



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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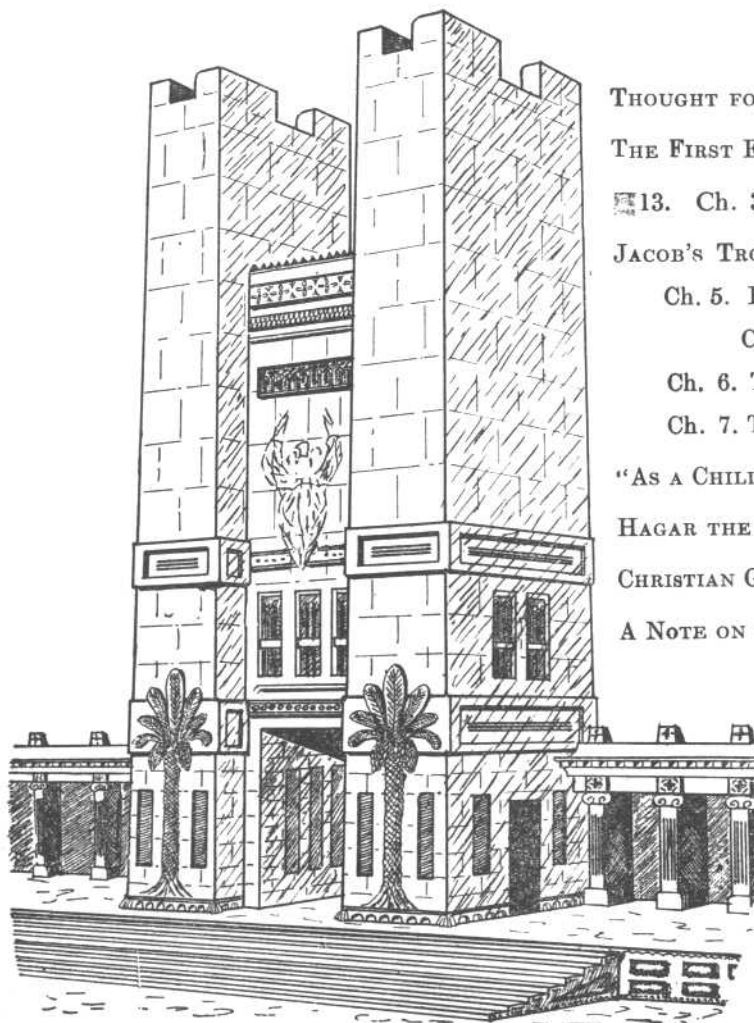
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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	2
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
13. Ch. 3, 4-8	3
JACOB'S TROUBLE	
Ch. 5. Kings of the Earth take Council	7
Ch. 6. The Valley of Jehoshaphat	10
Ch. 7. The Cleansing of the Land	13
"AS A CHILD SHALL ONE DIE"	18
HAGAR THE BONDMAID	19
CHRISTIAN GROWTH	23
A NOTE ON ETERNAL PUNISHMENT ...	24



*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

Christ's Great Olivet Prophecy (Constas) 75 pp.

C. J. Constas of Athens is known as the author of the exposition of the Book of Revelation entitled "**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**" reviewed in these columns two years ago. In this latest work from his pen, translated from the Greek as was the former work, Bro. Constas offers an exposition of our Lord's Advent prophecy recorded in Matt. 24. He sees much of the chapter fulfilled, at least in part, in the events of this Age from the First Advent onwards. He puts in a strong plea for the literal acceptance of O.T. and N.T. apocalyptic as descriptive of a real destruction of the earth's surface and of human life from the earth by fire or equivalent natural phenomena—readers of the "**Monthly**" will know that the outlook of this journal does not include that view of the Divine purpose—and a subsequent renovation of the earth preparatory to the Messianic Era. The style is easy and readable, and the exposition does at any rate finish where all good Christians like to finish—in the glory and peace of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. The book is distributed without charge (although contribution to cost of postage, etc., will be appreciated) on application to Mr. J. Thompson, 15 Argyle Street, Bury, Lancs. (but NOT, please, to BFU Hounslow).

The series entitled "Jacob's Trouble" is concluded in this issue; some may feel that a disproportionate amount of space has been devoted to this topic but this was felt preferable to having the subject extended over a greater number of issues. The complete series will be available shortly in booklet form; details will appear in our next issue.

Gone from us

—:—

Bro. E. Allbon (Bognor)
Sis. E. Clough (Manchester)
Bro. J. Lobley (Bolton)
Sis. E. Vaughan (Aldersbrook)
Bro. P. Watts (Oxford)

—:—

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

A Thought for the Month

"We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace" (Jer. 30. 5).

Words that speak of a great obstacle to Christian progress! Fear is a boggy which gibbers in front of every Christian who has not sufficient confidence in his calling to continue in belief that his mistakes and errors of judgment will be used in the Divine economy to effect some good thing in himself or in fellow-members in due course. To be an alert and zealous disciple demands full assurance of faith and confidence in the overruling power of God in our affairs. "*He hath opened mine eyes, and I have seen the Holy One. His angel hath touched my lips with the live coal from the altar; and I have heard His voice saying, 'Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?'*" If in our later days we can summon to our side the same devoted spirit which at the first prompted us to say "*Here am I, send me*", then indeed the spirit of fear will find no lodgment. In these days, when the lamp is burning low in the Temple of God, there is need not only for clarity of vision and depth of spiritual insight, but also for purpose and determination. That is the antidote to the apathy and lethargy which oft settles upon those who have begun to lose the freshness and zeal of their earlier days. Such times of depression come to all. The toils of the way, strife and schism caused by false brethren, the apparent failure of fond and perhaps long cherished hopes, cause us like Hezekiah to want to go softly all our years. Would that we could be equally appreciative, as was that good king, when a term of years is added to our time, and go forward with face upraised, remembering that we are now and for all time His witnesses, in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 13 I John 3. 4-8

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (Chap. 3 vs. 4).

This is a sudden change of thought from the lofty tones of the first three verses. *There*, John had taken us up into the very heavens themselves, exalting our minds with the celestial vision of the future glory that will without doubt be ours. The conditional qualification of verse 3, reminding us that a process of purifying is going on within each one who has this hope within him, seems almost intended to be nothing more than a reminder. The assurance and certainty of verses 1 and 2 is as though no failure is contemplated or possible. *We are* sons of God; that is indisputable. *We shall* be like Him; that is equally indisputable. Then verse 3 just hints at the fact that without purification the promised glory may never materialise, but verse 4 comes right down with a stark and uncompromising declaration that there is one dread power which might conceivably ruin and nullify the whole glorious promise, and that dread power is—sin!

Of course John had spoken about sin before. In chapter 1 and chapter 2 he touches upon its blackness several times. But whereas in chapter 1 he treats sin as a defiling influence resting upon us largely because of our Adamic inheritance, that can be cleansed away by confession and repentance; whereas in chapter 2 he speaks of sin as the general effect of our worldly environment and our own fleshly weaknesses, that can be extinguished by "abiding in Him", here in chapter 3 he shows how sin can be a more subtle and more personal thing, a principle that may be received into the heart and allowed to control life's actions not because of the seductive influences of the world, the flesh and the devil, but because the unregenerate heart may in some cases love the darkness better than the light and rejoice in deeds of evil for the very sake of evil. That is the darkest and the deepest manifestation of sin that can proceed from a man, the one most difficult to blot out. Adamic weakness will no longer have effect in men's lives in the Millennial Age; the snares of this world will disappear with the ending of this world; but nothing else than true conversion to Christ will ever put an end to secret sympathy with sin. The real

purpose both of Divine dealings with the Church in this Age and with the world in the next Age is to eliminate from all hearts the love of sin for its own sake, the last stronghold of the Devil. John, knowing that in these last days, just as in the days before the Flood, the hearts of men would be "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked", has taken care to warn all who may hear or read his words of the danger that surrounds those even who live the nearest to God. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

It seems such a self-evident statement that one might wonder at first why John troubled to make the remark. "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.*" Of course he transgresses, everyone knows that; for sin is against the law. There must be something deeper in the thought, something that does not come to mind until after a few minutes' reflection. What law? The law of Moses? It could be so, but the law of Moses is altogether too restricted a framework in which to fit the implication of this verse. John's words were addressed to Christians, too, and the law of Moses is not the rule by which our lives are to be guided. The law of Rome, then? Hardly that, for again the Christian is bound by a law which is higher far than the laws of Rome. That is the clue, of course. God constituted immutable and fundamental laws for the ordered progress of His creation and the guidance of those intelligent beings he purposed to create, away there right at the beginning. And sin is the violation of that primitive and fundamental law. No man-made code can reproduce all that is contained in that Divine rule in its entirety. Neither did the Mosaic law fully reflect all that it contains, and demands. The original Divine law, implanted in the constitution and in the heart of Adam in the day of his creation, and now held before the Church of this Gospel Age as the ideal towards which she must strive, is the law the violation of which is sin. Any infringement of the rules which God has devised for the orderly conduct of His creation and the happiness and well-being of the creatures He has placed upon it—is sin. And whosoever infringes those rules, whether deliberately or unwittingly, is a sinner. There is really no better expression of this truth

than is contained in the words of the Authorised Version. Wilson's Diaglott attempts to improve the translation by rendering "Every one who practises sin also practises iniquity, and sin is iniquity" but he really only obscures the sense. The plain, forthright English expression "SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW" cannot possibly be improved upon when once we realise that it is Divine fundamental law that is meant.

Here comes a parenthesis. John misses no opportunity of impressing upon his readers that there is a remedy for sin and a way of escape from the power of sin. So here, immediately after the dark shadow of sin has fallen across the page, he draws aside the curtain, as it were, and lets in the light that chases that shadow away. "Ye know that he was manifest to take away our sins; and in him is no sin" (vs. 5). The Vatican manuscript omits the word "our" and in so doing immeasurably strengthens the passage. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law . . . but . . . he was manifest to take away sin." There is hope for all, all who repent, no matter how heinous or deliberate their sin nor how tardy their repentance. If the Parable of the Prodigal Son had nothing else to teach us it would always have that. No matter how far away the erring one has strayed nor how deeply he has sunk, nor how long he has stayed away, if he but sincerely repents and begins to make his way back, his Father will come to meet him!

Now at this point John has to embark upon an admittedly difficult subject. He has to bring another deep doctrinal truth to his readers in such fashion that they can grasp the principle he wants to expound, without so misunderstanding the implication of his words that they assume a position before God to which they have no right. He wants to show his disciples that because of their repentance and sincerity they have been awarded a justification in the eyes of God which allows Him completely to ignore and put behind His back the content of sin in their mortal bodies and in their earthly lives. He has to make them realise that in the final analysis, sin is the fruit of the desire to act in violation of fundamental Divine law, and righteousness is the desire to act in accordance with fundamental Divine law; that it is from those desires that the concrete things which we call evil and good spring forth, so that it is what lies in the heart rather than on the hands which constitutes a man sinful or sinless. Jesus began to lead the minds of His

disciples to such an understanding when He told them that the mere desire to sin is the same to God as if the sin had actually been committed. (Matt. 5, 27-28). That was a "hard saying" to those who had been accustomed from childhood to the Mosaic Law which laid absolute stress upon the performance of the letter without any regard to the spirit. The later Papal doctrine of cleansing by penances really had quite a good prototype in the typical ceremonies of the Tabernacle. The Israelite who learned that by the bringing of appropriate animal or vegetable offerings to the priest, he could be cleansed from his sin, might very easily be tempted to conclude that for so much sin the price of cleansing was so much offering, or payment. That system, initiated by Moses and practised by Israel through so many centuries, was a very necessary step in the process by which God must needs reveal His deepest spiritual truths to man, but it was a stage that had to be completed, and then superseded in Christ by something deeper and nearer the fundamental. The tragedy is that even in our day, so long after the ending of the Mosaic Law, there are so many who fail to realise that slavery to sin, or freedom from sin, does not lie so much in the expression of our motives through our bodies, as in the motives themselves.

So John ventures upon this new and uncharted sea by a first tentative approach. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not." (vs. 6). It is a startling statement to make; taken in the ordinary sense and with our ordinary everyday definition of what constitutes the practice of sin, it cannot possibly be true. But the statement, coming as it does from the inspired Apostle, cannot be other than true, and if it seems a difficult and incomprehensible remark to make we must perforce search our minds and attune ourselves to his thoughts until we understand what he means. Thus doing we shall realise how true it is. We must not be unmindful of the fact that in chapter 1 he has already said "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us". Whatever meaning we attach to this last statement of John, it must not do violence to the earlier ones. We must understand it in such a way that both are true.

The Twentieth Century translation tries to lessen the impact of this disturbing teaching by rendering "No one who maintains union with him lives in sin". That is a way out of the apparent difficulty but that is not what

John said. The Greek is as bold and uncompromising as the Authorized: "Everyone abiding in him sins not". The only possible answer to the enigma is that the words do mean just what they say and that here in this passage John is representing things as seen by God Himself. In chapter 1 the viewpoint is from the earth and of ourselves. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" for the results of other men's infractions of Divine law are present in our bodies, and those of our own individual infractions of Divine law, willing or unwilling, deliberate or of ignorance, are also present in our bodies. But God, looking down upon us from above, says "Whoever is abiding in Me, sins not" for only those who at heart are sincere and in full sympathy with Divine law can be truly said to be "abiding in Him". And these, despite their fleshly, Adamic imperfections, their stumblings and failings and frequent falls from grace, the Father knows are at heart in harmony with Him and entirely out of sympathy with sin in all its forms. These, transferred to a perfect environment and being given bodies not handicapped by inherited imperfections and weaknesses, would live fully sinless lives in harmony with Divine law. Hence, knowing what they *would* do if they could, knowing that they have already pledged themselves to the standards of righteousness and have no desire for, nor sympathy with, any of the "hidden things of darkness", knowing that their motives and intents and sincerity are beyond question, God declares that such "sin not". From the Divine point of view they are without sin, even although in real life the motions of sin still work in their mortal members.

That, after all, is justification, to be declared righteous, upright, in the sight of God. That is the justification that is of God. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth!" (Rom. 8. 33).

Now, immediately, and as if to guard against our taking the wrong thought from this wonderful statement defining our standing in the sight of God, John adds an antithesis. "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not"—yes, but—"whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (vs. 6). Here we are brought back to earth again and compelled to view matters from our own standpoint once more. "Whosoever sinneth!" It has already been told us that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves; we, who are the sons of God, admitted to this spiritual presence. Now, says John, whosoever sinneth

hath neither seen nor known him. Clearly here again he is talking of sin from another standpoint than that which is taken in chapter 1. And how logical it is to conclude that if, in chapter 3 verse 6, the one who, abiding in him, sinneth not in the sense that his motives and sincerity are perfect in the Father's sight, then conversely, the one whose motives and sincerity are not perfect, neither sees nor knows the Father. John has already told us that much, previously in his epistle; now he reiterates this truth in even more solemn tones. It is not the one who has failed by reason of some human weakness who "hath not seen him, neither known him", else not one of us in the flesh could justly claim the privilege. It is the one who, like Simon the sorcerer, has a "heart not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8. 21) who, being one that sinneth, neither sees nor knows him.

John wants to impress this lesson even more forcefully before he leaves the subject, but he wants to go very carefully. He must have known how that some in after days would seize upon his words to claim for themselves an actual fleshly perfection which they do not in fact and can never hope to possess; how others, more sincere of heart, would nevertheless mistakenly conclude that God had granted perpetual freedom from the thralldom of sin without the possibility of its bonds ever again encircling them; and how there would be those so blind to the essence of God's ways that they would hail this declared freedom from sin as licence to plunge into those very excesses which must inevitably brand them as sinners in the sight of the Most High. "Let no man deceive you" he warns "He that doeth righteousness is the righteous one, just as God Himself is righteous" (vs. 7). That is not quite the A.V. rendering but it is perhaps a very readable paraphrase. It must be expected that the one whose inward purity and sincerity has earned for himself the Divine approval and hall mark of justification must show something in his outward life and actions to correspond. A good tree does not bring forth evil fruits and a grape vine planted in good ground will normally produce good grapes. Likewise, says John, it is with the sinner. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." (vs. 8). Just as God sets his seal upon those who are truly His, and proclaims them righteous in His sight, so the devil brands with his hall-mark those who have given themselves over to him, and proclaims them his slaves. Thus it is, and thus it

has been from the entry of sin into the world.

There is a subtle thought here that is not apparent in the Authorised Version. "The devil sinneth from the beginning" says that Version. The Greek omits the definite article; it is grammatically correct to read "a beginning", and although it does not necessarily follow on that account that the indefinite article and not the definite article—"a" instead of "the"—is intended and should be read in this instance, it is at least a possibility. We do not know just when the fall of Lucifer occurred. It might have been at the time of Eden; it might have been earlier, and he waiting his time for an opportunity to put his rebellious designs into effect. What we do know—and perhaps this is what John had in mind at this point—is that Satan's rebellion and sin did have a beginning; *Divine righteousness had no beginning*. That latter existed, with the Most High Himself, "from everlasting". And it will exist, after sin has been utterly destroyed, "to everlasting". And this same theme, the perpetuity of righteousness and those who stand for righteousness in contrast to the transience of evil and those who embrace and retain evil, is hinted at in the next sentence. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (vs. 8). Not created,

or born, but manifested. He already existed. There is no note here of the time when He was not. From a time long before whatever "beginning" it was that first saw the evil and sin of the Devil, the Son of God was; but now He is manifested, made plain in this world from whose sight He was formerly hidden, to destroy the works of the Devil. This "manifestation" must therefore include both His First and Second Advents and all that is associated therewith. Throughout all the past ages, whilst sin began and spread apparently unchecked through the earth, and the "prince of this world" ruled without let or hindrance, the Lord of All remained concealed from the world, unknown to mankind. On the historic day when the last of the Prophets, lifting up his eyes from the swiftly flowing waters, cried aloud "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world", that manifestation began, and has continued ever since, and will continue, throughout the Millennial Age of glory that is to succeed this Age, until the final judgment has completed this promised destruction of the works of the Devil, and ushered all mankind into the Divinely ordained eternity of sinlessness that is the consummation of God's purpose for this world.

(To be continued)

"In thy light shall we see light" (Psa. 36. 9).

First of all we must turn a search-light into all the dark corners of our being and clean out everything that cannot stand God's Light. No thought of darkness, no unworthy feeling or desire must be allowed to keep possession. We cannot prevent dark thoughts from presenting themselves, but we can change them immediately to constructive thoughts and so prevent the negative thoughts from dimming our consciousness. Turn out all thoughts not conducive to conditions of joy—never give expression to them. One really poised, radiant mind in a community will do far more than forty dim ones. We must keep our minds turned rightly toward the light, and keep them bright and clear like reflectors in a lighthouse, free from all the murky thoughts that dim and darken ourselves and others. Light builds up, and brings nutrition. The X-ray expands tissue condensed by disease and so gives the life force free course through it, and makes the healing process possible. So also our mind responds to the idea of light, and a real change is produced in the body as well as in the mind, for the body responds to

our thoughts. There is not a function of the body that is not altered by thought. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." This is true both of body and character. Our habitual thoughts are responsible for more than we have thought possible and need constant censorship. Moreover thoughts vibrate and travel like the light. Consciously or unconsciously the influence of our thought-life reaches others, uplifting or depressing. Let us seek to live consciously in the light of God's presence and rejoice in Him. Then dark thoughts will be impossible.

(Selected)

1 Kings 22. 39 refers to the "ivory house" which Ahab built at Samaria. The allusion was never really understood: the idea of a palace built of ivory hardly seemed within the bounds of architectural possibility. In modern times the riddle has been solved. Excavations at Samaria have revealed Ahab's palace, faced on all its walls with white marble, the loveliest of all building materials. No wonder the historian referred to it as an "ivory house".

JACOB'S TROUBLE

An exposition of Ezek. 38/39

Chapter 5 KINGS OF THE EARTH TAKE COUNSEL

The identity of the powers taking part in the great attack is not altogether easy to determine. The only prophet going into detail is Ezekiel, and he represents them in the guise of nations and tribes of his own day which, in the main, no longer exist. His account pictures two confederacies of peoples facing each other across the bounds of the Holy Land. In general, however, most of the Old Testament writers dealing with this subject—Joel, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Zechariah—as well as John in the Revelation, declare that “all nations” will be included in this mass attack on God’s people, and will together experience defeat by Divine intervention. Ezekiel names the leader of the invading hosts as “Gog”; Daniel calls him the “King of the North”, and Micah “the Assyrian”. An interpretation which satisfies all these varied definitions must be sought in the study of this subject.

Joel was first in history. His prophecy contains the seeds of most that the later prophets had to say concerning the Time of the End. Eight hundred years before Christ, he set down his symbolic description of Israel’s chequered history at the time of the great captivities and onward into her final restoration and the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom. Of this latter time he says “*in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat . . . assemble yourselves, and come, all ye nations, and gather yourselves together . . . and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations*” (Joel 3. 1-12). This passage tells of a great confederacy of nations, armed to the teeth, even the weak nations hasting to join, bearing down upon the Holy Nation to fight a decisive battle in what God calls the “*valley of decision*”—of judgment, properly, of “*threshing*”. The Lord will “*roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem*” (vs. 16) and Israel will be delivered.

Micah, Daniel and Zechariah—under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—all framed their

descriptions of the same event with the historical invasion of Sennacherib as their background. It is important when considering their words to remember the profound impression made upon successive generations of Israel after Sennacherib of Assyria in the year 701 B.C. followed up his predecessor Sargon’s overthrow of the Ten tribe kingdom by invading Judea and besieging Jerusalem, and the ignominious destruction of his army by the angel of the Lord. Analogies between the incidents of his campaign and the events of the final conflict at the end of this Age are drawn by all three prophets and assist both in their interpretation and in discerning the “*shape of things to come*” in respect to that final conflict. But their accounts are necessarily brief and in fact convey little beyond the fact that the invaders threaten the land, that God fights for his people, and Jerusalem is saved. It is left to Ezekiel to offer a more detailed and precise description which maintains all the other prophetic pictures of a military invasion with allusions borrowed from the battlefield, but introducing another aspect which is lacking in the others. The hostile forces of Ezekiel 38 are composed of two confederacies. One is pictured by the most warlike and ruthless peoples of ancient times, the Scythians, Persians, Ethiopians, the other by the merchant peoples, the travellers and traders from the far South and West. At the very least this must indicate that commercialism and militarism are twin principles involved in the motive which inspires those who invade the Land. It may appear that there is but flimsy evidence in Ezek. 38 that Sheba, Dedan and Tarshish are to be numbered among the enemies of Israel. It may be argued that there is no direct statement that these three take part in the attack, that they are depicted only as observers of the northern aggressor’s inroad (vs. 13 “*Tarshish . . . shall say . . . Thou art come to take a spoil and to take a prey*”, etc.). This is perfectly true, and if one considers Ezek. 38 alone it would appear as though the three commercial peoples are either neutral, or even in alliance with threatened Israel. There

is, however, no parallel prophecy which indicates the alliance or friendship of any other nation when Israel passes through "Jacob's Trouble". The picture is consistent; all the world is against them, and they alone emerge unscathed and triumphant. Verse 6 of chapter 39 indicates that the Divine retribution reaches out, not only to Magog, but also to "the isles"—the coastlands, a term used always to describe those far-off trade coasts to which the proper name "Tarshish" was applied. Tarshish shares in the retribution and must therefore be involved in the crime.

It is much more likely that the relative positions of Tarshish and Gog in Ezekiel's prophecy are analogous to those of Edom and Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded by the prophet Obadiah. Edom stood by as a spectator when Babylon ravaged Judah and took her people captive, and then came in to share in the loot and the spoil. They "*looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity*" and they "*laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity*". Therefore, says the prophet, "*in the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them*". In consequence Edom was equally involved in the sin of Babylon and the Divine sentence was "*as thou hast done it shall be done unto thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head*" (Obad. 10-15). In just the same fashion, it may be, we are expected to take this reference to Sheba and Dedan and Tarshish as referring to that element in the forces of this world which may not take so active a part in the actual onslaught but looks on with approbation and encouragement, and stands by to obtain a good share of the spoils.

If this be so the whole interpretation of Ezekiel 38 is lifted out of the narrow limits of a purely military campaign in the Middle East—a very favourite interpretation—to something much more vast and menacing, a world-wide effort to crush, by any means, economic or military, this new experiment of a great nation ordering its way of life according to the ways of God, in so doing challenging the whole fabric of present-day organised society. The particular tribes and nations named by Ezekiel are not to be taken as prophetic of their blood descendants of today, or of the present possessors of the lands in which they lived, but, taken as a whole, to represent what that catalogue of names did represent to Ezekiel, the far-flung nations of

the whole earth, gathered on all sides in one great alliance to destroy Israel. It is very necessary carefully to perceive that Ezekiel's prophecy does not describe a war between two great powers on Israel territory for the possession of commercial advantages which lie outside Israel territory anyway. It is a war of one world united against Israel for the possession of assets or advantages which lie inside Israel territory. And they come, not to destroy, but to inherit; not to kill, but to take into slavery. That is the literal meaning of the phrase "*to take a spoil, and to take a prey*" which defines the object of the attack.

The impression given in the 38th chapter is that the invading hosts are undergoing preparation for a relatively long period and move forward in concerted action when the time appears ripe. In verse 8 the word "visited" has the significance of being received by a superior preparatory to being called to action. Leeser says "*after many days thou shalt be ordered forward*" and Rotherham "*after many days shalt thou muster thy forces*". The Septuagint is similar; "*He shall be prepared after many days and he shall come at the end of years*". The idea definitely seems to be that of a long time of deliberate planning and preparation, and an organised move forward when the time is ripe. Joel gives the same impression when he describes the mighty men and the men of war assembling, beating their plowshares and pruning-hooks into swords and spears, and crowding in their multitudes into the valley of judgment (Joel 3. 9-16). There is also the fact that the Divine time-table is involved in this. In the counsels of God the "Times of the Gentiles" are fixed and limited, and the various prophetic references picturing God as calling the forces of this world to the final confrontation with Him and His holiness represent a very real thing. "*Except those days should be cut short*" said Jesus on one occasion "*there should be no flesh saved*", but God will cut those days short at the fore-ordained moment.

This overruling Divine supervision of the timing is shewn in Ezek. 38 and 39. That is the real meaning of chapter 38. 8 "*After many days thou shalt be ordered forward*" and again in chapter 39. 2 "*I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel*". In this latter text "*turn thee back*" is *bo*, meaning to cause to come in, indicating the actual advance to the attack. The following expression is rendered in the Authorised

Version "*leave but the sixth part of thee*" by a false etymology in which *shasha* was read as *shashash*, a sixth, whereas the correct rendering should be "*lead thee on*" which confirms the earlier part of the verse. The idea here is that the Lord accepts the challenge and beckons His opponents forward, but the outcome is characterised by the reverse operation. "*I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army*" (ch. 38. 2) where "*turn thee back*" is *shub*, meaning literally as rendered, to be forcibly returned to the place whence they had come, and "*bring thee forth*" is *yatsa*, to be made to depart or go out. The Assyrians in particular were in the habit of leading their captured notables into exile by means of a hook piercing through the flesh of the lips and this is the allusion "hooks in thy jaws". The Lord Himself will lead them away as defeated enemies.

There are several descriptions of the actual attack in the prophetic Scriptures, each based upon a different historic background, and this fact of itself demonstrates how carefully too literal an interpretation of the pictured details should be avoided. Joel portrays it on a stage decked with the scenery of Jehoshaphat's triumph. Zechariah describes it in the guise of a united world attack upon the city of Jerusalem in a manner reminiscent of Sennacherib's venture and defeat. Daniel, too, uses the Sennacherib story and pictures an attack upon Egypt in which Judah is involved and delivered. John the Revelator sees it in terms of a decisive conflict between the powers of earth and Heaven in the Plain of Esdraelon. Ezekiel, like Daniel, sets the whole land as the scene of the conflict but in terms of the Scythian invasion rather than that of Sennacherib. Any attempt to draw a realistic picture in modern terms of what is to be expected has to bring these various viewpoints into one focus which views them all with equal clarity. The differences in the various accounts, all relating to the same event, strengthen the case for supposing that they are, taken together, symbolic of one great reality which stands on an altogether higher level than that of relatively minor battles in one or another part of the Holy Land. Neither in Esdraelon in the north, nor in the Wilderness of Jeruel (Jehoshaphat) in the south, nor yet around the Holy City of Jerusalem itself, will the real conflict be fought. The issues at stake are greater by far than can be decided by a military force, however vast and well equipped, marching into a tract of land no

larger than a few English counties. Without much doubt the commencement of the event will be signalled by a colossal commercial offensive aimed at crippling the economic position of the "land of unwallled villages", and that will be engineered in great measure from places far remote from the Middle East.

Most wars of conquest in history were waged with an economic motive, to gain possession of natural advantages or sources of raw materials or the control of trade routes. In the old days, when the problems were less involved, a detachment of armed men marching in was the most effective method. Ezekiel, living in such days, could do naught else than frame his words accordingly. Today, when the fulfilment is all but upon us, the situation is different. The great commercial powers of the world, trained to think only of acquisition and profit, but necessarily having to consider effects upon the human populations involved, who are both their customers and their sources of labour, have other weapons in their armoury which are employed to the full before resource is had to naked force. Terms such as economic sanctions, withholding of credit, tariff barriers, cold war, had no meaning to the Scythian marauders of Ezekiel's time but they do have a meaning today. Perhaps the first sign that Gog's army, drawn from all the world, has begun its march to the place where it is to meet its end might well be the launching of a planned and unprecedented economic aggression aimed at cutting off the Servant Nation's links with the remainder of the world and forcing it to agree to its enemies' terms. A stranglehold upon the trade and production of the Holy Land might be tightened over, perhaps, a period of years. The extent to which such an aggression, especially if after a time it does not appear to be achieving its purpose, will be backed up by increasingly significant military force, can be surmised by any observer of current events who appreciates how closely these two aspects of modern life are inter-related. Most nations will try to get their way by so-called "peaceful" means and when that fails will, if they believe they can do so with impunity, resort to force. Just as there may conceivably be "economic sabotage" inside the boundaries of the Holy Land during the initial stages of this process, so ultimately it may be that the many references to the invaders entering upon the mountains of Israel may become reality. But even so, it must be realised that the real picture is that of the evil forces from all the world challeng-

ing the incipient power of righteousness enshrined in this little nation; the territorial implication is secondary.

Does this mean that the invasion takes the form of a calculated and perhaps quite long drawn out endeavour to wrest compliance to the world's demands from the Servant Nation by steady and unresisting economic pressure allied with all the weapons in the political armouries of the nations including, finally, the employment of force? The pattern of events may be something like this and the battle fought, at first at least, outside the boundaries of the Holy Land. The advance of Gog's host may manifest all the characteristics of modern political and diplomatic intrigue, proposals and counter-proposals, promises and counter-promises, with probably quite an element of mutual suspicion between the component elements of that host, before it is realised that the people in possession of the Holy Land are quite impervious to inducement or threat. So the inevitable progress toward an attempt at open physical warfare with the incipient Kingdom of God upon earth begins.

This is a most difficult thing to visualise in concrete terms. A conflict between the forces of mankind on the one hand and the powers of Heaven on the other involves so many imponderable factors. It is obvious, though, that since man, for his part, knows only the physical and material, his methods and weapons

must be of a purely terrestrial nature and he must of necessity regard the Land and its capital city and its human inhabitants as the objects of physical attack and conquest. Beyond this he sees and knows of nothing. It is to be expected, therefore, that so far as the assault forces are concerned, and notwithstanding the world-wide nature of the conspiracy, a literal entry into the Holy Land will be at least one object. Despite the fact, therefore, that much of the prophetic description of these happenings is of a symbolic nature and to be understood metaphorically, the well nigh unanimous insistence of nearly all the prophetic writers that Gog's host will enter upon the mountains of Israel is evidently intended to be taken literally. But this is no ordinary military conflict and there is no indication that the people of the Land are physically affected or involved. The invaders meet a totally new and unknown Power and the resistance they meet is not of the order they had expected. They will advance, knowing not that all their preparations have been in vain, that the weapons in which they trust will be useless in their hands, that the Power they have challenged will frustrate their purpose by agencies they cannot understand. All unwittingly they will fulfil a prophecy uttered two millenniums before their day: "*He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon!*"

Chapter 6 THE VALLEY OF JEHOShAPHAT

"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." (Joel 3. 14).

There is an enthralling story in the Second Book of Chronicles; a great alliance of aggressor nations—Moab, Ammon and Edom—had joined together to invade Israel. Great was the distress of the threatened people. Under good king Jehoshaphat they had turned to the Lord in sincerity, and in their land practised the arts of peace. Now it seemed that all their work was to be undone and the horrors of war and captivity again to be let loose upon the fair Judean countryside. In other and less God-fearing times such menace had been met by appeal to arms, and the flower of Israel's youth had marched out to do battle with the invader. Sometimes they were victorious and sometimes defeated, but whatever the fortunes of war it always meant weeping and heartbreak for those whose menfolk never returned from the conflict, and oftentimes the

desolate ones themselves were driven to exile in a strange land and their eyes never looked upon the pleasant fields of Israel again.

These people in the days of Jehoshaphat were of different calibre. They had learned to repose faith in the almighty power of God, and were ready for the test of faith whenever it should be applied. So it was that as the invading hosts swept around the southern shore of the Dead Sea and began to climb the steep ascents to the highlands of Judea all Israel came before God to claim His promised protection. "*We have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee . . . And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children.*" (2 Chron. 20. 11-13).

The sequel is thrilling! They went out to meet the enemy but not to fight! They went out with the priests of God leading the way, and as they went they sang the high praises

of God. "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle" cried Jahaziel the prophet. "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord". So they stood still; as the invaders made their way into the country with eager expectation of pillage and captives their judgment became confused, so that "Ammon and Moab stood up against Seir" (Edom) "utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another . . . and none escaped". That was one of the very few instances where Israel's faith rose to the occasion, and God delivered. Perhaps not since the days of the Red Sea crossing had there been so mighty a deliverance. So great was the impression left in the minds of those who witnessed this great thing that the story, handed down from father to son, came at length to form the setting in which the prophet Joel framed his description of the last great conflict of this Age.

Joel is the only Bible writer to refer to the "valley of Jehoshaphat". "Let the nations be wakened" he cries "and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all nations round about" (Joel 3. 12). There is not, and never has been, any such valley in reality. The valley of the Kidron on the east of Jerusalem is sometimes marked on Bible maps as the valley of Jehoshaphat but there is no ancient authority for the use of the name. Joel was thinking of this great event and picturing in his mind that mighty host making its way from En-gedi past the cliffs of Ziz into the wilderness of Jeruel there to destroy itself with Israel watching from the heights of Tekoa. He christened it the "valley of Jehoshaphat" because of the great thing that had happened there in Jehoshaphat's time. In prophetic vision he saw a far future day when, once more and for the last time, the holy nation of God would confront its enemies, serene in confidence of Divine protection, and again, this time for all the world to see, there would be enacted the miracle of Jehoshaphat.

There are a few, but sufficient, examples in the history of Israel to shew what God can do when the doors of trust and faith are opened for Him to intervene in human affairs. The crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14. 13-31), the Philistine invasion in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7. 3-12), Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18 & 19) and this in the days of Jehoshaphat, are sufficient to shew that what God had done before, He can and will do again under similar conditions. The reverse

cases, of the heavy defeat suffered by Israel at the hands of the Canaanites when they essayed to give battle against God's prohibition (Num. 14. 30-35), the disaster in the days of Eli when the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant (1 Sam. 4. 1-22), and the tragedy of the Babylonian captivity (2 Chron. 36. 14-21) all indicate that there can be no deliverance where there is no repentance and no faith.

From Zechariah's prophecy particularly it might be deduced that there will be some hardship and suffering at first, destined to test the sincerity of those who are in the Land. His picture, framed around the facts of Sennacherib's campaign, has as its centre-piece the city of Jerusalem, surrounded by the enemy. "The city shall be encompassed as in a net" is a literal rendering of his words in chapter 14. 2 where the A.V. has it "the city shall be taken". Sennacherib declared that he had shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage"—but he never opened the cage! What he did was to take a considerable amount of spoil and lead into exile a large number of captives—artisans, builders, musicians, Hezekiah's daughters and women of the harem. Only after this did Hezekiah publicly declare his confidence in the Lord with the result that is well-known. Chapter 14 vs. 2-3 of Zechariah constitutes both an allusion back to this aspect of Sennacherib's campaign and an indication that a similar aspect will characterise the future day of which he is speaking. There will be material loss and there will be some who go into exile. The position of the beleaguered nation will appear hopeless, so hopeless that some who had identified themselves with the Servant Nation will find their hearts fail them and will fall away to the enemy. The nature of their fault is indicated in sundry allusions as unbelief and idolatry, those twin sins which plagued Israel throughout her national history. Ezekiel talked about them in his 20th chapter, in the midst of a glowing description of the Return; "and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me. I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel" (chapter 20. 38). Isaiah too, speaks of the same. In the triumphant song of the regathering, the song of faith, "we have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" comes the darker note "favour is shewn to the wicked: he does not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness he deals perversely

and does not see the majesty of the Lord. Thy hand is lifted up but they see it not . . . Let the fire for thine adversaries consume them" (Isa. 26. 1-2, 10-11). The outlook of all such is eloquently expressed in another of Isaiah's pen pictures of this time. *"The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"* (Isa. 33. 14). That is their question as they look upon the advancing foe and because of their unbelief cannot accept that God will deliver. The prophet replies to the question with the calm assurance that the righteous will not only be able to defy the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings but *"will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech which you cannot comprehend"* (ch. 33. 18-19) indicating a barbarian people from a great distance just as pictured by Ezekiel. Thus the *"half cut off from the city"* of Zech. 14 may well be a hint that some whose faith fails them will apostasise from the nations and return, or be taken, to those places from whence they came. The land is thus freed from the incubus of some within its borders who are not heart and soul in sympathy with its principles. They depart, at a time when the land is suffering from the onslaught, is maintaining faith in God, but there is as yet no sign of deliverance.

At this point the signal is given for the climax. The threatening enemy tightens its grip upon the Holy Land. Whether it is an economic and commercial stranglehold or a military investment—or more likely both—the identity and existence of the people of the Lord is threatened with extinction. The issue is clear-cut; shall the present dominion of evil or the emerging power of good control the destinies of mankind? Evil has had its way for long ages past but now its day is done. This is the moment of Divine intervention, the time that God, at last, commands men to listen to Him. Zechariah describes the event in words of rare eloquence. *"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as in the day of his fighting"* (Zech. 14. 3) and Joel *"The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem"* (Joel 3. 16). The attitude of the threatened people is well pictured in Joel 2. 15-18 *"Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders . . . let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, . . . say 'Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the nations should*

rule over them . . . Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people".

Swiftly, and with irresistible force, God moves to action. *"I will call for a sword against him through all my mountains, saith the Lord God . . . and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone"* (Ezek. 38. 21-22) *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* (Zech. 14. 13). These, and many Scriptures like them, give some idea of the terrible visitation that will fall upon the aggressors. Strife between themselves, mutual jealousies and suspicions, perhaps intensified by unexpected failure to realise their purpose, may commence to dissipate the resources of the besiegers in internecine strife. But there may well be another factor. Perchance they will find that in a totally inexplicable manner the forces of Nature herself are working against them. That impression is given by many of the prophetic Scriptures and is especially suggested by Zech. 14. 12. *"Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth"*. If one interprets the flesh as munitions of war, the substance behind the attack, the eyes as intelligence services, the mouths as powers and avenues of direction, and visualises all these things becoming nullified by a series of unprecedented natural phenomena we have all the materials necessary for a demonstration of "other worldly" interference in the situation sufficient to convince all concerned that the powers of Heaven have taken a hand. After all, it only needs a sufficiently intense magnetic storm in the sun to disrupt all terrestrial radio communication and control for the period of its duration. That would constitute a very effective "consuming away" of "eyes" and "tongue" within the context of Zechariah's foreview. And many other like examples could be mooted.

Some dawning consciousness that they are contending with a force they cannot understand and against which all their weapons are impotent, then, could well lead to the overwhelming disruption of this entire campaign and the scattering of the component elements in this great multitude which Ezekiel calls

Gog's host and is representative of the whole world. The force of the picture is strengthened by Ezekiel's reference to birds of prey coming from all quarters to the scene of battle, for a sure sign of a defeated army in ancient times was the horde of carrion birds following its line of retreat and clustering around the dead and wounded left behind. That this is no ordinary defeat is indicated by the prophet's words *"Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field: Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side . . . ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth . . ."* (Ezek. 39. 17-19).

The broken forces, then, abandon their project and retreat in disorder. Retribution follows them even to their own homelands. *"I will send a fire upon Magog, and upon them that dwell confidently in the isles"* (coast lands) *"and they shall know that I am the Lord"* (Ezek. 39. 6). The effects of this mom-

entous happening, felt throughout all the earth, will be one of the agencies compelling men to realise that a new power has assumed control of earth's affairs. The magnitude of the disaster, unexplainable by any of the accepted laws of commercial manipulation or of military strategy, may well shake the confidence of men, at long last, in the efficacy of the time-honoured methods of fraud and force. The 39th chapter of Ezekiel appears to indicate that the wealth and the implements of the invaders fall into the hands of the Servant Nation; the tables are turned with a vengeance. But the victory will not be followed by revenge; the Lord has smitten only to heal, and hard on the heels of the retreating vanquished come the victors as ambassadors of the Gospel, to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven on earth as an accomplished reality, calling all men away from the evil of the past into the light and life of the future.

Chapter 7 THE CLEANSING OF THE LAND

What now of the "valley of the passengers?" Ezekiel says (ch. 39. 11) that God will provide *"a place of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamon-Gog"*. On the basis of this verse commentators have looked for a valley on the eastern side of the Dead Sea—where no valleys exist—for the final resting-place of the slain multitudes, but there is much more in the verse than so literal an interpretation would allow. In any case the A.V. rendering here is very poor and needs clarifying. The word "passengers" (*abar*) means primarily a wayfarer or one who passes through, and in this setting can logically mean "invaders" as descriptive of Gog's host. *"On the east of the sea"* is incorrect; *"gidmah"* is eastward, not east, and the sense of the phrase is that the valley is eastward from Jerusalem in the direction of the Dead Sea, i.e. between the city and the sea. The verb "stop" means to muzzle as in the well known text *"Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn"* whilst "noses" is not in the Hebrew text at all. *"Hamon"* is multitude. A logical if somewhat free rendering of the verse would be *"I will give to Gog a burial place in Israel, the valley of the invaders eastward toward the sea, and that shall muzzle the invaders. There shall they bury Gog and all*

his multitude, and they shall call it the valley of the multitude of Gog". That last expression is strongly reminiscent of Joel 3. 14 *"multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision. for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision"* referring to the same event.

Now this "valley of the invaders" pictured as lying between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea is a prophetic development of the Jehoshaphat deliverance. There is a surprising unanimity between Ezekiel, and Joel as to the site of the aggressor's overthrow in their respective prophecies and they all stem back to that notable happening in the days of Jehoshaphat. A little attention to the geography of that momentous occurrence can help to illustrate the allusions of these two prophets.

Ten miles south of Jerusalem, on the fringe of the Judean highlands, lies the Wilderness of Tekoa, where the people of Israel stood that day watching the invading forces making their way up the valley from En-Gedi on the Dead Sea coast four thousand feet below. The account in 2 Chron. 20 is so accurate in its description of the land that it can be reproduced in map form very easily. From En-Gedi the invaders *"came up by the cliff of Ziz"* (vs. 16) a mountainous outcrop near the sea, and into the *"wilderness of Jeruel"*, a hot and sterile rocky waste which to-day is called *"Midbar Yehuda"*—the Desert of Judah. They were following the usual and only practicable

route from the Dead Sea to Jerusalem. It was in the midst of this waste that the invaders met their doom, and here appears a striking confirmation of Biblical accuracy. Verse 24 records that when Israel, on Tekoa, came to *"the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped"*. No commentator or scholar seems



Wilderness of Jeruel, now known as Midbar Yehuda — Desert of Judah.

Valley of Jehoshaphat of Joel 3.

"Land barren and desolate" of Joel 2.

"Between the seas" of Dan. 11.

Valley of passengers of Ezek. 39.

to have discovered the nature or location of this "watch tower in the wilderness"—no further detail is given in the O.T. or in tradition. But the recently published official survey map of modern Israel shows, on the rising ground which culminates in the rocky heights of Tekoa, one isolated pinnacle rising some two hundred feet or so above the sur-

rounding plain, and from its position commanding a clear view between the mountains across the plain leading up from En-Gedi. As a natural "look-out post" commanding the normal invasion route from Edom and Moab its position is unrivalled and there would seem to be no doubt that such a useful eminence was crowned by a watch tower. From that height the observers could easily see the debacle going on in the plain some seven miles away. As they watched, faith was rewarded; the invaders, turning their arms upon one another, all perished. Here in the valley, between the city and the sea, they died, and the vultures came and took them all away. Then Israel descended the steep slopes to collect the spoil. Three days they collected, and on the fourth day climbed the ravines to the valley of Berachah in the highlands, there to praise God for His mighty act, and from thence returned to Jerusalem.

Now if Joel's prophecy be examined it seems clear that he has this same locality in mind. *"I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea"* (Dead Sea) *"and his hinder part toward the utmost sea"* (Mediterranean) *"... and whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered"* (Joel 2. 20-32). As though to clinch the matter his third chapter mentions this very valley as the place of the last great conflict. His description *"a land barren and desolate"* well fits the desert of Judah as it was in O.T. times.

There is some possibility that the rather obscure expression in Daniel 11. 45 *"He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end and no one shall help him"* rests on the same basis as the vision of Joel. The allusion is to the pavilion-tent of the commander-in-chief of an invading army. Sennacherib in Isaiah's time planted his at Lachish, between these same two seas—and he came to his end and no one helped him. Perhaps Daniel had that in mind.

There seems to be some real significance in the association of that sterile valley seventeen miles south of Jerusalem in connection with the destruction of the enemies of the Lord and it is clear that Ezekiel's "valley of passengers eastward to the sea" is this same place; just as the invaders in Jehoshaphat's time left their bones in that valley so he sees the forces of Gog and Magog buried there. No longer shall it be called the valley of Jehoshaphat; from now and for ever it shall be the

valley of the multitude of Gog.

"Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying them, that they may cleanse the land" (ch. 33. 12). If any further evidence is required that this is a metaphorical picture, not to be understood literally, this expression provides that evidence, for the idea of human bodies lying about for periods up to seven months awaiting burial—especially in that climate—is patently absurd. There is some symbolic meaning associated with this seven months, one that may have been more easily perceived by Israel of Ezekiel's day than by Christians of today. The statement stands without any following comment which might have elucidated its meaning.

Perhaps Zechariah can help. In his 14th chapter, after concluding his own version of this same conflict and resulting Divine deliverance, he refers to an observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in the land following the deliverance. Now the Feast of Tabernacles was the great feast of rejoicing, commemorating the full ingathering of the year's crops, and also the time Israel dwelt as wanderers in the wilderness, on which latter account they dwelt the seven days in temporary booths which gave the alternative name, the Feast of Booths. Hence this Feast became the symbol of final settlement in the land in prosperity after all troubles were over, and Zechariah's usage of the symbol is very apt. Now Ezekiel, in his vision of Millennial Israel (45th chapter) describes the apportionment and dedication to holy use of the land and a process of ceremonial cleansing which commences on the first day of the first month—New Year's Day—and continues until the end of the Feast of Tabernacles on the twenty first day of the seventh month. Here is a period of virtually seven months during which the land, freed from enemies, is apportioned to its future use, and its priests and people ceremonially cleansed that the way be laid open for the River of Life of chapter 47. Is it possible that in chapter 39 the same symbolic seven months is indicated, here picturing the cleansing of the land itself? If so, then the interpretation is clear. The seven months burying of the slain in the valley of the invaders indicates the active elimination from the land and people of every remaining taint of the policies or practices or principles of "this present evil world", to use St. Peter's term, and the emergence of a completely purified people ready to take up its destined position and work in the new Age then dawning. Verse 15 intensifies this idea. Any way-

farer passing through the land and coming upon a man's bone is to set up a sign—a cairn of stones—beside it until the buriers have taken it away and buried it in the valley. The smallest diversion from the principles of rectitude and uprightness is to be noted and quickly obliterated. The land is to be truly cleansed.

With a swift transition of thought in verse 16 the valley of the dead becomes a city of the dead; "*the name of the city shall be Hamonah*"—Multitudes. There may be some allusion here to the city of the dead of Isa. 14 "*Sheol from below is moved to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth . . . they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?*" The hosts of Gog are depicted as "passing through" the land to meet their doom in the valley of death, but behind this we have the implication that evil, and the powers of evil, "pass through" the world only to meet their end in the city of the dead, Sheol, where all that is evil shall be done away for ever. This is the clear import of John's words in Rev. 20. 14 "*And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire*". Those misguided men who take part in the great assault on the Holy Land will eventually share in the opportunities of the Millennial reign which is to follow their foredoomed failure, but the evil intent of their hearts, and the evil things they have created, are to be buried for ever in the "valley of the passengers", remembered for all time, like those carcasses of the transgressors of Isa. 66. 24, as an "abhorring to all flesh", but never again to have power or effect in the earth. This "Hamonah", this city of the dead, is a place into which all the evil that has afflicted all the world may be gathered and thrust far down underground from whence it can never trouble mankind again.

The seven years during which Israel is said to be occupied in burning the implements of war left behind—shields, bows and arrows, staves, spears—must have some symbolic meaning which is not easily apparent. There may be a connection here with Israel's first entry into the land under Joshua, when for seven years they battled with the warlike Canaanites and steadily dispossessed them of their power and their weapons until, at the end of that seven years "*the land had rest from war*" (Josh. 14. 15). In those days it was the war-like might of the Canaanites that had to be broken; now it is the war-like might of

all the world that must be completely consumed before Israel can rest safely. Perhaps, then, the utter and final breaking of the power of the world to make war is indicated here, likened to Israel's breaking of Canaanite power during that seven years so long ago. So it might be said that after Israel has burned the weapons seven years as described in chapter 38, 9-10 "*the world had rest from war*". That at least is the sentiment of *Psa. 46. 9 "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire"*.

One might well say, therefore, that with the end of the seven months and seven years—whatever period of actual earth years may be occupied by the realities they represent—all resistance to the Kingdom of God upon earth will have ceased and the new order of things is established and accepted. It is important to realise that the story of Gog and Magog ends, not in an orgy of death and destruction, but an era of life and construction. Isaiah declares (ch. 66) that after this spectacular vindication of Divine power, ambassadors will go from the delivered Nation to all the peoples of the world "*and they shall declare my glory among the nations*". Judgment is followed by blessing; the breaking of evil powers in the world of men is followed by a God-inspired opportunity to build a new world free from fear, injustice, oppression and even death. "*I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come*" says Haggai (2. 7). One has to remember that, evil as the hosts of Gog and Magog are depicted, the Divine desire is not for the eternal destruction of the individuals composing those forces, but for their reclamation and reconciliation. "*The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them*" said Jesus (Luke 9. 56). "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*" said the Lord to Ezekiel "*but that the wicked turn from his way and live*" (Ezek. 33. 11). All too often, consideration of the story of Gog and Magog finishes when the invading hosts are overthrown and destroyed; in truth this is not the end. The evil power and action of those men has been thwarted and brought to an end but they themselves, even although in the course of this great event they may have passed through the gates of physical death, must yet experience the benevolent yet strong discipline of the incoming Age, against which they so blindly fought, and make their decision for eternal life or its alternative. And that the world of man in

general, once the first shock of the change is over, will hail this new era in earth's affairs with enthusiasm is forthshewn in the words of Isa. 26. 9 "*It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him and He will save us . . . This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation*".

How may these things be related to forces in the world as it is seen today? To what extent is the "evil thought" of Ezek. 38. 10 yet in evidence?

Until the Land of Promise has budded and blossomed there will be no envious thoughts within the meaning of Ezek. 38. Political troubles of which Israel is the storm centre there are today, but these have to do with the mutually antagonistic policies and aims of existing world powers interested in Middle East territories surrounding the present State of Israel rather than the possessions and achievements of that State, and although Israel is perforce involved in present conditions it cannot be said that these are more than a preliminary to the ultimate world wide confrontation which she is destined to meet. When the "*people collected from the heathen, practising commerce and trade, and residing in the top of the earth*" (Ezek. 38. 12—Farrar Fenton) are beginning to make their mark in the world men may expect to see more plainly the outlines of this great thing. The Servant Nation, rapidly restoring the old wastes and beginning to realise its Divine mission, may well commence, not only to declare its allegiance to principles of life and conduct which the peoples of the earth in general deny, but to promulgate those principles throughout the world at a time when true religious faith is at its lowest ebb. So a double cause of enmity may loom large in the counsels of the world. Spiritually, this Nation is witnessing for God and the practical application of His laws to a world which is set against such things. Economically, it is prospering whilst the world at large is in the throes of trouble. The land is rich, and it is undefended. The people have no defensive weapons: they stand by their belief that God will defend. So the "evil thought" takes root. At one blow the world will rid itself of this troublesome witness for God and righteousness and at the same time possess itself of material wealth and advantages which by then will have become famous throughout the earth.

An important element in this latter must lie in the direction of scientific knowledge

and its practical application. To an ever increasing degree the world is becoming dependent upon technological advancement. The day is long since past when "Adam delved and Eve span", when the leisurely processes of Nature in food production, and cottage handicrafts in the production of man's other wants, sufficed for all human needs. The needs and the desires of modern man under the present competitive system can only be satisfied by an increasing reliance upon synthetic production and mass manufacture, and in order that the "profit motive" might also be satisfied there is an accelerating race to discover cheaper and faster and more efficient means of production. Now since the new Nation in the Holy Land is to initiate that new Era of which it is said that the desert shall blossom as the rose, that sustenance and living room in full measure shall be found for every member of Adam's race, that sickness, disease and death itself shall be abolished, it is logical to expect that the achievements in knowledge and mastery over natural forces and resources which that Nation will attain, increasingly so as the dawn of that new Era approaches, will excite the wonder and envy of the rest of the world. These things, perhaps more than anything else, will constitute the "cattle and goods" which excites the envy of the outside world. But the new Nation will insist upon using its knowledge for human happiness and advancement and not to serve the greed of soulless institutions, and this it is which will surely precipitate the conflict seen by Ezekiel in the guise of a barbarian invasion. Even today contemporary Israel is noted for the services it renders to newly developing nations, especially in the African Continent, by the provision of

technicians and advisers in many fields of science and technology. When the time comes that the people of the Holy Land have established an obvious lead over all other people in these things, and ominous mutterings begin to be heard from vested interests which see their monopolies and advantages slipping away from them in consequence, it may well be concluded that the clock is about to strike.

All this lies in the future, but it will surely come. "As truly as I live" said God upon one notable occasion "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14. 21). Habakkuk, on his watch tower, heard the Divine Voice saying "Though it tarry, wait for it; for it will surely come, it will not tarry". The time may seem to be prolonged, as men measure time, but the development of the things which now are seen into those that shall be is ordained and irrevocable. This world will one day perceive the reality of that which was presented in pictorial prophetic form by Joel, by Isaiah, by Ezekiel, by Daniel, by Zechariah, by John the Revelator, and in that perception realise that the arena has been cleared for the greatest and most soul-stirring event with which this indifferent and unbelieving modern world could possibly be confronted.

"Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, FOR THE MOUTH OF THE LORD HATH SPOKEN IT."

THE DIVINE CALL

It is surprising when we come to reckon up the instances how often it has pleased God to come down into the daily rounds and daily lives of His people, to equip them or call them to His service and favour, not when they were secluding themselves for purposes of devotion, but while engaged in the common-place, every day duties of very humble callings. Moses received his call and commission by a Voice issuing from a burning bush while tending his father-in-law's sheep on the slopes of Mt. Horeb. Gideon, as he threshed out the wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites, was greeted by the Angel of the Lord, and charged to deliver his people from the hand of their oppressors. David, the shepherd boy, attending the ewes, great with

young, is called by God to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. Elisha, ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, finds the mantle of Elijah thrown across his shoulders, thereby designating him to be the prophet of the Lord in the room of Elijah. Even the shepherds on the hill sides of Judea, while watching over their flocks by night were blessed, above men, by the songs of the Heavenly Host, as they sang of the babe of Bethlehem. Peter and Andrew were casting a net, when Jesus walked by, and called them to be "fishers of men". Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, entering up the payment of tribute, when the Lord called him to apostleship. Within the narrow sphere of "the common round, the daily task", the Lord found His servants and equipped them for greater things.

"AS A CHILD SHALL ONE DIE"

A Note on Isa. 65. 20

"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed."

The first two clauses are comparatively easy to understand; there will be no untoward deaths of infants at early ages—the meaning of the expression "an infant of days" being that of one whose life is quickly cut short—neither will there be old men who are, as it were, ready for death but death has not yet claimed them. The present indiscriminate coming of death to all sections of the community will no longer continue; in that day the only cause of death will be wilful and incorrigible sin. The next clause "*for the child shall die an hundred years old*" is more difficult. The word for "child" is *naar*, which indicates a male of any age from infancy to youthful maturity. Thus the child Moses in the water (Exod. 2. 6) is *naar*; so is Absalom in his prime (2 Sam. 18. 29), Joshua when he became Moses' lieutenant at the Exodus (Exod. 33. 11), and the four hundred Amalekite warriors who fled from David on their camels (1 Sam. 30. 17). The same word in its feminine form (*naarah*) is used for "young woman" as for Ruth in Ruth 4. 12. Remembering that Job, speaking of the Millennial Day, said of the wasted and aged man "*His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth*" (Job 33. 25) we might conclude that this third clause of the verse refers to those who are in the ideal state of human maturity, neither "infant" or "old man", a state which will be the normal physical condition of men in that day. This still does not explain why such should "die an hundred years old", i.e. in the full bloom of maturity, and this leads one to suspect a faulty translation due perhaps to some very early corruption in the Hebrew text. This suspicion is confirmed when one refers to the Septuagint rendering "*Neither shall there be any more a child that dies untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the youth shall be an hundred years old, and the sinner who dies at an hundred years old shall also be accursed.*" This seems to teach more clearly that there will be no untimely deaths in the Millennium, or as we would say, no "natural" deaths, and that an age of a hun-

dred years, which to-day is accounted extreme old age and accompanied as a rule by infirmity and decrepitude, will then be considered as that of a youth. But there will be death to sinners, and the sinner who dies at a hundred years will be cut off for ever.

Further confirmation of this view comes from a book which is thought to have been written about a hundred and twenty years before Christ, the "*Book of Jubilees*". Written by some pious Jew and based upon the Old Testament Scriptures, it contains one passage which is evidently taken from Isa. 65. 20, and since the writer probably had access to a more accurate copy of Isaiah's prophecy than we possess to-day his interpretation is valuable. In describing the Millennial reign, he says: "And in those days the children will begin to study the laws, and to seek the commandments, and return to the path of righteousness. And the days will begin to grow many and increase among the children of men, until their days draw near to one thousand years. . . . And there will be no old man, nor one who is not satisfied with his days; for all will be as children and youths. And all their days they will complete and live in peace and joy, and there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer; for all their days will be days of blessing and healing." (Jub. 23. 26-29). Again there is the picture of youthful perfection for all men, and everlasting life for the righteous. Whether the hundred years for the span of the wicked is intended literally or merely as the symbolic measure of a life that is governed by sin in contrast with the "thousand years" of the righteous is perhaps a debatable point. There may be some link with the words of Solomon "*Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet know I that it shall be well with them that fear God*" (Eccl. 8. 12). It may be that the meaning of this last clause is "the sinner; even though he live a hundred years; even though his life seem to be prolonged beyond the span that to-day is usual with man, yet he will eventually suffer sin's penalty and be accursed (cut-off)". God is not mocked: what a man soweth, that shall he reap, and if, under the enlightening influences of that blessed day, a man persists in the way of sin, he will certainly reap sin's penalty.

HAGAR THE BONDMAID

One of the most human stories of the Old Testament is that of the Egyptian slave-girl presented to Abraham by his childless wife Sarai for the single purpose of providing an heir to his vast estate. Infamiliarity with the laws and social customs of the time has led many to condemn the proceeding, whilst St. Paul's use of the episode to illustrate his doctrinal teaching in the Epistle to the Galatians has tended to divert attention from the human aspect.

The story is related in the 16th and 21st chapters of Genesis. Abraham and Sarai, married for many years, had no children, and from the purely natural point of view it seemed their hopes would never be realised. Sarai was past normal child-bearing age. God had previously promised Abraham that from him would spring a great nation, and that in his seed all families of the earth would one day be blessed. How could the promise be fulfilled?

Abraham and Sarai came originally from the Sumerian city of Ur, on the lower Euphrates. From there, before settling in Canaan, they had migrated to Haran, a city of the Mari civilisation on the upper Euphrates. Both these lands maintained marriage laws aimed at dealing with this problem, laws the records of which are extant to-day in legal tablets of those times which have been discovered. It was provided that in such a situation the wife was permitted (under Hurrian law was obliged) to give one of her own slave-girls to her husband as a second wife, standing in an inferior position to the first, but, if a child was born, automatically becoming a freewoman. Her status as a wife could not then be repudiated.

This was the law which Sarai invoked; perfectly proper, and quite customary at the time. No kind of moral stricture ought to be passed on this couple; they did what every right-thinking individual of the day would endorse. To risk the passing of Abraham's estates into alien hands by failing to take this step would have been considered most reprehensible.

Sarai's choice fell upon Hagar, a slave-girl whom she had probably brought back with her from Egypt at the time of the household's sojourn there some few years previously. She is called an Egyptian but that may only mean

that she was born in Egypt; Hagar is a Hebrew and not an Egyptian name and there were many Semitic Hebrews infiltrating into Lower Egypt at that time and nothing is more natural than when Pharaoh gave Abraham man-servants and maid-servants, as related in Gen. 12, he should thus dispose of a few unwanted Semitic immigrants. Bearing in mind Abraham's insistence on purity of Semitic blood for his son Isaac's wife in later days it hardly seems reasonable to think that he would himself willingly take a wife of Hamitic race when there must have been plenty of Hebrew women in his household from whom Sarai could choose. There is not enough evidence in the account to permit a definite conclusion one way or the other, so that whether Ishmael was pure Semitic or of mixed Semitic-Hamitic blood remains an open question.

It is not likely that Hagar had any choice in the matter. She was a slave-girl; slavery was an established part of the social order and she had to do as she was told. At the same time it can be borne in mind that in patriarchal times the entire establishment of a man like Abraham would be conducted more or less like a large family and the bond-servants enjoyed as full and contented a life as sons and daughters of the house, subject to the performance of their assigned duties. The prospect of becoming the mother of the heir to the estate and a freewoman into the bargain was probably attractive and Hagar might well have considered herself fortunate. When, a little later on, she found that she was indeed to become a mother, the exultation of the moment seems to have overcome her discretion and she demonstrated her feelings in the presence of Sarai, and that was a sad mistake. The account says "*her mistress was despised in her eyes*". That might mean merely that Hagar was guilty of "showing off", by look or word taunting Sarai, or, more seriously, that she made an endeavour to usurp Sarai's position as first wife on the strength of the expected heir. This latter action was condemned by the law and could result in the offender being relegated to the former position of a slave, at least until a son was born.

Sarai, not unnaturally, complained to her husband, and he, obviously with the provision of the law in mind, responded "*thy maid is in*

thy hands; do to her as it pleaseth thee". So Sarai "dealt hardly" with her. The expression does not mean, as is sometimes thought, that she used physical violence toward the girl; only that she took away her privileges and reduced her to her former condition of bond-service.

The indignity was too much for Hagar; she ran away. She seems to have been a high-spirited girl who could not brook humiliation; it may be also that she did not fully understand the position and believed, erroneously, that she had now forfeited the right to bear an heir to Abraham. She seems to have been possessed of pluck, too, for, though alone, she headed for her native Egypt. Abraham must have sent out men to find and bring her back but if so, they were unsuccessful. It was the angel of the Lord who found her, sitting by a spring of water "in the wilderness, in the way to Shur". Shur was the name of the defensive wall the Egyptians had built along their frontier near the present Suez canal, and the wilderness of Shur was the district of Western Sinai adjacent to Egypt. Hagar must have covered at least a hundred miles through sparsely inhabited territory, subject to all the dangers liable to befall a solitary woman travelling alone, before the angel found her.

At this point there is revealed Hagar's simple but sterling faith in God. Though Egypt was her native land she was no idolater. To the angel's question, from which she discerned at once that he knew all about her, "*Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go?*" she answered simply and without excuse "*I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai*". Whatever of pride or arrogance there might have been in her former attitude back at Hebron, there was none now. She acknowledged her position as Sarai's handmaid and stated the simple fact without any attempt at justification or complaint. When the angel told her to return to her mistress and submit herself to whatever might befall she was quite ready to obey.

The angel, of course, appeared in the form of a man, but Hagar knew him for a messenger of God. How she knew, she would have been at a loss to explain. His authoritative bearing, his knowledge of her past, and perhaps an inward illumination of mind bestowed upon her at that moment by the Holy Spirit, all together made her certain of the fact. So when he began to tell her what the future held she listened and accepted it in child-like faith. She would bear a son, and she was to call his name Ishmael. He would

be a "wild-ass" man—not "wild man" as in the A.V.—a term which likened him to the noblest animal of the desert, the wild ass, free and untamed, loving the wide open spaces and beholden to no man. To this day the true sons of Ishmael, the Bedouin of the deserts, have been like that. God had looked upon Hagar and her affliction, had Himself named her son as yet unborn, and had a place for Him in His world.

Here the reverential spirit of Hagar comes to the top. "*She called the name of the God who spoke to her 'Thou art a God of seeing' for she said 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?'*" (Gen. 16, 13 RSV). Like all of her times, Hagar believed that no one could see God, and live; He is too great to be comprehended by mortal eyes. Yet now He had manifested Himself to her in the guise of a man, and she had looked upon him, and lived! "*Thou art a God of seeing*" or as the A.V. has it "*Thou God seest me*". Many a distressed or despairing heart since the Egyptian bondmaid's day has been comforted and strengthened by that same realisation. "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*" "*Your Father in Heaven knoweth what things ye have need of.*"

In after days that spring which marked the turning-point of Hagar's life was called Lahai-roi, meaning "*The spring of the Living One who sees me*". It eventually became the headquarters of Isaac when he had acquired a household of his own. At this present time, with, perhaps, a sense of peace in her heart and some hope for the future, Hagar retraced her steps that hundred miles to Hebron and quietly took her assigned place in the household, trustfully waiting on the Lord to reveal His further will. And in due time Abraham looked upon his first-born son and named him Ishmael. Who can doubt that Hagar had told him every detail of the encounter at the spring in the wilderness and Abraham realised that the hand of God was in this thing? At this time, of course, he fully believed that in Ishmael he had received the promised "seed" through whom his line would be perpetuated and the Divine promise which guaranteed blessing to all families of the earth be fulfilled.

But God had planned otherwise.

* * *

Something like sixteen or seventeen years had passed. Quiet years, in the main, for Abraham's settlement at Hebron, marked towards their close by two noteworthy events.

The cities of the Plain, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, were destroyed by fire from heaven on account of their wickedness, and Abraham's wife Sarai, at last, presented him with a son. For a short time after the destruction of the cities Abraham, with Sarai, and Hagar and Ishmael, and the household, had migrated to Gerar, not far from the spring where Hagar had talked with the angel, but now they were all back at Hebron again and Isaac was being weaned and there was to be a great feast.

The birth of Isaac had of course changed the situation as regards Ishmael. The son of the first wife automatically took precedence as the heir and Ishmael now lost all his rights of primogeniture. At his father's death he would be entitled only to such provision as his father made for him. Whether the sixteen-year-old lad was unduly concerned about this is not related and in all probability he was not. At any rate his mother had automatically become a freewoman at his birth and could not be enslaved again, so that for sixteen years past Hagar had enjoyed an acknowledged position as Abraham's second wife and there was nothing Sarai could do about that. Whether or not any animosity existed between the two women is not recorded but in all the circumstances it is hardly to be expected that relations were of the best. Sarai must have found it galling to reflect that the position existed in consequence of her own act, and in the outcome need never have been instituted since she had after all given birth to a son of her own. Perhaps there was a nagging feeling that Ishmael, when grown to man's estate, might try to trick her son Isaac out of his rightful inheritance. Sarai does not seem to have possessed the calm faith in Divine oversight that characterised Abraham. He appears to have been content to leave it all with God; in the meantime he probably had to step in to keep the peace at times.

All this is suggested by Sarai's evident vindictiveness at the time of the feast. Despite her fame as the wife of Abraham, the "father of the faithful", a dispassionate view of the record does not show her up in a very good light. The account says that she saw the son of Hagar "*mocking*". It does not say who was being mocked or what was the nature of the act but it is usually assumed that Ishmael was mocking or deriding Isaac, or the feast of which he was the centre. The word has a wide range of meaning, from the act of derisive or scornful laughter to that of making

nonsensical sport, or "playing about" as we would say nowadays. It is used in this latter sense of Isaac with his wife Rebekah in Gen. 26. 8 and of Samson "*making sport*" for the Philistines in Jud. 16. 25. It might well be that this is the sense of the word here, and that Ishmael was merely "larking about" with his young half-brother. Whatever it was, Sarai's ire was aroused and she went straight to her husband and demanded that Hagar and her son be expelled from the family circle and sent away. "*Cast out this bondwoman and her son*" she said contemptuously "*for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son*". Sarai must have known that God had already told Abraham that Isaac was to be his heir; the established laws under which they lived guaranteed the same, but still she feared Ishmael as a possible supplanter. Her faith in God in this respect was evidently not up to the level of that maintained by her husband.

Abraham was reluctant to agree. He loved his son Ishmael; he himself was the legal husband of Hagar as well as of Sarai—under the laws then ruling she was a wife and not a concubine—and his innate sense of justice and uprightness told him that whatever this lad of sixteen had done could not justify the action demanded by Sarai. In any case, under Sumerian law, Ishmael could not be disowned or deprived of his home. But Sarai was adamant and Abraham evidently in great perplexity—until the Lord spake to him.

This is where God comes back into the story. Abraham was to rest this matter, as he had learned to rest so many other matters before, in the providences of the Most High. He was to assent to his wife's wish and send Hagar and her son away. God would look after them and in due time Ishmael would become the father of a great nation without affecting the destiny planned for the sons of Isaac. "*Twelve princes shall he beget*" the Lord told Abraham, "*and I will make him a great nation*" (Gen. 17. 20). History is witness to the striking fulfilment of those words. Ishmaelite tribes extended over all Sinai and down the Red Sea coast into all Western Arabia; some of the great nations of Roman and mediæval times such as the Nabatheans were Ishmaelites, and the prophet Mahomet, founder of the Mohammedan faith, was himself a descendant of Ishmael. Ethnologically, a large proportion of the Arab world owes its descent to the son of Hagar.

There is something missing in the story telling how Abraham gave Hagar "*a piece of*

bread and a bottle of water" and sent her away into the desert. No civilised man would treat any woman like that; certainly not a man like Abraham. The family encampment was at Hebron. To the south lay the dry and treeless desert, sun-baked by day and bitterly cold at night, which is to-day called the Negev and cultivated by colonies of Israelis under arduous conditions. There were inhabitants, roving Bedouins of the desert, and nearer the sea-coast on the way to Egypt, Abimelech king of Gerar and the tribes he ruled. But to send a woman out into that waterless waste, alone and unprotected, was about as good as sending her to certain death. One might ask why, if Hagar had to go, Abraham with all his wealth and abundance of servants did not provide an escort with sufficient provisions to take her back to her native Egypt where she might expect to find friends. Nothing of this is suggested. The logical conclusion is that the Genesis story confines itself to the bare essentials and that if the full circumstances were known the proceeding would not seem so heartless. A closer scrutiny of the background appears to be desirable.

Abraham was a wealthy and influential stock-breeder. His household was located at Hebron but various allusions in Genesis make it clear that his flocks and herds roamed over an extensive territory covering the Judean highlands between Hebron and Beer-Sheba, and westward to what is known to-day as the Gaza Strip. The area measured some thirty miles by forty. There were, of course, other inhabitants, mostly Canaanites and Hittites—Abraham's friendship with Ephron the Hittite, another powerful stock-breeder, is well known—and these all grazed their flocks and herds in the same land and got on fairly well together. Abraham, with his home and headquarters at Hebron, had shepherds and other workers scattered all over this country and there were probably settlements of these men and their families at strategic points. Almost certainly Beer-Sheba, in the far south, was one such point, for later on he transferred his headquarters to that place (Gen. 21). What more natural than that Abraham should have sent Hagar to one of his settlements, where she would have been provided for and their son grow to manhood, but out of the way of Sarai? According to the story Hagar departed from Hebron, and "*wandered in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba*", where she uttered her despairing cry to God and was heard.

It might well be, then, that Abraham had

instructed Hagar to make her way to Beer-Sheba and there settle with his herdsmen of that vicinity. According to the account he sent her away "*early in the morning*" which means at first light, about 5.0 a.m. The distance is twenty-six miles, through country where Abraham was known and respected and his employees to be found every few miles or so going about their business. Allowing for a rest in some shady place for the midday hours when the sun was fiercest, they could have been at Beer-Sheba before sunset. The piece of bread and bottle of water would then have been abundant provision for the day and all would have been well. Unfortunately Hagar missed her way. She may not have been far from the settlement at Beer-Sheba but she was in "*the wilderness*" and this would indicate that she had strayed from the haunts of men and was perhaps headed for the Negev desert beyond Beer-Sheba. The water was spent; perhaps in some panic she pressed on despite the heat of the sun, meeting no man and recognising no landmark. The lad's strength began to fail first and he could not go on. In despair she laid him in the shade of "*one of the shrubs*"—the low-growing desert scrub—went away and dropped on the ground "*a good way off*" in a paroxysm of grief, "*for she said, Let me not see the death of the lad. And she lifted up her voice, and wept*".

It is significant that no word of reproach on her part is recorded. In circumstances such as these one could not but wonder if she had given vent to some bitterness against Sarai, or Abraham, or even God, who long ago had promised that her son would live and become the father of a great nation. There seems to be unquestioning acceptance of the fate that appeared to be facing them both, and she gave way to grief without rancour.

There, alone in the desert and in her extremity, the angel of the Lord came to her the second time. "*The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard . . . arise, lift up the lad . . . for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, and she went, and filled the bottle, and gave the lad drink*". All unknowingly, she must have wandered near a spring and in her distress not perceived it. So the promise was reiterated; Ishmael would live and inherit that which God had ordained for him.

It is a remarkable fact that of these two women, Hagar and Sarai, it was Hagar the

bondmaid who on two occasions came in contact with the powers of Heaven for blessing; she saw God as it were in the angel in man's form and said reverently "*I have seen God*". Sarai the freewoman, with all her advantages, only saw the angel of God once, laughed disbelievingly at his words, lied about it afterwards, and earned the angel's reproach. (Gen. 18. 12-15). It would almost seem that the faith of Hagar, more simple perhaps, was at the same time more sincere and trusting. The Lord certainly spoke more tenderly to Hagar than He ever did to Sarai.

What happened next? The story leaves a gap. The succeeding verses in Gen. 21 tell of Ishmael's progress to manhood and a home in another part of the country. It is possible that Hagar did eventually find Beer-Sheba or whatever place to which she had been sent, and settled there with Abraham's workers. Abraham may well have visited his son there. But later on, perhaps as Ishmael grew to manhood, the question of setting up his own household must have occupied his mother's mind, and this may be the truth behind ch. 21 vss. 20-21. "*God was with the lad, and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt*". Paran was a

hundred miles or more to the south-west of Beer-Sheba, on the way to Egypt and in the Sinai desert. This looks as though Ishmael determined to make his own career in a land as yet not closely peopled and well out of the way of Abraham's far-flung interests. There, in the desert, Ishmael settled, and married, and begat twelve sons, and earned himself a name which in the Arab world at least has achieved immortality.

It must not be thought that Ishmael was cut off from Abraham in later years. There must have been communication, perhaps some coming and going, between the two, and between Ishmael and Isaac, with whom friendly relations must always have existed. Gen. 25. 9 reveals this. Upon the death of Abraham seventy years later "*his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah*". Isaac must have known exactly where to find Ishmael so that the latter could be present at the old home in time for the last respects. Sarai, of course, was long since dead.

Of Hagar we hear nothing more. Whether she ever saw her husband Abraham again we do not know. We leave her, the matriarchal head of a rapidly growing tribe of desert Bedouin, quiet and serene in her faith, perhaps always conscious of the goodness of God who had been to her all that He had promised.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Let me remind you all, ye faithful believers in Christ, that ye are compared to trees—trees of the Lord's right-hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year ye may grow downward; that ye may know more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted to humility. Pray that your roots may penetrate below the mere topsoil of truth, into the great rocks which underlie the uppermost stratum; that ye may get a good hold of the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity, but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm; a growth, the value of which no heart can conceive when the hurricane is tearing up the hypocrite. As ye root downward, seek to grow upward. Send out the topshoot of your love towards heaven. As the trees send out their spring shoot and their mid-summer shoot, and as you see upon the top of the fir that new green child of

spring, the fresh shoot which lifts its hand towards the sun, so plan to have more love and greater desires after God, a nearer approach towards Him in prayer, a sweeter spirit of adoption, a more intense and intimate fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. This mounting upward will add to your beauty and to your delight. Then pray to grow on either side. Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it also that ye grow in faithfulness, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labour this year by God's grace to bring forth more fruit unto Him than ye have ever done. We would not be as the gleanings of the vintage when there is only here and there a cluster upon the uppermost bough, we would be as the Valley of Eschol, whose presses burst with new wine.

This is to grow in grace; to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far-reaching branches, and to bring forth unto the Lord's glory. C. H. Spurgeon

A NOTE ON ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

A statement often provocative of perplexity or misunderstanding is the concluding verse of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25. 46) "*and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal*". Some of the facts relating to the word here translated "punishment" may be of interest.

"Eternal punishment" in this verse is from the Greek "*aionian kolasis*". "*Kolasis*" is a word which comes in the first place from "*kolos*", to lop or prune, and the meaning of the word as defined by Thayer, Liddell and Scott, and others, is to check, curb, restrain or correct. Its usage in the time of the Lord was twofold (a) punishment in the sense of restraint of the offender's power to continue his offence, and (b) disciplinary correction, or as we would say, chastisement. In classical Greek usage, Aristotle (350 B.C.) distinguished it from the other Greek word, used in Heb. 10. 29, for punishment, "*timoria*", by saying that *kolasis* is disciplinary, referring to the correction of the offender, whilst *timoria* is penal, referring to the satisfaction of the judge. *Kolasis* is used only in three other instances, these being:

2 Pet. 2. 9 "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the ungodly unto the day of judgment to be *punished*".

Acts 4. 22 "Finding nothing how they might *punish* them".

1 John 4. 18 "Perfect love casteth out fear; for fear hath *torment*" (has a curbing or restraining influence).

"*Timoria*" is used only in Heb. 10. 29 "Of how much sorer *punishment* shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God . . ." In this verse the type of punishment carries with it the thought of penal infliction, whereas in the former scripture it is the fact that the evil-doer is put under restraint so that his evil doing is suppressed that is in view. It is often urged that since "*kolasis*" does carry the thought of disciplinary correction equally with that of restraint or cutting off, it is equally logical to argue that the "everlasting punishment" of Matt. 25. 46 is, not "age-enduring cutting-off", but "age-enduring correction", and might very well refer to the "resurrection into judgment" of the Millennial Age itself (John 5). This suggestion is logical, but the term is used so infrequently in the New Testament

that it does not seem wise to build too much upon its strict dictionary meaning when there are so few instances from which to discern in what sense the New Testament speakers and writers actually used it. It is better in such cases to interpret the word in the light of the context and adopt the particular shade of meaning which best fits that context. In verse 41 these same "goats" have addressed to them the words "*Depart from me, ye cursed (separated or cut-off ones) into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*". Rev. 20. 10-15 shows that this is the same thing as the "Second Death", the final end of sinners and of all that proves to be incapable of reconciliation with God and amenable to the laws of His creation. Nowhere does the Scripture warrant the thought that those who come forth to the disciplinary judgment of the Millennial Age are regarded by Jesus as "cursed"; rather are they the "other sheep" of His fold which are eventually to be brought within the circle of the Father's family, if they will. The "cursed" must surely be those who reject all endeavours for their elevation to human perfection, and dying in their sin, become as though they had never been (Psa. 37. 10). We may consider ourselves justified therefore in interpreting this text "everlasting cutting-off" or "everlasting restraint" in the sense that those thus cut off are thereby permanently restrained from continuing to mar God's creation with their sin. "*Aionian*" may mean everlasting in the sense of a long period of either definite or indefinite duration, or everlasting in the sense of being perpetual. A good example of both meanings appearing side by side in the same text is afforded by the Greek (Septuagint) version of Hab. 3. 6 where the prophet says "the everlasting (*aionian*) mountains were scattered, . . . his ways are *everlasting (aionian)*". The mountains are everlasting in a limited sense only; change and decay will remove them eventually even though the time be thousands or millions of years. God's ways are perpetual; they can never be removed. In this light the text is perfectly logical and in harmony with Jesus' teaching. The one class go into everlasting life, the other into everlasting cutting-off; as Jesus said in another place "He that hath the Son hath life: but he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him".



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

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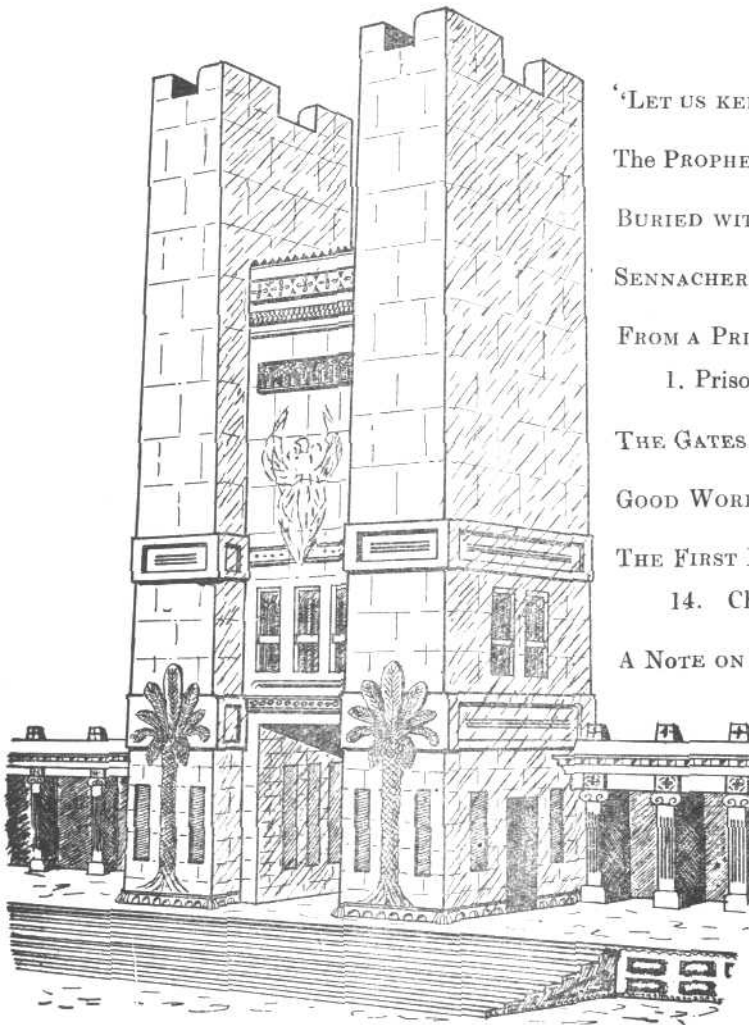
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CONTENTS

'LET US KEEP THE FEAST"	27
THE PROPHET AND THE LION	29
BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM	31
SENNACHERIB IN PROPHECY	33
FROM A PRISON CELL	
1. Prisoner for Christ	37
THE GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS	38
GOOD WORKS	42
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
14. Ch. 3. 9-13	44
A NOTE ON ISA. 52.10	48

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

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

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Secretary & Treasurer: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow) Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Welling)

BOOK REVIEW

"The Misread Record — the Deluge and its Cause"
(Prof. I. N. Vail) 88 pp. Stiff card cover. \$2.00.

This is a new edition of the original work by Prof. Vail first published more than half a century ago in a shortened form under the above title and on a more comprehensive scale encaptioned "The Earth's Annular System". Both works propounded the "Valian Theory" of annular rings surrounding the primitive earth, the final one, of water, reaching the surface of the planet after the appearance of man and resulting in the Deluge of Noah's day. This hypothesis as the cause of the Flood is familiar to many readers of the "Monthly". The book adduces a considerable amount of evidence from the traditions and mythologies of ancient nations in support of the thesis.

The production is of considerable interest for its content and historical value—Prof. Vail's works are long since out of print—although the price of two dollars for a card covered book of less than a hundred pages, especially in view of the recent devaluation, may limit its appeal in this country. The book may be obtained direct from the publishers, Health Research, 70 Lafayette Street, Mokelumne Hill, Calif. 95245, U.S.A.

New booklets

The short series published during 1967 under the caption "Three Stories of Salvation" is now available as a 24-page booklet entitled "Shepherd of Salvation", comprising dissertations on three incidents in our Lord's life and reflections upon His ministry to those who came in contact with Him. This booklet will be useful for sending to Christian friends, especially to "shut-ins", in correspondence and so forth. Supplied in packets of 6 copies for 3/6 (50c) post free.

The more comprehensive treatise on "Jacob's Trouble", concluded in our last issue, is now ready in a quarto size 32-page book in stiff card cover, complete with maps as appearing in the "Monthly" at 1/6 (25c) each or 5 for 7/- (one dollar) post free. This production will appeal to those interested in the prophetic Scriptures and some who have read the instalments in recent issues may appreciate this opportunity of having the entire treatise in convenient form.

PILGRIM MINISTRY

The appointments here listed are informally sponsored and the B.F.U. is in no way responsible. Correspondence and enquiries should be addressed to Bro. J. Thompson, 15 Argyle Street, Bury, Lancs. Any Bible class or study circle may be included in the plans by arrangement.

F. MUSK

March 21 Middlesbrough
April 4 Sheffield

J. D. PARKER

March 5 Greenford
6 Welling
15 Downham Market
16 Ipswich
17 Hitchin
April 7 Parkstone
23 Windsor
30 Luton

E. G. ROBERTS

April 10 Holmes Chapel
19 Gloucester

Gone from us

—:—

Sis. A. Bainbridge (Manchester)
Sis. F. Carter (Bury)
Bro. E. Gronau (N.Y. U.S.A.)
Bro. C. Trott (Cheltenham, late Windsor)
Sis. E. Walton (Bury)

—:—

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

BIBLE STUDENTS BROADSHEET

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

No. 4 MARCH, 1968

This broadsheet is published from time to time, as necessary, to give information on matters of interest to Bible Students particularly in Great Britain. The B.F.U. has no responsibility for any item mentioned herein apart from those under its own name, and brethren are desired to write to the appropriate address for the item concerned in every case.

THE MEMORIAL

The date upon which the Memorial will be celebrated this year is Thursday, April 11th, after 6.0 p.m. Groups of brethren all over the world will be gathered at this time to remember together the central fact of our faith.

COMING CONVENTIONS

WARRINGTON — Easter, April 13-15.

The Warrington friends are proposing to hold their usual Easter Convention in the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington. Details can be obtained from Bro. F. B. Quennell, 43 Ackers Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Lancs.

MANCHESTER — Sat. & Sun., May 11-12.

A gathering in the Registry Offices Board Room, All-Saints, Manchester. Programmes and details from Bro. H. Chrimes, 2 Cheam Road, Timperley, Altrincham, Ches. A warm welcome to all.

LEICESTER — Sat.-Sun., June 1-2.

The Midlands friends are planning the usual Whitsun Convention at Leicester. Details are not yet fixed but will be sent when ready on request lodged with Bro. J. Clarke, 74 Cromwell Road, Rugby.

PORTRUSH — Whitsun, Sat.-Mon., June 1-3.

The Northern Ireland friends have arranged the usual Convention at Port-na-Glas, Portrush and a warm welcome is extended to all. A baptismal service will be arranged if necessary. Programmes and details from Bro. T. R. Lang, 31 Hawthorn Terrace, Londonderry, N. Ireland or from Miss F. J. Stinson, Port-na-Glas Hotel, Portrush, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland.

MARANATHA CONFERENCE

This will be held over the period August 3 to 10 at "High Leigh", Hoddesdon, Herts, as on previous occasions and a warm welcome is extended to all who can attend for the whole or part of the time. Details from Bro. F. B. Quennell, 43 Ackers Road, Stockton Heath, Warrington, Lancs.

LONDON — Conway Hall, Aug. 31 - Sept. 2.

The usual Convention will be held (D.V.) at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1 over the Bank Holiday period. The sponsoring classes extend a warm invitation to all to join in fellowship on this occasion. A baptismal service will be arranged if necessary. All details from Secretary, Bro. D. Walton, "Connaks Quay," Shire Lane, Chorleywood, Herts.

VISITORS FROM U.S.A.

It is expected that Bro. A. L. Muir will spend the summer in this country, arriving in mid-May and staying until early September, and during this time will be available to visit classes and brethren where desired. Similarly Bro. L. Iannaccone, well known among the U.S.A. brethren, will be here during June and July and will also be able to make some visits. All plans for both these brethren are being made by Bro. Gordon Chilvers, "Bethany", Moorwood, Chapel End, Nuneaton, to whom requests for visits should be addressed.

BRITISH PILGRIM SERVICE

The result of the pilgrim visits arranged during 1967 was so encouraging and the brethren generally so appreciative of the effort that plans are now being made to continue through 1968. In order to give this service the attention it needs the correspondence and planning is being handled by Bro. J. Thompson, 15 Argyle Street, Bury, Lancs. All requests for visits, whether to classes or individuals, and all gifts toward the expenses of the work, should be sent direct to Bro. Thompson. It is hoped and expected that this arrangement will be for the benefit of the brethren and it is trusted that the Master's blessing will be upon the effort.

FREE BOOKLETS

The following are available from the Pastoral Bible Institute (British address, Mr. C. R. Smith, Ellesborough House, Butlers Cross, Aylesbury, Bucks.).

Place of Israel in the Plan of God
The ABC of Bible Prophecy
After Death the Judgment
Parables of the Kingdom
What say the Scriptures about Hell?
Is Israel emerging from Hell?
Has Judgment Day begun?
Are Wars to cease?
The coming World Potentate
Beliefs that matter
Elias shall first come
If a man die, shall he live again?
Our Lord's Return
What is the Soul?
Why does God permit Evil?
Great world changes long foretold
Israel and the Middle East

B.F.U. FREE LITERATURE

The following pamphlets are available in small quantities on the same terms as the "Bible Study Monthly", i.e. free of charge but gifts toward the cost of maintaining supplies sincerely appreciated.

- No. 31 The Bible — the Book for To-day
- 32 World Conversion — When?
- 33 The Divine Permission of Evil
- 34 Everlasting Punishment
- 35 Conversion in the After-life
- 36 The Resurrection of the Dead
- 37 The Second Advent — its Nature and Purpose

B.F.U. PUBLICATIONS

All prices include postage.

THE MISSION OF JONAH. A complete exposition of the Book of Jonah in semi-narrative form. 80pp. Cloth 5/6 (75c).

* * *

These three booklets 6 for 3/6 (50c) assorted as desired.

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN. Four short stories of the resurrection, describing Millennial conditions and the call to conversion. 22pp.

THE CUP OF OUR LORD. An encouraging devotional treatise on our Lord's experience. 16pp.

SHEPHERD OF SALVATION. Discourses on three incidents in the life of Jesus. 24pp.

* * *

All booklets below are 1/6 (25c) each, 5 for 7/- (\$1.00) assorted as desired.

THE MILLENNIAL GOSPEL OF JESUS. A survey of New Testament teaching regarding the Millennium and the hope for mankind. 40pp.

THE TRAGEDY OF SAMSON. The story of Samson's life, his failures and ultimate conversion. 52pp.

THE TOWER OF BABEL. History of the Tower from its building in the days of Nimrod to its end under Alexander the Great as revealed by modern research. 52pp.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM. Scriptural teaching on baptism and its real import in symbol. Useful in discussions. 32pp.

THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. An examination of the various kinds of Bible prophecy and the principles upon which their interpretation should rest. 52pp.

OBADIAH THE MESSENGER OF JUDGMENT. An exposition of the prophecy of Obadiah. 52pp.

JACOB'S TROUBLE. 32pp quarto size. Prophetic study on the Gog and Magog invasion in Ezekiel 38/39. 1/6 (25c) each, 5 for 7/- (\$1.00).

* * *

Complete set of above eleven titles 15/- (\$2.00).

B.F.U. FILM-SLIDE LOANING LIBRARY

Sets of Scriptural 2" transparencies with commentary are available on loan on same terms as the "Monthly", i.e., free of charge except that we ask for postage both ways to be paid. Gifts toward the initial cost of these transparencies, which is high, will also be sincerely appreciated. Requests should be sent to Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent from whom list of sets can be obtained.

THE BENEVOLENT FUND

For many years this Fund has been in the care of Bros. G. A. Ford and E. Allbon, the latter acting as Secretary-Treasurer and dealing with all correspondence. Consequent upon the passing of Bro. Allbon new arrangements have become necessary. Bro. Ford relinquishes his responsibility and the Benevolent Fund is now in the care of three brethren, to wit, Bros. John Shepherd (Bradford), John Thompson (Bury) and David Walton (London). These brothers will endeavour to conduct the Fund in precisely the same fashion as in the past. Correspondence, gifts and notification of cases of need should be sent to Mr. J. Shepherd, 11 Lynwood Close, Birkenshaw, Bradford, Yorks.

TAPE RECORDINGS

A number of sources from which tape recordings may be obtained on loan are available, and these are listed below for the convenience of brethren who would appreciate them. Lists of tapes available can be obtained from these addresses; it will be appreciated if borrowers will meet the cost of postage on tapes both ways.

BRO. V. McILVEEN, 429 Donegall Road, Belfast 12, N. Ireland.

A large selection of discourses by many British and American brethren. A list is available on request.

BRO. D. SUTCLIFFE, 8 Marlingdene Close, Hampton, Middlesex.

Discourses given mainly at Forest Gate and Conway Hall conventions.

SOME USEFUL ADDRESSES

BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION. 11 Lyncroft Gardens, Hounslow, Middlesex, Eng.

For "Bible Study Monthly" and associated literature.

BEREAN BIBLE INSTITUTE. 34 Ermington Place, Kew E 4. Melbourne, Vic., Australia.

For "Peoples Paper".

BEREAN BIBLE STUDENTS CHURCH OF CICERO, 5930 West 28th St., Cicero, Ill. 60650, U.S.A. (for newsletter).

BIBLE STUDENTS' BENEVOLENT SERVICE. Mr. J. Shepherd, 11 Lynwood Close, Birkenshaw, Bradford, Yorks.

BIBLE STUDENTS COUNCIL (NORTH-WEST) Mr G. B. Chapman, 9 Salisbury Ave., West Kirby, Ches.

BIBLE STUDENTS HYMNAL. Mr. Geo. Chilvers, The Haven, Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton. (for hymnal 2/6 words 15/- music).

BRITISH PILGRIM SERVICE. Mr. J. Thompson, 15 Argyle Street, Bury, Lancs.

DAWN. The Dawn, 70 Station Rd, Gidea Park, Essex (For "The Dawn").

MARANATHA. BCM/Maranatha, Bloomsbury, London, W.C.1.

For "Maranatha" and associated Conference.

MIDLANDS GROUP BIBLE STUDENTS

Mr. J. Clarke, 74 Cromwell Road, Rugby.

MIDLANDS NEWSLETTER. Mr. Gordon Chilvers, "Bethany", Moorwood, Chapel End, Nuneaton.

PASTORAL BIBLE INSTITUTE

P.O. Box 15031, Chouteau Station, St. Louis, Mo. 63110, U.S.A.

British agent: Mr. C. R. Smith, Ellesborough House, Butlers Cross, Aylesbury, Bucks.

(For the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom").

"LET US KEEP THE FEAST"

Reflections
for to-day

The Last Supper was not the same thing as the Passover, although the ceremony and words used by Jesus on that occasion and which have given the inspiration for two thousand years of Christian celebration must have followed close upon, and indeed were probably intermingled with, the disciples keeping of the Passover according to Mosaic law. It is not so much that the one ceremony was distinct from the other in point of time and sequence as that it was distinct in purpose. The Passover was a ceremony of tradition, looking back to a deliverance of fourteen centuries past; the Last Supper was the inaugural ceremony of a new fellowship, looking forward to a greater deliverance which was still two thousand years in the future. The one was a remembrance of the past, the other a pledge of the future.

We therefore, as we come together again as we have done, year by year, need to balance the future with the past. When Jesus said "This do in remembrance of Me" He surely meant us to remember, not only His life on earth and death on the Cross, but also His promised coming again in the glory of His Kingdom and His *apokulupsis* to all men when that Kingdom is established in power. Ours is not a faith which dwells forever on the things of the past, however soul-stirring and inspiring they may be, however mighty in Divine power for the furtherance of God's Plan. It is a faith that looks forward to the future, that beholds with clear, undimmed eyes those glories that shall be when the Son of Man has fully come in the power of His Kingdom, and all tribes and nations have gathered before Him to learn of the pure language that He will turn unto them, that they may all call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent. It is *that* coming which we have in mind as we raise the cup to our lips and repeat together "Till He come!"

There were eleven gathered with Him in that upper room. The others were not there—those who, beside the apostles, were constant attendants upon our Lord during His ministry. The three Marys, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Mark, were not there. Neither were Mary and Martha of Bethany, nor Joanna nor Salome. Neither was Lazarus, nor those secret disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus. The "five

hundred brethren" to whom the Lord showed Himself after His resurrection were elsewhere, all unconscious of the ceremony that was being enacted for the first time and which they themselves would repeat, year by year continually, for the rest of their lives. It was in the truest sense of the word a family gathering, and it marked the institution of a new family, the Christian family, a family that was to hold together and endure, through centuries of suffering and persecution, until our own day; yea, and endures still. Despite all our misunderstandings, our difficulties, our disappointments and our disillusionments, we remain a family still, and those who have grasped this truth and practice it in their relations with the brethren are the ones who alone have remained truly faithful to the cause of Christ.

It was appropriate therefore that the institution of the Christian family should be marked by a ceremonial which, whatever else it was intended to symbolise, did in fact bring home to the disciples one vivid realisation. They were to eat bread in the presence of their host! That meant a great deal more to those men in that day than ever it means to Western Europeans to-day. From time immemorial—yea, and even until to-day in the Arabian deserts—to eat bread in a man's house or in his tent in the land of the sons of Abraham meant that the host was forever bound to accept the eater as one of his family, even to the extent of sacrificing his own life if needs be in the defence of his guest. It was no idle word that Jesus uttered when He said "This is my body, broken for you. Take, eat". By that action He was assuring them, in symbol, that, having partaken of bread at His hands, they were forever under His protection and members of His family. "*Greater love hath no man than this;*" said Jesus, "*that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" He knew full well that He must lay down His own life on behalf of those who had eaten bread with Him, and in the earnestness of His communion with the Father He prayed that these who by this ceremonial eating of bread with Him had signified their desire to be of His family forevermore might be as one family whilst still in the flesh, "*that they may be one, as we are one*". We need to reflect here that to be one body in heaven means to be one

family on earth; the unity for which our Lord prayed is not one to be achieved as it were instantaneously upon our "change" to spiritual conditions and our entrance upon heavenly glory, but it is to be attained here and now in our fellowship together and our common pilgrim walk toward the Holy City. *"The bread which we break,"* says Paul in 1 Cor. 10. 16 *"is it not the communion—common union—'of the body of Christ?'"* It is only as we enter into the real meaning of the term "communion of saints" that we can begin to perceive the basis of that fellowship which shall be our inheritance beyond the Vail but for which we must be prepared here and now if we are ever to inherit it.

The significance of the bread, then, to us, is His life given for us, our acceptance into His family, binding us together in one body. If we take the symbol to ourselves and partake of the broken bread, we must identify ourselves with that position.

But the eleven were to be initiated into an understanding even deeper than that. Not only were they to enter into a passive relationship as members of the Christ family but they were also to enter into an active partnership as blood-brothers with Jesus Christ Himself. He called them, not only to accept of His hospitality and sacrifice upon their behalf, but also to become associated with Him in a work of service which should make them for all time *"joint-heirs with Christ—if so be that we suffer (endure) with Him, that we may also be glorified together"*. And so He bade them drink of the wine which was His blood.

The assimilating of blood meant the acquiring of blood relationship to the donor, to these men of the Eastern world. Two Bedouin Arabs, resolved to become blood-brothers to each other, would each open a vein in his wrist and the two together would allow their blood to mingle. From henceforth they were blood-brothers—each had the other's blood

run in his veins. The drinking of blood, too, meant the acquiring of life from another. *"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you,"* said Jesus. Hence this symbol of the cup involved a second and deeper obligation, one more personal between each believer and his Lord. It implied eternal association together in as close a sense as two brothers are together. It implied a companionship with the beloved partner in all things, in life or in death. So if Jesus spent His life in serving mankind and doing good to all, so do we. If Jesus forsook earthly ambitions and aims in order to further the interests of God's Kingdom, then so should we. If Jesus went into death at the hands of wicked men rather than swerve one iota from the course which Divine wisdom had planned for Him, then we should be ready to do the same. *"Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

The symbol of the cup, then, is that of a voluntary sharing with Him in all that He does, both in the service of mankind now, limited in scope and power though it must be, and in the infinitely wider sphere of Millennial work when that Age shall have come. *"Are ye able,"* asked our Lord of some who desired to reign with Him, *"to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?"* "Lord, we are able," was the confident reply. They knew not what they said. So, often, in our confidence, we say the same thing and understand the implication of what we say as little as did those disciples. May we have grace and sincerity to enter more deeply into the spirit of these things, and, approaching the holy table with full awareness of our responsibility and privilege, let us *"keep the feast . . . with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"*.

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

There is such a thing as healthy emotion. Emotion often plays a vital part in conversion. When that great Methodist layman, Lord Rochester, spoke to one of my young people's rallies in the Central Hall, Westminster, he said: "Do not despise or stifle your emotions; they often play a vital part in spiritual things. Remember, many of our big ships can only go in and out of port at high tide". Lord Rochester was right.

THE PROPHET AND THE LION

An examination
of 1 Kings 13

A strange story, this, of the man of God who denounced King Jeroboam for apostasy, and afterwards on account of an apparently trivial breach of instructions was waylaid and slain by a lion in punishment. Some have asked if God is really so vindictive as the story, on the surface, would appear to indicate.

The scene is set almost immediately after the separation of the Ten Tribes and the Two Tribes consequent upon the death of Solomon, and the account is recorded in 1 Kings 13. Jeroboam had just become the first king of the newly constituted Ten Tribe nation, henceforward to be known as Israel, and had been told by Ahijah the prophet that if he and his people remained faithful to the Lord God of Israel their prosperity was assured. Notwithstanding this he had at once instituted what amounted to idolatrous worship and was actually engaged in personally officiating at the pagan altar when the man of God, sent from Judah for the purpose, publicly reprovved him. Jeroboam gave orders that the prophet be seized for punishment and at once the Lord gave a sign. The altar was riven from top to bottom and Jeroboam's arm paralysed so that he could not move it. In sudden terror the king begged that his opponent would intercede with the Lord for him. His request granted, the prayer was answered and the king's arm made whole. Impressed with the miracle, and not a little subdued, Jeroboam invited the man of God to accept his hospitality and a fitting reward, but this the prophet declined, saying that he had been instructed neither to eat nor drink in the pagan land or to tarry for any reason, but to return home directly his mission was accomplished.

So far so good. He set out on the way to Judah, but before passing out of Jeroboam's domains sat down to rest under a terebinth tree. There he was found by an "old prophet" who in his turn invited him to accept the hospitality of his home. He gave the same reply as to Jeroboam, but the old prophet went further. He told the man of God that he also was a prophet of God and that an angel of the Lord had commissioned him to bring the traveller into his house and insist on his sharing a meal. "But" says the narrator "he lied unto him". Willing to believe the story, the traveller gave way and returned with the old prophet. Whilst at table, the Spirit of

the Lord came upon his host and under that influence he told the traveller that because he had disobeyed the commandment of God he would meet his death in a strange land. The narrative goes on to describe how, upon resuming his journey, he was attacked and killed by a lion, and his body buried in the old prophet's own sepulchre, with an expression of grief on the part of the latter and a declaration that the dead man's prediction concerning the fate of the nation would surely come to pass.

As related, the whole story seems so pointless, and the fate of its central character seemingly so unnecessarily severe, that the reason for its inclusion in the record might well be queried. The man was so evidently deceived by the old prophet of Bethel that the infliction of the death penalty seems out of all proportion to the crime. It is evident that a closer scrutiny of motives and implications hidden in the story is necessary.

The man of God was sent into an apostate land, to utter his message and depart, doing nothing whilst in its borders that would savour of participation in, or toleration of, its apostasy. Jeroboam had set up images of the golden calf, saying as did his forebears in the days of the Exodus "*behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*" (1 Kings 12. 28). No true-hearted worshipper of God could tolerate or condone that blasphemy and in fact most of the priests and Levites and prophets among the Ten Tribes had left and gone into Judah. The Lord's word had been clear and explicit; he was neither to eat bread nor drink water with anyone in the land and he was not to linger or turn back whilst within its frontiers. So far as the prime object of his mission was concerned he had obeyed, flatly refusing Jeroboam's invitation and immediately setting out for home.

Perhaps his sitting down to rest under the terebinth tree, still in alien territory, was his first mistake. There was really no need for him to rest, or to eat, at all. Bethel is only twelve miles north of Jerusalem; from the hastily set up frontier between the two kingdoms he would only have about seven or eight miles walking to make the round trip. He could have been back in Judah within three hours of setting out had he been as

zealous as he should have been to leave the land defiled by apostasy. He chose instead to take his ease under the tree and there the old prophet found him.

One might ask what this old prophet, if indeed he was a prophet of the Lord, was doing in Bethel, the centre of the apostasy? Why had he not accompanied his probably more God-fearing fellows to Judah? It is possible that he had compromised his conscience to the extent of tolerating the false worship that had been instituted and had no intention of leaving home. The fact that he deliberately lied to the traveller shews that in any case he was not a very good prophet. *For what purpose did he thus seek to persuade the other to abandon his principles?* The most logical suggestion is that he sought to obtain some concession, some outward sign from the traveller that a basis of fellowship or agreement might be possible between the rival faiths. It must not be forgotten that the sharing of a meal together meant a great deal in the East in those days, much more than a similar proceeding amongst us today. It bound the participants together in a tie of friendship and even of brotherhood. It implied that neither would seek to injure the other and the two would make common cause against any external threat to either. For the traveller to eat bread in the house of any of the apostates meant that he was prepared to join with them in fellowship and make common cause with them. This is what the traveller did, and in so doing he greatly mitigated the effect of the message he had just delivered and the judgments of which he had been the agent. The people around might well consider that their position in the sight of God was by no means so serious as had at first been suggested, if His messenger of condemnation was prepared to eat bread in one of their houses.

He did this thing in the assurance that an angel of God had told the old prophet the former command was rescinded. It seems very probable that the traveller wanted to believe it. As an instructed messenger of God he should have known better than to think that the Lord would change His mind after giving explicit instructions. He ought to have reasoned that even if the Lord had so decided, He was not likely to pass on His revised commands at third hand through a discredited prophet who was himself an apostate, when the original mandate had come direct to the traveller from God Himself. The whole setting of this part of the story seems clearly to

indicate that he was only too willing to accept the explanation and to go with the old prophet, heedless of his original very definite instructions.

It may seem strange that after all this the Lord should in fact speak through this treacherous old prophet. The account says that *"the word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back"*. The Divine sentence was that because he had disobeyed, *"thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers"*. It is not unusual, though, for the word of the Lord to be spoken by the mouth of an unworthy instrument. Balaam could well have been one such case. This might well be an instance where the man was impelled by the Divine Spirit to utter words despite his own volition and even perhaps against his will. The point should not be missed here that the traveller himself, because of disobedience, or more likely because of an inward unfaithful condition of heart which had now led him to this disobedience, had severed the link between himself and God, so that God had departed from him.

The meal ended, the traveller set forth again, riding upon an ass, the gift of which he had accepted from the apostate. He had only four miles or so to go but he must needs arrive in Judah with visible evidence of having accepted a present from the "people of the land". But he did not get so far. A short way out of Bethel *"a lion met him in the way and slew him"*. Speculation as to whether the Lord actually sent the lion or the account merely records an incident which was all too common in those days and this was an accidental encounter, is rather beside the point, for this, being the focus of the story, must enshrine the principle which its preservation in the Old Testament is intended to illustrate.

That principle is this. Whilst the prophet was faithfully discharging his duty to God in circumstances involving danger—not only from lions but from the wrath of King Jeroboam—he was under Divine protection. When he became faithless he lost that protection and must take his chance. From the moment he broke bread in the apostate's house he lost God, and when the lion met him he had no defence. So with Israel, the nation over whom Jeroboam was at that moment king. If they continued faithful, Divine protection was guaranteed; if they apostasised they were at the mercy of their enemies, and eventually their enemies would destroy them—as in fact they did do some two centuries later. That was the object lesson which the untimely

death of this unfortunate messenger presented to the spectators. That, perhaps, is why the story was recorded and has been preserved through the centuries.

The old prophet who had been the cause of the happening buried the dead man in his own tomb, and mourned him, and gave instructions that he himself should be laid to rest beside him when his own time should come. Does this indicate a rather tardy repentance for the part he had played? Did this Divine judgment upon the traveller awaken him to a sense of his own false position before God? It might well have been so. The story closes with his admonition to his own sons declaring that the word of the Lord against the apostate nation would surely come to pass, so that he seems to have changed his attitude considerably.

The event must have produced an impression. Three and a half centuries later, long after the blow had fallen and the Ten Tribes taken into captivity, good king Josiah of Judah, coming into Bethel, found a monument by the wayside. Enquiring its significance he was told that it marked the grave of the man of God who had prophesied the downfall of Israel and had been slain by the lion for his own disobedience (2 Kings 23. 16-18). That monument, then, must have stood

near Bethel, a silent witness to the Divine condemnation, during the entire history of the Ten Tribe kingdom from the time of its organisation under Jeroboam to the day that Shalmaneser of Assyria carried them all away captive. It remained, in the deserted land for more than another century at least, to the time of Josiah.

So, even in his death, the man of God was a witness to the Ten Tribes, through all their national history, of the fate they would incur by continued apostasy. But they did not heed, and so God executed judgment.

In later days the same principle holds good. "Separate yourselves from the people of the land" was the call in Old Testament times. Christians of this Age are under the same obligation. "What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" asks St. Paul in 2 Cor. 6. 15-18 "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you . . . saith the Lord God Almighty". It is as necessary today as it was in the days of Jeroboam to be positive and definite in our stand for the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven and to admit no compromise that would appear to the unbeliever to be condonation of his unbelief.

BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM

Comment on
Rom. 6, 4

The choice of fitting words by the Apostle, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to describe the experiences involved in the Christian life is very precise and accurate. It is wonderful to us to find how much of vital truth, and of religious experience can be compressed into a single word.

In this respect let us take note of the first word quoted at the head of our study—"Buried". Who among us has not witnessed the little cortege slowly wending its way to some selected spot, at which the earth has been opened in readiness, to lay away the lifeless remains of some beloved one whose torch of life has been extinguished. The angel of Death has swept by, and one who had been full of activity and vitality has fallen a victim to the sweep of his ruthless scythe, and now lies inert and motionless. And while we have watched, the little farewell ceremony has progressed, and the officiating minister and the bereaved mourners have laid "earth to

earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust", and there they have left the precious burden, as with weeping eyes, and sorrowing hearts they have turned away from the place of repose, and returned to the habitation which will know the loved one no more, till the voice of the Son of God calls all the waiting dead from their long silent sleep. And then, after the mourners have moved away, other hands have returned the earth to the cavity, and have hidden from sight all that was left of the dear-departed, and the earth has then received to her bosom that which she had hitherto given, for dust we are, and unto dust shall we return.

Burial! entombment! internment! sepulchre! the close of a career; the end of an existence! a sleep—and a forgetting. The whole range of thought is taken by the Spirit of God to describe that act of full surrender of all that one is, of all that one has, and of all that one hopes for, to the claims of the sover-

eign Will of God. No matter how strong and directive the will of the deceased had been it directs no longer now. Nor does it matter how brilliant the mind and intellect had been, its glory is now departed. Nor does it matter how strong the affections and love had been, they will not move the lifeless form again. They are as lights that have become extinguished, and have left no trace behind.

How impressive and full of meaning, also, is the symbolic ceremony whereby the surrender of the Christian's life is pictured forth. Of all the four main elements of nature—earth, air, fire, and water,—how appropriate is the submergence in water, to depict the complete and entire burial into the Will of God. All the days of our life we are immersed in Air—the atmosphere surrounds and envelops us always, everywhere,—and we could not live were it otherwise. Whatever other lessons it may teach us, our immersion in air does not depict for us a willing voluntary immersion, and for that reason comes short of what is required to teach consecration. Submergence into a flame of fire could overwhelm and envelop us fully but it would go too far in that it would leave nothing to represent the entrance of the New Creature into newness of life. Some have come forth after an entombment in the earth, but there would be much danger and in-commodation about such a practice, if used as a symbol of Baptism. All things considered, the descent and plunge into the watery sepulchre, with waters above, around, and beneath seems to be the most fitting symbol to represent complete submergence into the Will of God.

And suitable and fitting as is the symbol, it is not one whit more emphatic and definite than the great reality which it depicts. For it means, by a process of agreement and covenant, all that is seen every day of our life, when some member of our earthly kith and kin comes to the gates of the dark valley. In the Divine purposes, it means the termination of a life—not merely of a mode of life or a way of living; something very much more

than that. Consecration does not merely mean the turning over of a "new leaf", and the beginning of a different clean page. If that were all, the same old book is still retained and though the page is new, the book is still the same—the "identity" is still the same. "Burial" with Him means the cessation of the identity; the dissolution of the personality which hitherto had lived and functioned: and in God's sight the dissolution of the identity is just as complete when made by covenant, as when made by death, for when we go down into the waters of baptism it is to depict that "We"—our "self"—have gone down into the Divine sepulchre for ever. We are swallowed up into His Will and His Purpose, and there is nothing left for any other purpose. By the terms of the covenant the old will and mind and affections are dead; and if God should call upon us at any moment to consummate our existence in His service, we have no cause of complaint open to us.

But this burial is a prelude to a new life—a New Creature life—a resurrection life—a life of great possibilities, a life in association with Jesus, in heavenly exaltation and glory. From out of this covenanted tomb the flowers of immortality will spring, if so be that the Will of God is not thwarted and hindered by the perversity of the members of the human body which has to serve the New Creature till a better one is found for it.

Thus in going down in to the symbolic waters of baptism (down into the waters of God's Will) we go down into death and dissolution as men, but when we come up therefore, we arise as a New Creation, a new being, with hopes thenceforth of a spiritual existence, blossoming forth into immortality.

What a wonderful height and depth, length and breadth of Divine truth, and Christian experience, therefore, is crystallized and condensed into this graphic word "Buried".

May we see to it with all our hearts, that we do appreciate the privilege of being "Buried with Him in baptism".

The people who are lonely in this world are those who are always looking for something to come to them; they hope for pleasant adventures; they exact much from their friends and from their family, and they are never satisfied. But the happy men and women are those who never think to demand for themselves—who give and give again, and find joy whenever they find opportunity to give joy.

We may have an intellectual appreciation of God and His attributes, but it is only as we develop a heart reliance upon Him and His word, resulting from an experience of that sonship which is ours through vital union with Christ, that we can find that real peace which came to Jesus whilst He was bearing the greatest burden that man was ever called upon to bear.

SENNACHERIB IN PROPHECY

Coming events
prefigured in
past history

Recognition of the historical basis upon which most Old Testament prophecies of the "end of the Age" are framed is very necessary to their correct interpretation. It is a truism that history repeats itself; throughout the Bible story similar causes produce similar effects; the principles and forces which will eventually lead the world into the final conflict have already, on a smaller scale and in a more limited area, resulted in similar conflicts in the past. Those events, recorded in Biblical history, have been used by the prophets as models on which to base their pen pictures of the things that shall be hereafter "*That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God inquires into that which follows after*" said Solomon (Ecc. 3. 15). In those words he enshrined this principle. The visions of the prophets are best interpreted by discerning the model, and realising that it is by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the prophet has used a particular historical event as background to his vision. On that basis similar aspects to those contained within that event, but on a greater scale, can be looked for in the fulfilment.

One of the most noteworthy examples of this principle in prophecy is the use made by Daniel and Zechariah of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah in the days of Hezekiah. That invasion is famous in Old Testament history on account of its sequel; Hezekiah and his adviser, the statesman-prophet Isaiah, led the people of Jerusalem in reliance upon God for deliverance, and the Assyrian army was miraculously destroyed in the night and the threat lifted. This one prominent feature of the event is analogous to the Divine deliverance of the people of God in the end of this Age but it is when the details of Daniel's and Zechariah's visions are compared with the details of Sennacherib's invasion that the force of the correspondency becomes obvious and clues to the interpretation of the prophecies are offered.

"Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah" says Isaiah (ch. 36. 1) "*that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them*". This was the start of the campaign; Isa. 36 and 37, 2 Kings 18 and 2 Chron. 32 record the details. These narratives are confirmed and amplified by Sennacherib's own account, re-

corded on clay cylinders which have survived and now repose, one in the British Museum and one in America. Between the Biblical and the Assyrian records the story is fairly complete.

The real quarrel was between Assyria and Egypt, Judah at the time being allied with the latter. Sennacherib set out to subdue Egypt and Judah but first he had to secure his line of march by ensuring the loyalty of the Phoenician cities Tyre and Sidon on the seacoast, and the people of Syria. This he achieved by the simple expedient of siege and conquest. News of the ruthless invader spread rapidly through the land, and the kings of Edom, Moab and Ammon, in the south-east, hastened to the conqueror's camp with protestations of loyalty, in consequence of which these three nations escaped the horrors of warfare. The Assyrian king next proceeded along the Palestine coast, capturing the cities of the seaside plain, defeating the Egyptian army and laying siege to Lachish, the last important stronghold barring his road to Egypt. Whilst here he demanded tribute from Hezekiah as proof of allegiance, and Hezekiah complied. Sennacherib took a great deal of spoil—gold, silver, valuables of all kinds, and two hundred thousand captives, all of which he sent back to Assyria. Then news came to him of a fresh Egyptian attack and in his fury he sent one detachment against the Egyptians and with the other surrounded Jerusalem, calling upon Hezekiah to surrender the city. It was this second demand that Hezekiah laid before the Lord in the Temple and in consequence of which the Assyrian army investing Jerusalem was destroyed. Sennacherib called off his attack upon Egypt and with what was left of his forces in the country made his way back to Assyria, where his attention was urgently needed to deal with hostile action in Babylonia to the east and Armenia to the north. He came to a violent end, murdered by two of his sons.

Now the remarkable thing about this campaign is that it is almost completely mirrored by the prophetic vision of the latter part of Daniel's 11th chapter and certainly alluded to by Zechariah in his 14th chapter. It would seem as though the prophets were indicating that the events of the end of the Age are to bear a marked resemblance to the happenings

of this memorable campaign. No attempt to suggest an interpretation is to be made here but the correspondencies will be noted as an aid to the study and understanding of those chapters.

It is fairly obvious that Daniel 11 and 12 enshrines a synopsis of history, in rather veiled terms, from Daniel's own day to the introduction of the Messianic Kingdom. The latter event as the terminus is demanded by virtue of the fact that the resurrection of the dead is indicated in chapter 12. 2. Ignoring differences of thought as to the precise application of much of chapter 11 it is generally agreed that verse 36 introduces the final conflict at the Age's end under symbol of one usually known as the "wilful king". This part of the chapter, from verse 36 to the end, very accurately reflects Sennacherib's campaign but puts the fulfilment of the words into the future. Daniel, of course, wrote some hundred and sixty years after that campaign but he must have been very familiar with its details.

The description in verse 36 "*the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods*" is well suited to Sennacherib, who was one of the most boastful and arrogant kings of antiquity. His commander-in-chief's scornful words to the defenders of Jerusalem "*Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria . . . that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?*" (Isa. 36, 18) well illustrate his character. "*Let not thy God in whom thou trusteth, deceive thee saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria*" (Isa. 37, 10) was his last arrogant ultimatum before disaster came upon him. "*But in his place*" says Daniel in verse 38 "*shall he honour the god of fortresses*". Says one historian of Sennacherib "*Renowned over the earth in his days as the great destroyer, he knew no higher policy than force . . . lust of power, cruelty, pride and arrogance were developed in excess in his case*". Daniel goes on in verse 39 "*He shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain*". This is a true reflection of the Assyrian king's policy. Each country or city he conquered was placed under the control of a puppet ruler selected for his loyalty and under pledge of exacting and sending an annual tribute of goods and slaves to Nineveh. Sennacherib's destruction of Sidon at this time had the effect of diverting Phoenician commerce to Assyria; he controlled trade with Cyprus, and

his victories in Media and Babylonia brought the commercial activity of the east and the south into his hands. This "god of fortresses" of verse 38 was truly "*honoured with gold, and silver, and precious stones, and desirable things*".

Verse 40 introduces action. "*At the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him*". The campaign which ended in disaster was undertaken in consequence of the Egyptian threat to Assyrian expansion, and Sennacherib marched south to render Egypt powerless. "*The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over*". This well describes the Assyrian advance into Syria and Phoenicia; his progress was marked by complete and utter conquest and devastation. The one item not mentioned either in the Bible or the conqueror's own inscriptions is the use of ships. Assyria was an inland country and not accustomed to naval warfare. Sennacherib and his father Sargon, however, did make use of ships in their wars. Sargon had at his disposal sixty Phoenician galleys and eight thousand oarsmen for the siege of Tyre some twenty years earlier, and Sennacherib built a fleet for use in the Persian Gulf in his wars with the Elamites. It is quite likely therefore that part of his plan of attack upon Egypt involved the use of Phoenician ships.

"*He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many shall be overthrown, but these shall escape out of his hand, Edom and Moab and . . . Ammon*" (verse 41). Here is well depicted the invader's onward progress into the land of Israel and Judah proper, and its neighbour state, the confederacy of Philistine cities on the coast, Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Joppa. Sennacherib himself says of this entry into Judah and the many overthrown "*I besieged Hezekiah of Judah who had not submitted to my yoke and I captured forty-six of his fenced cities and innumerable villages . . . I drove into captivity two hundred thousand one hundred and fifty people, young and old, male and female, and horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep, counted as spoil. Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, I shut up in Jerusalem his royal city, and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from the city . . . He . . . sent tribute and to make submission with . . . gold . . . silver, precious stones . . . ivory couches, ivory chairs . . . ebonywood, boxwood and all kinds of valuable treasures, together with his daugh-*

ters, his wives and male and female musicians". He says nothing of his defeat and the destruction of his army; only of the spoil which by then was well on its way to Nineveh.

During these happenings and whilst Sennacherib was still dealing with the people of Sidon and Syria, three kings, Melech-ram of Edom, Chemosh-nadab of Moab, and Pedael of Ammon, hastened to him with tribute and protestations of loyalty, in consequence of which their lands were saved from invasion. This is a remarkable parallel to verse 41 in Daniel 11, for these were the only three to escape devastation and plunder.

This same boastful account of the spoil Sennacherib took just before his signal defeat seems to find an echo in the words of Zechariah. This prophet's 14th chapter commences by describing the gathering of all nations to besiege Jerusalem at the end of the Age, and says that the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravished, and half the city go into exile. The Lord does not deliver until these things have taken place. The likeness of this to Sennacherib's experience is significant. "*The city shall be taken*" says Zechariah. "Taken" here does not mean "captured" but rather "surrounded". It is a word meaning to enclose as in a net, derived from the snare or net used by fowlers. This is the very simile used by the Assyrian himself. "*Like a bird in a cage*" he says "*I shut him up in Jerusalem his royal city*". He never opened the cage. "*The houses rifled*", goes on Zechariah. The list of spoil, largely consisting of treasures from the Temple, according to 2 Kings 32, and obviously also from the houses of the well-to-do citizens, is a clear parallel to that. "*The women ravished*"; Sennacherib declares gloatingly that he took the daughters and wives of Hezekiah and sent them to Nineveh, evidently, as was the custom, to become inmates of his own harem, and the female musicians to be his slaves. For the rest of their lives these unfortunates were at the mercy of the Assyrians. "*And half of the city shall go forth into captivity*". This does not necessarily mean that exactly fifty per cent of the citizens are to suffer this fate; the word rendered "half" means primarily a portion separated, from the root word meaning "to divide". Whereas in the main a division into two portions is implied, quite a few instances in the Old Testament require three, four or more portions; all that need be stressed here is that part of the city will thus go forth. Since the background of Zech. 13 and 14 is the faith of

the people in God and salvation in consequence, it is a logical conclusion that those who "*go forth into captivity*" are destitute of that saving faith. This at any rate was the case in the days of Hezekiah. Although most of the people shared Hezekiah's and Isaiah's faith and obeyed the injunction to ignore the Assyrian threats (Isa. 36. 21), there was an element which did not have that faith and endeavoured to escape from the besieged city and trust for mercy to the besiegers—a trust which was sadly misplaced. A terse sentence in Sennacherib's account of the siege is eloquent enough; "*all who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off*". They shared the fate of the other captives who had already been sent to Nineveh. Then Zechariah comes to the climax. "*The residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations*". This is the climax which Sennacherib did not record in his account. The clay cylinders, which still exist for anyone to see, records the siege of Jerusalem, and how the Jewish king was shut up like a bird in a cage, but it does not say anything about the outcome, which was an unusual thing for Sennacherib—but then defeat, utter and overwhelming defeat, was also an unusual thing for him.

Daniel 11 is not so concerned with the activities around Jerusalem as with those on the larger country scene. Verses 42-43 say of the "King of the North" that he will prevail over the Egyptians, the Libyans and the Ethiopians and take great spoil of gold and silver and valuable treasures. This is true of Sennacherib. Egypt at the time was ruled by a powerful Ethiopian dynasty and the forces facing the Assyrian were from combined Egyptian and Ethiopian sources. (The Libyans were descended from the Egyptians and usually in active alliance with them). Sennacherib heavily defeated these forces twice, once before he besieged Jerusalem and again whilst the siege was proceeding. His own account lists the spoil he took after the capture and destruction of the city of Lachish, which left Egypt open and defenceless before him.

A strange and rather obscure word in verse 45 is illuminated by one of Sennacherib's boastful assertions. "*He shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain*" says Daniel. "*Palatial tents*" is the R.S.V. rendering; the word means the king's royal pavilion erected in the midst of his camp. The "*glorious holy*

mountain" is obviously in reference to the kingdom of Judah in the Promised Land and "between the seas" can only mean between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. Now Sennacherib's own account says that he did set his pavilion at Lachish where his main army was gathered, and Lachish was geographically between the two seas. He did, in fact, boast that he would set that pavilion inside Jerusalem and profane its palace gardens but that boast was unfulfilled. He planted his pavilion at Lachish in the arrogant belief that Hezekiah would be brought before him there as captive, to be dealt with as he dealt with all his defeated enemies; "yet" says Daniel "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him". His ornate pavilion was hurriedly taken down and packed for retreat; he himself, bereft of his army and perhaps with only a handful of personal attendants left to him, travelled the seven hundred miles back to Nineveh with the bitter knowledge of defeat in his heart, defeat at the hands of the God he had defied.

So far as Jerusalem and Judah was concerned, that was his end, for Sennacherib never returned. Whilst engaged on this campaign, tidings reached him of renewed rebellion in other parts of his far-flung empire, Babylon in the east and Armenia in the north. That is what Daniel said too. "Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy." Immediately following his retreat from Jerusalem he fought a campaign in Babylonia which left the countryside devastated. For two years after that he warred in Armenia, reducing the hardy mountain tribes of that land to subjection, and then

again another year against Babylon and Elam. Thirty thousand Babylonians and untold numbers of Armenian mountaineers were carried off into slavery, their towns burned and their lands devastated. Daniel's words fitly mirror what the Assyrian king had done.

Sennacherib lived nineteen years after his defeat at Jerusalem, of which ten were spent in unrelenting warfare against Babylon, Media, Elam, Armenia and Cilicia, but never again against Judah. In that time he more than earned his title of "the Destroyer". After his conquest of Cilicia he founded a city in that land which was to become famous in after years—Tarsus, the birthplace of the Apostle Paul. Then came the end; he was assassinated by two of his own sons, and a third son reigned in his stead. The might and the magnificence of Sennacherib, the fear and terror his name inspired amongst countless multitudes, vanished in an instant. Truly, as Daniel predicts of the greater oppressor whom he prefigured "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him".

Whatever be the interpretation of Daniel 11 and Zechariah 14 it would seem that the remarkable correspondence between those prophecies and this historical record of the seventh century B.C. is intended to provide a guide to the detailed nature of the events which will terminate this Age and lead on to the time when "Michael shall stand up" to use Daniel's phrase, or Zechariah's "then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations". Sennacherib's campaign in Judah and his crushing defeat at Jerusalem by Divine intervention is a preview, in miniature, of "things which must shortly come to pass".

The Master has Himself served, and knows all the difficulties of the service. It gives a master great power over his workmen when they know he is not a mere amateur in the thing itself; not merely master because he has money enough to employ them, but is a master who has done the work well and thoroughly, and joins them in the work, saying, "Come and work with me; what you do not know, I will show you". It is such a Master whom we serve.

* * *

Some of us think of ourselves as members of the "conquering bands with banners waving, pressing on o'er hill and plain", without remembering that there can be no conquest without conflict.

Yonder, beneath us, is a fair meadow, through which the pure River of the Water of Life is winding its way; on either side of it stands the Tree of Life, with its twelve manner of fruits and its beautiful leaves for the healing of the nations. And in the distance, high on the summit of the Everlasting Hills, the city, all of God, bathed in light and quivering with glory—the New Jerusalem: its walls are of jasper, its foundations of precious stones, its angel-guarded gates of pearl—the city that needs no sun, no moon, "for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof".

* * *

Putting away Baal is of little use if we keep the calves of Dan and Bethel.

FROM A PRISON CELL

Part I. Prisoner for Christ

Reflections on the
"Prison Epistles"

The Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians were written by Paul from a prison cell in Rome. Evidently his detention there was of a very mild nature, for, though under arrest, Paul was permitted to dwell in his own hired house alone, save for the presence of his military guard (Acts 28. 16). Pending the hearing of his case at Nero's judicial bar, he was permitted to continue under house-arrest for two whole years, with no greater inconvenience than his chains. During these two years he was permitted to receive all his friends without check, so that he *"received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him"*. (Acts 28. 31). Thus, spared the awful severities of ancient prison cells, his own home became both a sanctum and a cell.

Under conditions such as these the mighty qualities of his master-mind blossomed forth into full flower. To his native in-born genius the operation of the enlightening influence of the Spirit of the Living God gave new and added powers, enabling him to develop and define those deeper things of God which mortal tongue had only once told before. No teacher save the Lord Jesus had trodden that path of truth. Even He had not spoken full and clear, because at that time none else could understand. The "many things" which He had wanted to say, but could not say (John 16. 12) were left for Paul to say, when hearing ears had been opened by the Spirit of truth. Then under the enlightening power of the promised Comforter, Paul was able to develop all those special features of the Lord's good news—now Paul's good news—and set them out in all their force and beauty, both in his conversations with his friends and in these letters to Ephesus, Colosse and Philippi. We have in these three letters the very essence and cream of all extant Christian literature, reaching the loftiest heights of sanctifying expressions of which human language is capable. To such incomparable altitudes of illuminating thought do some of these expressions soar that students are to be found who speak of these things as though they constituted another and better Gospel, distinct and separate from all the teachings of Paul's own earlier days. Distinctions are

claimed between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the "fellowship of the Mystery" with suggestions that there is but little (if any) relationship between the two themes. It will be our privilege to investigate both these themes as our studies proceed, and we hope to be able to find that Paul wrote to his friends exactly the same things which he spoke to those who visited his prison home (Acts 28. 31). It is possible to assign other reasons than that of another and better Gospel for the super-excellence of these Epistles without detaching them from earlier writings from the same pen. We have only to call to mind the unrelenting journeys of his active days, from Asia to Europe, from Europe back again, with scarce a moment's cessation from activity in which to concentrate and reflect. We only need to think of the foot-sore evangelist harried from place to place by relentless foes intent only on discrediting him, and of gathering to themselves the fruitage of his labours, to realise how impossible it had been for him to sit for long at ease in cool, calm consideration of the deeper points of the Gospel story. He had them in his mind, in germ and bud, and sometimes they flower forth from his pen, but not with the full bloom and beauty of the later ripened truth.

It was only when the rush and turmoil of an overcrowded life gave place to the safe peacefulness of his quiet prison retreat, first for two years in Caesarea, and now again in Rome, that the undeveloped germs and unopened buds of earlier days blossomed forth into stately blooms, delightful to see and hear. Immature and rudimentary thoughts, difficult to express and harder still to pass along, assumed full-grown form and were clothed in words of rare beauty and great power. God cut those restless wanderings short, not only that Paul might testify at the Roman Court, but that he might have time to rest and open wide the portals of God's treasure-house, that all who later came to believe might see set forth the amplitude of their inheritance in Christ. Without that season of enforced rest Paul might have burnt away the wick of life too soon, before even he himself had grasped the full immensity of the mystery of the fellowship in Christ. Had that been so, not his alone would have been the loss, but three score generations since his day would also

have been deprived of these deeper, priceless things of God.

Paul was a deep thinker, and that was exactly what the Christian Church needed at the time. All other Apostles were untrained fishermen—men who had received no special training for their task. The Pharisees classed them as ignorant and unlearned men. Jesus had departed from the world leaving these untrained, untutored men to represent His cause. And while the propagation of truth was not intended to be accomplished by human power and intellectual might, its deeper aspect needed to be comprehended and stated by at least one penetrating well-balanced mind. Paul was a chosen vessel into which and through which Jesus could issue forth the things which He had to leave unsaid. Paul's mind could not leave a theme till he had traced it back to its first cause, nor until he had outlined its fullest sequences. Not enough was it for him to know that Jesus was the Son of God—he must dissect that statement into its compound elements, and know precisely what it meant. Not enough to know that Jesus died for sin. He wanted to know why and how that death could offset sin, and till he understood he deeply probed the records of the Word of God. He had to do among believing men the work which Jesus Himself could not do, because men could not understand. Hence Paul had to say the things Jesus could not say. These things became the theme and topic of Paul's enquiring mind and under the Spirit's influence the unsaid things of Jesus were said, in the main, by Paul. His writings, when arranged in chronological order, show that his mind was always getting deeper and still deeper into the things of his Lord; truth, roughly and immaturely stated at first utterance, became developed and complete as years rolled by. With progressive thought, ripeness of expression kept step, giving to the later products of his pen a mellowness rich and mature. Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon are the rich ripe fruits of Paul's mellow years. We may well thank God for Paul's restraining chain, even though at times it may have deeply chafed his flesh. It set free his soul to soar up to the heavenly heights to give form and words to lofty thoughts, high as the heavens themselves, and more enduring than eternal hills. Only God Himself can estimate the debt which we all of later day owe but cannot pay, to this diminutive giant of a man.

From that little prison cell, the enforced home of a little wandering Christian Jew, set

at the heart of the world's metropolis, with all the tawdry trappings of Imperial Majesty on every hand, the soaring mind of Paul swept forth throughout heaven and earth, and told, under the unseeing eyes of Rome's sceptred prince, in language superb and sublime, that God was creating a universal throne at whose feet even proud Imperial Cæsar would have to bow. No bricks nor walls, no chains nor prætorian guard could chain down that Spirit-led mind of Paul and make him mindful only of his little day and his fettered circumstance. Back to times before the world began, forward to better days, when heaven and earth are cleansed from sin, the Spirit led that receptive mind, and as he grasped the great design, he wrote it down in rich superlatives. Ordinary diction was poor and lame; he must spin phrases of his own, phrases which seem meaningless to the profane, but phrases, each of which is a rich coronet clustered with gems to those who know the truth. Here are a few — *"blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ"; "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"; "holy and without blemish before Him"; "foreordained us unto adoption as sons . . . unto Himself"; "the glory of His grace which He bestowed on us freely in the Beloved"*. This and much beside is almost all new coin, never issued from any mint before, but all required to set forth the abundant grace of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rome may have had her senators and orators, but no Cato or Cicero could speak like this. Rome may give her little men her franchise, and set them in her ranks of free-born men, but she could not make them sons of God! Rome may hoist her chosen Cæsar to her throne, but she could not lift her candidate to the heavenly Throne! Within the very shadow of Roman majesty itself the words and thoughts which told of One who could elevate a beggar to joint-heirship in that Throne took shape and form. How near together, therefore, in that little cell came the sordid and the sublime—only a length of chain, which, binding their ambassadors together, separated those two worlds. Guard and prisoner constituted together a miniature of this present world—one, the emblem of the supreme power of these Gentile Times, one, the token of the persecuted Christ, whose day of power is yet to come.

From that small spot, abounding with such great contrast, flowed forth doctrine which has changed the world. It has been both food

and light to help God's child along his way. It has developed faith and gendered hope, and kindled love in many hearts. There is no contradiction between this and the earlier themes. Ephesians and Colossians are built on the broad foundations laid in Romans and Galatians, but times and conditions were under change. The nation as a whole was drifting to its doom while the small elect remnant was growing up into Christ. In the early days Paul dwelt much on the First Coming of the Lord as the point towards which the history and destiny of the Hebrew race had long been tending; in his later days it is the Christ Who is Lord of angels and worlds, and to Whose Second Coming the whole array of the universe is moving. In the first days he sought to convince his kith and kin of their opportunity to accept and rally to the Messiah whom God had sent into their midst. Hence, he stressed repentance and justification from sin. But when the nation was bent on plunging to its doom it was to

the treasure within the field he paid greatest heed. He dwelt less on the redemptive work of Christ, and more on its Head and constitution; less on the justification of the repentant sinner and more on the sanctification of the elect saint; but all these later things had been implicit in his Gospel from the first, just as the earlier themes were never wholly absent from the later and more explicit themes. Throughout his ministry the burden of teaching sought to show the union of the believer with his redeeming Lord and for the description of this unity he has coined a whole vocabulary of phrases and illustrations; believers are "in Christ" and Christ in them; they bear relation to Him as stones to a foundation, as members to a Head, as a wife to her husband. This unity he shows to be "ideal" for before time began the Divine Father made the destiny of Christ and the destiny of the believer one.

(To be continued)

THE GATES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The spirit of worship
as revealed
in the Psalms

"Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord—this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter—I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation." (Psa. 118. 19-21).

Upon many an occasion whilst the Temple at Jerusalem was standing those words were sung by the priests and worshippers at the great festivals. Israelitish worship was essentially a worship of praise, of song and of music, and this is but one of the many examples of the songs they sang and which have been preserved for us in the Book of Psalms. We do well to consider something of this aspect of the Psalms, for an understanding of Israelitish methods and outlook respecting Divine worship cannot fail to be of assistance to us in our own attempt to relate the outward forms and ceremonies of worship to the inwardly felt reverence and adoration of our hearts. We know that God seeketh the worship only of those that will worship Him in spirit and in truth, but it is also true that our very sincerity and fervour should lead us to worship God in a dignified manner and so far as possible in appropriate surroundings. Some consideration of the ways in which Israel of old waited on God with praise and prayer can help us to trace more clearly the effect of outward forms in promoting the spirit of true

worship.

Since the Book of Psalms is really the record of Israel's public worship and contains the songs, chants and prayers which were used in the Temple ceremonies this short study will not go outside the Psalms for its material. Within that Book there is contained a wealth of inspiration for sincerity and purity in worship.

One of the most characteristic praise-prayers is found in Psalm 95. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods," and so on. Notice that the worshippers have commenced their service on a note of praise; more than that, on a note of joyful praise. This is characteristic of Israel's worship; their first impulse upon coming together was toward a lifting up of voices jointly in joy and gladness, and in gratitude of heart for all God's mercies, a gratitude that was not only felt inwardly but expressed outwardly. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psa. 118. 24). The very first element of their worship was a full, frank acknowledgment of Divine supremacy over all things and of their gratitude because of that supremacy. The valleys

and hills, the seas and land, were made by Him and are His by right, and those who are His children have the privilege of using for their own pleasure and joy the things that He has made, and the obligation of bringing to Him for His pleasure and joy the offerings of praise and thanksgiving which such beneficence has inspired.

This leads quite naturally to the second element in worship, a quiet and reverent acknowledgment of that moral responsibility to be conformed to God's laws and to live life in God's way which lies upon every man. One can almost sense the change in tone in verse 6 of Psalm 95. The major key of loud praise has dropped to a minor key of quiet reverence and awe. *"O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."* It is now that the mind turns away from the outward things of the earth which God has created, the appendages of life, of happiness, of enjoyment, for which praise has just been offered, and diverts its thoughts inward to the heart and soul. *God did not only make the hills and valleys, the sea and land; He made us, and He made us His people, His flock. He is not only a Creator, He is also a Shepherd and a Father. And the causes of worship, of reverence and of praise that lie within the human frame are greater by far than those that reside in the earth, which is itself but a minister to that same human frame, for God created the earth for man, and not man for the earth. Man is the glory and king of this material creation—or will be when the Divine purpose has been fully achieved. So the joyful ebullient praise that is prompted by the material blessings surrounding man gives place to reverent adoration, a recognition of the spiritual blessings that find their place within a man's heart. Therefore in Psalm 96, 8 the exhortation is "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth" and in Psalm 29 "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."* In all of this there is the realisation that to worship God in holiness is a thing of beauty, that the yearning of the human heart for that which brings beauty into the life and drives out the drab and sordid can be met, and fully met, in joint worship before God.

Is not this worth considering in our fellowship and our worship? We have much that is drab and commonplace in our daily lives. The conditions attendant upon earning a living or managing a home in this present day are oftentimes dull and monotonous to an extreme, and even we who have the knowledge of Divine truth to cheer our way feel the pressure of the times. It cannot possibly be otherwise. The world feels the same thing and rushes madly from one form of amusement to another in the endeavour to forget. Man was made to be happy and to enjoy the good gifts of God, and now that human selfishness and sin has taken away much of the possibility of happiness humanity is in danger of breaking down. Now the fact that in general we do not desire and could not be content with the amusements which do temporarily satisfy the majority of people does not dispose of this fact that the drabness and ugliness of life has its effect upon us as on them. We too need something that will counteract these things and show us visions of beauty in which we can rejoice and find satisfaction and rest of heart. *That counteracting force is to be found in worship—sincere, selfless worship offered in joint communion with others of like mind in an atmosphere of beauty and peace. Worship that ascends in chariots of praise to the highest heaven, that bears up the worshipper himself as it were on eagles' wings and takes him in the spirit of his mind to the holy place where God is seated upon His Throne, guiding the destinies of the world that He has created.*

We need then by all means possible to develop within our fellowship an increasing appreciation of the importance of worship—and, too, of joint fellowship together in worship, of communal worship. And that worship must be a joyful and happy worship—every gathering for worship an holy convocation unto the Lord where expressions of thankfulness and thanksgiving are predominant. Even although there must be other occasions where life is lived to the accompaniment of quieter and more subdued strains, where grief afflicts the heart and tears may not be far away, the time of worship will be a palliative to these things and call forth the happiness and joy that resides in the possession of the "deep things of God". The Psalmist felt like this when he sang of his dark moments, of the contradiction of sinners against himself, of tears by day and by night, and yet *"I had gone with the multitude, I went with them in the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise,*

with a multitude that kept holyday" (Psa. 42. 4). He found the comfort his soul desired in going up with his brethren, with praise and song, to worship the Lord in His holy temple.

This brings us to the third very important element in our worship—the place where worship is offered. In natural reaction against the formalism and ceremony of the great Churches there is a tendency to go to the other extreme and eschew all outward aids to beauty in worship. The Psalmist knew as well as do we that God may be worshipped in any place and does not require that the voice of praise ascend acceptably only from marble halls and prayers be offered to the accompaniment of swinging censers. David must have known better than any man how near God could be when alone on the mountain-tops at night, or lying in the field with the flocks in the heat of a summer day. But the Psalmist knew what inspiration could be given his soul by the mere sight of the Temple buildings on the summit of Mount Moriah, the thrill of heart as the multitudes moved slowly up the wide stairways and assembled in the great court, the awe and reverence that filled the soul as the music of harps and chanting of singers fell upon the ear. That was why he could say with feeling "*I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem*". (Psa. 122. 1). The very suggestion of going up to worship the Lord in company with the brethren is one that should induce feelings of gladness and happiness.

After all, just as Jesus at twelve years of age was found in His Father's courts, because that was the natural place in which to be found, so should we always feel as if the place of worship is our rightful spiritual home. It should possess a magnetism and an attraction for us that is possessed by no other place on earth. We should be conscious of an intense, a longing, desire to be there and to commune with our brethren of like faith, and to join with them in praise and prayer, and share with them the consciousness of the over-spreading Spirit, come down to bless and fill each worshipper with the grace and truth of

the Most High God. The Psalmist felt like that. "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" he cried, "*My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.*" (Psa. 84. 1-2). When he was away from the Temple he was an exile, a wanderer in strange lands. When he turned his steps towards the Temple he was coming home and as its familiar buildings came into sight he experienced the satisfaction of a spiritual hunger which could be met in no other way.

The word "amiable" in verse 1 really means "beloved". "*How beloved are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" The thought of the word is shown very vividly in its other occurrences. "*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him*" (Deut. 33. 12); "*So he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Psa. 127. 2); "*Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my well-beloved touching his vineyard*" (Isa. 5. 1). Thus is our worship made complete, when we can look toward the place of our meeting with our brethren, and call it "beloved". Thus may we combine the three-fold aspect of worship; our own personal coming to God in reverence and adoration; our joining with our brethren in united praise and prayer; our love and esteem for the place which is the place of our gathering, the place of our meeting, the place of our fellowship and worship. "*THIS GATE OF THE LORD, INTO WHICH THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL ENTER.*" How fitting are the words of the Psalmist in Psa. 117. 17-19, expressive of this three-fold cord. How the words come down to us in all their majesty and all their music, telling us of saints in olden time who trod this way before us, bidding us follow faithfully in the same way, that we, like them, may one day stand before God in Zion.

"*I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.*"

"*I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people!*"

"*In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem!*"

"PRAISE YE THE LORD."

Children with "wonder" minds can always see much more in life than those who are coldly calculating in their approach to things. Children of God with "wonder" minds can always see in the glowing words and thoughts of Paul more than those who are coldly statistical in their definitions of truth. These glowing words were a transcript from Paul's

own experience. It was both fact and action in his own life and character before it found its way to his manuscript, and because he lived intensely with his Lord, his pen could write with an intense intimacy about those things he received from his Lord and which he strove so enthusiastically to write for his friends.

GOOD WORKS

A practical
consideration

"Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus, "that they may see your good works" (Matt. 5. 16). There was no doubt in His heart that good works would accompany the reception of His teachings, and no doubt either that the light of the Gospel would be manifested, not only by word of mouth, but also by practical deeds of love and sympathy toward the "groaning creation". The Early Church grasped this truth more clearly than did any later generation, and the records of their times are replete with examples of the manner in which they carried out this very practical aspect of their Master's teaching. There has been no other time when the Church on earth has so completely manifested the Master's ideal. He founded a community which was to be as a family, its members closely knit by the ties of sympathetic and understanding love, a family which would exemplify the characteristics of the Kingdom it preached by doing good to all men as it had opportunity.

The miracles of Jesus, outside our power to reproduce, tend to obscure the fact that He set the example in good works of other kinds which are within the range of our abilities. It may be a new thought to some that Jesus, from his scanty store, did on occasion give money to the poor. The Holy Spirit has caused the evidence to be recorded that we may be in no doubt upon the subject. In the account of our Lord's words to Judas at the Last Supper, John says (chapter 13. 29): "some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor". The seeming casual allusion indicates clearly that the giving of alms to the poor was a customary action of Jesus—so much so that the departure of Judas at a word from the Lord was tacitly assumed by the disciples to be for some such purpose. We must commence our consideration of "good works", therefore, by realising that Jesus did not content Himself with telling folk that there was a good time coming, nor that His mission on earth was confined to preparation for His future Millennial work. He did something there and then to relieve the material distresses of suffering humanity in a way that would be possible later on to many of His followers.

It might have been this attitude of Jesus

which led his natural half-brother, James, the first Christian Bishop of Jerusalem, to stress in his epistle the importance of practical Christianity. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this" he says, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1. 27). James meant much more than a mere calling upon a widow to offer sympathy and condolence. The plight of orphans and widows in the First Century was desperate indeed, and the words of James have no meaning unless they imply the rendering of practical assistance to those thus bereaved. The beloved disciple John took up the same theme and drove the implication directly home when he said, "Whoso hath this world's goods and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him? My little children, let us not love in word or tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3. 17-18). John could not tell us in better language that the sharing of material goods with others in need is a concrete evidence of indwelling love. The Divine recognition of Cornelius' prayers is another case in point. Cornelius was a Gentile, a Roman centurion, a man noteworthy for two things: he "feared God with all his house" and "gave much alms to the people" (Acts 10. 2). When the angel appeared to him, he was told that his prayers and his alms had come for a memorial before God (v. 4). There was value, in God's sight, in this outward evidence of a heart sincerely afflicted with the sorrows of humanity.

The opportunity and duty of almsgiving must have featured very prominently in the life of the early Church—much more so than in our own day, because of the frightful conditions under which the poor lived. There was no system of relief such as does function, though imperfectly, in our country to-day. No one—very nearly no one—cared whether the very poor lived or died. The old, the infirm, the diseased, unable to labour for their living, turned out of their homes by children or relatives, wandered hopelessly about the towns and countryside, begging for alms wherewith to buy food sufficient to keep them alive. To Jesus, and to those who embraced His teaching, it must have been an intolerable sight, and to us in these days, despite all we know

of State provision for such unfortunates, it should be no less tolerable.

The primitive Church accepted this problem of poverty as a challenge to their new-found faith. Within their own circle they did not tolerate it at all. There was no such thing as unsatisfied need in the churches at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Rome. At the very outset the Church adopted the family relationship and to an appreciable degree the communal life. To describe this as communism may convey a wrong thought. Acts 2, 44-46 plainly states that those who believed were *"together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need"*. This was the secret of their power; in the joy and zeal of their conversion they counted not their goods as their own but as held in trust for their Lord and to be used for the general good. Thus, while there is no evidence of an equal division of possessions such as is generally implied by the word "communism", there was undoubtedly diligence to see that every case of need was satisfied from the store of those who possessed abundance.

One allusion to this family life is found in Acts 6, 1-4, where the election of the first seven deacons is described. There was apparently a tendency to neglect the Grecian-Jewish widows in favour of the native Jewish in the administration of this relief. The Church had grown greatly in numbers, and the problem was evidently assuming large proportions; nevertheless, the account reads as though there was absolute unanimity on the method adopted to remedy the defect. The impression of a spontaneously happy family is maintained throughout.

Such enthusiastic love for suffering humanity could not be kept within narrow bounds, and it was not long before the growing Church was reaching out to do good to all men irrespective of their standing inside or outside the Church. Paul's own exhortation must have been ever in their minds, as it is in ours. *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6, 30). The stress laid upon the latter clause does not release us from the obligation of the former one. And to such an extent did the early Christians exploit this outlet for loving service on behalf of their fellow men that in the fourth century the Roman Emperor Julian (the notorious "Julian the Apostate") declared that *"the godless Galileans support not only their own poor, but our poor also"*. In the

year A.D. 250 it was recorded that the Church in Rome—never a big church in those early days—regularly maintained no less than fifteen hundred destitute pagans.

Much could be said of the record of the Christian society through the centuries. Hospitals, universal education, abolition of child labour, organised poor relief, all these things which are taken for granted to-day had their origin in the efforts of Christian individuals or groups, and all in the name of Christ. Names like Dr. Barnardo, George Muller, William Booth, are household words; the works they started live after them but what they did was done because they were convinced Christians and interpreted the obligations of their faith in the practical application of Christ's words.

The problem of the poor does not really differ from the problem of the world as a whole. The world is in need—desperate need—and our mission in life, the whole object and purpose of our consecrated walk before God, is to fill that need. We know that the Millennial Age has been set apart by God for the full accomplishment of that work, and that God is now selecting from amongst men those who can be fitted to carry out that work. He chooses only volunteers, those whose hearts are in this work and who would be engaged in it even now, if they had the power, and the time was right. And the extent to which we use the power and the time we do possess is the gauge by which God measures the sincerity of our professed desire to do that great work *then*.

"Charge them that are rich in this world," says Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. 6, 17-19). *"... that they do good, that they be rich in good works... willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation for the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life"*. How clear it is that the good works, faithfully performed as we find opportunity, are of themselves contributing to our preparation for the future day when all power shall be ours. Works of mercy and sympathy, deeds of kindness and compassion, efforts to ameliorate the lot of some unhappy one or to infuse a little sunshine into a drab life—all these things, quite apart from the temporary relief they may bring to some afflicted son or daughter of Adam, are building into the fabric of our characters something that will endure to all eternity.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 14 I John 3. 9-13

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." (vs. 9-10).

This is a striking statement, more so even than that in verse 6 for it is couched in even bolder terms. "Doth not commit sin" . . . "he cannot sin!" These are daring words indeed. Even with all in mind that has just been said, can they be justified? Can it be truthfully said, from any possible standpoint, that we who are born of God, born from above, as Jesus put it to Nicodemus, *cannot sin*?

Most of the modern translators seem to be uncertain how to take this. They adopt a variety of expedients to get around the literal meaning of the words. *"Is not habitually guilty of sin"* says Weymouth. *"He does not value sinning"* is Ferrar Fenton's suggestion. *"No one who has received the new life from God lives sinfully"* is the rendering adopted by the Twentieth Century version. They all give an impression of dubiousness, of perplexity. None of them mirror the simplicity of the Greek—"is not able to sin". The one born of God cannot accept and practise the way of sin because it is unthinkable that he should do so. A good example of the principle is afforded in the case of Joseph and his master's wife. *"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin before God?"* (Gen. 39. 9). Physically and in fact, he *could* have done so, but nonetheless his allegiance to Divine law made it a perfectly true thing to say that he *could not* commit this sin. That is the heart attitude of all who are born of God; they do not and cannot have any sympathy with the violation of God's laws, and even though they may and do come short of their ideals, their inward sincerity remains unblemished, and God, looking upon them and judging them according to that perfect heart-attitude, declares that they, the born of God, are sinless in His sight.

There is an important but somewhat obscure phrase here. *"His seed remaineth in him."* Whose seed? Remains in whom? Grammatically, the "seed" referred to might be of God or it might be of the one born of God. It is not altogether clear why it is that the one who "doth not commit sin" finds himself

in this honoured position by reason of the fact that "his seed remaineth in him". What is the explanation?

It seems most likely that there is a direct connection between the fact of being "born of God" and the remaining a receptacle, so to speak, of this "seed". It is almost as if there is an assurance against sin coming in and defiling one who continues in possession of a purifying or vitalising "seed". Weymouth has it *"a God-given germ of life abides in him"*, Moffatt *"the offspring of God remains in him"* and the Twentieth Century *"the very nature of God dwelleth in him"*. Rotherham, more obscurely, renders *"a seed of him with him abideth"*. In most cases, at all events, the translators appear to take this "seed" as a vitalising or living influence from God, entering into the man and remaining there. That view at any rate makes the verse intelligible, and in harmony with all other scriptural doctrine regarding our spiritual quickening and "begetting" and "birth". Whoever has experienced this "new birth" has been "born of God", has thereafter and throughout life, whilst faithful to his calling, an inward possession of the life-giving and quickening Holy Spirit, which not only sustains the inward spiritual life but also causes us to grow and develop spiritually so that in due time we shall be fitted to be clothed upon with our "house which is from heaven". The continued possession of the Holy Spirit is a guarantee against our being brought into bondage to sin; conversely, our lapsing into the power of sin indicates that we have lost the Holy Spirit. The expression "his seed remaineth in him" does not mean that it must inevitably remain in us without possibility of loss for the remainder of life, any more than the parallel expression "he cannot sin" means that it is impossible for one to repudiate his Lord and his consecration and his faith and turn to unrighteousness like the "sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire". (2 Pet. 2. 22). What it does mean is that *while* that seed remains, and *because* it remains, the new birth, the being "born again" remains a truth, and freedom from sin is a truth also. There are not many who would seriously claim that one thus accepted into this relationship with God is thereafter rendered incapable of turning

his back upon the sacred things and embracing again the evil from which he has escaped. "Once saved, always saved" is certainly a theme not altogether unknown among some groups of Christian believers, but the belief, when analysed, is seldom found to be so extreme as the bare utterance of the four words would seem to imply.

Our final conclusion, in the light of all that John has to tell us in this remarkable passage, would seem to be that complete faith in Christ and in His atoning sacrificial death, and absolute sincerity of heart in one's personal consecration to God, backed up with such manifestation of good endeavours in words and conduct as the weakness of the flesh and the outward influences of the world permit, gains for the believer a judicial decree of righteousness, of sinlessness, in the sight of God, and as judged by His own fundamental standards. That blessed condition rests upon the basis of faith and consecration, and whilst that basis persists that standing before God persists. But if the basis be destroyed, the whole edifice that is built upon it is destroyed also. If one turns aside from the paths of righteousness and commences deliberately to violate Divine law, knowing that he is violating Divine law, then the Holy Spirit, the "seed", no longer remains in him. he loses his standing of justification, he is no longer born of God, it is no longer true that he "cannot sin", and it is manifest that he is no longer a child of God but is instead a child of the Devil. If it is possible for a man to be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, it must be equally possible for one to be delivered into the bondage of corruption out of the glorious liberty of the children of God.

But not by God! The great truth that can give the weakest of the Lord's sincere children supreme confidence is that our Father, having accepted one who has come to Him, will never of Himself let that one go. He Who has promised to perform a good work in us will abundantly complete that work and fulfil that promise, no matter how unpromising and unsatisfactory the human material with which He has to work—if we on our part will let Him. But there is one barrier the Father cannot and will not break down—the barrier of the human will. He will—and does—do all that lies in His mighty power to turn us away from sin and toward righteousness, but we have now and shall have for all time the power within ourselves to choose the way of evil, if we will. And if, after every possible

means of persuasion has been used, and failed, and we remain obdurate in our determination to continue in the way of evil, the Father can do nothing but leave us to the logical consequences of our choice. He will ever abide faithful, but attainment of the promised prize rests not only upon God's faithfulness to us, which cannot be questioned, but also upon our faithfulness to God, which is much more of an uncertain matter. We have been "once saved"; of that there is no doubt nor dispute, and so far as the Father is concerned we are, thereafter "always saved"; but so far as we are concerned we do well to remember that we shall remain "saved" only just so long as we ourselves comply with the conditions which alone can keep us "saved" in His sight.

Here John changes the subject. From the middle of verse 10 he comes back to the more practical expressions of Christian conduct in everyday life and begins to talk of the connection between our relationship to God and our relationship to the brethren.

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another." (vs. 10-11).

This declaration is a bridge between John's words in verses 4-10 and the things he is going to say in the rest of the chapter. He has already been at pains to stress that we, the disciples of Christ, have a standing in righteousness before God, dependent upon our sincerity and purity of mind and purpose, and that without that righteousness we cannot claim to be of God. That righteousness, that justification, is an inward possession, known only to God and the believer, not of itself discernible to the onlooker. Now John would tell us that there is a means by which our righteousness is manifested to those around us, to our brethren, our neighbours, and others. That means is our love for our brethren, our neighbours, for all. It was Jesus who first proclaimed the law of love and He made it incumbent upon His disciples to develop a love for all mankind of the nature that He Himself possessed. Nothing short of a deep and sincere love and solicitude for all who have been made in the image and likeness of God can be acceptable in those who are eventually to be entrusted with the task of reconciling men to God. But even John's fellow-brethren, accepted unto Christ and constituted sons of God as they were, could not reach up to that height at once. John must lead them by a succession of steps, appealing first of all to

that which lay nearest to their hearts. So he confines his argument at the beginning to the family circle, the fellowship of the believers, the community of the Church, where of all places the love of each true-hearted believer should be most manifest. If that love, the love of the brethren, is not present, says John, then without any further argument it can be definitely stated that the professed child of God is not so in fact. He that loveth not his brother is "not of God".

Now that does not mean that we must as a matter of obligation extend the full privileges of our fellowship and receive into all the implications of brotherly love anyone who chooses to come into our midst, profess acceptance of our beliefs and standards, and claim to be a brother or sister in Christ. There has often been a certain amount of loose thinking in this connection and not infrequently "wolves in sheep's clothing" have taken advantage of the too-ready friendliness of earnest disciples endeavouring to follow out what they believe to be the requirements of the Scriptures. When John says "his brother" he means just those who can truthfully be described by the term, those who are in deed and in truth children of God and therefore brethren of other children of God. There can be no denying that there is a love that we should bear toward the world in general, and towards our enemies, and toward all, no matter how evil or depraved or far from God they may be, but that is not what John is talking about here. He is talking, for the moment, of matters exclusively concerned with the circle of believers, the brethren, and his major theme, to which he returns time after time in the course of his exhortation, is that we must first recognise the strictness of the standards by which a true child of God is to be recognised, and then, recognising that, must find that we do feel a love toward him that transcends all other affections and friendships. The love of the brethren ought to be the greatest thing in our lives and the most powerful force in our fellowship.

"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (vs. 11). What beginning? Certainly not the beginning of Israel's existence as a nation, for although the Mosaic Law certainly did command men to love God above all things and then to love their neighbours as themselves, the same Law provided for things that were the very antithesis of love. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life"—that certainly is not the law of love as we

understand the word to-day. And love cannot be commanded; the Mosaic Law gave commands and the only love it could inculcate was duty love. The love that Jesus brought to light in the world was something so much beyond the loftiest reach of Moses' precepts that Jesus could justly say "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy', but I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven'." (Matt. 5. 43-45). That must have been the beginning of which John is speaking here; here in these words of Jesus we find the same association between the possession of all-embracing love and the being a child of God, except that Jesus demands more. He demands love towards all; John, so far as he has got in the course of his exhortation here in the middle of chapter 3, is for the present only asking for love for the brethren. But he appeals to the right authority. For him and for all who then and thereafter were to read his words, Jesus is the beginning and the words of Jesus constitute that "message that ye have heard from the beginning".

And how whole-heartedly the Church of the first few generations did enter into the spirit of that exhortation! It is impossible to read the thrilling stories of the Acts of the Apostles without sensing the atmosphere of Christian love in which the fellowship was born and developed. There were rifts and the occasional quarrels, it is true. The Grecians murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations (Acts 7). The Jews resented the extension of the call to the Gentiles and at first refused to count them brethren, causing Peter and others some difficult times before agreement was attained and harmony restored (Acts 15). Paul himself was not always received in the manner befitting an Apostle and an elder of the flock. But on the whole these were only incidents in the life of the Church. In the main the joy of salvation and appreciation of the High Calling to which they had been called overshadowed all other considerations and made the early Christian fellowship so joyous and happy a thing that those outside envied the believers for the possession of what they themselves could neither understand nor emulate. "How these Christians love one another!" cried Tertullian many years afterwards; that word has lingered and

echoed down the ages to our own time, where it has mingled with another expression "the love of the brethren" which has become proverbial amongst us. As it was in the first century, as it was in Tertullian's day, so it is in our own time; the spirit of Christian love manifest in our assemblies is still one of the most potent means of conversion we know. It is a solemn thought that the loss or partial loss of that spirit may be a contributory factor to the decline in the number of conversions we now observe. It is in our meetings, our gatherings and our fellowship that we have opportunity to show the enquirer how our beliefs and hopes work out in practice. If our practice does not match our profession we must pardon the candidate for conversion if he is a little sceptical. When George Lansbury, the one-time leader of the Labour party, visited Lenin in Moscow during the course of his endeavour to promote an understanding between the heads of the great Powers, and talked with him of Christ and the Christian faith, the Russian leader said quietly "Go back to England and convert your fellow-countrymen to Christianity; then come back to me and we will talk again". Lenin spent part of his life in this country and he knew what he was talking about. So with us; if we would persuade others to accept for themselves the rule of life which we have accepted and found good, we must expect to be judged by our manifestation of that life in actual practice under everyday conditions.

"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (vs. 12-13).

John, strangely, does not use the word "hate" in describing the attitude of Cain towards his brother. He leaves it to be inferred, in the light of all that he has just been saying, that Cain failed to love his brother. He could have quoted no more terrible example of the consequences that can follow such a failure. The sin of Cain has stirred the consciences of all generations of men throughout all history. He has become the standard archetype of the fratricide, and the expression "the mark of Cain" has passed into the realm of proverbs and popular allusions. There is probably no other character of history, except Judas Iscariot, who has commanded so much popular detestation as has Cain. We know nothing of Cain's earlier life with Abel, but it is evident that he had not loved him as a brother should.

Some have deduced from John's expression here, "who was of that wicked one", that Cain was in fact the offspring, not of Adam and Eve, but of Satan and Eve, and doomed from the outset. The plain statement of Gen. 4. 1 ought to be sufficient to expose the fallacy of such reasoning. Cain was "of the wicked one" in exactly the same sense as those Pharisees to whom our Lord said "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do". (Jno. 5. 44). He was "of that wicked one" because he had allowed sin to take root in his heart and exercise control over his actions, and in the end it led him to slay his brother.

Cain did not love his brother; that much is evident. That failure led to hatred, and hatred to murder. It is unlikely that Cain seriously intended things to go so far. There is no hint of animosity when they made their individual offerings, side by side, to God. When Cain's offering was rejected it was to God he first addressed his complaint and it was only after being told that acceptance followed righteousness, and rejection unrighteousness, that the implied contrast between his brother's goodness and his own evil evoked the feelings that led eventually to the crime. That is the position to which John is leading us here. The world hates the Christian because of its realisation of the contrast. The darkness hateth the light because its own deeds are evil. Abel suffered, innocently, because of his own rightness of heart. The very sight of him standing there, or going about his work, was a reproof to Cain and to the evil that he cherished; and Cain thought to remove the reproof by obliterating the sight of his brother, by doing away with him. So does the unregenerate man try to do away with all that savours of God and His holiness, and is no more successful than was Cain. So the message comes to us, that we should love one another in sincerity and truth, realising that this is the evidence we have that we are indeed passed from death unto life. The world will hate us, but we are bidden not to be surprised at that. Greater cause for surprise would we have if it were found that the world did not hate us. "Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you" said Jesus. He did not mean that we should always be expecting and seeking the scorn or active dislike or downright persecution of the world. Some have taken it that way and gone out of their way to make themselves obnoxious to their fellows, hailing the consequent—natural—resentment as persecution nobly borne for

Christ's sake. He did not mean anything like that. What he did mean was that we should expect to find the *darkness* in the world hating the *light* that is in us. That of itself will bring all the disesteem or reproach or persecution that the Lord intends us to have. Apart from that, we should expect to find ordinarily decent men and women in the world appreci-

ating and even applauding that which is good and Christ-like in our daily lives and our disposition and outlook. The world has fallen to a low level in many ways, but it is not so hopelessly degraded that there are not some who can appreciate and approve the things of Christ that we hold out before them.

(To be continued)

A NOTE ON ISA. 52. 10

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

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

The Septuagint has it *"so shall thy face be without glory from men, and thy glory shall not be honoured by the sons of men"*. This

rendering must have come from a different Hebrew text than the one which declares His countenance to be in process of destruction by decay, and it makes a much more fitting commentary upon the person of our Lord, so much so that we are perhaps justified in accepting it in place of the Authorised Version. Our Lord while in the flesh did indeed manifest a glory all His own, a "glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" but it was not a glory He obtained from men, neither was it a glory that was honoured by the sons of men. They despised and rejected Him instead. The words of the Septuagint are literally true therefore in our Lord's experience.

Some scholars consider that the word has suffered the alteration, at the hands of an ancient copyist, of one letter which has changed the word from one meaning "to anoint" and that on this supposition the reference here is not to a countenance that has been marred by disfigurement but one that has been anointed for ceremonial purification. The word in this case would be the same as that used in Leviticus for the consecration of Aaron and his sons, and elsewhere for the anointing to office of the kings of Israel. If this be in fact the true interpretation—and such cases of a changed letter altering the whole meaning of a word are not uncommon—then this verse indicates the astonishment of the beholders at seeing one among them who is anointed for the purpose of cleansing the people from sin, which is itself a fitting introduction to the sublime theme of the 53rd chapter.

It is tolerably certain that the passage in the original never taught that our Lord's physical appearance would be repulsive or unattractive and if we can at least dispose of that relic of traditional thought we shall have approached to a more accurate conception of Jesus' human nature.



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

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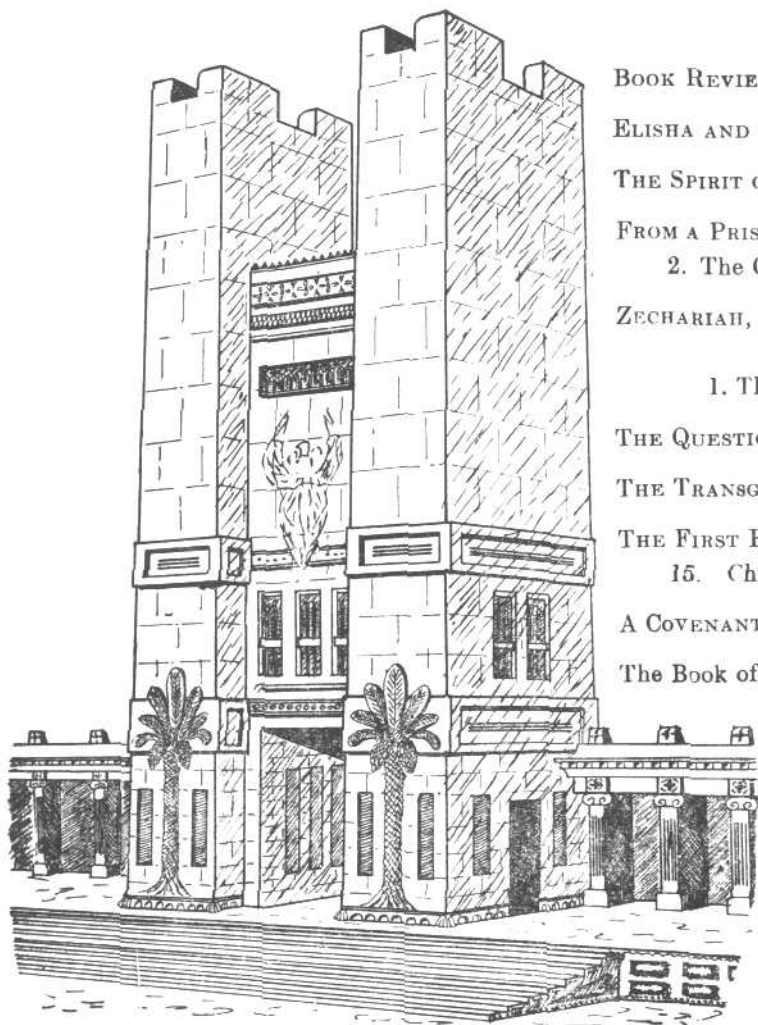
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CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEW	50
ELISHA AND THE TWO BEARS	51
THE SPIRIT OF POWER	54
FROM A PRISON CELL	
2. The Good Pleasure of His Will	57
ZECHARIAH, PROPHET	
OF THE RESTORATION	
1. The Prophet and the Book	59
THE QUESTION BOX	62
THE TRANSGRESSION OF ADAM	63
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN	
15. Ch. 3. 14-24	65
A COVENANT BY SACRIFICE.....	69
The Book of Jasher	72

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

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Unsealed Book (S. H. French). An exposition of the Book of Revelation.

This is a well-produced 113-page booklet following the "historical" interpretation which is familiar to, and generally accepted by, our readers. It is eminently readable and where references to history have to be made, as is inevitable in a work of this kind, they are free from the dry-as-dust "historian's" manner too often met with in expositions of Revelation. The booklet is available free of charge on request to Prophetic Light Publications, 4 Woodlands Gardens, Woodford New Road, Walthamstow, London, E.17.

Leicester (Blaby) Convention

It is regretted that due to a misunderstanding the date of the Blaby Convention has been announced in the "Broadsheet" as June 1-2 whereas it is in fact arranged for the previous week-end, May 25-26. This correction appears here in the endeavour to reach as many as possible of those who may have seen the earlier intimation. Further details can be obtained from Bro. J. Clarke, 74 Cromwell Road, Rugby.

* * *

Liverpool Convention

This gathering has been arranged for July 6-7 and details are available from Mrs. A. Pampling, 6 Clive Road, Oxtou, Birkenhead, Ches. A warm welcome is extended to all.

* * *

Postal Codes

The impact of the modern official craze for postal codes is beginning to make itself felt in our despatch department. These codes are claimed to save Post Office work by facilitating automatic sorting but it would seem that they achieve this end by making extra work for everybody else. We are now receiving notification of such codes from readers in U.K. and in Australia; will such readers please note that we are recording their codes but it will be some time in most cases before they can be added to outgoing issues, and until the use of such codes is made obligatory it is not considered that this is in any way disadvantageous. Readers who have advised us of their codes need not therefore be concerned at the omission of same on their envelopes for some time to come. All U.S.A. readers now have their postal codes (Zip Numbers) included in their addresses except where we have not been notified. Will any U.S.A. reader observing the omission of the Zip No. please let us have it at their convenience. There are a number of such cases.

PILGRIM MINISTRY

A. L. MUIR (U.S.A.)

May 26 Blaby Convention

June 1-3 Portrush Convention
9 Glasgow

July 7 Liverpool Convention

Aug. 3-10 Hoddesdon Conference

25 Coventry Home-Gathering

Sep. 1 London Convention

Details of further appointments as made from Bro. G. Chilvers, "Bethany", Moorwood, Chapel End, Nuneaton.

F. MUSK

May 2 Macclesfield

June 13 Sheffield

J. D. PARKER

May 1 Leicester

E. G. ROBERTS

May 7 Penzance

Details of these appointments from Bro. J. Thompson, 15 Argyle Street, Bury, Lancs.

Gone from us

—:—

Bro. G. Fitter (Birmingham)

Sis. M. L. Seager (Ipswich)

Sis. M. Spackman (London)

Sis. L. Taylor (Wrexham)

—:—

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

ELISHA AND THE TWO BEARS

An Old Testament
incident

Many a critic has pointed to the story of Elisha and the scoffing children of Bethel who were ravaged by bears after jeering at the prophet, and asked how such proceeding can be reconciled with the claimed benevolent character of God. The narrative is brief, and worthy of some consideration.

Elisha had just inherited the prophetic office of his predecessor Elijah, now passed beyond. The place of that passing had been in the wilderness on the eastern side of Jordan, and Elisha, having passed through Jericho, was approaching Bethel, the scene of the incident, on his way home to Samaria. *"And he went up from thence" (Jericho) "unto Bethel, and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them."* (2 Kings 2, 23-24).

Related like that, it looks like a savage punishment for a very trivial demeanour, altogether uncalled for and unjustified. Although the narrative does not say so, it is usually assumed that the prophet's curse induced the Almighty to send the bears to wreak His vengeance on the offending children. Bible commentators of past times have produced elaborate treatises in endeavours to justify this supposed intervention of God. It has been suggested that because Elisha was a prophet of the Most High any insult offered to him was equivalent to one offered to God and must be met with severe retribution. The fact that Bethel was at this time a centre of idolatry has been dwelt upon and the children made scapegoats for the sins of their idolatrous parents. Learned zealots for Divine justice have pontificated upon Heaven's abhorrence of sin and the necessity of making an example, heedless of the fact that the offence here recorded was nothing worse than the calling of rude names after a stranger, one of which probably every child that has ever lived has been guilty at some time or another. To think that the Almighty would take serious notice of that might well be thought to indicate lack of a sense of proportion.

Since, however, the story as it appears in the Authorised Version appears to imply just this, a fairly close examination of the text is

indicated. As a first step the characters in the little drama might be accurately viewed. After that may come the true nature of the actions recorded and finally the resultant implications as to Elisha's resentment and Divine interference. Who were these "little children" who came forth from the city? The word here rendered "children" is *naar* which can indicate any age between a few years old to the early twenties—and is masculine. There were no girls in this party. The diminutive "little" (*ketannim*) rather limits the expression in this case to children or boys, excluding youths in the late teens or twenties. Most modern translations render "young lads" or "small boys", which is probably in accordance with the facts of the case. The second occurrence of "children" (in verse 24) is *yeled* which normally denotes a child or young person and is more or less in agreement with this. (*Naar* is rendered "young man" or "servant" some 144 times and "child" or "lad" some 103 times in the Old Testament; *yeled* is "young man" or "young one" 10 times and "child" 72 times). There is no evidence in the story as to whether the lads were of idolatrous tendencies or not; at that age it is not likely that many of them had any real views on that subject. It is much more likely that they were just mischievous youths out for some fun.

The lads "mocked" (derided, scoffed at) Elisha by calling after him *"Go up, thou bald head"*. Baldness was considered a reproach by Israelites, and to call a man a bald head was grossly insulting. Elisha was a comparatively young man at this time—not more than thirty years of age—so that if he was in fact afflicted with baldness, as would here appear, the fact would be more than ordinarily noticeable. The injunction to "go up" has been thought by some to be a derisive reference to the ascent of Elijah by the whirlwind into heaven, but this is most unlikely. Probably, since the prophet was already toiling up the three thousand feet climb from Jericho to the central highlands, passing Bethel on the way, the expression was intended to urge him to continue his climb without turning aside to lodge in the town.

Elisha himself was a kindly man and from other recorded incidents of his career more inclined to be indulgent towards youngsters than the reverse. The case of the woman whose two boys were to be sold as slaves, of

the Shunamite and her child, of the sons of the prophets at Gilgal in the days of the famine, of the lad whose axe fell into the river, all these picture Elisha as a man to whom young people came with their troubles in confidence that he would help. That he was an excessively tender-hearted man is revealed in the later story of his encounter with Hazael of Syria. During that interview he came to a point where he could control his inner feelings no longer, and he broke down and wept. To Hazael's astonished enquiry as to the reason for this display of emotion he responded "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do to the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child" (2 Kings 8. 12). To Hazael's indignant rejoinder that he would never be guilty of such enormities the prophet replied sadly "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria". He knew full well what the intoxication of unexpected power would do to the Syrian soldier, and he could not bear the thought. In after days, when Hazael had become king as Elisha had foretold, he did indeed do those things which had caused Elisha so much grief. From these indications of Elisha's feelings for the young it is evident that his apparent reaction in the case of these lads of Bethel is altogether out of character, and this points to an appraisal of the precise nature of what is called in the narrative "cursing them in the name of the Lord".

"He turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord." "Turned back" is not *shub*, "to return", but *panah*, to face the other party. Elisha stood, and regarded his tormentors. As he stood he spoke, and continued upon his way. There are three principal words rendered "curse" in the Old Testament, *alah* for an oath, an execration or imprecation, *cherem* which denotes an object or person which is to be sacrificed to God or to the gods, and *galal*, to disesteem, despise, or make light of. *Galal* in its feminine form *gelalah* means to revile. The word in this narrative is *galal*, and this can only imply that Elisha treated the insult with contempt or disdain, made light of it, telling the lads that he did so because of the God whom he served, and having said that, passed on. A number of other occurrences of *galal* in the Old Testament illustrate this meaning; it is translated "lightly esteemed" for example in 1 Sam. 2. 30, "them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be

lightly esteemed", and "a light thing" in 1 Sam. 18. 23. "... David said, seemeth it a light thing to be a king's son-in-law"; Isa. 49. 6 "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant"; 2 Kings 20. 10. "Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees"; 2 Kings 3. 18. "This is but a light thing in the eyes of the Lord; he will deliver the Moabites into your hand." When Hagar "despised" Sarai in Gen. 16. 4-5 "despise" is *galal*; Hagar certainly did not "curse" Sarai, she treated her lightly as an object of contempt. There are many similar instances. The rendering of *galal* by "curse" would be incongruous, and so would it have been recognised in the case under consideration had not the sequel to the story suggested to students of past times, more obsessed with the supposed vengeance of God than His inherent tolerance, that the bears appeared in consequence of a curse pronounced by an angry prophet. The correct view of this episode is undoubtedly that Elisha turned, looked at the lads, made light of them and their remarks, in the name of God, and went on his way unperturbed.

There remains the very real fact of the two bears. The story reads as if they came out of the forest immediately upon Elisha's "curse", but this does not necessarily follow. The chronicler, however, evidently had the impression that the two factors were connected and that this sequel was in the nature of retribution for the insult. On the other hand, it is hardly conceivable that Elisha would refrain from taking a hand in repelling the animals and the fact that he is not mentioned seems to indicate that he had left the scene before the bears appeared. There is no need to think that any kind of Divine instigation lay behind their attack upon the lads; the Books of Kings are historical records of the times, compiled by men who sought to produce a factual record of happenings and events, and the fact that they, from their standpoint, may have implied a Divine intervention in a matter like this only goes to reflect their own outlook but, in the absence of a plain statement to the contrary, by no means invests their impression with Divine authority. All that can be said here is that following the lads' insults and Elisha's indifferent reaction, two bears emerged from the forest and attacked them. That kind of happening was not at all uncommon in Israel at the time; the land was fairly thickly forested; bears, jackals and lions abounded. Quite a few instances of such encounters between man and beast occur in

the Old Testament and stories such as that of Samson and again of David shew that the average Israelite was usually able to beat off or to kill the beast.

The bears "*tare forty and two of them*". A cursory reading evokes a vision of forty-two mangled bodies lying around, but this is not good enough. No one could expect that number of healthy boys to stand still whilst just two bears attacked each of them in turn. And if the bulk of the party did not run away and so escape it can only be because they joined together to drive the bears away or kill them. David, at little more than the same age, pursued singlehanded a bear which had snatched a lamb from his flock, took hold of him by his muzzle, rescued the lamb and killed the bear. (1 Sam. 17. 37). The word here rendered "*tare*" (*baga*) has a wide range of meaning. Basically, it means to divide or to cleave, and from this, to rend or tear, to make a breach or break through. 2 Sam. 23. 16 and 1 Chron. 11. 18 both speak of three mighty warriors who "*broke through*" an enemy host; other Israelite fighters in 2 Kings 3. 26 tried to "*break through*" to the King of Edom in battle. Isa. 35. 6 says that in the wilderness shall waters "*break out*", and in 2 Chron. 21. 17 the invading Philistines came to "*break into*" Judah. All these use the same word "*baga*" which here is rendered "*tare*".

If it were not for the fact of the stipulated number it could be well concluded that this primary sense of "*breaking through*" was intended and that the bears merely scattered the party. Since however it is expressly required that forty-two of the total number were personally affected it must probably be taken that the parallel meaning of "*rending*" or "*tearing*" is more fitting. All the requirements of the case are then satisfied by assuming that the party as a whole returned the bears' attack with sticks and stones or any other handy weapon, endeavouring to drive them back to the forest, and that in the ensuing melee forty-two of them received slashes or other wounds from the animals' claws. Probably no one was killed or even seriously hurt; this might not have been the first or the last time that they were involved in a similar fight. It was only the fact that this particular incident coincided with their ill-advised abuse of God's prophet that gave opportunity to the chronicler to suggest that, this time at least, their misadventure was a judgment upon them for wrongdoing.

Why was so apparently trivial a story recorded? Whatever our view of the outlook

manifested by the unknown scribe who compiled this part of the Book of Kings it has to be accepted that its inclusion and preservation in what has since become the Word of God is by the overruling power of the Holy Spirit and therefore not without purpose. Is it that men of later generations, reflecting upon the story, may come to realise that the Most High, the Creator of all things and source of life to all living creatures, is by no means the sanguinary, vengeful Deity so often suggested? The creature is far less tolerant than the Creator when it comes to treatment of the agnostic and the atheist; the disciple much less disposed than his Lord to take the taunting and opposition good-humouredly and with rancour. When the villagers of Samaria closed their doors against the Lord and His little band the disciples excitedly requested that they be given power to call down fire from heaven upon the unbelievers "*as Elijah did*". The sad story of religious intolerance through the ages reveals how necessary it is that examples be preserved in Holy Writ to stress how utterly alien this is to the Divine character. It is true that "*the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth*" (Psa. 34. 16) and no man will escape eventual retribution for the things he has done which deserve retribution. "*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6. 7). Evil and sin must and will be banished, and the time will surely come when evildoers will no longer defile God's creation. But this involves the deliberate rejection of God and His principles of goodness and rightdoing in the face of full knowledge and opportunity. The sinner perishes because he is inherently evil and there is no goodness left in him; deliberately and in full knowledge of the consequences he turns away from God, and God has to let him go.

That is Divine judgment, certain and inexorable. But by no stretch of the imagination can the boisterous horseplay of a crowd of healthy youngsters be considered an offence to God meriting punishment. It is hardly likely that the children who gathered round Jesus were all paragons of virtue; He probably had a few unruly ones to deal with, at times. And like Elisha, He knew how much importance to attach to the things they said and did. The ease with which the wrong conclusion can be drawn from the story of this incident in Elisha's life is, perhaps, a measure of the ease with which we can cry for swift judgment upon an apparent dishonour upon

the Divine Name or transgression of the Divine Law when all the time God looks down in His wisdom and rightly appraises the matter as a light thing not worthy of notice. Jesus spoke of those who scrupulously tithed mint and anise and cummin, and neglected the weightier matters. There is a

strong case for His disciples to learn well the principle He sought then to inculcate, and carefully to discern the difference between those things which are truly an abomination in the sight of God and those which, in His clear sight, can well be "*esteemed as a light thing*".

THE SPIRIT OF POWER

The work of the Holy Spirit

"Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." (Acts 1. 8).

This was the promise which restored the disciples' faith just before our Lord's Ascension. For five or six weeks since His death they had been in a condition of perplexity, not quite sure what was going to happen or in which way they would continue the work they had been doing in these three years past. "*Tarry ye in Jerusalem*" He had said "*until ye be endued with power from on high*" (Luke 24. 49). That expression must have been associated in their minds with the promised coming of the Holy Spirit: "*ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence*" (Acts 1. 5), for Jesus had made it plain to them that after His departure they would experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a manner previously unknown to them. "*The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*" (John 14. 26).

Now this association of the Holy Spirit of God with the idea of power or energy—the word is *dunamis* which means energy actively exerted and is the basis of our word dynamic—was a very familiar one to the disciples. They knew from their reading of the Law and the Prophets that the Holy Spirit is the power that executes the mighty works of creation, gives life and vitality to all living things, conferred upon God's warriors of olden time superhuman physical strength whereby they wrought great works in His Cause, inspired His prophets with visions and dreams and knowledge of coming things beyond the ability of men to discover unaided. They knew all this, and now, inconspicuous and untalented men that they were, they themselves became recipients of this mysterious ability to perform great and wonderful works which patently they could never have done in their own natural strength. "*Ye shall receive power*"; the reality of that experience is attested by the manner in which this group of untutored and inexperienced men set out

after Pentecost to preach Christ and His Kingdom against the formidable opposition mounted against them. By the power of the Spirit they spoke in many tongues to men of many nations, withstood the threatenings of the authorities who sought to suppress their work, and in no uncertain fashion gave witness to the fact of the Resurrection. A few weeks earlier they had all been in hiding in fear for their lives; now they stood before the people preaching the new faith and defying the authorities to stop them. "*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*" (Acts 4. 19-20). That was the reaction of Peter and John to those who sat in judgment upon them, and there was nothing their judges could do about it.

This is the Holy Spirit. Invisible but all-powerful, it effects the stupendous works of creation, bringing all things into existence. If the astronomers are right, throughout the regions of space new worlds are continually being born in the mighty crucibles of the stars. Across the vast distances which separate star from star there constantly flow streams of radiant energy which eventually reach their destinations and accomplish some great work in the processes of Nature. So is the Holy Spirit, giving light amid darkness, illumining the minds of men and making them to understand things which could not otherwise take shape in human thought. The vehicle of all life, this power initiates new life in the hearts of believers, sustaining them in the vicissitudes of earthly existence, bringing them through the transition of death into a new environment, conferring upon them new bodies in which life is renewed and continues. There is nothing in space and nothing in time but is controlled and determined by this supreme and all-embracing power, the Holy Spirit of God.

This is the true doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The power of God, operating to create and sustain all things, living and non-living, to convey His commands and fulfil His Will,

this is the Holy Spirit. The ultimate source of the Holy Spirit in God the Eternal no man can understand. How it is that God is, and that we exist, and know that we exist, that external to our own being and personality there is a material universe which we can see and hear and feel, we do not know. The mysteries of God and of existence are too great to comprehend. But we must accept and believe in this Divine energy pulsating through all that God has made and reaching out to the extremity of His creation, effective in the performance of His will, whether it be in the physical process of material creation, or the instruction and enlightenment of those to whom He has given life. That Divine energy which has its centre and source in God is the outward evidence to man that God is, that the things that happen in space and time have their origin in, and derive their reality from, Eternal Deity.

Scientific men are devoting a great deal of their time nowadays to investigating the source of the energy which drives the Universe. One fruit of their labours has been the atomic bomb, which produces and dissipates an enormous amount of energy in a fraction of time by "splitting the atom". Atoms are microscopic "piece parts" of which all material things are made and there are millions of atoms in a grain of dust, but atoms themselves are made of even more microscopic parts and when some of those parts are separated there is a tremendous release of energy. This occurs continuously in the sun and it is from the sun that the earth derives the energy to keep it going. We feel that energy as heat, and we see it as light, but it is itself invisible. Every day the sun lifts forty thousand gallons of water from the ocean for each man, woman and child now living on the earth, carries it across the sky, and drops it as rain so that the processes of life can continue. In the centre of the sun an atom divides and sets free a quantity of energy—scientists call it radiation. That radiation travels through space at the speed of light and when it reaches the earth it is seen as light. It falls upon a head of wheat growing in the field and sets in motion a series of changes whereby the plant takes a little of the surrounding air and a little moisture from the ground and out of them produces the material substances of the wheat grain. But there is more in that grain than came from the air and the ground. That radiation which travelled from the sun has also been transformed into part of the substance of that

wheat grain. The light of the sun, winging its way to earth, in a very real sense enters into man to support his life.

So is the Holy Spirit, Divine energy extending into all places of God's dominion, all-powerful in executing His will. Perhaps this is nowhere better shown than in the opening verses of Genesis. *"In the beginning the earth was without form and void, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light'".* The temptation to interpret those words in terms of modern science is strong indeed. The word "moved" in this text means to flutter or undulate and "waters" is, not the seas, but "tehom", the primeval abyss. Sir James Jeans a generation ago was the first to point out how accurately this expression fits modern knowledge of the nature of light, a cyclic or undulatory series of "waves" of many frequencies. These two initial verses in Genesis might well picture the momentous happening at the dawn of time when the Holy Spirit of God began to operate in the primæval nothingness to initiate the complex system of radiation and matter which constitutes the material universe—and at that time, in an instant, there was light!

In precisely the same manner the Holy Spirit is the vehicle of life, whether upon this earth or anywhere else. The ancients knew this. Speaking of the living creatures of the earth, the Psalmist says *"Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth"*. (Psa. 104. 30). *"If he set his heart upon man"* says Elihu in Job 34. 14-15. *"If he gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust."* The power which makes life possible in any organism, from man downwards, is the Holy Spirit. The historians of the Old Testament recognised this when they credited the possession of apparently superhuman power to the influence of the Spirit, as in the case of Samson or Jephthah or others of whom it is said that the Spirit of the Lord came upon them and they performed mighty deeds. Whether in Old Testament or New Testament, the idea behind the expression Holy Spirit is that of Divine power, Divine energy, operating in creation to the accomplishment of the Divine purpose.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of our Lord during His sojourn on earth at His First Advent. The power of the Holy Spirit, which is of the Father, was possessed and exercised by the Son. Of His exalted

position before coming to earth the writer to the Hebrews says that He upheld all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1. 3). In other words, creation was maintained and directed by His command in the power of the Spirit. And that power was His even during the temporary period of His humanity. Jesus Himself declared that the Father "gave not the Spirit by measure" unto Him (Jno. 3. 34): in other words, He possessed the power of the Spirit to an unlimited degree and that was manifested in one, out of many aspects, in the works of healing which he performed. "The power of the Lord was present to heal them" says Luke (Luke 5. 17). In the three instances when it is said that "virtue" went out of Him to heal the afflicted, that word "virtue" is this same word *dunamis*, power, the same Holy Spirit by which all His works were done. This close association of the Holy Spirit with the Son is an important element of Christian doctrine and it is very plainly indicated in the Book of Revelation. In the "throne scene" of the fourth chapter there are "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God" (better, the sevenfold Spirit of God). But in the fifth chapter the One like a sacrificial lamb standing before the throne has "seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" and this corresponds with the headstone, which is Christ, of Zech. 3. 8 to 4. 10, where likewise are the seven eyes, "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth". The "seven spirits" of course allude to the Holy Spirit's function of universal surveillance and operation "to and fro through the whole earth". The union and distinction between the Father, the Son and the Spirit is indicated in Rev. 1. 4-5 where the salutation comes from the Eternal, and from the "seven spirits", and from Jesus Christ. The unity of the Son and the Spirit is shown in Rev. 3. 1 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" and repeated seven times in chapters two and three. The Millennial invitation "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Rev. 22. 17) is the proclamation of the Lord and His Church and here again Jesus calls Himself "the Spirit". As though anticipating this, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians thirty years before John saw the visions of Revelation, announced the same truth. The Lord, he says, is the Spirit, and by the power of the Spirit we are being transformed into an image of the glory of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3. 17-18).

But the greatest manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit is seen in resurrection. The work of the Spirit in material creation, in the development and sustaining of life, in the illuminating of believing minds, in the transformation of imperfect, deathbound men and women to the deathless glory of Divine sonship, all this is eclipsed in the revealed Word of God by the greatest exhibition of power of all time, the resurrection of our Lord Christ from the dead. "The surpassing greatness of his power" says Paul "The energising of his mighty strength which he exerted in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his own right hand in the heaven." (Eph. 1. 19-20). The death and resurrection of the Son of God still has elements which are difficult for us to understand, but that a mighty operation of the Holy Spirit was responsible for the empty tomb and the entry into celestial glory of Him who died upon the Cross is incontrovertible. And the Apostle indicates that a similar direct action by the Father will effect the "change" to celestial conditions of those who follow the Lord to the end of the way. "God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by his own power"—*dunamis*—(1 Cor. 6. 14). Divine energy will go forth to translate the life that is adapted to this world into another world, into another order of existence, with a new and different body adapted to the new environment. Like all changes, this change will require energy; that energy emanates from the Holy Spirit of God.

In the final age of this world's probation God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2. 28). Isaiah saw something of this and he described the coming day when "the Spirit is poured upon us from on high" and the result will be peace and quietness and assurance for ever (Isa. 32. 15-18). Thus is pictured a period in human history when the power of God in active operation for world conversion and the rehabilitation of the planet will be so outwardly manifest that none can deny it. The wonders of present-day scientific achievements are as nothing to the marvels of Divine creation and the achievements of the future, to be brought within man's reach and understanding when he learns to co-operate with Divine power instead of fighting against it. The eyes of the Lord going to and fro through all the earth will find only peace and quietness and assurance for ever. For God said, long ago, in His immeasurable wisdom and foresight, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man".

FROM A PRISON CELL

Part 2. The Good Pleasure of His Will

Reflections on the
"Prison Epistles"

In the opening verses of his letter to the Ephesians, after the short introductory greeting, Paul piles up statement after statement in an almost bewildering way. The reflective mind is staggered by the immensity of the arguments as feature after feature is brought to view. This succession of amazing arguments presents, in the realm of religious thought, an appearance like a series of mighty mountain peaks towering up into heaven one up against the other, and stretching as far as the eye can see. So closely do the sentences run into each other, it is not easy to separate them one from another in order to take them each singly to analyse and explain them in turn, or in detail. By very careful differentiation, it is possible to divide the section (vs. 3-14) into three smaller sections, each of which seems to have its own outstanding particulars of teaching to impart. These three sub-sections are verses 3-6, verses 7-12, and verses 13-14. The first begins with ascription of praise to God for all His favours in general to the believer through Christ; the second with *"In whom WE have been blessed"* with a part in those favours; the third with *"In whom YE ALSO"* have come to receive a share with those who first hoped (or trusted) in Christ. The first one deals with God's foreordination to take to Himself a family of heavenly sons; the second shows them as a first instalment resulting from the operation of a plan of reconciliation embracing both heavenly and earthly things; the third places on record the bestowment of a token or pledge of Divine assurance that the full and complete inheritance for these sons of God is sure without fail. Towering high above all these assurances is the assertion that everything forms part of God's unchanging purpose—*"according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself"*—*"according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own Will"* (vv. 9 and 11). In the words of a later section (Eph. 3. 11) they were *"according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"*.

Three times the Apostle makes reference to varying aspects of God's Will. First (in v.5), he speaks of the process of adoption as being *"according to the good pleasure of his Will"*, and lastly (v.11) he asserts that the whole

scheme of reconciliation is *"according to the counsel of his Will"*. Thus the outworking of God's Will is seen to be in absolute accordance with the counsel given by unerring Wisdom, and though at its first inception it was in the nature of a God-kept mystery, known only to Himself, it has now been revealed, and shown to be in full conformity with God's unfathomed appreciation of all that is holy and true and good. The prompting motive throughout, at every stage, is God's free and unmerited grace—(v.6) *"to the glory of his grace"* (v.7)—*"according to the riches of his grace"*. Wisdom, Love and Power are thus set forth by the Apostle as the attributes behind the whole design, and as operating from before the foundation of the world towards the completion of the universal Plan. At the centre of the whole plan God has set "One" upon whom He has placed His own gracious Spirit, and from which "act of placement" that One has taken His title and His Name. That honoured "One" is called "The Christ". "The Christ" is rightly depicted as the recipient of an "outpouring". In Mosaic times this "out-pouring" was represented in the anointing oil of the "chosen" person as God's High Priest. Hence the Apostle can speak of privileges embodied and residing in Christ as from distant days, but which became available to the follower of the Lord in these special days of grace. Thus we read of spiritual blessings in the heavenlies *"in Christ"*, of God having fore-ordained us unto adoption as sons *"through Jesus Christ"*; of the grace, which He freely bestowed on us *"in the Beloved"*; of God's purpose to sum up all things *"in Christ"*; and that those *"should be unto the praise of His glory"* who had first hoped *"in Christ"*. Thus, in the far distant times, God had issued from His own possession and by His own sole authority, a whole galaxy of honours and preferments to and for His Chosen One when time and circumstances should cause that Chosen One to appear. *"In Christ"* the fulness (*"pleroma"*) of Divinity was appointed to dwell (Col. 2. 9).

But more than this, all other beings in heaven and earth, all things visible and invisible, whether thrones, dominions, principalities or powers, were created in relationship to Him, for it was God's will for Him to hold them together, as a sovereign prince might co-

ordinate and hold together many subordinate thrones. (Col. 1. 17). Their honours and stations were created and conferred to be ready for them to bear subordinate relationship to more exalted authority when He should reach His lofty throne. All this exalted superiority was vested "in Christ" before the world began and forms part of God's primordial out-pouring for His coming "Chosen One".

Twice the Apostle refers to an enabling power bestowed by God, the possession of which would activate and empower the members of the "Chosen One" to achieve the destiny to which they had been called. "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise" (vv. 3 and 13). The Holy Spirit is God's creative instrument, which can bestow blessing upon such as are in Christ—(spiritual light, spiritual food, and intense spiritual desire)—and at the same time mark or seal them as God's own. This is an outflow of Divine energy from the throne of God, in order to produce in His elect a disposition and character like His own—Divine power creating in the object of His choice a character that can contain and retain for ever attributes of Divinity.

But all save one of this elect company have been subject to the power of sin. Twice Paul speaks of redemption for all such. First, such redemption as is represented by the "forgiveness of sin". But that is not the full measure of redemption contemplated. Full redemption belongs to a later day, and will imply much

"Paul the aged"

Many years had Paul preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming it as a herald, telling it as good news, but now those days were past and done. His mission now was that of a teacher, giving quiet but none the less effective instruction to those who came to his modest lodging to learn of him. Did the stalwart old warrior, hero of a thousand battles, repine at being thus laid aside? We know that he did not; we know that he employed his powers with as keen diligence as ever to the new task his Lord had set him.

And for what purpose? What was the incentive that led Samuel quietly to remain in his house at Ramah, teaching those few young men who had gathered round him? What was in the mind of Paul as he stayed, day by day, in that house somewhere in the back streets of Rome, receiving and discoursing with those who came to him, the while the busy outer world pursued its interests and the

more than forgiveness of sin. There is a Day of redemption provided for—"the year of My redeemed". To redeem them from sin was ordained to cost their Lord and Leader His life. That Leader had to die for them, to procure cleansing for them from their sins, and further to enfold them about with His own spotless righteousness. To each forgiven follower the privilege was ordained for him to win his place in Christ, and be found in Him, by partaking of Christ's sufferings—being conformed to Jesus' death. It was thus necessary for the Chosen One—the Logos of creative days—to whom it pleased God to ordain pre-eminence in everything, to stoop down from his lofty place and be found in fashion as a man, and become humbled unto death so that He might redeem the intended sons from sin and death, and then when Himself raised from the dead, become their leader—as well as shepherd and bishop of their souls—to lead these many sons up to the ordained heights of glory, honour and immortality.

These, then, are the high peak points of Paul's opening argument in this great letter from a prison cell. Are all these points of doctrine new items of revelation never before enunciated till his prison days? Did Paul say nothing on these great themes in Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans? And had Jesus nothing to say on any of these doctrines?

We shall see!

(To be continued)

millions of the great Roman empire waited for the Gospel? It was, to use words first uttered in another connection, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord". (Luke 1. 17). John the Baptist was a man of the old dispensation, the Jewish Age, and he appeared in the end of that Age to make ready a nucleus who would take up the work of the new dispensation, the Gospel Age, and carry it forward to a glorious conclusion. John himself never entered the Gospel Age; his work finished, he was laid aside to await his final destiny. The people he prepared took up the flaming torch and carried it on, passing it in turn to their successors. Paul knew that, and he devoted the last years of his life to teaching those who were to guard the interests of the Christian faith in Rome and plant them firmly in the new Roman Age which was to dawn after the persecution in which Paul himself lost his life had ceased.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter I. The Prophet and the Book

A strange and thrilling time was the Era of the Restoration, when fifty thousand eager pioneers left Babylon and set out across the desert for the ruined country of Judea, there to build a Temple and a homeland. Few of them had seen Judea before; seventy years had elapsed since their fathers had been taken captive to Babylon, fifty-one since the Temple and city of Jerusalem had been destroyed, and most of the returning pilgrims had been born and brought up in Babylon and knew of their ancestors' homeland only by repute and description. But now Babylon was fallen, given into the power of Cyrus the Persian conqueror, and Cyrus had granted leave to all of the Jewish community in his new conquest to go back to the land of their fathers and there restore their Temple, their national worship, and some semblance of their old-time communal life, requiring only that they continue loyal to the suzerainty of Persia. So they came, bearing with them the sacred vessels of the Temple so ruthlessly despoiled by the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar half a century ago, exhibited as trophies of conquest in the Babylonish Temple of Marduk, and now destined to stand in their rightful place and serve their rightful role in the ritual of the worship of the God of Heaven. No wonder they sang, as the Psalmist says they did sing, on that arduous journey *"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the nations, The Lord hath done great things for them"*. (Psa. 126. 1-2). No wonder they came into the desolated land and camped among the ruined buildings of what had once been Jerusalem *"beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King"*, seeing around them by the eye of faith the scenery and the architecture of the glorious land that was soon to be, and they themselves, the people of the Lord, exalting Israel once again to a place among the nations, mighty in the strength of the God of Israel.

It was not long before the golden vision faded and the old enemies of greed, indifference and moral laxity asserted themselves. Commercialism replaced sacrifice; the acquisition of property and the building of houses attracted more attention than the erection of

the Temple of God. The community suffered accordingly. *"Is it time for you, O ye"* thundered Haggai the prophet *"to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this Temple lie waste? Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. Why? saith the Lord of Hosts. Because of my Temple that is waste and ye attend every man unto his own house!"* (Hag. 1. 4-9). Sixteen years it was since the pioneers came to Jerusalem with such high hopes, and this was all there was to shew for it! No wonder Zerubbabel, the governor of the colony, and Joshua the High Priest, were ashamed as they led the people in a great outburst of enthusiasm which sought to rectify the wrongs which had been allowed to develop.

It is at this point that Zechariah comes into the picture. A much younger man than his fellow-prophet Haggai, he had nevertheless shared in the journey from Babylon and from the nature of his prophetic visions shews that he must have known much about life in that notorious city. Like Haggai, he was possessed of a burning zeal for the establishment in Judea of a true theocratic State, and a certainty that all the Divine promises relating to the coming glory of Israel must most certainly come to pass. In this the two prophets were markedly different from the Governor and the High Priest, both of whom seem to have failed to display those qualities of leadership and foresight necessary for so great a purpose.

Zerubbabel had been appointed Governor of the colony by Cyrus, responsible to him for maintaining its loyalty to Persia. The appointment was obviously a diplomatic move; Zerubbabel was the grandson and senior living descendant of Jehoiachin the last legal king of Judah, who died in Babylon. He was probably in his early thirties and does not seem to have been particularly distinguished. Joshua the High Priest was a grandson of Seraiah, High Priest at the time of Jerusalem's destruction, who was executed by Nebuchadnezzar; he was most likely a much older man. These two figure largely in Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah himself was of the priestly tribe. He says of himself that he was the son of Berachiah and grandson of Iddo, although in the Book of Ezra he is described as the son of Iddo. (Zech. 1. 1-7. Ezra

5. 1 & 6. 14). The explanation appears to be that Berachiah died before his father Iddo, that Iddo was the head of one of the twenty-four courses into which the Levitical priesthood was divided and that upon his death this honour passed directly to his grandson Zechariah. (See Neh. 12. 16). From this latter text it is evident that Zechariah was still alive in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah some seventy years after the Return, by which time he must have been of a considerable age. Tradition has it that—unusually for a Hebrew prophet—he survived and died peacefully in extreme old age and was buried beside his old friend and colleague Haggai. His prophetic ministry must therefore have spanned at least fifty years.

The Book of Zechariah consists of three main divisions, and the style and subject matter of the third is of a vastly different nature from that of the other two. The first division, occupying chapters 1 to 6, dated in the second year of Darius (520 B.C.) the year in which the building of the Temple was resumed, comprises a series of visions the subject of which is the restoration of Jerusalem and of Judah as a nation, leading onward in time to the consummation of Israel's history in the Millennial Kingdom and accepted Divine rule over all the earth. These visions are highly symbolic and the imagery is taken from the writings of the prophets who preceded Zechariah; to understand their meaning to any extent even today requires a reasonably detailed knowledge of the Old Testament. Thus in the first vision the prophet sees Israel in captivity to the great nations of then current history—Assyria, Babylon, Persia—and the time come for God to redeem His promise of deliverance for Jerusalem. From that the scene changes to the preparation of the Promised Land for the returning multitudes and a hint that the complete fulfilment of this must extend into a then far future day. Next comes the preparation of the royal Priest-King who is to rule "in that day" accompanied by the Divine instrument of salvation forged from amongst men—the "servant" of Isaiah, to be a light to the nations to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Following that comes the promulgation of Divine Law which will root out all evil and establish everlasting righteousness, and finally the regathering of all from the many dispersions which have afflicted God's people during the course of history, and the full establishment of the Millennial order of things. In these visions Zechariah takes his

stand in the land of Judah of his own day and looks forward to the end of time, describing what he realises are the principles of the Divine purpose yet to be worked out. In all of this he gives evidence of a clear-sighted understanding of the basic laws of God and the road which, not only Israel, but all men, must traverse to reach the objective God has set.

The second division, given two years later, whilst the rebuilding of the Temple was actively proceeding, covers chapters 7 and 8 and consists of two "oracles", or messages from Heaven to be declared to those of the people in Zechariah's day directly concerned. Although at first sight these chapters appear to be of purely local application to events in the time of Zechariah, closer examination reveals that here is enshrined a statement of the essential principles upon which God ultimately bases His acceptance of Israel at the end of the Age and the manner in which He will use Israel in the work of His Kingdom. The entire picture is presented in the form of what, in mediæval England, was called a masquerade, a kind of play in which the actors take their places, asking and answering questions in which the message to be given is contained. In this instance representatives from the religious fraternity of Israel come to Zechariah to enquire as to the propriety of certain ceremonial observances; the prophet tells them, in effect, that since their past observances have been characterised by ritualism rather than sincerity, God is not interested in their offerings anyway. This gives opportunity for a stirring exhortation to sincere repentance and reformation of life that they might be truly fitted for the Divine purpose; that purpose is then revealed to be nothing less than the exaltation of Israel and the Israel land as the centre of Divine administration on earth when the due time should come, but all this is dependent upon faith and sincerity. So the terminal point of the oracles is the same as that of the visions of chapters 1-6, the glory and blessing of the Millennial Kingdom. In the visions the necessity as well as the certainty of Divine power and action to establish the "new heavens and earth" is shewn; in the two oracles the necessity of repentance and willing subservience to the Divine will on the part of Israel before the new heavens and earth can become a reality is pictured. With both these factors established the groundwork is laid for the final division of the Book. This tells of events more closely associated with the actual

passing of the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God. This third division, chapters 9 to 14, is of a fundamentally different style and nature from the earlier parts. Where chapters 1 to 6 comprise a succession of symbolic pictures based on past Old Testament literature, and 7 to 8 are hortatory, enshrining principles of Divine Law applicable to any Age and generation, these last chapters 9 to 14 are frankly prophetic, foreseeing the shape of things to come in the logical outworking of events determined on a basis of cause and effect. It is easy, and it is true, to say that the revelation of happenings yet in the future is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit, but it has also to be remembered that the Spirit-filled mind of a man like Zechariah, attuned in a very real sense to the mind of God, was of itself empowered to foresee the outcome, in future history, of events and forces belonging to his own time. The prophet clearly comprehended the ultimate purpose of God; he understood the manner in which, and the extent to which, the unbelief and the belief, the opposition and the concurrence, of men in his own day and in future times would influence and modify the road by which that goal would eventually be reached, and by that means the Spirit was able to guide him to an appreciation of "things which shall be hereafter" in so definite a fashion that he was able to set down in these chapters so detailed a description of things which had not yet—and in great degree have not yet—transpired.

The striking difference between the two earlier divisions of the Book and this one has led a number of scholars of the "Critical" school to claim that chapters 9 to 14 are not by the Zechariah of the Restoration era but by an unknown writer of much later times. The arguments are, in the main, the familiar ones used by such scholars to throw doubt on the genuineness of almost every Book of the Bible, and, being based primarily upon an unwillingness to admit the power of the Spirit in the compilation of these writings, need not be taken seriously. In point of fact, this difference in style is logically to be expected. The first two divisions, written in the second and fourth years of King Darius, are the product of Zechariah's youthful years; he was a man of round about thirty. Chapters 9 to 14 are not dated, but the general background and a certain amount of internal evidence would point to a time nearly half a century later, at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It may reasonably be taken that the prophet had reach-

ed the maturity and insight of old age after a lifetime spent "in tune" with God and this in itself amply accounts for the difference in style and the rich colouring of his prophetic vision.

This section commences with an outline sketch of the forces that were to affect Israel after the then present Persian domination had passed away. A new ruling power was to come upon the stage, one that we now know to have been the Greek power, which overthrew Persia. In this crisis Jerusalem was to be preserved, for the good work of the Restoration was still bearing some fruit. Hope of the climax to Israel's expectation would come to the front; the promised King would be manifested and offer Himself to the people. But despite Divine assurance that He would indeed ultimately reign, a darker hue is drawn over the scene. Israel apostasises and rejects the King who is also their Shepherd, and for an Age that rejection endures whilst God as it were turns His back upon the unrepentant people. But He has not done so for ever nor even in reality; in the fulness of time and when some through the generations have shewn themselves ready to serve Him, God arouses to action. There is a regathering of His ancient people to their ancient land, a time of opening of eyes and of repentance, and a great cleansing, preparatory to the coming of Messiah and the Millennial Kingdom. Simultaneously there is a moving of powers of evil in the world in opposition, seeking to destroy what seems to be the incipient establishment of the new and righteous world order. The consequence is a further test of faith, a second apostasy and a second rejection of the Shepherd; but a remnant preserves faith and to this remnant the Lord comes in complete and permanent deliverance. So transpires the great event to which all human history has been tending, the revelation of the Lord from Heaven to all mankind, the overthrow of all evil dominating power and the establishment of Divine sovereignty on earth. The glorious vision closes in the spectacle of, not only Israel, but the whole of humankind, delivered from the darkness of sin and death, fully entered at last into the eternal light and life of the illimitable future.

The Book of Zechariah is a remarkable book; remarkable because of its unshakeable confidence in the ultimate execution of the Divine purpose despite the shortcomings and frailty of man. The prophet lived his life in an age that of itself provided a picture in

miniature of the glories he foresaw in prophetic vision, but it was an age that, after Zechariah's death, belied its early promise and the light faded into darkness again. He himself in full confidence of faith looked to-

ward a day when the darkness would not return, and in so doing coined, at the close of his book, a phrase which has become immortal; "*At evening time it shall be light*".

? ? QUESTION BOX ? ?

Q. *Is it correct to say that the Times of the Gentiles referred to by Jesus in Luke 21, 24 have now ended? (A.S.)*

* * *

A. The expression occurs only this once in the Bible. Jesus used it in connection with His foreview of the troubles soon to come upon the Jewish nation. "*... there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*" (Luke 21, 23-24). The succeeding verses make it clear that the ending of these "times" coincides with the events of the Second Advent so that at the least they span the period between the First and Second Advents. But Jerusalem was "trodden down of the Gentiles" for several centuries before that, and since the expression evidently refers to the domination not only of Jerusalem but of the land and people by "Gentile" nations, the fairest definition of these "times" is that they commenced when the old Hebrew monarchy came to an end in the 6th century B.C. at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and continue until the Israel people are again in full possession of their ancient land and capital, and—this is important—completely independent of the Gentile nations.

In 586 B.C. the last shreds of independence were wrested from Israel and Jerusalem was destroyed. Since that day no king has reigned on the "throne of the Lord" in Jerusalem and—apart from about a hundred years in the Maccabean period—no independent Jewish State existed until the year 1948. It has been argued that 1948 thus marked the end of the Times of the Gentiles, but a goodly part of Biblical Jerusalem remained in non-Jewish hands. The occupation of East Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities in 1967 renewed the claim that the Times of the Gentiles had now ended, but the fact is ignored that Jesus' words imply much more than the mere question of who administers affairs in the city itself. Until Israel is completely independent

of the remainder of the world and no longer subject to any kind of restraint or control from outside influence the Times of the Gentiles must be held to continue. It must not be forgotten that these "times" were imposed upon Israel because of their faithlessness to the Divine Covenant; it can hardly be expected that they will end until that faithlessness has been replaced by faith. The condemnation which ushered in this period, passed upon Zedekiah the last monarch to sit upon David's throne, is conclusive as to this. "*And thou, profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end; thus saith the Lord God; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown . . . I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it, and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him*" (Ezek. 21, 25). It might well be that the full end of the Times of the Gentiles will coincide with the revelation of our Lord in power for the deliverance of all men at the full end of the Age; that is the time when Israel will turn to God in full faith and repudiate the unbelief of the past. Contemporary events in the land of Israel may well indicate the close proximity of that great climax in human history so that it might be logically concluded that the end of the Times of the Gentiles is imminent, but not that they have actually, as yet, ended.

There will be a day when the Master will look upon us with eyes that pierce through to the naked soul and will say "I gave you a marvellous opportunity. I gave you an understanding of my message such as millions of earth's multitudes never received. I gave you a knowledge of my Truth such as many of my first disciples never had. I gave you the key to every problem which distressed mankind in your day, and I gave you the privilege of being heralds of my Kingdom. I gave you the opportunity which my followers in every century since Pentecost dreamed of and prayed for. What have you done with it?"

THE TRANSGRESSION OF ADAM

A suggestion

In point of time God created man slightly in advance of woman. In Genesis 2. 7 we read of Adam's creation, and in the following verses how he was placed in command of that wonderful Edenic home; then in verse 18, because of a need not so far supplied, God decided to give Adam a helpmate, and we are familiar with the account in the following verses how this was done. In a sense, God did not differentiate—though Eve was created after Adam, God looked upon them as one creation. This thought is clearly expressed in Genesis 1. 27, "*So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them*". It is difficult to comprehend just how beautiful and desirable was this helpmate of Adam's—a woman in perfection, the glory of man.

We have come a long way since Eden. The ravages of the fall have played havoc with the perfections of both male and female, but even today how pleasing is a truly beautiful woman—referring not only to beauty of form and features, but also to the qualities that go with them. A Christian woman in the health and bloom of youth, whose culture and morality is the highest we can find, is she not appealingly beautiful to every man who is correspondingly as untainted as possible with the corruptions that have spoiled the glory of Eden? In her perfection how desirable Eve must have been to her partner Adam; likewise would be Eve's regard for Adam. But their happiness in their perfection was spoiled; we do not know how long Adam and Eve lived together before the fall—the Scripture passes over that happy period without further comment.

In the third chapter of Genesis we learn of Eve's tempting by the serpent. Just what was this serpent? It must have been a creature or being quite different to much present day conception. Present understanding is often strongly coloured by what we have learned about him as a deceiver of evil intent. What we need to rid our minds of completely is that Adam and Eve would know nothing of a serpent in that light; they had neither heard or learned anything to cause suspicion in their minds about such a being. Twice in the Book of Revelation (12. 9; 20. 2) Satan, the devil, is referred to as the serpent. We can understand this now; but this was not revealed to any prior to the fall of Adam, nor was

it true of Satan before his fall from grace. Jesus said, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*" (Luke 10. 18—lightning is elsewhere translated "*bright shining*"). When did Jesus behold Satan's descent from the heavenly realms? Would it be when Satan, as the beautiful spirit being Lucifer, decided to usurp God's authority and power over his wonderful human creation on earth. We need to mark well that Satan was not degraded until AFTER man's fall!

We have, in the early verses of chapter three of Genesis, the deception of Eve. It would seem probable, one is inclined to say surely, that the "serpent" which tempted Eve was the beautiful angelic or spirit being Lucifer whom Jesus saw fall or leave the heavenly or spiritual realms. If such be so, Eve was faced with a powerful tempter. It would seem that God had not directly warned Eve about the tree and any result of eating its fruit. Adam had been explicitly informed, and it would seem that he instructed Eve, passing on to her what God had told him.

Note how the serpent breaks down Eve's opposition to his overtures—You will not surely die! God knows that if you eat of it your knowledge will increase and you will become gods yourselves! Did Eve take a second look at the tree and reason the probabilities of the serpent being right? At any rate she took the fruit and ate. It seemed good, it had a different flavour to the other fruits of the garden, and Eve hastened to let her husband share the find she had made. There was not a semblance of suspicion in the mind of Eve that she had done wrong. Did she narrate to Adam how this wonderful angelic being had appeared and informed her further about this tree that God had told them not to eat of, telling Adam she had sampled it, and of its immediate satisfying effect? How did Adam reason? Did he immediately conclude that Eve must die as a result of disobeying God's command, and feeling that he could not face life without his helpmate, elect to eat that he might die with her?

It is difficult unreservedly to accept such a thought—that Adam virtually committed suicide. Today, so far from the Fall, no matter how stringent the circumstances, mankind generally cleaves to life; it is recognised that if any do commit suicide they are at least

temporarily, of unsound mind. In his *perfection* would Adam deliberately surrender his life? Would it be more reasonable to conclude that Adam reasoned something like this: What does it mean, that Eve has eaten of this fruit and has not died—she is here before me, alive and well, and she says the fruit is good; that a beautiful angelic being passed on special information to her? Was he a messenger from God? Is this a further advanced stage in our existence; are we now to have more knowledge, to know the difference between good and evil?

Neither Adam or Eve had had any experience with death. It would seem almost certain that Adam had no idea of the kind of death that would follow disobedience; that was not revealed until God passed sentence (Gen. 3. 17-19). He did not know that the dying was a gradual process. It seems reasonable to conclude that doubt would enter Adam's mind when Eve confessed to have eaten, yet was still alive before him. Eve pressed Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, quite innocent that she was doing wrong—she was **COMPLETELY DECEIVED** by the serpent. The scripture states that "*by one man's disobedience many were made sinners*". Adam had to make a choice—either he hold fast to his creator's **DIRECT** instruction, or be persuaded by his wife's reasoning. His mind must have been questioning all the time, and instead of waiting until fully assured from his Creator about this new contingency, he regarded the suggestion of his helpmate, and from Eve's hand he took the proffered fruit and ate.

Weymouth's translation of 1 Timothy 2. 14 is interesting, "*Adam was not deceived, but his wife was thoroughly deceived, and became involved in transgression*". Eve indeed was thoroughly deceived; unlike Adam there were no doubts in her mind that the serpent was presenting new avenues of blessing to them. 2 Cor. 11. 3 is another interesting scripture—"I fear . . . that as the serpent beguiled Eve through subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ". If they should be beguiled **AS EVE**, they would really think they were right, though they had been led to believe and do wrong.

The old Lollards were called "Holdfasts", not only because of their firmness under persecution, but of their strong grasp of the truth. Coleridge said, with a practical aptness unusual with him: "What does not withstand has no standing-ground". "Hold fast, then, the

As soon as Adam took the fruit and ate of it, we read in Gen. 3. 7, "*the eyes of them BOTH were opened*"—they knew that they had done wrong. After the disobedience the Lord appears to them—he questions Adam first regarding his conduct, and Adam blames his wife—see Gen. 3. 12. The Lord then turns to Eve—"What is this that thou hast done?" Eve answers simply and truthfully, "*the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat*"—she knows **NOW** that she had been beguiled by the serpent, but she did not know that when she was tempting Adam.

In Gen. 3. 14, 15 the Lord sentences the serpent for his part in the rebellion to Divine rule. This one who was originally created among the highest of God's creatures in the spiritual realms, is debased lower than the lowest of His earthly creatures; dust is to be his meat, he cannot preserve his life, all he can look forward to is the dust of extinction.

In Gen. 3. 16-19 God sentences Adam and Eve. In sentencing Adam, God did not say, "Because you were beguiled by the serpent"; or "because you despised the life I offered you by deliberately electing to die"; but, "*because thou hast hearkened to the VOICE OF THY WIFE*". Adam allowed himself to be swayed into disobedience instead of strictly obeying the clear command of his Creator. As the bread-winner, how true to his experience was the sentence passed—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" . . ."

The sentences upon all three are still being carried out. The mills of God grind slowly but they grind exceeding sure. Though Satan has had a long reign and has been successful in deceiving nearly all mankind, he has but a short time to go—his kingdom will not stand much longer; the serpent is being regulated to the lowest of the low.

A wonderful arrangement, originally for the happiness of the human pair, was frustrated by the Fall, and degenerated into much unhappiness and disillusionment. However as students of God's word we rejoice to know where we are on the stream of time; the sentences upon the human pair and their progeny have all but been fulfilled—the prisoners of hope have served their sentence, and are about to be set free in the "times of restitution".

form of sound words, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus." Be modest, unostentatious in all that is your own, willing to concede everything you have a right to yield, but be scrupulous and immovable about all that is Christ's.

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 15 I John 3. 14-24

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (vs. 14-15).

In chapter 2 the one who loves his brother is abiding in the light; in this chapter he is passed into life. In chapter 2 the one who hates his brother is walking in darkness and knoweth not whither he goeth; in this chapter he is abiding in death. Once more the analogy between light and life, and between darkness and death, which forms so prominent a theme in John's epistle, is impressed upon our minds. Abiding in the light, we pass into life, through love. Walking in darkness, we eventually abide in death, because of hate. These are simple and easily-remembered equations and they are important ones too.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (vs. 16).

First of all let it be noticed that the two words "of God" have been supplied by the translators (like all words in the Bible printed in italics) in order to help out what they deemed to be the sense of the passage. Such words do not appear in the original Hebrew or Greek, but in many cases their insertion is desirable and even necessary, and justified in order accurately to express the thought in English words. In this case the two words are neither necessary nor desirable. It was natural for the translators to think of the great love of God which inspired Him to arrange and conduct the great Plan of salvation, even to the extent of sending His Son to die on man's behalf for man's redemption, but John is not thinking so much about the personality as about the attribute. He is not thinking so much about the Majesty on high as he is about the Love that reached down to earth. And so sure is he that his readers are following with him in thought and entering into his thoughts that when he comes to refer to his Lord and their Lord, Jesus the Redeemer, he uses the personal pronoun instead of the proper name. *"Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us"*. He has been talking so much about love, love of the brethren, love for the brethren, love of the

saints for the world, love of a man for his brother, but now he rises to the height of the greatest love that ever has been. Hereby perceive we the love, the love that is manifest above all others. *"Greater love hath no man than this"* said Jesus *"that a man lay down his life for his friends"*. That man was Jesus; and because every one of John's disciples and brethren and readers knew Jesus to be that one, John had no need so much as to utter His name. *"Because he laid down his life for us."* There was only one who did that, only one who could do that, and although the love of God the Father in heaven was just as much involved in this as was the love of Christ the Son on earth, John refers to it just as *"the love"* because of all manifestations of love that the earth has ever known none can reach up to the level of this.

This laying down of his life for us was not only His death on the Cross but also His daily dying on man's behalf throughout the three and a half years of His ministry. *"He poured out his soul unto death"* cried Isaiah. *"I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished"* said Jesus. It is in that way that we, in our turn, can lay down our lives for the brethren. There is value in that *"laying down of life"*. Every sacrifice, every service, every loss, every suffering, incurred in the laying down of our lives on behalf of others, whether of the "brethren" or of the "world" lays up in store something which is of value in bringing men and women closer to Christ and nearer to reconciliation with God, either in this Age or the next. We who have given ourselves in consecration to be dead with Christ can by no means and in no manner be associated with Him in His vicarious sacrifice on the Cross, in the Ransom. To think that would be blasphemy. *"No other name is given, no other way is known"* runs the hymn. Only in Jesus Christ is there the ransom for all. But we are most definitely associated with Him in His sacrificial life, for *"as he was, so are we in this world"*. As He poured out His life unto death for three and a half years on behalf of, and for the benefit of, sin-stricken humanity, so do we, all the days and years of our consecrated lives. That, for Him, was the sin-offering; that, for us, is the sin-offering, and that is why so many of us hold and maintain

that the Church, while not in any sense sharing in the Ransom, does most definitely and in every sense of the word share in the sin-offering. We shall find in future days that the consecrated endeavours and sacrifices and sufferings of Christ's brethren during this Age will have played their part in generating a force, a power, that will enable men in the next Age in their own turn to climb back to righteousness. In the old typical ceremonies of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness the sin-offering was the means of removing sin from the people. The process culminated in all the weight of sin being, as it were, literally carried on the back of an animal far away into the wilderness, from which that sin would never return. So it is now in the reality. The Ransom reverses the death sentence and restores men to life. The Sin-offering removes sin, by restitution processes, to a place from whence it can never return. None but the Lord can have any part in the Ransom; "*Of the people there was none with him*". But He is graciously pleased to invite and allow others to be associated with Him in the subsequent work of bringing mankind up to perfection and helping to remove their sin. And that which will give them their authority and power in the eyes of those whom they would save will be their own earlier lives on earth, their own sacrifices and sufferings, even as their Lord's own life on earth will give Him His authority and power with these same sin-stricken ones. Men will follow a leader who has already walked the way himself.

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (vs. 17).

The Apostle John, for all his deep spirituality, was eminently practical. His Christianity was a faith to be exercised on earth toward others as well as in heaven toward God. The Christian society to him was much more than a congregation of individuals, each of whom had been individually made right with God and each of whom individually had to make his or her calling and election sure. The Christian society was a brotherhood in the deepest sense, a brotherhood such as the world had never known before and could never know apart from this, the supreme example of brotherliness. It is impossible, therefore, John insists, for any truly to be regarded as a member of this brotherhood if they fail to act up to the spirit of brotherhood. It just means that there can be no such thing as destitution within the Christian com-

munity unless all are destitute. At least that is what it means in theory; in practice, because the Christian community in the world has never reached up to the ideal set before us, it cannot be said that this condition is truly attained. Yet there are many indications that a great number of those who are Christ's and at the same time are in possession of "this world's goods" to a more than usual degree, have truly appreciated the spirit of this injunction and do minister to the material needs of their needy brethren. The Lord, who seeth in secret, will one day reward them openly; but they do not these things because of reward. They do them because the love of God that is in their hearts leads them irresistibly to make use of the ability they have to give happiness and comfort to the Lord's afflicted ones.

An old Persian poem runs, in its English translation, something like this:

*Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of
peace,*

*And saw, within the moonlight of his room,
Making it rich and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel, writing in a Book of gold.*

*Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem
bold,*

*And to the Vision in the room he said
"What writest thou?" The Angel raised his
head*

*And with a look made all of sweet accord,
Replied "The names of those who love the
Lord!"*

*"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not
so!"*

*Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still, and said "I pray thee,
then,*

Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."
*The Angel wrote, and vanished; the next
night*

*He came again with a great wakening light
To show the names of those whom love of
God had blessed.*

And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

No one can love God who does not also love his brother—and all men are brothers in God's sight—but no man who at first does not love God, if he have true love for his brother and his neighbour in his heart, will go very far before he has become a lover of God also.

The expression "bowels of compassion" is not a very happy one in modern English uses, and is meaningless to boot. The word has changed its meaning since the days of the

Authorised Version translators. In King James' time it meant the inward parts, including the heart, which then, as now, was a synonym for the inward affections. The same Greek word is better translated in 2 Cor. 7. 15; "His *inward affection* is more abundant toward us" and in Luke 1. 78 "Through the *tender mercy* of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us". The Septuagint uses the same word in Prov. 12. 10 "The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the *tender mercies* of the wicked are cruel". This meaning, "inward affection" should be applied wherever this word is used in a metaphorical sense in the New Testament, viz., 2 Cor. 6. 12, Phil. 1. 8 and 2. 1, Col. 3. 12, and Philemon 7, 12 and 20. All these occurrences, it will be noticed, are in the writings of Paul; he evidently had a great love himself for the sentiment that this word denoted.

Incidentally, in classical Greek the word is used by Herodotus to denote the inward parts of sacrificed animals, the lungs, liver, heart, etc., which were roasted by fire and eaten by the offenders. These were supposed to be the life-producing and life-sustaining organs—as indeed they are—and in the same way did the High Priest of Israel offer these same organs on the Brazen Altar in the Court of the Tabernacle during the progress of the Day of Atonement sacrifices. It has often been said that these "inward parts" thus offered in sacrifice represent the heart's devotion and best endeavours of the consecrated life; here is the physical basis for that thought.

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue, but in deed and truth. Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before him, whereinsoever our heart condemn us; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." (vs. 18-20 R.V.).

The Revised Version gives a better rendering of the Greek in verse 20 and in so doing completely changes the sense of the passage and makes it more harmonious. The A.V. has it "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things". It can fairly be argued from that sentence that John is issuing a warning. If we have as it were a guilty conscience, a heart that is telling us inwardly that we are doing wrong, we may depend on it that God, who is greater than our heart, knows all about that wrong doing also. He who searcheth the heart can read our inmost thoughts and there is nothing hidden from His penetrating gaze. Now that

is perfectly true but it is not what John is talking about just at present. He is giving comfort and assurance, not warning. He is telling us that if in our natural depression and foreboding on account of inward sense of sin and shortcoming, we are disposed to condemn ourselves unduly, this knowledge that we are loving Him and His children not in word only or by tongue only, but in deed and in truth, will constitute an assurance to us in every such time of self-condemnation. We shall assure our hearts that God, who knoweth all things, knows of the sincerity of our love and has taken note of the deeds that accompany that love, and in so doing has counted us acceptable in His sight notwithstanding our weaknesses and shortcomings on account of which we tend to condemn ourselves too severely.

It is admittedly true that some disciples do not view in sufficiently serious light their failures to reach up to the Divine ideals. There is almost certain to be some particular weakness or failing or indulgence—different in different people—which we do not repress or condemn so strictly as we should. But on the whole it is probably true that most of the Lord's children are too severely self-condemnatory; usually the more earnest they are in their consecration the more they tend to condemn themselves too severely. It is good for us that our Lord judges us neither too leniently nor too harshly—and, too, that in His judgment He guides us in His way so that we may do better in future.

It is our part therefore to see to it that our love, expressed in word and speech, is worked out in our lives. It is easy to read about the virtues of love, or to listen and give mental assent to discourses extolling the quality of love, and all that may fairly be described as "loving in word". It is nearly as easy to talk about love, to profess the characteristics of love, to exhort others, from the platform or pulpit, or in conversation, to love in daily life. That is truly loving with the tongue. But all of this, desirable and good as it may be—and John certainly does not mean us to understand that we are not to read, hear and talk about Christian love—is of no value at all to us unless that same love is demonstrably effecting its good works in our hearts and lives. It is quite possible for any of us to "preach to others, and oneself be a castaway". After all, it is not until one begins to put these things into practice that one really finds out what they mean. Many an audience has sat listening to an eloquent exhortation to

Christian love, with much nodding of heads in assent and many eyes riveted on the speaker; and after it is all over many in that audience have gone back to their daily routine without any intention of applying the things said to the incidents of daily life—it has just not occurred to them so to do. John wants us to take his words very seriously and make them our own, but not to be content with that. He wants us to go away and put them into practice and see for ourselves how they work out.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." (vs. 21-22).

This expression "if our heart condemn us not" is not an antithesis to verse 19 but is a development of that verse. The fact that we know our love to be one that is practised in our lives gives us assurance in heart against unnecessary and unjust self-condemnation. *Therefore*, since our heart no longer condemns us, we have a confidence—a *boldness*, is the real meaning of the word—toward God which enables us to approach Him in full confidence and assurance of faith. As the writer to the Hebrews says "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith". (Heb. 10. 19-22). We ought to realise, and hold as a fundamental article of our faith, that when in His wisdom and mercy and love our Heavenly Father sees fit to accept our proffered offering, the dedication and consecration of our hearts and lives to His service, He also gives us the privilege of access to Him. He has cast all our sins and shortcomings behind His back. He stands ready to help us over every obstacle, even though many of those obstacles are of our own making. We may have that confidence all the time that we retain the witness of our own heart's sincerity.

That is why John can say so confidently that "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him". It is because we "keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" that we receive whatsoever we ask. We ask only for those things that it is His Will we should have. True, we, all of us, voice many *requests* for things both spiritual and temporal that we never receive. There is a reason. We attach to every such request the unalterable proviso "if it be Thy Will". If the request is not going to be in accordance with

His Will—and at the time of proffering the request we do not know whether it is so or not—then *part of the request is that it be not granted*. So that if such a request is *not granted, that is just what we asked for!* It is literally true therefore that if we are keeping His commandments, which include desiring His Will to be done in all things, we do receive the answer we want to every request we make. It is "yes" or "no" according to the Divine Will; and it is that for which we ask. We accept the decision and we shape our course accordingly. The making of the request, whether it be granted or not, is good exercise. The acceptance of the decision, if it be in the negative, is good discipline. The receipt of that which is asked for, if the Lord's Will be to grant it, affords the opportunity for good practice, the making use of the gift for its intended purpose to the glory of God.

At last then, John comes to the conclusion of the second "book" in this his first epistle. Chapters 1 and 2 formed the first self-contained little treatise, chapter 3 the second, whilst chapters 4 and 5 constitute a third that introduces further and deeper doctrinal truth concerning the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now in verses 23 and 24 he gives a fitting conclusion to his long exhortation. *"This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in them. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."*

There is so much that might be said about that final word; and yet, because it is a final word, it were perhaps better to leave it to convey its own message, unelaborated. It was Jesus Himself who declared that love for God was the first and greatest commandment, and love for one's neighbour was the second, and like unto it. Now John transmutes that word into one that is of more particular significance to the Church, the members of the Body of Christ. Just as those words of Jesus are true in the larger, the universal sense, so in a more restricted sphere love of the Lord Jesus is the first and great commandment, and love for the brethren is the second. That has been John's insistence throughout his epistle. Those who realise that fact, and act upon it, and whose love both for their Lord and for their brethren is worked out in their lives, dwell in God, and God dwells in them. And the Holy Spirit gives its witness in the heart of each believer, that this is so.

A COVENANT BY SACRIFICE

A Talk about
Consecration

It is only as we reach the higher ground of the New Testament that the true nature of the consecrated life comes to view. All standards and forms of consecration preceding the life and death of Jesus had been formal and ceremonial only, introduced to last only until the times of reformation which followed Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven. With Jesus came the beginning of the "better" things—which better things will not be complete till, through a new Covenant, Israel first, and then the whole world, has been brought into conformity with the Will of God.

But when we have reached that higher New Testament ground, even then it will be only as we understand and appreciate the nature of the fundamental opposing moral qualities of holiness and sin, and the way these principles work out in daily life, that we shall realise to the full what consecration actually means. We shall find every thought, word, and deed involved in that act of dedication which we described by the word "consecration". It could be an easy matter for us to make a grievously uncharitable mistake on the question of "consecration". Differences of temperament as well as of Christian growth and attainment could easily dispose us to think that those of lesser stature in Christ were not consecrated at all, or were inattentive to their covenant vows. We might be too ready to measure another by our own standards, and expect him to "toe" our own line. A deeper appreciation of what is involved in consecration will show us that it may mean more to some than to others, and that more is required of some than of others.

The dictionary defines "consecration" to mean "*the act of setting apart to a holy use—to hallow; to devote*". This definition may be understood readily enough of a building or a plot of land set apart for religious purposes, or even of a man who withdraws himself from all secular callings, and applies himself exclusively to a religious life. This, however, does not exhaust the meaning of the New Testament usage, for every true believer in the Lord, whether in "holy orders" or not is exhorted by the Lord and His Apostles not only to offer himself in consecration, but also

to maintain that attitude of devotedness so long as life shall last. The unordained "lay" believer is not less exhorted to consecration than his clerical brother—and that exhortation applies while he follows his ordinary secular calling in life. Hence, New Testament usage is wider in its meaning than the dictionary definition.

The employment of the words "consecrate" and "consecration" brings into use another set of terms, derived from Latin sources, to supplement the Anglo-Saxon and Greek terms already used. We have thus three sets of synonymous words by which we may describe the act of full surrender to God, and the life of obedience which should follow. The word "consecrate" corresponds to the Anglo-Saxon "*Hallow*" (or *holify*) and the Greek "*sanctify*" while "consecration" is equivalent to the Anglo-Saxon "*holy*" and the Greek "*sanctification*". Thus a "consecrated life" is the same thing as a "holy life" or a "saintly life".

Now it is quite proper to ask "To what or whom is the consecrated object devoted, and to what degree is it devoted?" The reply might be that the follower of the Lord is devoted to the Will of God, to live or to die, according to His good pleasure. That is a good answer and in every way correct so far as it goes. But it needs further amplification and definition. What is the Will of God? Is it something that may be known with precision?

The Will of God has many phases or manifestations ranging from its local application in the small sphere of a single life to the vast universal plan that embraces the whole Creation. The Will of God provided for Calvary and all that is associated with that sublime sacrifice. But it did not begin with Calvary, nor with Sinai, nor with Abraham's call, nor yet in Eden, but far back along the highway of time, when God purposed that all things in heaven and earth should for all time be made subject to Christ (Col. 1. 20: Eph. 1. 10). This is an expression of His Will, comprehensive and absolute—towards which all succeeding Ages are contributing their quota—hence the call of Abraham with its unalterable Promise, the thunders and Covenant of

Sinai, and even the tragedy of Calvary, are but outstanding steps by the way to that "far-off Divine event to which the whole creation moves", From those far distant days the eternal God made known that He had found One in whom Divine wisdom could have everlasting confidence to "Head-up" both righteous beings, and righteous principles. That in its largest sense is the Will of God; but every stage of the development to that distant end is also accomplished according to the same over-ruling Will.

In consecration we behold a new and proper relationship of that sovereign Will to the small circle of an individual life. It brings the heart of a thenceforth willing child into alignment with its Father's good pleasure. The Will of God existed and pre-dated that little life by many ages but that act of submission brings that eternal Will into that little life to direct and use it for God's own ends. Consecration has brought that little life into alignment and harmony with an eternal purpose.

It is here that the fundamental moral issues underlying the whole Divine programme come into view, and give to the "act" and "life" of consecration their proper setting and value. It is very, very necessary to realise (with a very full realisation) that consecration relates the surrendered being to one side of the most intense antagonism which the whole wide universe, and the whole round of time has ever witnessed or can ever witness between the fundamental principles of sin and holiness, and between the two outstanding spirit beings who are their principal protagonists. God's Will is no "hole-in-the-corner" matter—it is no parochial affair. It is universal in its sphere, and will ultimately involve everyone and everything.

Lucifer's rebellion in the heavenly realms sent waves of disaffection universe-wide. It divided into two parts those bright sons of the morning who sang for joy at Creation's early dawn—who thenceforth took their places on this side or that of the contending forces. And as they then took their place, so have they continued to stand. Some of them are now called "*spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places*" (Eph. 6. 11-12); others are the "*ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation*" (Heb. 1. 14). From Lucifer the spirit of rebellion spread also to the earth and "sin entered into the world".

This spirit of conflict lies at the very heart of the universe and involves every thing or

principle that is of good or ill to every intelligent being in heaven or earth. It is not enough to think of Satan and his rebellion in a loose indefinite sort of way, as though the frequent hindering or thwarting of God's saints, or his temptation of weak unstable souls, were the full scope of his activities. These are only incidentals—more in the nature of side issues to a far greater and more fundamental issue. Satan is a powerful rebel against Divine authority, and is fighting might and main for a kingdom. Driven forth from heaven, he is fighting with desperate determination to keep the kingdom which he and his evil minions have built up. Every evil device, every stratagem in iniquity is in his hand to be employed to that end. And so far, he has every reason to think his rebellion a success, for he won over to his banners those bright angelic beings in the very course of heaven itself, and extended his empire also to the habitations of men.

It is this universal situation that lies behind God's invitation to His people to consecrate themselves to His Will. God has purposed, and pledged Himself on the inviolability of His Holy Name that all the earth shall yet be filled with His glory, and that no trace of sin or rebellion shall be tolerated beyond a pre-determined time. To that end God has been calling all who hate iniquity and love righteousness to enlist beneath His banners, and share with Him in the great task of cleansing both heaven and earth from their defiling stains. "Consecration" implies voluntary enlistment into the ranks of the armies of God in order to be trained and prepared for the great Battle of the Day of God Almighty. It implies the full acceptance of the Will of God as the supreme authority in life, and the full and complete repudiation of the claims of all other men or angels to have any control over the actions or desires.

Hitherto the antagonism between sin and holiness, and between Lucifer and God, has been more like the "pull" of two opposing magnets rather than the clash of open hostilities. Each man throughout the whole world has been like the compass-needle, possessed of some free swing but swinging towards this or that magnet, according to the power of its pull, and the degree of affinity between the magnet and the needle. Satanic power has exerted all its magnetism; Divine power has not!—hence the "Sin Magnet" has drawn and still draws by far the greater number within its "field". The record of human existence tells of an almost unrestricted permission for

Satan to work his way. He poisoned and tainted the affections of almost every human heart and made it difficult for men to live amicably with his fellows. Man, under Satan's influence became more selfish and self-centred—imbued with the idea of self-possession. To obtain and acquire this self-centred, self-satisfying possession of the earth's bounties men stooped to lying, stealing, and other means of taking what they wanted. The strong man either subjugated and exploited his weaker brother, or slew him out of the way. In this way arose the first primitive kingships of antiquity, and the primal orders of society, from which the huge aggressive organisations, and the present world order has been evolved.

Concurrently with them have grown modes of life—customs, institutions and practices which hold the souls of men in thrall. The power of Satan over man is defined as tending to "*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witch-craft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like*". Thus, response to the Satanic magnet resolves itself down to acts of wickedness and darkness—the practical level of a sinful life. The world to-day is covetousness and selfishness writ large; the outgrowth of those smaller ancient systems which embodied, for ill, the principles of defiance and rebellion which Satan transplanted from heaven to earth in Eden days. And the whole system of Satanic control reduces itself to constant repetition, from generation to generation, of those various acts of wickedness which man has been taught to love and prefer by his Satanic master. Satan's "magnet" is over the whole Gentile system—it is his "world" and his "kingdom". It is of his building and is permeated with his spirit and his principles.

Into this predominantly Satanic "field" every son of Adam has been born. He has the taint of sin in his blood. The force of heredity and the power of environment constrain each one to run in its grooves. Into this predominating Satanic "field" of evil, God has sent His Word and His messengers to "draw" to Himself such men and women as have some regard for righteousness in their hearts. Enoch and Noah were the choicest products of "the world that was". Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and all the prophets were men drawn to the service of God. Since Pentecost God has been drawing those whose hearts have shown appreciation for righteousness. God has

drawn them by the power enshrined in His Word, and by His Spirit, and, as men have willingly yielded themselves to His Will, His holy power has permeated their lives, and led them to a purer and nobler form of life. Self-centredness has given place to self-denial, while love of self has been displaced by a love for one's brother. It is to the point to note that the Apostles set this purer life as the standard of rectitude for the consecrated followers of the Lord. Note particularly the words of Paul in Eph. 4. 17, and onwards to Chap. 5. 20. The good actions required in the saints are set over against the evil deeds of the Gentiles, and the believer is exhorted to eschew the deeds of darkness. This also is the purport of the Apostle's appeal to the Romans (Chap. 6) to present their members unto God as instruments of righteousness, leading unto holiness—so that they shall not henceforth serve sin.

Consecration to God begins by turning one's back upon sin—that is, upon sinful acts—and seeking with all one's power to do those purer things which have God's approval. This means that the Satanic magnet is attracting less strongly than heretofore, and that the Divine "pull" is getting stronger as the days go by. The reforming drunkard, the converted criminal, are standing on the first threshold of the consecrated life, and as they seek to walk in the ways of truth and rectitude, they become more aligned with God on the great fundamental issues of the Ages.

Consecration, therefore, means the voluntary enlistment of a life (which already has or is finding some affinity with righteousness) in the ranks which Almighty God is assembling and preparing in readiness for the ultimate conflict—the actual clash of hostilities—with which the reign of sin will be brought to an end. It matters not where one's ultimate destiny will be found, whether among the Church of the Firstborns, or among restored and purified Israel, or among the "Whosoever will" of the wider call of Rev. 22. 17, the general principle involved in consecration will remain the same. It will imply the acceptance of the sovereign Will of God as the supreme law of heart and life. It will imply the taking of a vow to withstand the enticing power of sin in every word, thought and act. It implies a pledge to pursue uprightness and transparent honesty in the daily round of life. It means that one would not withhold so little as one hay-seed from the equitable balance, nor one drop from the lawful measure, nor one hairs-breadth from the mete-yard. It

means that no inaccurate or untruthful word would willingly be spoken—and that no man's character (to say nothing of his life) shall ever be in jeopardy or danger from our hand.

Thus in the practical matter-of-fact sphere of the daily life, various actions which are described as "fruits of the Spirit" (Gal. 5. 22-23) are set forth as the approved opposites of the evil modes of life peculiar to the world of the flesh and Satan. (Gal. 5. 1'-21). This mode of countering the evil act by the good; of the untruthful word by the true; of the evil thought by the pure, is but bringing the arena of the eternal conflict down to its low-

est practical level; and it is on this level that consecration to the good and true, i.e., to the Will of God must begin. Whatever else may be involved in consecration to its higher phases, this lowlier phase carries right through for every man, no matter what his ultimate destiny comes to be. Call it conversion if we will, or describe it by other term, consecration begins by turning away from the path of sin (which is the path of Satan) into the path of virtue and righteousness.

It is a voluntary choice of sides in the eternal conflict—choosing the banners of the Lord, instead of the service of Satan.

THE BOOK OF JASHER

Twice mentioned in the Old Testament, this book has not survived; nothing more is known about it than can be inferred from these two references. "Jasher" means just, upright, straight; the Vulgate calls it the "book of the just ones" and the LXX the "book of the upright one". There is just a possibility that the name is derived from a Hebrew word implying that it is a book of songs. The Syriac calls it the "book of praises". Less likely, perhaps, is that Jasher was the name of its author.

Josh. 10. 13, after recounting the story of the sun "standing still" until the people had defeated their enemies, says "*Is not this written in the book of Jasher?*" It has been pointed out by scholars that Joshua's words in vs. 12 and the first sentence in vs. 13 are poetry whereas the rest of the chapter is prose, and that this points to these words being a direct quotation from the book of Jasher.

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon

And thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

And the sun stood still,

And the moon stayed,

Until the people had avenged themselves

upon their enemies."

The other reference, in 2 Sam. 1. 18, relates to David's lament over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, a poetic composition covering vss.

19-27 of that chapter, and one of the most eloquent passages of the Old Testament. This, it is said in vs. 18, "*is written in the book of Jasher*". On the basis of these examples it is thought that the lost book was a collection of poems or songs dealing with the stirring deeds of Israel's ancient heroes, and that other similar songs preserved in the O.T., such as Miriam's song of triumph following the Red Sea crossing, and that of Deborah after the defeat of Sisera, had the same origin.

The book was probably written in the time of David or Solomon, since the reference in 2 Sam. dates it to David's time at the earliest. The reference in Joshua would then be an editorial insertion supplementary to the original narrative, added in the days of David or later.

Several editions of a book claiming to be the lost book of Jasher appeared between 1827 and 1840 but these all stemmed back to one published at Bristol in 1751 which was almost immediately shown to be a forgery. In fact the book has never been discovered. It is sometimes said that Josephus declared (Ant. 5. 1. 17) that a copy was held in the Temple archives of his day but reference to the place shows that he did not mention Jasher and probably referred to the Book of Joshua itself.

How grateful we should be to God for those who have been used to give us the many Bible helps, translations, concordances, etc., in these days, at prices within the reach of almost all. What would not John Bunyan have given for such advantages to his study of God's word. He sought a whole year for a

certain passage of Scripture; he writes "*thus I continued above a year and could not find the place . . . I looked, but I found it not; then I did ask first this good man, and then another if they knew where it was, but they knew not the place, but I doubted not but it was in holy scripture; but at last I found it*".



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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CONTENTS

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET

OF THE RESTORATION

2. The Rider in the Myrtle Trees 75

FROM A PRISON CELL

3. God's Eternal Purpose 79

- "THEY SHALL NOT TASTE OF DEATH" 82

- THE CASTING OUT OF FEAR 84

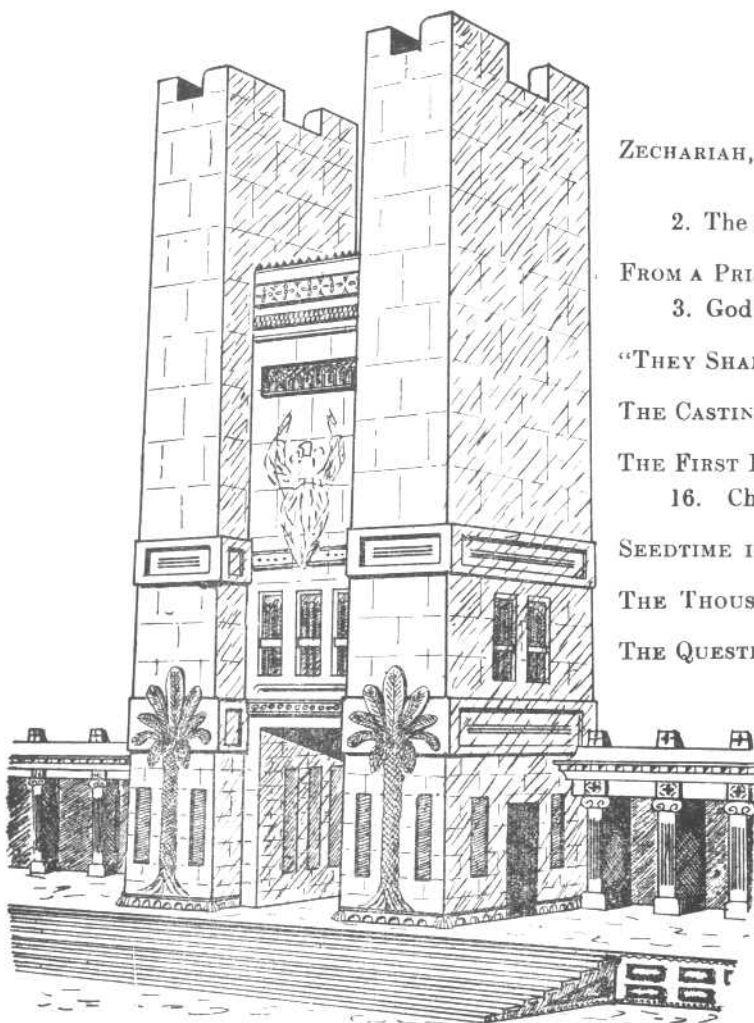
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

16. Ch. 4. 1-3 86

- SEEDTIME IN THE EVENING 91

- THE THOUSAND YEARS 94

- THE QUESTION BOX 96



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

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It is not necessary to be always audibly speaking to God in prayer, or always to be hearing from God by the ministry of His Word to have communion with Him. There is an inarticulate fellowship more sweet than words. The little child can sit all day long beside its busy mother, and, although few words are spoken on either side, both being busy, the one in his absorbing play, the other in her engrossing work, yet both are in perfect fellowship. The child knows that mother is there, mother knows that the child is all right.

Gone from us

—:—

Bro. G. A. Ford (Luton)
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Sis. E. F. Priestly (Lincoln)
Sis. J. Trott (Cheltenham, late Windsor)

—:—

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

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 2. The Rider in the Myrtle Trees

The series of visions comprising the first six chapters of Zechariah are very similar in style to those of the Book of Revelation, the outstanding difference being that whereas Revelation deals with the Church's conflict with evil during this present Age, Zechariah's visions include Israel and her conflict with evil during the times before Christ. Both reach to the same period—the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom upon earth. The style of symbolism, based on Old Testament history and prophecy, is common to both and it is likely that Zechariah, like John on Patmos, saw these strange and picturesque tableaux in waking moments, closely attuned to the influence of the Holy Spirit and probably completely unconscious of the everyday world around him. Whether the pictures appeared as optical views before his physical sight or were directly impressed upon his brain is of no consequence; in either case the required understanding was conveyed to his mind so that to Zechariah it was as if he indeed stood and observed in a world where these things were real.

The first vision (chapters 1. 8 to 2. 13) shewed him, first of all, a man, riding a red horse, standing motionless in a grove of myrtle trees at the bottom of a deep valley or glen. Behind the rider appeared others, also mounted on horses, denoted in the A.V. red, speckled and white. Zechariah enquires as to the identity of these riders, and an angel—the “revealing angel” who remains with the prophet throughout the series of visions—tells him that they are those whom the Lord has destined to wander through the earth. At this point the riders address a cry to their leader on the red horse complaining that in their wanderings they find that all other peoples in the earth are at ease and rest; they alone apparently are compelled to wander eternally. At this the leader on the red horse, who is now called “the Angel of Jehovah”, raises his voice to God, desiring Him that He will shew mercy to Jerusalem and Judah, who have been under His displeasure for seventy years. The Lord replies with an assurance that the time has come for His displeasure to be lifted, for Jerusalem to be rebuilt, and prosperity come to Israel. At this point a pair of horned bulls appear on the scene and the prophet becomes aware of the menace of their four powerful

horns. To his further enquiry the angel declares that these horns are the powers which have scattered Israel and Judah over the earth but their power is about to be broken. Behind the bulls come four artificers, craftsmen bearing the tools of their trade; these, said the angel, come to restrain and break the power of the horns and make possible fulfilment of the Divine promise.

The key to this rather strange imagery is contained in verse 12, where the Angel of Jehovah cries “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” This is obviously in reference to the Babylonian captivity recently ended, which was always described in terms of a punishment of seventy years. On this basis the subject of the vision is Israel at the time of the Restoration and this is the starting point of all Zechariah's prophecies.

The mounted riders, sent by the Lord to “walk to and fro through the earth” are symbols of the people of Israel condemned to banishment, to be wanderers and exiles among all nations. The other nations of mankind, by contrast, “sitteth still and is at rest” in their own homes, but Israel has no home. Because of past apostasies the Lord has dispersed Israel thus. Now the time has come for her to be regathered to her own land, symbolised by the myrtle trees in the deep valley. The myrtle, indigenous to Canaan, is used as a symbol of the Holy Land; in Zechariah's day Judah was not, as at other times, exalted to the tops of the mountains, but occupied a very subordinate position as a province of Persia, hence “in the valley” (A.V. “bottom”). There were three groups of horses, distinguished by three colours. The Israelite riders are carried by the horses “to and fro through the earth”; evidently in the horses we are expected to see the hostile nations which conquered and ruled Israel and took the people into captivity. There were three such up to Zechariah's day. Assyria, Babylon and Persia. One group of horses was red, one “speckled”, and one white. The rendering of “speckled” is open to question; the word only occurs once elsewhere, in Isa. 16. 8 where it is translated “principal plant”. Ellicott suggests that “*seruqqim*” here is a corruption of “*shechorim*” which means

black, and this supposition if accepted creates a harmony between these horses and those of the later vision in chapter 6, which lends support. On the assumption that this conclusion is justified there is a certain fitness in the colours. The red horses would picture the Assyrian power, the first to exile Israel from the land and carry them away "through the earth"; red is the colour of blood and hence a symbol of war, and Assyria more than the others waged frightful and unrelenting war in the pursuit of its ends. The black horses then picture Babylon, the next nation to enslave Israel. The Babylonians were not so outrageously cruel as the Assyrians; they waged war only for the attainment of their object and Israel's bondage to them was characterised more by the hopelessness of captivity in a strange land without hope of release. The blackness of death was a fitting symbol of Babylonian bondage. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion" (Psa. 137. 1). In contrast to that, the Persian rule which succeeded Babylon was one of tolerance and favour, opportunity for the exiles to return and rebuild their homeland. Hence the white horses fitly indicate Persia.

Now the wanderers have returned to the homeland. They stand among the myrtle trees, and with them is their princely champion, the Angel of Jehovah, himself riding a red horse. He also has come forth for war, but in his case it is war for the deliverance of the oppressed people. They have someone to plead their cause before God and to lead them out unto victory. This is not the first time that the Old Testament hints at an other-worldly power pledged to the defence and triumph of Israel. Joshua, contemplating his plans for the conquest of the Promised Land, was met by a celestial visitant, a soldier with drawn sword who told him "as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come" (Josh. 5. 13-14). In the days of Hezekiah the Angel of Jehovah appeared in the night and decimated the Assyrian army (2 Kings 19. 25). In the last great conflict, said the revealing angel to Daniel, Michael the great prince will stand up to deliver Israel and bring the evil powers to an end (Dan. 12. 1) and Michael here is but a cover name for the Angel of Jehovah. His true identity is made known in the Book of Revelation, where in chapter 19 the Heavenly Rider appears to make short work of the armies of evil, and reveals his name; the Word of God! Here in Zechariah, then, the Angel of Jehovah is the Divine Word, later to be per-

sonified on earth as Jesus Christ the Son of God, but here pictured as superintending the regathering of Israel and the overthrow of Israel's enemies. In all of this there is a vivid foreview of a greater regathering and a greater overthrow when this same Divine Word, "this same Jesus", is revealed in the power of His Second Advent for the world's deliverance.

The Angel of Jehovah cried to the Lord for an end to Israel's exile and suffering; the answer came, not to him but to the revealing angel with a message for the prophet. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal" ("jealousy" in the O.T. has the meaning for which we now use the word "zeal") "... I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; ... my cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad, and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem" (ch. 1. 13-17).

Here is the basic promise. The people shall be restored and Israel shall rise again. The national enthusiasm aroused by this message did indeed have the effect of creating a revived Jewish State, even though subject to Gentile rule, for a few centuries, but eventually the heavy hand of the oppressor came down upon them again. The promise had only a limited fulfilment, for the people were not yet ready for their high destiny.

"Then lifted I up mine eyes and saw and behold, four horns" (ch. 1. 18). These were most likely representations of the horns of bulls, used so often in the Scriptures as metaphors for the idea of power or brute force, and by extension of ideas to denote, prophetically, earthly powers or kingdoms. Thus "the horn of Moab is cut off" (Jer. 48. 25) denoting the end of Moab as a nation; there are many similar instances. The angel explained the horns as symbolising the powers "which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem" (ch. 1. 19). Immediately behind the horns came four "carpenters" (A.V.). The Hebrew word means any craftsman or worker whether in wood, metal or stone; perhaps "craftsmen" is the happiest rendering since nothing is said as to whether they were carpenters, blacksmiths or stonemasons and perhaps this vagueness is intentional. Whereas the horns pictured the earthly powers which had desolated Israel, the craftsmen, said the angel, represented a further power which was to destroy the horns. "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these" (the craftsmen) "are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the

nations" (ch. 1. 21). This word "fray" is rendered by most modern translators to terrify or frighten; "fray" in modern English means to rub or file down or to wear away, but in mediæval English and therefore in the A.V. it meant to terrify or affright. (This word "fray" is the root of our modern words "afraid" or "affray"). It is tempting to think of the four horns finding their reality in the four successive empires which held Israel in thrall, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, but in such case there would need to be found four individual powers to act as their conquerors. It might well be that since the number four is associated with the idea of universality as respects things on the earth—four winds of the earth, four corners, and so on—the idea here intended to be conveyed is that of the entire assembly of hostile nations at enmity with Israel, helpless in the face of a new development, the appearance of a corps of craftsmen, of builders, who not only cannot be resisted but eventually strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. From this point of view the vision may well picture the commencement of a great development in the outworking purpose of God. Up to this time, the people of God have been helpless in the grip of their enemies. That grip has been loosened and there now appears a company of builders, of craftsmen, who are going to build the Temple of God and make it an architectural and artistic creation to the glory of God, and there is nothing the nations can do to stop it. And when that Temple is complete its builders will become a means in the Lord's hand to annihilate all evil. No wonder the enemies are terrified. The horns of evil are to be broken and scattered; the craftsmen, rejoicing in the edifice they have erected, will emerge triumphant.

To a degree this vision had an application in the building of the Second Temple and the restoration of the Jewish State in the days of Zechariah, but only to a degree. Other horns were afterwards to appear with their threats of oppression; other builders come upon the scene to build an even greater and spiritual Temple. The symbols must surely find their full scope in the work of all God's servants, whether Old Testament Jew or New Testament Christian, labouring to build that edifice which will become the meeting place between God and man in the coming Age of blessing. The builders of times gone by, the builders of today, all will find that their combined life's labours have resulted in the weakening and final downfall of the horns of the

nations. Had Israel in the days of the Restoration been all that was indicated, one solitary craftsman could have filled the picture; the fact that four craftsmen, as four horns, are seen, denotes that in them is included the entire, the universal, company of labourers for God in all ages, united together in one great work, the builders of the symbolic Temple of God and the elimination of all evil from among the nations.

All this was still in prospect. Jerusalem as yet was still in ruins and the prophet was painfully conscious that his people needed positive assurance of the future to stimulate their endeavours. That assurance was now given. Chapter 2 opens with a new character in the drama, a man carrying a "*measuring line*", more properly a surveyor's cord, for this man is a surveyor, come to measure out the ground and plan the new Jerusalem. This was the answer he gave to the prophet's enquiry. "*To measure Jerusalem*" he said "*to see what is (to be) the breadth thereof and the length thereof*" (ch. 2. 2). This is the first result of the promise given in chapter 1 "*I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies, saith the Lord of Hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem*". The city destroyed seventy years before by Nebuchadnezzar was to rise again.

But there is a new aspect to this restoration of the ancient city. Whilst the surveyor was getting on with his task, the revealing angel left Zechariah's side and "*went forth*" to meet "*another angel*" who was advancing towards him. It seems very likely that this "other angel" was in fact the "Angel of Jehovah" of chapter 1, for the words he speaks in the following verses and the position of authority he seems to occupy are hardly appropriate to anyone of lesser rank. He gives the revealing angel an instruction. "*Run, speak to this young man*" he says, evidently referring to Zechariah, who was a silent observer "*saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein*" (ch. 2. 3-4). These few simple words expand the scope of the prophecy at one step to include the glory of Israel at the end of this present Age. The expression "towns without walls" is exactly the same as the "unwalled villages" of Ezek. 38. 13. "*Perazoth*" denotes unfortified country villages, incapable of defence against an enemy. At only one time in history can Jerusalem be described by the epithet "*perazoth*" and that is when the inhabitants thereof have put their entire trust in God for deliverance from their foes.

"For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (ch. 2. 5). This is an expression definitely associated with Israel's final triumph. "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isa. 60. 19). "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. 26. 1). Verses 4 and 5 are clearly intended to extend the scope of the vision from the Restoration of Zechariah's own day to the greater and final restoration at the time that God comes in power for the salvation of men. To express the same thing in New Testament language, it is the time of our Lord's Second Advent and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom.

On the basis of this promise God now calls His people back from captivity. Here also there is an extension of prophetic view into future times, for at this moment the nation had already returned from Babylon and were engaged in the rebuilding of their national polity. But not all. There were more Jews remaining in Babylon than returned with Zerubbabel and Joshua. In the days of the Book of Esther, only thirty years later, they were to be found in every province of the Persian Empire, from Egypt in the west to India in the east. The vast majority of the Ten Tribes had not come back; they were still in the mountains of Assyria and Media, and most of them never did come back. Here in the prophecy the Lord is looking to a greater and still future Return and a correspondingly greater Restoration.

"Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven . . . Escape to Zion, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon" (ch. 2. 6-7 R.S.V.). There is a two-fold Return envisaged here. Those who still dwell with Babylon are bidden to escape to the homeland whilst yet there is time; those who have been scattered to the four winds of heaven, an expression indicating the widespread lands of all the earth, are called to take their flight homeward. As respects this latter injunction, at the time of the vision Israel had not yet been scattered, in that sense, to the four winds of heaven, so that here again we have a word which carries us forward in time to the day, to use the words of Jeremiah, when God will send for fishers and hunters to seek out his people from every part of the world and send them home (Jer. 16. 16). And the next two verses

clinch the argument, for the Lord goes on to declare that He will shake His hand over the enslaving nations and they will become a spoil to Israel (ch. 2. 8-9). That cannot be until the close of this world order. In no sense of the word did Persia in Zechariah's day become "a spoil" to Israel, nor have the powers of this world at any time since. Upon the contrary, before many centuries had passed Jerusalem entered that phase foretold by our Lord when He said that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the Times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.

Two remarkable statements in verses 8 and 9 deserve notice. It must be remembered that verses 4-13 comprise a declaration by the Angel of Jehovah, a message given to Zechariah that he might proclaim it in turn. In verse 8 this Angel reveals that "for the sake of your glory hath he sent me to the nations which spoiled you" (Leeser) "for" he said "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye". Now if the Angel of Jehovah here in the vision is indeed the Divine Word personified this clearly is a foreview of the work of Christ during the early stages of His Second Advent, directing the course of events in history so that the nations at the end of the Age relinquish their grasp of Israel. "I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (Isa. 43. 6). To a limited extent the Angel of Jehovah can be said to have gone to the nations of that day, to Babylon and Assyria and Persia, to lead out the captive exiles, and this is perhaps well shewn in the beginning of the vision where this same Angel assumes the role of the rider on the red horse leading the horsemen who have "walked to and fro through the earth"; nevertheless the fact that in chapter 2 the vision evidently extends to the end of this world order demands that the "sending" of the Divine Lord to the nations must include His work at that time also. This is where the other statement is so significant, "and ye shall know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me". Here surely is indicated the end of Israel's blindness. They shall, at last, recognise and accept the One whom they so ignorantly rejected in the days of His First Advent.

The rest of the vision almost explains itself. "I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord" (ch. 2. 10). Words of tremendous import, mirrored in John's visions of Revelation "the dwelling place of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and

they shall be his people, and God . . . shall be their God" (Rev. 21. 3), and if the Revelator's words in fact take in their scope, not Israel alone but all mankind, that does not destroy the analogy for both are true in point of time. The next verse in Zechariah demonstrates that. *"And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people, and I will dwell in the midst of thee . . . and"* says the messenger again *"thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you"* (ch. 2. 10-11). Words such as these can only be true at the end of this Age when Heaven comes down to earth for the salvation of mankind. This entire vision, which begins its story with the return of a band of Jewish

exiles to their ruined land in about the year 536 B.C. as riders upon red, black, white horses, led by the Divine Lord on His red horse, closes with the greater return from all countries of the earth and at the end of this world-Age, led still by that same Divine Lord. His name now, in this greater and more momentous context, is called the Word of God. He appears from the heavens, still mounted upon a steed for war, and of Him it is said *"in righteousness he doth judge and make war"* (Rev. 19. 11). What wonder that this first of Zechariah's visions closes with the commanding words *"Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; for he is raised up out of His holy habitation"*.

FROM A PRISON CELL

Part 3. God's Eternal Purpose

Reflections on the
"Prison Epistles"

"According to His good pleasure which He has purposed." Eph. 1. 9.

The assertion that God is working to a Plan or Purpose is several times stated in the group of letters written from Paul's prison cell. The words just quoted are proof that God is following out His own designs, and that all that He does is "according to" a purpose drafted before He began to engage in His great work. Again, Paul follows this assertion by another which says that all who are in Christ were *"pre-destined according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His Will"* (v. 11). Then in a great statement indicating that the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are learning more of God's diversified wisdom through His dealings with the Church than they had hitherto been able to learn, Paul states that even this is *"according to the eternal purpose"* (the plan of the Ages) *"which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord"*. (Eph. 3. 11). Another reference to the activities of Him *"who worketh all things after the counsel of His Will"* is found in Phil. 2. 13. *"It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure"* (R.V.). This mighty energy which works creatively in the saints is linked at two points with the assertions in Ephesians. In both cases it is God that *"worketh"*; in both cases it is according to His *"good pleasure"*; hence the creative work in the hearts of the saints is part of His own great Plan.

Paul had already made known to the Church, before his prison days, that God was

working to a Plan. This was no new feature of his doctrine. In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul states that both the death and resurrection of Jesus took place in conformity with previous evidences given in the Scriptures. *"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures . . . and hath been raised . . . according to the Scriptures."* (1 Cor. 15. 3-4). Whatever occurred *"according to the Scriptures"* is proof of conformity to a design. He who caused the Scriptures to be written also designed, prior to the inspiration of the prophetic testimony, that Jesus should die as an offering for sin, and that afterwards He should be raised. Again, on the same point, Paul says *"while we were yet weak"* (R.V.) *"in due season Christ died"* (Rom. 5. 6). What occurred *"in due season"* also conforms to design. This same thought is also applied to His birth, *"When the fulness of time came God sent forth His Son, born of a woman . . ."* (Gal. 4. 4). "Times" also, as well as the form of Divine activity, were incorporated in the Plan. Then in Rom. 8. 28, this thought of design come out in great prominence. The control of the affairs of life by Divine Providence is assured to all who are *"called according to His purpose"*. Again, in the distant days of Isaac, in conformity with the purpose of God it was said that the elder son should serve the younger, *"that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth . . ."* (Rom. 9. 11). That incident therefore in Rebecca's life was also accomplished in conformity with a "Plan".

Thus it is abundantly demonstrated that

God is no mere opportunist, no strategist or tactician, waiting to seize and exploit some flaw in his opponent's methods and activities, but the Lord and Master of every circumstance, the originator of every cause, and the director of every effect. That this is so is proved by the fact that God was working to His Plan before sin came in. It was not by the act of sin by Adam, nor yet the previous act of sin by Satan, that brought the plan into operation. It was in operation untold Ages before sin began. God did not require to make any strategic move to checkmate the tactics of the great rebel who had become His open enemy. His plans were already made, and to those plans the Most High strictly adhered throughout.

God's plans began to be executed in His first-born Son. He was the "first-born of every creature" (of every created thing) far back in the unfathomable depths of undated time. (Col. 1. 15). That was according to God's Plan, that He might enjoy pre-eminence in the great family of God. Thenceforward, each angelic "being" and every instituted dignity was created and set in its place to bear some relationship to Him. Paul says they were created "by" Him. But they were also created "for" Him—just as an instrument is made for a man to use or employ. But even more than this, every created being was created "in Him"—"in" a combined fellowship under His control, to accomplish a great design which had been entrusted to the Firstborn Himself to be brought to full accomplishment when a certain course of Ages had run. They were to be as working members or limbs of a body, over which He was to preside as the directing brain or Head, each member being responsible, and yielding allegiance to, Him and His command. Every grade of power or rank was instituted with special relationship to what He had to bring to full accomplishment when the fulness of the appointed time should have arrived. And of the agencies in the earth which have been or will yet be found in harmony with righteousness and truth, this is also true. For "in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him and unto Him . . ." (Col. 1. 16). "He is before (prior to and in advance of) all things (in the creative and authoritative procession) and in Him all things consist" (are held together) v. 17.

Perhaps this may best be illustrated by reference to the co-ordinated offices blended

together in the king's government. In affairs of State, whereby the government of the people is carried out, several distinct offices are blended together each having its own province or sphere of operation. First we might mention the legislative sphere, by means of which the laws are made. The nature of the legislative body may vary from dictatorship on the one hand, to an open deliberate assembly on the other. The dictator (advised by his council) will decree law, the deliberative assembly may enact it, but for the purpose of this illustration it matters not which system is in operation. Laws are promulgated either for the King (by his Parliament) or by the King (as an autocrat). That is one office. Next we may cite the Constabulary office, whose duty is to see that the law is observed by the King's subjects. If the subject fails or refuses to observe the law, the Constabulary cites the offender before the Justiciary. The members of the Judiciary Office "try" the case presented against the offender and if the occasion requires it, mete out punishment upon the offender. When the offence so warrants, the Judiciary hands over the offender to the "detention" officers, and the offender is sent to prison for the period specified by the Judiciary.

Only the legislative body made the laws, but all the others apply them. The Constabulary is composed of many ranks and grades of authority, from the supreme chief at the centre of the Administration down to the humblest village policeman. The Judiciary is also composed of many ranks or grades of office, from the high chief down to the lowest prison officer. In addition to the legal machinery there is also the customs and excise, taxing and rating authorities, health authorities, etc., etc. Each department is separate from its fellows, yet each and all are "in" the King's confidence, and do the King's business in his stead. They are thus "in" the kingship—"in him"—yet while they are all held together "in" him and "by" him, he is "before" them all—higher in rank and prior in time. He is "first" in procession and "first" in prerogative.

Thus it was with the first-born Son of God in relation to the whole range of authorities, dominions and powers in the heavenly realms. All these sons of light were created to bear relationship to Him in the government committed to His care. By Him each had been created; by Him each had been commissioned and authorised to act in His name, having dignity in rank, and splendour in person, according with the allotted sphere or task.

One member of this hierarchy, a being of high and illustrious rank appears to have been accorded vice-royalty over the earth, to act first as representative of his Lord and next as overseer and caretaker of man. Of him alone could the words of Ezekiel 28: 12-15, be true. He only had been in Eden the Garden of God—and had been full of wisdom, and perfect in his beauty. He had been the cherub that had “covered”—that had spread his wings of authority over man. But iniquity (lawlessness) was found in him. He wanted to sit, not as viceroy for his appointed Lord, but as king and ruler in his own right. The story of his fall, and of the seduction of his charge from loyalty to God is too wide a story for this present exposition. Suffice it now for us to note the fact. Here, by the rebellious act of Lucifer, that ideal oneness was broken. Sin had appeared both in the heavens and in the earth. Subsequently other discontented heavenly messengers, rebelling against the Creator-Lord, left their own and sank to a lower estate to gratify evil desire. In due course the Heavenly Powers put these rebels under restraint, thus to remain until the Judgment day. (Jude 6). Thus sin and rebellion spread itself in the heavenly sphere and throughout the earth.

As that ideal “one-ness” in and under the first-born Son was the great design with which the creative work began, that “one-ness” is still the goal towards which all subsequent developments are directed. There is no alteration in the nature of the great plan, for it is still God’s purpose “in the fulness of the times to sum up” (to head up) “all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon earth”. (Eph. 1. 10). Not even the rebellion of Satan nor the fall of man changed the fore-ordained design. Before the world began arrangements had been made for the call and elevation of beings from the human plane to the highest heavenly plane. “. . . he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him . . .” (Eph. 1. 4). That is proof that the entrance of sin had been fore-known, and that every step, from the tremendous step-down from His exalted place by God’s first-born Son (and who in course of time came to be known as Jesus of Nazareth), on through the throes of death, until He was raised up to His Father’s right hand, as the first-born among many brethren, was all fore-known and fore-ordained. Even the defection of some of the angelic host produced no alteration of the plan, for the government of hea-

ven and earth carried on the right without their aid, carried on in spite even of their bitterest opposition. At every step of the development on earth, the evil discontents of heaven have sought to thwart and overthrow the Plan, and seem destined to fight it to their bitter end. Some Scriptures seem to indicate that despite this opposition there will open a door of hope for them in a later day, if they cease to interfere in human affairs and wait in patience for the day when judgment will begin. For all things in the heavenly sphere as well as on this earthly globe, that can be reconciled, will be reconciled to the supreme Lord of the great Plan, and to the great Designer of this sweeping universal Purpose. “For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him” (the glorified Lord) “should all fulness dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself . . . whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens.” (Col. 1. 19-20). Thus the unreconciled “sons of darkness” are to have the opportunity to become again “sons of light”, and return to the sphere from which they fell, and dwell again “in Him” and “for Him” for evermore. And all the rebellious sons of men, who likewise, on invitation, leave the ways of sin, will be accepted into His dominion, and as the earthly viceroy of Him who is the head of all power and dominion and every dignity that can be named, rule the earth in His name, and establish universal peace for both man and beast, “according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up” (to head up) “all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things in the earth”. (Eph. 1. 9-10).

In that happy day every creature of every rank in heaven as well as in earth will occupy his allotted place and fulfil his allotted task. This is great doctrine—broad and deep and wide, yet it was not exclusive to Paul’s prison days. He knew of it in an earlier day. While he does not enter into so many details in his earlier exposition, he covers all the ground relative to the subjugation of all enemies of God and of righteousness, until all things are under the First-born’s feet. Then the Son surrenders the whole subjected and purified dominion to His Father and His God, so that God Himself may be all in all. In his letter to the Corinthians, written several years prior to his imprisonment at Rome, Paul wrote: “Then cometh the end” (envisaged in the Plan) “when He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have abolished all” (antagonistic) “rule and all”

(contrary) "authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet . . . And when all things have been subjected unto Him then shall the Son also Himself be subjected unto Him" (God) "that did subject all things unto Him" (the Son)

"that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15. 24, 25, 28). This is the early germ of this great thought—Ephesians and Colossians give the full rich fruit, matured and complete.

(To be continued)

"THEY SHALL NOT TASTE OF DEATH"

An examination of a perplexing Scripture

"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark. 9. 1).

A strange statement, and one that has given rise to endless discussion in our own day, and probably in past days as well. The fact that the apostles "fell asleep" nearly two millenniums ago, but the Kingdom has not even yet been established, has encouraged the advancing of a number of explanations designed to make this text consistent with that fact. Thus it is suggested that the Transfiguration scene, which is recorded immediately afterward, was a vision symbolic of the coming Kingdom, and the fulfilment of these words. The fact that each of the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, places the Transfiguration record in conjunction with these words of Jesus does seem to indicate that they recognised a connection. Another suggestion, that the variorum rendering "there be some of them that stand, which shall not taste of death", indicates that Jesus referred to those "standing" at the end of the Age who would witness the coming of the Kingdom hardly deserves consideration. But there is such a unanimity among the three men who recorded the words that we are justified in examining the text closely in an endeavour to discern more accurately just what Jesus did mean.

Whilst it is quite a reasonable deduction that the Transfiguration scene was intended to symbolise the Kingdom and hence could be that to which Jesus referred, it is hardly a complete explanation of the matter. What are the actual words? Luke says that some of them would not die before they had seen "the kingdom of God"; Mark, "the kingdom of God come with power", and Matthew, "the Son of man coming in his kingdom". Matthew and Mark probably heard Jesus speak the words. Luke must have got his version from one of the disciples, for he was not a disciple himself at the time, and the fact that his version agrees with Mark, added to the fact that

Mark's Gospel shows signs of being generally more verbally correct than is Matthew's may justify us in accepting Mark's form of words as representing what Jesus really did say on that occasion.

Our usual approach to this problem is to assume, at once, that the expression "kingdom of God in power" refers to Jesus' coming power and glory at His Second Advent, attempting then to reconcile this with the fact that all the disciples did "taste of death" before that event has taken place. It is thought now that a new approach to the question may be helpful.

This promise must have made a profound impression on the minds of the disciples. It was as definite an assurance as they had ever had from Jesus that they would live to see their hopes fulfilled. They ardently desired the Kingdom; they knew that the Kingdom was to be the reign of Messiah over the nations with Israel as the missionary people to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth, and they themselves to occupy key positions in that Kingdom. They attached sufficient importance to this promise to record it, years afterwards, in practically identical words in each of their Gospels. Is it not reasonable to think therefore that the fulfilment, if and when it did occur in their lifetime, as it was promised it should, would be prominently recorded as evidence for all subsequent readers that their faith was not founded on the sand? When, thirty-five years later, Peter looked back over his life and testified to the reality of the things he had believed and preached, there came to his mind this very occasion, and he stated, as setting the seal upon the truth of his words, "this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1. 18)—the Mount of Transfiguration. And the whole tenor of that passage in Peter is one which seems to indicate his feeling that the fulfilment of the promise was a past event with him, not one that awaited

the end of the Age for its accomplishment. Peter, writing in his old age, had already seen the Kingdom of God come with power, even as Jesus had promised him. That is the impression we get from this passage in 2 Pet. 1.

Is there then any record in the stories of the apostles that would seem to fulfil the words of Jesus? It is suggested that there is—a record familiar to us all. Peter, standing up with the eleven on the Day of Pentecost, quoted Joel's prophecy of the Kingdom and declared that it was even then being fulfilled before his hearers' very eyes. "*This*" he said "*is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh.'*" (Acts 2. 16-21). If we are honest with ourselves in the examination of this passage we shall have to admit that Peter was preaching as though the Kingdom was being set up in power there and then; the whole of the quotation, from vs. 17 to vs. 21, is Messianic and refers to the power of the Kingdom which is to be manifested to men at the end of this Age and the beginning of the next. Peter was very definitely offering Israel an opportunity to receive the Kingdom both in its spiritual and its earthly aspects at once, and if we look at vs. 19-21 of chapter 3, remembering that "*when*" in vs. 19 should be "*that*", this conviction is heightened. Israel, as we now know, did not respond nationally to that invitation; only a "remnant" did accept it: and in consequence the Call went to the Gentiles and the earthly Kingdom was postponed for two thousand years, "until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11. 25). But that does not alter the fact that the Kingdom was offered to Israel at Pentecost and that Peter saw a very real sense in which the Kingdom had come "in power".

Now how can we define this sense in which the Kingdom did come to the apostles "in power"? Is there evidence in Scripture that such a thing was to be expected? Is there any sense in which it can be said that the Kingdom was already come at Pentecost and that the power of the Kingdom was then manifest?

There is such a sense, one with which we are all familiar. The Apostle Paul tells us that we, believers, have been "*delivered from the power of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son*" (Col. 1. 13). Again, Hebrews exhorts us "*wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably*" (Heb. 12. 28). We which have believed have already entered

the Kingdom, not in its aspect of outward glory and power, which does not come until the Messianic Age, but in an inward aspect which is none the less real and none the less "in power". The power of the kingdom *now* is the power of the Holy Spirit, and it was that manifestation, seen at Pentecost by all men in the inspiration of the eleven speaking with tongues, "declaring the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2. 11) that constituted the Kingdom in power and gave fulfilment to Jesus' words. To Peter and the other disciples, and to the multitudes of dwellers at Jerusalem who saw and heard them, the Kingdom of God was indeed "come with power".

John the Baptist preached, saying "*The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*". He must have had this Pentecost aspect in his mind, quickened as he was by the Spirit, for he went on to speak of the Harvest of Wheat and Chaff, (Matt. 3. 12), a harvest that commenced at Pentecost and continued until the final burning of the chaff in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was captured and destroyed. Jesus said on one occasion "*the law and the prophets were until John; since that day the Kingdom of Heaven is preached and every man presseth into it*" (Luke 16. 16). Again He said "*from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt. 11. 12). In both cases the underlying idea is that strenuous endeavour and a determination to "fight the good fight of faith" would be required of all who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven in its spiritual phase, the phase which at that time was about to be opened to men. Every man who *does* gain entry does so in consequence of effort and hardship, like a soldier who storms a city. But both texts indicate that entrance into the Kingdom could be gained there and then; the consecrated disciple, having intelligently entered in the High Calling, had thereby entered the Kingdom in its hidden or veiled aspect. That is what Jesus must have meant when He said to the Pharisees "*the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation*"—(with outward show, as of a scene spread before one's eyes) "*neither shall they say 'Lo, here' or 'Lo, there', for behold, the kingdom of God is within you*". (Luke 17. 20). This Scripture cannot refer to the Kingdom in power at the "revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven" (2 Thess. 1. 7), for men will then most definitely be able to say "Lo, here". The Kingdom will be plainly visible and all men will know it and see it. That text can only refer to this present Age, when the

Kingdom, although real and in power—the power of the Holy Spirit—is hidden and veiled from men. “The Kingdom of God is within you” (The Diaglott rendering “God’s Royal Majesty is among you” is not strictly correct. “Royal Majesty” is not a correct translation, and *entos* can be equally “within you”, in the sense of being inside an individual, or “among you” in the sense of being in the midst of a number of individuals). Since Jesus was talking to a group of men, either meaning may have been in His mind or even both! What He really did say was a definite, convincing word “The Kingdom of Heaven is, at this present time, in the midst of all of you, unseen, unknown to men, but present in spiritual power of the Holy Spirit”.

It is suggested therefore that Jesus’ declaration to the effect that some of those around Him on that day would not die until they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power was fulfilled a few years later when on the Day of Pentecost the eleven disciples experienced, and the people around them witnessed, a display of Divine power of a nature that had never been known before. For the first

time the power of the Holy Spirit, the power that sustains the Kingdom, was seen in operation commencing with the invitation to join the spiritual phase of the Kingdom, continuing through the Age, completing that spiritual called company and glorifying its members by a change to heavenly nature, then going on to perfect a missionary nation, in fulfillment of God’s promise to His ancient people, and finally calling all men to perfection by restitution processes to what is admittedly the *outward* power of the Kingdom, its manifestation in the Messianic Age. It is one Kingdom, commencing its operations at Pentecost with the Call of the Church and continuing into the time when the invitation of the “Spirit and the Bride” to come and take of the water of life freely goes out to all men. We are accustomed to thinking of the “kingdom in power” in terms of outward might and glory; we of all people should know that the greatest power is that which is unseen and the greatest glory that which is spiritual, and it is this power and glory which has been working in and through Christ’s disciples from the days of St. Peter to the present day.

THE CASTING OUT OF FEAR

“Stop the world; I want to get off!” Such sentiment is understandable when one considers the nightmarish course of this “present evil world”. Since Adam left Eden for the valley of the shadow, man has had to cope with trouble in many forms. Truly he has been “born to trouble as the sparks fly upward”. But by the outworking of evil man’s need of God and His righteousness is made very clear. Against the peace and balance of Eden, the fretful perversity of disobedience under the Usurper is made manifest as unprofitable, evil and vain. Truly God knew the end from the beginning; His love and wisdom is behind it all. He did not place Adam in a perfect world but only in a perfect garden, and when Adam left the garden God said “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake*”. At this end of the Age we see wickedness coming to the full; we also see people turning to the Gospel, seeking to “*wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb*”, and looking for the coming of Christ. God be praised!

We who have believed in God through the Word, and are “*looking unto Jesus*”, must still cope with fears in the flesh. There is no truce. On the contrary, by acknowledging the

Prince of Peace the special attention of the Prince of Darkness is invoked. He is the opposer of the brethren of Christ. As sons of God, citizens of the heavenly kingdom, we are now in enemy territory. Comfortingly, a very much beloved Brother reminds us that “*our minds may be troubled . . . our hearts, never*”. “*The Father Himself loveth you*”! We are provided for, as God provided for the Israelites, of which provision not the least marvellous was the “just sufficient” provision of manna, given day by day, whatever their position or condition, for forty years in the desert. Our inner man is renewed day by day as surely.

When the first exciting contact with their Messiah had been made and the disciples were all gathered, there began for them a period of very intensive training. They were with the Lord, and saw wonderful demonstrations of His heavenly power. They lived, and sang, and prayed with Him, and doubtless they thought the solution of all things was near to come. There were times when the draught blew in, the cold wind of opposing forces, as when Jesus visited His home country and could do “*few miracles there, because of their*

unbelief". The time, after the disciples had been empowered to heal, that they failed to cast out the deaf and dumb demon, must have been a shaking experience for them, full of doubts and arguments (Mark 9. 14-15). There were those fearful journeys across the Sea of Galilee, when the breakers loomed larger than the knowledge of the keeping power of God, even though His Son was with them. There were the much deeper feelings of uneasiness that came to them before their Lord left them for the last time. That last journey to Jerusalem was full of foreboding. With Jesus they could do all things, but where would they be if He left them? To see Him so sorrowful was a dreadful experience. No wonder *"they followed, afraid"* (Mark 10. 32).

By the disciples' experiences we may see the magnitude of God's tremendous work in creating His sons from mortal men. Twelve different men, an apprenticeship with the Master of only three years; how intensive that period! They got much more than they could digest or retain. Afterwards they needed the Holy Spirit of truth to bring all things to their remembrance. We can imagine the first joyful realisation *"We have found the Messiah!"* and then, how they must have striven to bring their own souls into alignment with Him. We have the story of Peter to illustrate the watchcare of our Lord over them in this personal aspect. He was a good shepherd. Apart from His wonderful public ministry, He maintained a special attitude of mind towards the Father, a pattern of prayer, thanksgiving and praise, a faith supreme and confident. So He weaned them away from superficial traditional worship, from all worldly ways of thought, to KNOW God as their Father, speaking to Him, trusting Him as such, in sincerity and truth. *"The Father Himself loveth you"* He said, *"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart—and you will find your souls refreshed"*. This is a principle in the lives of all God's people. *"Prayer brings victory."* *"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul."* *"In everything, by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus."* *"What time I am afraid, I will trust in God."* *"Always to pray—and not to faint."*

Fear is a part of the present world. In the Kingdom, with life and health and peace assured for men of goodwill, the only fear will be that of not gaining God's full approval.

We are working towards being approved of God now, as His sons, His firstfruits in Jesus, to be all in all with Him. But the element of mortal fear is with us, as one of the weaknesses of our "earthen vessels", and one of the weapons of Satan. If faith and the heavenly armour in themselves were sufficient for our safety, then there would be no need to "watch and fight and pray". We must exercise and build up our *"most holy faith"*, keep our heavenly armour on, and fight *"not as beating the air"*. Many times in the Word fear is recognised as part of the fight. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, angels and our Lord Himself found it necessary to give reassurance. Paul admits to *"fears in my own mind"* and as his never untroubled life unwound, it is plain that with each painful or tormenting experience came a greater measure of confidence, a deeper involvement with the Lord, an increasing sense of joy in victory—a rest in the outcome. God's purpose cannot fail, nor His watchcare and support for those upon whom it rests. This is made manifest for us in the Way as we go on, trusting more in His strength. We are on the winning side, against evil and for our God of Love; we each have a "comforter" with us, a personal messenger of the Holy Spirit, and God has not given us a cowardly spirit again to fear, but in truth, as will be proved—one of power, and love, and of a sound mind. Each trial, bringing firmer joy and confidence in victory through Christ, must needs increase our gratitude and love for God. *"... and the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned."* Indeed, Paul manifests the truth of this by his last letter to Timothy, writing *"I have maintained the good contest, I have finished the race, I have guarded the faith. It remains that there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in the day ... and to all ... who have loved his appearing"*. May we all go on, ever growing in grace and knowledge, and in the power of using that life-force that is within us, which is greater than *"that which is in the world"*. So shall we cast out fear, again and again and again, and find ourselves ever strong in Him who strengthens us, coming to the end of the race with the same tested-and-proved confidence of Paul. *"Now to him who is able to guard you from falling, and to place you blameless in the presence of his glory with great joy, to God alone our Saviour through Christ Jesus our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority, both now and throughout the ages. Amen."*

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 16 | John 4. 1-3

With the fourth chapter of John's First Epistle we enter upon what can fairly be described as the third "book" or treatise into which this Epistle is divided. The first, chapters 1 and 2, could be entitled the "walk by faith"; the second, chapter 3, the "walk by love"; and the third, chapters 4 and 5, the "walk by knowledge". The theme of these two chapters is doctrine, and whereas John in the previous portion of his epistle is dwelling upon and warning his readers against moral shortcomings, he now turns around and begins to talk about doctrinal errors. It is a very necessary aspect of Christian instruction; these believers of the Early Church were very prone, as are we ourselves, to belittle the importance of doctrinal teaching and to over-stress the place of the devotional and contemplative aspects of the Christian life. It was in consequence of that mistake that so many of the early Christians quickly lapsed into the grossest of sins under the mistaken impression that if the heart was pure it mattered little what was done in or by the body. John does not depart from his central theme, Jesus Christ the centre and circle of our faith and life, but he does speak of Him and His way from the doctrinal rather than the moral position. If many of his statements are allusions to sectarian errors of more particular application to his own day than ours, as they are, that does not lessen the value of his words. We also have doctrinal errors with which to contend and the principles of John's warnings are as valid for us as for his first readers.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." (vs. 1).

These "spirits" of course are the opinions, beliefs, influences, teachings, which, emanating either from the Father or from the Arch-enemy of mankind, according to their nature, whether good or bad influences, determine the course in life taken by the one receiving them. This verse has no reference to unseen angelic beings, "spirits", whether good or evil, and there is no mandate here for investigations into spiritualistic phenomena as some have thought. We are not to accept at its face value any apparently attractive looking teaching that may be presented to us just because at first sight it looks reasonable or God-like.

We are to test the teaching to determine whether it be of God, because there are many false prophets and false prophecies, teachings, in the world and we must needs be on our guard. The words of Paul to the Ephesians are appropriate here. In exhorting them to see that they be not deceived by the vain words of unregenerate men he bids them walk as children of light, *proving what is acceptable unto the Lord* (Eph. 5. 8-10). The believers in the Greek city of Berea were especially commended because they searched the Scriptures continually to assure themselves of the verity of the things which they had heard. In like manner also the Thessalonians were exhorted to *"despise not prophesies (teachings); prove all things; hold fast that which is good"*. (1 Thess. 5. 21).

This is one of the Scriptural supports for that right of private judgment which is the privilege of every consecrated Christian. No matter what the "official" teaching of one's fellowship on the subject under discussion or the weight of tradition behind the generally accepted belief, it is always the privilege, and right, and even the duty, of each individual to judge for himself and arrive at his own conclusion. None can take away that right, for it was conferred by the teachings of the Lord and the Apostles and sealed by the authority of the Holy Spirit. None may question it or deny it, for the same reason. And all this is for a very sound purpose. It is of vital importance that the future kings and priests of the Millennial world shall learn *now* to arrive at sane and balanced judgments on things of moment. The "babe in Christ" must needs sit at the feet of teachers, his "fathers in God", but it is good for him that he progresses out of that "milk" stage into the "strong meat" stage where he is able to take and assimilate nourishment with discretion, no longer having the choice made for him but making the choice for himself. Such an one will have the decisive character our Lord requires when in due course the work of His Kingdom is to commence.

But this implies a corresponding responsibility. This right of private judgment is not a licence to spiritual anarchy. The Apostles' insistence on individual "searching" and "discerning" of the doctrines does not ignore or disparage the communal sharing in matters

of belief which is a necessity to the orderly and harmonious continuance of any Christian fellowship. The same liberty that accords each one the right of private judgment demands also that the expressed belief of the majority composing a group or community be respected. There are so many who have discovered—or think they have discovered—some startling new variation from a doctrinal truth formerly held, and immediately conceive it their duty to bludgeon their fellows into acceptance of the new view, stigmatising as “sectarian; followers of a man; spiritually blind”; etc., those who do not accept the new finding. An attitude of that kind is hardly a good recommendation for the exacting duties that will be laid upon those who make their calling and election sure and are thereby assigned to superintend the educational work of the next Age. It is not an unknown thing to come across men and women who claim to have been entrusted with some marvellous understanding of newly revealed Truth or light on the Divine Word, who by their actions make it perfectly obvious to even the most casual observer that they are far from fit to be entrusted with any Divine commission at all. So the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, appeals to their maturity of understanding, “*I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say*”. (1 Cor. 10. 15). In soberness and gravity, fully cognisant of the tremendous issues involved, both for ourselves and our fellows, let us use our God-given powers of discernment and judgment for our own advancement and establishment in the Truth, and also for that of others, too.

John's assertion that “many false prophets are gone out into the world” was no news to the more reflective of his readers. The infant Church was still less than seventy years old. The first generation had to all intents and purposes passed away but the second generation still lived and there may have been a few left, like John himself, advanced in old age who remembered the Day of Pentecost with its thrilling happenings. But if so they had been very young—mere youths and maidens—at the time. And those who were the leaders and teachers in the Church, men who had sat at the feet of the Apostles, learned of them, laboured with them, served them, men like Timothy and Titus and Silvanus, knew full well that already all was not well with the life of the Church. Some had left or were leaving their first love; some were introducing fragments of paganism and Eastern philosophies under the pretext that these were the true

teachings of the Lord and represented the inner meaning of His sayings. The world, the flesh and the devil were continually seeking to break in upon the fellowship. The early expectation of an almost immediate return of the Lord and the imminent establishment of His Kingdom was fading in the light of clearer understanding of Apostolic teaching, and although no one as yet had any conception of the time that was truly to elapse until the end of the Age—the general expectation at the time of John's Epistle was that the year 500 or thereabouts would witness the Second Advent—the time was sufficiently far away to induce a lessening of love and zeal on the part of those whose faith rested more upon the desire for immediate glory than the devotion of life and all life holds to the Lord, for howsoever long that life may last. So the false prophets found ground in which their teachings could take root and begin to flourish.

Jesus had forewarned them of this. Long before the End Time, He told His disciples (Matt. 24), there would many come in His name, saying “*I am Christ*”, and would deceive many. “*Take heed*” He said “*that no man deceive you . . . Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many*.” Here in John's epistle, written less than seventy years later, is the melancholy record of the fulfilment of that prediction. The writings of the Early Fathers, the works of the Church historians, the records of the many ecclesiastical conferences and synods and councils, throughout the first four centuries of Christianity, all show how amply justified were those warnings of the Master and of His Apostles. Not only in the last days did perilous times come, they were there almost from the beginning.

For the precise nature of the heresies taught by those false prophets in John's day consideration must be given to verse 2 of this chapter. But before passing to that verse let it be clearly realised that a false prophet is not necessarily a teacher of false doctrine. True it is, sadly true, that many a believer has been led aside and his faith wrecked by the reception of doctrinal error; in so many things the life, its outlook and its conduct, is shaped and directed by the doctrinal views that are accepted. But it is also true that much of the false teaching lies in other fields, in those things that concern the inward relation between the Christian and his brethren, the activity that is the outward fruit of a Christian faith manifesting itself in the preaching of the glad tidings to those who as yet know it not. In all of these fields the acceptance of

erroneous views may and often does render unfruitful a life that started full of promise. If in this chapter John seems to stress the doctrinal "false prophets" it is because they were prominent in his day and because it is from doctrinal errors that most of the others flow. In verse 2 he comes down to the root of the matter and shows that incorrect ideas regarding our Lord and His mission to mankind and His redemptive sacrifice stand behind all the false teaching that in his day, as in ours, threatened the Christian community.

"Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world." (vs. 2-3).

The challenge of the searching question "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" is nowhere presented so bluntly and fearlessly as here. There is no room for compromise or evasion; do we or do we not believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh? All that John has yet to say in his epistle depends on the answer to that question. All that we are going to achieve in our own Christian lives, all that we are going to learn of the Plan of God, all that we hope to be in the life that follows this, depends upon our own individual replies to that question. In this Last Day of the present evil world, when light such as has never before been known has been shining for well-nigh a century upon the Plan of God, our personal conviction as to the coming to this earth, the life, the death and the going to His Father of Christ the Redeemer and Lord, is going to have a powerful influence upon our Christian walk and service. To us who live in this closing period of the Gospel Age the question "What think ye of Christ?" is fraught with tremendous significance.

This chapter of John's epistle asserts the real humanity of Jesus when on earth. Of that there can be no doubt. He was in truth the "man Christ Jesus", but there can be—and there are—many ways of viewing that "coming in the flesh" and not all of them are expressive of the truth. Thus Moffatt renders the verse "... confess Jesus as the Christ incarnate ..." which is correct Church theology and meets the surface understanding of John's words—for "incarnate" does mean "in flesh"—but it does not define the truth of the matter. Weymouth says "... that Jesus Christ has come as man ..." which is nearer to the truth

but still capable of misunderstanding. The angelic visitors of certain Old Testament incidents came "as men", but the taking upon Himself of our human nature which was the "coming" of Christ was something more than that. And yet on the other hand we must not fall into the error of some modern groups which declare that Jesus was nothing more than a child of Adam, and in all biological respects a man of the human race just like other men. We have to insist that Jesus of Nazareth was not like other men; He came from the Father, and from the Father's right hand, and He returned when His brief sojourn on earth had accomplished its purpose.

In John's own day there were those who said that the Divine Christ had come down from heaven and entered into the human body of Mary's son Jesus, thirty years of age, at His baptism in Jordan, dwelling in Him then for the remaining three and a half years of His life, leaving Him and returning to heaven at the crucifixion, so that it was not the Divine Christ but the human Jesus who died on the Cross. John knew, as we ourselves must know, that such teaching is blasphemy. Then there were those who admitted that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Messiah but denied that He was anything more than man, or that He came from above or existed before He appeared on earth. That is a modern as well as an ancient belief but it takes away from Jesus all redemptive power. *Psa. 49. 7* tells us that "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him*". The real truth concerning the manner in which Jesus Christ came "in the flesh" is perhaps best expressed in Scriptural language, combining the angel Gabriel's words to Mary in *Luke 1. 35* with Paul's to the Philippians in *Phil. 2. 8*: "*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God ... who being in God's form ... divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men.*" John, searching for words in which correctly to express this great truth when writing his Gospel, pointed to the prevailing belief in the *Logos*, the Word of God, all-powerful and ever active in carrying out the Divine purposes, the medium of Divine communication with man, yet never seen by men. John, with rare flash of inspiration, cried "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*". (John

1. 14). There are two important words in this second verse of chapter four of John's First Epistle; one is "flesh" and the other is "come", and both must be accepted and understood. It was Jesus Who came from above, and the One coming from above Who was made flesh. Here was no mystic union between a Divine being and a mortal man, no using the empty shell of a living physical frame as a temporary abiding place whereby to be visible to other men. The Word, Who had been co-existent with the Father for untold ages ere the world was, now laid aside that glory and became flesh by being born a babe of Mary; and in the fulness of time the Word, no longer flesh, took again the glory He had with the Father before the world was—and, too, added glory. (John 17. 5 and Phil. 2. 9-11).

Every spirit, doctrine, therefore, that is built upon this understanding of the coming of Jesus in the flesh is "of God"—given by the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is upon this basis that the doctrine of the "Ransom for All" is founded, and upon that in turn is built the whole edifice of all that makes our hope what it is—Restitution, the High Calling, the ultimate destruction of sin and death and the everlasting life of "whosoever will" after full and fair opportunity. All springs from, and is dependent upon, the fact that Jesus Christ came in the flesh and gave His humanity a "corresponding price" for Adam.

In verse 3 the expression "Christ is come in the flesh" does not rest upon good authority. It is not to be found in either the Sinaitic, Alexandrian or Vatican Mss., the three great manuscripts. It is also absent from many other versions. Thus amended, the verse runs "*Every spirit which confesses not Jesus is not of God*". It may be a strange thought to us, that any claiming to be Christians should totally deny Jesus, but the expression seems to imply as much. In John's day it was not so strange. Extremists there were who denied the "supernatural" element in Christianity and insisted that Jesus was merely a great ethical and philosophical leader and teacher and nothing more. John had one word for all such—*antichrist*—and would admit of no compromise. This is antichrist, against which they had already been warned, and now already, thus early in the age, it had appeared.

John's words are significant. "*Ye have heard that it should come*" as though there had been the prediction, "*and even now it is in the world*" as though the prediction had now begun to be fulfilled. Paul also had something to say about Antichrist, but he declared

that it was not yet to be revealed because of a "hindering one". "*He that now letteth (hindereth) will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked One be revealed . . .*" etc. (2 Thess. 2. 7-8). Even then the full revelation of the Antichrist is to come apparently only toward the end of the Age, for his consuming and destruction is to be by the spirit of the Lord's mouth and the radiance of His presence (vs. 8), which betokens an extension of the manifestation of Antichrist into the days of the Second Advent. It has been customary among Protestant commentators to refer the description in 2 Thess. 2 to the Papacy of the Dark Ages, on the ground of that system having usurped God's place in the "Temple", "shewing himself that he is God". We do well, however, to take careful heed to John's definition of Antichrist, one who denies Christ altogether, and if John and Paul, both by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are speaking of the same thing, we have to apply the epithet of "antichrist" to that which both denies Christ and usurps His place. In this modern Age there is much in the organised social framework of the world that meets that requirement, and it may well be that "antichrist" is not purely an ecclesiastical power after all. It may combine within itself some of the secular things that are equally arrayed against Christ and His Kingdom. Whatever it is, and whoever it is, that seeks to usurp the place of Jesus Christ and His teachings in the hearts and minds of men, and in the affairs of daily life, is by this definition, antichrist. Perhaps Jesus had something of the same thing in mind when in Matt. 24 He referred to the "abomination of desolation standing in the holy place". True it is that in these last three generations Christ has been denied, and His place usurped, as never before. The fact that in many cases this denial and usurpation has been done in ignorance, or under complete misapprehension of Jesus' message and life, and what He teaches and stands for, and what is the Plan of God for all mankind, does not alter the fact that this is antichrist, that should come into the world. The antichrist is that whole power that is set against Christ and His righteousness to oppose the incoming of the kingdom. It stands for the rule of this world as against the rule of the next; for the self-government of man by man without God, as against the self-government of man by man with God. It usurps the place of the powers of Heaven in the affairs of men and it justifies its usurpation by denying that there are any powers of Heaven. That is why

the spirit of the Lord's mouth must be brought near to consume it and the radiance of His presence to complete its destruction. These things will convince men of the reality of the unseen world and the concern of God for their welfare and happiness, and when these things are thus seen, the power of antichrist will vanish forever.

There are some evangelical Christian groups which look for the emergence in the Middle East, at the end of the Age, of some one man, mighty in power and of extreme wickedness, who will rapidly become a kind of world Dictator and ruthlessly persecute all Jews and Christians, in this way fulfilling the prophecies of Antichrist. Many expect him to make his capital in the ancient city of Babylon, which, they think, is to be rebuilt to more than its former magnificence. There is no Scriptural warrant for such an interpretation of the two Apostles' teachings respecting Antichrist. It is not that the idea of a World Dictator is unreasonable or impossible; recent events have shown that much more unlikely things could happen nowadays on the stage of world politics. It is rather that the New Testament teaching regarding Antichrist demands something much bigger than the figure of one man astride the few short years of one human life can possibly meet. It demands an Age for its development, maturity and

decline, and the whole sum of every system of evil that the Age has known, properly to fulfil all that is said of it. "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed.*" (Psa. 2. 2). It is that determined coalition of every evil force, set in relentless array against the Rider on the White Horse, that constitutes Antichrist, and it is that same coalition which will be utterly broken at the end.

John probably had a more personal thought in mind also. The next few verses speak as though he knew his readers to have challenged this incipient antichrist even in their own day, and overcome it, because God was in them. It is not likely that he was thinking entirely of doctrinal battles or the victory of "Present Truth" over Judaistic or Greek errors. Much more likely is it that John knew what we ought to know, that it is easy, so fatally easy, to deny Christ ourselves in our own hearts and lives even whilst we take His name on our lips. And if we do that, then on the authority of verse 3 of this chapter, we too are partaking of the spirit of antichrist. For we can deny Christ far more effectually in our actions or by our conduct than ever we can by our words.

(To be continued)

A great deal is written and said nowadays about the world's inability to feed its exploding population but such statements are mostly ill-informed. The possibilities inherent in Nature's powers applied to food production are as yet scarcely realised. A recent "break-through" in Russia is a case in point. A combination of aqua-culture (the growing of plants in a medium constantly supplied with water combined with nutrients) and intense light, under controlled conditions, has resulted in the production of tomatoes at the rate of over two hundredweights per square yard of cultivated area per year, and of strawberries at the rate of fifty pounds. At this rate

the space taken up by the family car would be enough to provide all the food required by a family of three. Objections to the validity of the Biblical doctrine of the Millennium are sometimes raised on the score that the earth could not possibly feed the multitudes depicted as experiencing the circumstances of the Messianic Era. The Psalmist, talking of that day, when God will "rule the people righteously and govern the nations upon earth", continues "*then shall the earth yield her increase*" (Psa. 67. 6). Perhaps this Russian scientist is showing the world one way in which it can be done.

During the Ecuador earthquake of August, 1949, the village of Libertad, with its hundred inhabitants and its surrounding fields, sank fifteen hundred feet into the earth in a few minutes. That is a modern parallel to the story of Korah and his multitude who rebelled against Moses, and the earth opened up at their feet and swallowed them up. It also

illustrates the possibility of the territory inhabited by the antediluvians becoming the subject of some vast earth movement which had the effect of lowering the whole land by some thousands of feet and allowing the waters to sweep over the countryside, thus producing the effect of a vast flood of waters which covered the mountains.

SEEDTIME IN THE EVENING

An exhortation

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." (Eccl. 11. 6).

There is wise counsel in the Book of Ecclesiastes for both the youthful Christian and the mature Christian, for the one who is setting out on life's journey and the one who is within sight of its end. "Evening" in Ecclesiastes is the second half of life, the time when youthful vigour and enthusiasm has begun to temper into the more measured pulse and the more dispassionate outlook of mature years. It is in such an evening that the activity of earlier days tends to give place to relaxation of effort; the disappointments and disillusionments that come to everyone in life lead to a cessation of missionary effort and a settling down to enjoy the social fellowship of the Church without further shouldering of its responsibilities. It is in such a time that this exhortation comes with its urgent appeal, "In the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that". There well might be work done in the end of life that shows greater and grander results for the Lord than more spectacular work undertaken in earlier days.

The same thing is true in the life of the Church. The Nineteenth Century was a period unique in the annals of Christianity. During that century were seen all the signs of the End as predicted by our Lord in that discourse of His to the disciples which is recorded in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. The Nineteenth Century was the Watcher's time of realisation. It saw the commencement, and the measurable completion, of the Harvest of the Age. The time came during that century when it could truly be said that at last the gospel of the Kingdom had been preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. Christian missionaries had reached the ends of the earth and all peoples, nations, and languages had received some part of the witness. That in itself was the first sign of the End Time, the first evidence that the days of the Second Advent were commencing. At the same time came the rich feast of Divine revelation and Bible truths promised by Jesus in His parable of the man taking a far journey.

Another evidence of the Second Presence; the servants that sat down to meat and were served by their Master. These things are in the past; they cannot be repeated; they can never be true in this Twentieth Century as they were in the Nineteenth. The blossoming of the fig tree in Israel's revival dating from 1897; the apostasy from the faith resultant from misapplied science and the influence of the theories of evolution, dating from 1859, when Charles Darwin published his *"Origin of Species"*; the steady breaking down of the Gentile powers, having its beginning in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the loss of Papal temporal power at the same time; all these events were signs that the end of this Age and the dawn of the next were at hand. And the message of God for those times concerned all those signs, pointed to them as evidences of what must shortly come to pass. In the power and enthusiasm of those visible happenings a great work was done and a mighty message was proclaimed. But the message was given and it has done its work. The signs have been seen and have receded into the distant years and now these things are nearly a century old. The message that depended on those signs no longer has the force that it did because we live in a new day and a new generation that knows them not. The signs inspired and supported a great work in Christendom but now the signs are finished and the work is done. What comes next?

There are some who say that nothing comes next; that the time for the cessation of all Gospel preaching has come and that the remaining members of the Church on earth have nothing left to do but to "build one another up on their most holy faith", sit down quietly and wait for the Lord to take them away to heaven and bring this wicked world and all its wicked works to an end. It is virtually suggested that Christians who think otherwise, particularly if they still persist in preaching the Gospel, are nearly as bad as the said wicked world. At any rate, they are said to be "spiritually blind", "not continuing in Present Truth", "partakers of milk and not of strong meat" and, generally speaking, in a condition greatly to be deplored. The fact that the active prosecution of the Church's age-old commission to preach the Gospel is made a crime instead of a commendation, in

the interests of that interpretation, only goes to show how easy it is, when the years have brought their disappointments, to lose sight of the first principles of the Christian faith: The Christian group that loses its missionary zeal signs its own death-warrant and will shortly die; that fact has been exemplified scores of times in past centuries and it is being exemplified before our eyes to-day. Christianity is a missionary faith and we cannot enjoy a healthy Church life unless in some fashion we incorporate some kind of missionary endeavour in our activities.

On the other hand we should not necessarily conclude that the precise form of activity in which the message was enshrined during the Nineteenth Century must be continued without change in the Twentieth. That is a very common mistake. There is a strong tendency to herald the Kingdom in the same manner and the same terms that were effective in 1868. They are not necessarily so appropriate in 1968. What guidance, then, may we take from the Gospels?

"Or whether they both shall be alike good!" Is it possible that in an "End Time" dispensational sense we may reasonably expect a "morning" and an "evening" sowing—the same seed, yet distinct works, each producing its own results and each, in the end, "alike good"?

It is a fact, at any rate, that our Lord enshrined two distinct thoughts in His final instructions to His disciples respecting their life work—and therefore our life work. According to Luke and Mark he told them to *preach* repentance and remission of sins among all nations, and to preach the Gospel to the whole creation. (Luke 24. 47; Mark 16. 15). According to Matthew He also told them to *teach* all nations, *"bidding them observe whatsoever I have commanded you"*. (Matt. 27. 19). There is a world of difference between the words "preach" and "teach", and there is no reason to doubt that all three Evangelists' accounts embody part only of all that Jesus said to them at His departure, and each injunction was actually spoken separately and in its own setting. We might do well, therefore, to examine more closely than we have done heretofore the differences between these several versions of His parting words.

The word "preach" is from the Greek *"evangeliso"*, meaning "I tell good news", or from *"kerusso"*, which means "I proclaim as a herald". "Teach," on the other hand, is from *"matheteuo"*, which denotes the instruction of pupils or learners, the making of disciples. In

the Christian way preaching comes first and is followed by teaching. The Apostles at Pentecost first proclaimed good news and went about as heralds, announcing the Kingdom of Heaven, and then settled down to teach their converts. In the individual Christian life it is inevitable that the early years are taken up with declaring the message, telling out the good tidings of redemption that is in Christ Jesus; only when the experiences of the way, and progress in the faith, has brought maturity of knowledge and character, can the believer begin to teach. Preaching belongs to youth and teaching to mature age; preaching is the work of the morning but teaching that of the evening.

There are two notable instances of this principle in the recorded lives of great men of God—one in the Old Testament and one in the New. It is almost as if the Holy Spirit has provided in advance for the question that must arise in the minds of those who find their life's work apparently a failure. Here we have two of the mightiest men of faith in the Biblical record, men whose early life and middle age was spent in prominent activity, and who received esteem and honour from those whom they served, ending their lives in relative insignificance and obscurity. One of those men was Samuel the Prophet and the other was Paul the Apostle. Samuel was dedicated to the service of the Lord from childhood and, as he grew up, rapidly became the leader of the nation in things ecclesiastical and secular. Israel looked to him for guidance and for strength. At the zenith of his power he travelled the country regularly, sitting in judgment annually in three different towns, administering justice and rectifying abuses. His wisdom as an administrator was no less famed than his sanctity as a prophet. He has very truly been called the greatest of the Judges. But the last glimpse we have of the life of Samuel shows him bereft of his power and glory, living in quiet retirement at Ramah, teaching a company of the prophets. A group of young men, gathered around him to learn of his wisdom and pass it on to the next generation, was all that remained of his life's work. Yet there is no indication that Samuel fretted or repined at this apparently ignominious ending to all that he had achieved for Israel. He knew—none better—that he had fulfilled the place for which his Lord had selected him, and carried out the work He had given him to do, and if for the rest of his remaining days he was to labour in a much more modest and unnoticed way than hereto-

fore, he was well content so long as he knew it to be God's will.

The Apostle Paul was in similar case. After a lifetime spent in travelling the length and breadth of the Roman world, the acknowledged leader of the Apostles and of Christians everywhere, he settled down at the end of his days—so far as the Scriptures reveal—to teach, contentedly, in his own hired house in the city of Rome, those who came to him. The last verse of the last chapter of the Book of Acts is wonderfully eloquent. Many years had Paul preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, proclaiming it as a herald, telling it as good news, but now those days were past and done. His mission now was that of a teacher, giving quiet but none the less effective instruction to those who came to his modest lodging to learn of him. Did the stalwart old warrior, hero of a thousand battles, repine at being thus laid aside? *We know that he did not; we know that he employed his powers with as keen diligence as ever to the new task his Lord had set him.*

And for what purpose? What was the incentive that led Samuel quietly to remain in his house at Ramah, teaching those few young men who had gathered round him? What was in the mind of Paul as he stayed, day by day, in that house somewhere in the back streets of Rome, receiving and discoursing with those who came to him, the while the busy outer world pursued its interests and the millions of the great Roman empire waited for the Gospel? It was, to use words first uttered in another connection, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord". (Luke 1. 17). John the Baptist was a man of the old dispensation, the Jewish Age, and he appeared in the end of that Age to make ready a nucleus who would take up the work of the new dispensation, the Gospel Age, and carry it forward to a glorious conclusion. John himself never entered the Gospel Age; his work finished, he was laid aside to await his final destiny. The people he prepared took up the flaming torch and carried it on, passing it in turn to their successors. Paul knew that, and he devoted the last years of his life to teaching those who were guard the interests of the Christian faith in Rome and plant them firmly in the new Roman Age which was to dawn after the persecution in which Paul himself lost his life had ceased.

So it is with us now. We, the members of Christ's Church still on earth, are, like John the Baptist, making ready a people prepared for the Lord. Our time on earth, like his, is

limited; the end of the Age draws nigh, and with it the closing of the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus". But when the last members of the Church have been gathered to meet their Lord, and the world is entering into the last stage of trouble that immediately precedes the Kingdom, what of the Truth? Will it be known in the earth? Of course it will! God has never left Himself without witness in the earth, and in times of catastrophe and judgment such as that which will then be upon the world He will assuredly have some who know the Truth and the explanation of events and will declare them. Perhaps it is the final mission of the Church on earth, the "final witness" for which so many look, thus to "make ready" such a people, by quiet teaching and instruction in such manner as opportunity affords or opportunity can be made. Elijah, disheartened at the apparent failure of his life's work, fled to Sinai. "Take me away, O Lord," he pleaded, "for I am not better than my fathers". But the Lord had yet a work for him to do. "Go back!" was the peremptory command—and Elijah went back, not to stand before Israel and declare his witness to the one true God in public and spectacular manner as of yore; not to stride into the presence of kings and nobles and denounce them for their apostasy while other men looked on with bated breath; but to make preparations for the continuance of God's work after his own decease! "Go, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu the son of Nimshi to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah to be prophet in thy room." The judgments of God, shortly to come upon Israel, were made sure by the anointing of Hazael the destroyer. The destruction of Israel's apostate worship was ensured by the anointing of Jehu the iconoclast. The continuance of the work of God and the knowledge of God was provided for in the anointing of Elisha; and it is significant that all Elisha's miracles are miracles that picture restitution—Millennial conditions. The healing of poisoned water and food; the increase of meal and oil, the giving of life to the dead!

So it may well be with us. The Lord calls us in our times of discouragement and slackness of effort to "GO BACK"; not necessarily to do the work that produced such good results thirty or forty or fifty years ago, but to do the work that is necessary to these present times. The Lord will not leave Himself without witness in the coming years; but to us He surely extends the privilege of

making arrangements, like Elijah, for the witness that is to be after our own earthly course is run. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand;

for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

THE THOUSAND YEARS

The Book of Revelation, a record of visions and voices made apparent to the Apostle John by the Holy Spirit, on the little Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, contains many dramatic passages, but few so dramatic as that in which the seer beheld an angel descending from heaven with a great chain in his hand, by means of which he proceeded to bind Satan, the Devil, cast him into the abyss, and shut him up so that he could deceive the nations no more until the thousand years of the Millennial Age should be fulfilled. The correct understanding of this twentieth chapter of Revelation is the key to a right view of the Millennial Age. The Divine restraint which is to be put upon the Devil and the power of evil is the essential preliminary to the evangelical work of that Age, and culminates in the reconciliation to God of "whoever will", their entrance into everlasting life, and the final condemnation of the incorrigibly wicked.

This chapter presents that aspect of the Millennial Age which has to do with the moving of Divine power against Satan for the overthrow of his rule, the restraint of the outward practice of evil in the world, and the exaltation of the true Church, the faithful Christians of this present time, to association with Jesus Christ in the governmental work of the Age. It includes the time at the end of the Age when the restraint on the practice of evil is relaxed in order to permit mankind, after their period of Divine education and evangelisation, to make their choice between good and evil. Satan attempts to regain his former power; he is unrepentant. He, and all who follow him, are destroyed as being incapable of reformation, and with their destruction the last shadow of evil flees away, and the Age comes to an end, being merged into the everlasting kingdom of the Father.

It is well known that only in this chapter does the Bible state the duration of the Millennial Age—one thousand years. There is no doubt, however, that the belief is well founded, and that the figure is intended to be taken literally. It was the fixed opinion of antiquity that the Messianic Age was to en-

sure for one thousand years, and that the Divine Plan would then reach its consummation so far as this earth was concerned. When John used the term—and he uses it six times in this chapter—it was as an expression well known to, and understood by, both Jews and the early Christian believers. In fact the Greek term is the equivalent of our word "Millennium" and the passages would be equally accurate if translated to read "... and bound him for the duration of the Millennium", "... and they lived and reigned with Christ throughout the Millennium" and so on. Its duration is also given as one thousand years in various apocalyptic books, notably the Book of Jubilees, written about 100 B.C. (Jub. 23; 27) and 2 Enoch, written about the time of Jesus (2 Enoch 22-23). These books reflected the Jewish belief of their own times, it is known that the Jews back so far as 300 B.C. believed in the thousand year reign of righteousness, and the most reasonable conclusion to which we can come, on the basis of John's use of the term in the Book of Revelation, is that this understanding originated with one of the Hebrew prophets speaking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and although not incorporated in any of the written prophecies which remain to us in the Old Testament, was nevertheless preserved through the centuries until, again under supervision of the Holy Spirit, it was included in John's record to serve as a definite declaration for all time. It is on this basis that belief in the thousand years is built.

What is meant by the "binding of Satan"? The Old Testament promises, relating to this time, that "*nothing shall hurt or destroy*" (Isa. 11. 9; 65. 25), "*God will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations*" (Isa. 25. 7) indicates that the practice of outward evil is to be restrained, and that Satan—who, despite all modern views to the contrary, is a very real, powerful and malignant personality—will be rendered incapable of deceiving and enslaving humanity. Through the ages of human history he has been permitted to work his fell designs on earth,

and the world has in consequence become a world of suffering. Now, in the heyday of his power, he will find himself suddenly unable to influence so much as one single human being, and for the whole duration of the Millennium he will be alone—with his evil.

There has been much confusion of thought in Christian circles regarding this chapter, but the difficulties disappear when it is seen that the Millennial Age itself is the great Day of Judgment, that the true Church, the Christians of the present time, are exalted to "reign with Christ" at the beginning of the thousand years, and that the rest of the dead are restored to earthly life during the thousand years for the completion of their probationary term of life's experience. Appropriately enough, therefore, the First Resurrection, that of the Church, takes place when Satan is bound and the Millennial Kingdom inaugurated. *"And I saw thrones—and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."* (Rev. 20. 4). The next thing in order is the General Resurrection, and here verse 5 has for fourteen centuries been responsible for a serious departure from the Apostolic teaching. The verse runs *"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection."* On the authority of this text, it has been widely held since the Fifth Century that the resurrection, and, therefore, the final judgment, takes place, not at the beginning, but at the end of the Millennium. This leads in turn to further confusion, for if the dead are not to return until the Millennium is ended, it follows that only the living nations at the time of Christ's Advent can share in the glories of His Millennial reign, and there can be no question of an opportunity of conversion for all men—only to those who happen to be living when the Kingdom is established, or who may be born subsequently; and this is the general view of those evangelical Christians who do believe in the Millennium. It seems clear, however, that this clause has no rightful place in the Scriptures. It first appeared in the 5th century, and is not to be found in any earlier manuscript. The Vatican 1160 and the Sinaitic, both of the 4th century, omit the clause, and so does the Syriac Peshito (2nd century). The best authorities on the Greek text reject it as an interpolation, pointing out that its construction and metre are different from the rest of the text, and that it breaks the sense and symmetry of the passage. The reason for its apparent insertion in the text of the Alexandrian manuscript in

the 5th century is not difficult to perceive. It had been a feature of Jewish belief for centuries that there was to be a "resurrection of the just" at the beginning of the Messianic Age, and a resurrection of the wicked, which generally meant the Gentile nations, at its end, for their condemnation and punishment. This belief was carried over into Christianity, and although not authorised by Apostolic teaching, lingered in the minds of many. It is very probable that this clause was originally a marginal comment made by some reader, who thought it necessary to add this item of popular belief to John's account of the First Resurrection, and was afterwards copied into the text by a later transcriber who failed to distinguish between the text and the comment. It seems evident, then, that this clause should be rejected, and with this deletion the passage becomes clear. Verses 1-6 constitute a description of the overthrow of Satan and the exaltation to glory of the Church. The following four verses, 7-10, go on to explain that this is not the last phase of the Devil's activities. At the end of the Millennium he is loosed from his restraints, attempts to stage another rebellion against God, and goes out to deceive the nations. His time is short; the rebellion fails, and utter destruction overtakes the rebels and their leader.

This is the end of the Millennial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. During the Age, evil having been restrained, men have had opportunity to appreciate and enter into heart harmony with the Divine principles of life. By its end there will be no longer any excuse for ignorance or failure to measure up to the standards of life required by God, for all will have had abundant opportunity to come to Christ in true conversion, and to attain that state of mental, moral and physical perfection which will enable them to keep the Divine laws without failure. The removal of the Divine restraint on evil must come, for God will have men living righteous lives on a completely voluntary and willing basis, not because they have no power or ability to do otherwise, and this will at once constitute a test of loyalty. Those who turn again to sin thereby demonstrate that they are unworthy of life, and that further prolonging of life is useless in their case; so God leaves the sinner to his way, and the end of that way is death. This is the principle which is symbolised by the allusion in these verses to the rebels going up against the citadel of God, and meeting with sudden and utter destruction.

Verses 11-15 take us back to the beginning

of the Age. The prophet now has his mind turned to the Millennial throne of the Messiah, familiar to all Jews from the descriptions in the Book of Enoch, and to all Christians by the parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25. 31). The basis of both pictures is the 7th chapter of Daniel, where the throne of judgment is set, and the nations gathered before it for judgment, the later Jews realising that although Daniel saw God Himself upon that throne, the executive power on earth is actually to be wielded by God's Messiah. The dead are brought back from the

grave to participate in this judgment, and at its end death and *Hades*—the death state—are cast into the fiery lake, *Gehenna*, destruction. This corresponds to Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15 to the effect that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, and that then Christ will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, that "God may be all in all". This passage, then, is a strong argument for the fact that the judgment is to take place during the entire Age, and that final sentence is pronounced at its end.

? ? QUESTION BOX ? ?

Q. What is the meaning of the expression "the time of the end" in Dan. 11. 40; 12. 4 and 9, etc., and to what period in history does it apply? (W.J.)

* * *

A. The phrase is found only in the Book of Daniel and denotes the culmination of the prophetic foreviews of the book, the final conversion of Israel and the setting up of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Daniel himself was primarily interested in the welfare of his own people and the realisation of their destiny; it is obvious that he had no conception of the length of time that intervenes between his own day and that event. There is not much doubt that he looked to the imminent release from Babylonian captivity as the decisive step in that direction and in this he was not so very different from many Christians of almost every century in this Era who have expected and looked for the coming of the Lord and His Kingdom each

in his own day and generation. Dan. 11. 40 leads closely up to the events which mark the change of sovereignty from the kingdoms of this world to that of God; the "king" there pictured is the last great evil power to oppose the incoming Kingdom and hence is pictured as arising "at the time of the end". In Dan. 12. 4 and 9 the revealing angel tells the prophet, in effect, that his words are "sealed" until the Time of the End and this means that having once been uttered and written they remain true and certain of realisation even although in the intervening time they will be more or less uncomprehended and lost to sight. Daniel was to reconcile himself to a long wait; he would not see the golden vision fulfilled in his own time but would "rest", i.e., sleep in death, in the grave, and "stand his lot at the end of the days", i.e., come forth in the resurrection to inherit the place in God's purposes for which he had prayed and waited so long.

He would continue to be taught of the Lord must continue to listen for His voice, continue to be in the hearing and obeying attitude of heart. The difficulty with some apparently is that their own wills are not fully extinct, dead—that their consecration is not complete; hence while consecrated enough to wish not to disobey the Lord's voice, they have certain ideas of their own respecting what His voice should say, and they prefer to interpret His message in conformity to their own preferences: they will to do more or less their own wills, and will to hear the Lord's voice directing them in accordance with their own wills. This is a most dangerous situation and is generally

accompanied by self-conceit and self-assertion and will ultimately lead far from the Christian's goal. Let each of us resolve by the Lord's grace that we will out of an honest heart continually seek to hear the pure Word of God, and that with a desire to obey it as far as we are able.

* * *

Some appear steadfast and nothing moves them. Some are excessively active and nothing concerns them.

* * *

God dwells in perfect peace because of His ability to see the end from the beginning, and because of His power to accomplish that which He designed to perform.



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

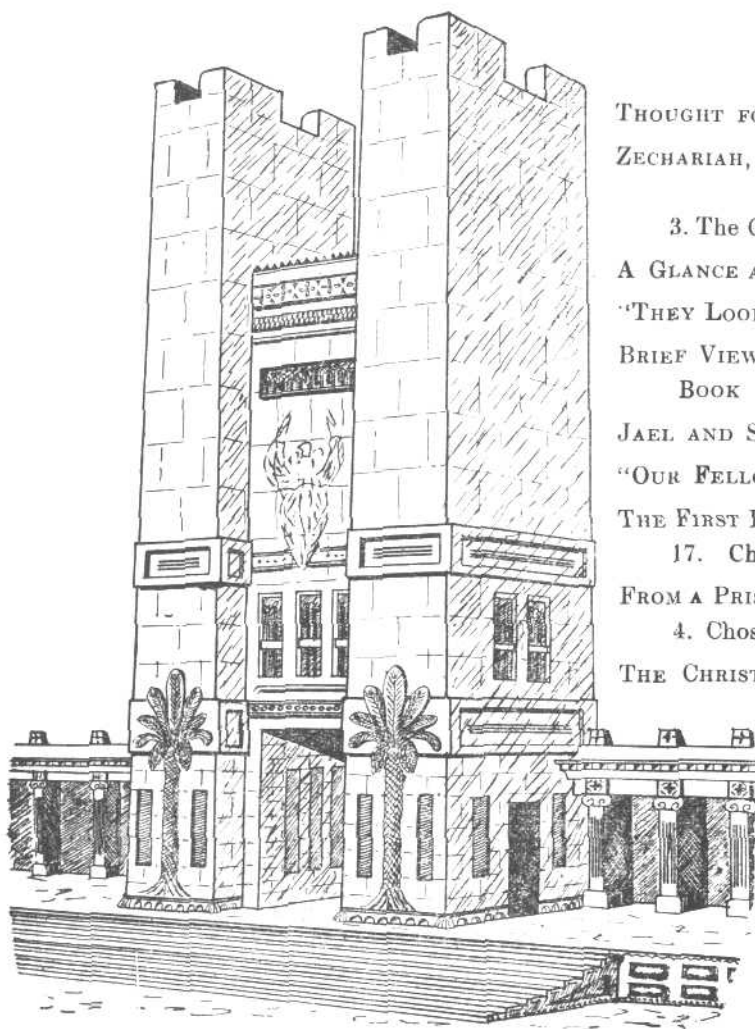
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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	98
ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION	
3. The Cleansing of the Priest	99
A GLANCE AT THE LIFE OF JOSEPH	104
"THEY LOOKED FOR A CITY"	106
BRIEF VIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION	107
JAEL AND SISERA	109
"OUR FELLOWSHIP"	112
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN 17. Ch. 4. 4-10	113
FROM A PRISON CELL 4. Chosen in Him	117
THE CHRISTIAN MISSION	119

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

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NOTICES

Annual Renewals

All readers whose address label reference numbers fall in the 9000 series are requested at this time to indicate their wishes regarding the continuance of the "Monthly". A "renewal slip" is included with this issue for this purpose but in cases where we have heard recently from a reader or are assured of their continued interest no renewal slip has been included and there is no need to request continuance. Gifts towards the publishing expenses are always welcome and sincerely appreciated, but inability to send a gift should not on this account deter anyone from requesting continuance of the "Monthly". It is our wish that all who are genuinely interested and helped should continue as readers irrespective of the financial aspect. At the same time we do appreciate the courtesy of an immediate intimation if a reader no longer desires to have the "Monthly", so that we are not involved in the expense of sending unwanted copies.

* * *

New Feature

A new feature initiated in this issue under the caption "They looked for a City" records the words of Christian men of past times—ministers, theologians, evangelists and others—who looked for and believed in the ultimate establishment of the Messianic kingdom on earth. Many of these men were notable Christian leaders in their own respective generations and their avowed personal views on the Scriptures regarding this aspect of the Divine purpose are worthy of repetition for the interest and encouragement of their successors in the faith to-day.

* * *

Free literature

The following pamphlets are available in small quantities on the same terms as the "Bible Study Monthly", i.e. free of charge but gifts toward the cost of maintaining supplies sincerely appreciated.

- No. 31 The Bible — the Book for To-day
- 32 World Conversion — When?
- 33 The Divine Permission of Evil
- 34 Everlasting Punishment
- 35 Conversion in the After-life
- 36 The Resurrection of the Dead
- 37 The Second Advent — its Nature and Purpose

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"It is God's gift to men that every one should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil" (Eccl. 3. 13 RSV).

There are of course some who do find pleasure and satisfaction in their daily occupation; a great many, alas, do not. For a considerable proportion of earth's millions the principle enunciated consequent upon man's acceptance of sin "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" still bears heavily; life is a continuous slavery to the task of getting enough food to survive. In modern industrial society many livelihoods are monotonous and soul-destroying in the extreme. And, of course, there are those who just do not like work and have no intention of working if they can extract enough money from the Welfare State to allow them a life of idleness.

The fact that these things are so, and have been more or less so throughout human history, does not make the Scripture statement of none effect. This is a Divine principle and by the time God has achieved His purpose with the human race it will be true in fact and practice. The prospect before men is not one of eternal idleness but of continuous activity and achievement. The difference will be that every man will have enthusiastically accepted his place as a citizen of creation and find joy and content in carrying out his share of the world's work. "My chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands" said Isaiah. Human labour will produce a sufficiency for all—"They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them". Instead of fighting and distorting the works of Nature, as they do now, men will make an ally of Nature and find in that alliance the complete provision of all their needs. This is what God has planned; it will surely come to pass.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 3. The Cleansing of the Priest

"Then he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him" (ch. 3, 1 R.S.V.).

A completely new vision appears at this point. The wide view of Jerusalem's building is gone and in its place the prophet stands in spirit, probably in the Court of the Temple, witnessing a ceremony which seems to have much in common with the Levitical consecration of the High Priest to the duties of his sacred office. Joshua was the lawful High Priest in the days of Zechariah, the spiritual head of the nation just as Zerubbabel was its secular head. When the rebuilt Temple was finally completed a few years later it was Joshua who officiated for the rest of his life at the annual Day of Atonement ceremonies. Now Zechariah sees this man standing before the Lord, arrayed in unclean garments, and Satan present to accuse him before God. The accusation is rejected; the Lord commands that Joshua be clothed in new and clean garments and a diadem placed upon his head. Then comes a solemn charge. If Joshua will faithfully discharge the duties of his priestly commission he will inherit an enduring place in the company of God's ministers. In the meantime, and whilst the Divine purpose for Israel is being worked out, he will lead the nation into the promised era of righteousness and peace when every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to make them afraid. (Micah 4, 4).

It is logical to think that the vision was intended to have an immediate although limited application to the situation in Israel as it existed in Zechariah's day, even although its major significance has to do with the wider aspects of the Divine Plan leading on to the days of Christ and the Millennial Kingdom. Thus Joshua in his "filthy garments" fitly pictured the defiled priesthood and Temple worship, consequent upon Israel's national captivity in Babylon and the desecrated Temple with its sacred vessels adorning the shrine of an idol god, Bel of Babylon. Satan, standing to accuse him, symbolised the hostility of the surrounding nations anxious to induce the Persian power to withdraw its support of the newly established Jewish State and bring the whole venture to an end. But here God steps in. *"The Lord*

rebuke thee, O Satan" He says *"is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"* (ch. 3, 2). Israel at this time, so recently delivered from Babylon, was in very truth a brand plucked out of the fire. So Joshua is clothed with new garments and crowned with a diadem as a symbol of the restored State and new glory of the returned exiles. This was indeed a fresh start for Israel; now, at last, the failures and apostasies of those five centuries when the kings reigned could be forgotten and under the impetus of the present passion for righteousness the nation go forward to achieve its destiny. So the charge to Joshua (ch. 3, 7); if he should walk in God's ways and keep God's charge, then his administration and rulership should be confirmed for ever. He would see the fulfilment of the old-time prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah concerning the emergence of a "branch" of David, a descendant of David's line, who should rule as both King and Priest (Isa. 11, 1. Jer. 23, 5, Zech. 6, 12-13). The outcome of this blessed reign was to be the removal of the iniquity of the land and the eternal peace and prosperity of its inhabitants.

The golden vision was never realised. True, the Temple was built and for a while the zeal of the people for their God was great; probably the lifetime of Joshua was marked by a continuing national allegiance to the covenant. But the old sins of cupidity, lawlessness and irreverence were still under the surface, waiting their chance to break through, and by the time of Ezra fifty years later the nation had relapsed into its old ways, and corruption had penetrated even into the priesthood, among the sons of Joshua. Ezra's notable prayer on the occasion of his coming to Jerusalem (Ezra 9 & 10) highlights the situation. *"O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up into the heavens . . . O our God, what shall we say after this, for we have forsaken thy commandments . . . we are before thee in our trespass; for we cannot stand before thee because of this"*. It is true that Ezra brought about a national revival and reform, but that was short-lived. Thirteen years later Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judah and found on his arrival to assume office that all Ezra's work had been

undone and Jerusalem was again a desolation. For twelve years he ruled and laboured among a fickle and at heart unbelieving people; the story of his stalwart defence of the city, its rebuilding under constant threat of attack, the moral rehabilitation of the citizens of Judea and re-establishment of the Temple worship with a purified priesthood, is well known to all who are familiar with the book of Nehemiah, but at the end of the twelve years he was recalled to Persia and immediately the nation relapsed again. He returned to Jerusalem subsequently and instituted further reforms, but as with Joshua, so with Nehemiah, after his death the light went out again, priests and people alike quickly abandoning all pretence of serving God and all belief in the high destiny of their nation. The last of the Hebrew prophets, Malachi, lived only a generation later and from his writings it is clear that Israel was still as far from attaining the Divine ideal as ever. In his short book, the last message from God to Israel in the old dispensation, there is shewn the hopelessness of the case and God's purpose to initiate a new dispensation with the Advent of Christ—an event which occurred four centuries later. So the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy in the person and work of Joshua and the generation he served as High Priest was not realised because of unfaithfulness and unfitness and the only possible fulfilment is that which runs its course through the Christian Dispensation and the one which follows, the Millennial Era in which the climax of Zech. 3 finds its reality.

It would seem, then, that the vision of this chapter takes us measurably away from the background and the events of the prophet's own day and leads irresistibly into the future. The climax of the vision, the emergence of the "Branch"—a title the Scriptures confine to the Lord Christ in His Messianic glory—the removal of iniquity, and the Millennial setting of verse 10, all point to this. Hence Joshua the High Priest, clothed in unclean garments which are taken away and replaced by clean ones, is clearly a figure of the Christian Church of this Age in process of cleansing and fitting for her future work in the next Age.

On this basis the elements of the vision fall into place. The central figure is the Royal Priesthood of the Millennial Age. A great deal of Old Testament imagery pictures our Lord uniting within Himself the combined offices of King and Priest. The Psalmist lays down the principle that when that Age dawns

Christ is to be a "priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek" (Psa. 110. 4). That is a reference back to the Genesis story of the Priest-King of Salem (Jerusalem) in Abraham's day, the story which the seventh chapter of the book of Hebrews uses so effectively to picture the work of Christ after His resurrection and at His Second Advent. Whereas at His First Advent and in His sacrificial role as the One who "poured out his life unto death" He was prefigured by the order of Aaron, a sacrificing and a dying priesthood ordained to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people", at His Second Advent and in the power of His glory He appears as a royal priest, a Priest-King, after the order of Melchisedek. But the New Testament shews that He is not alone in this; there is to be associated with Him in that restorative work among mankind of the future Age the company of His faithful disciples of this Age, the Christian Church, all those who in Rev. 17. 14 are said to be "called, and chosen, and faithful". And it is the Book of Revelation, among others, which indicates that this same Christian Church is to be considered as sharing with her Lord the honoured title of the Royal Priest-King. He "hath made us kings and priests unto God". "They (that have part in the first resurrection) shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 6; 20. 4). Joshua, standing in an unclean condition, cannot possibly be representative of our Lord but certainly can fitly picture the company of His disciples who, after cleansing, ultimately become part of the "Royal Priest". Hence verses 1-3 of Zech. 3 can logically represent the Church of this Age standing, by virtue of the consecration of its members to God, in the presence of the Lord, the "angel of Jehovah" of verse 1, clothed with unclean garments, the defiling influence of sin, which is now to be taken away. The clothing with "change of raiment" (verse 4) is easily seen to represent the "being arrayed in fine linen clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19. 8). Justification, reconciliation with God, the life of sanctification and dedication to the High Calling, all this is what is involved in this being arrayed in a change of raiment. How apt in this context are the words of verse 4 "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment".

Satan, the enemy of Joshua, is equally the enemy of all who would enter into a covenant of service with the Lord. It is noteworthy

that he disappears from the vision so soon as the Lord's reproof is uttered. So in the reality. The Prince of Evil has great power and influence in the world of men but the power of the Lord is greater and every "brand snatched from the burning" and brought to Christ is immune from the Adversary's devices. There is probably a recollection here of the story of Job. In that drama Satan is depicted as the Accuser, but although he did his worst the man of God came safely through his trials and stood vindicated and triumphant in the end. So it is with all who in these later days have taken their stand for the things of God and have not faltered.

Who are "those that stood before him" (i.e. before the angel of Jehovah, the Lord) in verse 4? These are the ones who actually strip the unclean garments from Joshua and array him in the new ones. Probably, just as Satan represents the powers of evil that would endeavour to keep Christian disciples in the way of sin, so "those that stood before" the Lord represent His ministers, whoever they are and from whencesoever they come, who are the instruments employed by the Lord in His work of transforming the hearts and lives of the believers, which is the real fulfilment of the change of garments. What has often been called "the ministry of angels" might well have its place here.

Now comes the indication of royalty, of the kingly aspect. Verse 5 speaks of a "fair mitre"—more accurately, a brilliant diadem—being placed on the head of Joshua. It is sometimes thought that this is the "mitre" which formed part of the Levitical priests'—Aaron's—regalia, but the word used makes it more likely that a royal crown or diadem is intended, as in Isa. 62. 3 "thou shalt be . . . a royal diadem in the hand of thy God". The symbol could well speak of the insignia of royalty which the prospective "Royal Priesthood" even now possesses, whilst still in this life. "Ye are . . . a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2. 9). So the Christian Church, as yet but a prospective heir to the glory that shall be revealed, stands in clean garments and with a royal diadem, acceptable in God's sight and ready for whatever commission the Lord will lay upon her.

That commission is stated in verses 6-7. "The angel of the Lord enjoined Joshua, Thus says the Lord of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here" (R.S.V.). Now

this appears to envisage the discharge of a present duty as the essential preliminary to receiving certain administrative authority, and entering into a place or joining a company which stands in close relation to God. It ought not to be difficult to discern the application. The injunction laid upon all who come to the Lord as members of His Church is both to walk in His ways and keep His charge. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2. 5). If "my house" and "my courts" have anything to do with the mystical Holy City of Rev. 21, the ruling entity of the Millennial Age, which at least is possible, then the promise is clearly paralleled by the many Scripture indications that consecrated Christians of this Age, having been faithful to their calling and having learned well all that the Divine Providence in the circumstances of life has taught them, will be privileged in the next Age with duties of oversight and instruction of the whole race of mankind then to be called to repentance and reconciliation. The final phrase is then the obvious comment. These who are thus found fitted and qualified for eternal association with the Lord in His future works are destined to be with Him, translated from this terrestrial world to that which is outside the range of human sense, but which is nevertheless the home of radiant beings always and altogether devoted and active in the service of God. Dr. Moffatt may have had more than a flash of insight when he rendered this particular sentence "I will give you right of access to this company of mine". Whatever the precise meaning of the original, it is a definite assurance that the faithful are eventually to be admitted to a condition of being, of life, an eternal home, which is in the presence of God and of those who, metaphorically perhaps, stand before His Throne. "In my Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14. 2). Something like that must be the "right of access among those who are standing here".

Now comes the inspiring sequel to the vision, one that reveals in a few simple phrases the inflexible purpose of God to remove evil from the world and lead mankind into a condition of everlasting contentment. "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at . . ." (ch. 3. 8). This is the prelude to a most important announcement; but first of all the characters thus addressed have to be identified. If Joshua the high priest is a

picture of the Church in the flesh, during this present Age, who then are "thy fellows that sit before thee", "men wondered at"? It is not easy to find a class of men in this present order of things who can fitly be described as "fellows" to the disciples of Christ. The qualifying expression "men wondered at" is difficult to apply; the Hebrew word means a miracle or a sign but the context would certainly not be satisfied by describing them as "miracle men". Every translator has his own slant on this phrase; thus the R.S.V. renders "*your friends . . . men of good omen*". Dr. Young "*Men of type they are*", Leeser "*distinguished men are they*", Rotherham "*men to serve as signs*" and Ferrar Fenton "*they are witnessing men*". Now most if not all of these expressions have been from time to time applied as descriptive of Israel, the nation that during Old Testament times was God's witness in the world and became not only a sign to all men of Divine power but a type of the later arrangement in Christ which was to come after His First Advent. Even the expression "miracle men" would not be out of place; the survival of that nation throughout history despite all that has endeavoured to destroy it, and its territorial resurgence in this our own day, has frequently been described as a miracle. And the fact that both Joshua and the "men wondered at" are bidden to heed the Lord's declaration that He will bring forth His servant the "Branch", and none among men save the Christian Church and believing Israel could have the faintest idea of the meaning of that expression, goes far to encourage the conclusion that this is the understanding intended.

"For, behold" says the Lord "*I will bring forth my servant the Branch*" (ch. 3. 8). This is Millennial prophecy at its best. The "Branch" in Scripture metaphor is Christ—at His Second Advent and during His Millennial reign, for the expression is always associated with the era of His administration of earth in glory and power. It has its origin, of course, in the fact that Jesus, as a man, came in descent of the line of David and so fulfilled in His own person the prediction that Messiah would come of David's seed. Thus we have Isa. 11. 1. "*There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse*" (David's father) "*and a Branch shall grow out of his roots*". The rest of the chapter describes the Millennial rule of Christ and its beneficent consequences for men. Says Jeremiah 23. 5 "*The days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King*

shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely . . ." Again the same prophet declares (ch. 33. 14-15) "*The days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David: and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land*". From these allusions it is obvious that the declaration here in Zech. 3. 8 relates to the establishment of the Millennial administration upon earth at the conclusion of this present Age, in which both the Church and regathered Israel, the heavenly and earthly instruments of world conversion in God's hand, will occupy significant positions.

"For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree" (ch. 3. 9-10).

A stone, having seven "eyes", engraved by the hand of God, becoming the means of removal of evil, resulting in men calling or inviting their fellows to the shelter or benefits of the vine and fig tree. This is the general picture presented to Joshua and the first task is to determine what is meant by the "stone".

Some of the older commentators took this to be a precious stone, a jewel, to adorn Joshua's regalia, having seven facets ("eyes") and engraved in similar fashion to the onyx stones of the Levitical priests, which bore the names of the twelve tribes. The Hebrew word here rendered "stone" (*eben*) may equally well refer to a precious stone, a pebble or a boulder of granite. The context has to decide. In this case the background is that of the coming Millennial Kingdom and immediately the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" of Daniel 2. 34-45, symbolising this same Millennial Kingdom, comes to mind. The "stone set before Joshua" as he stands ready for his destined work of converting the nations could well symbolise this same Kingdom. The usage of the term "engraving" is perhaps not too happy a one; logical if the stone were indeed a jewel and possible also if God is pictured as engraving His Name upon the stone that represents His Kingdom, in much the same fashion as Jesus

promises the overcomer in Rev. 3. 12 that He will make him a pillar in the Temple of God and write the name of God upon that pillar. "Pathach", however, means primarily to open a thing, as a door, a book, the gate of a city, or to loose a thing, as bonds or girdles, and only secondarily to engrave. In fact it is rendered "open" some 80 times and "engrave" only twice. It may well be therefore that what God is really promising here is that, having "set", or established, the stone which symbolises the coming Kingdom, He as it were throws it open for all who will to enter, much as the gates of the holy city of Rev. 21. 25, again picturing the same thing, are thrown open to redeemed humanity. This would then make sense of the succeeding phrase "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day", for the entrance to the "stone" kingdom being thus thrown open the logical consequence is the conversion and reconciliation of mankind and the consequent removal of their iniquity in the Millennial Day—the "one day" which St. Peter in 2 Pet. 3. 8 tells us "*is with the Lord as a thousand years*".

The seven eyes are significant in this connection. In chapter 4. 10 they are referred to again as the "*eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth*". This idea of the all-seeing supervision of His creation by the Most High is very prominent in Scripture. "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*" says the writer of Proverbs (15. 3). Elihu, that farsighted young man in the days of Job, said "*his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*" (Job 34. 21). A little known seer, Hanani of Judah, warned King Asa "*the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him*" (2 Chron. 16. 9). And in more poetic frame the Revelator sees and describes the "*seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth*" (Rev. 5. 6; 1. 4). These various expressions indicate God's all-comprehensive awareness of all that goes on in His creation; as the writer to the Hebrews says, "*all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*" (Heb. 4. 13). This does not imply that there are seven literal dissociated eyes—or even seven Spirits—travelling over the earth's surface to behold what is going on. The seven is the symbol of completeness, and the seven eyes picture the many-sided and universal Divine perception from which nothing is hid. In point of fact

"*ayin*" can equally well mean "aspect" or "face of" and is used in these senses frequently in the Old Testament. It is probably more logical to think that what Zechariah saw in the vision was not a boulder or rock adorned with representations of seven human optic organs, but rather a seven sided stone block, a stone having "seven facets" as some translators put it, so that one-seventh of the stone faced in each of seven directions. Thus would be well symbolised the Divine supervision of the Kingdom, seeing and ruling in every direction. "*The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea*".

So the stone comes to rest on the ground before Joshua; the Kingdom is established on earth, Joshua and his fellows are ready, and the Millennial work commences. "*In that day*" as Rotherham "*ye shall invite one another to come under the vine and under the fig tree*" or the LXX "*ye shall call together every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree*" or, again, the R.S.V. "*In that day, says the Lord of Hosts, everyone of you will invite his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree*". The essence of this final scene in the vision is the fact of invitation. Vine and fig tree are symbols of the Millennial Age; in that day men will invite their fellows to share in the blessings of that Age. The basic principle is laid down in Rev. 22. 17 "*And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*". This is the time when all men everywhere will have the opportunity to hear and accept the grace of God in Christ and progress, if they will, to a condition of full reconciliation with God and entry into the eternal state of the blessed. It will be by invitation and not of constraint; by persuasion and not of command. But the prospect is that of a world in which sin and evil are done away; the progress and development of the sons of men unhindered and untrammelled by violence, fear, selfishness, disease or death. The extent to which the vine and the fig tree are literally intended has yet to be seen, but that they indicate a condition in which the vast potentialities for advance in knowledge, in development and in activity inherent in man can and will be exploited to a degree at present undreamed of is evident. Man will, at last, have attained his place in creation.

(To be continued)

A GLANCE AT THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

The record concerning Joseph in the Book of Genesis is more than a true story. It gives to us an example of how God works in the lives of faithful men. The experiences of Joseph did not come to him by chance but were in the outworking of the Divine Purpose. His brothers hated him because of his father's great love for him. They hated him still more when he made known to them his dreams which indicated that he was to have dominion over them. Even Jacob rebuked him concerning the dream which implied that his parents as well as his brothers would come to bow down before him.

When Jacob sent Joseph to see if all was well with his brethren and their flocks it gave them the opportunity to put him out of the way and so put an end, as they thought, to all that was meant in his dreams. First they intended to put him to death. Reuben had other thoughts and Joseph was put into an empty pit after being stripped of the special coat given to him by his father. Later, instead of putting him to death his brothers sold him to a band of Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. Taking Joseph's coat they dipped it in the blood of one of the goats and took it to their father. Jacob was sure that some animal had devoured him and mourned his death.

Joseph was taken down to Egypt and sold as a slave to Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh's army. This appeared to be the end of Joseph's prospects, but not so, for we read *"the Lord was with Joseph"*. Divine providence was at work in a wonderful way. *"The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand"*. Observing this Potiphar gave Joseph complete oversight of his household and property. Further, the Lord blessed Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake. This is not the only time that an employer has been blessed by a godly servant.

Because of a lying accusation by his master's wife Joseph was cast into prison. But again we read *"the Lord was with Joseph"* and blessed him there. He was given charge of all the prisoners. The prison keeper left all things in his hands. Even now the prospect of Joseph's dreams ever being fulfilled seemed very remote. But God was working in a remarkable way. Two of Pharaoh's officers, the butler and the baker, who had been put

into prison had dreams. These Joseph interpreted correctly. The butler was freed and restored to his office, the baker was put to death. This was preparing the way for greater things. Next it was Pharaoh's turn to dream. He saw seven well fed, fat kine in the meadow, then seven lean kine came after them and ate them up. In a second dream he saw good healthy ears of corn which were devoured by seven thin blasted ones. He called for all his magicians and wise men but none could interpret the dreams. It was then that the butler remembered Joseph and how he had correctly interpreted his dream in prison. He made this known to Pharaoh who sent for Joseph. Shaved and properly dressed Joseph appeared before Pharaoh. *"I have dreamed a dream"* said Pharaoh, *"and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee that thou canst understand a dream and interpret it"*. Joseph at once disclaimed any honour for himself in answering Pharaoh. *"It is not in me"* he said, *"God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace"*. After Pharaoh had related his dreams Joseph said *"God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do"*. Joseph did not say that God had shewn what was about to happen but **WHAT HE WAS ABOUT TO DO, GOD WAS WORKING** in the events which were happening. Seven years of plenty were to be followed by seven years of famine. *"The thing is established by God"* said Joseph. *"God will shortly bring it to pass"*.

Joseph advised Pharaoh to appoint officers to prepare during the seven years of plenty for the seven years of famine which were to follow. This was a good proposition in the eyes of Pharaoh and his servants. Being sure that there was no one more fitted for the work than Joseph, whose God had revealed these things, Pharaoh made him ruler over all Egypt, next only to himself on the throne.

The power and authority of Joseph is expressed in the words *"without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt"*. So, under Joseph, Egypt during seven years of abundance prepared for the famine that was coming. The famine extended to the countries round about and they sent to Joseph in Egypt to buy corn.

The famine was felt in Canaan and Jacob sent ten of his sons to buy corn *"that we*

may live and not die". The brothers of Joseph came and "*bowed themselves before him*". Joseph recognised his brothers and would notice that Benjamin was not with them. He would no doubt remember his dreams as they bowed down before him. He dealt "*roughly*" with them and accused them of being spies. Then they declared that they were twelve brothers; the youngest was at home with their father and one, they said, is not. Joseph would indeed be glad to know that his father and Benjamin were alive and without doubt longed to see them at once. But first he would learn something concerning his brothers. His dealings with them as recorded in chapters 42 to 44 may seem to be "rough" but by this means he "proved" them. He found that they were really good at heart and had a great love and respect for their father. Further, he saw that they had come to feel guilty because of what they had done to him when they sold him into slavery. He felt no hatred for them nor any revenge in his heart, but only love for these who had treated him so badly. Unable to restrain himself any longer he made himself known to his brothers. What a dramatic situation! Having ordered that all others must leave, he wept aloud and declared "*I AM JOSEPH*". His brothers were speechless and troubled, no doubt wondering what he was about to do to them. He soon assured them with gracious words "*Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for GOD DID SEND ME BEFORE YOU TO PRESERVE YOU A POSTERITY IN THE EARTH and to save your lives by a*

grand deliverance". The purpose of God was working out through Jacob and his family. *They must be preserved*. The promised one to bless "all the families of the earth", one greater than Joseph, had to come through Israel, the natural seed of Abraham. God's hand was in the affairs of Egypt looking forward to the coming of Messiah the Saviour of Israel and the world. Joseph, a faithful man was wonderfully used by God in the chain of events leading on to that great day. Indeed God was with Joseph and working out His own purpose. Truly God does work in a mysterious way.

Having made himself known to his brothers and comforting them, Joseph sent them laden with corn back to their father to tell him the good news of Joseph's position in Egypt. Joseph was still alive and "*lord of all Egypt*"! What wonderful news for Jacob! So he and all belonging to him came down to Joseph and dwelt in the land of Goshen, there to enjoy the good things of Egypt. Centuries later, after a long period of affliction, they came out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, another faithful man mightily used of God in the unfolding of His great purpose. In this deliverance from Egypt the Lord fulfilled a promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15. 13-16). His word never fails. He keeps faithful to every promise.

In the many lessons which may be learned from God's dealings with Joseph one is: "*All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose*".

The prophet Amos condemned the luxury-loving leaders of Israel who in his day lived lives of indulgence, caring not for the hardships of the poor; "*that lie upon beds of ivory and stretch themselves upon their couches*" he says (Amos 6. 4). The accusation was evidently no figure of speech. At about the same time as Amos, or perhaps a century earlier, the Greek poet Homer described in his celebrated epic, the *Odyssey*, just such an ivory bed made for Odysseus the Greek hero.

*"Thence beginning I the bed did mould,
Shapely and perfect and the whole inlaid
With ivory and silver and rich gold."*

King Solomon, a century before Amos, imported ivory, among other articles of trade, probably from India. His ocean-going merchant vessels, "ships of Tarshish", took three years to make the round trip, setting out from Solomon's port of Ezion-geber, not far

from the modern Israeli port of Eliat on the Red Sea. It is very possible that the ivory used by the early Greeks and referred to by Homer originally came to the West in Hebrew vessels and was the subject of commercial business between the Hebrew King and Greek merchants.

There is increasing need that we should ponder the confident assertion of the prophet Isaiah, who assures us that "the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that it cannot hear". We are living in an age when too much emphasis is being placed upon what man can and must do, and we are in danger of overlooking that the One who sits upon the throne is omnipotent, and is able to make all grace abound unto His people.

"THEY LOOKED FOR A CITY"

Testimony to Millennial expectations from the past

Dr. Thomas Chalmers, 1780-1847, noted Scottish preacher and theologian. Founder and first Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland (1843). Originator of the "Disruption Theory" (1814) viz., that Gen. 1. 2 refers to the catastrophic destruction of the earth prior to man's creation, followed by its re-creation in readiness for man. Well versed in scientific thought of his day, an upholder of the integrity of the Bible, he was a convinced believer in the coming Millennial Kingdom.

"It has been our careful endeavour in all that we have said, to keep within the limits of the record, and to offer no other remarks than those which may fitly be suggested by the circumstances, that a new earth is to be created, as well as a new heaven, for the future accommodation of the righteous.

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

"In the new economy, which is to be reared for the accommodation of the blessed, there will be *materialism*; not merely new heavens, but also a *NEW EARTH*. And, as distinguished from the present, which is an abode of rebellion, it will be an abode of righteousness. It holds out a warmer and a more alluring picture of the *Elysium* that awaits us, when told that there will be a beauty to delight the eye; music to regale the ear; and the comfort that springs from all the charities of intercourse between man and man, holding converse as they do on earth, and gladdening each other with the benignant smiles that play on the human countenance, or the accents of kindness that fall in soft and soothing melody from the human voice. There is much of the innocent and much of the inspiring, and much to affect and elevate the heart, in the scenes and contemplations of materialism—and we do hail the information of our text, that after the dissolution of the earth's present framework, it will again be varied and decked out anew

in all the graces of its unfading verdure, and of its unbounded variety—that when He comes down to tabernacle with men, we shall also have the reflection of Him in a lovely mirror of His own workmanship—and that we shall walk for ever in a land replenished with those sensible delights, and those sensible glories, which, we doubt not, will lie most profusely scattered over the "new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness".

"But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a paradise of sensuality. Though not so unlike the present world as many apprehend it, there be one point of total dissimilarity betwixt them. It is not the entire substitution of spirit for matter that will distinguish the future economy from the present. But it will be the entire substitution of righteousness for sin. It is this which signalises the Christian from the Mohammedan paradise—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, and the glories of a visible creation seen with bodily eyes, are excluded from it—but that all which is vile in principle or voluptuous in impurity, will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterised. There will be both heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this speciality to mark it from the present age, that it will be a heavens and earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness"."

Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847)

Ed. Note:— There was not, in Dr. Chalmers' day, so clear an understanding of the difference between the celestial nature of the Church and the terrestrial of mankind in general, in the Millennial Age, as is possessed to-day. We know, now, that the faithful in Christ of this Age will, "in that day", although intimately connected with affairs on earth, themselves be citizens of another transcendently glorious world, the celestial.

God will never force His gifts. He always waits for some form of co-operation.

BRIEF VIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Book of Revelation has for long been the subject of controversy among students of the Bible. A book of symbols, it has been variously interpreted. It has been a fertile field for disputes between the exponents of interpretations labelled "præterist", "futurist" or "historical", while some, mystified by the strange events which John records, have given up in despair the task of understanding them. Others have applied themselves diligently to discovering some event in history, however insignificant, which will correspond to each detail of the narrative. It is not an easy book, but it is an intriguing one. Proverbially, a Bible class which embarks upon its study will toil through it long and painfully. The leader of such a study may feel he needs a complete knowledge not only of Old Testament prophecy but also of two thousand years of secular and church history: and together with this a sense of proportion and an appreciation of spiritual values.

Yet, for all the difficulty, the fact remains that the book is intended as a revelation. As one scholar puts it, "*The writer obviously expects that his meaning, so far from being obscured by the strange figures of speech and symbols which he employs, will be thereby illustrated, enforced, and brought home to the mind with greater than ordinary power.*" It would be hard to believe that this revelation, given by Jesus Christ, was intended only for scholars.

The book is a prophecy of things which, when it was written, were yet future. Those who first read it must have been as perplexed as those today who come to it lacking a knowledge of history—if indeed it be that many of the prophecies of the book have been fulfilled. To the first readers the book must have seemed a vast drama, with heaven and earth for a stage, in which move the kings of the earth, the angels of heaven, the powers of darkness and the messengers of light. As the apostle John unfolds his vision they recognise themselves, persecuted and oppressed, as the souls under the altar or the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem. They, with John, as spectators of the great drama of history, played before the throne of the King of Kings, in which the hero, the slain Lamb, becomes the Victor, conquering and to conquer. As the dark symbols follow one another

they rejoice to find their God is to be vindicated in His dealings with men: and the voices which speak to them in strains as of poetry tell plainly the foundation truths of the Gospel.

The modern reader as he pores over the various translations likewise notices these passages which Weymouth, Moffatt and the Revised Standard Version have rendered in verse. It is interesting to look at them. Often it is the four and twenty elders of the throne scene whose words the translators put in verse. These elders when they speak, speak to praise God. Since it is not empty praise, they give a reason for it. Their continual song, night and day, is to ascribe to God glory and honour and power. Why? Because He is the Creator of all things, and because it is by His will that the universe has come into existence. We may well echo these praises, for it is God the ever living One who through the ages has fashioned the world in which we live according to laws which only now are scientists beginning to understand. As Paul said upon Mars Hill, it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. It is only fitting that the Gospel should commence with the fact that our God is Creator of heaven and earth; and right that we too in our praises should remember thanks on this account.

In verse nine of chapter five the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song. The ages have rolled on. The world has long been established, and now the race of beings that inhabits it has been redeemed by one Jesus. But what is to follow? The anxious prayers of Christians come before the God of heaven. The elders rejoice, for that same Jesus in the very presence of God is found worthy to open the book of the future, to control the destinies of this world. He has ransomed men for God from every tribe and nation, a body who will reign over the earth as priests. Thus a second great fact emerges: that the Gospel Age is a time in which Christ's ransom sacrifice is applied to a selected company, for whom God has a special work. If we are among those who even now have been redeemed, we can join with their song.

*"Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry,
"To be exalted thus!"*

*"Worthy the Lamb!" our hearts reply,
"For He was slain for us."*

As we turn the pages of the Revelation, it is not till chapter seven that we find the elders once more burst forth in praise. The sight that inspires them then is a numberless host of men, justified and victorious, from every nation. Their great tribulation is past: they are to suffer no more, but under God's protection are to serve Him. Irrespective of any question what "class" this multitude represents, is it not a comfort to know that the future is to hold life, with the privilege of His service and protection, to *any* one who is under "the robe of Christ's righteousness".

The theme of the elders is more awesome in chapter eleven. If the mercy of God is to be praised, so also is His judgment. It has been the lot of Christians in the Gospel Age to live in a time of darkness, when the light of the Gospel has only partly illumined the world. There is light enough to see by, for those whose eyes are open to the message of salvation; but for the rest of mankind the world is dim, full of half truths, with any course of action a choice between two evils. Men dimly perceive what is good, but lack the courage to endure that measure of suffering which right action entails. While there are men upon earth to take selfish advantage, Christian meekness will bear this reward of suffering. So the nations are not meek but angry: and God's wrath comes upon them. Wrath upon the spirit of self, wrath upon those who destroy, wrath upon all those things which work not creatively in the spirit of the Creator, but to disrupt, antagonise and embitter. This judgment is necessary. To use a homely comparison, just as the dentist drills away the rotten part of a tooth in order to preserve the good remainder, so all that is antagonistic to the very life of God's kingdom must be removed. We know that Christ's rule will be one of mercy and equity: but we also know that what He sees fit eventually to destroy must indeed be worthy of destruction. God's judgment is a cause for rejoicing. For we long to see vindicated that spirit of love which now shows so little in outward results. We long for our God to reveal Himself in all His power and righteousness, to show His majesty, to embrace mankind in His love, to make it once and for all evident that the scorned and rejected gospel of Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Truth. As the twenty-four elders say, when they fall down and worship God, *"We give thanks to thee, Lord God almighty, who art*

and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign". While, if we are conquerors, we too may sing

*"Great and wonderful are thy deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are thy ways,
O King of the ages!
Who shall not fear and glorify thy name,
O Lord?"*

*For thou alone art holy.
All nations shall come and worship thee,
For thy judgments have been revealed."*

The chapters which follow are full of the judgments of God. False religion, the lust for worldly power, infatuation with the good things of this life, hypocrisy under the garb of godliness, all these things come under sentence together with the Dragon—the adversary—that inspires them. All is summed up in Babylon, that city into which is drawn all the wealth and pride of life. In it there is gaiety, finery, all those external things which delight the senses but without godliness are a delusion. Babylon is the epitome of the kingdom of this world: its inhabitants live for self, and they have a worldly allegiance. Their conduct stands condemned, for it results in the blood of innocent men, of men made holy by their relationship with God.

It is small wonder that Babylon's fall is heralded in the language of poetry. It is small wonder that the adjuration is "Come out of her, my people". We must ever beware of the spirit of Babylon, whatever our surroundings and with whomever we meet. Only by a personal guard over our lips and our ways, by a perpetual watchfulness in prayer shall we ensure that we are free of the trammels of the world. Let us beware lest our conduct betray our heavenly city or dishonour our heavenly King. It is so easy to peddle between two masters.

After the judgment of the harlot Babylon goes up the cry of the hosts in heaven, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just". The earth is rid of an evil thing, and by contrast we see the Bride of the Lamb made ready to be joined to her Lord. From the vision of the faithless we turn to the faithful: our Lord comes into His own, and His chosen ones with Him. Babylon is doomed: the new Jerusalem rises in its stead.

As the book draws to a close, there comes a voice from the throne itself:

*"God's dwelling place is among men
And He will dwell among them
And they shall be His people."*

*Yes, God Himself will be among them.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death shall be no more;
Nor sorrow, nor wail of woe, nor pain;
For the first things have passed away."*

There follows that pure, clean vision of the eternal city, a grand symbol to end the book of symbols. It is the consummation of God's purposes, a new order which follows the time of tempest and judgment. The waters of life flow there, and the nations, purged of sin, bring their glories to God's feet. God's servants, great and small, render Him holy service, and see His face, and are recognised as truly His.

Thus ends the Revelation passed by Jesus Christ to John on the Isle of Patmos. The broad picture is clear. God's purpose looks beyond the suffering of the present hour. The God who created man, and His Son who redeemed him, will reign over the race.

Suffering serves only to mature those who will reign with them, and God's ultimate design removes pain and death from the ken of human kind. The heart in tune with Him thrills as His designs are made manifest. Just as the Christians of the First Century longed for their final accomplishment, so do we; and we grasp His principles of righteousness, principles which seem as much in jeopardy in the world today as they must have seemed to the saints of old. If, after the nineteen hundred years of history, we can identify our position in time among the symbols of the book, well and good. But even if our minds are not capable of grasping the details of it, we may all rejoice in the one great hope, join with the four and twenty elders around the throne as they cry,

*"Worthy art thou, O Lord God! . . ."
"Worthy is the Lamb!"*

Jael and Sisera

*A story from the
days of the Judges*

Jael was the Kenite woman who slew Sisera the Canaanite chieftain after inviting him into the sanctity of her tent, and in so doing gave cause for a controversy over the ethics of her action which is never far from the surface whenever someone wants to decry the Old Testament. The story bears all the marks of an act of treachery but the whole-hearted endorsement of the affair by Deborah the Israelite prophetess has often been taken as indicating Divine approval.

The narrative is found in Judges 4 and 5. The time, the troubled period, a century or so after Israel had entered the promised land, when the "Judges" ruled, and *"every man did that which was right in his own eyes"*. (Judges 21. 25). The scene, the fertile valley of Esdraelon in the north, and mount Tabor, near which Nazareth was afterwards to stand. Some of the northern tribes, Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar, had become tributary to a Canaanite king, Jabin, and they groaned under his oppression. The acknowledged leader of Israel at the time was a woman, Deborah the prophetess, and when Israel *"cried unto the Lord"* (Jud. 4. 3) for deliverance, indicating contrition and a return to God, Deborah roused herself to action. Summoning Barak of the tribe of Naphtali, apparently the best military leader the nation possessed, she encouraged him to

raise a force of ten thousand men to challenge the oppressor. Descending from the slopes of mount Tabor upon the Canaanite host assembled in the valley, Barak gained a decisive victory and put the enemy to precipitate flight. Sisera, the Canaanite commander, became separated from his men and chariots, and fled in another direction on foot to find sanctuary with a friendly community. The battle had been fierce and long. The Canaanites apparently considerably outnumbered their opponents and had in addition the advantage of nine hundred war chariots. Israel was armed only with bows and spears. Barak, however, was evidently a strategist. He chose to launch his attack from the flank of Mount Tabor two thousand feet high, from whence he could descend upon the enemy arrayed along the river Kishon in the plain at Megiddo, down a relatively narrow valley protected from any out-flanking tactics by the high ground on either side. Thus the Canaanite host met the full force of a closely knit solid body of men striking at the very centre of their rather long drawn out defences. From Deborah's song of triumph after the event it seems the impact of Barak's attack demoralised the Canaanite army and that many were drowned in attempting to get across the river to safety. The survivors finally took to headlong flight through the

plain towards their principal fortress town of Harosheth twenty miles away, with the jubilant Israelites in hot pursuit. By the end of the day the chariots were all in the possession of Israel and the whole of Sisera's vast host had been put to the sword. The victory was complete. Sisera plodded wearily across country the four or five miles that separated him from the encampment of Heber the Kenite, where he hoped to find refuge. And this is where Jael comes into the story.

Jael was Heber's wife. She was not an Israelite. The Kenites were the people of Jethro the father-in-law of Moses, and had thrown in their lot with Israel when Moses led that nation to the Promised Land. Of Midianite extraction, they retained the fierce Bedouin instincts of their ancestors; this fact has to be borne in mind when assessing the later developments in the story. Judges 4. 17-22 is a straightforward narrative of what actually happened, relating sober facts, and this is history. Judges 5. 24-27 is part of Deborah's later song of triumph exulting over the incident, and this is poetry. This also has to be borne in mind, for poetry should not be viewed so literally as history.

So Sisera approached Heber's little settlement. It seems that Heber himself and all his menfolk were away, for it was Jael who went out to greet the fugitive. It could be that they were out in the fields with their flocks; it is not likely that they were in the battle with the Israelites, for ch. 4. 17 says that *"there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite"*. *"And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle"* (ch. 4. 18). Now this was a very risky proceeding for the Canaanite captain; a man discovered inside a woman's tent in that Bedouin society would meet instant death at the hands of the outraged husband and his relatives. If the woman was found there in his company she would share his fate. It is evident that Sisera took the risk in order to find a place of concealment from his pursuers, but why did Jael put herself in such jeopardy? It has been suggested that he forced his way in but this is neither likely to have served his purpose nor does it agree with Jael's apparent invitation. Verse 18 can hardly be construed as other than a direct free-will invitation. Dr. Thomson (*"The Land and the Book"*) suggests that the "peace" between Jabin and Heber need only

mean that no state of war existed, that the Canaanites almost certainly oppressed this little Semitic colony in their midst and that Heber had no cause to espouse Jabin's side. Jael, he thinks, seeing Sisera approaching in the distance and in the knowledge that her own menfolk were away, faced the alternatives of giving shelter to Sisera and risking the vengeance of the pursuing Israelites if they discovered him, or rejecting his plea for shelter and risking death at his hands. The outcome of the situation was the solution she found to her problem, and this may well explain her apparent later treachery.

At any rate, Sisera laid himself down in her tent and suffered himself to be covered with a "mantle", more properly a rough skin blanket. He asked for a drink of water, "for" said he *"I am thirsty"*. He had been fighting a losing battle all day, had lost his army, had been pursued at least twelve or fifteen miles over rough country, and he was exhausted. Jael gave him, not water, but milk, and thus refreshed, he settled down again under his blanket. Before so doing, however, he gave Jael an instruction, *"Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee and say, is there any man here, that thou shalt say, No"* (ch. 4. 20). The words as they stand would seem to indicate that the menfolk of Jael's own tribe were included in the prohibition—it could well be that Sisera was not prepared to trust any of them—but in any case his request put the woman in a very difficult position. By the code under which she lived she could expect no mercy from her own folk if after such an answer her word was found to be false, and Jael might well have felt at this point that Sisera had betrayed her hospitality and forfeited any claim to protection; that the preservation of her own reputation might now only be secured by the death of her visitor.

Jael's response was immediate. *"Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground, for he was fast asleep, and weary. So he died"* (ch. 4. 21). The Kenites were nomadic tent-dwellers; the "nail" was a sharp-pointed hardwood tentpeg and the "hammer" the wooden mallet used for driving the tentpegs into the ground. It was a cruel and terrible act, and by modern standards a deed of treachery. The man was her invited guest and had gone to sleep in trust that she would protect him,

and she betrayed that trust. It is only the fact that Deborah in ch. 5 invokes the Divine blessing upon her in consequence that makes it desirable perhaps to probe a little into the apparent reason for her act.

Sisera had come in worn out and exhausted from the battle and subsequent pursuit, desiring nothing more than a place in which to sleep in safety. The account says "he was fast asleep, and weary". If the dispassionate, matter of fact narrative in ch. 4 is given preference over the poetic licence of ch. 5 the details of the incident are plain. Jael went in to him "softly", ascertained that he was fast asleep, crouched down over him, perhaps with her knees on either side of his recumbent form, the tent peg and mallet in her hands—and the gruesome deed was done.

It would seem then that Jael's treachery was inspired by one of two factors. Either she was in fear for her own life as suggested by Dr. Thomson, or perhaps more likely, she regarded Sisera—and probably with good reason—as an enemy of her own people; that his destruction would justify her violation of the laws of hospitality. Something of her animosity is revealed in her words when, a little later on, Barak arrived at the settlement searching for Sisera; "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest". It might well have been that there was some unavenged wrong Sisera had done Jael or her people, not hinted at in the story, and that she took advantage of this opportunity for revenge. If so, the entire story is consistent with what could be expected of a fierce Bedouin woman.

What value then is to be placed upon Deborah's impassioned praise "*Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent*" (ch. 5. 24). The obvious answer is,

none at all. Deborah was a prophetess and obviously a woman stalwart in her allegiance to God but this did not impart infallibility to her utterances and neither was God bound to endorse all her sentiments. She was a woman of her times and from her point of view Jael had done a fine thing and was worthy of all commendation; but Deborah could hardly be considered completely unbiased in the matter. After all, in much later and more enlightened times plenty of quite earnest Christian people with much less excuse than Deborah have claimed the Divine blessing upon victories won in warfare involving acts no less nauseating than that for which Jael was responsible. Deborah's song was exultant, colourful poetry, conceived in the emotion of the moment, and her bestowment of blessing upon Jael need be taken no more seriously than her words a few verses earlier "*the stars in their courses fought against Sisera*". In literal fact the stars had nothing to do with the battle; it was the irresistible ferocity of the Israelite warriors which brought about the Canaanite defeat. The victory of Israel was a good thing; it helped to replace Canaanite degradation by a better and purer form of communal life in the land, and it can be agreed that in a general way the Divine purpose was being served; but this does not necessarily set the stamp of Divine approval upon everything that was done. This is one of many Biblical stories which stress the truth that the image men make of God is oft-times far removed from the reality. "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isa. 55. 8-9).

"*The trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*" (James 1. 3-4). There is something about the atmosphere of trial which seems to clear the vision of the children of God. In mountain scenery it is in stormy weather that the landscape takes upon herself the greatest beauty, and spiritually our vision is often dim and hazy when the skies are fair, but the day of trial often gives us the loveliest views of God and things Divine. It is in

the furnace heated hotter than usual that the form of the Son of God is seen. It is in the fourth watch of the night of toiling that the Lord appears walking majestically upon the sea. God's witness in His word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it, and no attacks made upon it, however fierce or subtle, can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculation to the terra firma of Divine Revelation.

"OUR FELLOWSHIP"

*An interesting quotation
from the past*

This manifesto was published some seventy years ago under the above title to define the outlook of the "Bible Student" movement of that time. The sentiments it expresses are so much in line with what many regard as fitting to-day that it is reproduced here and commended to all our readers. Probably no fellowship then or now has completely attained this ideal, but that it is one worthy of striving for few would deny.

* * *

Our fellowship sprang up spontaneously and gradually. It is composed of thinking Christian people of various ages who are studying the Bible reverently and profitably. There are no limitations as to membership, except such as could be properly applied to any true Christian. (1) Faith in God as the great Creator and Heavenly Father, (2) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the world's Redeemer, (3) Faith in the Bible—that it is the inspired message of God, respecting His will and purposes in connection with mankind, (4) A clean and honourable life.

We find this platform broad enough for all true Christians, regardless of denominational differences. We have no bondage, and anyone is as free to leave the local gatherings as to enter them. Indeed, following the example of the Early Church in this as well as in other matters, we avoid any special enrolment, or any special commitment as to faith and practice other than the broad principles already mentioned.

Each local gathering is independent, manages its own affairs, conducts its own meetings, and provides for its own expenses. The personnel of these gatherings come from all walks of life—labourers and physicians, pupils and teachers, housewives and the leisured. It is observed that many of these truth-seekers were unsatisfied when they studied the Bible from various denominational standpoints; now they are satisfied. How may one account for this? How comes it that a clearer light can be gained in such meetings than in the ordinary denominational institutions?

There is a difference. Each denomination seeks to uphold its own traditions of the past, some of which are true and some false. In our fellowship all denominational predilections are ignored. We pause not to inquire what Brother Calvin or Brother Wesley taught, nor what others taught before them or since. We go back to the teachings of

Christ and the apostles and prophets and ignore every other teaching. True, all denominations claim more or less to do this but are more or less handicapped by their traditions and creeds. They look through coloured spectacles. We ignore all those and strive to view the words of inspiration in the light of the context only, or in the reflected light from other passages of Scripture.

There is another reason why our position is blessed of God—the time mentioned in the Scriptures when the "wise" of God's people are to understand is here. The Scriptures show, what men are now beginning to realise, that we are in the dawn of a new era. This is the time concerning which God promised that He would give special enlightenment respecting His Word and His Plan, and the mystery of God should be finished.

Our fellowship therefore, while not affiliated to any of the older denominations and sects, is sympathetic with all Christian people of every creed. We realise that the various denominations were organised, not for the purpose of dividing and distracting the Lord's flock, but each with an endeavour to find the light and truth. We urge Christians to ignore all sectarian fetters and fancies, and would point out that there is one true Church, and but one Head of that Church.

Our fellowship therefore endeavours to bring all Christian people into relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His members. We recognise that the different denominations contain true people of God, and are glad to co-operate with them in any manner for the furtherance of the Lord's work in harmony with the Scriptures. Our only objection to sectarianism is that it attempts to divide God's people, insists upon the theories of the Dark Ages, and refuses to recognise the paramount authority of the Bible. We urge Christian people to stand for the Divine character, Plan and Word, even although this may mean opposition and persecution from those of sectarian spirit.

We labour therefore specially for Christian unity, on the Bible basis, in harmony with the words of the Apostle, "*By one Spirit we are all baptised into one Body*". (1 Cor. 12. 13).

*"There are great truths that pitch their
shining tents*

*Outside our walls, and though but dimly
seen*

*In the grey dawn, they will be manifest
When the light widens into perfect day."*

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 17 I John 4. 4-10

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (vs. 4).

There is a tone of quiet confidence in this verse that strikes a note of triumph. We have overcome them! Even although our earthly pilgrimage is by no means ended, and we still have trials and tribulation, struggles and conflict, to endure and survive, we have overcome "them". Who or what is indicated by the word? Surely the antichrists of which John has just been speaking. Because we are of God, and God is in us, we have already overcome all antichrists. John is not speaking here of believers whose conflicts with the world, the flesh and the devil are now all over and who therefore have entered into the final "rest" beyond the veil. He is talking to pilgrim Christians, struggling Christians, suffering Christians, Christians who still experience only too vividly and painfully the weaknesses and stumblings of their fallen human nature, and who oft-times are tempted to wonder if after all they are going to make their calling and election sure. It seems so evident that we in the flesh have by no means yet overcome all the enemies of the spirit; we wonder if John really had us in mind when he penned these words. Or is it that those early Christians of the First Century were already in spiritual stature far above what we can ever hope to be in the flesh? Did they overcome more completely and positively than do we in this Twentieth Century? Are these words of commendation applicable to them but not applicable to us?

Not so. There is no essential difference between Christians of any one century and any other. All are faced with much the same difficulties and temptations and all react to them in much the same way. Human nature does not change much through the ages, whether the individuals concerned be children of God or children of the Devil. We may be tolerably certain that John's commendation of his own brethren in his own day is more or less equally applicable to his brethren of this our day. We, like them, have overcome the antichrist simply and solely because God is in us and abides in us and dwells in us, and whilst that remains true there can be no other outcome. The issue is already decided. Of course if the time should come when it is no longer

true that God dwells in us, if we have banished His gracious presence from our hearts, then it is no longer true that we have overcome. It is not of our own unaided strength that we have overcome; it is because of His indwelling Spirit. We supply the sincerity, the desire; He supplies the strength. We need both to make the overcoming a certainty. If we on our part withdraw our sincerity, our desire to be overcomers, then His strength of itself will no longer effect the victory. We can only be overcomers by means of His strength; we can only be overcomers by means of our own sincerity. We need both.

So it is that because "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world", because God is greater than the Devil, we can be sure of our overcoming. God is visiting the nations to take out of them a people for His Name (Acts 15); He has called those in whom He has found some native leaning towards Him, and where the call has been heeded and answered He has accepted the consecration of such an one, and thenceforward the overcoming of that one is assured, if they continue in faith and hope. It cannot be repeated too often that once our Father has received us into covenant relationship with Himself, sealed us with the Holy Spirit of adoption and given us the honour of being called "sons of God", He will never be the One to let go first. He abideth faithful. But on the other hand we ourselves can let go; and if we of our own volition turn away and walk no more with Him then He has no alternative but to let us go. But John is not now thinking of such possibilities as that. He is writing to men and women who have every intention of living up to their new found faith. He is writing to men and women many of whom were later on to become martyrs for the Cause and the Lord to which and to Whom they had pledged their lives. And he is telling them in advance that the Holy Spirit in them is a power greater by far than anything the antichrists of this world could call to their aid, and because of that fact these simple hearted believers could already be said to have "overcome".

"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not

us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (vs. 5-6).

"They are of the world!" The word used here for "world"—*"kosmos"*—means and includes everything that has to do with the ordered life of man on this planet. It covers the political, the ecclesiastical and the social institutions of man and the lands and buildings and temples and everything appertaining thereto. It covers the cities and the factories and the ships and everything that has to do with the life of men. It covers all that men have made and built on the face of the earth and it covers all that they have said and written and painted. It covers their philosophies and their laws and all that is built upon those philosophies and laws. The *kosmos* is the world which men have made, and it is in such a world that we live as aliens—"in the world but not of the world". This is the world to which the antichrists belong, this the world of which and to which they speak, and this the world which gives them ear. It is a world in which God is not honoured and very largely is quite unknown. St. Paul gave it its true name when he called it *"this present evil world"*. Not until it has been swept away and replaced by a new order of things *"wherein dwelleth righteousness"* will men escape from the dominion of evil and the influence of antichrist. All this has a terrifying implication to-day. The minds and hearts of men are increasingly turning to that full unity with this present *kosmos* that leaves God right out of the picture. There is no room for God in men's ideas to-day. *"There is no God," is in all their thoughts*; that expression is more true to-day than it was when it was coined by the Psalmist three thousand years ago. And the result is that the world is slipping more and more into the grasp of antichrist. In its most modern form—a form not yet fully revealed—that awful power is described symbolically in Revelation 13, where the whole world saving those who have the Father's name in their foreheads will be branded with the mark of the Antichrist—the Beast. In a day yet to come—it may be very near—we shall realise much more intensely than we do now how true it is that the antichrist is "of" the world, and the world "heareth" it.

There is another side to the question. All are not deceived by antichrist. Some there are, hidden away in this *kosmos*, who are prepared to listen to the voice that is raised for God. Says Rotherham in this verse 6 *"He that is getting to understand God hearkeneth*

unto us; whoso is not of God listeneth not unto us". That indicates that in the world, in these dark times, there will be, first, those who are Christ's disciples, well-instructed in the truth and determined to defend it at all costs, and secondly, those who would hearken to the voice of God if it should be sounded. Even in the darkest hour of apostasy and the powers of evil there will be some desiring to know God who will listen if a voice is raised to speak for Him. That fact should be a powerful incentive to us. Daniel, giving heed to the angelic visitant's message concerning the latter days, heard him say *"The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, many days."* (chap. 11. 32-34). That may well refer to a period earlier in history than our own yet its teaching may be true teaching for the days in which we live. We too may find opportunity to "instruct many" in this dark hour of the world's travail. We too may have to fight all the powers of darkness in order to snatch one brand from the burning. This verse in John's epistle ought at least to remind us that our mission still is to hold aloft the banner of Truth in the sight of all people and exhort them to repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ. We are teachers of all nations, and the more that we see the darkness settling down over the earth the more we should seek to stab its blackness with our torches. We cannot hope to dispel it utterly—that is reserved for the coming Millennial Day—but we can at least make pin-points of fire in the gloom toward which the seekers can turn and make their way.

"Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" says John. Surely so! If we are thus able to stand up against the prevailing antichrist worship and denounce it for what it is we have this witness that we have the spirit of truth. No other spirit or power can sustain us at the present time. The spirit of truth, which has already led us into all truth, will now be our strength and inspiring influence. Just as Elijah, in the strength of the heaven-sent food and drink, went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the Mount of God, so shall we go in the strength of the spirit's witness the full span of our testing time, and emerge at the end triumphant, because we have known God. So let us continue, determined to witness faithfully for our Lord and Master, in no manner

dismayed by our opponents, knowing that of a surety "greater is he that is for us than all that can be against us".

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love". (vs. 7-8).

That last phrase is rightly esteemed one of the most significant words in the Scriptures. It is certainly one of the best known. It has been the inspiration for countless sermons and it has formed the subject of scornful comment by agnostics and atheists. It has been appealed to by those who would point men to a future hope in consolation for present distress and it has been quoted bitterly by those who cannot reconcile it with their present distress. Yet it has lived; no man has been able to destroy the simple beauty of those three simple words nor tear them down from the lofty position they occupy in the world. The proclamation that God is love will always be proclaimed while Christianity itself is proclaimed—and that will be forever.

There is an almost equally important word enshrined in this text: "Love is of God". Important, because that statement connects directly with the Divine purpose in creation. If God is love, and love is of God, then it follows that all His creation is inspired and directed by love. It follows that all His creatures will have their lives guided and controlled by love and that in their lives they manifest love. If God is love, then the controlling principle of the universe is love, and whatever exists in antagonism to love is out of harmony with the spirit of the Universe and will therefore pass away. We are now getting near to some connection between love and righteousness, and lovelessness and sin, and that is just what John wants for us. He is striving to show that unless we do love in sincerity and truth we are not of God, and that in turn means that we are yet in our sins.

We can well afford to linger for a while over this word "love is of God". It forges a link between the Divine and ourselves. The Scriptures exhort us to be fashioned into copy-likenesses of "God's dear Son"; since He is like His Father, then we, if made "like Him", will be like the Father also. That takes us back in thought to the time when God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". Was that expressed intention completely carried out in Eden? Surely not! Man as then made might well have been in the image and likeness of God in many respects but certainly not in all. In His steadfast hat-

red of sin he was not; in His unswerving insistence on righteousness he was not; in that far-seeing wisdom, inflexible justice, all-embracing love, that constitute three of the four attributes of God, he was not. And in the fourth of the Divine attributes, that of power, weak, puny man certainly has not yet proved himself to be anywhere near the likeness of God. We have to conclude that God spoke of His ultimate purpose with man and that He intends man to be fully in His own image and likeness at the end of the Millennial Age. What He did in Eden was only the beginning.

Nevertheless what was done in Eden certainly did manifest the fact that "love is of God". Divine love prompted the creation of man and all that went with that creation. It was Mark Twain who once observed that the proof to him that God has a sense of humour is the fact that He created ducks—otherwise He would not have devised such comical creatures. In much the same way we might observe, and perhaps with greater propriety, that the proof to us that our God is a God of love is the fact that He created man. The love of God is revealed in all that He has done for man since the beginning of creation, and in all that He has promised yet to do. The very existence of this earth with all its possibilities; the fact that we have brains capable of thinking to the extent that we can think; all is evidence of the truth of John's words "Love is of God".

But all of these considerations pale into insignificance beside the supreme example of Divine love, the one that is always in our minds and forms the background if not the subject of every Christian sermon and discourse. "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3. 16). That is without doubt the most well-known verse in the Bible and by far the most often quoted. John recalls those words here at this point in his own fashion. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (vs. 9-10). Is not John teaching true doctrine here when he turns away as it were from the evidences of Divine love in creation and all that has been given to man, and points to the coming of Jesus as the evidence of God's love before which all other

evidences are overshadowed. Obviously it must be so, for all those other gifts of God to man, the tokens of His love for man, can be enjoyed only if man is righteous, fully in the image and likeness of God. And only by the giving of Jesus His only begotten Son to be our redeemer can any of those other gifts be enjoyed in perpetuity. Without this supreme gift, all the other manifestations of Divine love will have been of no avail. That shows us one thing very clearly. It shows us that God could never be satisfied with an intelligent human creation the individuals of which were to live only for a limited period and then pass into death. He could not be satisfied with the praise and worship of dying creatures. He has planned for men an endless life, a life in which praise and worship will never come to an end; that fact more than any other consideration ought to assure us that God will never relax His efforts to bring each of His wandering children back to Himself until it is abundantly evident that the case is hopeless. It is no empty phrase that the Apostle uses when he declares that God *"will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"*. (1 Tim. 2. 4). We sometimes whittle down the force of that Scripture by suggesting it means only that God will "save" all men from Adamic death and give them the Millennial opportunity of reformation. It does mean that, but it means much more. It is God's will that all men should be saved eternally and enter into the full realisation of Divine truth that will come to the eternally redeemed. It is possible for a man to defy God's will in this respect. He made men so able to defy Him. In consequence some may refuse thus to be saved. Revelation 20. 9, if taken as a prophetic foreview of a coming historical event, indicates that there will

be some such. But it still remains true that it is *"not the will of your Father that one of these little ones should perish"* (Matt. 18. 14).

In these few verses all the emphasis is on Divine love and the achievement of that love. The love of God prompted the sending of His Son into the world to be a propitiation for our sins, that we might live through Him. Just how is it that this manifestation of love achieves the great work of reconciling mankind to God? It seems rather remarkable that we in our discussions on the subject of the Atonement put the emphasis on the word "blood" whereas the Scriptures do lay considerable emphasis on the word "love". Is it after all possible that there is a mystic, a spiritual and yet for all that—perhaps because of that—overwhelming power in love that, in a fashion we do not yet understand, is a compelling force, leading men to righteousness? We tend to think of the influence of love upon another life as consisting merely in sentiment, force of example, appeal to the other's better nature, and so on. What if, after all, the declaration "God IS Love", "Love is of God" has a reality of which we have never yet dreamed, and that every exhibition or manifestation of selfless love does let loose in the world a force which influences men, even without their knowledge, more powerfully than any power of evil? If that be so, we can, maybe, see more clearly than before why the Dark Ages theology of the Atonement, that Satan demanded the life of Jesus as a ransom for condemned man, has been abandoned in this our day. The Love of God required the death of Jesus because only by that death could the Love of the Father and of the Son become a mighty reformatory force in the hearts of mankind.

(To be continued)

Things Under the Earth (Phil. 2. 10).

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, both in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth." The reference to some who "under the earth" will bow the knee to Jesus sometimes provokes a question. Those in heaven, and those on earth—that is easily understood; but who are those "under the earth?" The Greek word which is translated by these three words is *katachthonios*, which is composed of *kata*, meaning down, *chthonios*, which is defined by Liddell and Scott as having reference to anything in or under the earth but especially to the gods below the earth. These gods in Greek mythology were

the Titans, who rebelled against the gods of heaven and after being defeated were cast out of heaven and imprisoned below the earth. These Titans correspond to the fallen angels, and it would seem that Paul used the word to refer to those fallen angels who are described by Peter as being imprisoned in Tartarus. In other words, when the Divine Plan for man is complete, not only will all in heaven and earth bend the knee, but also those who were "disobedient in the days of Noah" unless of course by wilful and continued opposition to the ways of God they reap the inevitable wages of sin—death.

FROM A PRISON CELL

Part 4. Chosen in Him

Reflections on the
"Prison Epistles"

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." (Eph 1. 4).

One of the most wonderful and astonishing of these great thoughts with which the Epistle to the Ephesians begins is that embodied in the words of the text. Quoting the small section in full, we read: "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love, having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus unto Himself*" (vv. 3-5).

There is far too much in this short section for this present study, and we must confine attention to just the few words in the head text, for they contain much food for reflective thought. It is a wonderful and solemnising thought to realise that the faithful of this Gospel Age have been chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, and that we, also, of these strenuous days, if found faithful unto death, may also win Christ and be found "in Him" when the ever living God makes up the number of His elect.

The context tells of many great positions of authority and power created for those high heavenly beings which were brought forth to be helpers and assistants to the first-born Son of God in the great Plan entrusted to His care, and into which they will enter in the fullest sense, when all things in heaven and earth are "headed-up" by Christ. In the words of the text Paul has transcendently great news for those from the human family who follow faithfully in the footsteps of their beloved Lord. In the unfathomable depths of ages gone by the same almighty sovereign God who framed the great all-comprehensive universal plan for the various gradations of heavenly beings also foreordained that a company of earthly beings, born as members of a fallen race, should be redeemed from the power of sin and death, and follow their Saviour and Redeemer from the confines of this terrestrial plane up into the highest place of the heavenly realms to be His own family of sons. This phase of the Divine intention took shape at the same time that Divine wisdom devised the great

Plan for the heavenly realms—that is, it took shape even before the creation of the heavenly beings, for their respective places in the Plan. By this fact we are informed that ages before man was created God had purposed that man should be created. And by the same evidence it was foreseen that circumstances would arise among men whereby a way would be opened so that beings of a lower sentient plane could be transformed and carried up to a higher plane. There must be some deep and unique reason for this procedure, otherwise, like all the native members of the heavenly hosts, they could have been created, at first move, in those heavenly realms. To be first born as men, and then changed and adapted afterwards to heavenly conditions is an experience without parallel in the vast creative Plan. So far as one can say, there can be no other reason for such a course than to give them contact with sin, on the lowest plane where the evil moral consequences of sin could be experienced and understood; and then for some great purpose, too deep at present to understand, have been lifted up to the highest place as companions and brethren of the first-born Son. Divine foreknowledge was fully equal to the task of knowing that man would fall into sin, and be allowed to die, and framing its Plans accordingly. That knowledge would not implicate the Divine Creator as conniving in man's fall any more than that He was responsible for Satan's fall. With full knowledge of the heavenly realms and of universal law, Satan fell by deliberate choice. He exercised the freedom of his will, and decided to rebel against high authority. So also did man—though within more circumscribed circumstances.

Divine foreknowledge could foresee the fatal swing away from righteousness of man's free-will, and planned to save man from the consequences of his fatal choice, and under the same circumstances call from among man's progeny a company to be transformed and then transferred to the higher sphere. Right back there in that distant past God purposed that man should be redeemed, and at that distant time made choice of One to be man's Redeemer. That is what Peter says when he writes: "... ye were redeemed ... with precious blood as of a lamb without

blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ, who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1. 18-20). This statement is an exact parallel to the words of Eph. 1. 4-7. Right back there in the unfathomable depths of time God purposed that man should be redeemed, and not only so, but that from among fallen men he would invite such as were right-hearted before Him to follow His well-beloved Son through death to His heavenly throne. This is what Jesus means in His great committal prayer. *"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was . . . Father, those whom Thou hast given me, I will, that where I am, there they may be also, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me, for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."* (John 17. 5 and 24).

This is the transcendental thought that amazes all who can comprehend it, and stirs their hearts to the very depths with emotion too deep for words. It is not easy to think back into those distant times and ponder on the Divine purposing, but, whether we can comprehend it or not, this inheritance in Christ was made secure by the sovereign will of God. And, more wonderful still, the fore-ordination of this purposing actually gave God joy and delight. Long ages before He would look upon this company of sons, God found pleasure in anticipating the days of their coming, and in the good pleasure of His Will deliberately ordained and chose this company and arranged its acceptance into His presence through His well-beloved Son. That great pleasure sprang out of His great love for His unborn family, for it was "in love" that He predestined it to be adopted. That all-seeing eye of God could look forward down the long distance of time, and as He saw what would come to pass among men as the story of His grace was told, He felt the warm movements of His loving heart expand towards those who believed and responded to His call.

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

Full sonship and full access to the Father's glorious presence belong to a later day, when every trace of sin and selfishness has been cleansed away, and when the clinging tendrils of this earth have been cut away once for all. No trace of unholy thought or defiling desire can be carried up into His heavenly home. Hence His future sons must be set free from these undesirable things here and now. To that end He most graciously forgives their sins—covering them with the precious blood of the worthy Lamb of God—and thus looks upon them approvingly through the abundant merit of His Son.

Then, to help them break the power of sin in their lives God has sent His Holy Spirit into their hearts, as a source of energy and strength, upon which they can draw in time of need. It is as though the Divine hand reached down to snap all the fetters of sin and to lift His prospective child over every stone and obstacle, by making every right impulse and desire stronger every day, and impressing the mind of His beloved with firmer resolve to live always and only for this purpose of God. Thus, holiness is engendered in the adopted one's heart—first, a desire to be free from sin; next, a determined resolve to become devoted in every sense and degree to the Will and purpose of his Father and his God. Thus holiness becomes complete.

Who would not go through fire and flood, and fight down every foe, for such an inheritance as this? Who would not relinquish every earthly prize and count it as unworthy refuse to win such a place in Christ? Do we wonder that Paul writes words which glow with living fire, as he contemplates what that future inheritance will mean (Phil. 3. 17-24).

God grant this thought to lie heavily on our hearts so that in the few years of this earthly life it may penetrate and permeate us through and through with deeper longing to be accounted worthy to go up into the higher realms to see and share the glory of the worthy Lamb.

To be concluded

only through intelligent thought and pondering.

* * *

There is no preaching of the truth more forcible than the silent influence of a consistent Christian character, bearing in richness and luxuriousness the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and self-control.

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION

The prophet Jeremiah had a burning zeal in his heart, a consuming sense of the importance of the message given him to deliver. His previous declaration of the Word of God concerning Israel had been so despised and rejected that he had become disheartened. He himself declared, *"The Word of the Lord was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily. Then I said: I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name. But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary of forbearing and could not stay!"* His message had to be spoken. The Lord had instructed him to tell Israel that they were about to be given over into the hands of their enemies.

If Jeremiah had allowed his fears to overwhelm him, and had withheld the message, undoubtedly he would have been set aside as the mouthpiece of God, and another would have been commissioned to deliver the message. The burning within the heart of the Prophet would have grown feebler and would ultimately have died out. When a fire is kept shut off from a draught for some length of time, it will become extinguished. This is as true in the realm of moral and spiritual forces as in that of physical nature. This is why the Apostle Paul urged: "Quench not the Spirit". We might let the Holy Spirit of God die out in our hearts by a failure to do our duty, a failure to keep our covenant faithfully. The light within us, the holy fire, would smoulder for a time, and finally become extinct. He could not withhold that which God had commanded him to speak; he could not quench the fire within his soul without losing his relationship with the Father.

Thus it is with us to-day. God has let us into the secret of His counsels. He has granted us a wonderful spiritual illumination. He has given us a Message of the utmost importance to deliver. We have been informed by the Lord that a great change is impending, that the present order is about to end, and that the dominion is about to be given "to Him whose right it is" to reign. The "kingdoms of this world" are about to "become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever".

This Message is not to be stated in a rude manner. But it is to be stated, nevertheless. The great King whom God hath appointed is about to come in. In Jeremiah's time, the

message was that the Kingdom of God, His typical kingdom, was about to be overthrown. The lease of power to the Gentiles was about to be inaugurated. This order of things was to be permitted to run for an appointed time. That time is now about to run out. The King's Son is soon to receive His long-promised inheritance (Psa. 2. 7-9). Our Message is not now the overthrow of God's Kingdom, but the very opposite of this—the overthrow of the kingdom of darkness and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

So we are to tell forth this glorious Message. We are to tell it in our actions, in our words, by the printed page, by pictorial presentations to the eye, and in every way that the Lord shall give us the opportunity. If through fear of persecution, of losing prestige in the eyes of men, for love of ease, or for any reason whatever, we should fail to give forth the Message of God, it will be taken from us and given to one who is worthy. The Lord is seeking those who are valiant for Him, for righteousness, for truth. If we prove ourselves weak, we are not fit for the Kingdom.

Is this wonderful Message, this Message the like of which was never before granted to men or angels to tell, burning within us? And are we speaking it forth, that its inspiration may cause other hearts to take fire?

If we refrain from telling the Glad Tidings, the result will be that the fire of God's Holy Spirit will become extinguished within us. And if the light that is within us becomes darkness, how great will be that darkness! The possession of the Truth—God's Message—brings with it great responsibility. Shall we prove faithful to it? Shall we show to our God our deep appreciation of His loving kindness in granting us the knowledge of His wonderful Message of Salvation, His glorious Plan, with its times and seasons?

There is a difference between the operation of the Lord's Spirit in His children now and its operation in the days of the Prophet Jeremiah, and the other holy Prophets. During the Jewish Age the Holy Spirit acted upon the servants and mouthpieces of God in a mechanical manner. Now the people of the Lord have both His Message in His written Word and the illumination of the Spirit, which gives us a spiritual understanding impossible to His people of past Ages. The

mysteries of God are now opened up to His children, the watchers; and we are granted a clear understanding of "the deep things of God", some features of which were never revealed until the present time, even to the most faithful of the Lord's saints (1 Thess. 5. 1-6).

We are told by the Apostle Paul that the things which were written of the servants of the Lord in past dispensations were written for *our* admonition and instruction and comfort, "upon whom the ends of the Ages are come" (1 Cor. 10. 11). Seeing all these

GREATER WORKS

Jesus said, "Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father". Have any of the Lord's disciples done any greater miracles than Jesus did so far as healing physical ailments are concerned? We have no record of greater works of this kind than are recorded in the Gospels. Have any of the Lord's disciples at any time done as great works according to the flesh as Jesus did? Have any of them ever waked the dead? Surely none except the Apostles have done this wonderful work. What then could our Lord have meant by this expression, "Greater works than these shall ye do?" We see that Jesus in His ministry dealt only with the natural man, and could not communicate to natural man respecting spiritual or heavenly things except in parables and dark sayings, which could be but imperfectly comprehended until after Pentecost gave the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The greater works, therefore, that have been done by the Lord's followers since the ascension have been such works as related to the hearts of men rather than to their bodies. The whole creation is groaning and travailling in physical discomfort, but the worst of all groans and pains comes from the anguish of the soul—broken hearts. The Lord's followers, in proportion as they receive of His Spirit, may communicate it through His word and bring to wounded and broken hearts peace and joy and blessing, regardless of physical conditions or discomfort, so that, as the Apostle explains, they may rejoice even in tribulation, knowing what the tribulations are working out for them in the way of greater glory and blessing and association with the Lord in His Kingdom.

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

things, "What manner of persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?" How earnestly, with what painstaking care, should we give heed to the Word spoken unto us! Let us be faithful in proclaiming the Message of our Lord, now due. Let us tell forth the words which He has put into our mouths, whether others hear or whether they forbear—whether our faithfulness brings us favour or disfavour. But let us speak His word in meekness and love, leaving the results with our great Chief Reaper. "The Day is at hand"!

A MILLENNIAL PROMISE

The thirty-second chapter of Isaiah has long been recognised to comprise a prophecy of Millennial conditions. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" is how it opens. The Septuagint rendering of verses 6-8, which describe the attitude of the obstinately wicked in that glorious day, is so much more clear and vivid than is the Authorised that it is well worth reproducing.

*"For the fool shall speak foolish words,
And his heart shall meditate vanities,
And to perform lawless deeds,
And to speak error against the Lord;
To scatter hungry souls,
And He will cause the thirsty souls to be empty.
For the counsel of the wicked will devise iniquity,
To destroy the poor with unjust words,
And ruin the cause of the poor in judgment.*

*But the godly have devised wise measures,
AND THIS COUNSEL SHALL STAND."*

That final sentence is a wonderful assurance of the certitude of God's promises. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" is the declaration. Here in Isaiah 32 we have an eloquent pen-picture of the determination with which some will seek to perpetuate the bad old ways of this "present evil world"; but all their plans and schemes will come to nought, for "the godly have devised wise measures, AND THIS COUNSEL SHALL STAND".

We are to love and cultivate that which is pure to such an extent that that which is impure will become painful to us, distressing, and we will desire to drop it from memory, and this will only be accomplished by continually thinking upon those things that are pure, and avoiding the giving of thought to the things that are impure.



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

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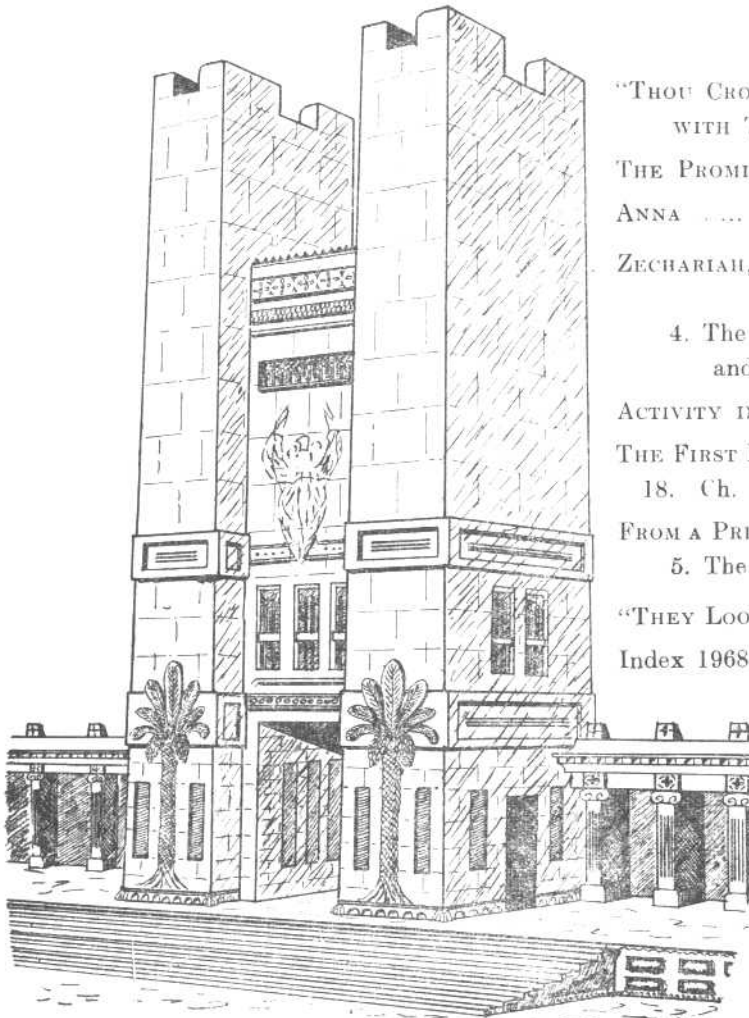
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CONTENTS

"THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS"	123
THE PROMISE OF RESTITUTION ...	125
ANNA	128
ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION	
4. The Lampstand and the Olive Trees	133
ACTIVITY IN ETERNITY	135
THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN 18. Ch. 4. 11-21	137
FROM A PRISON CELL 5. The Adoption of Sons	141
"THEY LOOKED FOR A CITY"	143
Index 1968	144



*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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Annual Renewals

A few readers in the 2000 and 9000 address label series who did not respond to the renewal request enclosed with the last issue of the "Monthly" will find a reminder in this issue. It will be appreciated if all such will signify their wishes by return; failing this we have little alternative but to discontinue sending. In the case of overseas readers we allow a further two months before inserting the reminders on account of the lengthy transit time in both directions and in these cases the reminders will be inserted, when necessary, in the January issue.

* * *

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This is a reprint of the series featured in the "Monthly" during 1967. There is need in this latter part of the Twentieth Century for an up-to-date presentation of the age-old doctrine of the Second Advent stripped of the crudities derived from mediaeval thought and examining Scripture references to the manner, the purpose and the time of our Lord's coming against the background of the present world situation. That He comes to establish a new world order of peace and prosperity in which evil will be progressively eliminated and goodness become universal, sin, misery, disease and death be abolished and men given a full opportunity to hear the Gospel and attain the life eternal that can only come through acceptance of Christ ought to be more widely known than it is. This 64 page booklet will be of interest to all who are "looking for His appearing" and not altogether satisfied with conventional expositions of the subject.

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"THOU CROWNEST THE YEAR WITH THY GOODNESS"

A reflection and an anticipation

(Psa. 65. 11)

Christmas comes at the end of the year, after the harvest has been gathered in and men's labours have measurably ceased, after all the activities of summer days, all the outworkings of plans and schemes, all the planting and building, have reached their climax and attained their object. Christmas is a time for casting the mind back upon the events and achievements of twelve months, and for rejoicing in that which has been done. The work of the year is complete, and Christmas crowns that work.

The Israelites began their New Year in the Autumn, after the fruits of their labours had been gathered in and sowing for next year's crops was about to commence. It was then that they observed their Feast of Tabernacles, and in the fiftieth year sounded the Trumpet of Jubilee which proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, calling every man to enter once more upon his inheritance, an inheritance which, perchance, he had lost many years before by reason of sin or misfortune. The Feast of Tabernacles was to Israel what Christmas is to us—the glory of achievement for one year's work, the anticipation of another year of sowing and reaping and building and sitting down under the vine and fig tree. Small wonder that it was a time of rejoicing. Small wonder that our God, in His wisdom, chose this season of the year for the coming to earth of His Son—for Christmas the traditional birthday of Jesus, was not actually the time of that event. It was Autumn when He came. Autumn, the time of the beginning again, the time for a fresh start in the things of men and the things of God. But because we in our day are more accustomed to think of the turn of the sun to longer and brighter days as being the beginning of better things; because we look longingly for the "shortest day" and then say one to another "the evenings will soon be drawing out again", it is appropriate that we look upon Christmas as did Israel upon the Feast of Tabernacles, and celebrate with our friends and neighbours the birth of Jesus, the dawn of new hope for the world, and a guarantee that there shall be a beginning again.

But the people of the world in general do not see that dawn of hope. The statesmen of the world still grope their way unseeingly,

feeling for peace, and finding it not, because the way of peace is not in their hearts. The shadow of war still hangs over us. The menace of rivalry between great world powers glowers at us from the darkness. Distrust is rampant everywhere. Food shortage and housing shortage is world-wide. There seems, on the surface, little enough reason for man to look up to God and say "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness".

And the reason is not far to seek. It is because the shadow of sin still lies over mankind. There is to be a day when God will "destroy the covering that is cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations" (Isa. 25. 7) but that day is not yet. We look for the coming of a Kingdom that will remove sin from the hearts of men and then all these evils from which the world now suffers will take flight and be gone, but that Kingdom is not yet here, and we must take heed of the present. It is a great and glorious part of our commission to tell men of the coming Age with its rule of righteousness and its opportunities of blessing and advancement toward human perfection. It is good that we comfort weary hearts with the golden promises of the golden future, with its shimmering vistas of a world at peace, a world in which disease and pain, sorrow and crying are done away. All this is part of the Christian gospel. But there is another part which is terribly important because it is related so closely to things that are around us every day. It speaks, not of health, but of pain; not of peace, but of war; not of good, but of evil, and it points to the fact that the cause of all these things is sin and that sin must be removed and that sin cannot be removed until there is first repentance, and conversion, and a coming to Jesus in full surrender of life to be moulded by Him into the fashion of that new life of the future Age. And although it is true that the great day of this work is the future day, the Millennial Age, it is also true that the gospel we preach now is the same gospel that will be preached then, and we too, in this our day, must call men, as Peter called men two thousand years ago, to repentance and conversion, before they can properly appreciate the glorious promises of the Age.

We tend to come short in this. We are too

apt to assume a Christian standing in those to whom we witness, and endeavour to convert them to our own understanding of the Divine Plan before we are sure that they are already converted to Christ. We think, perhaps, rather too much in terms of adding adherents to a fellowship and not enough of adding believers to Christ. Do we, one wonders, need to take to heart more seriously than we have done, the words of Jesus "*Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and . . .*"? In this dark day of the world's distress surely we need above all things to establish the faith of men in Christ the Lord, and on that basis begin to instruct them in things concerning His Kingdom.

Another thing we tend to forget is that we cannot convert others until we have converted ourselves. We cannot lead other men into a Kingdom into which we ourselves have not yet entered. And there is a very real sense in which we, who have "come in" to Christ, are called to enter His Kingdom here and now. Have we done so? Is it true of us that "*the Kingdom of God is within you*"? Have we "*entered into rest*" (Heb. 4. 3) or are we like those of old who failed to enter in "*because of unbelief*"? Men will ask us concerning our faith and hope for the future, and the way of life which we declare that men will be called upon to follow in that day, "Does it work?" Unless we can show that it *does* work, and *has* worked, in our own lives now, how can we expect them to heed our witness regarding the future? There is danger of spiritual complacency. We are so sure of our own personal salvation—and it is a good thing to be sure—but that very certainty tends to beget a carelessness with regard to others, and when, as at the present time, men are generally indifferent to the message there is a tendency to leave the world to its sin and unbelief and take refuge in the consciousness of personal acceptance with the Lord. Evangelical fervour is dulled by apathy, and the final result is seen in those little companies who have frankly and avowedly abandoned the Christian commission to preach the gospel and are waiting in quietude and seclusion until they are carried away to heavenly glory.

And all of this is because we have been unable to "*endure to the end*". It is only when the end has come that we can expect to see the fruition of our work, and only by patient continuance in well-doing that we shall receive the prize of immortality (Rom. 2. 7). It is noteworthy how often the Scripture stresses this fact, "*The Gospel shall be preached*

in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24. 14) "*Go thou thy way till the end be*" (Dan. 12. 13) "*Receiving the end of your faith*" (1 Pet. 1. 9) "*At the end it shall speak, and not lie*" (Hab. 2. 3). "*Then cometh the end, when He . . . shall have put down all rule and all authority and power*" (1 Cor. 15. 24). It is at the end that we shall realise the fruitage of our sowing and reaping.

We can, therefore, read a new meaning into the Psalmist's words, putting emphasis on "crownest" instead of on "goodness". "*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness!*" It is not until the end of things that God as it were puts the topstone on His structure and His goodness stands revealed to all men. It is not until the end of this present world that the light of the glory of the Kingdom shines to all men; not until the end of the Church's career in the flesh that she shines forth "*as the sun*" in the Kingdom of the Father (Matt. 13. 43).

So Christmas becomes a symbol and an earnest of the end that shall come, even though the past and present be dark and discouraging. We enter upon its familiar customs with knowledge that a greater and more glorious time of festivity and gladness awaits the world "*at the time of the end*". The short passage in Psa. 65 in which this phrase occurs is quite evidently framed to fit Millennial conditions. If not a direct prophecy of the coming Age, it certainly is a wonderful illustration and the "crowning" of that Age with God's goodness the natural climax. "*They that dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth are afraid at thy tokens*" (signs—Heb.) says the Psalmist in verse 8. Surely he here takes his stand during the great Time of Trouble which is concluding this present Age. Men are admittedly afraid at His signs—the signs of the long-promised *parousia* of the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Men's hearts failing them for fear.*" "*They shall seek the dens and caves of the rocks.*" We are quite familiar with many such Scriptures and their manifest fulfilment in this our day. "*Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*" The "*outgoing of the morning*" is the sunrising, and that of the evening the moonrising. Both these signs are to be witnessed at this time, the dawn of the Millennial Age. The sunrising is the manifestation of Jesus at His Second Advent—"as the bright shining, (the sunrise), cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man

be" (Matt. 24. 27). "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4. 2). And the moonrising is the restoration of God's ancient people Israel to their own land, to be a missionary people and to declare His salvation to the end of the earth (Isa. 49. 6). "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Isa. 60. 1). Here the sunrise is associated with the moonrise which shines by reflected glory from the sun. So Israel in that day will reflect the glory of the returned Lord to mankind. "Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water." That river of God is the Church, complete and ready for her task of bringing life to the nations; "full of water". "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." (Psa. 46. 4). "Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it." All things being ready, the pure sustenance of Millennial teaching, of missionary endeavour, of "life from the dead" is prepared for and offered to mankind. "corn" that will give them everlasting life. "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6. 51). "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"

(John 12. 24). "Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly. Thou settlest the furrows thereof. Thou makest it soft with showers. Thou blessest the springing thereof." Could language better describe the work of God with man during the next Age? "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations" (Isa. 61. 11). So we come to the climax of that glorious Age when "thou crownest the year with thy goodness, and thy paths drop fatness". "In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things, full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." (Isa. 25. 6).

This is the hope for mankind. Surely at this Christmas season we can take fresh heart of courage, remembering that there hath not failed one word of all His good promise, and that just as now we look forward to the ending of this year and the hope of better things in the next, so in this end of this present world, dark and fearsome though it may be, there is the sure and certain knowledge of a new and better world "wherein dwelleth righteousness".

THE PROMISE OF RESTITUTION

Some foundation principles

The doctrine of the Messianic Age has its roots in the soil of Eden. In that intensely interesting record there are two important elements. One, that man was created sinless and physically perfect, capable of living for ever, the subsequent entry of sin being responsible for death and every other evil. The other, that God permitted the dominion of sin for a wise purpose and for a limited time, but its power will eventually be destroyed and mankind will be restored to primal perfection and attain everlasting life. The Messianic Age is the period during which this restoration process takes place, for those that are capable of conversion and reconciliation to God, and the exaction of sin's ultimate penalty in the case of those that are incorrigibly wicked.

The story of Eden is not only one of condemnation, it is one of hope, speaking of God's intention to undo the evil effects of sin. Historically it records the conditions that existed when God, having brought the earth into existence and furnished it with plant

and animal life, placed Man, its crowning glory, upon it, and commissioned him to increase and multiply, bring the earth under control, and make use of all its amenities in harmony with Divine law. Man was free to repudiate that law, but the consequence of violating the principles which God had ordained was cessation of his existence—death. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Man did transgress; death reigned in consequence.

We do not fully understand the necessity of this temporary power of sin over the human race, but that it can be and is being used by God as a means toward achieving His designs for the human race is undeniable. That in some sense we do not fully comprehend—or perhaps do not comprehend at all—perfection is attained through suffering (Heb. 2. 10) is indicated in the Scriptures. Something of this may be meant by the cryptic statement that was man's first ray of hope. "I will put enmity between . . . thy seed and

her (the women's) seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3. 15). That text has been conventionalised into an oft-quoted saying: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head", and all Bible history and prophecy is a record of the development of this "seed" through the ages and its final and complete victory over the "serpent".

The next indication of the Divine purposes came when Abraham received his call to leave his native city and go into a land which God would show him. The Sumerians were the earliest civilised people of which records are available to us, and Sumerian Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, was a repository of learning and knowledge inherited from a still older civilisation of which no records have survived. It was from this people that Abraham, in the knowledge of their past, when the true God was better known among them, left Ur to follow the leadings of that God. He eventually received the promise "*I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee . . . and in thy seed . . . shall all the families of the earth be blessed*" (Gen. 12. 2-3, 22, 18). By virtue of this declaration Abraham, and his posterity as yet unborn, were destined to become the means of fulfilling God's benevolent intentions to all mankind. Bible history records the vicissitudes that befell the descendants of Abraham until the promise, narrowed down to one specific line, that of Isaac and Jacob, began to bear fruit in the creation of a nation, the nation of Israel, at Mount Sinai in the fifteenth century B.C.

The significance of this event was profound. For the first time in history a nation was formally dedicated to God and commissioned to demonstrate the operation of Divine principles in national life, whilst being trained and fitted for the ultimate conveyance of God's blessings to all men. It could, in fact, have been the Kingdom of God upon earth in miniature. Israel as a nation came short of that ideal, and eventually lost its nationhood during the troubled period 600 B.C. to 135 A.D., but during the fifteen hundred years of its existence it acquired characteristics which peculiarly fitted many of its sons for God's future purposes in the administration of the world after the Second Advent of Christ.

Two-thirds of the Old Testament was written during this period, and these books trace the gradual revelation of God's purpose regarding the coming of Messiah to deliver the world from the power of sin and death. At first the emphasis was laid upon the deliver-

ance of Israel and Divine retribution upon Israel's enemies, but intermingled with this theme there was consciousness of Israel's mission to "*declare His salvation to the ends of the earth*". The Psalms of David show the first real hope of an ultimate Messianic Kingdom in which "*righteousness shall flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth*" (Psa. 72. 7), over which the Son of God will reign as King for the elimination of all evil (see the Second Psalm). Isaiah, the most farsighted of all the Hebrew prophets, described this Messianic kingdom as a time in which "*the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose*" (Isa. 35. 1). He dwelt at length on the nature of the physical changes that will characterise that day, saying that God will create a new heaven and a new earth, a condition of things in which His elect will long enjoy the work of their hands. But in contrast to this sunlit picture of the Messianic Age Isaiah also drew another one of more sombre hue, that of Jehovah's "*suffering servant*" who by means of his suffering now, becomes fitted to be God's minister then, an instructor and guide of the nations. In the supreme sense these prophecies were fulfilled in the person and life of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for men, and having been raised from the dead awaits the time to set up His Kingdom on earth, in fulfilment of all the Messianic prophecies and hopes of old. Isaiah spoke of both His Advents, the First, when He took upon Himself human nature in order to suffer and die as a man, and the Second, when He returns in the glory of His Divine nature to establish the Kingdom that is to restore the willing of mankind to human perfection and so complete the Divine purpose.

Jeremiah, two centuries later, described God's purpose concerning the Messianic Kingdom in terms of a covenant made between God and man. God is to put His laws in the inward parts of men and write it in their hearts (Jer. 31. 33). All men will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, and the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Vs. 34; compare Isa. 11. 9). Daniel, nearly contemporary with Jeremiah, by virtue of his position as Prime Minister of Babylon brought into contact with the highest political movements of his day, stressed the essentially practical nature of the coming Kingdom, how that it is the world's only hope for peace and security; how that all existing forms of

government and power must yield place to this universal empire of righteousness that is destined to rule the whole earth (Dan. chaps. 2 and 7). It was Daniel who saw clearly, more clearly, perhaps, than any before, that God must have trained and qualified men, thoroughly experienced in His laws and His righteousness, to administer that Kingdom, and this understanding had a profound effect upon later teaching regarding the Messianic Age. Ezekiel the priest, a man gifted with prophetic vision of a very high order, described the forces of evil in the world hurling themselves in vain against the incoming Kingdom and failing, vanishing away to be succeeded by the orderly and beneficent system of Millennial government which he symbolised in his description of a vast and fair Temple from which proceeded a River of Life to the nations. This was the theme which led directly to John's description of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation nearly seven centuries later.

Thus, then, does the Old Testament describe this coming Age of blessing which will abolish evil, undo the havoc wrought at the time of Eden, reconcile man to God, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The work of converting the nations is to be effected by the "servant" which God has appointed and trained for that purpose, an essential factor in that training being the endurance of "suffering". In the end, death will be ended, the dead will have been raised, the righteous made perfect, sinners cut off, and sin no longer mar Divine creation.

The coming of Jesus Christ to earth threw a tremendous flood of light upon this almost purely material, earthly, expectation. Until only a few centuries before Christ there was no idea that God's plans included any kind of spiritual salvation, and it was expected that the "righteous" would all attain their ultimate destiny here on earth. The teaching of Jesus as understood and expounded by the apostles and other New Testament writers reveals another phase, a spiritual phase, to God's plan, and shows that some from among the nations during the period between the First and Second Advents are called to inherit a spiritual or heavenly state of being by becoming personal disciples of Jesus Christ. In the wisdom of God all such are trained and fitted by suffering, as were their Israelitish predecessors, that they might be qualified to occupy a supremely important position in the work of the Messianic Age. That position is one of association with

Christ, in the spiritual glory of His exalted station as King over the earth during the Millennium. The New Testament thus shows that the "Seed of Abraham" through which all families of the earth are to be blessed has a three-fold aspect. In the first place, Christ Himself is the Seed. Associated with Him in the heavens, having the oversight of all that is done during the Age of Blessing, is His Church, comprising the faithful consecrated disciples of this present Age; for "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3. 29). Associated with both Christ and His Church in service, but stationed upon the earth, is the restored and purified nation of Israel, administering the Kingdom arrangements. Within these three aspects the whole of the promise concerning the "Seed" is contained.

Additional to this new understanding the teaching of Jesus made plain another principle upon which the work of the coming Age must rest, *the necessity for conversion and intelligent, willing acceptance of the moral laws which God has ordained for the orderly conduct of life*. The Jews of the time shortly before Christ visualised the righteousness of the Kingdom as a formal and ritualistic righteousness, a state in which observance of the Mosaic Law was the indispensable and all-sufficient condition of eternal life. Jesus changed all that and described a system in which every man will be led to see for himself the rightness of righteousness and the sinfulness of sin, and make his choice accordingly. God seeketh such to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4. 23). *Hence Jesus called attention to the necessity of repentance and conversion to His way of life*. For this reason He commissioned His disciples to become missionaries and preachers, calling men to repentance, and although they were thus bidden to preach in all the world for a witness during this Age, it is evident that this is only by way of preparation for the next Age, when that missionary work will receive an impetus such as could not be given whilst the world is still in bondage to sin and death.

The New Testament, then, completes the Old Testament picture by revealing God's purpose to "send Jesus Christ" (Acts 3. 20), at His Second Advent, to establish an order of society upon earth in which all evil will be progressively eliminated, and men encouraged to repentance and conversion, and so to everlasting life. The resurrection of the dead to human life will take place at the

commencement of this era, and thereafter death, except as the end of those who are incorrigibly determined to continue in evil, will cease. At the close of the period the formal Kingship of Christ over the nations will end, their probationary period having expired, and men will enter into full relationship

with their Creator as sons of God.

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15. 24-28).

ANNA

*A story of the
child Jesus*

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for deliverance in Jerusalem." (Luke 2. 36-38).

So short a passage! So little said! But how eloquent! She comes in without having been previously introduced to the reader of sacred story. She goes out—and is never heard of again. But within that short space of a few minutes during which she occupies the Scripture stage, she does something that makes her brief appearance immortal for evermore.

Anna is the only one of that name in the New Testament. One in the Old Testament, Hannah, the mother of Samuel, has the same name, its Hebrew, as the other is its Greek form. In both languages the word means graciousness. Both women "spoke of Him". Hannah was the first in all the Scriptures to use the name "Messiah" to describe the one that should come. Abraham and others in earlier days had rejoiced to see His day and Moses had spoken of the Prophet that should arise, like unto himself but greater. No one before Hannah applied the word "Messiah" to Him and that is significant. Hannah was as truly a prophetess as was Anna a thousand years later. *"The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth"* she sang *"and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his Messiah"*. (1 Sam. 2. 10). Now the later Anna stood in the temple courts holding in her arms the tiny babe that was the fulfilment of the prophecy. Messiah had come, and Anna knew it!

How did she know? By what process of reasoning did this aged saint connect that helpless child with the Messiah of prophecy, the One coming from Edom, with dyed gar-

ments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of His strength, proclaiming His mightiness to save? What convinced her that here in this little family group lay, not only the doom of the mighty empire of Rome, but also of all the "kingdoms of this world" and all the forces of wickedness and powers of evil everywhere? In what way did that small innocent face show her the lineaments of a King?

It could only have been, as it was with Simeon on the same occasion, a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit. God had answered her long-continued prayers and fasting, her patience and expectation, with a word from Himself. It had been revealed to Simeon by the Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord Christ—the Messiah. He came "by the Spirit"—by the direct leading of the Holy Spirit—into the Temple just at the time Mary and Joseph were there with her first-born child. In that moment, as Simeon's old eyes fell upon the little group, there came an inward word, and his heart overflowed with reverent joy as he realised the dream of a lifetime fulfilled. So it must have been with Anna; coming in just as Simeon was pouring out his heart in his wonderful praise-prayer-prophecy, the Spirit spoke to Anna and she too knew that the consolation of Israel had come. The time was fulfilled; the hope for which the twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, waited to come, was realised. God at last had visited His people.

Anna had spent a long life waiting. Eighty-four years a widow, seven years a wife before that—for such is the meaning of the Greek expression; not that she was merely eighty-four years old—so that even had she been married at the age of sixteen, a common age for Jewish girls to be married at that time. Anna must have been one hundred and seven years old at the time of this incident. It is not stated, but it is implied and may reasonably be accepted as a fact, that she had served God in the Temple and waited for the promised

Messiah for at least the major portion of that time. What had she seen in all those years?

Anna was born when Judea was very different from its condition at the birth of Jesus. Rome had not yet appeared on the scene. Judea was an independent State under the rule of John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon, one of the Maccabean patriots who delivered the country from its foreign oppressors. She was perhaps five years of age when Aristobulus succeeded John, and then, in the following year, Alexander Janneus succeeded Aristobulus. That part of Jewish history, lying as it does between the Old and New Testaments, is not so well known to many of us as the days before Malachi or after Jesus, but in the reign of Alexander the boundaries of Judea were extended, by means of conquest or treaty, to the limits that had been reached by David and Solomon in olden times. In Alexander a Jewish king reigned from Sinai to the Euphrates, and Judea was the most powerful State in the Middle East. So influential was she, in fact, that the Roman Empire entered into treaty alliance with her—the text of the treaty, still preserved, is curiously like modern ones, both nations binding themselves not to make war upon the other and to help each other with military assistance should one be attacked by a third party—and Jewish ambassadors were in residence at Rome. It was a time of high hopes on the part of all true Jews that the Kingdom of God and the day of Israel's triumph was at hand. It only needed the appearance of Messiah to take over the reins of government. The Land of Promise as defined to Abraham—from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates—was under their control. Greek power was declining, and Rome, the only other great Empire, treated with Judea as an equal. Surely it could not be long now before the great Senate of Rome would listen with dignified respect to the orders of King Messiah, transmitted by the Jewish ambassador in the city, and Jerusalem replace both Athens and Rome as the world's seat of government. In those stirring days, ninety years or so before the angels sang at Bethlehem, men went about in daily expectation of the revelation of Messiah.

Some there were—as some there have been in every age—who knew from their deeper understanding of the things of God that the coming of the Kingdom could not be thus. History reveals the fact that behind the pomp and glitter of the rapidly growing State, the marching and shouting of armed men, the

glowing speeches and lavish promises of Judea's politicians, there was a nucleus of devout souls, chiefly the poor of this world, looking for a Messiah who would be first of all a Teacher of righteousness. They knew that all was not well with their homeland and its people. They knew that sin covered them with its heavy hand, and that not until sin was removed could the glowing promises of the prophets be fulfilled. So they studied the old prophecies and told each other of the golden time that would come when God arose to shake terribly the earth and reveal to all men the King who would reign in righteousness, even although with their limited vision they could hardly begin to see how these things could be. But they would have nothing to do with the politicians, nor yet—very much—with the established forms of religion, insincere and corrupt as they had become with the nation's rise to temporal prosperity. Zadokites, these faithful few were called in their day, and they found a substantial following among the ordinary people in that time, a century before the Messiah in whom they believed was to manifest Himself.

It is very possible that Anna came of a family that adhered to this faith and expectation. Her steadfastness through the years might very well have been due to parental influence and training. Phanuel might possibly have been an early leader among the Zadokites. And if so, if she grew up into early womanhood, married and widowed before she was twenty-four, neither she nor her fellows would have been unduly distressed or cast down at the rapid change of fortune which befell the triumphant State when Alexander Janneus died in B.C. 75 and war, disruption and anarchy set in. The enemies of the nation were not laid low after all; they had only been quiescent. Men who had so fondly imagined their victorious military Messiah soon coming to place Himself at the headship of the nations saw their territories invaded, their conquests wrested from them, and the ever growing threat of foreign oppression looming over them more menacingly every day.

In another eight years, when Anna was in her early forties, the crash came. The death of Queen Alexandra of Judea was followed by the submission of her sons to Pompey, the victorious Roman. From that time Judea became a Roman province, and hopes of the Messianic Kingdom were rudely dashed. But the Zadokites still believed, for their faith was not founded on the fortunes of war or

the virtue of political arrangements. As Anna quietly went about her duties in the Temple she prayed and fasted and waited still for "He that should come", not knowing how much longer He would tarry.

Another ten or twelve years went by with Judea helpless in the grasp of her Roman master. Away in the far north-west Julius Cæsar was invading Britain, and our own ancestors in these islands were undergoing their first experience of the power which already held Judea in a grip of iron. Anna, past fifty years of age now, endured the horror of seeing the Temple itself, the centre of all her hopes and those of her countrymen, desecrated and plundered by Crassus the Roman general. Would Messiah never come? Had God forgotten to be gracious? The question must at times have come to her mind but she put it from her knowing that the word of the Lord could not return to Him void, but must at the end prosper in the thing whereto it was sent.

So through the years, until Herod the Edomite came, to rule the country under title from Rome, a would-be king even although a tributary king. Perhaps at that the hopes of some began to rise again. When, eighteen years before the birth of Jesus, Herod announced his intention of pulling down the decaying fabric of Nehemiah's Temple, which had stood on Mount Moriah for five hundred years ever since the return from Babylon, and erect a magnificent new Temple in its place, many must have wondered if this was indeed a preparation for Messiah. Anna and her friend must often have talked about it. There would be Simeon, like herself, well in the eighties; a middle-aged couple, Zachariah and Elisabeth, hoping against hope for the child that never seemed to come, but with

greater intensity for the coming of Messiah; Jacob and his small son Joseph, and another Joseph, a wealthy young man from Arimathea, all waiting for His appearing and His Kingdom. As the splendid structure of the Temple grew under the industry of Herod's builders and stone-masons their hearts would swell with anticipation and they would say one to another "Surely He will come soon!"

Then one day, coming into the Temple court, Anna saw a little group standing. Simeon, the friend and counsellor of many years, was holding a little child in his arms. His face was upturned to heaven as if in thanksgiving and praise. Anna recognised the parents in an instant; Joseph the son of Jacob, grown to manhood now, and his seventeen-year old wife Mary, both of them zealous and devout believers in the coming of the Lord, both of them brought up from childhood to look and wait for his coming. Anna had known them both since they were born—it seemed only yesterday. She had known their parents, too. She had known their grandparents. Her tired old mind travelled back over the years and she thought of her own friends of youth, long since laid aside to sleep in the hope of a promise of which they had never seen the realisation. She saw the new generation before her, the young people who were destined to carry the hope of Messiah onward into the coming years, years which she knew she herself would not live to see. A thought flashed into her mind; she looked more closely at the little group, at the rapt expression on Simeon's countenance, the sweet, eager face of the young mother, the grave, reverently proud features of Joseph; and she looked at the Babe.

And in that moment she knew that the Messiah had come.

Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

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

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

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

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

Chapter 4. The Lampstand and the Olive Trees

The Lampstand and the Olive trees! Picturesque symbolism this, relating somewhat of Israel's ancient ceremonial to its reality in the Kingdom of God. It is evident that this fourth chapter of Zechariah is looking forward into the future much more than it looks back into the past, for it displays as its main feature the active operation of the Holy Spirit in a world where the supremacy of God is unchallenged, and this happy state is not yet.

Zechariah saw a golden lampstand, reminiscent of that which stood in the "Holy" of the Tabernacle and later in Solomon's Temple, similar and yet in some respects different. It had the seven lamps, apparently carried on seven arms diverging from a central column, as did the lampstand made by Bezaleel at Sinai, but there the similarity ended. Each lamp on Bezaleel's construction had its own reservoir for oil which had to be filled daily by the attendant priests. The lampstand seen by Zechariah possessed a central "bowl", a common oil container, from which seven pipes radiated to the lamps so that they drew a continuous supply of oil from the bowl and needed no replenishing. On each side of the lampstand stood an olive tree, with branches overshadowing, and from each tree a "funnel" or connecting pipe leading to the bowl. From the olives on the trees a continuous supply of olive oil flowed through the two funnels into the bowl and from thence to the seven lamps so that their light was continuous; they never went out.

In answer to the prophet's question the revealing angel told him that the vision was a symbolic representation of the manner in which the Holy Spirit of God would execute the Divine purpose. *"This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel"* he said (ch. 4. 6-10) *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the headstone"*. At first sight there may seem to be no rational connection between a lampstand with two olive trees and a mountain becoming a plain with an emerging headstone. There is, however, one readily discernible link—the work of God denoted by the angel's words is executed by the power of the Holy Spirit; the principal element in the symbol is the olive oil, flowing from the

two trees into the lamps and giving light. The Holy Spirit is frequently symbolised by olive oil, as witness its use in the anointing of the Levitical priesthood in symbol of dedication to Divine service, and Peter's application of the same to Jesus; *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power"* (Acts 10. 38). This allusion is almost certainly derived from Psa. 45. 7 in which the victorious Messiah in the days of His glory is addressed; *"God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows"*. That the followers of Christ, dedicated to His service, participate in this anointing is clear from 1 Jno. 2. 27 and the phrasing of this verse makes crystal clear that it is the possession of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the anointing, and thus the fact that this is the meaning of the oil in Zechariah's vision is confirmed.

Now the two olive trees are called by the angel *"the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth"* (ch. 3. 14). "Sons of the oil" is the literal Hebrew expression. These trees are the twin sources of the oil which flows to the lamps and gives universal enlightenment. There is only one time in history when two channels of the Holy Spirit are discharging their duty simultaneously and side by side, and there is sevenfold illumination in consequence, and that is in the Millennial Age, when the Lord's twin instruments, the Christian Church in Heaven and the restored and converted Holy Nation on earth, are engaged in their work of sending the light and life of the Divine call worldwide. *"The nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"* said Isaiah of the earthly Holy Nation (Isa. 60. 3). *"The light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days"* he says again in Isa. 30. 26 and this might well be the basis for our Lord's words describing the position of His followers of this present Age, the Church, when He said of that coming day *"then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13. 43).

The lampstand, then, represents the Millennial Kingdom on earth, shedding its light—which implies life—upon all mankind, dispelling the darkness of sin and leading men into the light of eternity. The oil, flowing

from the trees into the lamps and therein converted to light, indicates the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh through the medium of the earthly and heavenly aspects of the "Servant", the two anointed companies who have been found fitted for the task of world conversion. In Nature, of course, the tree does not create the oil; it is able to produce oil only because it receives energy and power from the sunlight with which so to do. So in the reality. The Lord's servants are not originators of the Holy Spirit of power; they are mediums for its transmission and the power comes to them from the centre and source of all life and power—the Eternal.

Fully to appreciate the relation between this lampstand vision and the "headstone" application it is necessary to examine the structure of the chapter. It is very possible that some dislocation of the text has occurred at a very early date; verses 11-14 have to do with verses 1-5 and the message respecting the headstone, which appears in the centre of the chapter, would seemingly be more appropriate at the end. If in fact there has been such dislocation it must have occurred quite soon after the writing of the book, for the Septuagint, which was translated from the Hebrew Scriptures about 250 B.C., has the same arrangement as our A.V. Zechariah probably did not complete his writings until late in his life which would hardly be more than two centuries before the Septuagint. In between these two dates came the time at which the Old Testament canon was closed, reputedly by Ezra, and it might well have been then that the slight confusion in the text occurred. There is no difference to the interpretation of the chapter in either case, but the re-arrangement does cause the passage to run more smoothly and understandably, and helps to clear up the very obscure A.V. rendering of verse 10. An endeavour is made here to offer what is thought to be probably the correct reconstruction.

After beholding the lampstand with its seven lamps (vss. 1-4) and asking the revealing angel "What are these, my lord?" the narrative proceeds (vs. 5) "Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me. Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No my lord. (6a) Then he answered and spake unto me saying (10b) These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth (11) Then answered I, and said unto him. What are these two olive trees . . . (12) And I answered again and said unto him, What be these two olive

branches . . . (13-14) And he answered me and said . . . These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth. (6b) This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts (7) thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel shall become a plain, and he shall bring forth the headstone shouting, Grace, grace unto it". Then the chapter concludes with a personal word from the Lord to Zechariah (8) "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying, (9) The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto you. (10a) For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel". This is then the end of the chapter.

Thus arranged, the chapter first describes the vision of the lampstand and olive trees, and the angel's explanation (vss. 1-6a, 10b-14) picturing the Lord's two anointed ones, Israel and the Church, commencing their work in the Millennial Age as channels of the Holy Spirit to the world of men; next it presents the angel's declaration respecting the demolished mountain and the setting of the headstone (vss. 6b-7) picturing the passing away of the kingdoms of this world at the instance of the victorious Christ in kingly power in the same Age; finally it records the word of the Lord to Zechariah himself (vss. 8-10a) assuring him that the completion of the Temple in his own day under the administration of Zerubbabel was to be a sign to his fellows of the Divine authority behind his prophecy. On this assumption the chapter is consistent and logical.

On this basis, after saying in verse 14 that the two olive trees are the two anointed ones which stand by the Lord of the whole earth, the angel concludes his explanation of the lampstand by saying (in vs. 10b) and referring obviously to the seven lamps, "those seven are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through all the earth". Chapter 3 speaks of the stone, laid before Joshua the High Priest, which had seven facets or eyes, a seven-sided stone, so to speak, picturing the universal surveillance of the "stone" Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, in the earth during the Millennial Age. Now here in chapter 4 the same idea is expressed but this time the universal power and surveillance of the Holy Spirit "in that day" is pictured by the sevenfold light from the lampstand, also

going forth into all the earth, the "seven eyes of the Lord".

With this picture in mind it is easier to comprehend the second section, the angel's message regarding the mountain and the headstone. The great mountain which is to become a plain is of course the mountain of the kingdoms of this world. *"It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it"* (Isa. 2. 2). *"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain"* (Isa. 40. 5). The picture here is that the holy city, the New Jerusalem, comes down to earth out of Heaven (Rev. 21) and as a city crowning the summit of a great mountain (*"the length and the breadth and the height of it were equal"* Rev. 21. 6) rules supreme over all the earth. Zerubbabel here is an alias for the Messianic King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Zerubbabel himself neither moved a mountain or saw any earthly kingdom fall prostrate before him. He died as he lived, a governor of Judea subordinate always to the Persian King. But Zerubbabel as the representative of royal power in Judea at that time fitly pictures the King who shall reign in the day which sees the reality of the vision. And this is where the "headstone" comes into the picture.

The "headstone" or "corner stone" was the principal foundation stone of a building and served in ceremonial fashion much as do the "foundation stones" of modern buildings, laid in a formal ceremony by some notability and as often as not blessed by some ecclesiastical dignitary. (At least this was the rule a generation or so ago; the concrete and glass monstrosities of the present are usually put up with too much haste to allow for such leisurely preliminaries). The basic idea was the same; the foundation stone in theory determined the position and size and purpose of the building and was in a sense representative of the building. This principle is used in the Scriptures to delineate the Lord Christ as the foundation and sustainer of the edifice which God is building in this Age; first the Christian Church, of whom He is said in Eph. 2. 20 and 1 Pet. 2. 6 to be the "chief corner stone", and later the Holy City of the next Age of which He is both chief corner stone and its everlasting light. *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner"* sang the Psalmist in Psal.

118. 22. *"Behold"* said the Lord through the prophet Isaiah *"I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not be confounded"* (Isa. 28. 16). Here in Zechariah this same corner stone is brought forth amid general rejoicings to initiate the building of that new Divinely ordained structure which is to succeed the levelling of the "great mountain" of this world. In this context, the picture is that of the building of the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, upon the ruins of the destroyed "kosmos" of this Age, and the exaltation of Christ as supreme. When earth's new king once asserts His power and authority in the earth He will not desist until His work is finished by the entire human race being brought to a full knowledge and understanding of the Christian Gospel, and every individual has made his deliberate and final choice for good—or evil. *"He shall not fail nor be discouraged"* says Isaiah of our Lord at this same time *"till he have set judgment in the earth, and the coastlands"*—the extremities of the earth—*"shall wait for his law"*. (Isa. 42. 4).

This ends the second section of the chapter. The demolished mountain and the headstone which replaces it, an exhibition of Divine power by the Holy Spirit in contrast to human might and power, of vss. 6-7, have nothing to do with the rebuilt Temple in a "day of small things" of vss. 8-10. In any case the one is a revelation to Zechariah by the angel and the other a direct word to him from the Lord. The two sections relate to distinct and dissimilar matters.

It is possible that vss. 8-10 are not intended to have other than a local and immediate prophetic application. The word of the Lord was to Zechariah directly; it told him that Zerubbabel, who had already started building the Temple, would also finish it, and by this sign, said Zechariah to his hearers or readers, they would know that he was a true prophet, that the Lord of Hosts had in truth sent him to them. Those who had despised the "day of small things", the meagre results, so far, of the Jewish restoration in Jerusalem and Judea, would yet rejoice when they saw the plummet—instrument used in building construction—in the hand of Zerubbabel. The R.S.V. puts it very succinctly *"For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel"*.

The prediction was certainly literally fulfilled. Zechariah had this word from the

Lord in the second year of Darius of Persia (Zech. 1. 1) which was 519 B.C. The Temple was started under the administration of Zerubbabel in 536 B.C., stopped by order of Cambyses of Persia in 529, resumed by permission of Darius in 520, and finally completed by Zerubbabel in 516, three years after Zechariah uttered these words. Throughout that frustrating period of twenty years, with the very existence of the new Jewish colony menaced by powerful enemies, it must often have seemed that the people lived in a "day of small things"; their present situation bore very unfavourable comparison with the glories of the old days before the captivity, when Solomon's Temple was still standing and the city Jerusalem the wonder of nations. So those who crowded to hear Zechariah's colourful predictions on the occasion of their first utterance, seeing, figuratively speaking, "*the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel*", realised three years later that the words of the prophet had come true and stamped those words with the seal of Divine authority.

It is possible to draw a parallel with the future. Whether that parallel is intended in this passage may be questioned, but it is true

that in the day of Christ's power soon to come, when in the glory of His Kingdom the Holy City shines resplendent and complete, those amongst men who in this day and this life have despised and ignored the apparent weakness and futility of the Divine programme, or have not believed in any God-given destiny for mankind, will "rejoice" at the then evident power and activity of earth's new rulership. At any rate an earlier prophet, Isaiah, was in no doubt about that fact when he declaimed (Isa. 25. 9) "*It shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation*". And if, in the wonder and rapture of that moment, they conveniently forget that in the past they were largely unbelievers and agnostics and were only unknowingly "waiting for him", there will be no recriminations on that score from our God. Like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, all He wants is to have his erring sons repent, and reform, and come home. That is why the Holy City comes down to earth.

(To be continued)

"O Saviour, was it not enough for thee to be manifested in flesh? Did not that elementary composition carry in it abasement enough, without any further addition; since for thee to become man was more than for all things to be returned to nothing; but that, in the rank of miserable manhood, thou wouldst humble thyself to the lowest of humanity, and become a servant? O Saviour, in how despicable a condition do I find thee exhibited to the world! lodged in a stable, cradled in a manger, visited by poor shepherds, employed in a homely trade, attended by fishermen, tempted by presumptuous devils, persecuted by the malice of envious men, exposed to hunger, thirst, nakedness, weariness, contumely. How many slaves, under the vassalage of an enemy, fare better than thou didst from ungrateful man, whom thou camest to save! Oh, let me not see only, but feel, this thy great mystery of godliness effectually working in me to all hearty thankfulness for so inestimable a mercy. And now, O Saviour, what a superabundant amends is made to thy glorified humanity for all thy bitter sufferings on earth! Thine agony was extreme, but thy glory is infinite, thy cross was heavy, but thy crown trans-

cendantly glorious; thy pains were inconceivably grievous, but short; thy glory is everlasting. Thou that stoodest before the judgment seat of a Pilate, shalt come in all heavenly magnificence to judge both the quick and the dead; thou that wouldest stoop to be a servant on earth, rulest and reignest for ever in heaven, as the King of eternal glory."

(Bishop Hall)

Is it not true that many times in the individual Christian life we find ourselves thanking God that we are not as other men. Does it not often happen that this wonderful separateness to God which we call consecration degenerates into a mere smug and self-satisfied separateness from the world. And should we not be very circumspect therefore and walk very humbly before our God, realising that by nature we are "children of wrath" even as others?

* * *

The story of Divine grace is the record of One who has been disposed to "give", and "give", and "give" again, because it pleases Him to dispense of His fulness to helpless, needy men.

ACTIVITY IN ETERNITY

Some thoughts on the
life of the future

"It strikes me as very curious" writes the well-known astronomer, Prof. Fred Hoyle, in one of his books (*"The Nature of the Universe"*), "that the Christians have so little to say how they propose eternity should be spent". There is some justification for the criticism; orthodox theology has a lot to say about the nature of God and the nature of man and the philosophy of the Atonement, but it does tend to stop short at the entrance to the Heavenly land and shrink from any plain statement of thought as to what goes on inside. A great deal is said, especially nowadays, about the obligations and activities incumbent upon Christians in this life but very little as to what might be expected of us in the next. To a great extent the mediæval idea of Heaven as a place of eternal rest and idleness, relieved only by the alternatives of playing harps or blowing trumpets to the glory of God, has been allowed to remain without up-dating in the light of modern understanding. The ideas of occupation, activity, progress, achievement, have not very often been associated with the life of the future. No wonder Prof. Hoyle says farther on in his book *"What the Christians offer me is an eternity of frustration!"*

Christians, perhaps, Christianity, no! Serious study of the purpose of God as it is expounded in the Bible reveals a very different picture, eloquent enough even though by no means clear or sharply defined. When we think of the celestial sphere we are thinking of another world whose conditions of life, existence and activity are so fundamentally different from those of terrestrial creation that language and similes in which they may be expressed just do not exist. The Apostle Paul discovered that, when after his memorable glimpse of sights and sounds belonging to the other world he found that by no means could he impart to others what he had perceived and could remember. He had "*heard indescribable things spoken, which it is not possible for a man to relate*" (2 Cor. 14. 4). The basic fact we have to realise and accept is that life in what we call, by way of distinction, the celestial world, whilst as real as ours and in just the same way created by and dependent upon the Supreme Being, is not capable of discernment by any of our senses, or description by any of the words or objects with which we are familiar. That was understood by several of the Scripture writ-

ers; Isaiah, for instance, declared "*From the beginning of the world they have not heard, nor perceived with the ears, the eye hath not seen, O God, what things thou hast prepared for them that wait for thee*" (Isa. 64. 4). The Apostle Paul, quoting these words rather loosely, told the Corinthians "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*". Jesus, about to leave His disciples, said to them "*I go to prepare a place for you . . . I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am ye may be also*" (Jno. 14. 3). Now all this implies that there is something being done, activities of a kind, even creative activity, progressing "beyond the veil", pending the time that we, erstwhile terrestrial creatures, gain entry to that other world. Its present citizens are neither idle nor frustrated; they too must be busily engaged in the multifarious activities appropriate to their environment. Psalm 103 implies that much, when it speaks of them as carrying out the Deity's commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word, executing His purpose.

By analogy also we must say that just as this world of ours is one of change and development, initiative and achievement, enquiry and progress, so is that. Both orders of existence—all orders of existence, if needs be, for we have no mandate to limit the possible orders of existence to two—owe their being to the Supreme One. Both are called into being to perform a function in His creation and to be both the recipients and agents of His wisdom and benevolence. St. Paul speaks of the time to come when God will "*exhibit the surpassing wealth of his benevolence*"; an expression like that implies some concrete factors in the future life which makes that life a real and progressive one in the light of Divine benevolence. There must be something there to "exhibit", something which justifies the term "surpassing wealth of his benevolence".

The Christian has much the same difficulty as the scientific investigator, each in his respective field. He is called upon to accept evidence pointing to the reality of something he cannot see. The scientist bases his evidence on the indications given him by man-made instruments which supplement his senses; because those instruments cannot indicate the reality of another world he

has no evidence for the existence of such. The Christian bases his evidence on an instructed faith which supplements his senses and by that faith he does see the other world and accepts the fact of its existence. But he is still unable to visualise what it is like, although he can form in his own mind an impression of its moral qualities. The New Testament faces up to this position by declaring quite bluntly and unequivocally that no human being, as such, can enter the other world. St. Paul explains the matter as a "change" from one kind of body to another. And when one realises that the body we have and know is essentially the means by which the life that is within us interacts with its environment and knows itself for what it is, it should be possible to understand that if we are to enter another world—the celestial—of a different nature, then we need another kind of body, one that is adapted to that order of being and in which we can interact with that environment, with whatever enhanced or different powers and sense perception that is appropriate, and still know ourselves for what we are. There is a terrestrial body, and there is a celestial body, says Paul, and the terrestrial body, flesh and blood, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Hence we must be "changed". Continuing this theme, he tells us in 2 Cor. 5 that the "house of earth" in which we now live, this human body, must be rejected eventually in order that we can be "clothed upon" with our "house from heaven". 1 Cor. 15 and 2 Cor. 5 should be equally interesting in this connection to both Christian and agnostic if the point at issue is the reality of the unseen world.

Perhaps it is an unseen world only because it is not on our "wave-length". Our eyes and ears respond to light and sound in our atmosphere, our fingers feel the solid objects of our earth, because our bodies are made of the same kinds of atoms and we respond. The Lord God created man "*of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being*". Not long ago a space scientist suggested that man might, eventually, come in contact with some alien form of life in some remote part of space and not be able to recognise it as life, because, he thinks, man's senses might be unable to discern some possible forms of life. The tremendous increase in man's knowledge of the nature of matter characteristic of recent years has led other investigators to feel that there can be some forms of atomic structure incapable of reacting upon terres-

trial matter; some "primary particles", as they term them, which can pass through all earthly materials unperceived just as light passes through glass, so making possible the existence of other worlds interpenetrating but not inter-acting with ours and so not known to us, yet just as real as our own. However this may be, Christians know that there is such a world, that it is real, and that our hope and expectation is to be citizens of such a world in time to come.

So far as can be deduced from Scripture, that world existed before this; its citizens, the "angels" of the Bible, were created before man, and its inhabitants represent a higher order of intelligence, having greater powers and abilities than man. The fact that God is depicted as saying, at the beginning, "*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*" must imply that in some degree or in some sense this world is modelled after the likeness of that, even though on a lower or inferior plane. Therefore, that world also must exhibit processes of learning and achievement, the arts and sciences of life, those occupations and pursuits which give glory to God and happiness in life, that mutual intercourse and co-operation which must characterise a society which is always and altogether fulfilling the Divine purpose in its creation.

There must be one great difference. This world of ours is marred by sin and cruelty, injustice and unhappiness, disease and death. That world is one in which these things have no place. There is an apparent dualism in the Divine purpose as revealed in the Scriptures which seems to point in the first place to the celestial world as the eternal home of the Christian Church of this Age, and a terrestrial destiny for a great portion of the human race who do not become dedicated disciples of Christ during this Age. This latter requires the abolition of sin and the conversion of the human society on earth to the same sinless condition as now obtains in heaven. Such an abolition and conversion is the object of the Messianic reign of Christ over the earth in the next, the Millennial Age. But whether an individual's final destiny be in the celestial or the terrestrial he will be equally a citizen of God's creation and in either case there will always be effort and progress, new vistas of knowledge to explore and new heights of achievement to scale. To all of that there will never be an end. So far from being idle or frustrated, men will, says God through the prophet "*long enjoy the work of their hands*".

STUDIES IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

Part 18 I John 4. 11-21

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (vs. 11-12).

We cannot repay God for His love; there is no recompense we can make that will in any way match His infinite goodness and mercy extended toward us. The only thing we can do to express our gratitude and appreciation is to love others of our fellow men in the manner He has loved us. No man has ever seen God, has stood in His presence in the flesh, that he might there declare his love for God and his appreciation of all His benefits; his gratitude must therefore be expressed in deeds directed towards the benefit of fellow men rather than in words directed toward God. Perhaps there is a Divine purpose in that. How easy it would have been if, immediately following our conversion, justification and consecration to God, we had been taken up into the Divine presence, away from all the vicissitudes and hardships of this workaday world. How pleasant then to stand before the heavenly throne and praise God for His great love manifested toward us in taking us away from the world of sin and death, all its ugliness and all its misery and all its dangers, and setting us down in the light and peace of the heavenly realm. And how useless we would then be so far as any future work for mankind is concerned—or, indeed, any work of any kind for God. No man hath seen God, that he might express his love for Him in person, at any time. There is a deep and vital truth in that brief statement. God does not want any of us round His throne until we have proved ourselves on the field of battle. There is no place for smooth-tongued sycophants in the heavenly courts. Those who can glibly say "Lord, Lord" but have no works of faith or life of endurance wherewith to support their words will never find entrance. It is in the manner that we demonstrate the sincerity of our love by our behaviour toward our fellows that we find the pathway to the golden door, and those who are ultimately received "into the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" will have been so received because the tenor of their lives here below has already demonstrated their loyalty and love in the council

of heaven far more effectively than any spoken word can do.

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." (vs. 13-14).

Here is a reminiscence of Pentecost. Why was John so sure that he was dwelling in God and God in him? "*Behold*" cried Solomon at the dedication of the Temple "*heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built.*" Yet John tells us with perfect assurance that God dwells in each one of us and we each may have that assurance, and in earnest thereof we have the witness of the Spirit. Writing to the Christians at Rome nearly a quarter of a century earlier, Paul had said "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*". Both Paul and John were merely voicing what was at that time and had always since Pentecost been the fixed conviction of the Church, that God, by His Holy Spirit, was indwelling each one of His children. "Your life" says Paul again "is hid with Christ in God". Can there be any closer expression of that intimacy with the Most High into which we enter when we come unto Him through the appointed way? It may be true, and it is true, that no man hath seen God with the natural sight at any time but we have entered into His presence, in a spiritual sense that is of far greater moment and means much more to us than any kind of visual appearance can do. There is all the difference in the world between being before the Throne and being in the Throne; between standing before God and dwelling in God. And it is that to which John is leading up. "*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*" (vs. 15). In these few verses we have the true relationship—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. We have the love of the Father because we dwell in Him, the grace—favour—of the Son because we confess Him, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit because that Spirit is indwelling with us. The familiar benediction is an expression of the truth—but all these things are true only because in the first place we have loved God and He

has loved us.

This confessing of Jesus Christ is a matter of the heart as much as of the lips. *"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead"* says Paul in Rom. 10. 9 *"thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* We are very apt in our enthusiasm to give honour and credit to the one who is fluent in tongue and can readily give voice to his belief in Christ; such an one, it is often thought, is the most effective missionary. It does not follow. Many a time the sermon of a quiet and consistent Christian life has reached into a heart that has never been moved by the spoken or the printed message. We can confess the Lord Jesus very effectively by believing in our hearts and letting that belief work out its fruits in our daily lives. When Jesus said "Whoso shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and his holy angels", He was surely not thinking only of verbal confession. He was almost certainly particularly thinking of those whose lives give evidence that they walk "as He walked", those of whom men take note that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. The Apostle Paul tells us in one place that we are a spectacle—a theatre—to angels; we are no less a spectacle to men. And what they see of us now is going to have quite an influence on the manner in which they will react to the earthly Kingdom and its laws when that Kingdom is established and those laws are put before them.

"And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (vs. 16).

John has said all this before, several times. He writes in the spirit of the oft-quoted modern saying "expression deepens impression". Our own lives' experiences testify to the need for constant repetition of these exhortations to love; we forget them so easily. Jesus impressed His disciples, before leaving them, with the truth that no more important thing could feature in their lives than the being made perfect in love. St. Paul declared unequivocally that without love he was as nothing despite all his other attainments and accomplishments. Love is the greatest thing, greater because more enduring than either faith or hope. Love is the end and aim of our moral progress, and is therefore clearly much more vital than doctrine, which is only a

means to that end. Doctrine, like faith and hope, will vanish away when "that which is perfect is come" but love will never fail. We have appreciated and accepted the fruits of God's love to us; that is one part of John's thought in this verse. Now we who have thus accepted the Divine gift find that by that acceptance we have been brought into tune with the Divine. God dwelleth in us; we dwell in God. We have already been over this ground but it is characteristic of John in his Epistle that he continually works round as it were in circles, bringing us back to thoughts previously expressed, but approaching from the opposite direction. But from whatever angle John comes to his subject the centre of his thought is always the same. God is love. In that great truth is enshrined the philosophy of the entire Plan of salvation and the assurance that it will be carried out. We who know of this love, who are persuaded of its reality and have seen evidence of its power, know that it will accomplish all that is promised. In that confidence we rest content.

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (vs. 17).

This is not the great Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, here in John's epistle. The aged Apostle was not thinking about that then far-off event. He was thinking about something much closer and more directly affecting the lives of his brethren. In every Christian life there comes a day of judgment, a time of testing when the faith structure that has been erected over perhaps many years of quiet and uneventful living must be proved and tried. It was the destiny of many of those early Christians to endure that day of judgment in the guise of persecution and martyrdom at the hands of the civil power of the day. But whether the testing time be a physically crucial one such as that, or the slower but perhaps more penetrating one of hopes unfulfilled and expectations disappointed, disillusionment and apathy such as is by no means an uncommon thing to-day, it still remains that the day of judgment comes to each one of us in the course of our consecrated life. Jesus illustrated it in His story of the two men who built themselves houses, one on the rock and the other on the sand, whilst St. Paul used the metaphor of workers building alternatively with gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, hay and stubble. In both cases the testing time came

and in both cases the handiwork of the one who had built well stood the strain and emerged triumphantly, whilst that of the other suffered loss and destruction. Now the completion of our growth in love, the "making perfect" of that love, ensures that we will be able to stand in that day. It was because Jesus Himself was the supreme example of selfless love—love for His Father, love for His brethren, love for the world—that He was able to go to the Cross and rise again triumphant on the third day. It was because He was the supreme example of selfless love that He went about during His lifetime doing good to all men, pouring out His life unto death. The incense of His offering ascended up to God a "sweet-smelling savour" and it was all love. Now, says John, "as he is, so are we in this world". Just as He was made perfect in love and in that perfection was completely acceptable to the Father and altogether triumphant over all that He suffered, so must we be if we are truly to "follow in his steps". We too are pouring out our lives unto death, we too are buried with Him by baptism into His death and are risen to walk with Him in newness of life that in due time we might triumphantly share in the glory of the First Resurrection. His love was made perfect and He had boldness in His day of judgment. We, if we would be like Him, must follow the same path.

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." "Torment" here is *kolasin*, to restrain, check, cut off, cut short. Are we not all witnesses to the truth of this word? Fear does have a restraining effect; so many have refrained from entering the race for the prize of the High Calling on account of their fear of its implications, and they have been restrained thereby from ever entering in. The children of Israel in the wilderness feared the gigantic inhabitants of the land and their high-walled cities, and that fear caused them to forget or to ignore the promise of God that He would go before them and drive out their enemies. Their fear had torment; it restrained them from going forward and entering into the land of promise.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Rom. 8 that those who "walk after the Spirit" have been delivered from the spirit of bondage, which is fear, and have received instead the spirit of adoption which makes us aware of our sonship to God. We can cry to Him "Father" and

know that it is no empty cry; we are indeed His sons. That consciousness of Divine sonship must therefore be synonymous with our being made perfect in love, for we are told here by John that he that feareth is not being made perfect in love. There is no room for fear in the Christian character; we can and must face all things in life with quiet confidence and absolute assurance that He who has called us and guided us hitherto will be our Leader and Guardian all the way until the end. "I am persuaded" cries Paul triumphantly "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." No room for fear there! In these latter days when affairs in the world have come to a pass that strikes fear into the hearts of men, "men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking to the things that are coming upon the earth", it is good to realise that we who are being made perfect in love are thereby being freed from fear. We can with perfect confidence pursue our appointed way in life knowing that God is good and God is great, and that all things are working together for good to us, we who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Once more, as we thus ponder John's words, are we impressed with the fact that he perceives a veritable power in love. Love is no matter of sentiment to John, no comfortable and easy virtue whose only use is to act as a lubricant in human relations, smoothing and making easy the rough places of our contact with fellow-men, a pious adjunct to our worship, preparing for us our approach to God. Love is a dynamic that is capable of overthrowing every evil thing. "Perfect love casteth out fear". The word for "casteth out" is *exo balli*; and that latter word gave its name in those early days to what was, in military circles, the then equivalent to our modern heavy artillery. The "ballista" was an engine of war designed something like a giant catapult, capable of hurling heavy stones and boulders long distances against enemy fortifications and city walls. (The "engines" mentioned in 2 Chron. 26. 15 as set by Uzziah on the wall of Jerusalem were *ballistæ*.) Just as those *ballistæ* cast heavy rocks many hundreds of yards in a wide trajectory through the air to a great distance away, so, says John, does perfect love cast out fear, not removing it gently as it were to just one side, where its presence might

still harass and obtrude, but far away whence it can never return.

It is just at this point, where another facet of the many-sided jewel we are examining has been fully displayed to our gaze, that John, as is his wont, abruptly returns to the centre of his subject. "*We love him*" he remarks "*because he first loved us.*" (vs. 19). Each time that he has concluded one of his exhortations and one little section of Christian instruction he reminds us that all we have and the whole position in which we stand is in consequence of the love of God. We are naught of ourselves; we owe all to Him. "*He first loved us.*"! Let us never forget that sublime truth. It explains everything. It explains the entire plan of salvation, the mystery of the coming and death of Christ, the interval between that coming and the advent of the Kingdom to ensure which He died, an interval devoted to our own calling and perfection, and it explains the Kingdom itself. "*He first loved us!*" Those four words stand as irrefutable evidence that God is working and will work to bring fallen man back to Himself, and will not cease working until the time has come that further effort is manifestly useless.

"If a man say 'I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.'" (vs. 20-21).

This is the end of John's dissertation on love. In chapter 5 he is going to talk about faith—the faith that saves. In this chapter he has talked about the love that saves, love that commenced in God and is continued in us. In the perfecting of this love we are truly made in the image and likeness of God and as such can be received, at the end, into the very presence of God. But this very thought of being made in His image and likeness instantly brings to mind another question, in-

timately associated; what of our fellows, also destined to be perfected in that same image and likeness. Do we love them?

If not, says John in effect, we are doing despite to the expressed purpose and intention of God and demonstrating that we have not as yet entered into an understanding of Divine love. If we claim to have this true, deep love for God and yet do not ourselves manifest the same feeling toward our brethren we are not speaking the truth; we are liars. It is quite impossible to hold and cherish true love for God without at the same time possessing and realising love for all that God has made. That does not involve any kind of sympathy with sin or endorsement of evil-doing, even as God's own love for man does not imply that. It does involve the same yearning desire that fills God's own heart for the reconciliation of all mankind and the perfecting of this earth to be their home. And it does also involve co-operation with God and willing service for Him to the extent He indicates is His will, in the work He is doing towards this end.

So the whole argument ends on this lofty note, a law which defines and limits the principles which should regulate our entire outward Christian life and activity. "*He who loveth God love his brother also.*" There is hardly need to elaborate that briefly eloquent word. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*" Each one of us is able to interpret those instructions in our individual cases and according to our individual circumstances. The manner in which they will be put into practice will of necessity differ with each one of us, but the underlying principle will always be the same. We shall be doing God's work in the world at this present time and we shall be progressing by sure stages to that mark of perfect love which will render us fitted in every respect for the still greater work of God in the coming Age.

(To be continued)

The proper motive in Bible study is the same motive which impelled the Son of Man to go forth on His mission in behalf of suffering humanity. "*Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity.*" There is the motive supreme for the study of the Bible. In the Scriptures are stated those principles of righteousness. In them are located directions for the right course of action. There are related the inspiring examples of others who loved righteousness and hated iniquity,

which examples are set forth for our emulation and encouragement. With this motive spurring one on, Bible study is not just a religious duty. It is a recreation, a delight, a vocation, and is well described by the Psalmist in the words, "*... his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*". All such are Bible students indeed, not merely in name, but in truth and in fact.

(*"Bible Student Inquirer"*)

FROM A PRISON CELL

Part 5. The Adoption of Sons

Reflections on the
"Prison" Epistles

Having fore-ordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself." (Eph. 1. 5).

There are two viewpoints in the Word of God concerning the mode whereby we become Sons of God. One of these is based upon the process of spirit-begetting and ultimate spirit-birth. This thought originates from the words of Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus. "Except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3. 3 and 5). This is the viewpoint also of Peter and John (1 Pet. 1. 23; 1 John 5. 1, 4, 18). Paul presents another view. He speaks not of begetting, but of adoption into the family of God. This view is based on a Roman custom which allowed a man of noble birth and standing to take into his family and account as his own son a youth of lowlier birth. This was all done in proper legal form. The first step was to take the intended son before a public notary and there give due note of the intention, subject to certain conditions being forthcoming at a future specified time. These centred in the response of the young man himself to the training and tuition, necessary for his prospective position, to which in the meantime he would be subjected. If he responded satisfactorily, then at the appointed day the status of full sonship would be publicly conferred, and from that day the adopted son was accounted as fully a son as though he was a child by birth.

But at the time when the father intimated his intention to adopt, a public token of his good faith in the matter was made in the presentation of a robe or ring or other gift to the intended son—a kind of pledge that he would be faithful to his promise, provided the young "adoptee" had so improved in education and general bearing as to be a credit to the house and standing of his kindly benefactor.

The Greek word here translated "adoption" literally means "placing as a son". It is the "placing as a son" one who is not such by birth, and entitling him to the peculiar privileges of such a connection, as fully and completely as a child by birth. Thus there were two stages to the legal process of adoption. First a provisional stage, with certain

conditions applicable to both parties, but mainly contingent upon the good conduct and progress of the intended son. Thenceforth the whole Roman world would treat him as the father's true son in every act in which duty caused him to become involved.

This illustration is the scaffolding upon which Paul builds his great theme of Divine Fatherhood and saintly sonship. God is the beneficent and kindly Master of a great house, who desires to find fitting companions for His one true Son. It was in His own unchallengeable prerogative to choose to do this thing. Nothing could compel or obligate Him so to do, had He willed it otherwise. To Him belongs the right to say who shall be invited, and on what terms they may be acceptable before Him. It is for Him to determine what tuition, and of what kind, every invited candidate must receive to make them fitting companions for His only begotten Son. And to Him belongs the right finally to decide who among the invited ones had reached up to the standard of worthiness sufficient to qualify for the position involved.

To whom did God make this gracious offer of adoption into the closest circle of His family? To the resplendent sons of the morning? No! They could not be a spectacle to man. Humankind could never have understood all that this most intimate sonship means if God had adopted His sons from them. It was from the lower plebeian level of men, and not from the patrician ranks of heaven, that God condescended to choose His sons.

As proof of the Divine good faith, the worthy Father decided to give a pledge, in the bestowment of His own good Spirit, to all who among men should respond to His call. This was to be accounted as an "earnest"—"a pledge-gift"—to every responding soul, assuring them that if they diligently applied themselves to the necessary education and refinement to fit themselves for acceptance into this elect position in God's great house, the gracious Father would be true to His promise and pledge and accept them as His own true sons.

The Greek word for "earnest"—"arrhabon"—primarily had to do with "exchange", and so had reference to a mutual pledge exchanged between two parties when making an

agreement; a token payment when the transaction was first agreed, to be returned to each party on fulfilment. But later usage changed its meaning to an "earnest"—a part price, given as a tangible promise that the whole would be paid in due time. Paul tells us that the "earnest" which God bestowed upon His invited sons is His Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit of promise—which is a pledge to stand good until the day of redemption of God's own—translated in the A.V. as "*until the redemption of the purchased possession*". This privilege of sonship belonged primarily to Israel, as Paul states in Rom. 9. 4 "... *whose is the adoption . . .*"; this same thought is asserted again in Gal. 4. 4-6 "*When the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons (first-stage sons) God sent forth the Spirit of His (well-beloved) Son into your hearts, crying 'Abba Father'.*"

The Galatians were sons of fathers who had at one time been under the law, but were divorced from it for unfaithfulness. Some among them were in danger of being enticed back under the law by Judaising teachers. Paul wanted them to realise that God was now calling "sons", not servants; children of the free-woman, not of the bond-woman. Only a remnant of Israel was found sufficiently responsive to heed the heavenly call and thus the privilege was extended to the Gentiles. It is in this larger sense that Paul describes the privileges of the sonship of Rom. 8. 14-16. Here he writes to a mixed church in a Gentile city, in which Gentile believers predominate. To these he says, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye received not the Spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*". The full thought concerning this spirit of adoption is brought out in the words of Eph. 1. 14. It is the promise of God that those faithful souls who mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8. 13) thus responding to Divine tuition and refinement, shall receive, in due time, the full inheritance of sonship as heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ.

Deep in the counsels of eternity God purposed to win from among men a company of sons who should be raised to the highest place in the heavenly realm. The fall of man into sin necessitated the descent to earth of His firstborn Son to become man's Redeemer,

and after that, the Princely-Leader of "many-brethren" up to those heavenly heights. The great privilege of sonship in this exalted closer sense was offered first to the sons of Abraham. As a people they rejected the invitation, only a remnant "according to the election of grace" being found in Israel. The invitation was then offered to those among the Gentiles whose hearts the Lord opened (Acts 16. 14). To such as made response with good and honest heart God gave the pledge-gift of His Holy Spirit, to be at once the earnest of their inheritance, and the transforming power within, to enable them to become trained and transformed, and thus made ready to become companions in full and complete sonship with His well-beloved Son. That is the story of adoption, planned before time began, but worked out in the little lives of such among men as have been found responsive to the love of an all-wise creator and Father.

Brethren in the Lord! Your calling is no small hole-in-the-corner affair in the sight of God. It is an integral part of a great plan spanning ages for its sphere. It is part of a plan which includes angels as well as men, and which, when complete, will place creatures which once were sinful human dust among and above the spirits which surround the heavenly throne. The eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, long ages ago looked down the long distances of time, and with joy and delight anticipated the homecoming of His sons. The door to that heavenly home still stands open to-day, for all who are ready to follow in the steps of our beloved Lord. What do you think of it all, dear brethren in the Lord? What do you think of such a benefactor-Father, and of such a call? And, if you have received the earnest of your inheritance, the Holy Spirit of promise, are you still assured that this is the token of your future sonship and joint-heirship with the Lord?

There need not be any doubt, for "*He is faithful that has promised*". Think it out again, and let that thought inspire to greater faithfulness day by day. Put your present little day into its insignificant relationship with the exceeding and eternal weight of glory which that heavenly invitation opens up! Then thank God for His unspeakable gifts and calling!

(THE END)

"THEY LOOKED FOR A CITY"

Testimony to Millennial
expectations from the past

Dr. John Cumming, (1807-1881), was a devout student and writer on prophecy, although his views on the book of Revelation would be considered sadly out of date to-day. In 1832 he was appointed minister to the National Scottish Church in Covent Garden, London. This extract is from his writings on the coming Millennial Age, as viewed a hundred and fifty years ago.

* * *

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

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

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

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

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

No preaching of the truth, however eloquent, reasonable, and logical, is likely to be productive of results to the glory of God, if not backed by the silent yet potent influence of a consistent Christian life.

INDEX 1968**EXPOSITORY**

Activity in Eternity	135
Anna	128
"As a child shall one die"	18
Buried with Him in baptism	31
Elisha and the two bears	51
Eternal Punishment, Note on	24
First Epistle of John	
13 3. 4-8	3
14 3. 9-13	44
15 3. 14-24	65
16 4. 1-3	86
17 4. 4-10	113
18 4. 11-21	137
From a Prison Cell	
1 Prisoner for Christ	37
2 Good Pleasure of His Will	57
3 God's Eternal Purpose	79
4 Chosen in Him	117
5 Adoption of Sons	141
Gates of Righteousness, The	39
Hagar the Bondmaid	19
Jael and Sisera	109
Jacob's Trouble	
5 Kings take counsel	7
6 Valley of Jehoshaphat	10
7 Cleansing of Land	13
Promise of Restitution, The	125
Prophet and the Lion, The	29
Question Box, The	62, 96
Revelation, Brief view of	107
Sennacherib in Prophecy	33
Spirit of Power, The	54
"They Looked for a City"	
1 Dr. Thos. Chalmers	106
2 Dr. Jno. Cumming	143
"They shall not taste death"	82
Thousand Years, The	94
Transgression of Adam	63
Zechariah, Prophet of Restoration	
1 Prophet and Book	59
2 Rider in Myrtle Trees	75
3 Cleansing of Priest	99
4 Lampstand and olive trees	131

DEVOTIONAL

Casting out of fear	84
Christian Mission, The	119
Covenant by Sacrifice	69
Crownest the Year	123
"Our Fellowship"	112
Joseph, Glance at life of	104
Seedtime in the evening	91
Thought for Month	2, 98

SHORT ITEMS

Book of Jasher	72
Book Reviews	2, 26, 50
Christian Growth	23
Greater works	120
Note on Amos' ivory beds	105
" " world food production	90
" " Isa. 32. 6-8	120
" " Isa. 52. 10	48
" " Phil. 2. 10	116
On discipleship (selected)	130
On Jesus (Bishop Hall)	134
Paul the aged	58

TEXTS EXPOUNDED IN DETAIL

Jud. 4 & 5	109	Dan. 11. 40	96
1 Ki. 13	29	Joel 2. 20-32	14
" 22. 39	6	Hag. 1. 4-9	59
2 Ki. 2. 23-24	51	Zech. 1	59
Psa. 36. 9	6	" 2	75
" 65. 11	123	" 3	99
" 118. 19-21	39	" 4	131
Eccl. 3. 13	98	Matt. 5. 16	42
" 11. 6	91	" 25. 46	24
Isa. 32. 6-8	120	Mark 9. 1	82
" 36. 1	33	Luke 2. 26-38	128
" 52. 10	48	" 21. 24	62
" 65. 20	18	Acts 1. 8	54
Jer. 30. 5	2	Rom. 6. 4	31
Ezek. 39. 11	13	Phil. 2. 10	116
Dan. 11. 36-40	34	Jas. 1. 27	42