Church receives neither of these interpretations. By the thousand years we understand the time of the preaching of the gospel, or the time of the gospel dispensation". Here is a plain statement of rejection of Millennial belief and clear evidence that the inserted passage was generally received by that date.

The earliest reference to belief in this second resurrection at the end of the Millennium that the writer has been able to discover is in the writings of Lactantius, an educated Roman who became tutor to the eldest son of the Emperor Constantine, and had some influence on the theology of the Church of his day. Writing in A.D. 310, he says (*Divine Institutions*, Book 7, ch. 24) "Let philosophers know, who number thousands of years since the beginning of the world, that the six thousandth year is not yet concluded. But that number being fulfilled, of necessity there must be an end and the state of human things be transferred into that which is better. Because all the works of God were finished

in six days, it is necessary that the world should remain in this state six ages; that is, six thousand years. Because having finished the works, he rested on the seventh day and blessed it, it is necessary that at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness should be abolished out of the earth, and justice should reign for a thousand years. When the Son of God shall have destroyed injustice, and shall have restored the just to life, he shall be conversant among men a thousand years and shall rule with a most righteous government. At the same time the Prince of Devils shall be bound with chains, and shall be in custody for a thousand years of the heavenly kingdom, lest he should attempt anything against the people of God. When the thousand years of the kingdom, that is, seven thousand years, shall draw toward a conclusion, Satan shall be loosed again; and then shall be that second and public resurrection of us all wherein the unjust shall be raised". Now this description of the Millennium from the pen of one of the most learned Christians of the 4th century is remarkable in that it betrays no trace whatever of the true purpose for which the Age is ordained of God; "that the residue of men might seek after the Lord" (Acts 15. 17). The Millennium of Lactantius is not for the blessing and conversion of the world; it is for the delectation and selfish pleasure of the saints, and at its end the "unjust", those who are not of the saints, are to be raised merely to be judged and presumably sent to everlasting doom. And that leads us to the conclusion that it was the loss of that true understanding of God's purpose in the Millennial Age, sometime between the 1st and 4th centuries, that made it possible, and indeed necessary, to find some Scriptural warrant for deferring the resurrection of the world to the end of the Millennium. Their presence on earth during that blessed Age would be an annoyance and a nuisance to the redeemed saints who had been raised from the dead to enjoy a kind of super-holiday as compensation for the persecutions and sufferings they had endured during this life.

Writers earlier than Lactantius do not seem to have any knowledge of this idea of a deferred resurrection. Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto, in A.D. 220 proclaimed that the Millennium would commence in A.D. 500, when Christ would return, destroy Antichrist, the First Resurrection take place, the Kingdom be set up, and the wicked come into judgment. That is a fair summary of the truth as

many, now would define it—except for the date! Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, in A.D. 116 taught that there would be a thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, when the Kingdom of Christ would be established visibly upon the earth. The unknown writer of the *"Epistle of Barnabas"*, some time during the 1st century, said *"In six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end . . . And when he saith 'He rested the seventh day' he meaneth this, that when His Son shall come and abolish the Wicked One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, and moon, and stars, then He shall gloriously rest on that seventh day"*. These earlier Christians of the first few centuries seem to be quite clear that the Age itself is intended for the judgment of the "ungodly", and when we realise that the term "judgment" includes the whole process of teaching and preparing mankind for the final choice, then these beliefs are just what we would expect from men who were not far removed from Apostolic teaching.

Why does the belief in this "second resurrection at the end of the Age" persist? During later centuries of the Gospel Age those few who did hold to the New Testament view of the Millennial reign were compelled to view the prophecies in the light of their own theological misconceptions. The effect of the "Dark Ages" suppression of the doctrine was to obliterate understanding of the "two salvations", and with that went, logically, the true view of the two resurrections. When in the 16th and 17th centuries Millennial belief came to the surface again men viewed the Millennial earth much as did Lactantius, the temporary home of the resurrected saints prior to their being taken off to heaven at the end of the thousand years and the burning up of the earth. The seeming incongruity of glorified saints and resurrected wicked living side by side, upon the Millennial earth, made it easy to postpone the judgment of humanity in general to the end of the Age, especially since there was no understanding that the Age is to be a time of probation; there would seem to be no point in resurrecting the doomed only to wait about for a thousand years before being brought to the bar for sentence. This disputed passage therefore was still just as apparently logical. The saints were to dwell on earth during the thousand years with Satan and all evil restrained; at the end the saints would be taken to heaven, all mankind, "the rest of the dead", raised, Satan loosed, the final judgment on evil, the "Last Judgment", take place before the Great White

Throne, and then the Devil destroyed, the earth burned up, and the new heavens and new earth brought into being. At a time when men had not realised that God plans to give all the dead and all the living a full and fair trial for life and the Millennial Age is the Age for the purpose, and the only Age that could be for that purpose, it all looked very logical and harmonious.

To-day there is no such excuse. It is a fundamental article of faith that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained". That day is a thousand years in length. The saints, raised at the beginning of that day, at the Second Advent, are not to dwell on the earth but in heaven; they reign over the earth as spiritual rulers. The dead—all of them—are to be raised to life to enjoy the provision that God has made for them in that Age, and have the opportunity to become reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ the King and Mediator. The whole purpose of the thousand years is the reconciliation of mankind, whosoever will, living or dead. The restraint of Satan and the restraint of evil during that Age is not for the benefit of the Church, which will then be beyond Satan's power anyway, but in the interests of the remainder of humanity that they be no longer deceived or enslaved by the power of evil, and able to profit fully by the evangelical endeavour of that Age. In the very same breath in which Paul spoke of the day apportioned by God for the judging of the world in righteousness he spoke of God having turned from the times of ignorance which He had been overlooking, and calling upon all men everywhere to repent. That call to repentance commenced to go out at Pentecost. For two thousand years it has led those who heeded it to the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus". That leaves the rest of mankind to be reached by the call during the third thousand years. The end of the Millennium is the end of man's probationary experience and the time of his maturity, the end of the Divine Plan so far as this earth is concerned. The new heavens and new earth which all have looked for as following the end of the Millennial reign will commence at that point, sure enough, but it will be a new heaven and new earth in which full perfection has been reached and there is no question of further probation or further judgment. *"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever maketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"*

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 4. I John 2. 3-6

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep His commandments" (vs. 3).

John has a great deal to say about this relationship between our knowledge of God and our faithfulness in keeping His Word. In another place and at another time the Apostle Paul spoke of our having the "witness" of the Spirit, the inner consciousness that our acceptance by the Father is a very real thing, a consciousness that can only be ours if we truly are led by the Spirit of God. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God" he says, "they are the Sons of God . . . FOR . . . ye have received the Spirit of adoption" and it is that Spirit that bears witness with our own Spirit that we are the children of God and therefore joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8. 14-17). John's mind here in this chapter is running along similar lines. If we have truly entered into covenant relationship with God and have genuinely come "into" Christ, seeking more and more to give His Word full scope and full play in our lives, then we shall have the witness within ourselves that we are His in truth, that we "know" God. It may not be a thing we can define in so many words; we may not be able to express or explain the philosophic or intellectual basis of our acceptance with Him to others or even to ourselves, yet nevertheless we shall *know* that we know God. This is not a matter of mere blind credulity, or even wishful thinking; those who have truly entered into the secret place of the Most High and now abide under the shadow of the Almighty have a perception and knowledge of spiritual things which gives them a realisation of the presence of God that cannot be the portion of one who has never passed through that experience. Where there is positive knowledge the mind no longer needs the benefit of argument or debate, the appeal to logic or to reason; these things are the steps by which knowledge is—in this material world—normally attained but with the achievement the means becomes superfluous. Our knowledge of God is the result of experience, our experience of Him after the entry into the consecrated life, and when once we know Him there can on longer be any question about the matter—we *know* that we know Him.

Perhaps John had another thought also in his mind at this point. Perhaps he wanted to

stress the fact that our confidence in this respect must rest upon our keeping of God's commandments as distinct from any other code or rule of life. The greater liberty accorded to Christian believers as compared with that allowed their Jewish brethren in the previous Age, and their freedom from the Law of Moses, which had always been obligatory upon the latter, might very well induce the thought that notwithstanding our covenant with God and our acceptance of the consecrated life we are left to formulate our own code of conduct and our own laws of right and wrong. In fact that kind of heresy did make its appearance among the early Christians after the passing of the Apostles and wrought much harm. The fact is that despite our having been given a considerable measure of self-determination in many aspects of the Christian life, we are morally bound to keep a Divine law which is really far more stringent and soul searching than was the Mosaic law. After all, that was a fairly simple system of prohibitions and injunctions. It was either "Thou shalt not do this" or "Thou shalt do that". The law of the New Creation, although not defined in words as was the Law of Moses, is really more strict. It demands a far higher standard of conduct than did its predecessor, and a far more wholehearted life of consecration and devotion to God. It demands all that the Christian has to give, and it is only when we have given our all, and receiving it back at the Father's hands, proceed to use it in the furtherance of His interests, that we really do begin to "keep His commandments".

There was a time in the history of Israel when the people rejected the idea of responsibility to a central authority and a common law. The chronicler said of that time "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes". (Jud. 21. 15). It was a time of unprecedented disaster for Israel, a period of anarchy and lawlessness, of apostasy and consequent captivity, repeated time and time again, and only relieved by occasional terms during which the people repented of their excesses, and cried unto the Lord, and were heard, and delivered, and restored to their own land. Sickened at last by their own weakness they petitioned for kings to rule over them that

they might have an ultimate standard of conduct to which all must conform. Men are making the same mistake to-day. The old acceptance of Divine authority and Divine law as the standard for men, no matter how imperfectly understood and insufficiently kept, has been repudiated, and now every man is a law unto himself, and the world is lapsing into anarchy in consequence. We who look for a day of world conversion in the Age to come, the Millennial Age, know full well that such conversion will be effected, not by leaving each man to the unrestrained exercise of his own fancies and desires, however well-intentioned or even well-informed, but by bringing everyone under the jurisdiction of a perfectly incorruptible and all-embracing educational system that, for the time being at any rate, will not brook disobedience. The salvation of men will depend, not on their keeping commandments of their own devising, but on keeping God's commandments. Only when by reason of suitable and adequate discipline they have arrived at a complete and understanding knowledge of those commandments will they be free to accept or reject, by the exercise of their own wills, the alternatives of life and death, good and evil, which will then stand placed before them.

So then with us in this Age. The wonderful freedom which is ours in Christ does not include freedom to frame our own code of laws, our own set of commandments. If we know God, then we realise full well that there is no alternative to the laws that He has set before us for our own well being. It is in the sincere and unreserved acceptance of those laws into our hearts, and the application of them in our lives, that we shall find the realisation that we know God and are known of Him. The witness of the Spirit, speaking as it were with our spirit, will assure us of that.

But of course, there are so many who claim to "know Him" and oft-times deceive themselves as well as others, but because they have not really entered into this relationship to God and are not doers of His will cannot claim to be keepers of His commandments. John has no shadow of doubt about the position of such and he has no intention of there being any misapprehension in the minds of his readers either. *"He that saith 'I know Him' and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (vs. 4). In considering the forthrightness of a statement such as this we do well to remember that these men of the East were—and still are—accustomed to frame their sentiments in

much more expressive and forceful words than we of the West might consider necessary or even proper. A good example of this is found in the Scriptural use of the word "hate", a word which will fall to be considered later on in this same chapter. Now here it is quite possible that John is not using the word "liar" in the bald, extreme sense which the same word normally bears among us to-day. His point rather is, surely, that the man who claims to know God but who is not doing the will of God simply is not speaking the truth. He may be quite unaware of the fact; in his own self-opinionated condition, his own egotism, or his own mere confident ignorance, he might be quite sure that he *does* know God, but in fact he does not. In consequence, says John, the truth is not in him. We are very accustomed to speak of one believer or another as being "in the Truth" by which we mean that such an one has come to a knowledge of God's Plan and understands His purpose with the Church in this Age and the world in the next, and on that basis has become a consecrated "footstep follower" of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is one thing though to be "in the Truth" and quite another for the Truth to be "in" us; this latter demands a great deal more than an appreciation and understanding of the Divine Plan and acceptance of the call to consecration. It requires the devoted painstaking following of Christ in all things throughout life, a giving full reign to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and some continuous manifestation of the results of that work as the years pass. Later on in the chapter John will be talking about the Word of God abiding in us; perhaps it is something like that he has in mind here where he speaks of the truth not being "in" those who, despite their protestations, really do not know God.

"But whosoever keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in Him" (vs. 5). This is the other side of the picture. The outward evidence that a man is keeping the commandments, "his Word" is that in him the love of God is visibly manifest, quite apparently in process of being made perfect. This connection of love with the commandment is worthy of notice. The great aim and object of our lives is that we be made perfect in love. Love it was that caused the coming to earth of Jesus for man's salvation, the love of the Father and the love of the Son. Love it is that leads us to give ourselves to God, after having realised His own great love toward us.

Now we are to be made perfect in love so that we in our turn may be used to bring the blessings of salvation to those who, in the next Age, will need them so much. Paul, writing to Timothy, warned him against giving attention to fables and endless genealogies which give birth to unprofitable questionings and debates rather than "godly edifying which is in faith", and told him that "the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 1. 5). The result of our keeping the commandment of God is that we are made perfect in love, made pure in heart, made sound in conscience, and genuine in faith. These are the characteristics of the disciple who "keepeth His Word". In such an one verily is the love of God perfected.

Thus do we come to the climax of this lesson. Verses 3, 4 and 5 lay down the Divine principles regarding knowing God and show how easily we may be deceived if we are not perfectly sincere in our profession. John explains the difference between the one who knows God and keeps His commandments and the one who does not keep the commandments and therefore does not know God. Now comes the practical exhortation, the logical consequence of what has gone before. "*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself so to walk even as he walked*" (vs. 6). The outward evidence that we are indeed abiding in Christ is to be found in the outwardly manifest fact that we are walking as Jesus walked. Now that does not mean that we must display before men and our brethren on all occasions, without ever failing, the same serene, unruffled composure, the same

complete freedom from hasty word and act, the same purity and nobility and majesty which Jesus Himself displayed to men during His earthly life. Not one of us can ever measure up to the fulness of that wonderful life or approach anywhere near it. But we can walk in the manner that He walked, so that men may take note that we have been with Jesus, and have, however imperfectly, learned of Him. We can so yield our lives and all our possessions and our talents and our influence to Him in glad consecration that it may truly be said we are "abiding" in Him. Let it never be forgotten also that this abiding in Him brings the corresponding great joy of the knowledge that He is abiding in us. The visions of Revelation include the picture of One who stands at the door, and knocks. If any man will open the door, the Lord will come in and sup with him, and he with his Lord. This is an abiding together, we in Him and He in us. "Abide in Me" he says "and I in you . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." (John 15. 4-5).

Our claim to know Him, and to be abiding in Him, then, will be evidenced by our keeping His commandments. The result of that will be our perfecting in love and in every good grace. The perfecting of ourselves in love will in turn be the evidence that we are members of Christ's body, of His Church. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love . . . this is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15. 10-12).

(To be continued)

There is a grass, a kind of millet, the stems of which are seen to shoot up in the tropical forests of India. They are scarcely thicker than a stout straw, and seem but poor weak, insignificant things amongst the grand forms and gorgeous beauty of the surrounding growth. But watch them and you will see that with great rapidity and strength they continue to rise up higher and higher. Presently they reach the boughs of vast trees, but pushing their leaves aside, they pass onward and upward. Now they have mounted over the summit of the highest branches and there, above all the trees of the forest, they spread their flowers like some rich meadow far in the upper air! Is not this a striking figure of the followers of Christ? Judged by ordinary standard they do indeed appear poor and weak in comparison with the pomp

and show around them. There is often little of outward beauty or strength to mark their earthly way. Their flowers cannot flourish nor their fruits ripen in the fields below. Truly their "conversation, (their daily walk) is in heaven". With wondrous power, despite all obstacles, they pursue their upward way, soaring over the heads of their fellow-men; in affections placed higher, in aims more exalted, and earth left behind they rise to enjoy "spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ".

(selected)

The serenity and tranquillity of heart and mind which a firm and convinced faith in God produces in the life is something which cannot be imitated or produced by any other means whatever.

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

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

Assuring them that all their needs were known, and that He who clothed the lilies could find them clothes, and He who fed the sparrows find them food, the Lord advised them to leave their to-morrows alone. Oh yes! to-morrow would most certainly have its cares and perplexities; its refusals and rejections, but He would have them let to-morrow be anxious for itself. Then (in the lovely words of the New Revised Version) Jesus said "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day". (Mat. 6. 34). There was not always an overflowing purse for those first pioneers of our faith; sometimes they would have enough to "abound", at other times they knew what it was to be in "want". Contentment in every state was a lesson that needed to be learnt.

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

Naturally the Christian believer will be of the thrifty rather than the spend-thrift type, and finds the natural propensities a handicap

if not a hindrance to his rest of soul. And while there is no prohibition against a "proper thought" for coming days, it is so easy to exceed the range of "proper thought", and expand it into anxious care. The dividing line between pleasure and pain is very thin; what may have been intended as a love-tap may reach its billet as a hurtful blow. It is all a question of degree. So with the exercise of "proper thought".

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

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

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

God holds the key of all unknown.

And I am glad.

*If other hands should hold the key,
 Or if He trusted it to me,*

I might be sad.



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

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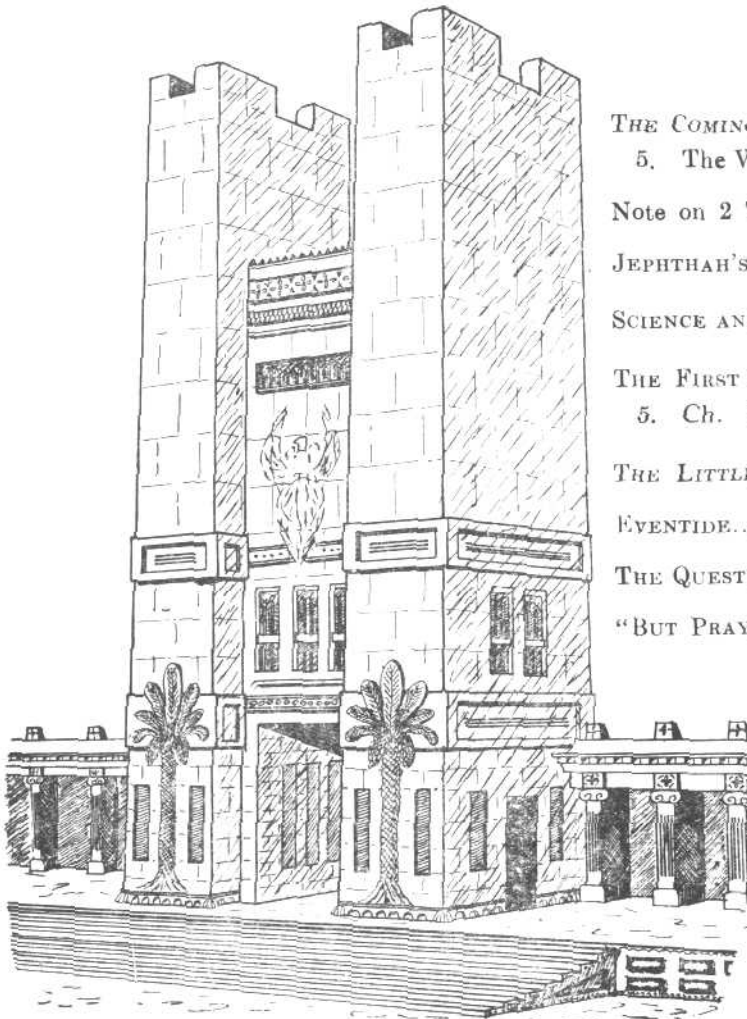
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CONTENTS

THE COMING OF THE KING	
5. The Voice of the Archangel ...	83
Note on 2 Tim. 3.6 ...	86
JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER ...	87
SCIENCE AND THE COMING AGE ...	90
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
5. Ch. 2. 7-8 ...	91
THE LITTLE SEASON ...	93
EVENTIDE ...	97
THE QUESTION BOX ...	98
"BUT PRAYER WAS MADE" ...	99



*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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BOOK REVIEW

"ENJOY YOUR BIBLE" (Rev. G. R. Harding Wood) Henry E. Walter, London 1962. 92 pp. Paper. 3/6.

A useful help to systematic Bible reading and study. As with the author's young friend quoted at the outset, there must be two ways of reading the Bible since some find it dull and some find it interesting. Mr. Harding Wood shows how it can be found interesting—more than that, how it can become a Book actively alive and apt to every situation. The Book, he says, is as a love-letter to a bride, a road map to a traveller, a lesson book to a scholar, an order sheet to a soldier. The importance of the Old Testament as a basis of the New is stressed, and simple suggestions for the understanding of the O.T. are given which make the general plan of the entire Bible luminous. Many homely illustrations and memory-helps render the book immediately appealing and as one proceeds the emphasis shifts from the Bible as a whole to helpful methods of studying a single book, then a chapter, then a verse, finally "the wonder of one word". The language is straightforward and simple, equally appealing to old or young. Altogether a most useful and interesting little book.

One of the Ten Plagues was repeated on a minor scale a few months ago in Israel. The waters of the River Dan in Upper Galilee suddenly turned red in the night and by noon of the following day the modern equivalent of Pharaoh's magicians—Israeli government geologists and engineers—were investigating the happening. There had been several earth tremors the previous night and the cause of the red water was a heavy dilution by certain minerals in microscopic form.

This occurrence illustrates a Biblical allusion. During the course of Ezekiel's vision he saw at the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem

NOTICE

A number of our readers will find a renewal form enclosed with this issue asking them to let us know if they desire the continued visits of the "Bible Study Monthly". When we have assurance of continued interest, such as recent correspondence or donations, the form is omitted and no action need be taken in such case. It will be appreciated if recipients of the form will kindly return it at an early date; whilst on the one hand we are anxious to retain on our list all who are sincerely interested we do not wish to send unwanted copies or to addresses which are no longer valid. It is especially desirable that overseas readers are prompt with their replies since the two-way despatch can easily occupy six or seven weeks and there is danger of our next issue in November being sent out with a second reminder whilst your acceptance is on its way across the seas to us; thus confusion is created.

Gone from us

Sis. Green (Manchester)
Bro. A. Knight (Oxford)
Sis. N. D. Smith (Bournemouth)

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

"women weeping for Tammuz" (Ezek. 8. 15). Some among the apostate Israelites had adopted a pagan ritual common in Galilee and Syria. Tammuz was the slain god whose blood was said to turn the rivers of Galilee into blood at certain seasons of the year. Women undertook ceremonial weeping for him and in due course Tammuz rose from the dead and the weeping was replaced by rejoicing. This modern instance is probably a repetition of a phenomenon that might have been common in that district in Old Testament times and given rise to the legend.

THE COMING OF THE KING

5. The Voice of the Archangel

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

One of the finest passages of Scripture relating to the Second Advent is that which enshrines St. Paul's words to the Christians of Thessalonica who were fearful that their departed brethren might be forgotten when the Lord came. Those words have been an inspiration to all succeeding Christian generations and they remain a stimulus and ground of confidence today. That some understand their background literally and others spiritually makes no difference to the assurance and incentive that all derive from them, but the very fact there are differences of thought on the structure of the passage makes it certain that no matter how sure one may be of the meaning, a fresh approach to the question will be of interest. There is no disagreement upon the principles of the doctrine itself, only differences of view as to precisely how and when the event comes to pass.

Let the glorious beauty of the words themselves rise before the mind again as prelude to consideration of what they involve. *"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so" (we must believe) "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the presence of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

There is an evident association of thought between this passage and the noteworthy words of 1. Cor. 15. 51-52. *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; 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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* In both passages there is a distinction between the "sleeping" and the "living" saints. The former are "raised" to the glory of immortal spiritual nature, the latter are "changed".

The descent of the Lord from heaven in this context, then, is intimately associated with the resurrection of the Church, the en-

tire body of dedicated believers in this Age, whether they be in the grave or still living upon earth at the time of the Advent. It may be said with justice that this entire statement in Thessalonians is concerned with the Advent only as it relates to the Church; the complete picture of the arrival, the voice, the trumpet, the air and the clouds, have to do entirely with the dead in Christ and their fellows who remain. The wider aspects of the Advent as respects the Lord's manifestation to all men, His work of bringing this Age to an end, and His initiating the Messianic Kingdom, is neither mentioned nor hinted at. In short, here is presented a picture of the Lord coming for His own, to gather them to Himself preparatory to His being manifested with them for the evangelical work of the next Age. The popular idea of the "rapture of the saints" illustrates this principle; those dedicated men and women whose lives have been yielded to Christ, and who have been fitted by their Christian experience for the task of world conversion in the future Day, are now taken, from death or from life, to be ready for the commencement of that great work.

The nature and manner, both of the Lord's "descent" and the resurrected ones "ascent", come naturally for consideration at this point. Does our returning Lord appear visibly in the sky, as a gloriously radiant human being, attended by flying angels, to the sound of shouts and silver trumpets audible to the human ear, or are these expressions vivid metaphors expressive of a reality which cannot itself be defined without some such material analogy? Are the air and the clouds the literal atmosphere and vapour masses of this planet, or did the words convey a meaning to the Thessalonian believers which is not easily appreciated in our day and generation?

It is well known and accepted that the Scripture writers, including St. Paul himself, frequently used "figures of speech" to convey a meaning perfectly well understood by their readers, just as we do ourselves. We habitually refer to the death of an aged believer as "passing beyond the veil" without claiming that there is a literal veil which has to be passed in order to gain entry to the spiritual world. We speak of such an one as having gained his "crown" without implying that he

is to be presented with a literal laurel wreath as adornment for all eternity. The "white robes" of the redeemed and the "robe of righteousness" of the justified are recognised for what they are, metaphors expressive of a reality which cannot otherwise be defined in human terms. All these allusions are commonly used without further explanation and no one ever thinks of taking them literally. Likewise when Paul declares that the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout he is clothing a truth that we with our human limitations cannot understand in literal everyday terms that we can understand. And we have to remember that the extent of human knowledge in St. Paul's day was considerably more restricted than it is now so that in many respects truths concerning the celestial realities "on the other side of the veil" had to be stated in even more down-to-earth terms than are necessary today. After all, at the First Advent and right into the Middle Ages even the best scientific knowledge of the times held that this earth was the centre of the universe and that the heaven of God's throne was situated on the surface of a kind of crystalline sphere which revolved around the earth at not too great a distance away, so that the only possible manner in which any man could picture the coming of the Lord was by an aerial descent from "there" to "here" through the atmosphere. No one dreamed then that the air extended only a few miles up and the wings of the angel would be of no possible use in empty space!

In our own day, although we know so much more of the physical universe now, and the vast distances involved, and that this earth, so far from being the centre is but the merest speck in the immensity of God's creation, we ourselves are quite unable to visualise the reality. We must be frank and confess that we do not know *how* our Lord returns at His Second Advent or from whence He comes; what we do know is that He *does* come to earth at the appointed time. We cannot understand the nature of the celestial world and we do not know "where" it is, nor how one gets there. It might well be that when St. Paul says "the Lord shall descend from heaven" he was, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, framing his words to express the truth within the general knowledge and belief of his time; the value of his definition is shewn by the fact that even now, two thousand years later and with a totally different understanding of astronomical science we still

think instinctively of our Lord as coming down from above, although we no longer consider that heaven is only a few hundred miles up on the outside of an encircling glass sphere. The reality is that at the time of the commencement of the Advent our Lord leaves that sphere of being which we call the celestial, the company of its angelic citizens and everything of which that creation exists, and comes within the space and time framework of this material creation, with its stars and suns and circling planets, and this earth in which He once lived as man for thirty three earth years. Such a coming can be a reality without demanding necessarily a visible appearance, any more than our Lord was visible to His disciples during the major part of the six weeks intervening between His resurrection and His ascension.

He will descend "*with a shout, the voice of the archangel*". The shout and the voice of the archangel are one and the same. The word "shout" is "*keleusma*", used nowhere else in the New Testament and evidently intended to convey a meaning which could not be indicated in any other way. It is a technical term for the cry of combined command and encouragement given to horses by charioteers, hounds by hunters, and especially to the oarsmen of galleys. In order to ensure that these latter pulled on their oars in unison, an overseer known as the "*keleustes*" stood in a commanding position on the ship and at regular intervals uttered the "*keleusma*", which, urging the men to sustained effort, became a call of combined authority, direction and encouragement. Michael the archangel was pictured in Jewish tradition as the leader of the hosts of heaven and the princely champion of the nation of Israel, standing in the presence of God as the executor of Divine judgment upon angels and men. The prophet Daniel was told that at the end of the age of evil, and the inception of the kingdom of righteousness, Michael would stand up and wage war for the overthrow of God's enemies and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. (Dan. 12. 1-3). The "voice of the archangel" thus becomes an allusion to the heaven-sent signal of command and encouragement which indicates that the Advent has begun—encouragement that the time is at hand, and command to recognise and accept the implications of the event and proclaim the fact of the Advent in positive terms. Such a proclamation has in fact been given; from the days of the Baptist minister William Miller a hundred and fifty years ago, Chris-

tian recognition that the "time is at hand" became clear and positive. Miller's own expectation of a visible descent from the skies in the year 1843 was not realised, but later in the century sober reflection and discussion shewed that the initial stages of the Advent are not accompanied by an outwardly visible manifestation, and the voice of the archangel is heard, spiritually, only by those who recognise the significance of the times in which they live. This view began to be propounded and debated from 1840 onward, and that recognition, against the background of contemporary events, is abundantly demonstrated, not only by the work of William Miller and the Second Advent movement of the early nineteenth century, but also by a widespread proclamation later in the century and a general awareness among thoughtful Christians of all schools of thought, then and since, that the world is moving into the "days of the Son of Man". In England the inter-denominational Mildmay conferences of 1873-1878 discussed every aspect of the Advent and gained the support of hundreds of ministers and students, as did similar conferences—notably Clifton Springs in America—at the same time. The level of understanding of both the purpose and manner of the Advent was higher—more enlightened and more sober—than that of the Miller thesis half a century earlier. It might well be true, therefore, that the voice of the archangel has been heard for more than a century past.

"*And the trump of God.*" This is the traditional "Last Trumpet"—popularly known as "Gabriel's Horn"—announcing the onset of the Day of Judgment. Paul's letter to the Thessalonians was written at least twenty years before St. John, in exile on the island of Patmos, witnessed the visions of Revelation which still constitute the most familiar picture of this momentous event to Christians. "*And the seventh angel sounded and there were great voices in heaven saying, The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever . . . and the nations were angry and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst . . . destroy them which corrupt the earth*" (Rev. 11, 15-18). St. Paul therefore drew his allusion from an earlier basis and both in Thessalonians and in Corinthians associates it with the resurrection of the Church. "*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 incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15, 51-52). This idea of the great trumpet which signals the coming of Divine judgment upon the evil things of this Age and the introduction of a new and better world "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3, 13) has its origin in the Old Testament, where the prophets used the simile to picture God rising up to take action for judgment upon evil. Zech. 9, 14 and Joel 2, 1-15 are cases in point. It is a military metaphor; the trumpet is blown to announce that the forces are about to attack; many such references appear in the historical books of the Bible. Since an essential pre requisite to the destruction of man's world edifice of evil and its supersession by the Messianic Kingdom is the resurrection to celestial conditions of all who are to be associated with Christ in the administration of that kingdom, it follows that the "last trump" is the symbol, not only of the imminence of "Judgment Day", but also of the immediate resurrection of the Church, and this explains the close association in the mind of St. Paul between the two ideas. The mediæval idea was that "Gabriel's horn" sounding on the air would cause those hearing it to know that the time was at hand. The modern understanding is that when outward evidences in the world accumulate to the point where there is no longer any possibility of avoiding the obvious conclusion that the world of men is running into disruption and dissolution and judgment, then the "Last Trump" is sounding. Many Christians believe that this position has already been reached. Other men, far-sighted and sober thinking men of the world often, are increasingly coming to the same conclusion. "*Upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity . . . men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world*" was Jesus' description of the position, (Luke 21, 26 RSV). It could very reasonably be held that on this basis the sound of the "Last Trump" has been heard upon earth for a number of decades past.

It is against this background that the age-old hope and aim of all Christians—to be translated at the end of earthly life to that celestial condition in which they will find their place of service in God's purposes and be associated with the Lord Christ for evermore—must be set. When the outward evidence becomes conclusive that the voice of the archangel and the trump of God are both sounding in the earth, even although only

those who "watch for his appearing" are as yet aware of the fact and the bulk of the sons of men, even if seeing the signs, do not know what they portend, then the implication is that the Advent has commenced even although the returned Lord is not discerned by human sight. The further implication is that the first work of the Advent, the "change" of the Church, is then in progress or is imminent. Until that work is completed there can be no advance in the manifold activities which are to characterise the Advent and eventuate in the replacement of this present world order by that which is to bring peace to the nations and an end to evil and death.

The resurrection of the Church is known in Scripture as the "First Resurrection" (Rev. 20, 4-6; 1 Cor. 15, 23-24; Rom. 8, 19), because it precedes the general resurrection of the remainder of mankind, a process which commences only after the Messianic Kingdom is in operation with Christ and His Church in control. This "First Resurrection" has a dual aspect; at the time of the Advent there is to be, initially, the resurrection of believers who are described as "asleep"—i.e. in the grave, having finished their earthly lives prior to the Advent. After this comes the "change" of those who are still living at the time of the Advent. The net effect is the same; in both cases the individuals concerned close their

eyes to the earth, they come to the end of consciousness and existence as experienced through the human organism, which thereafter returns to its dust, and they open their eyes to a new and celestial world in which consciousness and existence is experienced through a new and celestial body, one adapted to that order of life. St. Paul only alludes to the fact in Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians 15, 51-22, where the sleeping ones are "raised" and the living ones are "changed" or "translated". The philosophy of the matter is much more closely set out in 1 Cor. 15, 36-50 and 2 Cor. 5, 1-4 where this whole question of the celestial body and environment of those who thus go "to be with the Lord" is discussed in detail.

This then is the first great event of the Advent. There will be no outward sign and it will not be known to, or suspected by, the general mass of humankind. This is essentially a preparation for the more spectacular manifestations of a later stage of the Advent when no living creature will be able to dispute the fact. 1 Thess. 4 in particular, and a number of related New Testament passages in general, afford a wealth of detail as to the nature and manner of this resurrection of the Church, and it is to this aspect of the subject that much Advent truth relates.

(To be continued)

NOTE ON 2 TIM. 3. 6

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (2 Tim. 3. 6-7).

One wonders if St. Paul really viewed the Christian sisters of Ephesus with the apparent contempt implied in this remark, and if not, what was his meaning. The literal word is "little women", used in the sense of something below normal strength or intelligence. Perhaps "simple women" would be the better expression in modern English idiom. The term "laden with sins" has the significance of a crushing burden under which the subject is sinking. The general sense of the passage appears to be an invective against false and self seeking teachers who find disciples by contacting the less intellectually minded of the women believers in their own homes and trading upon their consciousness of their own shortcomings. Having thus gained an entry, and with the advantage of the known readiness of women, with their usually more pronounced devotional natures, to accept assur-

ance of Divine forgiveness, the next step would be to "tickle their fancy" with the new and strange doctrines being promulgated by these false teachers. If the verse refers to simple women oppressed with a realisation of sin, who are enticed and ensnared by unscrupulous false teachers, and in consequence never attain to a correct knowledge of the truth, all the requirements of the case are fulfilled and St. Paul need not be accused of the caustic contempt which the A.V. rendering would seem to imply.

Dr. Moffatt renders *"Who worm their way into families and get hold of the womenfolk who feel crushed by the burden of their sins—wayward creatures of impulse who are always curious to learn and never able to attain the knowledge of the truth"*.

The chief lesson and study in divinity is well and rightly to learn to know Christ . . . and Christ Himself also teacheth that we should learn to know Him only out of the Scriptures where He saith, "Search the Scriptures, for they do testify of me". (Luther)

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

Light on an
Old Testament story

Jephthah was the Israelite hero who vowed, according to the A.V., that if God gave him victory in his war with the Ammonites then whatever living thing first met him on his return home would be sacrificed as a burnt-offering in token of gratitude. He did gain the victory and the first to meet him was his only daughter. The narrative says briefly that *"he did with her according to his vow"* and has thereby given occasion for many a sceptic's jibe at belief in a God who would assent to such a proceeding.

As with so many Old Testament stories, this one requires examination before judgment is passed. The turn of a phrase, of difference of meaning in a word as between the seventeenth century, when the A.V. was produced, and the present time, can alter the entire position. In order to achieve correct understanding it is necessary first to look at the background.

The story is found in the eleventh chapter of Judges. The time, probably about the middle of the period of the Judges, say about 1200 B.C. It was a rude and barbarous age in Israel and the ruthless, warlike Israelites had little to commend them beyond their fierce belief in the God of Israel and—in the main—a regard for the Law of Moses. *"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* is how a later chronicler describes the times. Before judging them too harshly we have to remember that we, through our forebears, possess a knowledge of Divine laws and standards and the way of life which is right in God's sight which is the accumulation of over three thousand years of Divine revelation. The men of Jephthah's day had only the advantage of two centuries.

By force of circumstances Jephthah found himself at the head of the Israelite forces, determined to make a bid for liberation from the Ammonite yoke. Under the terms of the Mosaic covenant national apostasy from God was punished by servitude to a foreign nation and for eighteen years past they had paid tribute to Ammon. Now there had been a national repentance and by the same covenant that should be followed by deliverance. Jephthah felt therefore that the Lord was with them and would fight for them.

This is the first factor to consider. Despite

his early years spent as leader of a dissident group of "resistance fighters", as we would call them nowadays, with the lawlessness and licence which that must have entailed, Jephthah emerges as a serious-minded man conscious of Israel's special position before God and the obligation of loyalty to God devolving upon himself as leader of the hosts of the Lord. Like so many Old Testament heroes, he was probably very much a swash-buckling freebooter, but this was a reflection of the times in which he lived; underneath that apparently reckless exterior there are glimpses of a nobility of character and a keen penetrating mind which go far to illuminate the story. Before advancing into battle with the Ammonites he first entered into prayer with God, and addressed a formal request to the king of Ammon to state the grounds of his complaint against Israel. The reply was a completely false assertion that Israel had appropriated territory rightfully the property of Ammon. Jephthah countered that by a logical and reasoned recapitulation of the historical evidences back to the original entry of Israel into the land after the Exodus, demonstrating the falsity of the claim. *"Wherefore I have not sinned against thee"* he said *"but thou doest me wrong to war against me. The Lord the Judge be judge this day between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon."* So they went to war.

Here comes the point at issue. *"Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into my hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."* (ch. 11. 31). The margin has it *"or I will offer it up,"* etc., which changes the sense, although it is claimed by some authorities that this is not justified by Hebrew grammar. Jephthah must have known, however, that under the Mosaic Law a burnt offering must be a male animal, in perfect condition, and not of those classified unclean. Human sacrifice in any case was expressly forbidden by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18. 21; Deut. 12. 31) and barbarous as were the people in the days of the Judges, and common as was this practice among the surrounding nations, there is no trace of it in

Israel until the decadent days prior to the Captivity, some eight hundred years later, when this abomination did penetrate into Israel with the adoption of Moloch worship. The impulsive champion of Israel probably uttered his vow in some haste without stopping to think of the situation that would be created if the first creature to meet him should be ineligible for a burnt-offering. In any case the vow was out of order and entirely unnecessary, for victory depended upon Israel's heart condition before God, and since in chapter 10 the fact of their national repentance is recorded Jephthah should have realised that deliverance was thereby assured.

So Jephthah sallied forth at the head of his armies, and in due course returned, the triumphant conquering hero. The Lord had given deliverance to Israel, and there was universal rejoicing. His home town of Mizpeh was sixty miles from the frontier and all along the way the crowds must have met him with acclamation, the name of the Lord upon all lips for His goodness and favour returned to Israel. That the national feeling was a religious one is evidenced by the action of Jephthah's daughter in coming forth to meet him *"with timbrels and with dances"*. This was the traditional method of ascribing praise to God for a resounding victory, first instituted by Miriam the sister of Moses after the Red Sea crossing, a procession of maidens singing the high praises of God and recounting the deed of valour associated with the particular victory being celebrated. There must have been many such processions during the conqueror's sixty miles journey homeward with his victorious warriors.

It was the sight of those gracefully moving girls and the sound of melodious voices and timbrels that brought Jephthah to an abrupt halt. His eyes beheld his own daughter, leading her companions, and the recollection of his vow flooded into his mind. This was a possibility he had not imagined, and as he realised what was involved he rent his clothes in his anguish of spirit. Gone now was triumph and exaltation and rejoicing, yielding place to sorrow and utter despair. *"Alas, my daughter"* he groaned *"thou hast brought me very low . . . for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."* Here is revealed the man's sterling loyalty and allegiance to God; despite the depth of sorrow and grief into which the fulfilment of his rash vow must now plunge him and the fate to which he had condemned his innocent daughter there was no thought of going back

on his word or seeking to avoid his obligation. *"I have opened my mouth unto the Lord and I cannot go back"*. So far from being an uncultured robber chief, as some critics have maintained, this man was a true son of Israel.

His daughter manifests equal nobility of character. Whether at this moment she realised the nature of the vow does not appear. Probably she did not. But without hesitation she put herself at her father's disposal. *"My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies."* Evidently this was a household where God was known and honoured and worshipped and the daughter, no less than the father, had no other thought than to do what was right in the sight of God, at whatever personal cost.

Here lies the crux of the question. Did Jephthah actually sacrifice his unresisting daughter upon a smoking altar, a burnt-offering unto God, or was the discharge of his vow effected in some other legitimate manner? What actually happened to this loyal noble-spirited girl?

It goes without saying that such a sacrifice would have been totally unacceptable to the Most High and could only incur His strongest condemnation. It remains then to examine the position in the light of the Mosaic code regarding vows and sacrifices to discover exactly what Jephthah, as a law-abiding man of Israel, would be obligated to do.

The laws governing such vows appear in the twenty-seventh chapter of Leviticus. From this it is apparent that there are two cases. A man could dedicate himself or any member of his household upon condition of some Divine favour such as recovery from an illness, deliverance from an enemy, or granting of some request. Thus Hannah dedicated her first-born son Samuel to the service of the Sanctuary upon receiving the blessing of motherhood. Animals or property of any description might likewise be dedicated. Should the animal be a perfect male of the flocks or herds then it must be sacrificed by fire, but if an unclean beast, a human being or item of property such as land or houses then it could not thus be sacrificed but must either be given to the Sanctuary to be the Lord's forever, or redeemed by payment of a sum of money into the Sanctuary according to a scale laid down in Lev. 27. This discharged the vow. The other case concerned captives or booty taken in war which were to

be "devoted" because of unfitness to remain in existence. The booty must be utterly consumed with fire and the captives must be slain.

Jephthah's vow clearly comes within the first category. The offering was to be an acknowledgment to God in gratitude for victory. (The word "burnt-offering" in the A.V. is the rendering of a Hebrew expression meaning literally "that which ascends", primarily referring to the smoke of the sacrifice going up to God but having as its basic idea the presentation of an offering, the burning being only incidental). The victory had been granted and the vow must be implemented. Under the Law that meant either that Jephthah's daughter must be redeemed with money or else taken into perpetual service in the Sanctuary. It might be that the spirit of Jephthah's undertaking that the one meeting him "shall be the Lord's" precluded him from availing himself of the provision for redemption, or that the magnitude of the victory demanded a positive sacrifice on the part of Jephthah greater than could be made by the mere payment of money. It is evident from the rest of the account that in fact his daughter did enter the service of the Sanctuary thereby remaining unmarried to the end of her days. This is shown by the girl's request that before the irrevocable step was taken she might be allowed to spend two months with her companions to "bewail her virginity". Besides the customary expectation of marriage and motherhood normal to her sex, every Israelite girl was encouraged to hope that she might become the mother of the "seed of blessing" later on crystallised in the person of the Messiah. To be destined to a life of perpetual virginity was a crushing blow. It was this, and not the prospect of sacrifice, which Jephthah's daughter and her friends lamented those two months. At the end of the time her father "did with her according to his vow . . . and she knew no man". That last phrase is mediæval English and it denotes that she remained a virgin, which is consistent with her being "hallowed to the Lord", for the rest of her days.

Verse 40 as it stands in the A.V. conveys a wrong impression when it says that the "daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year". The margin corrects it by substituting "to talk with". The word really means "to speak praise", and the implication is that once every year the young women of Israel visited her to

commend and praise her for the devotion which led her so willingly to accept her fate. The visitors would have to journey to Shiloh, in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim and the geographical centre of the entire land, for here stood the Sanctuary of God, the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the Wilderness, and here, where the High Priest of Israel conducted the duties of his exalted office, Jephthah's daughter spent her life in the service of the Sanctuary.

There is not much said about the place of women in this service but that they were so employed is clear from a comparison of Exod. 38. 8 and 1 Sam. 2. 22 with Num. 4. 23 and 8. 24. The first two texts refer to the women who "assembled" at the Sanctuary whilst the other two use the same word—*tsaba*—to describe the work of the male Levites in the service of the Sanctuary. The Tabernacle at Shiloh was the central religious establishment of the country, fulfilling the function that in much later days was taken over by the Temple in Jerusalem, and with pilgrims and visitors continually coming for various religious exercises, and the tremendous influx three times in the year upon the occasions of the great "feasts", it is probable that the services of these women were very necessary in many ways. They were possibly in the main wives and daughters of the Levites attending on the Sanctuary, assuming their duties voluntarily and performing them within the routine of their normal daily lives. Jephthah's daughter, because she had been given to the Lord, was there on a different basis. She was not free to leave and for her there could be no normal life, no husband and family. For Jephthah her father, because she was his only child, there could be none to continue his line; his name must perish out of Israel. Those were the consequences of a rash vow, uttered unthinkingly and in haste and that never need have been made. Because it was made, and was fulfilled despite the cost to those concerned, not only the Israelite conqueror but also his unnamed daughter must surely occupy a place among that "great cloud of witnesses" whom the writer to the Hebrews sets forth as examples of sterling faith to the Christian Church.

Christianity has too often been associated with gloom, both in our places of worship and in the lives of its adherents. When filled up with the Spirit of God, we shall be delivered from our icy coldness to the life exuberant, cordial and infectiously happy.

SCIENCE AND THE COMING AGE

*Impact of modern discovery
upon Millennial expectation*

An intriguing prospect for the future is opened by the discovery a few months ago of a means whereby an electric current can be obtained from vegetable products. A research organisation has found that certain bacteria, when allowed to feed on coconut juice, multiply exceedingly, transforming the coconut juice into formic acid and in the process produce a current of electricity which, in the experimental model, was sufficient to operate a radio set. The inventors believe that the same effect can be obtained by the use of sugar-cane, fruits, and possibly leaves and grass; further research is proceeding. The current produced is small—an average coconut will provide enough juice to make sufficient current to light the sitting-room for two hours or operate the radio for ten hours. This is not likely to be economic in countries where electricity is available from the mains but could be a different thing in the jungle where no mains exist and coconuts are plentiful. Robinson Crusoe would have been glad to know of the device.

Electrical research men have long known that there is a common basic principle underlying the operation of modern electronic equipment and the normal processes of Nature. Wilfred Branfield pointed out in his book *"Continuous Creation"* (1960) that in the living state a continuous movement of what the technicians call "charged electrons" is taking place in the leaves and fruits of plants so that the whole process of growth is an electrical one powered by the energy of sunlight falling upon the plant. The same kind of movement and process goes on in the wires and components of an electrical device such as a radio set, so that the inventive genius of man in these modern wonders is merely reproducing something that has been going on in the world of Nature for untold ages. In other words, and for all the proud boasts of human achievement, "God thought of it first". The busily working bacteria in the new invention are taking the plant product into which has been built energy from the sun, and converting that energy into electrical power on practically the same principle as the metallic cells in a photographer's exposure meter when held up to the light transforms the light shining upon it into an electrical impulse which moves the indicator over the dial to show the photographer how much exposure he needs.

The importance of all this to the Millennial Age is immense. Men will always need heat,

light and power in order to live the full and useful life which God intends for them. Since the days of man's increase over the face of the earth much of the light, the greater part of the heat, and practically all of the power has been obtained from what are called "fossil fuels"—coal, oil, natural gas, and latterly, uranium the raw material of nuclear power. But the supply is limited; one day all the obtainable deposits will be exhausted, and for coal and oil and gas at the currently increasing rate of consumption that day is near. Nuclear power requires elaborate and potentially dangerous mechanical plant for its production. Quite obviously, the continuance of terrestrial creation will have to depend upon the direct utilisation of energy reaching earth from outside—from the sun, which is the ultimate source of all terrestrial power. By means of Nature's myriad agents of labour, it may well be, in that blessed era of the Kingdom of God upon earth, when nuclear power has become as obsolete as the flint axes of the Stone Age are to us today, that men will gather power from the growing things of the earth just as they gather their crops. The prophet says that *"they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them"; "they shall sit every man under his vine and his fig-tree"* (Isa. 65.21; Micah 4. 4). He might have added that the same vines and fig-trees could by virtue of the wonderful works of God become the means of providing light in their dwellings and even of talking with their neighbours far away. It is not so fantastic an idea as may seem at first sight. The energy inherent in natural phenomena exceeds by many times over the greatest amount of power men can ever require for all their manifold enterprises, and in this age of scientific enquiry and rapid achievement, wherein the miraculous of one day becomes the common-place of the next, it is not surprising that men are beginning to learn how to obtain that power direct from Nature without the cumbersome mechanical and electrical machines, massive buildings and general engineering works which are at best but a crude and inefficient means of achieving what Nature does habitually on a far greater scale through the simple media of sunlight, growing plants and actively busy living creatures. The Millennium may yet prove to be a great day for bacteria!

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 5. I John 2. 7-8

The "beloved disciple" seems to have entered much more fully than any other of the Twelve into the depths of Jesus' teaching. Here and there in this epistle there are allusions and remarks which seem clearly to have their basis in some vital thing which Jesus said at some time during His ministry. Such a word comes before us now in this 7th verse. "*Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.*" Now this "old commandment" can hardly be anything else than the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament and all that it had to say about Christ. In the next verse John goes on to talk about a "new" commandment which he does write to the brethren; it must of necessity be that the new commandment is something that he received from his Lord, for John would not arrogate to himself the prerogative of laying down even newer commandments after his Lord had ascended on high. The "old" commandment therefore must be that which Jesus had in mind when he said "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil". (Matt. 5. 17). One of the greatest truths of the New Testament is this that John is here endeavouring to impress upon his readers, that Christianity did not spring as it were fully fledged into the world without any previous preparation, but came as the logical sequel to a long process of development that had its commencement in the Law given to Moses at Sinai. Jesus never repudiated that past basis upon which His message was founded. To Him, the words and works of the fathers, the Law of Sinai, and all that these had meant to Israel, was something that had come from God and because it had come from God must be held in due honour. True, He never failed to denounce the formalistic additions which men had built around and upon the Law and He condemned the hypocrisy and blindness of those who had done those things; but for the Law itself He always maintained that reverence and respect which was due to words that had at the first been written by the finger of God and given to Moses on the top of the Mount.

So John hastens to disavow, in his turn, any intention of belittling or denying the principles which had made Israel what it was

and had brought his readers to the position in which they could understand and accept Christ. "The Law" said Paul in another place (Gal. 3. 24) "was our schoolmaster" (*paidagogos* or pedagogue, child-leader) "to bring us unto Christ". That allusion is to the family tutor, often a slave, whose duty it was in Greek families to instruct and guide the children of the family whilst they were young and immature. "But after that faith is come" Paul continued "we are no longer under a schoolmaster; for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The Law trained the believer so that he could recognise Christ when He came. It is true that only a few, a "remnant", as Paul elsewhere calls them, profited sufficiently by the training of the Law to recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah; but in the training and development of those few the Law had done its destined work and was vindicated. For the successful accomplishment of that work the Law stood in eternal honour, and John realised, as Jesus would have him realise, that the "old commandment" was the indispensable preliminary to the new grace in which all the believers stood and in fact was incorporated in that new faith.

Yet the very fact that the Law and Prophets were intended to develop and, in a sense, "bring forth" the newer and greater revelation of God in Jesus Christ implies that the demands of the Law and the obligations of the Law and the restrictions of the Law must become of no effect, must break down and fall away, so soon as Jesus ushered in the new dispensation. In all development, that which is developed is a greater and a grander thing than that from which it is developed, and as the new comes to birth so must the old give place and disappear. That is what John the Baptist meant when he said "He must increase, but I must decrease". The Baptist knew himself to be the last of the old order, the last of the prophets, the last to call Israel to full compliance with the Law. Christ stood before him, Christ who would make an end of the Law to everyone that believeth, who would cause it to be swallowed up in the brighter effulgence of His own new message, and lift those who came to God to a plane of understanding and union with Him higher by far than anything that had ever been experi-

enced by Moses or Samuel or Elijah or the son of Zacharias.

That is exactly what John the beloved disciple has in mind now. Knowing that he has given due recognition to the old law out of which the new has been developed he goes on to explain that, for Christians, the new commandment is necessary. Not for them the mere unreasoning and adherence to ritual and ceremony, to sacrifice and keeping of feast-days and "washing of pots and cups". *"Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."* (vs. 8).

Jesus often spoke of the "new commandment". Sometimes it was a direct injunction, such as "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another". (John 13. 34). Sometimes it was not so direct but none the less a clear injunction to do something that was inherent in the spirit of the old Law but not covered by its letter. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . *thus and so* . . . but I say unto you . . . *thus and thus*." So many things there were in the whole scope of human relations that Jesus lifted to a higher standard, so much higher that he virtually changed the law for his disciples without abrogating anything of the older injunctions. So it comes about that every disciple who keeps the law of love enjoined by Jesus upon His followers automatically attains to a higher degree of keeping the law of Moses than was ever achieved by any Israelite in all the fourteen centuries that the Law was incumbent upon them.

This new commandment, says John, is "true in him and in you". There is a wonderful indication of communion, of common-union, between our Lord and ourselves in that expression. The earnest, pious Israelite who brought his animal for sacrifice to the Tabernacle or Temple, as prescribed by the Levitical ritual, was taught to feel a sense of oneness with his God as the smoke of the sacrifice ascended into the sky; but for all that, God was still very far off, and in any case the priest must stand as an intermediary. The offerer, no matter how earnest or how pious, may not offer on his own account and stand directly in the presence of God. With us it is different. We have "boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. 10. 19), and we can by reason of our consecration of heart and life to God, and our acceptance by Him into His "High Calling", enter into the privilege of full and direct communion. Noth-

ing less is implied by the fact that "now we are the sons of God". Nothing less than this is the honour bestowed upon those who have heard and responded to the call "My son, give me thine heart". It is very true that this thing "is true in him and in you" and we share its truth together.

"Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." According to the Greek John's words are *"the darkness is passing away"*. Notwithstanding all that he has implied in his previous words as to the value and necessity of the Law and the Prophets, and his insistence that they are not to be rejected or repudiated now that the fuller light of Christianity has come to make the way more clear, yet it is true that compared with the glorious radiance of the Christian evangel, the Mosaic dispensation was as darkness. That was the darkness which was passing away because *"the true light now shineth"*. Perhaps John was thinking of the burning words of his namesake, that other John who stood and beheld the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world, and in beholding him had exclaimed, rapturously, *"that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"*. (John 1. 9). Out of the darkness of the Jewish Age with its Mosaic Law came the light of the Gospel Age with its higher law of love and its clearer view of the Divine purposes and plans. It is not so surprising to find light thus coming out of darkness, right at the beginning it was the same. The earth was enshrouded in darkness, and *"God said, Let there be light; and there was light"*. So Zechariah, looking forward to the grand consummation of God's Plan, when evil and sin and death have been done away forever, says *"At evening time it shall be light"* (Zech. 14. 7). The whole story of man's upward struggle toward the destiny that God planned for him at the beginning is one of the passing away of darkness and the final triumph of the light. So John, looking to the great work of the present Age, the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus whereby the spiritual "Seed of Abraham" is to be selected and made ready for the future Millennial work of service, and realising how infinitely superior that work is to the old work with Israel after the flesh, says *"the darkness is passing away, and the true light now shineth"*.

(To be continued)

Our modern tragedy is that too often our discipleship is so ineffective and so inarticulate as to be almost unnoticeable.

THE LITTLE SEASON

A study in the
Book of Revelation

"I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season . . . and when the thousand years are expired Satan shall be loosed from his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations . . ." (Rev. 20. 1-10).

Of all revealed prophecy of things to come, this event, at the end of the Millennial Age, is farthest away in time, and its outlines are vague and shadowy. The suppression of the powers of evil during the Millennium, symbolised by the casting of Satan into the abyss, is a fundamental feature of the Age and follows on the fact that a righteous and all-powerful Administration has taken control of the world. The evangelical work of that Administration will have the effect of bringing all men, without exception, face to face with the vital issues of eternal life or death, and before it closes every living being will have made the crucial choice, for God or Satan, for good or evil, for life or death. It is within the framework of this choice, at the end, that this rather obscure passage in Revelation has its place. It would seem on the basis of this vision that at this climax there is to be a last attempt by the forces of evil to regain the allegiance of any who may at heart still be in sympathy with sin. It is not an opportunity that will last long; it is not an effort that is going to be crowned with success. Swift and inexorable, the immutable laws of God will move to judgment.

The use of the names "Satan" and "Devil" in this chapter would normally be understood to limit the reference to a personal being, the enemy of God, usually referred to by those names, but this is unusual in the Book of Revelation where every reality is normally represented by a symbol; in this instance the four-fold appellation "*the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan*" links the symbol with chapters 12 and 13 where the successive systems of evil that have dominated man since the beginning are pictured. The first of these, the dragon, embodies all the powers of

evil operating in the world up to and including the time of the First Advent and which in the eyes of the Revelator were represented in his day by the religio-secular power of Pagan Rome. That, to John, was the epitome and embodiment of all the evil power that was in the world. Behind that power was the malevolent influence of the Prince of Darkness himself. That which John describes in Rev. 20, therefore, is not only the casting of the Prince of Darkness into the abyss, but the whole of that edifice of evil which has been built up through the centuries. In a moment of time, Satan's empire comes to naught. From the viewpoint of symbolism, moreover, it is significant that when the "loosing" is described in verses 7 and 10, the personal names "Satan" and "Devil" are employed alone—as though to suggest that the personality comes forth without his empire. The onward narrative supports this view; it is as though Satan finds himself set free and goes out to recruit new followers or regain his old ones, but his empire is not restored.

But is this "loosing of Satan" in harmony with the revealed character of God? Having done so much to remove evil from the hearts of men and teach them of His ways, where is the logic of letting the author of all evil loose upon mankind again? For answer we must go back to the beginning. God created our first parents creatures of free-will and with the knowledge that all they had of life and intelligence and ability they owed to Him. But they had freedom of choice that their allegiance might be voluntary and not of compulsion, and under the deception of the Adversary they exercised their freedom of choice and chose wrongly. The situation will be exactly the same, except that all men will then have the benefit of experience and practical demonstration, and if any give way to the Evil One it will be in the face of full knowledge. Before men pass into everlasting life, and the next stage of their continuing experience of God, it must be demonstrated that their allegiance is sincere and of free-will even in the face of opportunity to take the opposite path. There is another factor, too, which is indicated in this passage. This will be no passive abandonment of men to the seductive influence of the Adversary with no corresponding force on the other side. The

forces of righteousness will do battle with the forces of evil for every human soul, and it will be a hard thing for any man to resist the appeal of God.

The account says that Satan will "go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (vs. 8). This has been interpreted to suggest that the great majority of earth's millions will join the rebels, as though they were the sand of the seashore for multitude compared with a relatively few righteous. This is not consistent with the Divine Plan. If, after this thousand years' reign, which is ordained by God for the reconciliation to Himself of "whosoever will", so that His original purpose in creating mankind on the earth might go into effect, the vast majority of men fall again into sin at the first temptation, then we can only conclude that the whole creative purpose of God has been a failure. If only a minority of earth's inhabitants eventually attain eternal life then the glowing rhapsodies of the prophets were, to say the least of it, exaggeration, and the coming of Jesus to earth by no means such "good tidings of great joy to all people" as the angels claimed. This is not the case. Everything that is revealed concerning the Plan of God stresses the transcendent truth that it is going to be a glorious success. So far from it being a hard thing to enter into eternal life, as was supposed in mediæval times, it is in fact going to be a very hard thing to keep out of it. The interpretation is based upon a misunderstanding of the reference to "Gog and Magog". John used a Hebrew idiom that was much more intelligible to his immediate readers than it is to us. To the Jews the expression "Gog and Magog" meant all the farthest and most remote and most primitive peoples of the earth. It had its origin in the days of Ezekiel's boyhood, when the settled civilisations of Israel, Assyria, Syria, Babylonia and Egypt were suddenly and without warning assailed by a savage onslaught of barbarous people from the north, of whose very existence they had previously been hardly aware. These invaders ravaged and looted for some thirty years before being driven back to the coasts of the Black Sea, from whence they had come, but Israel never forgot their visitation. It provided Ezekiel in later life with the background for his memorable description of the trouble with which this Age is to end. The term became a synonym for ruthlessness and savagery, but basic-

ally it was a general expression for peoples from the far corners of the earth. The idea of a final attack upon the citadel of God's holiness at the end of the Messianic reign by such peoples from the farthest parts of the earth, referred to as Gog and Magog, was a very general one at the time of the First Advent. It is not easy to decide just when or how the belief came into being or how much it owed in the first place to Ezekiel's prophecy, but certain it is that John was not the only seer who spoke and wrote in such terms. Thus the "Sibylline Oracles", written roughly at the same time as Revelation, says that the Messianic Kingdom will be closed by an attack of all the nations upon Jerusalem and their destruction by the intervention of God. The "Apocalypse of Elijah" and the "4th Book of Ezra", among other apocryphal works of times very close to the First Advent, repeat this belief. John used a few simple words here to convey a perfectly familiar thought to his readers; that there would come peoples from the farthest corners of the earth to join in an attack upon the things of God. Satan is to seek his dupes, not merely among the faithful ones at the very centre of God's Kingdom, not among the relative few in the "beloved city", at headquarters, so to speak, but among all the millions of redeemed humanity spread abroad upon the face of the earth who themselves are as the sand of the sea for multitude.

It seems incredible that after the object lesson men will have had from the righteous rule of the Messianic Age anyone should be found ready to follow the paths of evil. The upsurge of sin described in this passage, the condemnation of the unfit in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matt. 25., the prohibition against the unclean and immoral entering the Holy City in Rev. 21. 27 and the Millennial descriptions of Psalms 66 alluding to the "feigned obedience" of some whose hearts remain obdurate against the appeal of the Gospel, appear to shew that when all that can be done has been done, some remain whose opposition to truth and goodness is never overcome. There may be factors in this matter which we do not, even now, fully understand, but the vision of John certainly pictures this final rebellion of evil against good, and its consequences in the withdrawal of life from those who have thus demonstrated their irrevocable allegiance to evil for its own sake.

It is important to observe that those who thus take the side of the rebels do so with their eyes open. The basic meaning of the word rendered "deceive" in Rev. 20 is to lead

astray or in wrong paths, to wander. Those who take their places in the ranks of the Prince of Darkness do so not because they do not know, but because they do not believe. This involves the question as to the hopes and aims of the apostates. They will have seen the wondrous works of God manifest throughout the thousand years and had abundant opportunity to realise the extent of His power no less than His inherent goodness. What kind of deception is it by means of which the Devil, loosed from his prison, is able to convince them that sin and sinful men have yet the opportunity and power to regain control over the now righteous world of mankind, and restore to their own advantage the old bad days of sin and death? It must obviously be a subtle temptation, buttressed by convincing and apparently logical arguments. Even in these present days men do not embark on a desperate venture unless they have reason to hope for success, and the rebellion of that final day will be in face of a much more united and powerful world than any revolutionary has had to face in past history. Even the most hardened of the rebels will have to admit that they are up against what the world today calls a "tough proposition"! Death will have been unknown for a thousand years. Disease and sickness will have been long since eliminated. The earth will have become fair and fertile, fear and anxiety for the future long since banished. men living happily together as one great family. The days of sin and death will seem very far away—as far away as the time of William the Conqueror to us. There will be a few, here and there, who do not seem to share in the general happiness. They will always have been marked out by their tardiness in co-operating with others for the general welfare. They give outward and nominal assent to the laws of the Kingdom but it is easy to see that they resent them and are not at heart lovers of the Lord Jesus. They are still unreconciled to God and there can be no disguising the fact. But they have never been able to inflict evil on others nor to injure the earth. Whatever may be their inmost thoughts and desires, they have had to conform to the general rules of conduct which have been binding upon all men in the Millennial world.

Now a change becomes evident. The thousand years is at an end and there must be a certain amount of interested discussion as to precisely what happens next. The reign of Christ over the nations is to close; that much is known, and mankind is to be completely

self-governing. Clearly those whose hearts are set in them to do evil must look forward to the prospect with more than academic interest. And when, for the first time for a thousand years, the Evil One finds himself able to whisper his suggestions into the ears of those who will listen, what is likely to be the nature of his deception?

Could it conceivably be the old one that was so effective at the start, back there in Eden? "*Ye shall be as gods—ye shall not surely die!*" For a thousand years there has been no death. Men have, in that time, become godlike in form and physique, and in mental powers. It is true that all this has come about since the Most High defeated and imprisoned the powers of evil a thousand years ago; but it took Him six or seven thousand years to effect that defeat, and even when He had done so, He did not destroy those powers. They did not go into death. And now they have escaped that imprisonment and are active again! Can it be—is it possible—that God, after all, is unable to deprive evil beings of life, that rebellion against God does not really bring death in its train, that perhaps, given sufficient determination and ruthlessness, God could be defied indefinitely? "*Ye shall not surely die!*" At this late stage in the history of humanity, so many millenniums after man's creation, with so long a history of evil, it is still true that not one intelligent creature has as yet suffered the penalty of sin—eternal death. Here at the end of the Millennium every human being and every angelic being, good or evil, that has known conscious existence, is alive still. The law that eternal death is the wages of sin has still to be demonstrated in actual fact. Is it not at least possible that the great delusion which will test humanity and search out the sinful at heart, at the end of the Millennial Age, will be just that; "*Suppose Satan is right after all! Suppose God is unable to inflict eternal death! He has not yet done so, to anyone! There is no evidence, as yet, that He can do so! And, if that be so, then we, refusing loyalty to God, can still be as gods! We shall not surely die!*"?

Once such a thought took root in the minds of the unregenerate there would soon be an attempt to convert it into action. "*We can do as we like and God cannot interfere; we shall live for ever.*" The challenge is thrown down before the Divine representatives in the earth and it is a challenge that cannot be ignored, for the whole fulfilment of the Divine purpose in creating man depends upon the out-

come. In the Revelation passage the story is told in symbol. *"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and encircled the camp of the holy ones, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them"* (vs. 9). The word rendered "camp" means a walled military encampment or barracks, or an army drawn up in array. In Acts 21 to 23 it is translated "castle" in reference to the Tower of Antonia, the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, built at the north-west corner of the Temple area so that a watch could be kept upon activities within the Temple. The "beloved city" is, of course, Jerusalem the Holy. In the symbolic imagery of Revelation this allusion might well refer to the celestial ruling entity, the Church, the "camp of the holy ones", the place from which ruling authority proceeds, and the earthly representatives of Christ, the "heroes of faith" of Heb. 11 administering the affairs of the world from their centre in the "beloved city". Thus the rebels challenge Divine authority and rule. This is not a literal investment of a literal city with physical weapons; the symbolic nature of Revelation rules that out in any case. This is a determined attempt to defy the authority of God and those who represent Him in the world and seduce the righteous of mankind from their faith and allegiance.

There is no indication that they make any converts. It is hardly to be expected that they could. The day of probation has ended; all men are well in a position to make up their minds for good or evil, and all men will have made up their minds. Those who have not been influenced by the specious arguments of the arch-rebel are not likely to take much notice of his followers. The dividing line will therefore be clear and definite. To quote Elijah at Mount Carmel, *"If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him"*. It can be taken that the incorrigibly corrupt at heart will stand revealed in their true colours over this matter but no one else will be misled or in any way hurt. And at this point, when it is demonstrated beyond all question that nothing can ever turn these men from evil and make them sons of God, the time comes when God must turn sorrowfully away and leave them to the consequences of their choice. John saw fire coming down from heaven to devour them—fit symbol of that everlasting destruction which is the only possible end of anything and everything in which evil and sin resides and cannot be eradicated.

Do the words of Peter in 2 Peter 2 give a hint as to what might be expected? That chapter alludes to the false prophets of past ages and the descent of Divine judgment upon them, detailing the nature of their sins, and draws an analogy with the corresponding seducers of—it has generally been thought—the Gospel Age. The thought may well be correct, but even so Peter's language is strong, almost too strong if his allusion is only to false teachers among Christians during this Age. Did he have in mind also the seducers of the Millennial Age and was his language deliberately chosen to define their position too? He certainly alludes to a similar class of evildoers in each of earth's former ages; the fallen angels in the Antediluvian Age, the men of Sodom and Balaam the prophet of Aram in the Patriarchal Age, and the false prophets of Israel in the Jewish Age. Of all these he speaks in general terms describing their uncleanness and immorality, but above all of the fact that they are, first, unbelievers (vs. 1); second, hypocrites, seeking to deceive the righteous (vs. 3); third, presumptuous, standing up against the powers of heaven (vs. 10); fourth—and this is important—themselves deceived by reason of their unbelief, so that they fail to understand the power against which they fight (vs. 12). The chapter is replete with strong expressions denoting judgment upon these rebels. *"The Lord knoweth how . . . to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"* (vs. 9). *"As natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed . . . shall utterly perish in their own corruption"* (vs. 12). *"To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever"* (vs. 17). There is much in this striking chapter that fits very well the position of those who sally forth at the end of the Millennium to deceive the righteous.

Unbelief—hypocrisy—presumption—blindness to the invincibility of righteousness. These are the characteristics of those who side with the Evil One in this the last challenge to God's goodness. But they will have forgotten one thing. Perhaps they never really believed it. Paul knew, and he imparted his knowledge to the men of Athens. *"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."* (Acts 17. 28). In God's hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind (Job 12. 10). In a manner beyond our comprehension He has but to withdraw His Spirit, and life ceases.

That is how the end will come. In the very moment of the proud boast, of the scornful

and final rejection of all that the Heavenly Father has done for them, He has but to "gather to Himself His spirit and His breath" (Job 34. 14). The arrogant words, dying on the lips; the proud glance, fading out of the eyes;

the suddenly nerveless body, slumping helplessly to the ground; all will give mute but eloquent testimony to the burning truth of the Divine word "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*". (Ezek. 18. 4).

EVENTIDE

"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"

"Abide with us . . . for the day is far spent."

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

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

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

Had they tired of His company? Had His searching words probed too deeply and left a wound, or a sting? Had He dominated them too long? No! not a bit of it. The burning

fires within their souls had kindled goodwill to such a traveller and made them long for more such conversation. Would He come in and stay the night with them? At least He should not go forward without an invitation to their abode!

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

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

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

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

In the maturing experience of every true child of God there comes at last—sometimes earlier—sometimes late—a deepening sense of Christ-consciousness. It is the expression of

a deep inborn desire for Someone on whom to rest implicitly and with confidence. In the earlier years of life, when one's mental powers are at their prime, the need for this harbour of repose may not be so keenly realised. It is only when the brain with its reflective and retentive faculties begins to fail, and to function less capably, that the desire for something that is central to every element of Truth begins to assert itself. It is then that the maturing saint begins to feel his need of the abiding Presence of the Lord. Thenceforth the need is more for "Him" than "It". The constant prayer of a such a heart will be:

*"I need Thy Presence every passing hour;
What but Thy Grace can foil the tempter's power?"*

Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?

Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me."

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

*"I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness,
Where is death's sting? where grave thy victory?"*

I triumph still, if Thou abide with me."

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

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

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *Why does the writer to the Hebrews say, in Heb. 9. 4, that the Incense Altar was in the Most Holy, when the Old Testament declares it to be in the Holy?*

* * *

A. Many commentators have remarked upon this seeming discrepancy. In the first place, it cannot be argued that the expression "golden censer" in Heb. 9. 4, refers, not to the Incense Altar, but to a censer which was taken into the Most Holy, for the word used (*thumiaterion*) refers to any article of furniture used for the burning of incense, and is used for the incense altar by Josephus and other First Advent writers. Some have suggested that a slip of the pen on the part of the writer was responsible; Bible students will hardly accept that view readily. The writings were overruled by the Holy Spirit and such slips are hardly to be expected under those circumstances.

It is possible that the writer was not thinking of the *location* of the Incense Altar so much as its position in the symbolism connected with the ceremonial. The golden table and the lampstand both had to do with the priests. The Altar, on the other hand, had to do with the presence of God. On the day of

Atonement the incense was placed on this altar and burned, the resultant cloud of smoke preceding the High Priest into the Most Holy in order that his entry into the presence of God might be acceptable. Hence it was as essential a part of "Most Holy" symbolism as the Ark of the Covenant itself. So the writer to the Hebrews, thinking of the symbolism of the Tabernacle rather than its "geography" would perhaps associate the Ark, the Cherubim and the Incense Altar together, and *think of the Altar as belonging to the Most Holy although it actually stood in the Holy*. In the description of Solomon's Temple it is described (1 Kings 6. 22, when correctly translated), as the "Altar that belongs to the oracle" (the Ark).

The symbolism of Revelation is similar. In Rev. 9. 13, we read of the "golden altar which is before God" and in Rev. 8. 3-5 of the "golden altar which is before the throne". So in Isaiah 6 the prophet sees the Lord upon his throne and an angel takes a live coal from the altar which is before Him. In each of these cases the idea in the mind of the seer is that of the Incense Altar standing in the presence of God, the means by which His people can have access to Him; for the incense represents the prayers of saints.

In all temptation and difficulty the way of deliverance is to remember that the eye of the Lord Jesus as a Friend is upon you; that His presence as a Friend is with you; and then to ask with confidence and to expect with certainty.

If we are faithful in this service we have no time, nor have we the disposition, to give heed either to false doctrines or to other themes which have no bearing on the *one thing* to which we have solemnly dedicated our lives.

"BUT PRAYER WAS MADE"

An exhortation

In the Scripture from which these few words have been taken the story is told of a season of deep distress which befell the few staunch, faithful souls who braved the wrath of the fanatical Jews in Jerusalem, and remained there with the Apostles. An intense persecution had broken out in the days when Stephen was arrested and stoned to death, and had continued with great ferocity through all the subsequent weeks and months. Many members of the mother Church had fled for safety to other towns and villages, and had been the means of spreading the gospel story over a wider field (Acts 11. 19), and of winning converts to the church of Christ. Some, if not all, of the Apostles had remained resident in Jerusalem, to keep the standard of the faith flying in the city which had raised its felon hand against the Son through whom God had spoken to them, and against the first martyr, who had been privileged to follow the Master in the way of sacrifice and death.

In view of the intensity of the persecution, instituted and conducted by the zealot, Saul of Tarsus, who, as leader of the persecuting band, entered houses and hiding-places, applying methods of coercion and constraint, it would require a rare courage to stay on in the rage-maddened city, even though maintaining discreet silence in public about the great things committed to their care. When the conduct of people is actuated by blind passion rather than cool reason, it calls for heroism of the finest quality to linger on under circumstances where misdirected zeal and burning fanaticism may, at any moment, and without any warning, kindle the fiery furnace with manifold intensity. In spite of the fact that the hand of the Lord Jesus had plucked the chief of the persecutors as a brand from the fire, there was no respite from the severities of the persecution. Rather, that even fed fuel to the flames of wrath which burned in the cruel hearts of priest and Pharisee alike, so that to remain in Jerusalem became increasingly dangerous from that time thenceforward for all the Apostles and for those stalwart souls who chose to remain with them in the metropolis.

At length, to curry favour with the Jews, the Edomite king, Herod, while on a visit to Jerusalem, caused James, the brother of John, to be arrested and slain with the sword. This

cruel act gave great satisfaction to the Jewish hierarchy—a satisfaction which was openly made known to the royal murderer. Desiring to give further pleasure to the flattering Jews, Herod next proceeded to arrest Peter, and threw him, under guard, into prison. But because the Jewish people were engaged in the observance of one of their great feasts—perhaps the most important of them all—Herod postponed the final act of execution for a few days. When the ritualistic solemnities of the Passover feast-days were at an end, Herod purposed to bring Peter forth from prison and give him to the headsman's sword, and thus deprive the defenceless followers of the Nazarene of the second member of that favoured trio which had enjoyed the closest intimacy with their Master so many times.

Herod had done all that a royal despot could do to ensure Peter's safekeeping in custody. Two soldiers were chained to his wrists, and two others mounted guard outside his prison door, in relays, day and night. Also, his cell was deep within the building—within the "first and second wards" (v. 10), and the guards were under the strictest orders to keep the prisoner safe and secure, in readiness for Herod's further act of appeasement when the appropriate moment should have come.

Thus far the royal and military position! What of the prisoner? Was he cowed and broken, ready to forswear his faith in face of death? Three words only describe Peter's state of mind. "*Peter was sleeping . . .*" (v. 6). Not much is said, but enough to show that Peter's heart was at rest in the Lord. Without doubt, he knew of Herod's purpose on the morrow, for soldiers' tongues would talk! But Peter found a "Power" in his heart, which enabled him to look death coolly in the face without fear or dread. He had learned to live or die without regrets, submissive to his Master's Will and Providence.

Peter was "at rest"! What of his brethren? It could not have been wholly a happy Passover-time for them. Their fervent remembrance of the Master's death would be tempered by the remembrance of Peter's plight. They would have remembrance also of a long record of martyr sufferings, beginning with Stephen and ending, within recent days, in the death of James. They would be quite cognisant that God, the Father of them all, and

Jesus, the great Shepherd of them all, had permitted the persecutor to prevail and work his evil will upon the defenceless flock. Would they permit Peter to be slain? Would Herod do with Peter as he had done with James? They did not know. The apprehensive little company had remained together in continuous session through all the days of the Feast. And now, knowing, perhaps, of Herod's intention to slay Peter on the coming day, with full heart they betook themselves to prayer. What else could they do? They had no one with influence at Herod's court, so there was no ray of hope there. They could not expect a change of the Pharisaical heart, and, save for God's intervention, there was no way out of the dilemma. Peter's deliverance, at best, was but a forlorn hope. "But prayer was made." It was, indeed, the prayer of a forlorn hope, the prayer of human extremity, the prayer in the dark! For what did they pray? Was it for Peter's deliverance? Was it for the frustration of Herod's plans, and the return of Peter to their midst? It may have been, but it is somewhat doubtful whether that was so. Their reaction to his knocking "at the door of the gate" scarcely agrees with such a thought. They were doubtful even after Rhoda had heard and recognised his voice, whether Peter could have been set free. Their unkind reply to the damsel's joyful words reveals only too well how little they had expected Peter's release. For what, then, had they prayed, if not for Peter's release? Is it not more likely that prayer was for Peter's "faith"—that he might be faithful in the hour of death, that he would not retract one word, nor flinch his eye, when face to face with the headsman's sword.

God has His own wise way of teaching His children to trust Him. To Peter He sent that inward peace, so that on the last night before the fateful morrow Peter could sleep. Peter would never forget—could never forget—the holy calm that possessed his soul and closed his eyes in sweet repose. Then, after his restful sleep, came the unexpected release. God gave him deliverance from his "fears", and then deliverance from his foes. Can one wonder that it was Peter's hand which wrote the deeply confident words, "kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation . . ." (1 Pet. 1. 6). The mighty power of God "kept" Peter from his own weaknesses, and from his enemy's sword—a lesson which tintured every word and thought from that day on, and though long centuries have passed, that confidence "yet speaketh".

The lesson for the little prayer-circle was

that God can take man's extremity as His opportunity. In royal circles Peter's decapitation was as good as done—to the little assembly it was all but accomplished, but God decreed otherwise. The Divine caretaker allowed the peril to persist right on till the last night, till hope was all but dead, then, out of the "seemingly inevitable" God rescued His trusting child. Could the little band ever forget that God gave more than they had asked—"exceedingly above all that they could ask or think".

Every circumstance of life is an occasion and an opportunity for the child of God to pray. He has causes without end to voice his gratitude to God. He has need more than he knows to utter his requests, but in all the changeful experience of life it is the prayer of the "extremity" and the "forlorn hope" that best shows the moral fibre of the soul. A weak faith may say, "it is too late", a doubting heart could say "What is the use of it all?"—a dauntless faith will say "But prayer may still be made". Thanksgiving and request are the appropriate prayers for the ordinary occasions of life. The "but prayer" is the prayer for the extraordinary times, when we have reached the end of our tether, or a bit beyond, and we can see no way out or through or even over the tangled thicket that surrounds us. Like the little company in Jerusalem, we may not always word our prayer to the right end, but the essential thing is not the mere fact of asking, but the attitude of asking. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint", said Jesus, and it is when fainting seems the next obvious human thing to do, that "but prayer" wins the Divine reward.

*"When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay."*

When the Herods of this world have laid their evil plans, and we seem to have no way of escape from their toils—as may yet well happen amid the present strains of life—we must not faint or fall, but remember that prayer can be made, and out of the dark scene the angel of the Lord will lead the way to the working of the Will of God. Let us ever remember that whether we are the "prayed-for" (as Peter), or of the praying Church, it is the prayer which rises from the farthest edge of our extremity that will bring the Divine blessing in full measure into our lives.

Did our Lord say "If any man would be my disciple let him serve me" or was it "If any man would serve me let him follow me"?



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

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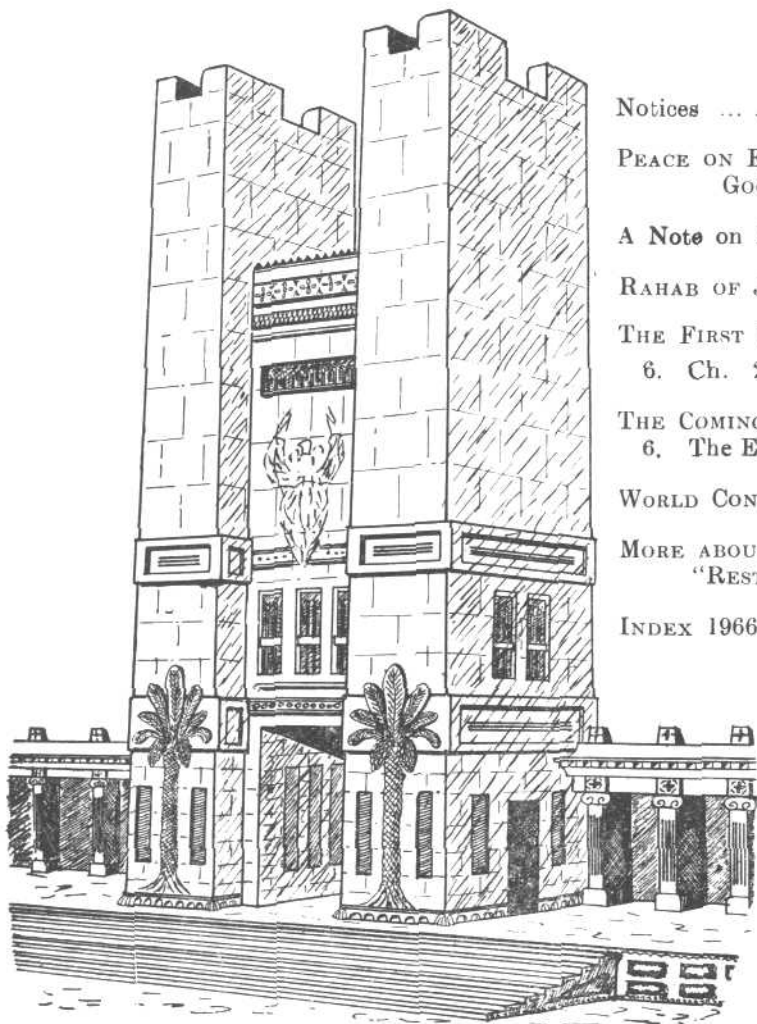
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CONTENTS

Notices	101
PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN	103
A Note on Methuselah	105
RAHAB OF JERICO	106
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN 6. Ch. 2.9-11	109
THE COMING OF THE KING 6. The End of the World	111
WORLD CONVERSION—WHEN?	113
MORE ABOUT THE “REST OF THE DEAD”	119
INDEX 1966	120



*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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NOTICES

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. E. Allbon, 9 Esher Close, Nyetimber Lane, Pagham, Bognor Regis, Sussex.

* * *

The Keswick Calendar, published by a well-known Scripture Publishing House, is often in demand by many readers and for the convenience of those in country districts and elsewhere who have difficulty in obtaining them locally we can supply from stock. The calendar consists of monthly turnover sheets with twelve colour reproductions of some of the finest views in Britain, with appropriate scripture text and meditation. Suitable for Christmas gift. 5/9 (80c) post free.

* * *

Attention is invited to the list of current publications in the opposite column. Several of these booklets are quite useful as small Christmas gifts to Christian friends, and for this purpose the ones on *Jonah*, *Samson* and the *Tower of Babel* are appropriate.

In addition to these booklets we can at the moment supply from stock the following by other publishers, of interest to many of our readers.

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—:—

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

PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN

A Christian
Message

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men'." (Luke 2. 14).

That was the song of the celestial choir at the Nativity. It came to the wondering shepherds in its fresh simplicity and they accepted it with child-like faith. Perhaps they thought that the promise was to be fulfilled almost at once, or at least in their own lifetime; it must have been a source of perplexity to them all during the next thirty years that nothing of the glorious word had come to pass.

The purpose of God in Christ is still a mystery to all except those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit in consequence of their acceptance into the High Calling, and their walk in the way of consecration. Only to such is it given at this present time to enter into a knowledge of the "deep things of God". And in order to understand how and when it will be true that there is peace on earth and goodwill amongst men, it is essential to understand our Lord's relation to the continuing reign of evil, and the place in this that is occupied by the "Church which is His Body".

These shepherds must have listened to the message with an especial intensity because their land had not known true peace for many years. The background of the people of Judea was one of warfare, captivity, rebellion and severe suffering. Six hundred years earlier they had endured the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the national disintegration which followed that calamitous event. Even although, seventy years later, they found themselves restored to their own land, it was only as a tributary nation, first under the Persians, later the Greeks, and finally Rome. The attempts of the Greeks to Hellenise them led to revolt after revolt, interspersed with dreadful persecutions. Their temporary success during the Maccabean period, while due largely to the prowess of Judas Maccabeus, was also contributed to by the decay of Greek power before the growing influence of Rome, and the brief period of Jewish independence ended abruptly in the year 63 B.C. when the Roman, Pompey, marched his legions into Jerusalem. From then until the

year A.D. 70 there was almost continual rebellion against the invaders. It is little wonder that, despairingly seeking some relief from their sufferings, "*all men were in expectation*" of the long-promised Messianic deliverer. The terrible consequences of the struggle for independence led by Judas of Galilee, during the childhood of Jesus, culminating in the death of Judas and the crucifixion of four thousand of his followers by the Romans, was only one of those dark happenings which made men long for true peace.

In the midst of these conditions Jesus grew to manhood's estate. Standing head and shoulders above His fellows, men at the first must have looked to Him for leadership, in confidence that He would be able to deliver them from the Roman yoke. They expected, as do so many to-day, that "peace on earth, goodwill to men" could only come by the use of armed force by means of which their enemies would be crushed in the same way as they themselves had been subjugated. Great must have been their disappointment when at length the One in whom they had pinned their hopes came back from the wilderness to preach an entirely different message than that they had expected. Trained as they were in the Mosaic Law, which called for "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", and encouraged to go forth to slay the enemies of the Lord, they utterly failed to understand this new gospel of non-resistance, of love for enemies, of turning the other cheek, of doing good to the ones who were inflicting evil. And in their disappointment and chagrin they turned away and rejected the only One who could have brought them the peace they so much desired.

Many there are to-day who understand no more clearly. The majority still uphold the principle of fighting the forces of evil with the weapons of evil. There is no real comprehension of the true purpose and power of God except in the hearts of the few. Not many appreciate the meaning of Jesus' words "*If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me*". And yet in no other way could the Father pave the way for the Son to take up His destined work as the anointed Priest-King, made "*higher than the heavens*". Christ defeated the sin of the world by accepting it into His love, and at the same time, says the writer to

the Hebrews, "*learned obedience through the things that he suffered*". So He became, again as Hebrews declares, a merciful and compassionate High Priest, able to "*have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way*" and, praise God, thus to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Men and women at the time of the First Advent could not understand how such a method could avail. Even Jesus' closest associates, the twelve disciples, failed to follow this "more excellent way". There was a strife amongst them, which should be the greatest in the Kingdom. They wanted to call down fire from heaven in the fashion of Elijah of old to destroy the inhospitable Samaritans. Peter, defending his Master, drew his sword and struck off the ear of the High Priest's servant. The old training and beliefs died hard; it was not until after Pentecost that they began to see the why and the wherefore of the pattern Jesus set for them. Here it was that the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus was first discerned and first made known. It could not have been so proclaimed earlier, for it was here that atonement had been made by Christ Jesus entering into the presence of God and the Holy Spirit sent to the waiting disciples with creative power to transform them into His likeness. That is why their writings afterward gave such clear instruction concerning the meeting of evil and the overcoming of evil by the force of love alone. That was henceforth to be the guiding principle in the lives of true Christians, necessary preparation for their future work in the next Age, when the work of conversion and reconciliation will depend upon the power of the love of God and on that alone. So in this Age that same principle is to be adopted by the Sons of God, both collectively and as individuals.

Collectively—yes, for the members of the true Church in the flesh are to be the salt of the earth; they are to be as lights in the world. It is a grievous thing that no matter how much we may succeed in measuring up to this ideal individually, in our personal lives before God, we so often utterly fail to do it collectively, as a community or as a group. And it is as a community that we are judged by them. No small part of our failure to give an effective witness in the world and win men and women for Christ must be put down to our lamentable failure to manifest among ourselves the standards we preach.

The Apostle Paul was one who well learned the way of Christ. His object lesson at the

first was the non-violent resistance of the first Christian martyr, Stephen. He was falsely accused, but he refused to meet evil with the weapons of his persecutors. "*All that sat in the council, gazing steadfastly upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*". How could it have been otherwise, lighted as it was with the indwelling radiance of the Holy Spirit? At his stoning he retained the same disposition and died praying the Lord that He would not lay their great sin to their charge. From the point of view of those around at the time it could be argued that Stephen's death was pointless, unavailing, powerless to accomplish any good. From the standpoint of history that argument is futile and valueless. The power and effect of Stephen's death was seen a few years later when a bright light blinded with its glare a traveller on the Damascus road, and a voice broke through that proud man's reserve with the fearful question "*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?*" Had Saul not stood by and witnessed the death of the man whom he helped to condemn he may never have come to that later experience and become a man utterly broken and humbled, moulded into a chosen vessel to do and suffer great things in and for the Name of Jesus. It may well be that we owe the superb power of the Pauline Epistles, and the tremendous legacy Paul left to the Church of after ages, to the faithfulness of the first martyr Stephen.

Little wonder, then, is it that we find St. Paul clearly defining Christ's terms in the words "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom. 12, 21). These are the terms of the One who "*loved righteousness and hated iniquity*", realising that it was not yet God's time to restrain evil in the world at large. This Gospel Age is a time in which Christ the Head, and the Church which is His Body, are called to resist evil by non-violent methods, and so receive their training for the work of that coming Day when all evil everywhere is to be removed and banished.

It is a costly way when measured by human standards. It entails sacrificial death, as it did in the case of Jesus, but if we are faithful unto death we shall be raised in the power of the First Resurrection into the glory of the Kingdom. Then, and then only, will it be possible to bring about what so many well-intentioned men are striving by their own efforts to accomplish now—peace on earth, goodwill towards men. The ordinary man, desiring to help his fellows, feels it little less than criminal to stand idle in the present chaos; he is

impelled to do all that lies in his power to crush collective evil, whatever the means he employs. That is because he does not understand God's plan of the ages. The Kingdom of peace and righteousness will never and can never come by man's efforts, but only by the power of God in the person of Christ, the great Mediator, the One who has resisted evil by non-violence. Men will never cause wars to cease; it is only God who can and will do this in His own time and way, making *"wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire"*.

The ministry of affliction plays a very important part in the development of the Church. The example is set before us in 1 Pet. 2. 23 *"When he was reviled, reviled not again, when he was threatened, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously"*. It is no use asserting, as some do, that the case of Jesus was different, and

that we are called upon to fight evil with weapons He did not and would not use, for the Apostle Paul also says *"Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer, being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day"* (1 Cor. 4. 12-13). This line of conduct is no sign of weakness; it savours not of compromise and its practical outworking savours both strength and beauty of character.

So peace will come at last. In the meantime it is for us to continue along the narrow pathway, faithful to the increasing light of truth as we endeavour to make our calling and election sure. Always remember that *"there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it"* (1 Cor. 10. 13).

A NOTE ON METHUSELAH

A questioner refers to the statement sometimes met with to the effect that the meaning of the name "Methuselah" is *"When he is dead it shall be sent"*, his death in the year of the Flood, according to Gen. 5. 27 and 7. 6, being a sign of its imminence, and enquires as to the basis of this assertion. The suggestion that the name has this meaning, that it was a prophetic name bestowed by his father Enoch, and referred to the coming of the Flood, was first advanced, the writer of this note believes, by Arthur Gook in a small work called *"Can a Young Man trust his Bible?"* some fifty years ago. It is not wise to place too much reliance upon name meanings unless the name itself is a regular Hebrew word. In this case it is not. "Methuselah" is a compound word and originally was written without vowels. Not until the early centuries of the Christian era did written Hebrew have the vowels added and no one then knew or even now knows how the words were pronounced in archaic Hebrew. As first written the name was M-TH-S-L-H and almost certainly is compounded of "Meth" (Man) and "Salah" a verb meaning to be quiet, peaceful, prosperous, without care, and so on, with the genitive "us" (of) interposed, thus meaning, probably, "man of peace" or "man of prosperity". The originator of the alternative suggestion apparently took "Muth", meaning death, and compounded it with "Salach", a verb meaning "to send", without realising

that he had mistaken the Hebrew letter for CH with that for H, so producing a word which could be rendered "death of sending" which is meaningless. Even so, the name would have to be spelt "Muthusalach", a form for which there is no warrant. A more likely explanation, in keeping with the known character of the family concerned, is that if the name has any meaning at all, it is "Man of peace".

The fact that Methuselah is credited with the longest life of any man—he is stated to have lived 969 years—enabled the suggestion to be used as a basis for picturing the long forbearance of God as the living warning dragged out a long life, becoming more urgent as each year passed. It must be remembered that Hebrew is, like all languages, post-diluvian. No one knows what language structure existed before the Deluge but it is unlikely to have had very much resemblance to the Hebrew in which Genesis now exists.

That pilgrim of old, David, passed through the valley of weeping, and there, he says, he made a well, and the pools thereof were filled with water (Psa. 84. 6). In that valley "his tears had been his meat day and night". But he found God's gifts in the valley. And many a pilgrim since has seen the footmarks of this valiant saint, and drunk deep of those wells of refreshment which he dug for fellow-pilgrims.

RAHAB OF JERICO

An Old Testament
character study

One of the women mentioned approvingly in the New Testament as an example of sterling faith is Rahab the harlot of Jericho, the woman who gave shelter to the Israelite spies sent to reconnoitre the city before its destruction. The writer to the Hebrews says "*By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace*" (Heb. 11. 31). James, in the course of his homily on the relation between faith and works, asks (2. 25) "*Was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*" These allusions are based upon the story as we have it in the Book of Joshua. St. Matthew appears to have had access to genealogical records not now surviving when he compiled the first chapter of his Gospel; he indicates that this same Rahab married Salmon, leader of the tribe of Judah, and that from this union came Boaz, who stands in the direct line of descent between Abraham and Christ (Matt. 1. 5). Thus this otherwise unknown woman of Jericho is an ancestress of our Lord.

Jewish Rabbinic sources many centuries ago propounded the suggestion that the word here rendered "harlot" can also mean "inn-keeper" and that in reality Rahab was a most respectable custodian of a local hostelry at which the spies booked in for the night. This hypothesis owes its existence to the Rabbis' desire to relieve King David, descended from Rahab, of what they felt to be a stigma on his ancestry. It is perpetuated by some Christian commentators and others with the same intent as respects Jesus Christ. There is no foundation for the idea; the word occurs some ninety times in the Old Testament and never means anything else in Hebrew than the mediæval English term by which it is always translated. And this little fortress town, only two hundred and fifty yards long by a hundred wide, is most unlikely to have had need of an "inn" of any description. Such places existed only in the country districts, where travellers might be caught after nightfall, and even then only in much later times. It is said by those who should know that at the time of the Exodus and earlier the whole idea of inns and hostelries for travellers was quite unknown; those caught out at night slept under the stars.

The story itself is related in the 2nd and 6th chapters of Joshua. After forty years' sojourn in the desert, following the Exodus, Israel was encamped in the plains of Moab east of the Jordan waiting for the word to march. The river lay between them and their goal but they had been assured that God would remove that barrier at the crucial moment. Five miles from the other side of the river, inside Canaan, lay the military frontier fortress of Jericho, a town surrounded by high walls, crammed with defending soldiery, and thought to be impregnable. It probably contained a number of Egyptian troops, for Canaan was still nominally under the sovereignty of Egypt, although for many years now the land had been in a state of turmoil and rebellion, and Egypt had very largely abandoned any attempt to govern. But Jericho was obviously the first strong city to be besieged and captured as soon as the host of Israel invaded. So Joshua sent two trusty men across the river to investigate the defences.

The town was not large; a man could walk right round it in ten minutes. The spies, dressed like people of the land, apparently gained entry at twilight before the gate was closed and explored the little settlement unchallenged. They found it closely packed with small flat-topped houses and a central solid building which was the abode of the garrison. The defences consisted of two massive walls about thirty feet high, the outer one six feet and the inner one twelve feet thick, with a fifteen feet space between them. In many places the two walls had been bridged by masonry and stout timbers and houses built actually upon the walls, straddling between inner and outer. All this is known because the city lay, just as Joshua left it, concealed under an increasing mound of sand and earth, with little interference, for three thousand years, until in the years 1930-1936 Prof. John Garstang of Britain excavated and found everything exactly as described in the Book of Joshua, even to the remains of the houses on the wall, one of which must have been Rahab's. Going round the city, the spies discerned that the inhabitants were terrified of the Israelite menace and were not likely to offer much resistance once the walls had been breached. After all, the population in a town of that size could hardly have exceeded two or three thousand and there were six hundred

thousand Israelite warriors threatening them only a few miles away.

By this time it was dark and the city gate closed. The intruders had to find concealment for a few hours and make their escape in the morning when the town opened for normal business. They solved this problem by getting themselves accepted for the night at the house of a harlot named Rahab. Probably they felt that the presence of strange men at such an establishment would be less likely to excite suspicion than anywhere else. They could hardly have known that, despite her profession, Rahab was a woman who exercised belief and faith in the same God as they, and was prepared to run almost certainly a grave risk in protecting them. The hand of God must have been in this thing that they were led to this house in any case, and that Rahab knew them for what they were; they are not likely to have revealed their identity, even to their hostess.

They had not been so fortunate in escaping detection as they had thought. Someone had seen them go in and was suspicious. Before long the representatives of law and order were knocking at Rahab's door with a demand that the men be produced. Rahab was evidently quick-witted. The house had a flat roof like all in Jericho and on Rahab's roof there was laid out a quantity of freshly cut flax for drying—she evidently had a second source of income, in connection with some aspect of the local textile industry. She quickly hurried the spies up to her roof and concealed them under the flax. Whilst the investigators searched her house she blandly admitted that two men had been with her that night; that as usual she had asked no questions and eventually sent them on their way. Where they went afterwards she had no idea and was not interested, but if, as asserted, they were enemy spies it was not likely they had got very far. If her interviewers would stop wasting time in her house and go after them they might yet overtake and capture their men. The officers appreciated the point of this argument and were apparently out of the house and down the street with considerable promptitude; the city gates closed with a clang after them and they spent the rest of the night in an unavailing search of the countryside between Jericho and the fords of Jordan five miles away.

In the meantime this very practical woman had gone up to the roof and engaged her guests in very serious conversation. "I know" she said "that the Lord hath given you the

land, and that your fear is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt . . . and our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the Lord your God, he is God in the heaven above and in the earth beneath" (Josh. 2. 9-11). That is quite a striking testimony from one whose life was lived among idolators and who probably had learned but little of the God of Israel. Perhaps Rahab was already sick of the life she led and looking for the light; like Mary Magdalene of much later times in similar circumstances, she was nearly ready to be cleansed of the "seven demons". Israel had sojourned in the desert not much more than a hundred miles away for forty years past and some knowledge of their laws and standards and the God they worshipped must have filtered into Canaan, carried by wandering nomads and caravans of traders from time to time during that period. The wilderness of Sinai was on the highway between Egypt and Canaan and travellers were constantly passing through. Rahab may very well have heard something of all this and in her heart wanted to know more of this worship so much loftier in its tones and ideals than the sensual religions of Canaan. At any rate, on this night when the men of Israel came to her she took her stand with the people of the Lord, and in so doing, one might hope and reasonably expect, turned away for ever from the old life.

The two men readily agreed to her request that in recognition of her espousal of their cause they would see that she and her family were spared from the doom that was to fall upon the city. "It shall be" they told her "when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee". With that assurance she planned their escape. This was, providentially, an easy matter. Her house was upon the two walls and a window gave access to the exterior of the city. "She let them down by a cord from the window; for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall" (ch. 2. 15). Under cover of the friendly darkness they made their way down the rope to the ground, and following Rahab's instructions headed westward away from Jordan and "into the mountain"—Mount Kuruntul, which still rises three thousand feet immediately behind the site of ancient Jericho. There, said she, they must remain hidden three days before venturing back to the lowlands and the river.

Evidently she had anticipated several days' search before the hunt was called off. Her judgment appears to have been pretty sound, for "*the pursuers sought them throughout all the way, but found them not*" (ch. 2. 22). Eventually the intrepid pair arrived safe and sound in the camp of Israel and reported to Joshua the result of their mission.

A fortnight later the city fell to the besiegers and was utterly destroyed. Faithful to their promise, and in obedience to the command of Joshua, the two spies went in amidst the turmoil and the fighting to the house now marked with the scarlet thread hanging from the window, the agreed sign that those within were waiting and trusting in the integrity of the promise. So they were brought forth. Rahab the woman of faith, her father and mother and all her family, and conducted to a place of safety away from the fighting. They were the only citizens of Jericho to survive. The ferocity of Joshua's troops saw to it that everyone else was slain, the city levelled with the ground and consumed by fire. Garstang found the evidence of that fire, earthenware pots containing charred and burnt foodstuffs, stonework and brickwork scorched and split by the heat, and layers of ashes six inches thick. Every single detail in the Joshua account has been verified by investigation on the site.

"And" concludes the ancient scribe who compiled the Book of Joshua, speaking still of Rahab, "*she dwelleth in Israel unto this day*". If the book was completed in that generation this need only mean that she was still alive and amongst them, but it is unlikely that this is the meaning. It was always believed in after ages in Israel that Rahab became the wife of Salmon, and in such case this expression would refer to the perpetuation of her descendants in Israel. No reference to a marriage is found in the Old Testament and in fact Rahab is not mentioned again, but Matthew does state definitely that Boaz was born to Salmon and Rahab; this information he must have taken from a documentary source and not relied upon mere tradition.

The marriage raises the question of Rahab's nationality. It was against the laws of Israel for an Israelite to marry any of the "women of the land" i.e., native Canaanites, Hittites or any other of the Hamitic race (descendants of Ham). There was not, however, the same objection to Semitic women, descendants of Shem through Abraham and others, even though they were not of Israel, through Jacob. Zipporah, the wife of Moses, was of a tribe

descended from Abraham through Keturah. There were many such descendants of Abraham's many children scattered through Canaan. Although there is no Scriptural evidence regarding Rahab's racial origin, it is at least possible that she was of Abrahamic stock, and this could account in part for her leaning towards the God of Israel and her faith in Him in preference to the Canaanites' gods, besides rendering Salmon's choice of her as wife easier to understand.

A very significant fact is that Rahab's name is included in what has been called the "gallery of faith" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. This chapter has long been renowned for immortalising certain "heroes of faith" of Old Testament times, prior to the establishment of the Christian Church, whose sterling faith and whose deeds springing from that faith place them in a special position in God's sight. It has often been suggested that those immortalised in this chapter are destined for inclusion in the company of world rulers in the next Age, administering the Millennial Kingdom in the name of the King, the Lord Christ. The terms "Old Testament Saints" or "Ancient Worthies" have been coined to apply to such. Out of sixteen names selected by the writer to the Hebrews two only are women. One is Sarah the wife of Abraham and the other is Rahab. That the writer was subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit when making his selection is hardly open to question. The logical and irresistible conclusion therefore is that this woman of ancient Jericho, despite the kind of life attributed to her, was one in the sight of God possessing the character and moral calibre and strength of faith which would make her a fitting choice as one of the "*princes in all the earth*" (Psa. 45. 16) who are to exercise functions of rulership "in that day". The one little scrap of history we have concerning Rahab the harlot shows her loyal, far-seeing, resourceful, courageous, and above all, inflexible in her faith that God is true and the purpose of God will certainly be carried out. If in fact, as appears to be the case, she did indeed marry Salmon prince of the royal tribe of Judah, and so became ancestress of Israel's Messiah and the world's Saviour, then again we have an instance of the wonderful power of God Who can make vessels of honour out of weak and common clay. Once more we are reminded of the truth that God looks not at a man or woman's past, only at their present condition of heart and the possibilities that lie in them for their future.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 6 I John 2. 9-11

After showing his readers that the man who claims to know God and does not keep His commandments is grievously in error, John leads their minds to an even more searching question. What about the man who claims to know God but does not love his own brother in the faith? This is another aspect of practical Christianity, of the Christian faith in everyday life. *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."* This word "hateth" has a wide range of meaning in the Greek. It is "miseo" and does mean the evil thing we call "hate", in many instances, but it also can and does denote disesteem or indifference. It is not necessarily a question of departing so far from Christian principles as to allow the evil passions of hate and malice to take possession of the mind and heart; it also includes the act of despising or ignoring, being indifferent toward, the person and the interests of one's brother in the faith. "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" is the standard laid down, and to which we are all required to conform. Those whom our Lord has given us to be our brethren must be received and treated as such; and even then not as it were of constraint or compulsion, but spontaneously and of our own free will. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."* Later on in this epistle John returns to this point and puts the question *"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"* (1 John 4. 20). It is clear that in his mind this question of brotherly love is of the utmost importance. Perhaps John had learned, better than any of his fellow apostles, the lessons of those times of dispute and wrangling when they were with Jesus and some had sought to gain pre-eminence over the others. Perhaps he had realised more than most the spirit that was being inculcated by Jesus when he reproved those who in mistaken zeal would have called down fire from heaven upon some misguided villagers, and would have forbidden those whom they found casting out demons in the name of Jesus although following not with Him. There was so much they must needs learn before they could be "made perfect in love"; John, here at the end of a busy and devoted life, was perhaps in a position to

have learned more deeply than the rest what was meant by the magic phrase "the love of the brethren". Sometimes the meaning of this expression to those who lived in New Testament times comes out in the narratives in a totally unexpected manner. The wonderful little letter written to Philemon by Paul is as lovely a gem of brotherly love as can be found anywhere in the whole of the Scriptures. "Without thy mind would I do nothing" said Paul. What an example of true humility and Christian consideration! Paul, the chief of the Apostles, must of all men have surely possessed the conceded right to require or expect the ready assent of Philemon to his request; but no, he would win his consent by love or not at all. "Yea, brother" he writes, "let me have joy of thee in the Lord". The affectionate manner in which he refers to his co-labourers speaks volumes. "Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you" . . . "Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier" . . . "Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord". So many references there are which show what the love and fellowship, no less than the ministry and service, of these loyal ones meant to the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And no doubt John had a similar experience.

The ease of falling into the condition of "hating" or failing properly to esteem or care for the interests of one's brother is shown in passages such as Romans 14 where Paul enjoins us not to destroy with our "meat" our brother for whom Christ died. There are times when for love of our brother we must impose some self discipline upon ourselves that he be not stumbled. James, in his epistle, leads our thoughts in a different direction. He speaks of the brothers or sisters who are destitute of daily food, and of our obligation in such case to do what we can to give those things whereby they may be warmed and filled. In so many ways in life do we come up against these words, *"he that hateth his brother is in darkness"*.

Therefore, concludes John *"he that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes"* (vs. 10-11).

This verse is the end of a long warning commencing at verse 6 of chapter 1. In that warning John has traced the course of the disciple who has turned, at the first ever so imperceptibly, from walking in the light to walking in darkness. From failing to attain and maintain true fellowship with God he descends to a wrong understanding of his true position before God, claiming to be literally sinless, whereas no man is actually so. From that there is a retrogression to failure to keep God's commandments and from that to a position of antagonism towards the brethren of Christ. At that point he enters into the darkness which blinds his eyes so that he knows not the direction in which he is going and is unable any more to perceive the light of the truth of God. It is significant that the first step in this drifting away from the light is loss of fellowship with God. *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."* It is a point that maybe ought to be stressed more than is usually done, that the first effect of our consecration is entry into communion, fellowship with God. In our progression toward Divine things we first of all accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour and are justified by faith, in that acceptance and the belief that prompted it. Then—and not until then—do we properly hear and understand the call to consecration of heart and life and all our powers and possessions and abilities. *"My son, give me thine heart!"* The result of our Father's acceptance of that consecration is that we become His sons. *"Now are we the sons of God";* the Father hath bestowed great *"manner of love"* upon us, that we should be called by that honoured name. By virtue of that fact we came under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a manner that would have been impossible otherwise. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son. The fellowship into which we enter is not only a fellowship of the *"saints"* here below, a communion that can be seen and experienced in tangible fashion, as when we come together in conventions and assemblies and the like; it is also a fellowship in which we, believers on earth, are included with God in heaven. The medium of that fellowship is prayer, and meditation, and a silent lifting of the heart to God in worship and adoration and gratitude amid the manifold activities of the day. That is the fellowship that we each ought to have with Him and which can be ours and assuredly is ours if we continue to walk in the

light. Without sincerity of heart and purity of mind and fixedness of purpose that fellowship cannot endure. Without the consciousness that we are constantly endeavouring, however imperfectly, to carry out our covenant of consecration to Him and become a vehicle of His purposes, a tool in His hand, a vessel ready for His use, the communion is interrupted, the light fades from the sky—and we commence to walk in darkness.

Perhaps John's greatest point here is that we must appraise the situation intelligently. We must not delude or deceive ourselves. Unless we continue in the right attitude of heart toward our Father in heaven and our brethren on earth we cannot possibly remain in fellowship with God. Unless we hold the right understanding of sin, the basis of our cleansing from sin, and the nature of the standing we have before God, we cannot remain in fellowship with Him. Unless we come into harmony with His ways and to the utmost of our powers obey His commandments, that fellowship cannot exist. In this long appeal of warning which comes to us with all the urgency that the *"beloved disciple"* can infuse into his words, we are reminded solemnly and intensely of the great fundamentals of our acceptance with God. Observe the orderly fashion in which they are set out, as if to command our closest attention; the four stages of the Christian life, briefly outlined in these few verses.

First: Admission of sin—*repentance*. (Chap. 1. vs. 8-10).

Second: Cleansing in Christ—*justification*. (Chap. 2. vs. 1-2).

Third: Acceptance of His commandments—*consecration*. (Chap. 2. vs. 3-5).

Fourth: Abiding in Him—*sanctification*. (Chap. 2. vs. 6-9).

The man who hates his brother has lost all this and is back where he started—in the darkness, stumbling and staggering uncertainly, not knowing whither he is going, and at every step straying farther and farther from the true path. John is not really saying that his readers are like that: in his next exhortation he will express his confidence in their right standing before the Father, but here in this opening chapter of the epistle he does draw aside the curtain, as it were, and show them—and us through them—the tragic end of those who because of lack of love and zeal and sincerity take the path into what Bunyan called *"By-path Meadow"* and never find the way back.

(To be continued)

THE COMING OF THE KING

6. The End of the World

A series of studies
concerning the
Second Advent

The old idea of the Second Advent was that suggested by St. Paul's burning words in 2 Thess. 1. 9 *"the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God"*. A famous painting by Rubens (A.D. 1632) now in the museum at Brussels, Belgium, is based on this belief. Christ is shown descending from the stormclouds hurling thunderbolts upon the earth while His mother Mary tries in vain to restrain Him. Lower down in the picture St. Francis crouches over a globe representing the world which he is trying to protect from the wrath of the Lord. This was, and in some quarters still is, the orthodox view of the "Day of Judgment" and it is very far removed from reality.

That the Scriptures frequently speak of judgment and fiery destruction in the world of men as a feature of the Second Advent is a fact and there is no gainsaying that things worthy of judgment and destruction are, at that time, to go down in a manner fitly symbolised by consuming fire, which is so often a feature of Biblical descriptions. This is not a fiery destruction of men as such nor yet the literal passing away of heaven and earth in the manner suggested by some well-known hymns. The judgment of men associated with the Second Advent is one which includes provision for reclamation and reconciliation with God for those who will, and is described in much less sombre tones. The many passages which speak of Christ coming as a destroyer rather than a preserver have to do with the destruction of the evil systems and institutions of this world which have defied God and oppressed man, to the overthrow of the "kingdoms of this world" and their suppression by the Divine government of Christ, Who shall reign as Prince of Peace over a world governed by the principles of truth and righteousness.

This final phase of the ages-long struggle between good and evil is a very real conflict. The powers of evil, of greed, oppression and injustice, have become firmly entrenched during the thousands of years of human history and they will not yield place to the incoming world order of righteousness without protest. The issue is not in doubt; the powers of good will prevail; but vivid pen-pictures in the Bible describe the intensity of the conflict and

the magnitude of that final cataclysm which marks the overthrow of the present world order.

There are many Scriptures which speak prophetically of the time when the greed and selfishness and sin of mankind brings the world into its Armageddon, a time of trouble from which there can be no escape except through the coming of Messiah's kingdom. Many of these passages show clearly that the early period of Christ's Advent, besides being devoted to gathering His saints to their heavenly destiny, also sees the beginning of this work of destruction. That this climax to human misrule is the natural and inevitable result of man's own course of conduct since creation does not make any difference to the fact that a higher Power is now intervening to overrule these events for ultimate good.

The first intimation that Divine judgment is in process of coming upon the world is when observers realise the fulfilment of St. Paul's word to the Thessalonian Christians in 2 Thess. 2. 8. This particular community seems to have been specially concerned over the possible imminence of the Advent and it was to correct their misapprehension that the Apostle devoted so much time to the subject in his epistle. In this second chapter he explained that the Day of Christ would not come until there had first been a great falling away from the faith (which Jesus also foretold in Matt. 24), followed by the development of the "Antichrist", the "man of sin", which development could not commence until "*he that now hindereth*" should be taken out of the way. Finally there would be a revelation of the Antichrist in full power, and only after that could come the time that he would be "*consumed by the spirit of the Lord's mouth and destroyed by the bright shining of his presence*". In this short passage, 2 Thess. 2. 3-8, the Apostle spans the entire Age from his own day to the Second Advent and pictures two powers, that which is against Christ throughout the Age and that which is of Christ at the age's end.

Many and varied suggestions have been made as to the identity of the Antichrist but the plain fact is that the whole edifice of pseudo-Christian institutional power throughout the entire Age, claiming to rule men in the name of God—as Paul here puts it, "*he*

as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"—is the Antichrist of 2 Thess. 2. From quite an early period in the Age ambitious men began to introduce secular standards and practices into the Christian society with the view of increasing its standing and influence in the affairs of men. A concept took shape that if the Church was destined to reign over the nations then the sooner there was union with the secular power the better. This end could not be attained during the first three centuries; as St. Paul pointed out to the Thessalonians, "he that hindereth" must first be taken out of the way. The "hinderer" was the existing religious-secular system of Pagan Rome, firmly in the saddle in Paul's day and showing no sign of moving. By the Fourth Century, however, Pagan Rome, in its joint religious and political aspects, had passed away. It might be a fair appraisal of the position to say that when the Emperor Constantine in the early years of that century made Christianity the official State religion of the Roman Empire, and the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the day joined forces with him to create the power which in after centuries perpetrated many atrocities in the name of Christianity, Paul's foreview "*he who now hindereth will hinder, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that Wicked One be revealed*" was fulfilled.

For a period of fifteen hundred years this principle of Church-State union for the rulership of Christendom, and the rest of the earth so far as European influence extended thereto, claiming so to do in the name of Christ but in reality being completely alien from Him, had its day. Now it has almost completely dissolved. During the past century and a half such powers have lost or are fast losing their secular influence. No longer regarded as equal partners by the world's political rulers they become almost nonentities in the world's affairs. Neither is there guidance or instruction for the Christian community from such sources; they have long since suffered the extinction of the inner light, and when the voice of the prophet is heard in the land today it is the voice of a man whom God has raised up, a minister or pastor whose personal relationship with Christ inspires his utterance, or the message of a Christian body which has never succumbed to the temptation to join forces with the powers of this world and has remained true to the basic faith. The increasing force and scope of democratic and communistic forms of government having little or no interest in religious faith and no

intention of sharing functions of rulership with representatives of religion is another factor tending towards the destruction of Antichrist "with the bright shining of his presence". The fact that this dissolution is now manifestly in progress is one of the indications that we now live in that time, in the "*days of the Son of Man*".

A much more detailed account of this same process is given in the eighteenth chapter of Revelation, where the apostate power that in Rev. 17. 6 is declared guilty of "*the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*" is pictured under the symbol of great Babylon, the idolatrous city of olden time which ruled and oppressed the world and held captive the then people of God, Israel. The language of Rev. 18 is based upon the vivid denunciations of prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and its application is clearly to the Advent. This is shown by the opening verse; a mighty angel descends from heaven having great power and the earth is lightened by his glory. He declares the fall of Babylon and the rest of the chapter details the finality of the judgment. All her riches are destroyed and she shall be found no more at all.

This is not the end of Divine judgment upon world evil. Modern as well as ancient paganism may have crumbled into ruins but the political and social institutions of earth remain and these too must give place to the coming King. It is here that visions such as those of Daniel and Joel have their place. The seventh chapter of Daniel pictures the "*Ancient of Days*", the Most High, presiding over the Last Judgment, the while a series of mythological living creatures representing the empires of the world are brought before Him for condemnation. One "*like the Son of Man*" comes in the clouds to receive the dominion of earth thus relinquished by those creatures; His kingdom, it is said, is to endure for ever. Here is shown the passing of human rule in a time of disruption and disintegration as by a devouring fire. The prophet Joel (chap. 3) sees the same thing in the guise of a fierce military battle between the kings of the earth and the forces of the Most High; the outcome is the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth and a reign of universal peace. Very similar previews are recounted by Ezekiel and by Zechariah, and all of these are brought to a focus in the most spectacular vision of all, that describing the conflict between the combined forces of this world and the Rider upon the White Horse.

This climax to the whole sequence of prophetic imagery is found in Revelation 19, verses 11-21. The seer of Patmos tells how he saw heaven opened and the emergence therefrom of a majestic rider mounted upon a white horse, coming forth to "*judge and make war*". This Rider, John goes on to say, is the King of kings and Lord of lords, his name the Word of God. He wields a sword wherewith to smite the nations and He "*treadeth the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God*". Behind Him stream His followers, the armies of heaven.

Now John turns his eyes to the earth and there he sees the kings of the earth and their armies, drawn up to give battle. With them there are the mystic "beast" and "false prophet", Revelation's symbols of world evil. The opposing forces meet and the powers of Heaven are victorious. The defeat of the coalition is utter and complete and the vultures of the skies are called to feast upon the bodies of the slain. The sequel to this, continuing into the twentieth chapter, is the inauguration of the Millennial reign of Christ, the time of world reconstruction.

There are in the Bible some fifteen detailed descriptions of this aspect of the Second Advent, the direct intervention of the powers of Heaven into human affairs for the purpose of ending the present unsatisfactory rule of man and introducing the Messianic kingdom with its new and better order. All of these are couched in metaphorical language and against the background of current events and the state of society in the days in which they were written. They should not be interpreted in strictly literal fashion as is so often done, for this strikes at the very basis of the prophetic principle. These passages are called "apocalyptic", a term which has been coined to define symbolic literature produced by the ancient writers in deliberately veiled language, using symbols, parables and the like, to describe what they saw of the ultimate end of evil and triumph of righteousness, in such fashion that their message could be received and appreciated by men of any generation familiar with the storehouse of the Old Testament. These writings are invariably so worded that they have a primary application to the writers' own days and lead on into the far future when the golden dreams are to be realised, containing within their literary structure detailed outlines of those far distant events concealed under the symbols and allusions employed. Thus the familiar descriptions of the "Last Days", with all the lurid

details of human warfare and convulsions of Nature with which they abound, form a poetic basis for deduction of the underlying truth, and stand for the forces which will in reality be concerned with the overthrow of earthly power at the "Time of the End".

In line with this principle, the falling mountains and crashing rocks of so many prophetic utterances stand for the breaking down of political powers, the toppling of kings from their thrones, which is so characteristic of this era. Mountains in this type of literature stand for kingdoms, such as the "stone" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which became a "*great mountain which filled the whole earth*", interpreted by Daniel to symbolise the incoming Messianic kingdom. This is one of the most obvious "signs of the end" of to-day, the division of erstwhile great powers into increasingly smaller "independent" nations, and the re-composition of these into "blocs" of influence which themselves are unstable and easily disrupted. The stars falling from heaven are symbols of the decline of organised religious interests, coming down from their original high estate more and more to an earthly level at which they not only lose the spiritual leadership which alone gives them Divine authority amongst men, but also lose the esteem and support of men so that they finish up having no power at all. This is true not only of many nominally Christian interests but also of the other great world religions such as Islam and Buddhism. The disease is world-wide and it is another sign of the judgment. The consequence of these developments is an increase of anarchy in world society, both in organised democracy and communism and in individual contempt for law and order, so that crime reaches unprecedented proportions. In parallel with this there is the cumulative effect of human greed and selfishness, particularly in the commercial world, whereby the physique of the human race is being steadily undermined by unnatural ways of living. Medical science is increasing the average life span but there are more diseases to combat and the cost of maintaining that longer life span becomes steadily greater. The stresses of modern "civilisation" and ways of living give the lie to any pretence of improving physique, physical or mental, and with the despoiling of the earth's natural resources and the poisoning of land and sea by man-made chemical products, reacting upon vegetable and animal life alike, the earth can conceivably be brought to a condition where it will no

longer bring forth food for man. The misuse of expanding scientific discovery and the rash experiments men make without knowing what world-wide disastrous effect may be involved, create an ever increasing risk that unless halted by Divine intervention, there might one day be reached the "point of no return" where the planet itself is rendered uninhabitable and the human race extinct. These are not idle fancies, for they have all been foreseen by far-seeing men of the world qualified to speak with authority on things of this nature.

This is how the age comes to its end. Before men do reach that point of no return, and with the ruins of this world crashing around them, Divine intervention takes place. The planet itself will not be destroyed; the mountains will still rear their lofty heads into the upper skies; the alternations of day and night, of summer and winter, of seedtime and harvest, will continue as of yore. The sun will still lift the seas into the atmosphere and send them down over the earth as rain, bringing seed to the sower and bread to the eater. The darkening of the sun and moon, the earthquakes and the fire, all are symbolic imagery to be understood as metaphors. That which is destroyed is the sovereignty and the work of man. This is the purpose of the Second Advent, and men will realise the fact of Christ's presence when they begin to accept that the old order has passed irretrievably into the hands of the new.

There will be new rulers. There will be men on earth, coming to the forefront from no man knows where, who will manifest a clear grasp of the situation and the ability to put things right. Without the backing of physical force they will exert an influence which cannot be resisted; men will find that they can do naught else but obey. This is the time of which the prophet Zephaniah was led to speak when he declaimed in words of rare eloquence "*My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my zeal. And then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent*" (Zeph. 3. 8-9). This is the point at which earth's fortunes change for the better, the point at which the reality of God can no longer be denied in the minds of men. It is a point that is not reached speedily; the vitality of this old world with its entrenched systems of evil and injustice is still

great and it takes a long time to die. It might well be concluded that the judgments of the Second Advent have been coming upon the world for three or four generations past and no man can say how much longer there is to go; all that can be said with conviction is that before men can despoil the earth beyond repair the end of the judgment will have come in the institution of what St. Peter called "*a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (2 Pet. 3. 13).

That is not the end of the Advent. The demolition of the old order may have been completed but after that must come the day of reconstruction. As the one took time, so will the other. It might well require a long period to get a war-weary and well-nigh despairing world back on its feet again. But the rulers will be adequate to the task. The stage will be ready for the next great act in the drama of the human race, an act which finds place for the dead as well as the living. As with the Thessalonian Christians who feared that those of their number who died before the Advent would be precluded from sharing in the triumphs of that Advent, and so gave St. Paul opportunity to expound so much of what has been discussed here, so it is true that those of humanity who have died before this great day in earthly affairs will by no means miss the climax. An essential factor in Christian theology is that the dead as well as the living are to share in the Day of Judgment and all that is therein involved, and it must be therefore that, despite apparent implausibility or impracticability, the resurrection of the dead has its place in the sequence of events that follow the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

(To be continued)

The supreme example in the way of the Cross is Jesus. In His self-denying life and self-sacrificing ministry we discover how the Supreme Will of God lies like the transverse beam of a literal cross athwart the most noble and most natural aspirations of well-intentioned men.

* * *

Just before his death Buddha said to Ananda, his favourite disciple: "The doctrine and the laws, O Ananda, which I have taught and proclaimed unto you, they shall be your master when I have left you". The Lord Jesus alone could give the promise to be everlastingly present in person among His own.

(James Hislop)

WORLD CONVERSION — WHEN

That grand old Christian statesman, George Lansbury, once visited Lenin at Moscow in the course of an endeavour to promote friendly relations between European powers. In his book, *"My Quest for Peace"*, he told how the Russian leader listened sympathetically while he spoke of Jesus Christ and His saving power, how that no nation that rejected God could hope to be truly prosperous in the long run, and then said quietly "Lansbury, go back to England and convert your own people to Christianity—then come and talk to me again!"

Lansbury never returned to Russia.

In January 1953 five African chiefs from Nyassaland came to England to voice their people's protest against forcible inclusion in the new political amalgamation of East African territories. Said their spokesman *"the British won Nyassaland at the first, not by military weapons, but by the Bible. Now the British have abandoned the Bible—but you will not hold Nyassaland with guns and bayonets"*. That is a damning indictment of the change that has come over the affairs of Britain in little more than a century. Only that much ago missionaries were penetrating almost every part of the non-white world with the Bible in their hands and the love of God in their hearts. They braved dangers innumerable; perils of Nature, ferocity of man, but they kept at their task, and they planted the seed of the Gospel in a myriad dark places where it sprouted and blossomed and brought forth its fruitage of light.

In those same lands to-day the tide of Christian faith is receding. It is no use blinking eyes at the fact. Even the hardest of missionary societies are being forced to withdraw. The prevailing tendency to-day in almost all countries—of no matter what ideology—is to make the nation's Churches subject to State policy and exclude foreign influence. Hence some great Powers, whilst giving every facility for the organisation and continuance of native "national" Churches, have banished "foreign" missionaries and Christian connections entirely or almost entirely from the spheres under their control. The withdrawal from China of what is perhaps the famous society, the China Inland Mission, is a notable case in point. The taking over of Christian institutions in India by the

State is another. It is not that Christianity has been suppressed in such lands—in most cases the national Churches are healthy and vigorous and able to go about their work within their own borders unmolested and often with considerable help from the State—but two of the essential characteristics of the Christian Society have gone; that fellowship of Christians which transcends national distinctions is interrupted, and missionaries, aflame with zeal to win more hearts and lives for Christ, no longer cross the frontiers.

Each successive generation of this Twentieth Century includes a smaller percentage of convinced Christians than its predecessor. The religious background to daily life which three hundred years ago was normal does not exist to-day. An observer overheard a snatch of conversation between a young soldier and his girl friend, as they stood looking into a shop window. The girl's eyes lighted on a crucifix. "Look at that little figure of a man on a cross" she exclaimed. "I've seen it before. There must be some story behind it! I wonder what it is?" "Something to do with the Bible, I think", replied the soldier vaguely, and the pair moved off. Questions put to a group of high school students in their teens revealed that one in every five did not know what event Good Friday commemorates. The facts show that despite the efforts of organised Churches and evangelical campaigns, Christianity is fast becoming the faith and guiding principle of a pitifully small number of people, and they increasingly found among the elderly in years. The little bands of young Christians in their teens and twenties and perhaps thirties, battling manfully against increasing odds, have need of all the youthful enthusiasm and vision they can summon, and even so must surely oftentimes ask themselves where is all this going to end.

That is the great question to-day. Is world conversion an ideal that will eventually be attained, despite present apathy and disinterest in the Christian faith, or is it an impossible dream, a hope that will never be fulfilled? Will present materialism and reliance upon human philosophy and scientific achievement continue until the life and death of Jesus Christ and the deeds of His apostles become dim legends as shadowy and unsubstantial and unrelated to modern life as our own

English stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table?

Such a tragic end to the great thing that had its beginning in the Roman province of Judea two thousand years ago is out of the question. World conversion *WILL* come; this earth with its teeming millions *WILL* be the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; those who have spent time and effort and life itself in bringing men and women to Christ, whether in far-off heathen lands or right here in our own country, *WILL* share in that triumph and find that none of their efforts have been in vain. The world *WILL* be converted; but it may not come in the way we think.

The inspiration and incentive for all Christian missionary work springs in the first place from the words of Jesus, spoken after His resurrection, when He was about to leave His disciples. "*Go into all the world—and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*" (Mark 16. 15). "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you . . . and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" (Matt. 28. 19, Acts 1. 8). A pretty comprehensive mandate! We have a saying in our day "*The sky's the limit*". That is how it must have seemed to those men, simple, untravelled Galilean peasants and fishermen, given a commission which took in its scope the whole of the earth.

Although there is no doubt about the universal nature of this commission to evangelise the world, Jesus did not promise that His followers would effect the general conversion of the world before His return. In fact He indicated just the opposite. "*When the Son of Man cometh*" He said on one occasion "*will he find faith on earth?*" (Matt. 18. 8). Judging by the catalogue of disasters and wickedness, apostasies and waxing cold of love, which crowd some of His foreviews of the events of this Age, as narrated for example in Matt. 24, it is obvious that He did not expect so to do. The Age which opened at Pentecost will see at its close, not a world fully converted, living at peace and in the glorious liberty of the children of God, but a world facing catastrophe and held in more vigorous bondage to sin and the effects of sin than ever before. The Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth as He promised, not because His Church will have saved the world without Him, but because His own personal presence is necessary to the world's salvation.

That is the secret behind this apparent fail-

ure of Christian missionary effort to-day. It was not expected that Christians should convert the world in this Age, before the return of our Lord. It was intended that they should prepare the way for His return and preach the Gospel in all the world *for a witness*. The present Age is a time during which disciples of Christ are being trained and disciplined for a much more extensive missionary work that is to come in the next. James the Just, first Elder of the Church at Jerusalem, thus summed up the matter at the Council whose deliberations are recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts: "God first visited the nations to take out of them a people for his name . . . 'after this' (quoting the prophet Amos now) 'I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David which has fallen' (the habitation of Israel) 'that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the nations' . . .". There is a three-fold Plan outlined here. First, God will make a selection, from among all nations, of those who are peculiarly called by His name—devoted Christians of all nations and generations, in all the years that pass between Jesus' First and Second Advents; second, the restoration of the national polity of Israel, in preparation for the new centre of world administration under Divine control, and thirdly, a time when all men everywhere will be called to turn and seek the Lord. That latter is obviously the time of world conversion for which we look.

In harmony with this, we find that for the first two centuries of Church history there was no expectation that Christians must convert the world and present the finished work as it were to God at the end. Rather there was a fervent and fixed belief in the early dissolution of the institutions and powers of this world in face of the coming and appearing of the Lord Himself in power and glory—the Second Advent. Hence their universal belief in the Millennium, the Age of Christ's reign upon earth, when wars would be made to cease and evil eliminated from the hearts of men, until death itself had vanished. (Rev. 21. 3-4). That was the hope and conviction of the Early Church.

During the second and third centuries certain heretical sects began to put grossly sensuous and material interpretations upon the Millennial prophecies and in consequence this aspect of the original Apostolic teaching passed under a cloud and was largely banished from "official" theology. The teachings of St. Augustine in the fourth century paved the way for what became a very general belief in

Christendom, viz., that the thousand-year reign of Christ in which He vanquishes all His enemies (1 Cor. 15. 24-28) is during this Age *before* Christ comes, and not in a future Age *after* He has come. That theory sounded all right at the time it was formulated, when Paganism was rapidly giving way to Christianity in the political sphere as well as the religious, and it looked as though the Church was destined to sweep on from triumph to triumph until it had conquered the world. It does not look so convincing to-day, when from the outward and natural viewpoint, Christianity is in retreat almost all along the line and the prospect, not only of winning new ground, but even of regaining ground already lost, is bleak indeed. It is becoming more and more obvious that the Church of the first two centuries was entirely right and that our calling is to continue with our missionary work with as much, or more, ardour as in our best times, not in expectation or hope of converting the world now but certainly in the firm conviction that we are sowing the seed which is to result in world conversion after Christ comes.

There is a very significant remark in the comprehensive answer which Jesus gave to His disciples in response to their question as to how they would know when the time of His return and the consummation of the Age had arrived. (Matt. 24). Amongst the sequences of wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, persecutions, that were to characterise the successive centuries of the Age, we find this statement. "*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come.*" (Matt. 24. 14) The importance of the statement is shown in its setting. Up to that point, Jesus was speaking of the characteristic events of the Age. "*You will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet.*" After that point we are in the time of the End itself, there are signs and portents and events associated with the 'transition period during which the "*kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*". (Rev. 11. 15). It would appear therefore that this "preaching the gospel of the Kingdom" must be carried into the whole world, not at this time for their total conversion, but "for a testimony to all nations" *before the end can come*. In other words, in the outworking of this great Plan of redemption the full com-

prehension of which is locked deep in the "determinate wisdom and foreknowledge of God", the Age for world conversion cannot and will not come until the gospel has been preached first for a testimony "to the uttermost parts of the earth".

Such an understanding of the matter should give greater impetus than ever before to every effort for Christian witness. If the essence of present-day evangelism is to take the Gospel to places where it has never before been, and failure to convert all who have in past time been reached does not of itself imply any thwarting of the Divine purpose, then the closing of doors that have been open for centuries past need not occasion undue despondency. The Gospel *has* been preached, the testimony *has* been given: a few have retained the seed in their hearts and even if the doors do close upon them and we see them no more, we may have confidence that those same doors will swing open again, never more to shut, at "His appearing and His Kingdom". Even though faith in a country such as our own is at a low ebb and the signs are that it will sink still lower, yet our country has had the testimony and a few remain witnesses to the saving power of God in the life. The tide will turn again. That is the great hope and expectation to sustain faith and zeal while as yet our missionary work goes on. *He promised to return*—and under the administration of His Kingdom Christian evangelism will soar to heights previously undreamed.

There are Christian observers who point out that in a geographical sense the statement in Matt. 24 has now, albeit recently, been fulfilled. The disciples set out from Jerusalem and speedily carried the name and message of Christ throughout the Mediterranean world. Successive generations of evangelists pushed on, but it was not until the phenomenal increase of missionary work in the 19th and 20th centuries that the utmost limits of the world were reached. It is an established fact that the Gospel *has* now been preached "in all the world" "to all nations" "for a testimony". That being so, we may be much nearer to a tremendous change for the better in earth's affairs than is generally thought or hoped. No one will dispute that a change is necessary—and if the present appalling prospect that faces mankind is in fact destined to be resolved by some kind of Divine intervention, saving men from the worst consequences of their own folly and putting the Christian Church in a position of immeasurably great-

er influence than it has enjoyed at any time past, few will be found to criticise the change except those whose interests lie in the maintenance and perpetuation of evil and evil things.

Speaking to the philosophers of Athens, St. Paul declared that God *"has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead"*. (Acts 17. 31). Christ Jesus is that one, the time, clearly, that of His Second Coming, and the day, consequently, the one that Jesus referred to when He said *"Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"*. (Matt. 19. 28). Such a statement cannot be referred to this present Age when the last thing a Christian disciple expects to experience is the occupancy of a throne or the prerogative of judging anything or anybody. The Apostle Paul expressly relegates the time of ruling and judging to the future, as in 1 Cor. 6. 2 *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?"*

The preaching of St. Peter at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2 and 3, associates the coming of the "last days" with a great opportunity for salvation and a time of world conversion. *"In the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh . . . And it shall be that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Acts 2. 17-21). Associated with this declaration there is a call to repentance as preparation for the coming of this future day of grace. *"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old."* (Acts 3. 19-21). These passages obviously pre-suppose a time at the end of the Age, at the Return of Christ, when there will be a great outpouring of the Gospel upon the peoples of earth and a correspondingly great response. There is a definite basis for this belief in the Old Testament. For instance, Zephaniah says (3. 8-9) *"Therefore wait for me" says the Lord "for the day when I arise as a witness . . . to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation; for in the fire of my*

jealous wrath all the earth shall be consumed. Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord." All of this indicates very clearly the Divine intention that a day of grace—and a most successful day of grace at that—is to succeed the day of judgment which brings this "present evil world" to an end. The Book of Isaiah is eloquent on this subject. The great Hebrew statesman saw very clearly the nature of that day which is yet to be, when all missionary and evangelical effort will converge into one great work of reclamation and reconciliation among all mankind. The figure of Messiah is predominant in all his pen pictures—the king who will "reign in righteousness" of Chapter 32, the one who is to "feed his flock like a shepherd" of Chapter 40, the "servant" who is to "bring forth justice to the nations" of Chapter 42, the anointed One, bringing liberty and healing to the captives, of Chapter 61. *"It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation'."* (25. 9). *"And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever."* (32. 17). *"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* (35. 10). *"Behold my servant, my chosen in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations . . . he will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth."* (42. 1-4). *"For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."* (61. 13).

This is only a fraction of the vast store of Biblical evidence that a glorious future is before Christian evangelical work, and a programme that envisages a definite endeavour to reconcile to God every member of the human race who has strayed away from Him or never known Him. The apparent failure of to-day is only apparent; the Advent of the King will change the entire situation, and set the stage for the conversion of the world.

Scripture quotations in the above article are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

MORE ABOUT "THE REST OF THE DEAD"

The exposition of Rev. 20. 5 appearing in July/August issue under the caption "The Rest of the Dead" has prompted the submission of this analysis of the manuscripts bearing upon this matter. This note is really for the research student and not all readers will readily follow the rather technical nature of the references; nevertheless it is felt that this analysis is worthy of permanent record and is published therefore in the interests of analytical Bible study.

* * *

There is a complete catalogue of Greek manuscripts of Revelation, as known by the early 1920s—H. C. Hoskier, *"Concerning the text of the Apocalypse"*, 2 vols, University of Michigan, 1925. Hoskier himself may be a rather caustic individual but his work of a complete collation of approximately 250 manuscripts of Revelation is invaluable to us to-day. Since Hoskier's 1925 compilation only the Chester Beatty papyrus (Rev. 9. 10—17.2) and a few small fragments have contributed much of value, and none of them cover Rev. 20. 5.

Now there is only one Ms of the 4th century, the Sinaitic, and nothing has been found before that date on Rev. 20. 5. The 5th cent. Ephraemi ends with Rev. 19. 5 and so cannot possibly testify in the 20th chapter. The early-to-middle 5th cent. Alexandrian is the only other Greek manuscript prior to the 8th cent.

There are early translations into other languages; Latin, Aramaic (Syriac) and Coptic, all about 2nd cent. The Old Latin was soon replaced by Jerome's Vulgate. The Aramaic may have had two independent 2nd cent. translations, followed by the later Philoxenian. The Coptic had several dialects: the Boharic (Northern) and Sahidic (Southern) would be about 2nd cent., while the Fayumic and one other are somewhat later. We find one or more manuscripts in each language; each dialect of that language; and each different translation into that dialect! In addition, the Arian Bishop to the Goths (Central Europe) in the mid-7th cent. translated the Bible into Gothic (fragments published). Then in the 5th cent. were Ethiopic, Arabic and Armenian, and other translations in later times. (An Anglo-Saxon Four Gospels of the 9th cent. or thereabouts has been published).

To return to Rev. 20. 5, as per Hoskier's work. The disputed passage is omitted by 71 Mss, including the Sinaitic. At least 115 include the passage, but as translated in the Douay—not as in the King James—in 108 of them, including the Alexandrian and the 8th cent. Vatican 2066. The Douay omits "but" and "again". There are 20 Mss that are absent in the area of the disputed passage. It may possibly be inferred that as many as 52 read with the King James (A.V.). The Syriac translations omit the passage, while the Coptic, Armenian, Latin and Ethiopic appear to include it in one form or the other.

However, the 30% figure for omission all by itself does not tell the whole story. Someone might argue that the scribe's eyes skipped from "chilia etc" (thousand years) in the 7th verse to "chilia etc" in the 5th verse, and therefore the passage has been often omitted by mistake. But another might argue that it is the 11th, 12th and 13th cent. Mss that omit the text (at least half of them do) while it is the 14th, 15th and 16th cent. Mss that include it (perhaps 80% of them do). Historical arguments might be adduced on either side. But there is a decisive aspect of the manuscript testimony. Manuscripts are categorised in families, according to similar readings throughout. There is relatively little randomness as to whether the passage is included or omitted, so there is no evidence that there was any omission through error. Rather the so-called "B-family" omits the passage generally (called "B-family" because of the close relation of these Mss with the Vatican 1209 in other books of the Bible). The Graeco-Latin Mss all uniformly omit. Various subgroups of the Egyptian, Coptic and Syriac groups are on opposite sides (but only a couple of groups are not clearly on one side or the other). The two Aecumenius groups are on opposite sides. The Arethras groups and almost all of the Complutensian groups include the disputed passage. The sum is this: Manuscript groups remote in origin from Asia Minor (Revelation was written at Patmos) by and large include the disputed passage; e.g. the European Complutensian Mss and the Sahidic Mss. Manuscripts thought to be more closely related to Asia Minor in origin, but particularly those of earlier (11th-13th cent) origin, show a defin-

ite trend to omit the disputed passage; e.g., B-family, Graeco-Latin, and the best of the Syriac groups.

The above paragraph can be expressed less technically and more simply. There is a definite trend for manuscripts written nearer Patmos, the source of Revelation, and earlier in time, to omit the passage. Manuscripts of later and more remote western origin show strong tendencies to include it. Therefore the manuscript testimony favours a spurious origin for the first sentence of Rev. 20. 5.

J. B. Parkinson, Los Angeles

Whatever may be the explanation or the origin of evil, for practical purposes, and it is only for such purposes that theology is of any use, we get the best point of view by maintaining absolutely that God is good, and nothing but good, love, and nothing but love. Whatever is counter to good or to love is not God, but the obstacle which God is overcoming and will some day completely overcome.

R. F. Horton

INDEX 1966

EXPOSITORY

Amen, The	52
Anointed cherub that covereth	67
Coming of the King, The	
1 Purpose of Second Advent	3
2 As in days of Noah	23
3 He cometh with clouds	43
4 Higher than all heavens	63
5 Voice of Archangel	83
6 End of the World	111
First Epistle of John	
1 1. 1-7	7
2 1. 8 - 2. 1	37
3 2. 1-2	48
4 2. 3-6	77
5 2. 7-8	91
6 2. 9-11	109
Jephthah's Daughter	87
Jonah and his Gourd	15
Kingdom of Heaven—present or future	50
Little Season, The	93
Problem of Evil	69
Rahab of Jericho	106
Rest of the Dead	73, 119
Saints shall judge world	13
Sodom & Gomorrah, Overthrow	32, 56
Sweet Influences Pleiades	18
World Conversion—When	115

DEVOTIONAL

Cup of our Lord, The	28
Eventide	17, 39, 46, 80, 97
Hill of Olives	11
Peace on Earth, Goodwill to men	103
Prayer was Made	99

SHORT ITEMS

Book Reviews	6, 10, 82
Book Quotations	27
Comment	22
Question Box	98
Methuselah, Note on	105
Millet Grass	79
Modern First Plague	82
Note on John 17	35
" Isa. 18. 4	35
" Isa. 40. 3	55
" 2 Tim. 3. 6	86
Science and Coming Age	90
Thinking Point	42

TEXTS EXPOUNDED IN DETAIL

Gen. 5. 27	105	1 Cor. 6. 2	13
" 14. 25	24	" 15. 52	83
" 18	33	Eph. 4. 3	42
" 19	56	1 Thess. 4. 16-17	83
Josh. 2	106	2 Thess. 1. 9	111
Jud. 11	87	" 2. 3-8	111
Job 38. 31-32	18	2 Tim. 3. 6	86
Isa. 18. 4	35	Heb. 9. 4	98
" 40. 3	55	1 Jno. 1. 1-7	7
Ezek. 8. 15	82	" 1. 8	37
" 28	67	" 2. 1	37
Jonah 4. 10-11	15	" 2. 1-2	48
Matt. 24. 23	27	" 2. 3-6	77
" 24. 26-27	25	" 2. 7-8	91
" 24. 36-39	23	" 2. 9-11	109
" 26. 64	44	Rev. 1. 7	43
Luke 2. 14	103	" 20. 1	93
Jno. 18. 11	28	" 20. 5	73
Acts 12. 5	99	" 20. 10	93