



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

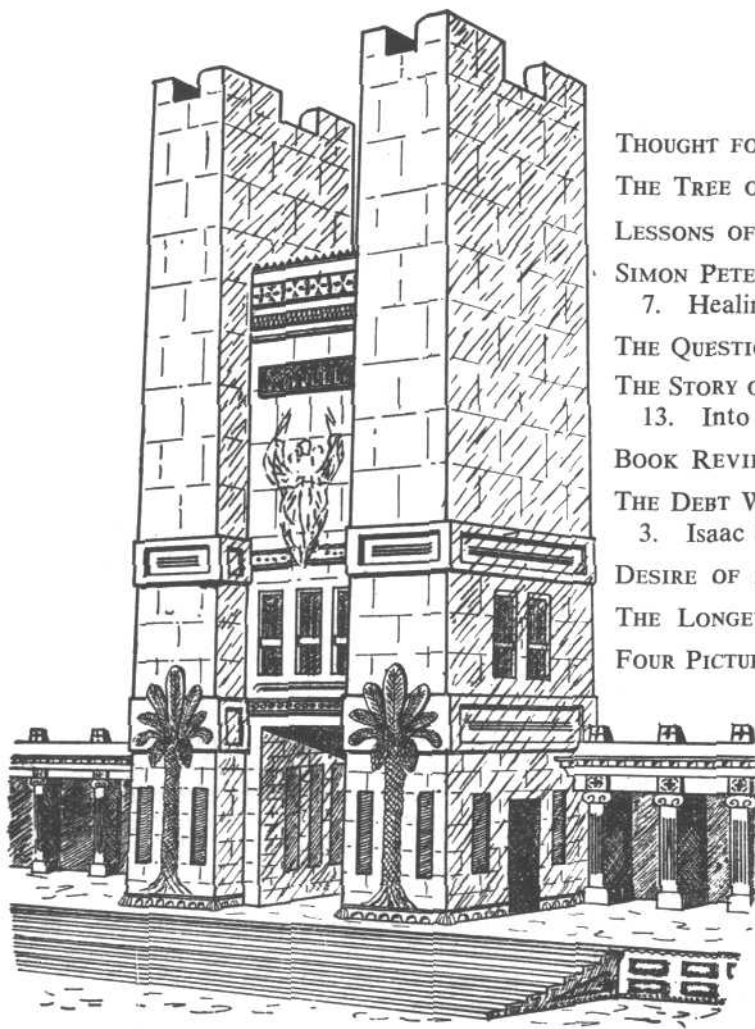
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"Is not God in the height of heaven? And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering, that he seeth not" (Job. 22.12-14).

It would seem that even three thousand years ago, when there was no doubt or dispute as to the reality of the existence of God, or the gods, some men believed they could escape from the moral obligation of loyalty to him. God is too far away to see what we are doing, they said to one another; the clouds of the sky shroud us from his sight and we can go our own ways and plan our own lives without any thought of duty or responsibility towards him or even any appreciation of what he has done for us. Two thousand years before their time the ancient Sumerians taught that man had been created for the service of the gods and in every department of daily life they acknowledged the overlordship of the gods and rendered them their due; but these wise ones were already a long way past such childish notions. If God was there at all, He was not unduly interested in the affairs of mortal men; the very obvious fact that evil deeds and evil lives went unpunished, injustice was unheeded and the unrighteous as often as not profited exceedingly from their unrighteousness, proved that there was nothing to be gained by living an upright life and exercising a benevolent citizenship. God neither sees nor cares and we are free to add to the injustice and suffering in the world as we will. They *"said unto God, Depart from us, and, what can the Almighty do to us?"*

The modern world in general does not even stop to ask what the Almighty can do to us; the

very existence of the Almighty is tacitly if not avowedly denied. Man was not created; man is the consequence of a fortuitous amalgamation of chemical substances acted upon by ultra-violet rays and lightning flashes, or of any one of the half-dozen ways the subject of similar learned theories, and is responsible therefore to no one but himself. Hence we live by the law of the jungle. The end product of evolution appears to be annihilation. Some among the wise men of this world are beginning to realise that. Perhaps some of these lords of creation will begin to hope there is after all a Lord of Creation to whom they can assign their self-claimed role as arbiter of human destiny. The old philosopher of Job's day did say of those who demanded what could the Almighty do to them that there was a world before theirs which the Almighty had brought to an end because of its wickedness, and that they themselves would one day come to the point where the fire would "consume their own excellency". Many years later St. Peter, talking of the inevitable end of this continuing disregard of, and disbelief in, God, described the close of this present world-age in the same terms: *"the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements melt with fervent heat: the earth also and the work that are therein shall be burned up"*. It is after that catastrophe that all men everywhere, despite their past unbelief, will realise that God has been there all the time, not unmindful of man, always in full control, has indeed created man for a purpose, to live in abiding union with him in what Peter then goes on to describe as *"a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"*.

THE TREE OF LIFE

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2.7).

The Tree of Life figures only in the initial narrative of human history, the story of the Garden of Eden, and the final scene when the human race is in process of final reconciliation to God during the Messianic era which concludes that history so far as it is revealed in the Bible, in the words of Ezekiel the Old Testament prophet and John the writer of the Book of Revelation. Man in his primal perfection and union with God had access to the Tree of Life and by that tree he lived. During the long intervening years of sin and death he is debarred from the Tree. At the end, when the reign of Christ over the earth is abolishing sin and death, and men are coming into vital union with God, the Tree is there again, its fruit for food and its leaves for healing. A side issue to the picture is that represented by the text above quoted in which the promise to every one of the Christian church of this present Age who makes his "calling and election sure" is that he also will eat of that Tree of Life at his attainment to the glory of the celestial life. There is therefore a direct link and a close association between Gen. chaps. 2 and 3, in which the Tree of Life is first mentioned in connection with the first of mankind, and Ezek. 47.7-12 with Rev. 22.1-3, both of which have to do with the final stage of man's preparation for eternity. It is significant also that in the first picture the Tree of Life is associated with the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, which because of the consequences in the Eden story becomes the symbol of death, but in the latter picture the Tree of Knowledge is no longer there. There is no more death, for it has been abolished by the Messianic work of Christ. *"There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21.4).*

All this poses the question: what is the significance of the Tree of Life in the Eden story? The very general impression among those who hold that there actually was a Garden of Eden and a literal Adam and Eve is that it was a very special kind of tree the fruit of which had the power of conferring continuous never-dying life. All the time our first parents partook of its fruit they would never die; conversely, if they were debarred from the tree, death was certain. This, despite the fact that *"every tree that is . . . good*

for food" was separately mentioned as the support for man's physical life and the Tree of Life made to stand out as something unique. It should be borne in mind also that in the Divine arrangement death is the natural and inevitable consequence of sin. When the bond of union between God and man is severed because of sin the life-line is snapped, and continued, "eternal", life is lost because of that severance. The man then possesses only the modicum of animal vitality still residing in his material body and sooner or later that residual vitality ebbs away and the man dies. So the sentence on Adam was *"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"*. Whatever the nature and properties of the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden of the Genesis story, man automatically lost access to it at the moment of his sin, and not as a secondary precautionary action on the part of God, even although the rather inadequate translation of Gen. 3.22 in the A.V. may seem to favour that latter view. The Most High, soliloquising after the tragedy of the Fall, knew, and declared, that man should no longer, because he could no longer, have access to the Tree of Life and so live forever. But it was the fact of his sin, and not the inability to eat of the fruit of a certain tree, which created that situation.

It is more than possible, on the basis of the literal inerrancy of the Eden story, that the partaking of the fruit both of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were ritual acts, having a ceremonial significance expressive of the inward heart condition something like the significance of the bread and wine in the celebration of the Last Supper. In such case to partake of the Tree of Life was expressive of loyalty and allegiance to God and recognition that man's continued life depends upon the unbroken union and communion with God which comes in consequence of that loyalty and allegiance. Hence it is easy to understand that when disloyalty and rebellion had entered man's heart he no longer partook of the Tree of Life. His loyalty and allegiance was now given to the Satan who had seduced him and in partaking of the Tree of Knowledge he signified the change. He could partake of the one Tree or the other; he could not partake of both.

This then was the position from the time of the Fall onward. In a very true sense men have been partaking of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil ever since, giving their loyalty and allegiance to the "god of this world". Because all men,

even the best of them, are involved in the death conditions introduced by their first father the Tree of Life is debarred from all. As the Apostle Paul says, "*there is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rom. 3.10). But this is not for ever. In the story celestial guardians were appointed to keep the way of the Tree of Life as though to preserve it and throw it open again to mankind when the time should be ripe. That can only involve one conclusion, that a time is to come in the purposes of God when the power of sin shall be overthrown and its consequences eliminated, and mankind restored to a condition of reconciliation and union with God, and logically, then have access to the Tree of Life in the sense that they affirm and maintain their loyalty and allegiance to God and walk in the ways of his righteousness for ever. Equally logically, the Tree of Knowledge disappears, for there is no more evil in the hearts of men.

This is how it is in the other two pictures of the Tree of Life presented in the Scriptures, both in settings descriptive of the Millennial Age of Christ's reign over the world. The earlier, and most descriptive, is that seen in vision by the prophet Ezekiel half a millennium before Christ, and recorded in chapter 47 of the book which bears his name. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit he saw a magnificent idealised Temple, reminiscent of the edifice built by Solomon at Jerusalem and destroyed by the Babylonians in Ezekiel's own time, but greater and more imposing in every respect. Just as Solomon's Temple was symbolic of the Divine rule over Israel during the term of the theocracy, when their kings "sat on the throne of the Lord", so this greater Temple of Ezekiel's vision is symbolic of the future far greater Divine Kingdom of the Millennial Age, when not Israel only, but all nations and all men everywhere, will live under its influence and walk in its light. Now one feature of this Temple and its associated features was a River of Life which emerged from the central sanctuary and flowed through the countryside, bringing life and fertility to the surrounding lands—"every-thing shall live where the river cometh" (vs. 9)—until it eventually reached the barren waters of the Dead Sea and healed those waters so that they became full of fish—another symbol of life. And the banks of the river were furnished with trees, trees of life, whose fruit should be for food and whose leaves for healing. Here again is the same principle that is enshrined in the Genesis story. The Tree—the word in Genesis means trees or a grove—the Tree or Trees of Life derive their potency from the central sanctuary, where God dwells, through the medium of the River of Life. Those who partake of the Trees are thereby

brought into direct contact and union with God and so long as they maintain that union by that means they will never die. This is the eternal life which every man who believes and becomes Christ's man will receive in abundant measure through him as the channel of life from God. "*I am come*" He said "*that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (Jno. 10.10). True, during their progress through the remedial processes of the Millennial Age, the steps of repentance and conversion and dedication, of renunciation of sin and rehabilitation to the standard of righteousness, men will stand in sore need of healing, and restoration from the power of sin, and the untoward effects of their own past lives, and that is why Ezekiel said that the Tree of Life is also for healing. But the end result will be that "*all that hath breath shall praise the Lord*".

The Apostle John on Patmos (Rev. 21.20-22.5), saw something of a very similar nature pointing to the same glorious culmination. He saw, not a Temple, but a City, the New Jerusalem come down to earth from God that God might dwell with man — restored and perfected man. The nations are to walk in the light of the city—and the glory of God is that which lightens it, and the presence of Christ the Messianic King—and they become its citizens only when they are fully cleansed from sin and every defilement. As with Ezekiel, there is the river of life, proceeding this time from the throne of God in the centre of the city, and on the banks of the river the same trees of life seen by Ezekiel, again yielding fruit for food, and "*the leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations*" (ch. 22.2). Precisely the same symbolism as with the earlier prophet, and referring to the same era in prophetic time. With John there is an additional appropriateness, for just as the banishment of man from the Tree of Life marks the beginning of human history at the beginning of the first book of the Bible, so the rescinding of that prohibition comes at the climax of human history prior to the eternal state at the end of the last book of the Bible. Beyond that point sin and evil are no more, all creation is at peace and harmony with God, and Christ is ALL in ALL, with every tongue confessing him as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There remains the promise to the "overcomers" of this present Age. These, said the glorified Christ to John, are to be given "*to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God*". (Rev. 2.7). Now since it is through the instrumentality of the Church, associated with her Lord in the celestial world, that He will conduct the evangelical and reconciling work of the Millennial Age, it follows that this promise is

fulfilled at the completion of the Church's career upon earth, i.e. at the close of this present Age. The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 15 speaks of the "change" of every member of the Church, every truly dedicated and consecrated Christian of this Age, to heavenly conditions—since "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God*", and the Apostle Peter in 1 Thess. 4.13-17 of this resurrection as taking place at the Second Advent of our Lord, also at the end of this Age. There is therefore here in Rev. 2.7 a bold metaphor of the union of all believers with God at the time they are presented "*faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude 24) on the basis of the earthly symbol of the Tree of Life. Just as the reality of essential union with God is symbolised for mankind by the literal Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden, so, we are told to infer, there is a spiritual counterpart of the Tree of Life

in the celestial presence of God. Just as man will continue to all eternity in vital life-relationship to God the Father and Creator of all, so will those who "*by patient continuance in well doing*" have achieved the immortality which is the inheritance of all who have been "*buried with (Christ) by baptism into his death*", and raised "*in the likeness of his resurrection*". (Rom. 6.4-5). The one Tree was in the paradise of man, on earth; the other in the paradise of God, in heaven.

But they two are really one Tree of Life. One means of communion, one bond of union, one channel of life, between God and man. That channel is Christ. "*God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life*" (1 Jno. 5.11-12). It may not be too far-fetched to say that, in reality, the Lord Christ himself is the Tree of Life.

LESSONS OF TWO BEGINNINGS

Both lessons, Gen. 1.1-2.3 and John 1.1-18, open with the same words—"*In the beginning*". The Genesis reading refers to the creation of the Universe by God, but John's account is even more revealing because it says "*When the world had its beginning the Word was already there*". With this pronouncement we are taken out of the world of time and space, for we are face to face with eternal realities.

Time, to the believer, is that period in which the Divine purpose of God is being worked out. But the consummation of that purpose, that is to say, the perfect completion of God's plan, is not realised in time; the fulness of its meaning is to be made manifest in eternity. Time is the loom on which the garment is being woven—the wheel on which the pot is being shaped. When the work is done, the loom is abandoned, the wheel is stilled. What has been woven, what has been shaped, will endure. Time's wheel runs back and stops—God and thy soul endure. Time is "finite"—we have an allotted span of years in which we can work, achieve, just so much, for time emphasises the limitations of humanity. We can speak only dimly, only hesitantly, of ETERNITY, the "infinite", but we know that it unfolds for us the limitless resources of his mercy, his boundless love, his marvellous grace.

John 1.1 says "When the world had its beginning, the *Word* was already there; and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God. This *Word* was in the beginning with God". Unless we know that in using the word "*Word*", John is referring

to Christ, the passage is difficult to understand. Why then did John describe Christ in this way? For two reasons:

1. In order to present the Gospel in a way which would be understood both by the Jewish Christians and the Gentiles, in particular the Greeks.
2. For the purpose of refuting certain heretical teaching which confronted the Christian Church at that time.

Whilst it can never be absolutely certain that John the apostle wrote the Fourth Gospel, everything supports the fact. John had returned to Ephesus from exile in the Isle of Patmos, and it was when he was in Ephesus he is considered to have written the Gospel, about 100 A.D. At that time there were very many more converts to Christianity amongst the Greeks than the Jews, although Christianity had been cradled in Judaism. The Scriptures were written in Hebrew, but only the scholars (scribes etc.) knew the language. The ordinary Jew knew only Aramaic—the tongue spoken by Jesus during his ministry. When therefore a Jew worshipped in the synagogue, the Scriptures could be read from the Hebrew but would then be translated into Aramaic. This translation gave great emphasis to the "*Word of God*". The name of God would appear as "*the Word of God*".

The spoken word was like a unit of energy charged with power. The Hebrew language had but ten thousand words. The Greek language had two hundred thousand words. So every word to

the Jew was very emphatic and important. "And God said . . ."; words repeated over and over again in Genesis 1 and very many more times in the O.T. (394 times). (Illustration of vital importance of the spoken word is when Churchill broadcast in the second World War when our country was facing the onslaught of the enemy — Churchill's words seemed to give our nation an uplift and encouragement.) The Word was all important to the Jew—it spoke of God's wisdom and ordaining.

The Scriptures were again very difficult for a Greek to understand. He knew nothing of Jewish patriarchs, Jewish heritage, national pride and fervour. Matthew opens his gospel by setting down the genealogy of Christ, all important to the Jews, but quite beyond the Greek who had never heard even of King David. The Greek would not understand the title given to Christ of "Messiah", and referred to so often in prophecy. The very centre of Jewish expectation, the coming of the long expected Messiah, was an idea which was alien to the Greeks. So that the way in which the Jewish Christians conceived and presented Jesus meant nothing to the Greeks.

Here then was the problem—how to present the Christian message to the Greek world. The Greeks were the thinkers, the philosophers of that age. The Greek term for "Word" was LOGOS and meant not only Word but REASON. The two meanings were intertwined and the Greeks saw, in the "Logos", the creating, guiding, directing power of God. The Greeks had thought and dreamed and written about the "Logos", the power which made the world, the power by which men think and reason, the power by which men are drawn closer to God. John seizes on this and says:

"Jesus is that LOGOS—that Word that has come down to earth".

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us". So John, as he opens his gospel narrative, says to both Jew and Greek, that in Jesus there is perfectly revealed to mankind all that God always was, always will be, and all that God feels towards and desires for humanity.

In the second place John wrote of the Word being with God even before creation, in order to refute heretical teaching which confronted Christianity at that time. Some taught that as the world was sinful, God the Father, the God of the O.T., could not have created it—this must have been the work of another God. This is why John is so emphatic when he writes "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made". That is why John says "God so loved the world". Others said that Jesus

was a man in whom the Spirit of God came at his baptism but this Spirit left him before he was crucified. They held the opinion that Jesus was not really Divine.

John repudiates these heresies and states emphatically that this is God's world, He made it, nothing is beyond his control, and that Christ, who came to re-create the world, was the co-worker of God when the world was created.

In the 18th verse of John 1 John reminds us that no one has seen God at any time—not even Abraham the man of faith. Moses saw only the symbol of God in the burning bush on Mount Horeb. No one in O.T. days could have thought it possible to see God. The philosophers in Greece felt in exactly the same way. There would have been none to disagree with John when he said that no man has ever seen God. But John does not stop there. He goes on to say that Jesus has fully revealed to men what God is like—"He who is in the bosom of the Father, who has told us all about God" (John 1.18). This is the keynote of John's gospel: "If you want to see what God is like look at Jesus Christ". Compare in John 14.9 Christ's words "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father".

Stay for a moment at the stable in Bethlehem. This is the message of Christmas. To see in the manger God's omnipotence exchanged for weakness, God's omniscience for the limitations of human intellect. To see moreover the loving heart and faithfulness of God. Go in imagination to the well at Sychar to which a Samaritan woman has come to draw water, and perceive from the words of Jesus the sympathetic heart of God, the friendliness of God; Sychar, where all barriers of race and prejudice erected by man are removed. Listen to the parable which Jesus tells of the Prodigal Son—do you not grasp the fact of God's mercy and grace, his love which knows no bounds. Stay awhile at the hill outside Jerusalem and look up to the Cross where Jesus has been put to die a death of shame and ignominy. But you will not see the shamefulness of such a punishment; you will see the unfolding of God's purpose of reconciliation. Look into the empty tomb; rather, hurry to the house of Cleopas and rejoice as you become aware of the victory over death and sin.

Christ was not one who lived nobly and died gallantly for a lost cause. He did not come to the end in defeat, but in TRIUMPH. So that we need have no doubt about the promises of God because Christ by his life and resurrection gives a Yes to them all—see 2 Cor. 1.20.

In Christ, the distant, invisible, unreachable God has come to men and God can never be a stranger to us again.

SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

7. Healing of the lame man

The man sat on the ground, his body propped up against the wall, dejectedly surveying the crowds passing and repassing on their way into and out of the Temple. Now in his early forties, he had lain there every day for as long as he could remember, mutely supplicating passers-by for their charity. He had never walked, he had never worked; all he knew of the world was the little strip of ground between his hovel-home in Jerusalem and this wide pavement in the Gate Beautiful at the eastern approach to the Temple where he habitually solicited alms wherewith to sustain himself in his infirmity. His friends brought him there in the morning and left him, and in the evening they came again to take him home. And that was his life, all of it.

Two men approached, coming into the Temple. He did not know them. They were not regular worshippers. Only in recent weeks had he seen them at all, and then too far away in the crowd to accost them. Now they were here again, and this time on a path which would bring them within a few feet of his recumbent body. His eyes brightened a little and he lifted his head. "Alms, for the love of God; alms" he croaked, voice dry and hard by reason of the constant repetition of his plea.

The men stopped and looked down at him. Hope surged into his eyes and his lean frame quivered in anticipation as he tremblingly extended a skinny hand. But as one of them began to speak his expectations were cruelly dashed. "*Silver and gold have I none*" said Peter; as the import of the words sank in, the cripple subsided back to the flagstones, bitter disappointment showing on his face. "*But such as I have give I thee*" the voice went on, and he looked up again, a little perplexed, a little hesitant, vaguely wondering if there was some kind of a gift, perhaps of food or clothing, which he was about to receive. He sensed the kindness and compassion in Peter's voice and the understanding sympathy of his companion but he was totally unprepared for the command which came upon him like a thunder-clap: "**IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH RISE UP AND WALK**".

He had never walked. He had never stood upon his feet. From his birth he had always been carried, taken up and put down like a package of goods. He had seen other people walking and going about their business but it had never entered his head that he himself would ever do

any such thing. He had been made as he was by the will of God, and only God could change his state. He looked up into the burning eyes of Peter and suddenly he remembered what he had been told about this same Jesus, how He had healed the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda and the blind man at the Pool of Siloam. He had even, they said, raised the dead. He had hoped, when he heard these wonderful stories, that Jesus might come his way one day and he could ask for healing; but Jesus had never come and now, so they said, He had been crucified by the priests and there was no more any hope of healing. And then, his own eyes still held by that compelling gaze, he realised the truth. Jesus still lives, Jesus can save; a swift accession of faith suffused his whole being and he grasped the proffered hand held out towards him and in a moment was standing upon his feet. He had never stood; now he was standing. He took two tentative steps forward. He had never walked; now he was walking. In a sudden paroxysm of joy he leaped into the air, he who had never leaped, and in a loud voice began to praise God for the wonderful thing that had happened to him. Joining the throng which was pressing forward into the Temple, he went along with Peter and John, voicing his praises in the ears of all the people as he went.

Of course it created a sensation. The man had become so familiar a figure throughout the years and his disability so obviously incurable that people came running from all sides to see and to question. Peter and John found themselves in the middle of a wondering and excited crowd with no chance of escape, the while the healed man was clinging tightly to them and declaiming to the onlookers the details of his miraculous cure.

This was Peter's opportunity. The people reacted to this miracle just as they had reacted to Jesus' miracles—they gave praise to God and looked with awe upon the human agent as a special messenger from God akin to the prophets of old. Peter and John must be special favourites with God to be entrusted with so great a power. And Peter straightway disabused their minds of that misapprehension. We have no supernatural powers of our own, he told them; we are not extraordinarily holy men. And having thus disavowed any special merit of his own in this thing, he began in a masterly fashion to direct their minds to the true source of the miracle and what it portended for them and theirs. He did not say straight away that it was done by the power of

Christ resurrected; he wanted to prepare their minds so that they might properly appreciate the magnitude of that truth. First, the familiar formula, the reverent expression which meant so much to every Israelite and could be depended on always to command their attention. *"The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers"*. Here was the source, to Jew and afterwards to Christian, from which all things come and in which all things subsist. *"Hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up . . ."* This was a gentle approach to the heart of the matter; this word "glorified" (*doxazo*) has nothing to do with the resurrection itself: it denotes to magnify, extol, praise, and what Peter is saying here is that God had publicly approved and honoured Jesus of Nazareth during his earthly life but despite that the people had delivered him up to death. Then came the deeper accusation and the deeper truth. *"Ye denied the Holy One . . . and killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses."* There was to be no mitigation of their responsibility; they, as a nation, were guilty and solely guilty. Pilate he practically exonerates; *"he was determined to let him go"* and the guilt of the condemnation he places fairly and squarely upon Israel. But their intent was frustrated. God had raised him from the dead; we know, because we have seen him! We are witnesses! For the second time Peter staked his all upon the reality of his Lord's resurrection; once again he manifested the certainty of an eye-witness. And now he used the undisputed fact of this miracle which they had all just witnessed as a further and incontrovertible evidence in all their eyes. *"His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong . . . hath given him perfect soundness in the presence of you all."* The disciples believed in the Resurrection because they had seen Jesus in person. That was not given to other men. The evidence given to the man in the street was the continuation of the works of healing which Jesus had performed while in this life. The power of Jesus to restore to health and life those who had faith in him reached them even from beyond the grave.

The crowd was silent, and for a very good reason. They had nothing to say. The evidence could not be gainsaid. Peter, following up his advantage, adopted a more conciliatory tone. *"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."* God had foreseen that men would react in this way when Christ should come to them and recorded his foreknowledge in the words of the prophets. He would make use of this hardness of man's heart in the furtherance of his great purpose and at the

end all would be well. But in the meantime there was a part for man to play; more immediately importantly, for the men of Israel to play. *"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord"*: ("when" in the A.V. should be "so that"). These "times of refreshing" are literally seasons of cooling, of refrigeration, of mitigation of heat; in using this word Peter indicated that those who did thus repent and come into Christ thereby found relief from the burdens of the Mosaic Law and the stress of the times in which they lived, entering into a new life in which all their burdens were brought to the Lord and He undertook their future welfare. *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* was the invitation when Jesus was with them; it was no less open to them now that He was gone. It came now from before the Divine presence, where Christ was "sitting on the right hand of God".

But Peter hastened on. There were even greater things he must say. It was not sufficient that he must witness to the resurrection of Christ and the continuing call to believe on him. He must tell them of the ultimate outcome of that resurrection, of the return of that same Jesus to this earth and this people where He had been rejected, this time in the glory and majesty of his Divine kingship, that He must reign over all the world for the purpose of eliminating all evil and completing mankind's preparation for its ordained destiny. Jesus had already said He would return; the angels at the site of the Ascension reiterated that promise; now Peter testifies to his belief and expectation of the same and he connects it with the original promise of God to Abraham that "in thy seed all the kindreds of the earth shall be blessed". *"He shall send Jesus Christ"* he told them *"whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."* Times of restitution; the word means "restoration". Restoration of what? There are many things buried in the past history of humanity which it is not good should be restored. It helps to omit the comma in this verse—commas were invented in the fifteenth century and are not always in the right places in the A.V.—so that the verse reads "times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets". Many good and glorious things had been spoken by the prophets. Israel's own land is to be restored to her; the Lord is to dwell in the midst of her and never depart again. Life, rich, vital, indwelling life, is to be restored to all men. All that has been lost by the influence and

power of sin will be restored. The glory and beauty of the fertile earth, spoiled and polluted and ruined by man, will be restored. The dead will be restored from the grave. Eden shall bloom again and this time there shall be no Tempter, no Evil One. These "times of restitution" of which Peter spoke on this occasion are in fact the wide sweeps of the Millennium, the Messianic era of Christ's presence in the earth, the time when God is said to dwell with man and "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away". All these things have been promised by the Hebrew prophets and all these things shall be restored to man.

At this point Peter's eloquence was rudely interrupted. Someone had told the priests about these two itinerant evangelists preaching the resurrection of Jesus within the very confines of the Temple itself and they came out in force to stop it. With them came the "captain of the Temple", the commander of the Temple police, a body of muscular Levites whose duty it was to deal with troublemakers within the sacred precincts. Without further ado Peter and John were apprehended and locked up for the night, the while arrangements were made for a special meeting of the Sanhedrin in the morning to examine them and mete out punishment.

The last time Peter had set eyes upon Annas and Caiaphas, who between them ruled the Sanhedrin, had been at the trial of Jesus not much more than two months before. Then, Peter had been a frightened man and in fear of his own life had denied his Lord. Now, himself facing that same assemblage of hostile judges, and hearing their angry demand to say by what power he had done this thing, he answered boldly in full disregard of their enmity. There is a wonderful contrast between his respective attitudes on these two occasions. Only the full assurance that his Lord had indeed survived death and now had all power in heaven and earth could have generated this fortitude. "*Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel*" was his reply "*be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.*"

This was throwing the gauntlet back at them with a vengeance. They had crucified Christ; God had raised him from the dead, and now He possessed and wielded a power which they could neither refute nor resist. "*Beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it*". Evidently that worthy also had suffered arrest and imprisonment for the night

with the two apostles. The Sanhedrin was thrown into confusion. They had thought that with the encompassment of the death of Jesus they had put an end to this incipient heresy and this threat to their own positions and authority; now they found it blossoming forth even more strongly than before. They had congratulated themselves on the cessation of the miraculous works of healing and other wonderful acts which characterised Jesus' ministry and now they found that He was continuing these things from beyond the grave where they could not get at him. No wonder they went into secret session. They had to admit the truth to themselves although they would not do so publicly. "*What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem: and we cannot deny it.*" If the Sanhedrin had not believed in the resurrection of Jesus and his Divine power before, they believed in it now. But such is the blinding effect of pride and self-interest that they still considered they could defy this new power which was challenging their authority. Even though the power was from heaven, it must still be exerted through men, and men moreover who must claim and invoke the Name of Christ. So they recalled the apostles and commanded them, with threats, neither to speak nor teach in the name of Jesus. The apostles' compliance with that instruction would ensure that there would be no more miracles.

Peter and John both flatly refused. "*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*". Unmoved by their judges' threats, they defied them to do their worst.

At the trial of Jesus, the priests had dominated the situation and Pilate was the weak one who gave way to them. Now the position was reversed; the Sanhedrin, apprehensive and indecisive, had lost the initiative and the apostles were in control. Despite their threats, there was nothing the judges could do beyond reiterating warnings of condign punishment which were known, even to themselves, to be but empty words, and to turn the apostles loose to continue their work.

This was the first of many occasions in the history of this Age when the Lion and the Lamb met in open conflict, and the Lamb emerged the victor. There was to be many a fight and many a casualty in coming days, but the existence of the Christian Church and its ultimate triumph was ensured on that day when two resolute disciples faced a tribunal of seventy outwardly enraged but inwardly very frightened men and made that historic declaration.

To be continued.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *What is the import of 2 Pet. 1.20 "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation"?*

A. St. Paul declares that God has "set" various helpers in the Church — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—for the edification and upbuilding of the assembly. It is only from the Scriptures that such helpers can fulfil their function, and only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The verse should be read in its entirety: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". "Prophecy" is a word which means the public declaration or exposition of the Faith, particularly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The word is not confined to the foretelling of future events which is the common English usage to-day; it can cover any aspect of Scripture truth or Christian exhortation. "Private" in the Greek means "of one's own self", and "interpretation" is "unloosing". The gist of the verse is that Christian teaching of any kind is not the unaided product of the teacher's own mental equipment but is by the power of the Spirit. It is not possible to explain and interpret Scripture by the processes of natural reasoning; it can be interpreted and understood only by the power of the same Spirit by which it is given. Divine truth is not on the same level as an earthly science; its expounders must be men of God and men of spiritual insight. Christians should take for their guides and teachers, therefore, only those who give evidence of the indwelling Spirit in their lives and who can speak "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Spirit teacheth".

Q. *What is the meaning of the word "Selah" found at intervals in certain Psalms?*

A. The Psalms were originally sung in the Temple ritual to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The word "selah", meaning "rest" or "silence", was a musical term indicating a point in the singing of the Psalm where the singers were to pause whilst the instrumental music continued. It usually serves to divide a Psalm into several "stanzas" or sections and often is intended to high-light the special significance of the immediately preceding words.

Q. *What is the meaning of our Lord's words in Matt. 10.23 when, sending the disciples out to preach in the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, He said "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come?" Did He refer to his Second Coming?*

A. The most reasonable understanding of the text is that He did. In sending out the disciples He told them, among other things, that they would be delivered up and brought before kings and governors, and would be "hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved". Now that, at least, did not happen to the twelve disciples until after the death of Jesus. Verses 17-22 are more truly descriptive of the persecutions and apostasy of the Gospel Age than of the disciples' experiences whilst Jesus was with them. It seems evident therefore that Jesus was speaking to the disciples as representing all who would follow in their steps in after years. The commission He had just given the disciples, to go forth and preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (vs. 7) is the same commission that He afterwards expressed in the words "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16.15). That witness was to continue until his return, as we have it in the well-known words of Matt. 24. 14, "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." This 24th Chapter repeats the warning given in Chap. 10 that the true believers would be delivered up and persecuted, and that some would betray their brethren. The expression "Son of man be come" seems clearly to point back to Daniel 7 and the vision of the Second Advent. It seems then that Jesus meant to convey that the mission upon which He was then sending his disciples would continue for the rest of their lives, and throughout the lives of all the believers who would follow them, generation after generation, until He should come again. They thought that He would return in their own lifetime; events proved otherwise, but it is still true that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached continually until the full revelation of the Lord upon the Throne of his glory.

THE STORY OF THE DELUGE

13. Into the New World.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." (Gen. 8.22).

At long last the waters retreated and the eight survivors stepped out into a new world. It is difficult to gauge their feelings. The world they had known, with all its violence and horror, the malevolent tyranny of the *Nephilim* and the crass wickedness of their fellows, was gone, gone for ever. They themselves were the only ones left and there was nothing more to fear. Now they had the opportunity to build a new world wherein would dwell righteousness. They could train their children up in the nurture and the reverence of the Most High God and evil would no more defile their fair domain. That must have been the thought in their minds as they surveyed the desolated lands and began to plan the re-establishment of their daily work.

It could not have been an easy task. The terse, matter-of-fact statement that *"in the second month, in the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried . . . and Noah went forth, and his sons, and . . . every beast, every creeping thing, went forth out of the ark"* gives the impression at first sight that things were now all right and they could find a place to live and pick up life where they had left it a year earlier. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The land on which they now stood had been covered with deep sea water for twelve months; the soil would be impregnated with salt and require a long period of "leaching" by rain before the salt was eliminated and crops could grow. For the first year at least they must have existed upon what they could harvest from pockets of soil in the mountains above the level to which the flood water had reached. It is probable that for many years they lived in the mountains, gradually establishing a system of agriculture and stock-breeding suitable to the conditions, perhaps using the stranded Ark as a kind of headquarters and storage depot. Eventually they, or their descendants, would find that the more fertile soil of the Iraq plain had become salt-free and they could move down and find living conditions considerably eased, but that would have been years or even decades later.

They were not many, at first. Three able-bodied men, one old man, and four women. That is the picture presented in Genesis. They must needs wait a few years before their flocks and herds were of sufficient size to provide a regular food

supply; they would certainly have stored plenty of seed in the Ark but even so they must dig and sow and await their first harvest, twelve months away perhaps, before they began to be self-sufficient. It is likely that they sought, and found, wild grain and other food plants in the high mountain valleys untouched by the Flood. To this day travellers have remarked on the abundant vegetation and wild life of those same valleys. It is an interesting fact, well established by competent authorities in recent years, that this is the territory where originated the original wild wheat and barley from which all cultivated wheat and barley is derived. Noah is usually renowned, on the authority of Genesis, for having planted the first post-diluvian vineyard. It may be he also deserves the credit for producing the first strains of cultivated grain from the parent wild stock.

The community grew slowly. On the basis of the rather scanty data given in Genesis, they could only have numbered between thirty and sixty a century after leaving the Ark. It was a long time before there was any appreciable population on those wild plains which later on were to see the world's first great civilisation, the Sumerian, sons of Ham. The sons and grandsons of Noah probably lived their lives in tolerable peace and harmony, and in reverence and thanksgiving to God for their great deliverance.

The first act of Noah upon emerging from the Ark was to bring an offering to God. How much the antediluvians knew of offerings and sacrifice, and to what extent they worshipped, if they worshipped at all, we have no idea. It is very probable that there were no "false gods" and no mythologies before the Flood. All the evidence we have from pagan and idolatrous religions points to their origin on this side of the Flood, quite a few centuries after that event. The only references to worship in antediluvian times are in connection with Cain and Abel, Enos, Enoch, Lamech and Noah, all acknowledging God. Noah's offering might well be regarded as marking the continuance of an age-old tradition whereby men recognised God's overlordship of their lives and their dependence upon him. It might also, or perhaps entirely, have been a thank offering to God for the deliverance just effected and their emergence into safety. It might have been a pledge of continued and utter loyalty to God on the part of the entire family. God had set him down in this new world, as it were, unharmed and with all that he needed in the way of possessions

to start life anew and so he rendered to God a share of all in token of his allegiance.

The offering was a "burnt offering". Noah *"took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl"* (bird); this statement has been seized upon by critics as evidence that the story is of much later date than its claimed period on the assumption that the distinction between clean and unclean beasts originated with Moses. This assumption is unwarranted; the distinction, although not stated, is evident in the account of Abraham's covenant-sacrifice in Gen. 15, and it is saying very little for the intelligence of Noah's generation if they had not discerned the difference between animals which are and are not good for food, which is the basic idea behind the separation into clean and unclean. Deut. 14 lists ten species as "clean" for purposes of the Mosaic Law and Noah's offering probably consisted of a similar variety. Divine acceptance of the burnt offering would be demonstrated by the coming of fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, as in the parallel instances of Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kin. 18.38), Gideon and the angel (Jud. 6.21), the consecration of Aaron as High Priest (Lev. 9.24), and the dedication of Solomon's Temple (2 Chron. 7.1).

This sacrifice is noteworthy in that it validated the first covenant between God and man recorded in the Scripture. The Noachic covenant was an unconditional one in that it enshrined the expression of God's fixed intention towards the earth and its inhabitants irrespective of what man might or might not do in the future. Theologically, a covenant (*berith*) in the O.T. is a statement of the relationship instituted and existing between God and man against the background of an avowed purpose. It can be conditional, in that its terms may be violated by man, in which case it comes to an end, or unconditional in that it avows a settled purpose of God which is not annulled or disturbed by anything that man does. The covenant with Noah was of this latter kind. God told him before the Flood occurred that He would establish such a covenant with him (Gen. 6.18) and now the time had come to fulfil his word.

First, the admonition, a repetition of the commission given to the first human pair at the beginning; *"be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"*. The whole world which Noah had known had been devastated of its inhabitants; that was the world which the sons of Noah were to replenish. *"Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you . . . but flesh with the life thereof, the blood thereof, shall ye not eat"* (ch. 9.3-4). This injunction raises the question as to whether men had been flesh eaters before the Deluge or was this the Divine permission to institute a new

practice. The original provision for human food at man's creation as given in Gen. 1.29 implied a vegetarian and fruitarian diet with no mention of flesh; this might very well have been the state of things at the beginning but does not demand that men maintained the practice right up to the Flood. According to Gen. 4.20 cattle-rearing commenced in the eighth generation from Adam, and this can hardly have been for any other purpose than food. In Jewish legend an element in the universal corruption of the antediluvians was the indiscriminate partaking of flesh, both animal and human. The Book of Jubilees, which is considered to be based on a Hebrew text differing from that from which our Authorised Version is derived, says in this connection *"and lawlessness increased on the earth and all flesh corrupted its way, alike men and cattle and beasts and birds and everything that walketh on the earth; all of them corrupted their ways and their orders, and they began to devour each other, and lawlessness increased on the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of all men was thus evil continually"* (Jub. 5.2). In like manner the Book of Enoch accuses the progeny of the fallen angels of the same sin; *"(they) consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another's flesh, and drink the blood"*. (1 Enoch 7.3-5). These books in their present form only date from a few centuries before Christ, although they do manifestly incorporate fragments of much older material; nevertheless these traditions may well rest on a basis of fact, handed down by oral tradition from earliest times. And if something like this was indeed the situation in those decadent days before the Flood then the Lord's words to Noah in this chapter might well be understood as regularising and limiting a practice which was not unknown to the patriarch already. The Jubilees rendering of the instruction is a little more illuminating than the A.V.; *"behold, I have given unto you all beasts, and all winged things, and everything that moveth on the earth, and the fish in the waters, and all things for food; as the green herbs, I have given you all things to eat. But flesh, with the life thereof, with the blood, ye shall not eat; for the life of all flesh is in the blood, lest your blood of your lives be required"*. (Jub. 6. 6-7). This prohibition of eating flesh with the blood might well be a warning against repeating the corrupt practices referred to in "Jubilees" and "Enoch"; men were free to use the flesh of suitable animals for food but not to drink the blood, or possibly, not partake of it raw with the blood. Behind this lay

the idea that the life of a terrestrial creature resides in the blood and the life comes from God and must go back to God; man can appropriate the material carcass to his own use but may not appropriate the life, which belongs to God. The same idea was incorporated in the Mosaic Law many centuries later. This, perhaps, is the significance of vs. 5-6 in Gen. 9. God will require the blood of every beast and every man in the sense that He takes back the life He has given (Eccl. 12.7. Ps. 104.29-30). The oft-debated pronouncement "*whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man*" (ch. 9.6) is also connected with all this. God alone has authority to take away life, and because all men are made in his image and possess life by his decree, the man who wilfully sheds the blood of another must himself forfeit his own privilege of sentient life. Whether this is a mandate for the exercise of judicial "capital punishment" or an anticipatory statement of Jesus' own declaration "*they that take the sword shall perish by the sword*" may be open to debate, but there can be little doubt that the injunction was given to Noah in reaction to the terrible lawlessness of the pre-Flood days. Henceforth mankind must govern themselves in an orderly fashion by the rule of law and this must involve disciplinary and preventive measures against law-breakers.

Finally God announced the covenant, the agreement which assured Noah of a stable future for himself and his descendants, and defined their relationship to God. This covenant was to be "*with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth*" (ch. 9.9-10). This is the only occasion in Bible theology where God is said to make a covenant, enter into an agreement, not merely with man, but also with the animal creation. The gist of the agreement is that both man and the brute creation can proceed to multiply and inhabit the earth in full confidence that never again will it be devastated as it had been by the Flood. Whatever changes of administration were yet to be made, whatever the depth of corruption to which man might conceivably sink and whatever the nature of the changes God must introduce in consequence, the orderly processes of Nature, seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night, shall continue uninterrupted. The mediæval theological idea of the destruction of the earth at the Last Day in a great conflagration cannot be sustained in the light of this promise and covenant. Even the great transition from the kingdoms of this world to the

Kingdom of God when the Lord Christ at his return assumes his power and commences his Messianic reign is subject to the terms of this Covenant; the earth itself will pass from the one Age to the other unscathed.

An interesting point revealed by vs. 10 is that, despite the popular impression and the works of many artists, there were no predatory (carnivorous) animals in the Ark; lions, tigers, bears, wolves and so on were conspicuous by their absence. In the Old Testament the predatory animals are always described by the appellations "beast of the earth", "beast of the forest", "beast of the field" or "wild beast". The herbivorous creatures are denominated by several words which are translated "cattle" "beast" or "creeping thing". Nowhere in the entire narrative is there any reference to predatory animals being in the Ark. But now that Noah has emerged from the Ark and is having the terms of the Covenant recited to him, God says that it is to include all living creatures besides man; "*From all that go out of the Ark, To every beast of the earth*"—predators. In other words, the covenant is to include the entire animal creation, from all those who were in the Ark to all those who never were in it. The implication of all this is, of course, that the territory inundated by the Flood was cleared of all its carnivorous animals, which was just as well in the interests of the admittedly scanty number of beasts Noah had with which to repopulate his new realm. Wild animals would have survived in the mountainous districts unaffected by the Flood but it would be many years before they or their progeny penetrated the plains where men had re-established themselves, by which time their flocks and herds, and the herbivorous wild creatures, would have multiplied adequately to ensure survival.

The visible token of the covenant was the rainbow. Henceforth whenever there shall be rain on the earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, said God, "*I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth*" (ch. 9.16). The rainbow became the symbol of God's faithfulness; more than that, it was a visible manifestation of the glory of God reflected to earth, assuring man that God is in control of all things and is always working for the ultimate well-being of man. The rainbow is mentioned in Scriptures only three other times and always with the same association. When Ezekiel stood and beheld the vision of God on his throne advancing to earth for the combined purposes of burning out, by his judgments, the evil that was in his people, and setting in motion the forces which ultimately would bring them the

blessings He had promised, the rainbow surrounded his throne (Ezek. 1.28). When John saw a similar vision of the Lord in heaven about to initiate exactly the same processes among both the apostates and the faithful in this present Christian Age, the rainbow was there again (Rev. 4.3). Above all, when to the Revelator was vouchsafed the vision of the returning Christ armed with all power to establish upon earth his kingdom of everlasting righteousness, He was crowned with the rainbow (Rev. 10.1). Each of the four great ages of post-Flood history, the Patriarchs, the Jewish, the Christian or Gospel, and the Millennial, ages are hallowed by the appearance of the rainbow, indicative of God's faithfulness in the implementation of his eternal purpose for the sons of men and of his never-failing beneficent control of all earth's affairs, that men, despite their shortcomings and failures, might eventually attain their destined place in his eternal creation.

So, after judgment comes blessing. That is one of the Divine principles which men have been so slow to learn. God does not chastise for the sake of chastisement, but that men might turn from their evil ways, and live. *"The Lord hath chastened me sore"* said the Psalmist *"but he hath not given me over to death"*. In that lies our hope and assurance for the future of mankind. None will be eternally lost save those who are quite irreclaimable. None will be denied an opportunity for repentance and we shall find in the last analysis that the only men who do escape from the loving hands of God are those who have destroyed within themselves their own capacity for repentance, who have so steeled themselves against every influence for good that they have nothing left on which the Spirit of God can work. The antediluvians were not like that; their corruption was largely the result of ignorance and they suffered under a demonic tyranny from which they could not escape. Degenerate as they were, it might well be that God in his mercy took them away before they became irrevocably depraved, that in a yet far future day, freed from the evil tyranny of the past, and brought to a full knowledge of the saving grace of God in Christ, they may have a full opportunity to listen, and repent, and convert, and be healed.

Things were different after the Flood. True, it was still a world of sin and death, "this present

evil world". It was still a world where evil flourished and went apparently unpunished. But there was a difference. From Noah's day onward the light was increasing instead of decreasing. Slowly but surely men entered more and more into the knowledge of God and his purpose. Never again, declared God in his infinite wisdom, need the human race be virtually blotted out because of almost total degeneracy. There was always to be a remnant, witnesses to God in every generation and age. From Noah to Abraham a hope for the future was preserved. During those long centuries when the peoples of Sumer, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and lands farther afield built their splendid but pagan civilisations, times concerning which the Old Testament is virtually silent, there must have been many godly men in the earth. Reverential hands preserved and recorded the story of God's dealings with man from the very beginning of man's existence upon earth for the enlightenment of generations to come. Despite many shortcomings and failures, Israel preserved the truth of God, and the written oracles, and remained his witness in the world, for fifteen hundred years until Christ came. So it was with full confidence that these things would be so that God gave the promise *"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done"*. (ch. 8.21).

In the strength of that promise Noah embarked on the rebuilding of the world. The first to be brought into covenant relationship with God, he and his sons had the Divine blessing and they had the visible sign, the rainbow, always to remind them of God's faithfulness and God's abiding presence. He and his had lived through an experience such as no other men have been called upon to undergo. He had believed God, and translated his belief into action, and reaped the reward of faith. For a short time the whole of the Divine purpose depended upon him and his integrity. If Noah had failed, the whole of the Divine purpose, centred in the Person of One who was to trace lineal descent through Noah from Mother Eve, would, from the human point of view, been disrupted. There would have been no Seed of the Woman. But God chooses his men aright. Noah did not fail, and the earth was replenished anew.

The End.

BOOK REVIEW

"Noah's Ark; Fact or Fable?". Violet M. Cummings. 352 pp 54 photos 14 diagrams. Stocked by Send the Light Trust, 9 London Road, Bromley, Kent. £2.50 post free.

For thirty years past there has been great activity on and around Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey by various expeditions, chiefly American, engaged in searching for remains of Noah's Ark. The impetus comes from a number of claims, some of doubtful authenticity, by plane pilots and others, that the Ark has been sighted in

recent years. This book is a fascinating account of the research and exploration which has been going on during this period and in conjunction with the many photographs of scenes on the mountain brings the story vividly to life. The reader is left to exercise his own judgment as to the value of some of the stories of alleged "sightings" and the result is a work which is at once factual and entertaining. A most interesting book on modern Ararat exploration.

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 3. Isaac to Joseph

With reluctance we leave the venerable figure of Abraham, who was without doubt a key-stone of the faith and a land mark in history, pausing a moment before Isaac, the miracle child of his old age, through whom flowed nations and kings. Isaac was a man of peace and meditation, living in a quiet backwater without the trials which had tested his father's faith to the uttermost. He had been a cherished son, inheriting along with the promises great wealth. Struggle was not for him. Barring disputes about wells, he rode on quiet seas. Blindness in his old age may have been his chief misfortune, but in the providence of God it led to his giving the blessing to the son most fitted to receive it. A partiality for a favourite son may have been his one weakness, as a disappointment in that same son may have been his one sorrow. The delightful picture splashed on the canvas is that of a man in his youthful prime, walking in the fields at eventide, his thoughtful mood interrupted by the colourful approach of an eastern caravan which brought him Rebekah, whom he loved at first sight. Her choice, her long journey to become his wife and her astute valuation of the promises of God give her an honoured place in the gallery of the great women of faith. There are so many of these pilgrim women who shared the faith, enduring its hazards and the loneliness of the separated life. They must have their own gallery with a special day for viewing, where honour may be rendered to whom honour is due.

Beside the portrait of this tranquil man of faith hangs a sketch no less interesting, that of Eliezer of Damascus the steward of Abraham's estate, comptroller of his considerable household and ambassador extraordinary to the city of Nahor, in search of a bride for his master's son. He it was who chose Rebekah and brought her on her long journey to become the mother of nations. Here is the picture of a faithful servant seeking not his own, but rendering up honest accounts of his governorship, entrusted with a delicate mission, carried out with sagacity and a practical exhibition of true faith. While he believed in the God of Abraham he wanted signs for which he dared to ask with a natural simplicity, signs which he promptly acted upon to the successful completion of his mission, so forging another link in the strong chain of eternal purpose.

The portrait of Jacob is one of darker shades. There was little of serenity about his life but much of toil, struggle and suffering. In later life he considered his days 'few and evil' in compar-

ison to the lighter and more lengthy days of his predecessors. His faith cost him something. He knew danger, hardship, grief and disappointment. Having by stealth gained possession of the family deeds, because he had the faith of his grandfather and set a high value upon those "exceeding great and precious promise", he was in turn outwitted, forced by circumstances to do what he least wanted to do but submitting because of his innate devotion to God and God's precepts. His critics have been many and sharp, but the tenacity and virtue of the man far outshines the narrow wit of his slanderers. If Isaac favoured Esau with his dish of venison. Rebekah favoured Jacob the slightly younger of her twin sons. Before their birth she had been told the elder should serve the younger. Watching the two boys grow to manhood she could not fail to see the difference in character and the father's indulgence for the more flamboyant hunter who prepared his tasty dishes. Even in looks they were different, making necessary an elaborate deception which she contrived and for whose consequences she was ready to accept responsibility. Esau had brought into the family two pagan wives, which besides being a source of irritation to her, disqualified him to receive the promises of God.

The discovery that he had been ingeniously displaced filled Esau with murderous hatred, further revealing his unfitness for God's purpose. Rebekah sent Jacob away for safety to her old home. The grandson of Abraham went out, a solitary wanderer, to retrace the steps of the founder of his house, to become in turn the founder of a larger house which in time would be welded into a nation. Known to many as wrestling Jacob, because he struggled with God and prevailed, his tenacity expressed in the determined cry, "I will not let thee go unless thou bless me," was the obtaining of a first hand assurance which his filching of the blessing of Isaac had not given him. He valued the blessing so highly he had sacrificed his all for it; now he sought it so intensely that even his mighty opponent did not shake his courage or conviction. His reward was a new name, Israel, a prince with God. The will to survive even a hand to hand conflict with almighty strength was a guarantee to his posterity of survival over monstrous difficulties. Whom God had not overthrown no power of man or force of evil could overthrow, a fact evident in the history of his race. Their foes have been many and cruel but Israel survives as a nation. The house of Jacob

still stands. Of the spiritual house of Israel the same can be said. Twenty centuries of persecution, ostracism and cunning deception have failed to destroy the faith or separate God from his people (Rom. 8.35-39). Wrestling Jacob procured and passed on to the heirs of faith the pledge to the overcomers. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame" (Rev. 3.21).

The strong unsmiling face, etched in lines of sorrow, looks down the corridors of history with gentle, steadfast eyes. He was at all times a man of action, unwavering in his devotion to God, ready to count all things loss for the greater prize of a promised inheritance. Many of his words illuminate the pages of life with a rich glow. His dream of the heavenly ladder with the angels travelling between heaven and earth, his exclamation, "Surely the Lord is in this place. This is the house of God, the gate of heaven," mark him a poet, an enthusiast, a man who followed his vision. His constant love for Rachel reveal him as the ardent lover, the devoted husband, the tender father of their sons. His dedication of a holy place, his vow of a tenth of all he might possess while still a penniless wanderer, shows him a man of mental and physical stamina, a worthy head of the great house of Jacob which at the time of his death consisted of about one hundred members. More of his descendants were to carry it forward to nationhood by mysterious ways, one of whom was his own son Joseph, son of the beloved Rachel.

Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Joseph was the gentleman of the party. There is no evidence that Jacob ever had any strong affection for the sons of Leah, whom his uncle Laban had palmed off on him in place of Rachel, so getting another seven years work out of him. Her six sons and those of the serving girls had not the qualities of Joseph, the son of the loved and beautiful Rachel. There is that eye-catching portrait of the charming, vivacious lad, dressed in the many coloured coat which denoted the rank of a prince. This evidence of Jacob's favour, the guileless flaunting of his superiority, his artless chatter of dreams which appeared to exalt him even above his parents, aroused in the sullen minds of his brethren a deep hatred.

There came a day when he was sent to inquire if all was well with them and the flocks, when they conspired to kill him. It is possible that the doting Jacob would have made Joseph his heir, not only of his property but of the birthright and the blessing of the promises. This the ten could not allow, so they put him in a pit, eventually selling him to a spice caravan going down to Egypt. Little did they know what they were doing

for the future of their family or race. For twenty pieces of silver they sold a resourceful seventeen-year-old into a slavery which he turned to good account. They had stripped him of the princely coat which had so enhanced his status and his good looks. This they dipped in the blood of a young goat, taking it back to Jacob as evidence that Joseph was killed by some wild beast. In the skin of a kid Jacob had deceived Isaac. Now with the blood of a kid he himself was deceived, but whereas he had gone into exile, Joseph appeared to be torn to pieces. Poor Jacob tore his own clothes in anguish. He wore sackcloth and the tears of sorrow flowed in rivulets down the furrows which time, work and trouble had made in his cheeks. His was an irreparable loss, for Joseph had been his delight, the apple of his eye.

Joseph however was resolved to make the best of his plight. He had been taught and trained in the faith of his father and brought up in a large household, without doubt an apt and precocious pupil. He must have suffered grief at being so rudely torn from father and home. That his brethren could do this to him must have shocked him out of his youthful complacency. In his heart was more affection for them than they had for him. His later forgiveness of their crime and his reunion with them is one of the classical scenes in Israel's story. His hopeful and lively temperament, coupled to his faith in God, enabled him to take the experience calmly. He believed in God's purpose, that he himself was destined to play a part in that purpose. His dreams were signs, unforgotten buoys which kept him afloat where another might have sunk in despair.

The versatile boy with the charming tongue, the readiness to work, the gift to organise, was probably in charge of the whole caravan long before it reached Egypt. By his ability and grace he no doubt made himself as indispensable to the Midianite who bought him as he did to Potiphar, to the prison governor, and last of all to Pharaoh when at thirty years of age he became the Grand Vizier of Egypt.

The story of Joseph's rise to power is too well known to be repeated although it is one of the most fascinating biographies ever written. God was with Joseph and made everything to prosper that he did, but if he had not had the faith and the natural talents, the knowledge, the patience and the will to assert himself, to remain true to his early training, God could not have used or prospered him. God works, but they of the faith must readily work with him or nothing can be achieved. When Potiphar's wife would have seduced him the very suggestion was to him wickedness, the action a sin against God, against her husband his master, and against himself.

Where a lesser man might have succumbed, the principle of righteousness held Joseph like a steel hawser. He went to prison because of it but he came out to rule Egypt, to wear the white linen and the gold ornaments, to carry the wand of authority, to wear Pharaoh's ring, to ride in the second chariot behind the monarch or to be conveyed about in a splendid litter while he supervised the crops, the canals and storehouses of the land.

He had the manners, looks and charm of a prince, which Jacob had recognised when he dressed him in that multicoloured coat. Moreover he was talented and educated. Where did he get that knowledge of organising, accounting and superintending an estate? He undoubtedly had it when he went down into Egypt. Is it possible he was tutored by an aged Eliezer of Damascus who lived long enough to fall for the charm of this engaging grandson of Rebekah whom he had brought on that long journey from Nahor? Eliezer was the steward *par excellence* whom Abraham had thought at one time to make his heir. Maybe to him Potiphar and Pharaoh owed something for the implicit trust they placed in Joseph's administration. Without the genius which made him so able a superintendent he would never have been in a position to succour the whole house of Jacob when the seven years famine dried up supplies.

That this was part of the purpose of his going into Egypt he easily recognised, when at last he met and embraced his beloved parent and established his brethren and their families in the land of Goshen. His dreams had not been the idle imaginings of an ambitious youth. They had been hints of his future. Jacob with a touching humility

acknowledged the lordship of his son, begging that he would take him back to Machpelah for his burial. "Bury me not I pray thee in Egypt." The strange rites of Egypt, their obsession with the land of the dead, must have been highly distasteful to Jacob. Circumstances had forced him into a land not his, a land he could not love, a land which would become a house of bondage to his future children, a land in which he felt even his bones could not rest in peace. He had the funeral of a King but not before his remains had undergone the Egyptian custom of embalming, a fashion unknown and repugnant to the pastoral tent-dwellers of the land of Canaan. Into the burial cave of Abraham went the elaborate Egyptian sarcophagus of Jacob, as very much later another such one was interred at Shechem containing the bones of Joseph which the children of Israel faithfully carried about with them in all their wilderness wanderings.

Joseph lived and died an Egyptian but at heart he was a Hebrew, Abraham's great-grandson, with confidence in the oath-clad promise of a land that God had sworn to give to the numerous seed of that great man of faith. Egypt was not that land; when the time came to go, Joseph, like Jacob, did not want even his bones to be left behind. Jacob had left Joseph all his property, part of which was a parcel of land at Shechem, and there nearly two hundred years later the faithful leaders laid him to rest in the land which God had given them. From first to last Joseph held fast to the faith which will yet bring him a reward greater than the plot of land at Shechem, a position even higher than that of the viceroy of Egypt.

To be continued.

Heroes and Saints

The Son of God did not come to earth to increase the number of heroes. but to raise up saints. Heroes are scarce; hardly one in a generation, or even in a century, is to be met with; Jesus Christ purposed to people the world with saints. Heroes dazzle us by the splendour of their astounding deeds; saints edify us by the example of their virtues. The world could do without heroes, they are not absolutely necessary; without saints, this world could not last, could not be preserved. Heroes have no successors, because they have no family to perpetuate them; they are raised up of God every time that He deems it right to give them a part to play in the world; they appear only to disappear, leaving behind

them neither heirs nor successors. Saints have a numerous posterity, which is propagated from generation to generation, and from age to age. In order that they may act, put forth their power, triumph and shine, heroes require a broad and lofty stage, where all can see them; in the humblest careers, in the obscurest positions, everywhere and always, saints can display their devotion and love; sustained by Divine grace they can serve God amidst all surroundings; thanks to the arrangements of Providence, opportunities for spending their strength and doing good are never wanting. Their fidelity is displayed as much, and perhaps even more, in little as in great things.

Author unknown, 1892.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Christ's Kingdom will be what all men need. At first it will rule with a rod of iron, breaking up civil, social and religious systems of tyranny and oppression putting down opposing authority and power; humbling the proud and high minded; and finally teaching the world to know that the Lord's Anointed has taken the dominion. Then the blessing of its peaceful reign will begin to be experienced, truth and equity established on a permanent footing; justice laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet (Isa. 28.17); and the restitution work will progress to its glorious consummation. There will be sweeping moral reforms, great educational and philanthropic enterprises, awakenings from death, and a grand reorganisation of society under the new order of the Kingdom of God. All the world's bitter experiences during the past will then prove valuable lessons on the sinfulness of sin; helping men to appreciate the new rule of righteousness, to live in everlasting conformity to the will of God and accept God's gift of everlasting life, designed for all who will receive it in love and loyal obedience to his commands. Then it will be true: "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22.17).

The educational reforms and instructions of the future will begin with the hearts of men, starting with the lesson, "*the fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (Prov. 9.10). One of the difficulties of present-day education, which tends to pride, arrogance, and discontent, is its lack of this elementary wisdom. Every work of grace under the regulation of the Kingdom will be properly begun and thoroughly accomplished. No creature of the redeemed race will be too low for Divine grace to reach, through the all-powerful and blessed agency of the Kingdom. No degradation of sin will be too deep for the hand of mercy to fathom; no darkness of ignorance or superstition will be so dense in any heart but that the light of Divine truth and love will penetrate its gloom and bring to it a knowledge of the joy and gladness of the new day, and an opportunity to share the same by obedience. No disease that can attack and pollute the physical system will be beyond the prompt control of the great Physician. And no deformity, monstrosity, redundancy, or mental imbecility will be able to resist his healing touch.

The work of restitution, thus begun on the living nations, will extend to the sleeping families of the earth; for the hour is coming, yea, is not far distant, when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; when death and hell (*hades*, the grave) shall give up the dead which are in them; and the sea shall give up its dead (John 5.28, 29; Rev. 20.13).

What a glorious prospect the new Dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent but this change will be the most eventful of all. "Close your eyes for a moment to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that yet prevail on account of sin, and picture before your mental vision the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought, not an unkind look or word; love, welling up from every heart, meets a kindred response in every other heart, and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more; not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay—not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen, and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears all wiped away, when thus they realise the resurrection work complete."

No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle—of a whole race returning to God with songs of praise and everlasting joy upon their heads—should seem almost too good to believe; but He who has promised is able also to perform all his good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet "sorrow and sighing shall flee away"; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the morning; all tears shall be wiped from all faces; beauty shall be given for ashes; the oil of joy shall replace the spirit of heaviness and the whole earth shall be at rest (Isa. 14.7).

(*"Peoples Paper" Melbourne*).

THE LONGEVITY OF THE ANCIENTS

One of the stock arguments used to discredit the historical accuracy of the Bible is the (apparently) inordinate length of life ascribed to so many in the early ages between Creation and the time of Abraham. Before the Flood men are asserted to have lived for varying periods between 777 and 969 years. After the Flood length of life suddenly dropped, but even so it started at 600 for Shem the son of Noah, decreasing steadily to Abraham at 175 and Isaac at 180 twelve centuries later. In another six hundred years it was down to 120 and six centuries after that to an average of 64.

Several theories have been advanced to explain the origin of these apparently fantastic figures, all based on the assumption that because men do not live to such great ages nowadays, they cannot possibly be true. One such suggests that each of these alleged patriarchs is in reality the name of a "dynasty", ruling for the stated number of years and then giving place to its successor. Thus the "Adam" dynasty ruled for 230 years and gave place to the "Seth" dynasty, an unstated number of generations later. The theory does not attempt to say what happened to the rest of the "Adam" dynasty during the remainder of its 930 years. It ignores the fact that the relevant passages (Gen. 5 and 11) are not lists of ancient kings ruling over thousands of subjects, but are presented as genealogical tables of individual men, father to son, in one definite line, the line leading from Adam to Christ. They are men, moreover, the earliest of whom lived in a primitive state of human society when community populations were very small and there were no kings. It also ignores the impossibility of deciding where, on the sliding and decreasing scale of life-spans incorporating agreed and obviously historical characters, the "dynasty" system ends and the "historic" one begins.

Another theory is that the unit of time designated "years" in early Genesis is not the solar year but a much shorter period. Like the previous one, this is a hypothesis invented to explain away the facts. The basic units of time, the day and the year, are stated in the first chapter of Genesis, (Gen. 1.14) and the secondary units, the week and the month, are inferred. Had the writer intended to give the ages of the patriarchs in months, which would have brought them more in line with modern experience, he would have said so. All life-spans indicated in the Old Testament are stated in years; there is no evidence that in any of them, from Adam at 930 to Darius the

Mede at 62, is the year intended to be anything other than the normal solar year. Here again, with the descending scale of years as the time goes on, it would be impossible to discern where "years" ceased to mean "months" and commenced to mean "years". It would also involve the absurdity of the post-diluvian patriarchs becoming fathers at the tender age of ten years or so—in the case of Terah at six years!

Another and singularly ill-informed hypothesis is that the original writer of Genesis, or some later editor, lengthened the recorded lives of the early patriarchs to bring them more into conformity with the long lives accredited by other ancient nations—Egypt, Sumer, etc.—to their own archaic forebears. It seems not to have occurred to the exponents of this explanation that if most of the ancient nations preserved this tradition—as in fact they did—it might well be because it was the fact of the matter. In any case the most cursory knowledge of the attitude of the Israelites to other nations is sufficient to dispel this suggestion. The patriotic and God-fearing Israelite did not care a jot for other nations and their histories. To him the Jew, and before him the son of Israel, was the chosen of God and his nation superior to all upon earth; others were outside the pale, their gods were false gods, and their writings valueless. The last thing an Israelite editor would want to do was alter or edit his sacred writings to conform to alien records—even though in much later days they did not scruple to tamper with them to nullify certain statements claimed to point to Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's promised Messiah.

The logical conclusion therefore is that the long life-spans of the ante-diluvian and post-diluvian patriarchs recorded in Gen. 5 and 11, and the still above-normal ones characteristic of Bible history up to the time of Jacob, when life spans of 175, 180, 147 and so on are found, are deliberately and knowledgeably set down and intended to be taken at face value. It remains therefore to examine any relevant data that can be assembled in order both to demonstrate the fact and adduce some reasonable suggestions how or why it was that men did live such long lives at the beginning and why they have declined so greatly over the years to the present proverbial three-score and ten.

The testimony of Josephus can be introduced at this point. He had the advantage of living two thousand years nearer to the events concerned and moreover was able to consult ancient writers

from before his own day whose records have now perished or can be recovered in part only by occasional quotations in later works. On this subject he says, in his *"Antiquities of the Jews"*, "Let no one, on comparing the lives of the ancients with our lives, and with the few years which we now live, think that what we have said of them is false: or make the shortness of our lives at present an argument that neither did they attain to so long a duration of life; for these ancients were beloved of God, and lately made by God himself; and because their food was then fitter for the prolongation of life, might well live so great a number of years; and besides, God afforded them a longer time of life on account of their virtues, and the good use they made of it in astronomical and geometrical discoveries Now I have for witnesses to what I have said, all those that have written Antiquities, both among the Greeks and barbarians; for even Manetho, who wrote the Egyptian history, and Berossus, who collected the Chaldean monuments, and Mochus, and Hestieus, and besides these, Hieronymus the Egyptian, and those who composed the Phoenician history, agree to what I say: Hesiod also, and Hecataeus, Hellanicus, and Acusilaus, and besides these, Ephorus and Nicolaus, relate that the ancients lived a thousand years: but as to these matters, let every one think upon them as they think fit" (Ant. 1.3.9). Josephus himself, of course, accepted the long lives in Genesis as literally intended and he quotes these historians of other nations by way of supporting evidence. Because most of these writings have perished it is not possible to check his references in detail, but that such statements were made by so many is conclusive testimony that the Bible is by no means alone in preserving the recollection of excessively long lives in ancient times.

Something rather more definite can be gleaned from the inscriptions and paintings in the old tombs of Egypt. Many of these contain accounts of the lives of the deceased with details of the successive Pharaohs under whom they served and from these it is possible to form some idea of their life-spans. Thus we have the case of one Ptah-Shepses, born in the reign of Menkaura, fourth Pharaoh of the 4th dynasty, who was still alive at the end of the 5th dynasty, about 2500-2300 B.C., roughly contemporary with the patriarch Serug (Gen. 11.20). This means that Ptah-Shepses lived more than 225 years as compared with Serug's 330. Then there is the Prince Sekhemkura, a high court official who served five successive Pharaohs in the 4th and 5th dynasties and when last heard of was still going strong at an age of at least 160. A little later we find Pharaoh Pepi II of the 6th dynasty, in the early days of

Terah father of Abraham, reigning for 96 years and by all indications having had to wait nearly a century before succeeding his father, so that his almost 200 years matches up very well with Terah's 205. Then there is the sad case of Crown Prince Ptah-Hotep of the 12th dynasty, about the time of Isaac, as recorded on a papyrus written by himself and now in safe custody in Paris. The unfortunate Ptah-Hotep complains bitterly that he is already 110 years old and his father is still reigning as Pharaoh and shows no sign as yet of vacating the position. His worthy—and hardy—sire must therefore have been well on to completing his second century at a time when his contemporary Isaac lived 180 years. About sixty years before the birth of Moses the Egyptian world saw the advent of Ahmose el Kab, a lusty infant who at fifty years of age became Admiral of the Egyptian Navy and served with distinction nearly every Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty, was still on active service at 110, and died at about 130 just before Moses came back from Midian to organise the Exodus. Amram, father of Moses, born within a few years of Ahmose, died at 137. Finally comes Amen-Hotep the son of Hapu, philosopher and leading statesman under Pharaoh Amen-Hetep III, the reigning Pharaoh when Israel entered Canaan under Joshua. Amen-Hotep must have been born within ten years or so of Joshua; they both died at 110 years of age.

This remarkable coincidence of life-spans between Bible patriarchs and their Egyptian contemporaries, each recorded without the knowledge of the other, is of itself strong corroborative evidence of the accuracy of Genesis in this respect.

The other great civilisations connected with Israel throughout its history, the Sumerian/Assyrian/Babylonian, might well have been expected to contribute some reliable data in view of their proclivity for recording everything they did on imperishable clay tablets, but unfortunately, unlike the Egyptian tomb inscriptions which, once executed, remained for all time to be deciphered by modern archaeologists, the constant copying and recopying of the ancient Sumerian records has introduced elements of uncertainty. Main sources of information are the writings, in Greek, of Berossus, a Babylonian priest of the 3rd B.C. century, and certain chronological tablets of about 1700 B.C. but in both cases it is evident that the values of the time periods have suffered in transmission. The one fact which does stand out clearly is that the pre-Flood life-spans are represented as enormously long compared with the present, and that the post-Flood life-spans, considerably less than before the Flood, are nevertheless much greater than normal, up to a time which can be equated with a few

centuries before Abraham. There is therefore the same tradition, of unusually long lives in ancient times, preserved in the Babylonian records.

Much more reliable evidence in this field is provided by the famous anthropologist, Sir Arthur Keith, who examined a number of skulls of early Sumerians of the "Al-Ubaid" period—about the time of the death of Arphaxad son of Shem—brought from near Ur of the Chaldees by Sir Leonard Woolley in the early part of this century. The conclusion expressed by Sir Arthur, based on the degree of wearing down of the teeth and other signs, was that the people to whom these skulls belonged must have lived lives of enormous length compared with the normal life-span of today, and much longer than the later Sumerians of the time of Abraham.

Even in modern times cases of unusual longevity are not unknown. The 17th century in England seems to have been notable in this respect. A celebrated character of his time, Old Parr, died in 1635 aged 150, having sired his last child at 120. Ten years earlier Katherine Fitzgerald died at 162, and in 1621 Ivan Yorath of Llanmair, Glamorgan, died aged 156. In 1668 it was the turn of Elizabeth Yorath at 177 years and a year later Henry Jenkins, of Bolton-on-Swale, Yorks, at 169. The redoubtable Henry had followed his calling as a fisherman for no less than 140 years. In the same year Thomas Newman of Bristol died at 153.

At the present time two areas in the world are unique for the longevity of their inhabitants. One, only recently brought to notice and visited by anthropologists, is a village in Ecuador called Vilcabamba, lying in a secluded valley more or less remote from its neighbours. Descendants of 16th century Spanish invaders, the 5000 population look upon the attainment of a century as the normal thing; in 1973 the oldest inhabitants were 123 and 142 respectively and still hale and hearty. The other, and more remarkable case, is in the Russian Caucasus, where a considerable number live well beyond a century. Ages up to 130 or 140 are by no means exceptional; in 1967 there were nearly 600 Russians aged between 120 and 156. In 1971 the oldest living man in Russia, Shirah Mislimer, had attained the age of 166 years. Experts have not discovered any explanation for this unusual state of affairs, and it is not possible to say whether these cases are due to the same cause as with the more consistent and long-term longevity of the ancients.

One peculiarity of the range of life-spans given in the Old Testament is that the rate of decrease from the Flood to the period of the Kings is not regular; it progresses in a series of distinct steps. Life before the Flood was fairly constant; from Adam to Noah all the deaths save one came with-

in the range 895/969, with an average of 930. After that, we have Step 1 comprising Shem at 600 with four successors between 460/565; step 2, Peleg, Reu, Serug between 330/339; step 3, Nahor to Moses, comprising five patriarchs to Jacob, eighteen other Bible characters and four Egyptians, at a general level of 130/180 except the first two who attained just over 200. Step 4 covers the period of the Judges where the few whose ages are stated or can be inferred averaged 100, and step 5 that of the Kings where those who died natural deaths did so between 40/90, with an average of 64. Applying this to the scale of Bible chronology it means that at five points of time there occurred a relatively sudden fall in the normal span of human life, which continued then at the new level for a number of centuries until the next fall. The generally accepted idea of a progressive shortening of human life due to decreasing vitality, consequent on human imperfection and the ravages of disease, from the time of the Fall onward, would account for a steady rate of decrease but not this system of "steps", which must be due to some other underlying cause.

From the nature of the problem the determination of that cause can only rest on conjecture. There is however one remarkable correspondence which may not be without significance. S. F. Markham, in *"Climate and the Energy of Nations"* (1942), showed that all the great civilisations of world history had their rise and span of prosperity during periods of exceptionally good climatic conditions in their own parts of the world. Markham, of course, related his findings to general world history and made no investigation into Biblical history or records. But it occurred to the writer of these notes to investigate climatic conditions in Old Testament times and any relation that might exist between climate and Biblically recorded lengths of life. Four authoritative works were consulted; C. E. P. Brooks, *"Climate through the Ages"*, 1970, and *"Climatic Changes since the Ice Age"*, 1931; H. H. Lamb, *"The Changing Climate"*, 1966, and G. R. Rumney, *"Climatology"*, 1968. From these authorities a comprehensive picture of world climate in ancient times was obtained; much of the most useful information came from Brooks, who is usually considered the present century's leading climatologist. From all this it would appear that the warm and genial climate of what in the Bible is the ante-diluvian era came to an end about 3000 B.C. (death of Noah) with a sudden climatic change which commenced a progressive deterioration of world climate, continuing for three millennia. For the next four centuries the weather was cold and wet and there was a continuous abnormal volcanic activity. From then onwards there were four more distinct and sudden climatic

changes each rendering the general level of world climate more arduous for man than before. The significant thing in the present connection is that each of these sudden climatic changes coincides almost exactly—in each case within a century—with the dates of each “step” when the human life-span almost as suddenly dropped to lower levels.

For twenty-five centuries, from Noah to Daniel, the mean life-span of men in Bible history decreased, in five distinct steps, from 930 to 510, 335, 160, 100 and 64. These changes occurred at intervals of five, three, eight, four and five centuries. The climatic changes took place at the same intervals. It may be pure coincidence, albeit a quite remarkable one. It may, on the other hand, indicate some unsuspected relation between the natural forces which determine the outward conditions of our living and the span of years our weak and ailing human bodies under such conditions can keep death at bay. If so—and it would require the combined knowledge and learning of qualified climatologists and biologists together to say whether the hypothesis is soundly based—there may be more than a hint here that not only the Garden of the Genesis story, but also the very

climate of that world and that day, was directly planned by God to provide the normal terrestrial conditions for human continuous life. When Adam was told that if he sinned he would die, the implication was that if he did not sin he would never die. Had the Fall not taken place perhaps the climate would have remained genial as it was at the beginning. (Brooks says the “genial climate is normal for earth and that experienced since 3000 B.C. to be considered abnormal”.)

And if that be so one can imagine that when the Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is established upon earth and men come to him in devotion and loyalty, one of the characteristics of that glad day will be the restoration of the genial climate which Adam knew and which might well prove to be the normal condition ordained by God for the sons of men. That, of course, is another subject. For this present, the traditions of ancient nations, the independent testimony of Egyptian tomb inscriptions, and the possible relation between world climate and human longevity at any one period should provide a sufficiently reasonable basis for accepting the Biblical statements as to the ages of early man to mean exactly what they say.

A NOTE ON EXOD. 31. 17.

“In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and in the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed” (Exod. 31.17).

Taken as a statement of literal fact, this text poses a difficulty. It is impossible to think of the Creator needing to be “refreshed”, as though after the work of creating the earth He must needs recuperate his energy before attempting anything else. God is the source of all energy and cannot be deficient in any way. The Bible says as much in other places: *“The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary”* (Isa. 40.28). Here the word for “fainteth” means to be fatigued with flight—it is derived from the verb “to fly”—and “weary” means to be fatigued with labour.

The word for “rested” in this Exodus text and in Gen. 2.2-3 is *shabath*, which means, basically, a cessation.. This was the idea behind “sabbath”, a cessation of activity implying, in a human context, a time of rest. With man that does involve the idea of recuperation of energy, because man is not himself a source of energy. All that he expends in labour he must first take in from outside, through the medium of food and so on. It is not so with God, and therefore when the idea of “rest” is applied to God it carries the basic principle of cessation but not the secondary one of rest for recuperation. The word for “refreshed” is *naphesh* which is a grammatical form of *nephesh*, breath, soul, mind and is defined by

Gesenius as to take breath or to cease from working. It is probably best expressed by a modern colloquialism, “to take a breather”. The Lord spent “six days” exerting creative energy in respect to this planet—perhaps this universe—culminating with the creation of man. He then ceased that active creative phase and, as it were, “sat back” for a space whilst the drama of human self-will and the struggle with evil is played out on the stage He had set. A little later on that drama will be complete and mankind will have entered upon their eternal inheritance. Then, perhaps, God will resume creative activity in some other sphere. There may be valid reasons, beyond our finite comprehension, why such possible future creations must wait until sin and evil, which intruded into God’s realm at the beginning of man’s history, have been eliminated from that realm and all men are reconciled to God, and Christ is ALL in ALL.

Gone from us

—:—

Sis. M. E. Clifford (*Hailsham*)

Bro. J. E. Davison (*Newcastle*)

Bro. G. Pollock (*Gravesend*)

Sis. J. Robinson (*Seaton*)

—:—

“Till the day break, and the shadows flee away”

FOUR PICTURES

A Discourse

The Apostle Peter's words in the first five verses of the second chapter of his First Epistle enshrine four distinct pictures of the new life in Christ. The idea of this new life is introduced by the Apostle in the previous chapter, verses 3 and 23, where he says that we were *"begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus"* and *"born again by the Word of God"*. The pictures are progressive, the first dealing with the laying aside of the things belonging to the old life, like discarded clothing, the second the individual growth and development of the new life, the third dealing with our corporate life in Christ and the fourth with our mission of service and sacrifice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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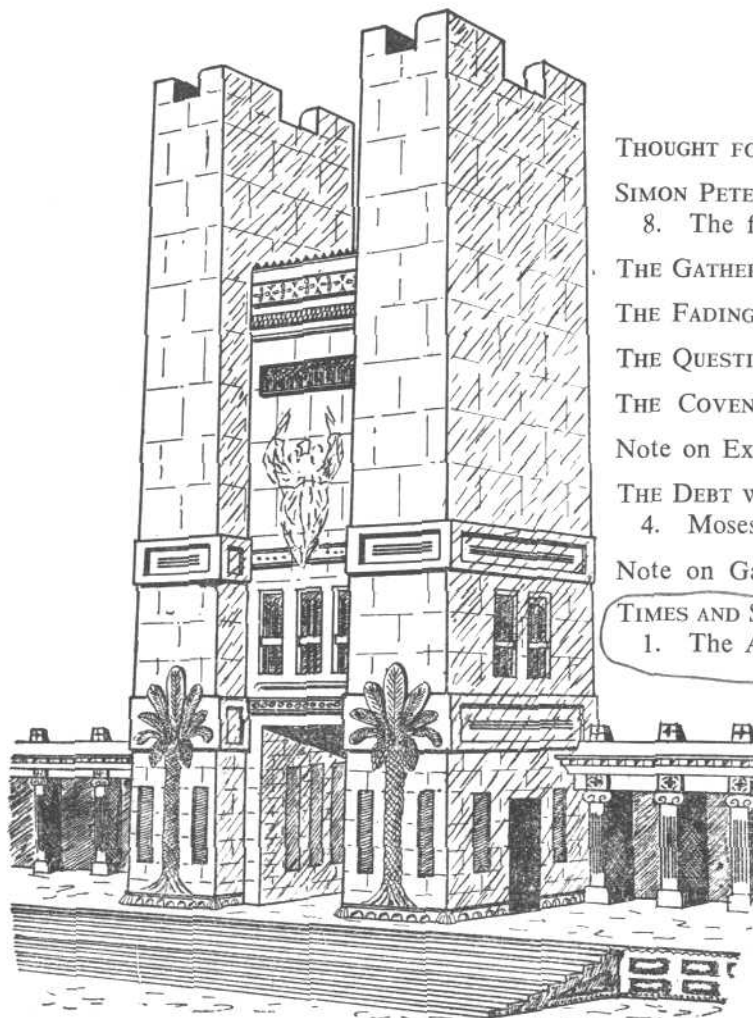
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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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Thought for the Month

"This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (I Cor. 11:24).

He has been remembered ever since. Considering that Jesus of Nazareth was born in an obscure village in a remote eastern province of the Roman Empire two thousand years ago, never travelled more than a hundred miles from his birthplace, never wrote a book, and was in the public eye only three and a half years before an ignominious death, it might be thought a remarkable thing that He has ever been remembered at all. Other men of his day are remembered; Nero the bloodthirsty emperor, Vespasian the successful soldier, Cicero the impassioned orator, Tacitus the sober historian, Strabo the meticulous geographer. But these men are remembered for what they have done or what they have written; Jesus is remembered for what He was—and is! The power and influence of each of these men ceased with his death; that of Jesus in a very real sense began with his. The empire of Rome has long since given place to other empires built by other men; history has outrun Tacitus; the geography of Strabo is sadly out of date. But all that Jesus said lives on, in the hearts and minds of men in this generation as it has done in every generation since He lived. And the power that He promised to send from above to vitalise the hearts and hands of all who give themselves to him and his service has been manifested in the many and varied fruits of Christianity in the world of men. Whether it is the knowledge of God's Plan for humankind imparting a clear and heartening vision of the world to come, or the energy and determination which leads to service and self-sacrifice and caring for the suffering, the deprived and the hopeless, all are evidences that He is

remembered and what has been done is in remembrance of him.

There is a deeper aspect of this remembrance. It is to be *"as oft as ye drink it"*. Those few men gathered around that table in the upper room had just shared with their Lord in the drinking from a common cup. In that action they pledged themselves to eternal association with their Lord in whatever He stood for and whatever He did. In a figurative sense they were to be crucified with him and rise again from the dead with him to a new life. In sober truth every one, of whatever generation or time, who yields self in dedication of life to Christ has become God's man, consecrated to his eternal purpose, for all time. The day has yet to come when the active expression of that purpose so far as the human race is concerned is to come into operation; the Second Coming of Christ will signal the commencement of a work of God in the world which will abolish evil and institute everlasting peace. Every true follower of Christ is to be associated with him in the execution of that work. In the meantime those followers must needs remember all this, continue figuratively to drink that Cup with him and constantly affirm their intent of faithful association with him. At this time of year it is more than usually appropriate to think of these things, and, perhaps, to meet together in the significant ritual of sharing the cup, reminding each participant of the transcendent truth which lies behind the action. In partaking of the broken bread, and drinking from the communal cup, there is being manifested not only the depth and sincerity of personal dedication to Christ, but also a witness to the veracity of his own promise: *"I will come again"*.

SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

8. The first Christian fellowship Acts 5.

They came, in a long line extending to the end of the spacious room, one by one stepping up to the waiting Apostles and depositing their gifts of money in the large earthenware vessel standing there on the floor. The room was filled with singing, songs of praise ascending on high to God, interrupted by an occasional pause whilst some one or another in the assembly raised his voice in impassioned prayer. This was a meeting of the church, a meeting characterised by all the fresh zeal and enthusiasm of the newly converted. The mood was one of jubilation at the outcome of the abortive Sanhedrin trial of Peter and John; with this evidence that the power of Christ from beyond the grave was working on their behalf and preparing the way for the mission of evangelisation which was their privilege, the brethren had come together in this spontaneous exhibition of fraternal love and whole-hearted dedication to Divine service. None of them now looked upon what they possessed of this world's goods as for their personal enjoyment; all was held as a stewardship from God to be used for the welfare of the believers and for the promulgation of the Gospel. So the needs of each became the concern of the many; they sold houses and lands and possessions of all kinds, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need. In the prevalent atmosphere of expectation that their resurrected Lord would very soon be with them again to establish his promised kingdom of righteousness—and with the recollection, no doubt, of his predictions concerning the very imminent destruction of Jerusalem and disruption of the nation — they must have felt that houses and lands were best disposed of and the proceeds put to immediate good use in promoting the interests of the coming Kingdom. So they sang their praises and intoned their prayers, the while those who had somewhat to contribute waited their turn to appear before Peter and the others and proffer their gifts.

Heads were turned; eyes followed a stalwart figure who strode through the doorway and attached himself to the end of the line. Barnabas of Cyprus had become a well-known and much loved character during these past weeks. Visiting Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, he had become a convinced believer in Christ at the very first preaching and had very quickly manifested the depth and sincerity of his new-found allegiance to Christ. A comparatively prosperous

farmer, he had decided to throw in his lot with the disciples and devote his life to the proclamation of the faith he had espoused; he had sold his farm and now appeared in the midst of the assembly to hand over the proceeds to be added to the gifts already given. In after days Barnabas was to be used mightily in the work of the Gospel, first at Jerusalem, then at Antioch, and in later times as a missionary to the wider world. For the present he was content to offer his gift and take his place among the rest of the brethren assembled.

Another stir at the doorway as a second newcomer entered. Ananias, and his wife Sapphira, were relatively new converts and not yet well known to the brethren in general but they had participated in all that was being done and had been received into full fellowship. Now Ananias came forward, looking to left and right as he did so, carrying a small bag of money which he swung carelessly so that all could see it. As Barnabas stepped aside, Ananias proffered his bag to Peter; "we got this for the land we sold. Take it for the Cause" he said in a voice loud enough to be heard by the assembly. Peter's warm, friendly eyes suddenly clouded over and became sombre. "Ananias", he responded in a voice that was infinitely reproachful and infinitely sad "*why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? After it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God!*"

The singing had stopped; dead silence reigned in the room. Ananias, the complacent smile suddenly gone, stood ashen-faced. Peter knew! Peter had seen through his subterfuge. He had done what he had done in order to gain glory from his fellows for an act of self-sacrifice whilst retaining some of the money for his own use and he had not thought anyone would ever know anything about it. But Peter had known! How could he have known? Suddenly the shattering realisation came. Of course, God knew! There was a reality about God that he had not fully understood or believed but now it came to him that his petty deceit had been open to the eyes of God all the time. He felt the eyes of the assembly upon him, accusing eyes, wondering eyes, curious eyes, and he looked up in desperation to the group of apostles before him, all with faces turned towards Peter awaiting such action as he must feel com-

pelled to take. He saw Peter's eyes too, shadowed, sad, considering. Like Moses, thought Ananias, about to pass judgment upon some man of Israel who had transgressed the covenant; he suddenly remembered Achan who had committed much the same kind of deceit that he had himself and had brought defilement upon Israel in consequence. Now he himself had brought defilement upon the assembly which had received him as a brother. He was guilty as had been Achan and merited the same punishment; with a strangled cry he sank to the ground, lying there a crumpled heap.

One of the apostles took three quick steps and knelt down beside the recumbent body. A quick examination, and he looked up to Peter, watching. "Dead!" he exclaimed. Peter's face was serious. "It is of the Lord" he said gravely. "Our brother erred, but his judgment has been taken out of our hands. He is in the care of the Righteous Judge".

It must have come as a shock to Peter to realise that there could be enemies within the circle of the faithful as well as outside. The animosity of the priests and Pharisees, the hostility of the people, all this he was prepared for and ready to combat. The outcome of his recent appearance before the Sanhedrin had given him confidence that by the name of Jesus and faith in his Divine power there was no external enemy that could harm them. So far as that factor was concerned he could expect the work of the Gospel to continue without let or hindrance. But now he became suddenly conscious of a new and more insidious enemy, the traitor from within. The evangelical power engendered by the sincerity and whole-hearted dedication of the disciples could easily be sullied and weakened by treason among their own number; perhaps for the first time Peter realised that he must henceforth be prepared to fight a battle on two fronts.

It is noteworthy that he did not condemn Ananias. He pointed out the gravity of his offence; the man's death was not brought about by Peter; its cause must be sought in other fields. The witnesses would take the view that it was a Divine judgment, a visitation from God; according to Acts a most salutary impression was created. It is probable that everyone who had been there or heard about it was a little more careful from then on.

It would seem that the meeting continued, albeit almost certainly on a more subdued note. The tragedy which had occurred in their midst must have made them all much more conscious of the gravity of their position before God. They had been called to a standard higher than that of the world around them, a standard which made

no allowance for divided loyalties or the service of two masters. Their service was to God and God alone; He required absolute sincerity and complete dedication of life and talents and possessions—all. Even though that life and those talents and possessions were handed back to the offerer to be used as a stewardship, the fact still remained that all belonged to God. Some of them began to realise the principle that underlay Peter's words. Ananias had every right to apportion his money in whatever fashion seemed good to him in the exercise of such a stewardship; it was the element of insincerity, of deception, of hypocrisy, which was obnoxious in the sight of God.

Three hours later, the assembly still in session, Sapphira walked in, knowing nothing of what had happened. Peter's words to her have been branded as callous and brutal, but this may be doing the Apostle an injustice. The printed page cannot convey the tone in which the words were spoken nor the attitude of the speaker; in this instance they may well have been uttered in tones of deep sorrow and sadness. First of all Peter gave her the opportunity to confess the truth about the unhappy matter, to put herself right with God, but she, not aware that Peter already knew the truth, adhered to the story upon which she and her husband had agreed. It might well have been that at this point Peter, by the inward inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the possession of which he manifested in a number of incidents in his life, knew within himself what the outcome of this matter was going to be, and so uttered the fateful words which both told the unfortunate woman of the untimely death of her husband and also predicted her own. "*Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.*" It is much more likely that the words were uttered sadly, and with gentleness, than brusquely and with severity. Peter must have been bitterly grieved at this, the first example of sub-normal Christian behaviour amongst the faithful; in later days he would become more accustomed to such things, but now, in the first flush of exhilaration at the rapid growth of the Church and the spontaneous sincerity of its fellowship, it must have been a bitter blow to find that even here the evils of the outside world could find lodgment. It is much more likely that he spoke in sorrow and not in anger.

But the mood passed; there was much to do and the crowds outside were pressing. "*Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.*" The miracles of healing continued; the physical absence of Jesus made no difference to that. Whenever and wherever Peter passed down the street he found the sick, the

crippled, the lame, on beds and couches, waiting in the hope that at least his shadow might fall on them as he passed. From the villages around Jerusalem came people bringing their sick for his ministrations, and the victims of demon obsession in the hope of freedom; *"and they were healed every one"*. There can be no doubt that each and every act of healing was accompanied by an exposition of the good news of the coming Kingdom, of the fulfilment of all that the prophets had spoken concerning the future Messianic era when all men, the least to the greatest, will hear the gracious message of the goodness of God in Christ, and be exhorted to believe on him, and believing, be saved. Repeatedly did the Apostles reiterate the basis of their message and the power behind all that they were doing: *"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses"*.

Eventually the priestly party could take no more. Their first clash with Peter and John had left them defeated, but resentful. They were compelled to stand by helplessly and see all the nation going after these men and they could not tolerate the situation. Perhaps they began to reason that their forefathers had frequently put the prophets of God to death and apparently not suffered vengeance from above. Perhaps they themselves had not been sufficiently resolute on the last occasion and the situation had got out of hand accordingly. In all probability it was in sheer desperation that they arrested, not merely Peter and John as on the previous occasion, but all the apostles, and locked them up in prison for the night pending an arraignment before the Sanhedrin in the morning. The captain of the guard returned to report that all instructions had been duly carried out, and for the first time for quite a while the high priest and his supporters enjoyed a good night's sleep.

Came the morning and with it the Sanhedrin assembled in formal session, Sadducees on one side and Pharisees on the other, the high priest presiding. When all was ready, the captain of the Temple guard was ordered to produce the prisoners. There ensued an unexpected and unexplained delay; after a while an officer appeared in the entry and beckoned urgently to the captain of the guard. There ensued a whispered colloquy which only served to increase the impatience of Annas, waiting to commence the proceedings. At length the unhappy captain, red of face, returned to inform the high priest that upon going to the prison and finding everything safely locked and in order with the jailers duly standing guard before the doors, his men had most unaccountably and inexplicably found no one inside. The news was received in shocked silence; it was not customary for the high priest's prisoners to get

out so easily and there were muttered doubts as to what the outcome of this situation was going to be. *"When the chief priests heard these things they doubted of them whereunto this would grow."* The Sadducees, who believed in nothing supernatural, looked to Annas, himself a Sadducee, for a rational explanation of this unexpected contretemps, but amongst the Pharisees, the conservatives who believed in all that the Old Testament recorded, there was whispering and head-shaking. Suppose that the angel of the Lord had gone to that prison in the dead of night, opened the doors and set these men free? Few among them would deny the possibility of such a happening, if that was God's will. And if so, what an item on the credit side of their continual antagonism to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the existence of angels! The Pharisees settled themselves comfortably on their benches to see how their old enemy Annas was going to get out of this one.

That worthy was reprieved at the last minute. One of the busybodies who are always to be found haunting the courts of authority came bustling in to tell anyone who would listen that the men they had put in prison were at that moment standing in the Temple teaching the people. Anxious to retrieve his somewhat tarnished reputation, the captain of the guard was off like a shot with his officers, to essay another attempt at the apprehension of these singularly elusive offenders. Being by virtue of his calling and social level a little more in touch with the general public than were his superiors, he realised that discretion would assuredly be the better part of valour in the somewhat ticklish business of taking the party of apostles away from the people who idolised them. He had been in Temple riots before. Moreover he was probably not quite sure what other-worldly power the apostles might possess wherewith to resist arrest. That matter of their escape from prison without opening the doors still rankled in his mind. And no matter what his Sadducee superiors might say about the mythical nature of Old Testament history, he was painfully conscious of the story of the old prophet Elijah and what he was said to have done to two parties of fifty sent by the king of that day to arrest him. The more he thought about it the more he felt the matter should be approached in a spirit of sweet reasonableness. It was a greatly relieved captain of the guard, therefore, who found that the men he sought were perfectly prepared to accompany him, on an entirely voluntary basis, to the presence of the high priest!

Annas was annoyed and he was frightened. It is obvious that he felt he was losing command of the situation. The uncomfortable fact that they

had escaped from his prison and then walked into his presence of their own free will had done nothing to improve his confidence. His opening words are not an accusation; they are a complaint, and a weak complaint at that. *"Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."* Considering that he and his, not many weeks previously, had incited the mob to cry *"His blood be upon us and upon our children"* Annas was, on the most charitable view possible, a bit forgetful. He also pretended to forget that when he imposed the prohibition Peter had flatly defied him and he had been powerless to do anything about it. This second arraignment was a policy of desperation, with no real belief that it could produce results. Annas knew it, and Peter knew it.

Apparently all the apostles had their say. Probably Peter, as usual, took the lead and said the most. The joint answer was forthright. *"We ought to obey God rather than men."* The Apostle again accused them of their sin; *"the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew"*. Finally, they the apostles were his witnesses and they had no intention of abandoning their preaching and their work.

Once again the Sanhedrin faced a condition of stalemate. The expression in the A.V. *"they were cut to the heart"* means literally that they were rent with vexation. It is evident that the apostles had been sent out of the council chamber at this point while their judges deliberated on the action to be taken. The only apparent solution was to find ways and means to encompass the deaths of these obstinate and resolute men. But at this point a new voice was raised in the council, that of Gamaliel.

Gamaliel is famous in Jewish history outside the New Testament. He was a Pharisee, grandson of the even more famous Hillel, and himself greatly respected for his wisdom, learning, and

knowledge of the Law. The Apostle Paul received his early training under Gamaliel (Acts 22.3). Thirty-five years later, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Titus and the nation scattered, Gamaliel was one of those active in re-establishing the Sanhedrin at Jamnia and become its President. At this present time his opinions were sought and respected by both Pharisees and Sadducees, and when he intervened in this dilemma his words received marked attention.

Gamaliel counselled moderation. He reminded his hearers that there had been men in times past who had put themselves forward as the nation's deliverers and gathered followers, and had come to naught. Theudas, he said, had gathered a band of four hundred rebels but he was slain and his followers dispersed. Judas of Galilee had risen up and collected a band of adherents and met the same fate. *"And now I say unto you"* he went on *"refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."*

Whatever may have been the personal feelings of Annas, the majority of the Sanhedrin agreed with Gamaliel. It was the second ignominious retreat of the rulers of Israel from the determination of Peter and John. The Apostles were recalled to the council chamber and told of the decision; but Annas had them flogged as a mark of his displeasure. Then, weakly, *"they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus"*, knowing all the time that they would ignore the prohibition as they had done before, *"and let them go"*.

"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ".

To be continued.

NOTICES

Warrington Convention Friends at Warrington announce an Easter convention for three days, Sat-Sun-Mon April 17-18-19, in the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington. Details and programmes from F. B. Quennell, 21 Summerville Gardens, Grappenhall, Warrington, WA4 2EG, Lancs.

The Memorial The date for the Memorial service this year will be the evening of Tuesday, April 13.

Renewals If there is a pink "renewal notice" enclosed with this issue please endeavour to return it promptly stating your wishes for continuance. This helps our routine work very considerably.

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

Blood is thicker than water, says our familiar adage. Surely grace should be stronger than nature and should lead us to love our brethren in Christ, not in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth.

THE GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

Saints are referred to throughout the Old Testament and the New, but there is no simple definition of a saint. One dictionary defines a saint as "one holy, canonised or officially recognised by the Church as having won, by exceptional holiness, a high place in heaven and veneration on earth," but this is too narrow. Another puts it, "a holy person, one eminent in virtue, an Israelite, a Christian, one of the blessed dead, or an angel." Consideration of the use of the word "saint" in the Scriptures reveals the same rather wide range of application. The earliest reference to the saints, in Deut. 33.2, associates them with the presence of God on earth accompanied by fire. In Daniel 7.9-10 the Ancient of Days is seen seated upon his throne, which was like the fiery flame and its wheels as burning fire, and a fiery stream came forth before him; thousand and thousands ministered with him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. These are identified as saints or holy ones. In Zech. 14.4-5 all the saints accompany Jehovah as he stands on the Mount of Olives as a great earthquake divides the mountain. Here they are identified as angels. Saints are referred to in Job. 5.1 and 15.15, and in other renderings they are holy ones or holy angels, and it is reasonable to suppose that angels are referred to here. In Daniel 7.18, 22 and 27 reference is made to the saints of the Most High. Other translations use the word "saints" except Rotherham, who describes them as the holy ones of the highest places, so it is a matter of speculation as to who are referred to here.

Saints are referred to in 2 Chron. 6.41 where Solomon prays "*Let thy priests, O God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness*". In 2 Sam. 2.9 we read that God will keep the feet of his saints. Other translations describe these variously as worshippers, pious servants, his loving ones, or men of loving kindness. This brings a new element into our consideration, because in these passages we become aware of a word which is described as one of the great words of Old Testament vocabulary. It is the Hebrew *chesed* and means steadfast love, but in many instances it is translated "mercy". So these saints are those who are set apart as steadfast and loyal. This is seen again in Psalm 4.3 which states that Jehovah has set apart "him that is godly" for himself. Here the word is *chasid*, which is connected with "steadfast love", and is said to mean "one who shows devotion to God". Such are

those referred to in Psalms 50.5 and 116.15, and in modern translations are also described as pious ones, devoted ones, loving ones, or men of loving kindness.

However, in Psalm 50.5 a particular section of the saints is referred to, inasmuch as they are described as having made a covenant by sacrifice. This can apply to Israelites because in Exodus 19 it is recorded that when God met Moses on Mount Sinai the message to Jacob and Israel was "*Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples*." And all the people answered together, and said, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." After this things become complicated inasmuch as a multiplicity of sacrifices appear (Num. chap. 28 and 29), but these sacrifices, enacted under the Mosaic law, deteriorated to such an extent that in Isaiah 1.11 God asks "*to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? I am full of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or lambs or he goats*." (see also Amos 5. 21-23 and Micah 6.6-7.)

It is pertinent to ask what had gone wrong. God gives the answer in Jer. 7.21-24 (Moffatt) "You can add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the flesh yourselves. When I brought your fathers from the land of Egypt I said nothing to them, I gave them no orders about burnt offerings or sacrifices; my orders were 'Listen to my voice and I will be your God, as you shall be my people; live exactly as I order that you may prosper!' But they would not listen, they would not lend an ear; they lived as their own evil, stubborn hearts prompted them, they grew worse instead of better." Their failure to listen is pin-pointed in the verse following those already noted in Micah 6.6-7. Verse 8 continues "He hath showed thee, O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice and love mercy (steadfast love) and walk humbly with thy God." To walk humbly means literally to live in quiet fellowship with, or to live secretly with, and this envisages a much deeper relationship than all the mere offering of sacrifices. So God says (Hosea 6.6) "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Here again mercy is rather steadfast love; so Phillips translates it, "It is true love I have wanted, not sacrifice."

Now how does all this apply to the saints of Psa. 50.5? While the condemnation of Israel, which we have noted, applies to the nation as a whole, there were those who remained faithful to their vows and they will get their reward (Ezek. 44. 15-16). Now let us turn our attention to the saints of the New Testament. Our Lord does not use the word, but we find references to the saints in the Pauline epistles and Revelation. Here they are variously described in other translations as God's people, God's own people, Christ's men and women, dedicated, consecrated, or set apart ones, faithful Christians. Here again we find the emphasis is on dedication, fidelity or steadfast love, as well as holiness.

However our subject is the GATHERING of the saints, so we have to refer to Matt. 24.31, which speaks of the gathering of the elect. But the question arises, are the saints and the elect the same beings? Here again we find that the term is applied to more than one class. There seems little doubt that Isa. 42.1 applies primarily to our Lord. "Behold mine servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Isa. 45.4 refers to "Jacob my servant and Israel mine elect". Isa. 65.9 reads "I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my holy mountain, and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there". These two passages would appear to divide the servants from the elect, but verse 22 says "for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands". Turning again to the New Testament, in 1 Tim. 5.21 we read of elect angels. In other translations these are chosen messengers, holy angels, or the angels who are chosen, so they may be earthly or heavenly beings. Let us not waste time arguing whether the elect are exclusively either heavenly or earthly beings, rather let us emphasise the fact that all the saints or elect ones are chosen by God to be in relationship with him on whatever plane He wills.

The characteristics of the elect are outlined in Col. 3.12 (T.E.V.). "You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. Therefore you must put on compassion, gentleness and patience, kindness and humility. Be helpful to one another and forgive one another. You must forgive each other in the same way that the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these add love, which binds all together in perfect unity." This is but an echo of our Lord's reply to the lawyer who asked "what are we to consider the law's greatest commandment?" (see also Gal. 5.14, James 2.8).

But it may be asked, how does this relate to the covenant made by sacrifice? We have already noted this warning in the condemnation of

natural Israel, because their sacrifice became meaningless, devoid of true love, and there is another grave warning implicit in the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 13.2. "*If I speak with the eloquence of men and angels, but have not love, I become no more than blaring brass or crashing cymbal. If I dispose of all that I possess, even if I give my own body to be burned, but have no love, I achieve precisely nothing*".

So we come to the final gathering of the saints or elect ones. Matt. 24.31 foretells that at his return the Lord will send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This is not another gathering apart from the one in Psa. 50.5, for as we noted, the term saints and elect ones do not apply to different beings. This being so the gathering of the saints is a much more comprehensive work than we are wont to think. Turning to Mark 13.27 we find a most important difference from the prophecy in Matt. 24.31. Here the angels are said to gather his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of the heavens. This is capable of different interpretations, and it may be asked "what about the myriads of angels who cannot be said to have made a covenant by sacrifice?" There is nothing in the Scriptures which limits this final gathering exclusively to the saints of this age. Old Testament prophecies foretell, as we have seen, that God will descend with myriads of angels (or saints). Zech. 14. 4 & 5 foretells the descent of God on the mount of Olives with all his saints (holy ones, saints or angels). This is the final gathering, planned before the world began. In Eph. 1.10-11 Paul tells us that God has made known to us the secret of his plan He had already decided to complete by means of Christ. God's plan, which He will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and earth, with Christ as head (T.E.V.).

The original covenant by sacrifice was made at Sinai, but Hebrews 12. 18-23 draws a remarkable contrast between this and Mount Zion. One writer first describes the scene when God met Moses and appeared before the children of Israel on Mount Sinai, when Moses said "I am trembling and aghast", but he continues, "You have not drawn near to such a mountain, but you stand before Mount Zion, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant". What a gathering! All drawn together by and with Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and this wonderful gathering is the prelude to the ultimate gathering of all things

both in heaven and upon earth under one Head, even Christ.

What a crescendo of praise will swell over the earth and in the heavens when the great cry goes up "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power and might, be

unto our God forever and ever". We long and pray for the gathering of the saints to be completed, so that the blessings of God's kingdom may flow out to this sin-stricken world, when the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

THE FADING LIGHT OF LAODICEA

A picture of the past

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

The reading finished and the little company sat silent, almost as if expecting the Master himself to come into their assembly. Thus had they sat, for more years now than some of them cared to remember, at each Memorial celebration, recollection going back over the years past, hopes rising as they thought of the future. That passage in the Book of Revelation had an especial significance for them and they read it every year at their Memorial service; always did it grip them with its solemn expectation of the Coming One. They were but a small company, meeting in a small house on the outskirts of the city, but they knew that when their Lord did come, He would come to them. The wealthy and fashionable congregation whose magnificent building was one of the sights of Laodicea would have none of him; they had ignored John's message and cast out the faithful few who reproved their increasing worldliness and carelessness in spiritual things, and so there were now two companies in Laodicea that claimed the name of Christ, but in only one of them that his voice was heard.

It had not always been thus. Although none of them were old enough to remember it, they all knew of the time when the Church at Laodicea had its humble beginning in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4. 15). He had been at Ephesus, eighty miles away, on business, and whilst there had heard the preaching of Paul the Apostle. *Jesus Christ, and him crucified! Repentance, remission of sins, justification by faith, consecration to God and holiness of life! Times of Restoration, life for all by a resurrection from the dead!* Nymphas had long sought the meaning of the sin and distress in the world; he was a business man and Laodicea was a business man's city; but he had sometimes gone the six miles across to Hierapolis (Col. 4.13) the holy city of the Greek Nature gods and goddesses, to seek inspiration and enlightenment, and as often returned home dissatisfied. But here was a message which satisfied his longings as nothing else

had ever done. It answered all his questions and fired his imagination; now he was agog to finish his business and get back home to Laodicea to tell his friends of the glorious news he had heard.

So it came about that he found himself on the great Roman road that, running inland from Ephesus across Asia, passed through Laodicea and Colosse on its way. He had companions, too, for at the Ephesus meetings he had met Philemon of Colosse and his son Archippus, and as they travelled back together the long road seemed but an hour's journey, so much there was to discuss, so much of recalling the words of the great Apostle and his no less fervent fellow labourers at Ephesus. Epaphras, already a tower of strength to the Ephesian church, had exhorted them to return to Ephesus and hear more of the words of life, and had promised to come to Laodicea and Colosse to help them with their converts and minister to them the things of Christ. Arrived at Laodicea, Philemon stayed one night at the house of Nymphas and then went the remaining twenty miles to his own town of Colosse, where his wife Apphia heard the word from his lips, and believed too.

Thus grew up, first in Laodicea, and then in Colosse and Hierapolis, (Col. 4.13) three little companies of believers who were themselves never to see the great Apostle in the flesh, but nevertheless were to make rapid progress in the knowledge of the Truth as they studied the Scriptures and read together the fragments of the sayings of Jesus that began to come their way. Paul's own journeyings took him to many places but never to these three towns. Timothy came sometimes; but Epaphras was their most frequent visitor and he was to them an ever welcome and a faithful minister in Christ (Col. 1.7).

There had been one memorable event in those early days. Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, had returned to Colosse bearing with him two—perhaps three—precious letters, letters written by the great Apostle himself. The one was a personal letter to Philemon, written jointly from Paul and Timothy. *"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow labourer, and to*

our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and the church in thy house" it began (Philem. 1. 2), and in it Paul the aged besought his brother Philemon for the errant slave who had now himself become a brother in Christ, in Whom there is neither slave nor free, but all are brethren. And the other letter was particularly to the church, a letter full of fatherly counsel and doctrinal instruction; for Paul had heard that already in these Greek cities there were some coming among the believers seeking to take away the liberty that was theirs in Christ, and graft upon their simple Christian faith, on the one hand Jewish ordinances born of the Law, and on the other hand Greek mysticism and Eastern philosophies which would reduce the living Christ Who had become the inner power of their lives to a meaningless theological figure, a shadowy emanation that could neither sustain nor save. The trading markets of Laodicea brought many such Eastern doctrines to the ears of the Christians there, and the false worship of Hierapolis added its quota of Greek mythology, and Colosse received the impact of both. So the Epistle to the Colossians, carried to his master by Onesimus, was read, as was Paul's wish, both at Colosse and at Laodicea, and treasured up in the archives of the Church.

Perhaps there was a third, an Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans. It seems to be indicated in Col. 4. 16 but it is not in the New Testament and it has never been found. (There is a so-called "Epistle to the Laodiceans" but it is known to be a forgery of much later times.) So that, if Paul really did write such an epistle, it was not preserved by the Holy Spirit as necessary to the later edification of the Christian Church. The loving brotherliness that so clearly existed between the ecclesias at Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis makes it evident that the one epistle to the Colossians was shared by them all, and all were edified.

Then came the news of Paul's death. Far away in Rome, he had suffered under the sword of the executioner, and Philemon and Nymphas were conscious of a new responsibility in their respective pastoral charges. Persecution was breaking out; Ephesus, more in the public eye than the inland cities, bore the brunt of it, and Laodicea and Colosse were left to a greater extent than formerly to their own devices.

And now the first generation of Christian Laodiceans and Colossians was passing away. Epaphras had gone, Nymphas had gone, Philemon had gone, and Archippus, after perhaps a season of service at Ephesus, had been called, if tradition be correct, to become the "presbyter" or "bishop"—the elder, as we would say to-day—

of the now flourishing church at Laodicea. It would seem that the sister assemblies at Colosse and Hierapolis were declining, or at most remaining stationary. Laodicea flourished. That was not surprising. Laodicea was an important city, the capital of the province of Phrygia, and a trading centre. It occupied a prominent place on the great road, situated in the midst of beautiful country and splendid scenery, and boasted the finest architecture in all Asia; hence it attracted many visitors. Its citizens were prosperous, well-read and well-educated. Insensibly at first perhaps, but none the less surely, the church at Laodicea, bereft of the personal presence and direct influence of its first fathers in God, subject to the persuasive arguments of newcomers who knew nothing of that early missionary zeal and simple faith which had characterised its first members, began to conform itself more and more to the fashions and ways of the city, and as it did so the Spirit began to depart. They had not repudiated the Truth; they held still to the main doctrines of the Faith, perhaps more closely than had the brethren of Colosse; but there was a lukewarmness about their service, a formality about their worship, a self-satisfaction with their Church organisation and a smugness in their study and ministry, that caused perplexity and sadness of heart to the few of their number who loved their Lord sincerely and waited still for his appearing. Those faithful ones wanted to preach the Kingdom; they believed that to be the only hope of the world; but now so many of their fellowship, professing the same Lord and the same faith, seemed to be indifferent or sceptical regarding that appearing and that Kingdom. They were so much more interested in business and the social life of the city.....

Until, one day, when the Church was assembled in its magnificent building for formal worship, there came a grave, dignified presbyter, his clothes stained with travel-dust, and the congregation sat still as he mounted the rostrum, for ambassadors from the important sister-church at Ephesus were treated with ceremony and honour. His eyes swept the audience, resting sternly upon the self-satisfied, well-dressed men and women seated in the front rows, softening as he surveyed the eager faces of the company at the back. He spoke slowly and sadly. "My brethren, I come with news. Our beloved brother John, the last of the Twelve who followed our Lord in the days of his flesh, has finished his course. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give him in the day of his appearing". He paused. "He sends you a farewell message, given him in vision in the Isle of Patmos, a message from the all-

seeing One, the Master himself. Give heed, my brethren, for the message is for you." He drew a roll of parchment from the recesses of his robe and began to read in a firm voice that resounded through the building.

"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent—.".....

They never went back to the great building. The scene at that night's meeting was too vivid, too painful, for any of them to wish so to do. They never went back, and when next the emissaries from Ephesus came to Laodicea, they came to a little house on the outskirts, where a few true-hearted believers in the risen Lord met to encourage one another in the faith and to wait for his appearing.

* * *

The simple ceremony was over. The aged elder looked at his brethren affectionately. There were not many left who had been present, with him, at that service when the message to Laodicea had been read in the great Church. It was a long time ago—he was beginning to realise that now—and most of these were of the third generation

and knew nothing at first hand of the events that forced him and his out of the church which had left its first love. He looked at them again, and thought to himself "The time is prolonged—surely He must come soon". In quiet assurance of faith he raised his hand in benediction. "Little children" he said "ye are members one of another, brethren beloved in the Lord. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him The bread that we have broken, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup we have shared, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And we are all partakers thereof... Let us therefore who are thus minded esteem one another alike, building up one another on our most holy faith, waiting together for the glorious appearing of our Lord from heaven, for, He will surely come!"

He made a gesture of dismissal, and they went out, quietly, as always after the Memorial Service. Through the darkened streets of the city they made their way, one and another turning off here and there as the parting of each several way was reached. The last half-dozen of the little company came thus to a building ablaze with light and gay with music. People were coming down the steps; rich, well-dressed men and bejewelled, lavishly attired women, to slaves awaiting them, carrying litters in which to bear them home, and torchbearers holding flaming torches to guide them on their way. Behind the tall Grecian columns which graced the vestibule the pilgrims caught sight of a brilliantly lighted interior, costly furnishings, and amid an admiring crowd, a proud dignitary, clad in purple vestments. And the little party moved on, away from the wealth and the show, out of the circle of light, into the darkness, into the unknown—to God.

"The longer I live, the more sure do I become that our happiness in life, our comfort in trouble and strength for service, all depend upon our living near to God, nay dwelling in God, as the lilies in the water. To grow on the bank of the river of the water of life is good but to grow in the stream is far better. God's lilies need to be in him who is their life. With all earnestness of my soul, I would entreat all whom I love to cultivate continual communion with the Lord. It may require great watchfulness, but it will well repay the believer for all his care. This river hath

golden sands. Fellowship with God is a land which floweth with milk and honey. I would rather spend an hour in the presence of the Lord than a century in prosperity without him. There are secrets of unknown delight, which can never be known to us till we rise above the outward and worldly, and come into the life of God, which is the life of heaven. By faith this is to be enjoyed even now. The faith which brought us life at the first, is the same by which we attain to life more abundantly"—C. H. Spurgeon.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. What is the meaning of Heb. 2.15 "... deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"?

A. The preceding verse must be taken into account. Jesus went voluntarily into death that He might render powerless the one having the dominion of death, the Devil. These two words, "powerless" and "dominion", (rendered "destroy" and "power" in the A.V.), are the keys to verse 15. "*Katargeo*" means to render powerless or deprive of strength, and "*kratos*", quite properly translated "strength" or "power" in some contexts, also means "dominion" in settings such as this; it is rendered "dominion" in 1 Pet. 4.11 and 5.11; Jude 25, and Rev. 1.6. From the beginning of the Book of Genesis there is consistently maintained the position that man's deliberate and willing entry into a state of sin at the beginning placed him under the dominion of the Devil, which is also the dominion of death. Jesus called the Devil the "prince of this world" (Jno. 14.30), and Paul referred to him as the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4.4), whilst John again states that "the whole world lieth in the Evil One" (1 Jno. 5.19 *Diag.*). The entire human race, cut off because of sin from the eternal life that is residual in God, knowing that this brief life must inevitably terminate in death, and quite unable of themselves to avert that fate, are thereby "all their lifetime subject" to this terrible bondage. But there is deliverance! Christ, by means of his association with humanity as man, and his death, and his resurrection to life, has opened a way whereby dying and sin-cursed man can be freed from sin and the effects of sin and so be reconciled to God and receive the Divine life which is eternal life. The philosophy of the matter we may not certainly understand, but that there is a merit and a power in the fact of Jesus having shared human life with man and gone into death like man, that gives man the opportunity and ability to repudiate the past and attain true life and freedom from sin is incontrovertible. So it is true that "through death", as verse 14 says, Christ renders powerless him who has the dominion of death, and delivers those who because of this life-long overshadowing of the certainty of death are held in a life-long bondage.

Q. Please explain Rom. 6.6 "... our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin". In what sense is the old sinful body "destroyed"?

A. The passage is metaphorical. We are not literally crucified with Christ and our human bodies are not literally dead. In a figurative sense we are, because of our association with Christ and our dedication or consecration of life to him, pictured as being baptised as He was for the same purpose, that being thus completely immersed into the will of God we do eventually share in the Lord's resurrection to eternal life. Even now, after passing through this experience, we are said to "walk in newness of life". As Paul says in 2 Cor. 5.17 "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new*". But though thus justified and cleansed and accepted in the sight of God, it is still true—sometimes painfully true, as Paul testified of himself in Rom. 7.14-25, that the processes and effects of sin are still manifest in our mortal frames. But the new life, the new power that has come into our lives, the new ideals and new incentives that we have, the power of the risen Christ working in us, progressively reduces the dominion of these things in our lives. Our "old man" is crucified, says Paul. The word "old" here, *palaioo*, has the significance of something that is worn out and ready to be cast away; it is of course replaced by the "new man", the "new creation" of 2 Cor. 5.17. Likewise the "body of sin" denotes the content of sin still in our lives and pictured therefore as residing still in the old body. The word "destroyed", (as in the previous question) is *katargeo*, which means to render powerless or deprive of strength. Paul does not mean that upon coming into Christ our existing human body is destroyed; such statement would be patently absurd. What he does mean is that the content of sin in our nature is being progressively deprived of its power and strength, "*that henceforth we should not serve sin*". The whole picture is that of the regenerating process which goes on in the life of the sincere believer who has consecrated his life to Christ and is living henceforth in the power that Christ gives. To use the picture Paul gave the Philippians, he has not yet attained, and is not yet perfect, but he is "*pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3.11-14).

THE COVENANTS

The story of God's dealings with man, from rebellion to reconciliation, is punctuated by the declaration of five great covenants, propounded by God and accepted by man, each defining an important aspect of the Divine purpose. A covenant is an arrangement or agreement between two parties, made either for mutual benefit or for the benefit of one of the parties, and may be paternal, in which one party bestows the benefit unconditionally upon the other, or mutual, in which the two parties meet and agree on equal terms. The covenants of the Bible all have to do with the relationship between God and man; hence the two parties cannot and do not meet as equals. Thus the words rendered "covenant"—*diatheke* in the New Testament and *berith* in the Old,—indicate an arrangement made by God, either for the unconditional benefit of the other party irrespective of what that other party may or may not do, or conditional upon the other party's conformity with its terms. The latter has no part in laying down the terms of the covenant; only God can do that and the other either accepts, or rejects. (*Diatheke* means both a will—"last will and testament"—or such a unilateral covenant, because in both cases the beneficiary has no part in its terms; he can only accept or reject. Another Greek word, *suntheke*, denotes a covenant between equal parties or by mutual agreement, as in the case of a business partnership or a marriage, but this word does not occur in the New Testament.)

The first covenant of the Bible is that made with Noah after the Flood. Rightly viewed, it is the basis of the other covenants, for it declared God's intention with regard to the perpetuity of the earth and of man upon it, and without this guarantee nothing of the Divine plan for mankind could be accomplished. This covenant was unconditional in that it declared the Divine purpose irrespective of what man did or did not do in the future. The story is in Gen. 8.20-22 and 9.3-16. God made this covenant with Noah, his family and with all the living creatures on the earth, and it guaranteed that never again would the earth be devastated, so that Noah and his sons, and by implication the brute beasts also, could set about re-populating the desolated world in full confidence that their efforts would be lastingly effective. As the days follow each other in continuous succession—this is the meaning of "*while (the earth) remaineth*" in Gen. 8.22—all the normal processes of Nature, seedtime and

harvest, summer and winter, day and night, will never be interrupted. The covenant was marked by the offering to God of a "burnt offering" of slain beasts, the traditional symbol in ancient times of a compact between God and man and of God's acceptance of man's homage. The evil of the past world was blotted out from God's sight, and man, counted clean in a new clean world, made a fresh start with the consciousness of Divine favour.

The next covenant was that made with Abraham, and usually known as the Abrahamic covenant. This also was unconditional; it constituted a declaration of God's fixed intention which would be carried into effect through the other party, Abraham and his descendants, but could not be thwarted by anything that any of those descendants might do. Briefly, as outlined in Gen. chaps. 15, 17 and 22, God avowed his intention to confer his blessing upon all the families of the earth through the agency of Abraham's "seed", i.e. certain of his descendants who would partake of his faith and loyalty. No time was indicated for the realisation of this promise; Abraham might have speculated in his own mind when and how it would be fulfilled but he could never have imagined the nature of that fulfilment nor that it would be more than four thousand years after his own time that it would become evident. After his death God reiterated the covenant to his son Isaac, indicating that the line of descent to the "seed" was to pass through him, and then when Isaac's son Jacob brought his family and possessions from Padan-Aram to settle in Canaan, the Lord confirmed the covenant to him and his descendants, this confirmation being ratified by the formal presentation of a drink-offering to God upon an anointed pediment of stone symbolising the meeting place between God and Jacob—a meeting-place thereafter known throughout Israel's history as Bethel, the house of God. (Gen. 28.2-14 and 35.1-15). This offering was a recognition of the original sacrifice made at the institution of the covenant with Abraham when the patriarch kept vigil beside the smoking altar far into the night as symbol that he was God's man for ever, and his descendants the "seed" were God's for ever into the darkness of the future whatever of hardship and suffering that future might involve—as it did so involve when Israel suffered affliction in "a land not theirs" at the hands of a hostile nation. It might fairly be said therefore that the purpose of the

Abrahamic covenant is to develop the means whereby God purposes to reconcile the world unto himself.

Throughout the history of Israel, the nation of which Jacob was the progenitor, great reliance was placed upon the unconditional nature of the covenant and the certainty that the "seed" would inevitably fulfil its allotted destiny, but scant regard was paid to the fact that the unconditional nature of the covenant in the first place was due to the already known and tested faith of Abraham, with whom it was originally made. In later days that faith was notoriously lacking among many who possessed valid claims to being of the seed of Abraham. Not until the time of Christ was it realised that the provisions of the covenant allowed God to make his own choice of the destined "seed" from among those who proved fit for the honour. The Apostle Paul made this clear when in Gal. chap. 3 he pointed out that in God's view, and for the purposes of the covenant, *"they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham"*. God makes his choice from among those who share and manifest the faith which characterised Abraham and made him the fitting party to the covenant in the first place. Paul dismisses the many claimants who relied on their lineal descent from Abraham in vs. 16; *"he saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ"*. So the age-old promise of the covenant is fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham, according to his human nature received through Mary, and in his resurrection glory Lord of all creation. He, at the end, takes up the reins of power and rules mankind "with justice and judgment" in that beneficent Millennial reign of righteousness which will in truth mean the blessing of all the families of the earth.

But the Lord Christ has his associates in this work of blessing and reconciliation. Gal. 3 insists that *"they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"*; that in the Divine view those who possess and manifest Abraham's faith and loyalty are his "seed" more truly than they who claim only the fleshly relationship. The faithful Gentile, counted as adopted into the family of Abraham because of his faith, is considered "in", where the faithless Israelite, disowned from the family of Abraham because of his faithlessness, is considered "out". And so Paul comes to the logical conclusion which is the basis of one of the most profound truths of the Scriptures, the eternal association of the "Church" with Christ, as Bride to Bridegroom, in all his future work, in the words (ch. 3.29) *"if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"*.

The great work of the Abrahamic covenant, therefore, is the institution of Christ as the promised seed of Abraham, and the development of the Church which is his Body, his Bride, his loyal associates in the reconciliation of mankind to God.

The third stage of God revealing himself to man, the institution of the nation of Israel as his representative and witness in the world, was heralded by the third covenant. Known as the Law Covenant or Mosaic Covenant, because it was negotiated by Moses at the time of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, it was, unlike the previous two, a conditional covenant. Israel must keep its terms and honour its obligations if they would receive its benefits. The covenant required that the people remain totally dedicated to the service of God, that they adhere to the moral and legal and ceremonial laws which formed its basis, that they constituted themselves, and remained, a cleansed and holy consecrated nation, a people for a purpose, a light to the world. The ultimate object of the covenant was to lead them to Christ when in the fulness of time He was revealed; to accustom them to the idea that their admittedly weak and erring state separated them from God's holiness and only by the ministrations and example of a Saviour who must needs give his life on their behalf could they hope to become reconciled to God. Hence the covenant provided for a system of annual ceremonial cleansing from sin by means of sacrifices and ritual to teach these things in picture form. This in turn needed a priesthood which would offer formal sacrifices to God on behalf of the people to atone for breaches of the covenant and restore the ruptured relationship with God. It should be realised that to the pious Israelite "sin" was nothing more nor less than a breach of the requirements of the covenant; it was not so much a moral transgression as a violation of the letter of the mandatory law. Consequently it could be atoned for and cancelled by the offering of the appropriate sacrifice. All this was a symbol, a picture, educating their minds to understand the reality which was later to be revealed in Christ.

Such a conditional covenant required a Mediator, one to stand between the parties, representing each to the other. Moses was that Mediator. He is the only Israelite who was not subject to the Law Covenant; he stood above it as the Mediator between God and man. Because the glory of the Divine presence was more than Israel could endure, it was Moses who conversed with God on the mountain-top, "face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend", and afterwards retailed to Israel what God had spoken. When Israel trans-

gressed and thereby incurred the Divine wrath, it was Moses who stood before God and pleaded on their behalf. It was the duty of Moses to exhort and guide the people of Israel in all the implications of the covenant, to condemn evil-doers and present well-doers before God. That duty he discharged faithfully during the forty years of his office and so earned the New Testament commendation "*Moses was faithful in all his house*" (Heb. 3.5).

The making of the Law Covenant is recorded in the Book of Exodus. It was made whilst Israel was encamped before Mount Sinai at the start of the forty years' journey to the Promised Land. Exod. 19.5 marks God's initiation of the Covenant; its terms are outlined in chapters 19 to 23 of Exodus; in Exod. 24.3 Israel accepted the terms. "*All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient*" they declared. The sacrifice which ratified the Covenant and made it valid is described in Exod. 24.5-8 and the ceremonial feast at which Moses, and the elders of Israel as representing the people, as it were sat and shared a meal with God, in Exod. 24.11. Thus God and Israel became one, related to each other in the bonds of a covenant in which God on the one side could not be other than faithful, but Israel on the other side might or might not repudiate its terms and so maintain or destroy the relationship accordingly.

The Law Covenant came to its end at the Cross. It had of necessity so to do, because Israel's special relationship to God ended at that point with their national rejection of Christ. The purpose of the covenant was to prepare them for Christ and to point them to Christ and to lead them to Christ; it was adequate to do all these things, but because of apostasy and unbelief they "knew not the time of their visitation" and were formally disowned on that account. Looking back after the event, the Apostle Paul was able to ask, in Gal. 3, of what purpose or utility was the Law and then to answer his own question by saying "*it was added*" (to the original Abrahamic covenant) "*because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*". It formed a bridge to span the gap between the institution of the people called to become co-workers with the promised "Seed", Christ, and the time when He would appear to claim their co-operation—which, in the event, they never gave him. During that period it served as a means of symbolically blotting out the transgressions of Israel and maintaining their status as the covenant people of God, but it failed, because of their own deficiency, to make them the people of God in literal truth and so at last they were rejected as unfit and the covenant came to an end. God

perceived this happening and told them through the prophet Jeremiah (ch. 31) that when the sad climax did come He would initiate a new and better covenant which under the guidance of Christ, rather than of Moses, would enable those of Israel who had learned the lesson of the past failure to try again, and this time succeed.

But before this New Covenant becomes a reality there is another, an unconditional one made with one man as was the case with Abraham, framed to define in clearer terms than before the nature of the work and of the Mediator that is to be characteristic of the New Covenant. This was the covenant made with King David.

The Law Covenant had only been in operation for some four centuries when the Lord announced the Davidic Covenant, and it still had another thousand years to run. One might have expected that the glowing promise of this Divine pledge to Israel's greatest king would have inspired the nation to renewed and continued faithfulness to their national covenant, but it was not to be. Israel in the main never came to awareness of what the Davidic covenant implied and what it could mean to them. But it remained a testimony to the immutable will of God who had promised and would surely perform. It was after David had become king over all Israel and had settled in Jerusalem that the Lord spoke to him of his intentions. The gist of the account in 2 Sam. 7 is that despite the possible unfaithfulness of some of his descendants in the kingly line the Lord would certainly preserve his house for ever and the line of David would always bear the right to rule. That was one aspect and it came to its climax when Christ, the rightful king of Israel, was born of the line of David. The other aspect was that Israel would surely eventually be established in the land as a purified and holy nation devoted to the service of God. This was inherent in the Abrahamic promise and in fact the Davidic covenant was largely a reiteration of the original Abrahamic covenant insofar as the people of Israel themselves were concerned. Its real function was to stress more particularly the royal or kingly factor in the purpose of God. Abraham was told that through his seed would the nations of earth be blessed. To David it was intimated that the "seed of blessing" would come in the form of a righteous and all-powerful king, ruling with the authority and in the power of God. David recalled this at the end of his life when he declared that God had made with him an everlasting covenant "*ordered in all things, and sure*" (2 Sam. 23.5), but it was in the Psalms that he recorded its details for the benefit and instruction of those who should come after. The 89th Psalm

expresses the Lord's determination to maintain the covenant He has made with David and that his seed who will fulfil the covenant shall endure for ever. Justice and judgment will be the habitation of his throne and mercy and truth shall go before his face. In declaring the Divine intention "*I will make him, my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth*" (vs.27) it becomes crystal clear that the one spoken of is our Lord. Then the 110th Psalm takes its place as the formal declaration of the Davidic covenant. "*The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" The risen Christ is appointed "*a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*" (vs.4). Melchizedek in the days of Abraham was a priest-king, a "priest upon his throne". The functions of royalty and ministry were combined in the one individual, the attributes of power and service. That is the position of Christ the Messiah in the days of his kingdom when all men will come before him for blessing and, if they will, eternal life. This is the guarantee afforded by the Davidic covenant.

So, finally, comes the New Covenant, to set the crown on all that God is doing for the human race. This covenant could not be inaugurated or put in operation until after Christ came, and died, and rose again, because this covenant is the outward manifestation of the Divine process for the reconciliation of man to God, and that process is accomplished only in and through Christ. Like the old Mosaic Law Covenant which it replaces, it is a conditional covenant; God's part is fixed and irrevocable and will surely be enacted, but it will be for each man to accept and maintain its terms for himself if he is to reap its benefits. Like that other covenant, therefore, it needs and possesses a Mediator; that Mediator is Christ.

This is called the New Covenant because it succeeds and replaces the older conditional one. The name was given by God in the days of Jeremiah, when the prophet was commanded to acquaint unfaithful Israel with this then far future development in the Divine purpose. "*The days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers..... which my covenant they brake..... But this shall be the covenant that I shall make..... I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people..... for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them. I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more*" (Jer. 31.31-34).

This is tantamount to a declaration that Israel, apostate as she was then, will eventually be converted and purified and brought into alignment with the ways of God and so enter into everlasting life. But not Israel only. Other Scripture passages, such as Ezek. 16.60-63 and Isa. 56.3-17, indicate that others of mankind besides Israel after the flesh will also, by the exercise of faith, be brought into this arrangement. The condition will always be faith; the work of the covenant will be the instilling of that faith into men's hearts that they might come willingly and voluntarily to acceptance of Christ and hence reconciliation with God and so receive the gift of eternal life which is the fruit of the covenant.

This is why Christ is the Mediator of this covenant. He is the only one who could mediate its terms between God and man. Having given his life for men, he now has the right, so to speak, to stand before men in the presence of the Father, the while by his beneficent Messianic reign He teaches them the right way and wins "whosoever will" away from the bondage of sin to serve the living God. This is why the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Jesus is the guarantee of a "better covenant" (Heb. 7.22), and again, that "*he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises*" going on then to contrast that better covenant with the old one which was violated by those it should have benefited (Heb. 8.6-13).

This covenant, then, is for the reconciliation of mankind generally, and this fact defines its time of operation as during the Millennial Age, the era of Christ's Messianic work of world conversion. But it must first be inaugurated and formally ratified by blood as were the earlier covenants. In the case of the Law Covenant this was done at Sinai and Moses was the one who offered the blood and made the arrangement binding on both parties, God and Israel. In the case of the New Covenant our Lord is the one who parallels Moses, and the blood He offers is his own. "*This*" He told his disciples "*is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26.28; Mark 14.24). That simple ceremony around that table upon the last night of our Lord's earthly life corresponded with the actions of Moses recorded in Exod. 24. And when, a few hours later, Jesus gave his life upon the cross, the Covenant was sealed and ratified in the sight of God and its provisions made sure of fulfilment.

But not yet. Though sealed and ratified and made sure, the Covenant cannot go into operation until the Mediator is ready for the duties of his office and has taken up his task. In the Exodus account the ratification ceremony was

followed by Moses' absence alone with God at the summit of the mountain for a total period of at least eighty-seven days, nearly three months, before he returned to the people—his countenance so dazzlingly radiant that he had to wear a veil over his face when in their presence—to commence the actual administration of the covenant. So now; the New Covenant was sealed and ratified at the Cross but the Mediator will not be ready to commence its work and administration until Christ, the Lord from heaven, has, like Moses, returned from the presence of God, at his Second Advent in the dawn of the Millennial Age to be revealed to the people awaiting his ministration; and when one other factor has been included.

That other factor involves the Christian Church of this present Age. The Church, dedicated disciples of Christ, "*buried with him by baptism into his death*" (Rom. 6.3-5) is to be associated with him in the resurrection life in all that He does for mankind. The Church therefore is joined with Christ in his office of Mediator. Says Paul in 2 Cor. 3.6 (God) "*hath made us able ministers of the New Covenant*" and goes on to compare our ministry with that of Moses at the time of his descent from Sinai. Farther on, in 2 Cor. 5.18-21, he refers to our being associated with Christ in what he there calls the ministry of reconciliation, reconciling men to God, which is the purpose of the Millennial Age. The mem-

bers of the Church are joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8.17), jointly with him of the promised Abrahamic seed of blessing (Gal. 3.29), exercising priestly and regal functions with him (1 Pet. 2.9; Rev. 20.4), so sharing with him the obligations and duties and privileges of the Mediatorial office. Until, then, the Church on earth has finished its course and become joined to its Lord in heaven—the "First Resurrection"—the work of the New Covenant cannot commence.

The Mediator, of course, is not subject to the Covenant. Moses was the only man of Israel who was never under the Law Covenant, for he was its Mediator. Likewise both our Lord and the members of his Church stand above the New Covenant, for they together constitute in practice and in fact its Mediator. The Church, which with Christ is certified in Galatians to constitute the true Seed of Abraham in whom and by whom all families of the earth are to be blessed, are in point of fact the fruit of the Covenant with Abraham, the formal expression of that promise.

So then, children of the Abrahamic Covenant, qualified ministers of the New Covenant, those who constitute the completed and glorified Church will embark upon their destined Millennial role of reconciling to God all from amongst mankind who can possibly be converted, so that at the end it can truly be said "*all that hath breath shall praise the Lord*".

A NOTE ON EXOD. 19. 4-6.

"If ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people . . . and ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation."

That was the promise, something like three and a half millenniums ago, to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. The history of that people in after times gave small ground for supposing that they ever merited the title of a Holy Nation. According to the Apostle Paul there was only "a remnant" who truly obeyed God's voice and made any attempt to keep his covenant. (Rom. 11.5; Heb. 1.1) the rest being "blinded" and shut up together in unbelief. (Rom. 11.32). He goes on to show that the opportunity once given to Israel was then taken away and offered to the Gentiles.

Yet the promises of God are sure and must be fulfilled. Paul does say that after the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, after the opportunity thus extended to the Gentiles has been taken up and those from among them who will turn to Christ have truly done so, there will be a turning away of Israel's blindness so that eventually "all

Israel shall be saved" because "*there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob*" (Rom. 11.26). It remains then to reconcile the apparent contradiction; shall it be Israel after the flesh or Israel after the Spirit that is to inherit the promise and be God's servant to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

The answer is that there are to be two phases of that "servant". It is very difficult—in fact it is impossible—rightly to understand the Divine Plan until we appreciate that God's way of bringing the blessings of life to all mankind is by means of the devoted—and suffering—service of both these classes, one heavenly and one earthly. The earthly class was developed first but it is the heavenly that occupies the superior plane and has the greater blessing. When the prospect of becoming a kingdom of priests and an holy nation was offered to Israel it was conditional. "*If ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant*". As a nation Israel failed to keep the condition, as a nation they failed therefore to attain the promise. But individuals within the nation did show themselves of the spirit that God desires to see in his

servants and those individuals are called by a name which appears first in the words of the prophet Joel and was later elaborated by Isaiah and Micah—the “remnant”. *“Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election (elect—choice or chosen) hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded”* says Paul in Rom. 11.7.

There were some of these in the days of the First Advent, and they accepted Christ and became Christians, heirs of the heavenly calling and had no further part nor lot in the earthly Israel. There were some of them in preceding generations before Christ came, and these are they that God can and will use in the resurrection. The most outstanding of these are the ones often referred to as the “Ancient Worthies”, or as more generally known among Christians to-day, the “Old Testament Saints”. Paul’s argument throughout Romans 11 is that there is such a “remnant” that will eventually be brought back actively into God’s purposes and become the means of saving, first, their own unbelieving brethren and later, the believing of all mankind, acting all the time under the instructions and guidance of the then glorified Church. It is obvious that those of Israel who rejected the covenant and perished in their unbelief are no more fitted for use in the Kingdom than are Gentiles who in this Gospel Age have turned away from the High Calling and disdained to follow the “Narrow Way”. It should be clear therefore that Israel as a nation comes back in the resurrection on just the same footing as the rest of mankind, candidates for restitution. Just as the Church in heaven will be composed of the “called, and chosen, and faithful” of this Gospel Age, so the new nation on earth which is to commence the Millennial missionary work will consist, at least in the main, of the “called, and chosen, and faithful” of the Jewish Age.

The first work of this restored “remnant” will be the conversion and reconciliation to God of their own unbelieving brethren; that therefore is the first work of the Kingdom. That is implied by

Paul’s words “they also, *if they abide not still in unbelief*, shall be grafted in”; “blindness in part is happened to Israel *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved*”. This may well indicate that there will be a large scale conversion of Israel in the Holy Land before the full end of the present Age. This would result in a missionary nation composed of men and women of faith, tested and proved by the stress of Armageddon and “Jacob’s Trouble”, ready for the work of the Kingdom immediately that Kingdom is established in power and announced to all mankind. “*If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world*” (in the death of Christ) “*what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*” (resurrection). The raising of all men from death depends upon and waits for the reconciliation of at least a part of Israel, and this seems to demand a prior resurrection, or, perhaps more accurately, the resurrection of Jews before Gentiles when once the “general resurrection” has commenced.

It is not quite right to say that Israel lost the right to their Divine destiny and that it was inherited by the Christian Church, for there are two separate destinies here and each is achieved in due time. Israel at Sinai was not promised a spiritual salvation and the Church at Pentecost was not offered an earthly salvation. Israel as a nation was offered the opportunity of becoming a Kingdom of Priests on earth but Israel as a nation lost that opportunity; individual Israelites won it and they will eventually form the nation of destiny. The Gentile world was offered a similar, but this time a spiritual, kingdom and again the opportunity was embraced and won only by individuals; they and they alone will be the spiritual Royal Priesthood. Both earthly and heavenly phases of that royal priesthood, holy nation, chosen people, will represent the consummation of God’s work in the Jewish and Gospel Ages, selecting training and preparing the means that He is to use for the reconciliation of men to himself in the third Age, the Millennial Age.

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

Thus wrote Tatian, an Assyrian, and one of the

most brilliant pagans of the second century, speaking of his conversion to Christianity. It is worthy of note that, coming to the Old Testament (the writings to which he refers above) and the teachings of the Christian church, he realised how different were these principles from the Greek philosophy which held premier place in the world of that day, and, too, that acceptance of this new way of life brings freedom from the bondage which is upon men. Said Jesus: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”.

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 4. Moses

The affliction of Israel in Egypt brought to the fore yet another man whose name and deeds have inspired alike the cleverest of writers, sculptors and painters. This was he who stood barefooted before the burning bush, receiving his dread commission to deliver Israel from the power of a particularly ruthless, vacillating king. Joseph had brought them down for preservation, a growing family which, with the passing of more than a century since his death, had multiplied greatly in numbers and possessions, so much so that the new king felt them a menace to his power, for *"Israel are more and mightier than we"*.

There then followed one of the most ruthless suppressions of a people by slavery and infanticide which almost amounted to a policy of race extermination. As one king died another took his place, more cruel than the last. In desperation the people in their misery cried unto God and He heard their cry. This deplorable bondage had been foretold even to Abraham. That it was allowed to go on so long and to such an extreme of suffering raises a few question marks about the mysterious ways of God, to which he gives his own inscrutable answer; *"My ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts"; "neither can the clay say to the potter, What makest thou?"*.

That generation of Hebrews had fallen victim to a king with a craze for building and in them he found a plentiful supply of cheap labour. Taskmasters whipped them on to unflagging drudgery and the toll of life through illness and overwork must have been very great. Added to that the grief of women whose male children were thrown into the Nile, brought them to extremity. Tragically, people often have no desire to call upon God until they are reduced to this pitiful plight, when He becomes a last resort. As God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to bring them to a land which would be their's forever and had used Joseph to preserve them, he was in honour bound to get them out of Egypt before successive tyrants destroyed them.

The timing of God for great events is always perfect and on time, never early, never late. A drama was to be enacted in that land, a conflict between two men whom he had raised up, the reigning Pharaoh and Moses the deliverer, who by a strange providence had been brought up in the Egyptian court. The babe in the bulrushes watched by an attentive sister, discovered by Pharaoh's daughter and nursed by a devoted

mother, has the same appeal as Noah's Ark and the manger at Bethlehem. No book produces such stories as the Bible. Truth is stranger than fiction. It still provides the best themes for the Arts; it is pseudo-cleverness which labels them as myths and fairy tales, for in each case they played a part in stupendous events which were anything but myths and bore no resemblance whatever to fairy tales.

At the time of the famine God needed a man in Egypt who could command the ear of a sympathetic Pharaoh for the preservation of his people. Never before or since did two such men and such a set of circumstances meet together. Because of divine foreknowledge they served his purpose. When the time of deliverance came, Moses and the reigning Pharaoh were of a type of mind and character well suited to his intentions. There is a touch of irony in the rearing of the child of a Hebrew slave in the royal house of the very ruler who had issued the edict for the destruction of male infants. That Moses was ignorant of his own lineage until he was forty years of age, that he was educated and trained as an Egyptian prince and ruler seems evident. Such knowledge and such training fitted him to stand in later years in the royal court, to subdue the sorcerers, to expose the priesthood, to overthrow the false gods, to break the power of Pharaoh and to organise the orderly departure of an estimated two and a half million people.

The revelation of his identity must have been a shattering blow to a man in his position, to one of his arrogant and hasty temperament. To find that he was not the son of the king's daughter, but a son of the despised slave race, to be suddenly hurled from the top of the social ladder to the bottom, must have been a traumatic experience, a nervous shock, which may have left its mark in that slowness of speech of which he later complained. As Moses is accredited with the writing of the book of Exodus, much interesting, personal detail is absent. From what antiquarians have discovered of the courts of those days, it is possible that while undergoing certain temple rites as a possible heir to the throne, the jealous priests revealed to him his true identity. That there were well-known details of this phase of his life is evident from the references of New Testament writers to the man "learned in all the wisdom and knowledge of the Egyptians, mighty in word and in deeds" who forsook or renounced all "the treasures of Egypt", his princely position,

his wealth and all the honours of a royal house, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God.

His identification with them, his study of their situation, his slaying of the Egyptian taskmaster, his intervention in the quarrel between two Hebrews and his subsequent flight into Midian did not take place all at once. The Hebrews knew him for a prince and ruler, an Egyptian, and they rejected him. Pharaoh, hearing of the angry blow which had felled an officer, would naturally be outraged and alarmed that one presumably of his house should espouse the cause of the detested Hebrews. The man who fled into Midian had received a shock and a severe lesson in self-humiliation. All that he learned was to fit him for leadership. Moses, forty years an Egyptian, became for the next forty years an Arab shepherd, wandering with the sheep in a wild land, learning something of the destiny of the Hebrews from Jethro, a descendant of Abraham by Keturah, and who became his good friend and father-in-law.

The conversations of these two men and the cogitations of Moses, while he watched and led the sheep in the land of Midian, may be imagined. When God at last called him from the burning bush he was sufficiently instructed and disciplined to understand the import of the task he was asked to undertake, to realise the awful responsibility of taking this nation of slaves out of Egypt and the greedy clutches of Pharaoh into the land promised by Divine oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

After some pardonable demur, Moses accepted the commission. It cannot have been with any feelings of jubilation that he took his leave of the pastoral home, where he had known so much peace, to traverse again that weary road to Egypt. If he had any premonition that the rest of his life was to be spent wandering in the wilderness with a rebellious and stiffnecked people who would constantly sigh for the fleshpots and the graves of Egypt from which he was sent to deliver them, he must have arrived among them in a very sober and solemn frame of mind.

In due course that conflict began, not so much between man and man as between the powers of darkness and the forces of light; between the supremacy of God and the pagan idolatry by which Satanic agencies blinded and enslaved not one nation but the entire race of man. While the ten plagues were directed at the Egyptian way of life, the whole confrontation appears to symbolise a greater combat, to foreshadow a greater than Moses challenging the same forces of wickedness to "let my people go". The fight was God's, Moses the instrument through whom He accom-

plished so mighty a deliverance. Although the Pharaoh who had sought the life of Moses was dead, it is quite possible that he was personally acquainted with the Pharaoh of the Exodus who then occupied a position for which he himself had been trained. Those at court would be well aware that the man who now stood before them demanding, with all the signs of Divine authority, the liberation of the enslaved people, was a Hebrew who had forty years earlier been a prince and a ruler in the royal house.

This fact would help to harden Pharaoh's heart, to add contempt to his dismissals of Moses from his presence. If in the end it added fear, it also added rage and a malignant spite when he pursued Israel with destructive purpose to the Red Sea. Moses knew all the arts and magic of the sorcerers. They too must have been bitterly mortified when, having been put through their paces, they had to admit after the plague of lice, "This is the finger of God". Their humiliation was complete when the plague of boils smote them also and they could no longer stand before him. Once having given himself to the task Moses was not the man to look back or give in. Through all the years of wilderness wanderings, constantly aggravated by a discontented people who would much rather have returned to their bondage and the sensual pleasures of idol worship than go on to the promised land, there is no evidence that he ever regretted his past or was tempted to resign his office of leadership. Through experiences which made him "fear and quake", through famine, drought, pestilence, battle and rebellion; through snares, enticements and executions of wrong doers he remained the firm head of his people through forty years of wandering in a desolate wilderness where water was an ever pressing need. Beside herds and flocks there had come with them out of Egypt a mixed multitude who often stirred up trouble. In spite of all these things he welded them into a nation, giving them laws which embodied the righteousness of God and the whole duty of man to God and his neighbours, and a priesthood whose beauty and ceremonial foreshadowed better things to come.

Israel left Egypt a tribal people but they crossed the Jordan a nation, a commonwealth, a theocracy, fitted to inherit the land of promise, to be a holy nation, chosen and separate. The righteous principles of the faith were no longer in the custody of one man, or one family, but of a nation, brought out of affliction, moulded and hardened in the wilderness, taught and disciplined by Moses the administrator, the leader, the conqueror, the head of his house, whose total identification with them, whose submergence of self in them, whose total lack of self-interest, made him

"the meekest man in all the earth".

Of all the prophets there were none who knew the Lord face to face as he did, who came from his holy conversations with the light of the God of Israel illuminating his face with a brightness which could not be looked upon. Although that nation was to produce many great characters of the faith, there were none between Moses and Christ who ever shone with the same heavenly glory or showed among men a more utter selflessness, a readiness to lay down life for others, although the others showed few signs of worthiness of such generous sacrifice. And at the end he was not allowed to cross the Jordan into that land to which he had brought the new nation. While still vigorous he was called to lay down his office, to pass to his successor some of his own strength and wisdom. His work was finished. None other could have done it. But the new young nation needed a new and younger leader, who would have to bear the brunt of the battle and the task of parcelling out the land. So Moses ascended alone to the top of Pisgah, to look out from that mountain eyrie across to the land where his people would dwell.

That is the last picture of a great man, endued with some of the sublime grandeur of the mountain upon which he stood, his last thoughts with the destiny of the people whom he had led and

blest, whom he had exhorted and warned. Leaning upon his staff, with undimmed eye taking in the prospect, looking down the future with a prophetic vision, feeling in his heart something of the things yet to come to this chequered, wayward people but confident that in God's good time they would dwell at last in peace in the everlasting inheritance, he rendered up his account to him who had called him from the burning bush forty years before.

Life had begun for him "a goodly child", placed upon the waters of the Nile in a fragile basket. In three phases he had lived it, the Egyptian prince, the Arab shepherd, the Hebrew leader and law-giver. He had honoured the faith of Joseph, bringing his bones out of Egypt. In all the desert wanderings they had carried the sacred relics of Abraham's great-grand-son, who once ruled Egypt. They would cross the Jordan to be interred at last by Joshua in the parcel of land which Jacob bought at Shechem so long ago, land which became the inheritance of Joseph's children. But for Moses, whose intrepid courage, whose wisdom, patience and self-annihilation had brought Joseph's Israel in their thousands to the border of the promised land, a lonely end in a lonely place. None could venerate or claim the spot, for none knew or ever would know where God buried one of his finest workmen.

To be continued.

A NOTE ON GAL. 1.15.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me . . . I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1.15-16).

It is thought by some that by the use of this expression Paul is avowing his belief that he was "separated" to God's service, "called" to that service, from the moment of his birth—in short, that he was "pre-destinated" to his office as Apostle to the Gentiles. A careful examination of the text does not seem to bear this out. The plain English implication of the first clause is that his birth into this world was, like that of all human beings, in consequence of the Divine ordering of the conditions of man's existence and there is nothing to indicate that the "separation" and the calling are at the same moment of time. In the expression "separated me from my mother's womb" the preposition "from" is *ek*

which is a preposition of place, indicating exit out of an enclosing space. It is used occasionally as a preposition of time, but only when it governs a genitive of time, as in Jno. 9.1 "a man which was blind *from* his birth"; Matt. 19.20 "these things have I kept *from* my youth up", and Acts 24.10 "thou hast been *of* many years a judge". *Ek* can only indicate a time lapse in such cases as distinct from "out of" in cases of place or location. In this instance the phrase is *ek koilias metros mou* "out of the womb of the mother of me". The separation is physical and not metaphorical; the idea is that the same God who gave him life in the first place also called him to his service at some indeterminate time later on. Another example of the use of this preposition in this fashion is Heb. 13.20 "the God of peace, that brought again *from* the dead our Lord Jesus . . .". This is *ek nekron*, "out of the dead ones", again a preposition of place.

TIMES AND SEASONS

I. The Antediluvian Era

The study of Biblical time periods makes it possible to relate Bible history to the "secular" histories of ancient nations, thus assisting in establishing the veracity of Bible writers and the times at which they lived and wrote. Many an Old Testament story has been dubbed mythical and unhistorical until the researches of archaeologists revealed that such men did live and such things did happen, and the Scripture was right all the time. Whereas present secular historical chronology, built up from the records of ancient nations such as Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians and so on, goes back with tolerable certainty to about fifteen centuries before Christ, and with considerable uncertainty before that only another thousand years, the Bible alone gives a definite time-scale right to the beginning, a time-scale which is more and more coming to be accepted by historians as accurate. Particularly is this true for the period prior to King David. Whereas so little as fifty years ago the known history of Egypt, Babylon and Sumer, recognised as being the earliest nations, was held to have commenced a thousand years before the Bible indicates it did, the leading historical chronologists of the present day advocate dates which are more or less in line with those implied by the Old Testament.

Jewish chronologists have used the time periods of the Bible to determine the date of the coming of Messiah, and their Christian counterparts to fix the time of the Second Advent. This has been going on since the 2nd century B.C. and the results have often been instrumental in awakening the people of God, Jews or Christians, in certain generations, to the significance of the times in which they were living. This series will not make any such prognostications although some of the data presented may be of use to those engaged in that kind of research.

The first era to be considered is naturally that from Eden to the Flood, the "world that then was" as St. Peter calls it. The calculation has the merit of simplicity in that its span of years is made up by adding together the ages of the patriarchs at the births of the respective sons who carried on the family line, finishing with the age of Noah when the Flood came. The whole of the necessary data is given in the 5th chapter of Genesis, but right here a difficulty presents itself. The three great texts of the early Old Testaments, the Massoretic, (from which the A.V. and most modern translations are derived), the Septuagint and the Samaritan, present three different sets of figures, resulting in totals of

1656, 2262 and 1307 years respectively. The vital question; which is correct?

The answer is of importance to chronologists and historians but it does not affect the validity of the Bible or the Divine oversight of its contents. The ethical teaching of the Bible, its doctrinal and prophetic expositions, its revelation of God in and through Christ, are all under the inspiration and control of the Holy Spirit and are accepted as inviolate. In regard to the historical narratives of the Old Testament, their accuracy depends upon the integrity of their writers and the care with which they have been preserved. It can be taken as certain that the over-ruling power of the Holy Spirit has seen to it that all that ought to be recorded for future generations has been so recorded and that matters having no conceivable use have been left out. Which of these three periods is the true one is immaterial so far as soundness in the Faith or the conditions of the Christian life are concerned.

The books of the Hebrew Old Testament began to be brought together in what is called the "canon" over a period of several centuries commencing from the days of Ezra. By about 400 B.C. the Old Testament was complete. There was no printing; copies of the books were made by copying existing manuscripts. This was normally done with scrupulous care, so that errors and omissions were rare although they did sometimes occur. Thus a certain amount of difference between various copies began to appear but usually in quite unimportant details. By the 3rd cent. B.C., however, Hebrew had ceased to be the spoken language and was replaced by Aramaic and particularly Greek. Hence the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (270-230 B.C.) for general use and this is what is called the Septuagint (LXX for short). The Hebrew Bible remained in use by priests and rabbis and in the synagogues but the Greek was the one in general use. Hence the many quotations from the Septuagint by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament.

At an earlier period, probably about 400 B.C. the Samaritans built a Temple on Mount Gerizim in opposition to Nehemiah's Temple at Jerusalem, and at about the same time produced what is called the Samaritan Pentateuch, a Hebrew text containing only the Five Books of Moses, differing in many minor respects from the other texts but inclining in the main more towards the Septuagint than the Hebrew.

These were the three Bibles, all descended from

the original Hebrew of the time of Ezra, which were in use at the time of Christ. Most of the early translations into European languages up to the 16th Century were made from the Septuagint, but when the Authorised Version of 1611 was produced the Palestinian Hebrew text—known by then as the Massoretic—was brought into consideration and in consequence the A.V. chronology in Genesis is that found in the Massoretic. To this day, however, the Eastern European and Asiatic translations—Greek, Armenian, Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopian, and so on, are from the Septuagint.

This "Massoretic" text upon which the A.V. is based was fixed about the 8th Cent. A.D. About A.D. 100 Jewish scholars had begun to rationalise the many varied Hebrew texts which existed in order to produce a standard text. This process went on for several centuries, the scholars who conducted this work being known as the Massoretes, hence the name of the resultant text, which since the 8th century has been the "Received Text" of Judaism and has not since been changed.

With all this in mind the question of which text contains the original time periods can be approached. The original manuscripts are of course no longer in existence. The oldest Mss of the Septuagint still surviving was made about A.D. 350; the oldest Massoretic A.D. 916; and the oldest Samaritan A.D. 1149. The differences in the time periods arose prior to these dates, at some time between them and the original divergence from the correct text of Ezra, which could have been as early as the time of Christ.

The solution to the conundrum has been well established and attested by a number of historians and theologians during the early part of the Christian era. For several centuries prior to the First Advent the fixed conviction of Judaism was that Messiah would appear at or about the close of six thousand years of human history, and would then inaugurate his earthly kingdom, the seventh thousand. According to the then Hebrew Bible chronology this period had nearly expired when Jesus was born. Naturally enough, the early Christians seized on this as an indisputable proof of his Messiahship. It is well established that, in consequence of this, the rabbis, endeavouring to refute the claim, consistently altered the text of Genesis whenever new copies were made, by reducing the ages of six of the patriarchs at the birth of their sons by a hundred years each. The effect of this was to postpone the end of the six thousand years to a date six hundred years later. It was the invariable practice that when new copies of the Hebrew Scriptures were made to replace old ones, the old copies were withdrawn from use and eventually destroyed.

Hence, over a lapse of time, the new scale of years became universal in the Hebrew manuscripts.

The Samaritan Jews, at the same time or probably a little earlier, also began to alter their texts, but they deducted a century from each of all the nine patriarchs so that their postponement was that much longer and their figure for the length of the antediluvian era the shortest of the three.

The Septuagint copies in circulation, not being under the control of the rabbis and being much more widely diffused, were not affected and retained the original time-spans.

First witness is the Jewish historian Josephus. Writing about A.D. 90, he says in his work "Contr. Apion" 1-1, "The Antiquities contain the history of 5000 years and are taken out of our sacred books, but are translated by me into the Greek tongue". In this latter work, "The Antiquities of the Jews", he gives the ages of the patriarchs and the chronology from Creation to Abraham as it is now presented in the Septuagint but by his own assertion he translated from the Hebrew, which infers that in his day the Hebrew was identical with the Septuagint. And there is one interesting point which clinches this fact. Lamech in the Hebrew (Massoretic) is given 777 years of life with Noah born to him at 182. The Septuagint gives him 753 years with Noah born at 188. Josephus, in this one instance, follows the Hebrew. It seems evident that in Josephus' time this one difference between the two versions existed and that Josephus, following the Hebrew, had thus adopted the figure he did.

Thirty years after Josephus came Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, who produced the first Christian chronology, which agreed with the Septuagint. About this time the rabbis began their work of standardising the text and here the alterations apparently began to be made. In A.D. 148 Justin Martyr, notable Palestinian Christian, accused the rabbis of tampering with the Scriptures; Origen in A.D. 230 gave a number of instances in which alterations had been made. Eusebius of Cæsarea, A.D. 320, says in his writings that in various Hebrew Bibles to which he had access he found differing accounts of the chronology, some following the longer and others the shorter. He himself advocated the longer. Another famous Christian scholar, Ephrem Syrius of Nisibis, at about the same time said "The Jews have subtracted 600 years from the generations of Adam, Seth and so on, in order that their own books might not convict them concerning the coming of Christ, he having been predicted to appear for the deliverance of mankind after 5500 years." The celebrated theologian, St. Augustine, 4th century, refers in his work "The City of God" to "the great discrepancy between the Hebrew

Mss and our Bible" (i.e. the Septuagint) "*especially on the matter of the ages of the patriarchs, which savours not of accident but design*". Georges Syncellus, A.D. 800, Greek writer, remarks "*it is with reason that in our chronology we follow the version of the Septuagint, which was made, as it appears, from an ancient and uncorrupted copy.*"

There are plenty of evidences that the Church during the early centuries of this present era held to the Septuagint chronology. One of the most notable is the so-called "*Gospel of Nicodemus*", produced at some time between the 2nd and 4th centuries. This work contains statements on chronology which are in line with the Septuagint. Hippolytus, Bishop of Rome A.D. 220, Ambrose of Milan A.D. 370, Lactantius, tutor to the son of the Emperor Constantine A.D. 300, all said that since 5500 years had elapsed at the birth of Christ—which the Septuagint chronology indicates approximately—the Second Advent could be expected in A.D. 500. Louis Golding, in his book "*In the steps of Moses the Conqueror*" (1937) tells of his visit to the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, where he saw, fixed to the Monastery wall, a marble plaque commemorating its founding. The plaque states that it was placed there by the Emperor Justinian and bears the date "*in the year 6021 after Adam, the 577th year after Christ*" which again is in accord with the Septuagint chronology.

In making the alterations, the perpetrators created some anomalies which had to be put right. One may ask why, in the case of the Massoretic text, only six patriarchs were made subject to the hundred years' deduction; the apparent reason is that if Methuselah and Lamech were thus treated they would then have been shown surviving the Flood. In the case of Jared the answer probably lies in Jewish legend. It was believed that, with the exception of Abel, Adam was the first man to die and this is consistent with the Septuagint chronology. Had 100 years been taken from Jared as from the others, the effect would be that his son Enoch was "translated" 43 years before Adam's death, which was not acceptable and so Jared was left untouched.

The Samaritan text, in deducting 100 years from each of the nine patriarchs, were faced with the result that Jared, Methuselah and Lamech all survived the Flood. They overcame this difficulty by altering the total lengths of these three lives from 962, 969 and 753 to 547, 720 and 653 respectively, so making each of these three to die in the actual year of the Flood.

It is for these reasons that the Septuagint chronology for the period before the Flood is now generally accepted as representing the original

Hebrew text of the O.T. One edition of the Septuagint, the Sixtine, made in Latin in the 17th century, has 167 for Methuselah instead of 187, but the Sixtine was made from the Greek Vaticanus Mss which has no Genesis. This figure must have been obtained from some other late Mss and is probably a copyist's error. It may therefore reasonably be taken that the length of the antediluvian era as given in the original Bible of Ezra is 2262 years.

There are, of course, no independent histories of that era which could be used to check the figure. It is of interest, though, that some Babylonian tablets, written in the 17th Cent. B.C., which have been in the British Museum for the past hundred years, were deciphered in 1967 and found to comprise an account of legendary events between the creation of man and the great Flood. According to the story the antediluvian era comprised two periods, each enduring "*a little less than 1200 years*", terminated, the first by a great plague, and the second by the Flood. That this legend, written several centuries after Abraham's departure from Ur but probably derived from histories current in his time or earlier, should give "just under" 2400 years for the period stated in Genesis as 2262 years is at least an intriguing coincidence and could suggest a common origin.

The following table compares the relevant figures from the Massoretic, Samaritan, Septuagint, and Josephus.

AGE AT BIRTH OF SON

	Mas.	Sam.	LXX	Jos.
Adam	130	130	230	230
Seth	105	105	205	205
Enos	90	90	190	190
Kainan	70	70	170	170
Mahalaleel	65	65	165	165
Jared	162	62	162	162
Enoch	65	65	165	165
Methuselah	187	67	187	187
Lamech	182	53	188	182
Noah (to Flood)	600	600	600	600
Total	1656	1307	2262	2256

TOTAL LENGTH OF LIFE

Adam	930	930	930	930
Seth	912	912	912	912
Enos	905	905	905	905
Kainan	910	910	910	910
Mahalaleel	895	895	895	895
Jared	962	847	962	962
Enoch	365	365	365	365
Methuselah	969	720	969	969
Lamech	777	653	753	777
Noah	950	950	950	950



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

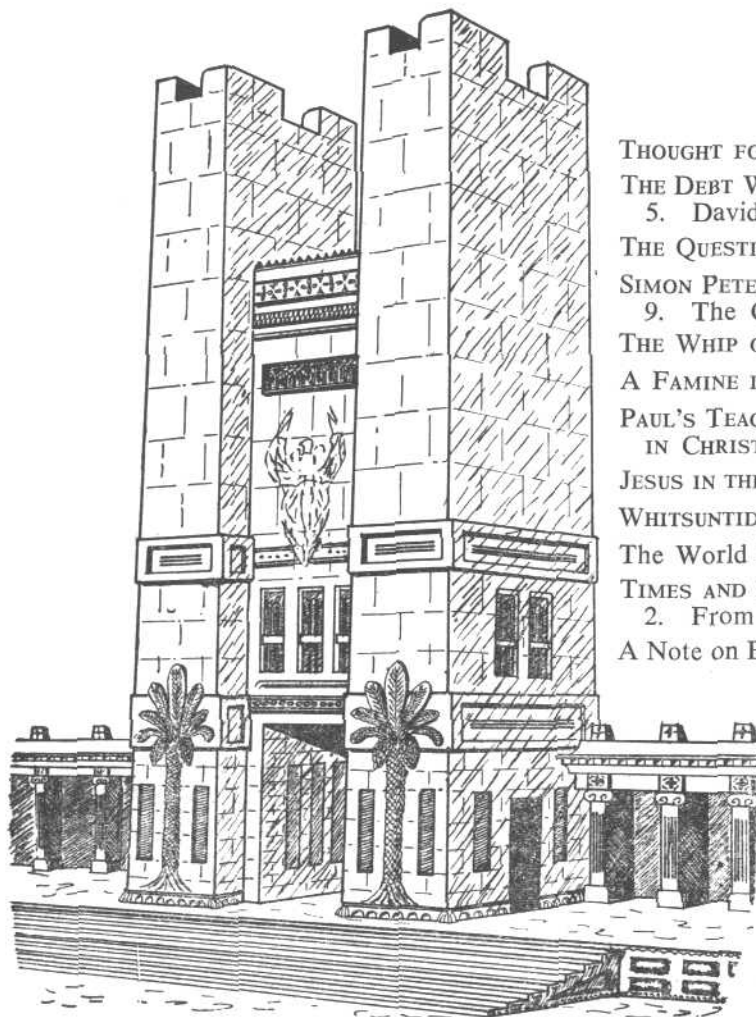
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"Even to hoar hairs will I carry you" (Isa. 46.4).

Old age could be called one of the tragedies of life. The beauty of youth, the vigour and action of mature years, fade and fall as the petals of the fairest flower. Inevitably time steals both strength and treasure. Friends depart, household ranks are thinned, many cherished hopes remain unrealised and the rushing torrent of new thought sweeps away old landmarks, with long cherished customs.

Enthusiasm sinks as the sap falls in the tree, shedding daily the autumn gold. A sober look at the problems of these last decades of life could be disquieting were it not for the caring, carrying power of Omnipotence. Days were when we ran and jumped and danced and sang with the best, when the glory of life irradiated every fibre of our being with a seemingly quenchless flame. But the days come when tired feet no longer run and tired eyes no longer see the road or the faces about them as once they saw.

Even the heart grows tired after its long labours, scarred maybe with sorrow, with well-fought battles and the pain of unshed tears. How good it is then to be lifted in the eternal Arms and carried over the last few laps of the road. This carrying power of God is the tender expression of love. It is God taking the load, bearing between his shoulders these who have grown old and grey in his service, fending for them when they are no longer able to fend for themselves.

Those who have fought a good fight have no reason to fear the tedium, the solitariness, the weakness which often attends the time when the frosts of many winters whiten and thin the once luxurious locks. He has said "I will carry you". As a father picks up a tired child, carrying it home in triumph upon his shoulders, so will watchful love provide for saints going home, for God never yet forsook the heart which trusted him.

*"I read from the past what the future shall be
Far better than all my fears."*

NOTICES

Back Numbers of B.S.M. Sets of the "Monthly" from 1969 onwards are available and will be sent upon request while stocks last. There is no charge although any who feel led to send a gift towards the postal and incidental expenses may rest assured that their thought is sincerely appreciated. If the desired sets are not received within three weeks it must be taken that stocks for those years are exhausted. Recently enrolled readers particularly might be interested in acquiring such issues preceding the date on which they became readers.

Literature. A list of all booklets and pamphlets, dealing with various Scriptural subjects, published supplementary to the "Monthly", and currently in print, is available upon request. The pamphlets can be supplied, at no charge, in small quantities for judicious distribution among people likely to be interested in their contents.

Convention. The usual June convention is being arranged (D.V.) for Sat-Sun. June 5-6, in the Main Hall, Elgiva Road, Chesham, Bucks. Details and programmes from H. Charlton, 43 Halkingcroft, Langley, Slough, Bucks.

Gone from us

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Sis. M. Andrews (Worthing)

Sis. E. Colls, Sr. (London)

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

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 5. David to the Baptist

Between Moses and Christ there are many portraits of men who kept the faith, who were moulded by it into something approaching greatness. Judges, prophets, kings, and many from lowlier walks of life look down from the corridors of ancient days upon their twentieth century counterparts, earnestly contending for the faith; a great cloud of witnesses of whom the world was not worthy. Time does not allow a detailed observance of all these excellent people any more than it did the writer to the Hebrews long ago.

There is one however which commands attention, that of David, king of Israel. Shepherd, poet, musician, warrior, prophet and monarch, never did such a versatile man occupy a throne and rule a people to its best advantage. The youngest of eight sons, he was, when Samuel the greatest of the Judges anointed him as Israel's prospective king, "*ruddy, of a beautiful countenance and goodly to look upon*" (1 Sam. 16.12). His exploits as a shepherd in the fields of Bethlehem, his slaying of the giant Goliath and his years as an outlaw, hunted by the jealousy of Saul like a partridge in the mountains, have so captured the imagination of hero-worshippers that his name has become a legend. He lives in poetry, music, sculpture and painted art as a handsome, deeply fascinating character, whose warm humanity, undaunted courage and unwavering religious devotion still have the power to inspire men to better things.

David was known as "a man after God's own heart" which has caused some critics to question the judgment of God, seeing that he was a shedder of blood, a man who grievously sinned over the matter of the beautiful Bathsheba and the unsuspecting, valiant Uriah her husband. In his defence it must be said that God judges not as men judge who look only on the outward appearance. He reads the heart, knowing what is in the human creature, made unwillingly subject to the frailty of the flesh. Perfection although encouraged is not expected from the imperfect. It is the resolute purpose which never wavers from that goal, which defeated and baffled rises again from penitence and remorse to renew the struggle, which earns Divine approval. Such a man was David, who testified to the mercy of God, "*Though a good man fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand*" (Psa. 37.24).

Whatever his personal faults throughout his

life David never deviated from his trust in God. Military genius he may have been, by his prowess overthrowing the enemies of Israel, winning territories which made for them an empire qualified to take its place among the nations. He gave them a capital city set on a hill and gained for them a respect, even an admiration from the kings of that generation. With it all he remained humble, obedient, worshipful, acknowledging at all times the justice and wisdom of God. If at times he failed to live up to the law of God which was his delight, none were more penitent than David.

He gave to religion songs which are the embodiment of true devotion to God. They have been a far richer legacy than the great wealth he bequeathed for the building of the Temple, nothing of which now remains except the massive foundation stones at which generations of Hebrews have mourned the loss of their former greatness. His son, the glorious Solomon, with his inherited wealth and gifted wisdom, added to David's empire all the splendours of the court of an oriental monarch. Yet it is to the psalms of David, which have endured the assaults of time where empires, palaces and temples have vanished, that those tried by the perplexities and vicissitudes of life constantly return for comfort and encouragement, for the joy of singing unto the Lord with a cheerful voice.

David's youth, spent in the fields leading the sheep by day, guarding them by night under the starlit heavens, made him an observer and lover of nature. It gave to the world the incomparable twenty-third psalm, which has been such a source of consolation and hope to all classes of people. The poetry of David abounds with appreciation of God's creative works, leading to adoration, affectionate trust, communion with God, walking before him in uprightness of heart, rejoicing in a vision of the future when the heavens and the earth will be renewed in beauty and strength, when the world will be stabilised under the rule of a righteous government. His faults, which were those of his times, are eclipsed by his virtues which were many. He served his day and generation with a liberality which has spilled over every succeeding century. Every Christian has been enriched by his life, and by his words which are a rare and valuable literature, part of the choice inheritance of the house of God.

When Saul his predecessor was advised to seek

music to charm away the black mood which often came upon him, one of his servants recommended the young man David, saying, "*Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, cunning in playing the harp, a mighty man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech and a comely person, and the Lord is with him*". This was the combination of qualities which made David the beloved. His friends and soldiers loved him, risking their lives for him. Women loved him, singing his praises. Jonathan loved him with a love surpassing the love of women. Even Saul in his saner moments was thawed by David's charm, loyalty and magnanimity. And God loved him. He loved the lad He had chosen from the sheepcote. The sincere heart, the fearless courage, the uprightness and integrity which took him through the struggles of his middle years, the constancy, the desire to serve and honour God as well as his house and people, to give something to both man and God, were all endearing qualities. Jerusalem became David's city also, the holy city, the living symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem for whose righteous rule mankind yet waits. Many great cities of the earth have exalted themselves and fallen to dust or faded into insignificance but the much besieged city of Jerusalem still commands the eyes and ears of the world. "*For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it*" (Psa. 132.13-14).

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the lowly monarch who inherited David's throne, the crowd who went before him cried "Hosanna to the Son of David". He was never hailed as the son of Abraham, or the son of Moses. Great David's greater son was the king whom David had prefigured, who would occupy his throne and rule from his city with a righteous and just rule never yet experienced by any nation. To David God had sworn, "*There shall not fail thee a man to rule upon the throne of Israel*". When the throne was overturned and the people sent into Babylonian exile it was not destroyed but left vacant "*until he come whose right it is and I will give it to him*" (Ezek. 21.27).

When David came to the end of his life the theme of the dying king was that of faith, of God's justice and man's reverence. His parting words to Solomon enshrouded advice all rulers might well have heeded for their own safety and the good of the ruled. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God". Herein lies the whole peace and happiness of man. Even Solomon, satiated with all that wealth could give, with all under the sun that a man could see or have or do, concluded the whole

matter, "*Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil*" (Eccl. 12.13-14).

* * *

Since looking upon the portrait of Abraham to whom God had pledged himself to give the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession we have wandered two thousand years down the long gallery of time, observing the prophets, kings and priests of the dynasty he founded. Far from being proud owners of the land, they were oppressed tenants, ruled by Rome, paying tax to its notorious Cæsar, their priesthood a formality, their religious pride a stumbling stone. There were plentiful signs of a national breakdown. Even the pagan world, drunk with excesses of cruelty and moral degradation, lurched unsteadily along. Society was full of sinister shadows which turned the thoughtful away from its words and ways. Those who retained the faith could only look on with dismay, sick at heart, a prey to doubt and fear, wondering what sort of future lay ahead for them and their children.

It was at such a time that the voice of a prophet was heard once more in Judea. A cry rang out with bell-like clarity from the banks of the Jordan, "*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". The voice startled the haughty and stirred the disconsolate. People went to see and hear this remarkable young man who daringly denounced the sins of the age, who declared the axe already laid at the root of an old tree, a worn out system. He was in no doubt about his own mission. He was more than a prophet, more than a voice crying in the wilderness. He was the herald of the King, making straight the way before him.

He was born for his task. Dedicated from birth to the service of God, schooled in the wilderness, solitary in the desert, separated from the daily life of men, he was tutored and disciplined, chosen and fitted to prepare Israel to receive her king. In the portrait gallery of faith he is an arresting figure; a man standing at the meeting place of two great ages, foretelling the end of one and the beginning of another, yet privileged to share the spoils of neither. His mission ended, his life ended not in triumph but by the caprice of a wanton woman whose way of life he had condemned.

He was the last of the prophets. Of all who had gone before him there were none greater than this young man who appeared like a denizen from another world. Unshorn, bronzed with outdoor life, clad in his coat of camel's hair, primitive in habits and appearance, challenging

the lip-serving priests with his burning invective, he followed the Divine pattern of the startling and the unexpected. His whole life, his preaching and his ardour, was a total rejection of the show, the trappings, the rites and ceremonial which society thought necessary to successful living. The old ways were doomed. None could enter upon a new order without first shedding the past. This, many were eager to do, wading out into the cool swift waters of the Jordan river for baptism at the hands of John, known to history as the Baptist. Among these there stepped down one day for baptism another young man whom he recognised as the One whose way he had been preparing.

In the river pool they stood together, one dedicating the other to his long awaited office. What emotions must have stirred the breast of the ardent young prophet as he baptised the sinless Saviour, as he saw the Spirit of God descending in dove-like form and heard the heavenly voice proclaiming, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3.16-17).

This was the one greater than himself whose shoe's latchet he felt unworthy to unloose. *"He must increase. I must decrease"*. Humbly the morning star paled before the rising sun. Pointing men earnestly to "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" the dauntless, fiery Baptist slipped unobtrusively into the background, passing from the dawn of a new day through the dark portals of a gloomy prison to a lonely dungeon, to languish uncertain, undelivered, until at last the executioner's axe ended his brief career. History added one more martyr to its rolls. From Abel to John the blood of the prophets had been spilled; the price of allegiance to the invisible God and recognition of that code of conduct which demanded justice, humility and love for God and man.

Evil had its victories but the eternal spirit of good went forward in the person of him whom John had proclaimed the Lamb of God. In Jesus of Nazareth John had recognised him of whom all the prophets had spoken, the Messiah, the King for whose rule of righteousness the whole

world waited. He had clearly seen the end of the Jewish age and the advent of a new era in the earth, the kingdom of heaven. Later incarcerated in Herod's fortress like a caged eagle, the eye of faith dimmed. Sending some of his disciples to Jesus he expressed his doubt in the question, "art thou he that should come or do we look for another?". In common with his nation he may have been expecting deliverance at the hands of his king. Freedom from tyranny was the uppermost thought of those who had long suffered its iron grip. National independence, restoration to former greatness and future usefulness was the persistent dream of patriots. The answer to his question may have been as unexpected as the events which later baffled the disciples of Christ. Great things were expected of Israel's Messiah. John's messengers returned with the news that "the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, the poor had the gospel preached unto them".

This was kingdom work, the evidence that He who should come, had come. His deeds were his credentials, his letter of introduction from God to mankind. He was not concerned with thrones and kings, with pomp and power, with politics and priestcraft. Life was the central theme, about which his whole ministry revolved, life more abundantly for every man everywhere. He had come to fight a greater foe than Cæsar, to overthrow a craftier tyrant than Herod, whom he dismissed as "that fox". Men were in bondage to Satan in whose power even pagan tyrants were but pigmies. Injustice, poverty, cruelty, greed, sorrow, suffering, disease, ignorance and despair were some of the giant tentacles of sin which held the frustrated race in a deadly grip from which One alone could deliver them. Jesus knew what He had come to do. No doubt John knew too after he had received the answer of him whom he had dipped in the water of Jordan with such grave submission, and knowing, he went out to meet his end with satisfaction of having fulfilled his part, dying with the taste of victory sweet upon his lips and the vision of Messiah's Kingdom bright before his eyes.

"In Britain, when summer is at its height, excursions are made to the Arctic Circle, to view the midnight sun. It is a fascinating spectacle. The sun barely dips beneath the horizon, and there in the same heavens it is possible to see on the one hand the dying glory of the evening glow bathing the clouds in the rich hue of sunset, and on the other the pale lustre of the dawn silvering the slight cirrus cloudlets with exquisite beauty. So we who are living to-day are watching the evening glory of the closing years of "the times of the Gentiles", and in the sky there are

symptoms of the approaching day, the age of which Virgil dreamed and which Isaiah foretold.

"It is not within our province to detail the essential features of that age, except to say that He who died as Saviour will come to reign as King, and that the malign spirits who have operated "in the heavenlies" for evil will be replaced by the redeemed who will reign on the earth. Human life will go on then as now, but the invisible forces which will condition it will no longer be malign and evil, but pure and holy.

Dr. F. B. Meyer.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *Could you explain where pre-historic animals fit into our Bible account of creation?*

A. During the fifth creative day of Gen. 1.20-23. This is the beginning of the animal creation. The "moving creature that hath life" (*sherets*), literally "teeming creatures", is descriptive of the swarming life of that archaic time; "fowl that may fly above the earth" (*oph*) is a word which means, properly, any kind of flying creature including the flying reptiles—in Lev. 11.20 the word is used for bats — and "whales" (*tannin*) is a word meaning any great sea monster, particularly reptiles. These two verses therefore depict the time of the great land and sea and flying reptiles and other types of early life which later became extinct. The work of the sixth creative day (vss. 24-25) covers the emergence of the types of animal life that are known to us to-day, the "creeping things" (*remes*) a term for all small animals, the "cattle" (*behemah*) a word which covers the herbivorous animals, and "beasts of the earth" (*chaiyah erets*) the carnivorous wild animals. The fifth creative day, which saw these "pre-historic" monsters, would therefore correspond more or less with what the geologists call the Secondary or Mesozoic Era.

* * *

Q. *Is it not a fact that according to the New Testament the early Christians met for worship in private houses? Should not this practice be followed today? Is there not a stronger sense of fellowship on such occasions?*

A. The custom of "house meetings" is certainly as old as the Church itself and in the early days of Christianity the believers normally met in private houses for obvious reasons; the relatively small communities that were formed at first had no option. As the congregations grew in size larger buildings were required; when ministering at Ephesus the Apostle Paul found it necessary to hold his meetings "in the school of one Tyrannus" (Acts 19.9). (This "school" was in fact a place of general debating and listening to speakers, what would now be called a lecture hall.) Round about the 4th Century, when Christianity became the State religion of Rome and the old idol faiths were dispossessed, the State Church inherited the pagan temples and turned them into places of worship. That introduced the custom of worshipping in buildings set apart solely for Divine worship; the priests in the Middle Ages

saw to it that the entire population attended church and so such buildings became necessary. "Private" meetings, unattended and unsupervised by the priests, were frowned upon and often suppressed. Nevertheless there has never been a time during the Age when earnest Christians have not met in "twos and threes" in relatively humble homes; today, with diminishing numbers in many congregations, the system of house meetings is gaining fresh ground and in fact such regular gatherings are increasingly forming part of organised worship in many churches, with claims of consequent spiritual profit.

Q. *Is there not a hint of "sharp practice" on the part of the Israelites in the Exodus story when the Lord told them to "borrow" of their Egyptian neighbours jewels of silver and gold, knowing they were leaving Egypt and would never return the loans? (Exod. 11.2).*

A. The word here rendered "borrow" is *shaal* which means to ask or enquire, or request a gift, but not to borrow with the obligation of returning. It is rendered "ask" 87 times, "enquire" 22 times, "demand" 4, and in a few other ways. The only other time it is translated "borrow" is in 2 Kings 6.5. Examples of *shaal* are Jud. 1.14 where Achsah "asked" of her father a field, Jud. 5.25 where Sisera "asked" for water and Jael gave him milk, 1 Sam. 1.17 where Hannah "asked", in prayer, for a child. The regular word for "borrow" is *lavah*, as in Deut. 28.12. "Thou shalt lend and not borrow"; Neh. 5.4. "We have borrowed money for the king's tribute"; Ps. 37.21. "The wicked borroweth and payeth not again." What the Lord did tell Israel to do was ask their neighbours for these gifts. Perhaps it was intended as a symbolic recognition that payment of some kind was only fair, after the many years they had spent as slaves in Egypt.

* * *

Q. *What was the "angels' food" of Ps. 78.25 "Man did eat angels food; he sent them bread to the full"?*

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

SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

9. The Conversion of Cornelius Acts 10.

From his vantage-point on the rooftop he looked across the wide expanse of sunlit sea. His eyes followed the long waves as they formed far out and travelled at steady pace towards the shore, raising smooth brows as they approached, curling over with foam-covered crests, falling to break in a cascade of shining water flooding across the flat sands. The sky above him shimmered like a sheet of white-hot steel, and in the distance on his right he could see the long line of rocks running out to sea where legend had it the fair maiden Andromeda had once been chained as a sacrifice to appease the terrible sea-monster and the hero Perseus had appeared in time to slay the monster and deliver Andromeda. But Peter had no interest in Greek legend; he knew that this thriving seaport town of Joppa preserved the story as a distorted recollection of a prophet of his own people, Jonah of Gath-hepher, who had left this place in a merchant ship to run away from his Divine commission and had been brought back not many days later by a great seabeast. He knew that the old half-ruined Temple of Dagon on the hillside behind him had once contained the skeleton of a great seabeast and recalled what the citizens of Joppa told him, that less than a century earlier it had been taken to Rome and placed in a Natural History exhibition. His mind went back to Jonah and his eventual successful mission to the alien Assyrians—men who were outside the commonwealth of Israel, Gentiles, beyond the pale and yet God had blessed them because of their faith! He wondered why he had been guided to Joppa, a cosmopolitan seafaring city having more to do with the Gentile world than the Jewish. What interest could his risen Lord have in such a place, he mused. In Jonah's day it had been the scene of a wondrous manifestation of Divine power and heralded a great missionary work among certain Gentiles and a great deliverance. But he himself was not, like Jonah, a missionary to Gentiles. He was sent, as Jesus had been sent, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and in these last few days he had been empowered by the Holy Spirit to do great things. At Lydda, not many miles away, he had cured the Christian disciple Aeneas of his paralysis. Here at Joppa he had performed the most marvellous miracle of all; he had raised the devout woman Tabitha from the dead, and the resultant sensation in the town had brought many to the Lord and laid the foundations of a Christian community which

was to endure for many years and play its part in some momentous events in the history of the Church.

But Peter's thoughts were still with Jonah. He had elected to accept the hospitality of this brother in the Lord, Simon the tanner, in his humble home on the seashore—humble, because all orthodox Jews abhorred the tanner's trade and the calling was looked down upon and those who followed it despised. Simon was a poor man but he was a believer and with him Peter felt at home. Somehow or other he sensed some new phase of his commission was going to open before him but he could not be sure what it was going to be. For some time now the infant Church had been experiencing a period of rest. The opposition of the priests had subsided; the advice of Gamaliel had been followed. Peter had taken the opportunity to leave Jerusalem and travel through Samaria and then the lowlands along the coast, preaching the word and making converts, and now he was here at Joppa and there was an element of uncertainty what he should do next.

He shifted his position on the parapet of the roof to avoid the noon-day sun getting into his eyes. They would be calling him down presently for the midday meal and his burly fisherman's frame was already calling out for it. But more than his physical hunger was this desire for the revelation of God's will which he felt his soul needed. In the direction towards which he was now looking he could see a Tyrian merchant vessel setting out on its journey to some distant land. He watched the oars flashing in the sunlight as the rowers strove to assist the tremendous square sail, speeding the ship onward. Peter wondered where it was going. His eyes swept beyond it to the line of the far horizon, the boundary between sea and sky. Beyond that horizon, he knew, lay Rome, the city that was master of the world, and the arrogant race which worshipped gods many and lords many and knew naught of Christ. Still farther on to the west, he had heard of Spain, gateway to the mighty western ocean which extended to the rim of the world and from which no man who crossed had ever returned. One day when he was declaring the Good News in the streets of Joppa there had stopped to listen three unusual looking men, mariners, with blue eyes and fair hair. They had just come from placing their offerings on a modest shrine on the quayside to a strange god called Lud. In answer to his

questions, they had told him they were Britons, from a land in the far north-west where the ships of Tyre went to trade for tin, a metal scarce in the East but plentiful in their land. The round trip to their country and back took the ships two years, they told him, and although the pay was good for taking service on the Tyrian ships they were always glad to leave the hot and arid country of Judea and get back to their own green and pleasant land. Peter asked them about Lud and they said he was a great god in their land and in their capital city there was a temple to him on a hill called the Hill of Lud approached through a gate in the city wall called Lud Gate. When he talked to them about Jesus and the resurrection they shook their heads uncomprehendingly and said they did not understand, and as they went down the street towards their ship Peter was conscious again of that strange stab of feeling for these men who had never known the God of Israel, never heard of Jesus, and without believing in his Name could never be saved.

He thought of those three men now as he watched the ship ploughing its way through the waters, heading west. They were probably on that very ship now, he mused. In due time they would be back in their own land where that strange god they had told him about was worshipped. Would they remember anything of what he had said to them about Jesus; perhaps tell of him to their fellows in that land? And if so, would it be any good? What hope was there for them? They were Gentiles, outside the sphere of God's favour, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, dogs, unclean, common.....

A great stillness. The scene before him had taken on an unreal aspect. There was still sea and sky, but the town and the sands had disappeared; the parapet before him was not there now. He seemed to be suspended in space. There was no movement; the rolling waves had arrested their motion and were stationary. Drawn by an irresistible impulse, he looked up to the sky. The great square sail of the ship he had just been watching was there, high in the heavens, suspended by its ropes and tackling from some invisible support. It was descending, coming rapidly towards him, and as it came near he saw that it was crowded with moving figures, figures of animals, wild animals, reptiles, unclean beasts like swine and camels, scavenging birds like the vulture, and his soul shrank within him at the sight. All the things of the animate natural world which offended his Jewishness and were proscribed by the Law of Moses were there obtruding upon his sight. Try as he might he could not escape them. And as the great sail hung there, suspended by its four corners, with its repugnant cargo, there came a

rumbling of thunder from the clear skies above, shaping itself into words, words uttered in the familiar voice of his Master, words from the import of which he instinctively shrank in horror; "*Rise, Peter, kill, and eat!*".

Swift and unhesitating came his response. "*Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.*" There was a pause, and then that heavenly voice again, measured, serene, compelling. "*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*". Peter was silent, his mind in turmoil. Never before had his Master commanded him to commit so flagrant a breach of the Law. What did it imply; why must he do this thing, so alien to all that he had been taught and believed? Had he in reality heard aright and was this in very truth the voice of the Lord and not some demoniac trick of the Evil One?..... The voice came again, louder and more stern this time, each word impinging on his consciousness with an impact as of a heavy blow. "*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*". There could be no doubt about it; this was indeed the voice he knew so well. This was indeed Jesus speaking to him from the other side. But how could he do such a thing? What would his fellow-apostles and the believers say? Where would be the distinction between his position as a son of Israel, one of the chosen people, and that of any of the Gentiles around him, the unclean, the outcasts?..... In tones of thunder now, a challenge that could not be gainsaid, a command he could not but obey, reverberating through his mind and continuing in successive echoes against which he could not close his ears; "*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*"......

He looked up. The voice had ceased; the stillness had returned. The great sail with its strange load was ascending again into the heavens. Even as he gazed it became a speck in the sky and was gone. Suddenly the silence was broken. The twittering of birds fell upon his ears, the noises of people moving in the street below. The scene before his eyes came to life, the sea-waves rolling in to the shore as they had been a few minutes ago. The houses of the town were there, and the parapet before him, and the flat roof beneath his feet. The scenery took on perspective and came alive; far away at sea he saw the Tyrian ship dipping in the rollers as it headed west. It seemed to be in the same place on the ocean as when he last saw it before this thing happened to him, almost as if time had stood still for a space.....

Long did Peter sit there pondering the vision—for that it was a vision he now had no doubt. His earlier feeling that something momentous was about to happen was now fully justified. What lay behind his Lord's insistence that he no longer

recognise the distinction between clean and unclean? And why the great ship's sail, suspended in the heavens as choice of vehicle for the unclean assemblage which he was now to treat as clean? His eyes rested again on the ship, now little more than a speck on the horizon, and his mind suddenly divined the truth. There, straining against the tall mast of that merchant vessel, held by the ropes and tackling that spread it to receive the wind, was the same sail he had just seen in vision. It was taking that ship to the lands of the Gentiles. Its crew would fraternise with the Gentiles, trade with them for their goods, eat of their food, breathe the air of their countries, bring the products of their lands back to the land of Judea. That sail, driven and impelled forward by the wind of heaven, was a means of breaking down the physical barrier between Jew and Gentile, and no power on earth could prevent it. Had God shown him the sail, the agent of union—the unclean made clean—the message of the Gospel to go out from Israel to peoples far beyond the sea just as that ship was doing at this very moment—would God then indeed grant to the Gentiles repentance unto life? So he sat, musing, until presently there came upon his questing but receptive mind an intuition with which he was becoming increasingly familiar in these wonderful days; the voice of the Spirit. Now it was saying to him *"Behold, three men seek thee"*. Slowly he got up from the parapet and went down the steps to the little group of strangers standing at the door of the house.

* * *

Cornelius the centurion was a native Roman. His men were Romans also. Many of the soldiers stationed in Judea were drawn from occupied countries of the Empire other than Rome and indeed even Jews could be found in the Roman forces, but in order to impart some "stiffening" to these mixed companies certain legions were composed purely of highly trained men of Italy. Cornelius was a centurion of one such legion. He had probably been stationed at Cæsarea, which was the headquarters of the Roman governor of Judea, for a long time, for he had come to know and to worship the God of Israel. He was evidently a man of sterling worth, for his family and household staff were believers also, and even some of his legionaries (soldiers). Unlike most of the occupying forces he was just and generous in his dealings with the subject people, even to adopting the Jewish practice of giving alms to the poor. A Gentile, he served the God of Israel, and God saw, and hearkened, and honoured his faith. And it came to pass that a messenger from heaven was sent to him, and he was told that his prayers and his alms had come up for a memorial

before God. *"Now"* said the angel *"send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter... he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."*

So it came about that two of Cornelius' household servants and one of his legionaries set out to tramp the thirty miles which separated the two towns, and about noon on the second day entered Joppa and enquired for the house of Simon the tanner. Peter, coming down from the rooftop, found the three men, one in the uniform of a Roman soldier, all three obviously non-Jews, waiting for him. Quietly for once, he listened to their story, how that a Divine revelation to their master Cornelius had prompted him to send this request that Peter return with them to Cæsarea and bring with him the words of life. Peter must have listened with mixed feelings; this man was a Gentile and he had not as yet had any contact with Gentiles in his missionary work; but the vision he had just seen must have been a powerful influence. Perhaps it was at this point he began, however reluctantly, to accept that God had something in store for others besides the Jewish people, that the covenant with Abraham promising blessing to all the families of the earth was intended to be taken literally. At all events, he consented to go, and having invited six of the Joppa brethren to accompany him, the little party set out for Cæsarea.

There was time during that two days' journey—they travelled on foot—for Peter to consider and reconsider all that the vision had shown him. That great ship's sail was still in his mind. (The word rendered "sheet" in Acts 10.11 and 11.5 also denotes ship's sails, whilst that rendered "vessel" means, among other things, the ship's tackling and accessories used to hold the sail in place. What Peter saw therefore was this great square sail with its ropes and tackle fixed to its four corners so that it hung in the skies suspended from above containing the beasts and birds). Everything about that vision pointed to the Gentile world. Now he was in the company of Gentiles and going, for perhaps the first time in his life, into a Gentile household. It must have been a thoughtful Peter who eventually stepped across the threshold of Cornelius' house and greeted the centurion.

The room was full; Cornelius had gathered together all his kinsfolk and personal friends, and doubtless his household servants and those of his soldiery who shared his faith. Peter must have felt somewhat at a loss as he surveyed this motley assembly. All Gentiles, all strangers from the covenant of promise, all outside the circle of the chosen people; how was he to address them and what was he to tell them? But first of all he

wanted to make his own position clear. He could, and did, offer Jesus to the Jews as the logical climax to the Mosaic Law and the fulfilment of the prophets' foreviews of Messiah, but he was not yet at all sure in what terms he could present Christ to these Gentiles or what place he could allot to them in the Divine Plan. "Ye know" he commenced *"that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto, one of another nation, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for. I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?"*

This was putting the onus back on his host. Peter was evidently still feeling his way, still uncertain about the whole position, yet conscious that his Lord was leading him by stages to some new phase of understanding which he had formerly not even imagined could exist. He was no longer antagonistic, just conscious of inadequate knowledge, and he was waiting for the guidance and revelation which he knew would come.

Cornelius responded with his story. Four days earlier, two days before Peter's vision on the rooftop, he had this vision of an angel from God bidding him to send to Joppa for a man of whom he had never heard, telling him of the precise house where he was to be found, and assuring him that that man would speak to him the words of life which his soul desired. *"Now therefore"* he concluded *"are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God"*. Peter's expression was serious. He had listened intently to the narrative and his agile mind was piecing its elements together. This man before him had seen his vision at precisely the right moment to ensure the arrival of his messengers at Peter's house just when his own vision had ended. This thing was of God; there could be no other explanation. His Lord had intended and commissioned him to come to these Gentiles with the words of life. Everything was now perfectly clear. Christ was Lord of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. God had a place for Gentiles just as He had a place for Jews. When Jesus had told his disciples, so long ago now, to preach his gospel to the ends of the earth it was not just the scattered Jewish community in the world, the *Diaspora*, to which He referred. He meant all men, without exception. A whole new range of ideas suddenly suffused the mind of the rugged Apostle, and when he spoke it was in an unusually subdued tone and with intense earnestness.

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him".

Then, suddenly, his mood changed. As the full implication of the glorious truth he had just enunciated burst upon his mind he became the old Peter, enthusiastic, zealous, confident. With that same passion and fervour which had characterised his first appeal to the Jews at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost he plunged anew into his exposition of Jesus Christ and him crucified. *"The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ . . ."* He no longer saw Gentiles in front of him; he saw only men and women, for whom Christ had died, for whom Christ had risen, to whom Christ would come again in the days of his Second Advent for their salvation, and he told the story of that dying and that resurrection and that coming as forcefully and convincingly as ever he had done in his speaking to the sons of Israel. While he was yet speaking, the Holy Spirit came upon that assembly, just as it had done upon the disciples in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost itself, and when the six Jewish Christians from Joppa who had accompanied Peter witnessed that sight, they bowed their heads in awe. Here was the Divine endorsement, God's acceptance of these strangers into his family and his purposes even though they could lay no claim to being of the seed of Abraham. Upon these people also, outsiders once, but now accepted as the elect of God, came the visible and audible gifts of the Spirit and no man could gainsay them.

Quick witted as ever, Peter grasped the situation and he knew what it implied. *"These have received the Holy Spirit as we have! Can any man therefore forbid them baptism into Christ?"* And no man could. So they were baptised. Thus did the Gospel go to the Gentiles.

Many years later St. Paul referred to this momentous happening when, writing to the Ephesians, he said (Eph. 2.14) that *"he hath made both one, breaking down the middle wall of partition between us . . . now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"*. From that time onward there was no more Jew nor Greek, but all were one in Christ Jesus.

The other apostles, and the church with them at Jerusalem, were not so sure. When Peter got back eventually to the capital some of them made an issue of the matter. They were not prepared to accept Gentiles as their brethren in Christ. *"Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised"* they accused him *"and didst eat with them"*. But they did listen patiently to Peter's explanation, and at the end, perhaps wonderingly, but certainly believingly, declared *"then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"*. It was almost unbelievable, it cut across all their pre-

conceived ideas of God's attitude to the outsiders, it was going to raise all sorts of questions as to the validity of the Mosaic Law in the Christian community, but "God has granted the opportunity of repentance to the Gentiles". Perhaps some of them thought of Jonah and remembered that God is a merciful God, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repent-

ance. There were to be arguments and rifts and misunderstandings in the future before the Jewish section of the church finally accepted that the Lord Christ was Lord to all and not only to the Jew, but the standards of the universal Church were well and truly defined on that day when the Jewish Apostle Peter went to visit the Roman centurion Cornelius.

To be continued.

THE WHIP OF SMALL CORDS

A much misunderstood incident in our Lord's life is that recorded by John as occurring during the early stages of his ministry, the cleansing of the Temple. A similar incident also took place much later and this is recorded by the other three evangelists, but it is the one spoken about in John's Gospel which mentions the whip of small cords. The generally accepted impression is that Jesus, entering the Temple and finding it given over to all manner of merchant trading connected with the ritual sacrifices, made himself a whip (more properly a flail or scourge) and drove out the traders by the use of sheer physical violence. This action, so contrary to the general tenor of his conduct and teaching, has been made the basis of argument to the effect that the Prince of Peace sanctioned the use of violence.

A brief study of the passage in question reveals the false premise upon which this conclusion rests. Jesus did not in fact assault the traders with his flail at all. He drove out the beasts—the cattle and sheep — and then returned to upset the money-changers' tables and utter those burning words of denunciation which caused the guilty men before him to slink out of the Temple precincts, quailed and cowed under the fire of his indignation.

The A.V. is at fault in rendering the passage "*When he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen*" (Jno. 2.15). The R.V. corrects this mis translation "*He made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen.*" This rendering is confirmed by the majority of independent translators, as may be seen by the following examples.

"All of them he thrust forth out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen" (Roth.).

"So he drove all—both sheep and bullocks" (Weymouth).

"He drove them all, sheep and cattle together" (Moffatt).

"He cast all out of the sanctuary, the sheep as well as the oxen" (Concordant).

The sheep and cattle were driven out, their owners being left to round them up as best they could; the money-changers, sitting to barter the pilgrims' coins, of all nations, for the Jewish coin in which alone the Temple tribute could be paid, grovelled on the ground seeking to recover their ill-gotten and scattered gains; while the sellers of doves for the very poor quickly carried their cages away as his piercing voice rang in their ears, "Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

The time was the Passover. Every orthodox Jew had within the past few days scrupulously searched his house for hidden leaven and anything else that might defile, and attended to his own ceremonial cleanliness that he might keep the Passover according to ritual. Now there appeared one Who took to himself the role of a prophet in Israel and commanded men to cease from desecrating the Temple of their God, and with that inborn awe of a man who spoke to them in the name of God they hastened to remove themselves from the Court which they knew was defiled by their presence. The fact of Christ's indignation, joined to their own knowledge that their conduct was indefensible, was sufficient to empty the Court of the Gentiles of its trafficking crowd, and it was not until after the occasion had passed and the cupidity of these men once again overcame their temporary confusion that they began to ask of him a sign—a miracle—to establish his right to act as He had done in claiming the authority of a prophet in Israel.

A FAMINE IN THE LAND

*A talk for
the times*

"The days come that I will send a famine in the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord" (Amos 8. 11).

That old Hebrew prophet was a far-sighted man. He knew that the course of history could end only in one way; the continued ignoring of God would at last lead to almost complete ignorance of his Word. The prophets of old had great reverence for such of the written Word as existed in their days; there was not much of it but what there was became the rule of life by which they lived and the infallible authority on which they based their claim to speak. And some of the prophets—perhaps a score or so—added to the words of the Book for the greater benefit of those who were to come after them. Amos, the herdsman, who spoke and probably wrote the words quoted above, was one such and in his burning denunciation of the evils which were rampant in his own lifetime we see a vivid picture of the condition of world society to-day.

"When the Son of Man cometh," asked Jesus of his disciples, *"shall he find faith on the earth?"* His own words upon other occasions leave us in no doubt as to his own answer to his question. He did not expect to find faith on the earth. In the wondrous wisdom of the Divine Plan his return to earth in the power of his Second Coming was to be deferred until the world in the outworking of its own wilfulness and selfishness had come near to self-destruction. That would imply that the world would by then very largely have rejected God and turned aside from his Word. Jesus might equally truthfully have said that the Son of Man *could* not come until faith would no longer be found in the earth. So it has been in the outcome. Events in the political and commercial and social worlds for nearly a century past have so abundantly fulfilled the Biblical fore-views that there is no doubt the end of the Age is upon us, the time of God's intervention in the affairs of the nations. Concurrently with this the very same period has witnessed a steady decline in religious belief and faith and an increasing ignorance of God's Holy Word.

A strong light was cast upon this fact twenty-five years ago when the *"News Chronicle"* conducted a "Gallup Poll" directed to testing general knowledge of the Bible by finding out how many people could name all or any of the writers of the Four Gospels. One would think those four names are among the most familiar in the English

language. At one time they were, but now—apparently—no! Of all the people questioned—supposed to represent a fair sample of all levels and classes of the population—three out of five could name all four Evangelists; one out of four could not name any. The figures for the younger people are more revealing. Of all questioned under the age of 29, four out of five could not name a single one. Four out of five of the present generation, had either never heard of, or at any rate, did not know the Biblical connection of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John!

There is nothing really new about this. Similar conditions have been observed and recorded for quite a few years. Despite the optimistic claims of some ecclesiastical dignitaries—quite sincere claims, in most cases at least—and the ponderous utterances of certain politicians clad in the mantles of would-be Christian oracles, the fact does remain that the majority of people to-day are appallingly ignorant of the basic facts of Christianity, the nature of the Christian life, and the contents of the Word of God. Whatever may be the reason, and opinions differ, that is the position.

Now the Hebrew prophets, when they in their own days found themselves faced with a situation such as this—which was, relatively speaking, quite often—never hesitated to draw public attention to the fact and to denounce it; but they also never failed to go on to the remedy. They did not interpret their mission as one of denunciation or condemnation only. They set themselves up as teachers of the Word that had become all but universally despised, and out of that Word they brought all the assurances and the warnings that God had beforetime caused to be written concerning the inevitable consequences of continuance in such wrongful course. They declared on the authority of that Word the way to be taken whereby men might change their course and inherit, instead of disorder and unhappiness, the peaceful and prosperous state of order and happiness which awaits any people that attempts to order its life in accordance with, and holding in due recognition, the written Word of God.

The teaching of those prophets was positive, even to the verge of dogmatism. "If ye do this, ye shall . . . If ye do that, ye shall not . . . The Lord God will . . ." and so on. There is no doubt or indecision in what they had to say. They were men who had already learned well the principles of the Word that was in them and had applied

those principles to the practical problems of life and knew how they worked. It was on that account they were able to stand before the people and speak, as did our Lord at a later date, "as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

The reason that we in our day enjoy so clear and detailed a view of the Divine Plan, particularly in its dispensational and prophetic features, and understand so much as we do concerning the details of the Time of Trouble and the Kingdom that is to succeed it, is because these men were so clear in their own understanding and so definite in what they committed to writing. The work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts and minds has given us a sharp, well-defined understanding of the Plan of God that need not admit of uncertainty or doubt. We, in our turn, have succeeded to the inheritance bequeathed by faithful men of God through all preceding generations. *"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours"*. The question that comes up and requires an answer is—What are we going to do with it?

Here, on the one hand, are the teachers, qualified both by acceptance into the body of disciples and the possession and understanding of the sacred Scriptures to teach the ignorant out of the Word. There can be no reasonable doubt about that. Christians who have made themselves thoroughly familiar with the Word of God and its basic principles, and especially with the philosophy of the Divine Plan, how that God created man for life and happiness and is actively working through the ages to attain that end and will surely achieve his purpose, are the qualified teachers of this generation. Of course there are many, actively identified though they may be with some one or other of the Christian denominations, whose consecration to God and dedication to his service has not been so wholehearted that they have attained this position; or perhaps they are not consecrated or dedicated at all; in either case they come within the category described by the writer to the Hebrews as those who *"when, for the time, ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat"* (Heb. 5. 12). But we are not concerned with such at the moment; the important thing is that those who are consecrated to God and are diligent students of his Word, and have learned to apply it in their own lives and its principles in their daily conduct, are fitted by virtue of that fact to be teachers of the Divine Word to the generation in which they live.

So much for that side of the picture. On the other hand there is the colossal ignorance to

which reference has been made. The word of Micaiah, the prophet of King Ahab, comes to mind. *"I saw all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep having no shepherd. And the Lord said unto me, 'These have no shepherd, let them go every man to his own place'."* Things are like that to-day. There is a famine in the land, not of bread, nor of water, but of the hearing the word of the Lord. What is our mission in the face of this situation?

Quite evidently, to teach! That was the primary commission given to the Church. *"Teach all nations"*! The present ignorance of God and of his Word is a challenge to all who love God and know his Word to plan very deliberately for the extension of knowledge on every aspect of that Word. This at once involves the consideration of the message that is to be proclaimed, and the type of person to whom it is to be proclaimed.

The general answers to these questions are already well known and very generally agreed. Apart from those few who understand the will of God for them to require attention to their own spiritual development to the complete exclusion of any imparting of their faith and knowledge to the "world" around them, it is probably almost universally agreed that our mission is to preach Christ whenever and wherever we can, and to exclude from our evangelistic efforts none who are prepared to listen. That, at any rate, is how it usually works out in practice. At the same time it should be recognised that at this present stage in the world's history—or in the outworking of the Divine Plan, which is much the same thing—during this present "Gospel Age", the fact that God is inviting and selecting the members of the "Church" who are to be his agents of world redemption in the next Age means that emphasis should be placed upon Scriptural teaching regarding the "High Calling". Those most likely to respond to this will be men and women who already have a measure of Christian faith and belief and who want to learn more, to progress into something better than they have yet attained. These are obviously more likely to appreciate and perhaps accept the deeper truths of the "High Calling in Christ Jesus", the principles of Divine dealing which guarantees to every man a full, fair opportunity for life, and the appeal of the death of Jesus on their behalf, than those who have never so much as heard of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. To increase the number of "would-be" disciples who become "all-the-way" disciples is to increase and so help to complete the force that God is preparing for future world conversion and this surely is working on right lines and co-labouring intelligently with God. The detailed substance of our message,

therefore, should be such as will appeal to those who already have some faith in God and his Word and want to increase their measure of belief. The message should be built very largely around definite expository teaching of Bible themes and this, strangely enough, is one of the foremost remedies advocated by some leading ministers for the present condition of indifference and frustration.

Another important necessity is to see that the way is not made too easy. The tendency of this modern age is to make all things superlatively easy for everyone. Whether it is in the realm of labour-saving devices in the home, a library service that provides information on every conceivable subject for no conceivable purpose, or a State welfare system that lifts every vestige of personal, parental and filial responsibility from the shoulders of John Citizen and make those interests the responsibility of the State, the universal appeal is "take this, see how easy it is". God's way is not like that, and the Christian way was not intended to be easy, and in fact is not easy, and no good can come by pretending to people that it is. Our message should stress the fact that its acceptance will cost something. The life into which it leads and the benefits it brings will be found well worthy of the cost; but a price there is and that has to be paid. It is sometimes suggested that those who take their stand on the Lord's side will be preserved from all physical harm in the Armageddon that is to come; a variant of the belief is that the "saints" will be "gathered home" in order to escape the tribulation which is coming upon the earth. Now whatever of truth there may be in that understanding of the Divine intentions it is quite immoral and unscriptural to hold out that kind of inducement for people to accept Christianity, and, with it, Christ. The early Christians certainly had no such bait held out to them. They accepted Christ knowing full well it might very easily mean wild beasts in the arena, the stake, or worse, as in

many cases it did.

Our task, then, is to relate our understanding of Scripture and of the Divine Plan to the state of present day knowledge—and the pageant of current events, that those who are already halfway in their progress to God may find in this presentation that for which they are looking. So doing, we shall be using our energies and abilities and resources to the best advantage, like the man in the parable who by the more judicious use of his "pound" eventually gained ten pounds. It would seem, anyway, that his zealous endeavours in the matter had resulted in his attainment of qualifications for future administration to a much higher degree than had the endeavours of his fellows, for he was made ruler over ten cities, and the Lord would not have done that had he not been fitted for the task. The man who hid his talent in the earth did not succeed in obtaining the rulership over even one! The timorous, the cynical—and the condemnatory—man will stand aloof from the activity inseparable from the promulgation of such a message, but will be quite satisfied with the ultimate results. All are acquainted with the weak-in-faith or pessimistic brother who surveys the empty chairs and proclaims aloud his opinion that the meeting will be a fiasco; how pleased he is, as pleased as any of the rest, when the unexpected happens and the hall is full. So it will probably be with those of our brethren who feel that Jezebel has slain all the prophets and pulled down all the altars and only we few are left; the Lord may well bring into his fold some whom we would have considered most unlikely ones, and perform a work, even at this late stage of the Age's history, which we might have deemed improbable. When all that can be said has been said, it remains true that there is a famine of the Word of the Lord in the earth, and if we are anything like the first disciples whom we claim to take for our teachers and exemplars, "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard".

In the Apostle Paul we have the greatest example of an imperfect man giving his all for the perfection of heaven. It brought him at last to a prison cell, almost blind, feeble and in chains; his only possessions a few books and parchments and an old cloak. Almost friendless and alone he faced a martyr's death, but he could say, "I have fought a good fight . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown". The crown was the thing for which he had paid his all, esteeming

it only a light affliction. He had nothing, yet everything, for he had the conviction that the crown was his. Do we desire to have the same conviction? To some it is worth while, to others much. Let us say, "To me it is worth everything. I want my Father's perfection, the perfection of Christ, the life of heaven, the fellowship of saints and angels for ever, and by the power and grace of God which avails for me through Christ I know I shall have it".

PAUL'S TEACHING ON FELLOWSHIP IN CHRIST

In the course of writing his letters Paul used the expression "in Christ" more than two hundred times (according to Hunter in *"Introduction to the New Testament Theology"*). He also used variant ideas in expression such as "in the Lord" and "in Him". He further turned the concept inside out by phrases which convey the thought of Christ dwelling in the believer. In recent years Paul's theology has been regarded more and more as based on Hebrew thinking rather than Greek ideas and in this recurrent theme of "fellowship in Christ" there is no reflection of the mystery religions. To Paul, sharing in the life of Jesus touched on every possible aspect of his life, and in fact to him to live was to be "in Christ", wholly committed to what he believed was God's purpose for him.

Dignified reverence for a holy God had been coupled with thoughts of his bending near to his people, in some Psalms and by some prophets. Isaiah 57.15 (from the Revised Standard Version) sums up this attitude in the words *"I dwell in the high and holy place and also with him who is of a contrite spirit"*. In the gospels the main aspect of communion with God is "prayer" although the Gospel of John makes more direct statements concerning the relationship of the believer to Christ. Jesus spoke quite naturally of God as his Father and this attitude was duly impressed upon the first disciples. Paul also urged those to whom he wrote to be diligent in prayer but throughout his epistles a deeper aspect of communion is present which is perhaps best described as "oneness with Christ". Although Paul was unaware of the formal gospels as we have them today the traditional legacy of the sayings of Jesus which were current among the early Christians could not have omitted some of those expressions of Jesus concerning his unity with his people.

As we read the gospels we may ask the questions "Who is Christ?" and "What is he like?" In "Acts", we read of the work of the Church done "In the name of Christ" but Paul's attitude is summed up in 1 Cor. 1. 30, *"He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, righteousness and consecration and redemption"*.

One of the several occasions when Paul's prayers are mentioned is the record of his plea for the "thorn in the flesh" to be removed. The Apostle in his letters, and Luke in the "Acts", tell us of Paul's visions. Whatever the nature of the visions

such as he had in Jerusalem (Acts 22. 17-21) and on board ship (Acts 27.4) it is clear that there was some form of vivid and intimate communication between Paul and the Lord. However, Paul's life was not a mystical experience shut away from the hard facts of life. He lived most of the time either as a missionary or a pastor with a young church, in an atmosphere of opposition and like many others whose lot was cast in the thick of the battle, he needed and obtained strength from his Master. As A. R. George has written in his book *"Communion with God"* — *"Paul is not inventing unverified theories but writing out of the depths of his personal experience"* (p.142).

In his first encounter with Christ on the Damascus road Paul was given a personal knowledge of the risen Saviour. This experience served firstly to convince Saul of Tarsus who Jesus really was. Instead of viewing the prophet of Nazareth as the blasphemous leader of an heretical sect whose death as a criminal was completely justified, Paul discovered that Jesus was the living Son of God, whose life and death had provided him with a deliverance from sin, which the Law had failed to do. God was also pleased to reveal his Son to Paul in order that he might preach him among the Gentiles (Rom. 3. 24; Gal. 1. 16). That vision, reinforced by personal communion along the road he travelled, upheld Paul through very bitter experiences.

In Romans 5. 11 and 2 Cor. 5. 18-19 Paul shows that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. In these two chapters Paul is relating how God is bridging the gap between himself and man through the work of Jesus. Writing much later Paul wrote of "the man Christ Jesus" as the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2. 5). That work accomplished, Paul goes on to demonstrate in the next three chapters of Romans (6-8) how that Christ did what the Law had been powerless to do, subdue the power of sin. Christ's ability to do this sprang from the relationship which he established with his followers, collectively and individually.

Once in the history of Israel the far distant Creator had established a covenant relationship through the ancient lawgiver, and at many and various times since then had spoken through the prophets. Now God had made himself known through his Son *"To give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Cor. 4.6 R.S.V.). The awesome recol-

lection of the Divine presence at Sinai was a thing of the past; even the physical knowledge of Jesus' earthly ministry was no essential to become a Christian, for wrote Paul *"even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer, therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation."* (2 Cor. 5. 16-17 R.S.V.)

Paul was concerned that the young Churches should understand that reconciliation was not enough. Too many in Israel had believed that they had a special relationship to God just because they were descendants of Abraham. They neglected true religion and tried to satisfy God with ritual and animal sacrifices in lieu of decent ethical standards. Even those like Paul who had tried to keep the Law and genuinely served God, found it impossible. The Apostle was later to discover the solution to his problem was a right relationship with God based upon participation in the resurrection life of Christ. In Romans 6 Paul explains how the new eternal life of the risen Christ is the sound basis for defeating the continued demands of sin. In the sight of God the inherited life of the human race has been replaced by the obedient life of Christ. Finally in that same chapter, vv. 22, 23, he presses home the point that the believing follower of Christ enjoys now eternal life and again we catch an echo of the words of Jesus later to be recorded in the fourth gospel. But the problem of the struggle against evil had been a very real one to Paul and in Romans 7 Paul wrote of the solution to this problem as being *"Through Jesus Christ my Lord"* (v.25).

Jesus, in his earthly life, had demonstrated that the power of God could overcome the power of evil. In Eph. 2 and Col. 3. Paul continues the argument of Romans 6 of being buried in baptism with Christ in order that his life might be submerged into the purpose of God. Just as in the gospels God's kingdom is described as a present and future experience, so life in Christ is begun in the life of "here and now" to be continued in the life "hereafter". Paul expects that there will be outward evidence in the physical body that the old life has terminated and that the new life has begun. Life in Christ was Paul's normal way of life and not just passing moments of exaltation as A. R. George again puts it (p. 148). The permanence of this relationship with Christ is emphasised in Eph. 3. 17 *"that Christ may actually live in your hearts by your faith."* (J. B. Phillips).

In writing to the Church at Philippi, a church born amid the Apostle's affliction, he discusses the discipline of becoming a Christian (ch.3) and the denial of natural privileges for the sake of knowing Christ. But in v.11 he goes further than denial when he gives expression to longing to share the sufferings of Christ. In 2 Cor. 1. 5 he states that he is actually sharing the sufferings of Christ. When in prison, he regarded himself as a prisoner of Jesus Christ and in his letter to Philemon he writes of Epaphras as his fellow prisoner in Christ.

It follows that if many believers are attached to Christ as brethren then there must occur some form of kinship among those brethren of Christ. This thought is strengthened by the teaching in the gospels and in Rom. 8. 15 to regard God as Father in Heaven. Again, the permanence and inter-relationships so formed are expressed by Paul in Eph. 2. 19-22 in the words *"you are fellow-citizens... saints... members of the household of God;... Christ Jesus... in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord... in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit"*. The barriers of former years were of no consequence in the Church (2 Cor. 5. 16), for the baptised into Christ have *"put on the family likeness"* (Phillips) and discarded the natural differences of race, sex and class, for *"all are one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3. 27-28). His practical application of this family relationship is shown in Romans 16 by such greetings as *"Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus"*.

This is a bond of love with Christ stronger than death and Paul longs to see his Master in Heaven. To him Christ was the *"hope of glory"* (Col. 1.27) and he was assured that *"the dead in Christ"* would rise (1 Thess. 4.16). From his early ministry until the story ends in Rome, Paul's life was directed by his fellowship with Christ. As a slave, as a member of the body of Christ, as a *"joint heir"*, Paul was confident of his place in his Master's affection. The Christ he met on the Damascus road led him through bitter sufferings for his name's sake (Acts 9.16) but these only served to draw him close to his Master, to transform his character into Christ's likeness (2 Cor. 3.18) and to enable him to write at the end *"if we have died with him, we shall also live with him"* and he was assured of the reward which the Lord would reserve for him (2 Tim. 3. 11; 4.8).

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

A story of the
First Advent

One of the early incidents of our Lord's ministry was his discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, a discourse which both set the pattern of his future work and would, had Jesus been no more than an ordinary man, have terminated that ministry before it fairly began. Received at first with approbation, his concluding words so incensed the worshippers that they rushed him to the top of a precipice outside the town, intending to cast him down; by the exercise of that mystic power which was his He turned and made his way through the crowd and defeated their intention.

It is a little difficult to piece together the four accounts of Jesus' movements immediately after his baptism. It seems certain that he made his way to Galilee but not at first to his home town of Nazareth. For a little while He visited other places in Galilee, arousing some interest in his message and performing some miracles. During this short time came the wedding at Cana with its turning of water into wine. Then he went to Nazareth and attended the synagogue there on the first sabbath of his stay. Following the sequel to his discourse he went down to Capernaum on the lakeside and never went back to Nazareth.

On that memorable sabbath Jesus entered into the synagogue and was apparently received as a well-known and respected member of the community. He must of course have been accepted for many years as a young man singularly proficient in the knowledge and exposition of the Scriptures and he had probably officiated as reader many times before. It is possible that none of the local townspeople had heard anything about his recent baptism in Jordan and they would have received him on exactly the same basis as in the past. And when, being called to read, he repeated to them the well-known words of the prophet Isaiah, words which spoke in glowing terms of Israel's coming glory, there would be much nodding of heads in approval.

"*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*" he read "*because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" (Luke 4. 18-19). Familiar words; they had heard them many times before, but today there was a difference. An air of expectancy pervaded the synagogue. "*The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were*

fastened on him."

"*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" That announcement must have caused a good many to sit up. Accustomed as they were to hearing the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah expounded in public, this must have been the first time they had been told that the prophecy was even then in process of fulfilment. The customary exegesis looked forward to a future day when the Roman occupation of Judea would be ended by the victorious advent of Messiah, a king ruling in righteousness and riding to victory in the majesty of his power, crushing all opposition and exalting Israel to the head of the nations. The rest of the chapter, and the succeeding chapters, are eloquent on this theme, how that the Gentiles would become tributary to Israel and bring gifts, how the old desolations would be restored and the favour of God be turned toward his people as in the days of old. Here was a theme with which any preacher could always command the attention of his audience, present woes being temporarily forgotten in the anticipation of that which was to come. The idea that the fond expectation was to be realised in their own day and time must have awakened instant interest just as the same kind of declaration has done in every generation since that day.

Details of the sermon which Jesus preached have not been recorded. All that is known is that "*all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*" (Luke 4. 22). Up to this point his words could be unanimously approved, as they always are when a congregation has its own particular beliefs, prejudices and outlook endorsed from the pulpit. But Jesus had no intention of finishing on that note. He intended to complete the vision of Isaiah, to show how the glory of the Lord is to be revealed to all flesh, and all men all over the earth have the opportunity of covenant relationship with the God of Israel. The Jews of our Lord's day never failed to remember that their nation one day was to be exalted above the nations and become the blessed people of God but they had long since forgotten the expressed purpose of that destiny, that they might be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. In that they become the prototype of practically every reform movement in the Christian church, starting off in genuine evangelical fervour to deepen individual spiritual life in close conjunction with intensive missionary endeavour

in the promulgation of the Gospel to those who are still unreconciled to God. Invariably, before many generations have passed, the missionary spirit has largely died out and the movement crystallised into the unreasoning dogmatism of a sectarian club in which little possibility of further progress in the light remains.

It would seem as though the interest and enthusiasm of Jesus' hearers was not altogether without an ulterior motive. He himself anticipated a demand for the performance of some miracles. Whether this emerged from their fulsome praise of his discourse or was manifest in their attitude does not appear, but Jesus told them of his expectation that they were going to ask him some such thing. And as always, he had nothing but the stern word of reproof for those who thus manifested their lack of desire for the fundamentals of his mission. Jesus wrought many wonderful works but He did not come to earth for that purpose. He came to die for man's sin and by his life and death show to man the way by which man can be reconciled to God and ultimately fill his destined place in God's creation. The miracles of healing and other wonderful works were intended as examples, illustrations, of the wholesale work of healing and blessing He will conduct when his kingdom is set up at his Second Advent, when the glories of Isaiah's prophecies which He was then and there expounding should become realities. Jesus never refused a plea for healing, but He did not set out on a systematic campaign to heal all the diseased and crippled in Israel. He felt it necessary to stress this fact at the outset. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, he said, all suffering from the famine, but Elijah was only commissioned to relieve one and she was not even of the chosen people; she was a Gentile of Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha but the prophet was not sent to heal any of them but only Naaman a Syrian. And when the good people in the synagogue heard these things, they were filled with wrath.

Why the sudden change of feeling? There was probably a dual reason. Disappointment and vexation that Jesus was not going to work any miracles to satisfy their curiosity, and rage that He should dare to suggest that God would bestow blessings on the hated Gentiles. These were incidents in their sacred writings which they preferred to forget. An all-Jewish Messiah who would pander to the national pride and use his powers exclusively for the benefit of Israel they

would accept, but one who proposed to include the Gentiles and all nations in the scope of his benevolence they would not have. The meeting broke up in disorder as the congregation seized the one whom they had so lately been eulogising and rushed him outside the town to a place where in their insensate fury they would have hurled him to death from the precipice.

It seems that Jesus suffered them, unresistingly, until they came to the cliff. The record runs "*but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way*" (vs. 30). There is something here that is very similar to the incident in Gethsemane at the close of his life when his would-be captors fell back from him upon his declaration of identity, and fell to the ground. There must have been such times when the majesty of his Divine origin shone out through the veil of his flesh and caused men to realise that they had to do with one who was more than a son of Adam. So here, the maddened crowd must have fallen suddenly quiet, the rough hands loose their grip, the cries of anger lapse into silence, as the crowd looked upon the young man they had known from childhood, and beheld something in him they had never seen before. Perhaps in that moment conviction came to some of them that the words they had just listened to were words of truth, unwelcome though they had been.

So far as is known, Jesus never went back to Nazareth. His rejection by the townspeople was utter and complete. According to Mark's account, he could do no mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them. Capernaum became his headquarters for a while and that town probably became the home of Mary and the rest of the family. James, the eldest son of both Joseph and Mary, was grown up by now and probably assumed the duties of head of the family, so leaving Jesus free to pursue his ministry wherever it might take him. It is significant that none of his disciples came from Nazareth. None of his old time friends, the companions of his youth, believed in him enough to throw in their lot with him. It was chiefly from among the fishermen of the lakeside that he found the men who were to labour and suffer with him. Pride, and prejudice, and bigotry and national arrogance, blinded the men of Nazareth so that they missed the opportunity they and their nation had been anticipating for centuries. They rejected their most illustrious citizen, and the opportunity never came their way again.

WHITSUNTIDE

A seasonable word

Whitsuntide has been observed for centuries by Christians as the memorial of the Day of Pentecost, which occurred fifty days after the resurrection of our Lord. On that day the Holy Spirit descended upon the early disciples in "tongues like as of fire", as a visible sign of their setting apart to the service of God, and of the beginning of a new life within them, wherein they should "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". Not since that day, except, perhaps, in the case of Cornelius and those who "heard the word" with him (Acts 10.44-48), has the Spirit been visibly bestowed; yet every true child of God is aware that he has received the same begetting. *"You have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know it"* (1 John 2.20).

What is the purpose of this begetting? What is the meaning of the gift, and what is the intent of him who bestows it? Is it that the recipient might "speak with tongues", or that he should henceforth have an excess of emotional religious fervour? Nay; it is of far greater significance and consequence. Jesus, in his patient effort to make clear to the Jewish ruler, Nicodemus, some of the things of the spirit world, told him that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". This statement may be logically expanded to say: "That which is begotten of the Spirit will be born a spirit-being". The birth follows the begetting, and partakes of its nature.

In the same conversation Jesus explained that those "born of the Spirit" have powers of action and of invisibility to human perception totally unknown to man. "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with every one who has been born of the Spirit".

"God is a Spirit"; "heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool". The nature, laws, and conditions of the spirit world are vastly different from those of the earth. In the one particular of temperature the physicists and astronomers tell us that the universe has a range of tens of thousands of degrees Fahrenheit; our human life can endure a variation of barely one hundred and fifty degrees. We cannot conceive of life existing at four hundred degrees below zero, or at ten thousand degrees above; yet the spirit world has joyful existence under equally inconceivable conditions.

If we were planning to move our residence to Africa or Australia, we would try to learn all we could about life there—in fact, to go there in our minds and so prepare ourselves for our new environment. We would commence our new life there in anticipation; and that is exactly what the Pentecostal begetting of the Spirit is—a mental seed-planting of a new spirit-life, a "lively hope", or new hope of life. To this embryonic spirit-life such various Scriptures refer as: "a New Creature"; "the renewing of your mind"; "walking in newness of life".

"There is a physical body, and there is a spirit body". The change from one to the other, tremendous as it is, is a mere detail to the power with which the begotten one has to do. The actual operation is dismissed in the Scriptures in a brief sentence: "He giveth it a body as it pleaseth him". Moreover, this change will be accomplished instantaneously, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye".

But the mental, moral, and emotional transformation from the human to the spirit nature is a far more complicated and lengthy process and requires the candidate's full, continuous, and careful cooperation. Practically the whole of the New Testament is devoted to describing, facilitating, and inspiring this process. It requires rigid self-abnegation, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. "The flesh-desires oppose the spirit and the spirit-desires oppose the flesh, for these are contrary to each other; that not whatsoever things ye may be wishing, these ye should be doing".

What does it mean to us? Are we carefully cherishing and cultivating that flame of life that we have received, or are we permitting "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" to "quench the spirit"? Are we "putting to death the deeds of the body" that we may live; or are we "living after the flesh", which is mortal—"death-doomed"? Are we "giving ourselves wholly to these things, that our profit may be manifest to all", as the Apostle advised his "beloved son" Timothy? Are we cultivating and bringing forth in our lives the ripening "fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering", or are the "works of the flesh" still all too manifest in our relationships—family, church, business? Is our love like God's sunshine and rain, universal and impartial—"perfect", as Jesus admonished us it should be; or is it sectional—only for those who agree with us?

These are practical questions of supreme importance. They should be addressed, in all seriousness, to ourselves. *"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith". "Prove yourselves. Or do ye not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you,*

unless you are disapproved"? For "if we examine ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are corrected, that we may not be condemned with the world".

(From the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom")

THE WORLD PASSETH AWAY

Among the principal necessities of life upon earth is oxygen. Nearly everyone knows oxygen as that constituent of the air we breathe which sustains our living processes. Human beings, like all living creatures, breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Where does the oxygen come from? It comes entirely from the vegetable world! All plant life, from the finest grass to the mightiest tree, takes in water vapour and carbon dioxide, and breathes out oxygen which has been manufactured by the plant. Thus the animal and vegetable worlds are interdependent; each lives on what the other provides and provides what the other needs. And these processes have been going on for untold ages of time without the balance being upset. There has always been enough carbon dioxide for the plants and always enough oxygen for man and the animals. This is only one of the many instances of Divine planning in the practicalities of material creation.

But now someone thinks the balance is in danger of being upset—and of course it is man and not God who is doing the upsetting. At a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1967 it was stated that the increasing dumping of man-made refuse and chemicals in the oceans, and the burning of increasing quantities of coal, oil and gas, may conceivably reach a point in the not too distant future when there will be a catastrophic shortage of oxygen in the atmosphere, and life on the earth in consequence become impossible. There are now, it was said, over half a million different kinds of pesticides, detergents and radio-active waste materials reaching or being dumped in the seas of the world. The toxic effect of this increasing pollution might well commence to kill off the myriad forms of floating plant life—as it has already done in some areas near industrialised coasts—and this plant life in the sea produces 70% of the world's continuing supply of oxygen. It was pointed out that whenever any kind of fuel is burnt oxygen is consumed and although in past ages the quantity was insignificant, modern in-

dustry is making such huge demands that this becomes another potential source of shortage.

When one reflects upon the immensity of the earth and its surrounding atmosphere a warning such as the above seems a little too fantastic to be taken seriously. But is it so fantastic after all? A few hasty—and approximate—calculations based upon a variety of independent research findings come up with some startling figures. A full grown man uses up about ten tons of oxygen in a year, and all of this comes from the plant world. But the construction of modern buildings, roads, airports, and so on, obliterates over fifteen hundred square miles of the earth's surface each year, and this involves a permanent loss of the oxygen needed to keep ten million human beings alive. There is, at any one time, over a thousand millions of millions of tons of the stuff in existence so there appears to be an ample store, but it would seem that the many processes for which Nature requires oxygen would exhaust this vast accumulation in less than ten years if production by the plant world ceased, so that the American professor may well be uttering a timely warning.

That it will be heeded is too much to expect. The powers and vested interests of this world will continue to pour the filth from their industrial processes, the poisonous pesticides from their "scientific" agriculture, the radio-active wastes from their nuclear power stations, and their sewage, into the oceans, killing off the creatures that live therein and threatening the orderly continuance of life on this planet. It seems that the process will only be halted when the sovereignty of Christ is asserted and the kingdoms of this world become his kingdom. Under his administration we can look for the restoration of that orderly harmony and co-operation between man and Nature which characterised the beginning of things. The apparent urgency of the position is another evidence that the time of that Kingdom is close at hand—"even at the doors"!

TIMES AND SEASONS

2. From the Flood to Abraham

The second period of dated Bible history commences with the Flood and ends with the death of Terah and Abraham's departure from Haran to take up residence in Canaan. From that point the history of Abraham properly begins and forms the natural starting point of another period. All that is recorded concerning this long span of more than a thousand years is contained within the 9th to 11th chapters of Genesis, necessarily brief and consisting of little more than the genealogies and lines of descent of the immediate descendants of the sons of Noah. One family line of descent, from Noah through Shem to Abraham, gives the age of each father at the birth of the relevant son; the sum of these ages represents the Biblical view of the actual duration of the period.

Right here the same situation exists as in the case of the antediluvian era, dealt with in the previous chapter of this series. The Massoretic text displays a shortening of the period of 650 years, using the same expedient as before, viz., deducting 100 years (50 in one case) from the ages of the patriarchs. The Samaritan text, however, which followed suit in the case of the antediluvian patriarchs, does not agree with the Massoretic here, but shows the same figures, with one exception, as the Septuagint. From this it has been surmised that the alterations to the Massoretic text were made in two stages, the antediluvian first, probably in the early A.D. centuries, and the postdiluvian at a much later date when the desirability of still further postponing the end of the 6,000 years from creation became evident, and that the Samaritan, having become a fixed text by then and outside the "orthodox" Jewish stream, was not altered and so remained conformed in this respect to the Septuagint.

One other point of difference is that both the Massoretic and the Samaritan omit Cainan the son of Arphaxad, whereas the Septuagint includes him. It is fairly certain that this omission was made in the Hebrew texts at a very early date, probably some time before Christ, for Josephus also omits Cainan, although otherwise he agrees generally with the Septuagint. (For a full discussion of the arguments for the inclusion or exclusion of Cainan see *B.S.M.* for Jan/Feb. 1975. Ed.) The Apocryphal "*Book of Jubilees*", about 150 B.C. includes Cainan with an account of the sin for which he was condemned, this latter logically leading to his being "blotted from the book" when the Hebrew texts were rationalised

in the early centuries. "*Jubilees*" is believed to stem from a variant Hebrew text midway between those which eventually led to the Massoretic and the Septuagint. A subsidiary testimony is offered by the fact that the chronology of the Gospel of Nicodemus, (2nd-4th cent. A.D.), in its estimate of the time between the Flood and the Tower of Babel, also includes the period of Cainan's life.

The following table compares the relevant figures from the Massoretic, Alexandrian Septuagint, Samaritan, and Josephus.

AGE AT BIRTH OF SON

	Mass	Sam	LXX	Jos
Shem (from Flood)	2	2	2	12
Arphaxad	35	135	135	135
Cainan	—	—	130	—
Sala	30	130	130	130
Eber	34	134	134	134
Peleg	30	130	130	130
Reu	32	132	132	130
Serug	30	130	130	132
Nahor	29	79	79*	120
Terah	130	70	130	70
To death Terah	75	75	75	75
Total	427	942	1,207	993

*Sextine LXX has 179

TOTAL LENGTH OF LIFE

Shem	600	600	600	—
Arphaxad	438	438	565*	—
Cainan	—	—	460	—
Sala	433	433	460	—
Eber	464	404	504*	—
Peleg	239	239	339	—
Reu	239	239	339	—
Serug	230	230	330	—
Nahor	148	148	208*	—
Terah	205	145	205	205

*Sextine LXX has 535, 404, 304 respectively

It will be noticed that there are two discrepancies apart from the Massoretic omission of 100 years in six instances. One is the case of Terah who is said by the Samaritan and Josephus to have been 70 instead of 130 years old at the birth of Abraham. This is due in both cases to careless reading of Gen. 11.26 "*Nahor lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran*" with failure to notice that the three names are not in order of birth but of their prominence in the history of after events. Gen. 11.32 and 12.4, with Acts 7.4,

make it clear that Abraham was seventy-five when he left the city of Haran upon the death of his father Terah at 205 years, so that he was born when Terah was 130. A confirmation of this is the fact that both Abraham and Nahor married daughters of their elder brother Haran, the one who died early before the departure from Ur, and that Haran's son Lot was the companion and colleague of Abraham in his later journeyings. The position is set out in Gen. 11. 27-29, where it is shown that Nahor married Milcah and Abraham married Sarai, both daughters of Haran. The otherwise unknown name "Iscah" in vs. 29 should be read "Sarai". Josephus says (*Ant.* 1.6), as does Jewish tradition, that Sarai was the daughter of Nahor, but only in recent times has it been discovered how the name came to be rendered Iscah in the Hebrew text; this incidentally is one of the many indications that this part of Genesis originally existed in Sumerian or Akkadian cuneiform before Moses included it in his "Five Books". The cuneiform signs for "Sarai" and "Iscah" are almost identical and a scribe copying the tablet might easily mistake one for the other; alternatively a translator rendering the cuneiform record into the early Hebrew script, which might have been any time between Joseph and Joshua, could easily have misread the name. Cuneiform characters were often roughly or badly executed on the clay tablets as modern decipherers have often found to their cost.

The other discrepancy is in the age of Nahor at Terah's birth and this is more far-reaching. There are four versions; Mass at 29, Alexandrian LXX and Sam. at 79, the Sixtine LXX at 179, and Josephus at 120. The easy way out is to assume that the LXX 79 is correct and that the Mass, unable to deduct 100 as with the other patriarchs, deducted 50. This, however, does not explain where Josephus got his 120 or the Sixtine LXX its 179. And in the LXX all the other patriarchs show consistent figures between 130 and 135; this one seems to be a strange anomaly.

The solution probably lies in variations introduced in the process of copying old worn-out manuscripts, or in translation from the "Old Hebrew" to the "square Hebrew" of the 1st-2nd cents B.C., and from that to Greek. Numbers were written as full words in the 1st Cent. Hebrew and Greek texts so that mistakes are unlikely, but it is not known whether the "old Hebrew" used words or numerals so that research is difficult. On the assumption that numerals were used in the "Old Hebrew"—as they certainly were in the original cuneiform from which these records are derived—it is possible that the original figure in the oldest texts was 129. This number would have been denoted by the three letters

Kuph (100) *Caph* (20) *Teth* (9). But the Old Hebrew letter *Caph* looks much more like the square Hebrew *Ayin* (70) than it does the square *Caph* and some copyists might easily thus change 129 to 179. Thus some Mass would retain the 129 and others show 179. Other considerations which are too lengthy to be entered into here tend to suggest that the Hebrew texts used by the Masoretic and Josephus had 129, which was subject to the same 100 years deduction as the rest of the patriarchs to give the Massoretic 29, and used by Josephus with the loss of the final 9, perhaps a slip on his part or even a later corruption of his writings, to give his 120. The variant Hebrew texts which had 179 led eventually to the Samaritan and the Alex. and Sixtine texts, with the former two modified to 79 to avoid the incongruity of so late an age of fatherhood when Nahor died at 208. All this is at best a hypothesis, for the available data is too scanty for certitude, and the best that can be said is that in all likelihood Nahor's age at the birth of Terah was either 79 as in the LXX or 129 as might be suggested by translation probabilities.

There is one other consideration which tends to favour the latter view. It has been often remarked that the consistent ages at which the patriarchs' sons were born—always between 130 and 135 years—is too artificial to be real, especially upon the usual assumption that these were all first-born sons. There is, of course, no reason for insisting that this latter must be the case. Many of the men destined to occupy places in the line of descent from Adam to Christ were not first-borns—Seth, Abraham, Jacob, Judah, David, and others—and the same could well be the case here. There may be another reason. A little reflection will show that the elder sons of men like these who are depicted as living three or four hundred years, must have departed and set up their own family arrangements and themselves become something like great-great-grandfathers while their own father was still " hale and hearty ". Thus the sons who would be near enough to the ancestral home to carry on the father's interests after his death would more naturally be those born somewhat later in life. It might well be that a custom existed defining the time of life at which the son then born would become the one considered as carrying on the family line. It is certainly the case that Abraham, born when his father was 130, became the heir in preference to his elder brothers born something like thirty and sixty years before him. In such case the consistency of these "birth" ages may be intentional. The land, the people and the culture in which and amongst whom these patriarchs lived was that to which historians have given the name

Sumerian. The Sumerians, from their earliest days skilled in astronomy, measured time by the Saros, a period of 18 years, (being the span of time during which all eclipses of the sun and moon recur in the same order; incidentally 70 sarai equal 1260 years, the celebrated Scriptural prophetic number). If in fact Terah was born in Nahor's 129th year then all the nine postdiluvian patriarchs from Cainan to Abraham were born during the eighth saros of their father's lives (126-144 years). It could have been the practice that the first son born after the end of the seventh saros was considered the heir. If so, this would strengthen the case for 129 against 79.

Be all this as it may, the position is apparently that the Septuagint, Samaritan and Josephus have preserved the original figures for the duration of this postdiluvian patriarchal era. The two latter are deficient in having omitted Cainan and erred in the age of Abraham. That leaves the Septuagint figure of 1207 years holding the field. (If the hypothesis of 129 years instead of 79 for Nahor outlined above is sustained, this becomes 1257 years but it is not possible to be dogmatic.) The Massoretic figure of 427 years obtained by reducing the ages by 100 years each is necessarily unacceptable.

General support to this 1207 years period is given by what is known of ancient history. The earliest city-states of the Sumerians were founded at least five centuries before Abraham, some authorities claiming several centuries more, and there was certainly a previous historical period of indeterminate length for which no contemporary records have been found but from later allusions must have lasted quite a few centuries. The birth of Egyptian civilisation goes back as far. Plenty of authorities insist that the civilisations of the Euphrates and Nile valleys could not possibly

have emerged in even the period denoted by the Septuagint, that they must have required at least two thousand years, but this is not the place to go into that. So far as present day positive knowledge goes, there are five or perhaps six centuries of known history prior to Abraham, and another six or seven behind that back to the date of the Flood as defined by the Septuagint. The Genesis presentation in chapters 10-11 is that the peoples listed in those chapters were natural descendants of the three sons of Noah; there is nothing impossible or unreasonable in accepting that those six or seven hidden centuries, about which history is silent and the brief record in Genesis the only available information, was adequate for that purpose.

If, then, the death of Terah and the entry of Abraham into Canaan, which really marks the commencement of detailed Bible history, did occur some 1200/1250 years after the Flood, and if the antediluvian world had previously endured for something like 2250 years, the implication is that God in his wisdom had waited 3500 years before even a nucleus among mankind were ready for, and capable of, receiving and understanding the magnitude of the future He plans for them. Abraham was called "the father of the faithful"; his sterling faith and loyalty to God are proverbial. With him the developing Plan of God commenced its outworking, leading on to Israel the people of God in the ancient world, then to Christ the world's Saviour, then on to the Christian Church which is to be associated with Christ in his future work of blessing all mankind, finally to that great day when sin and evil is banished and "*all that hath breath shall praise the Lord*". It all started with Abraham. But it took God 3500 years to find Abraham.

BIBLE EMPHASIS

If the Bible be divided along the lines of its three predominant themes, viz., History, Doctrine and Prophecy, and the amount of space devoted to each be examined, an interesting analysis results.

In the Old Testament, the books from Genesis to Esther are mainly history, those from Psalms to Song of Solomon, devotional and doctrinal, and from Isaiah to Malachi prophetic. In the New Testament the same order is shown: Matthew to Acts may be fairly described as history, Romans to Jude as doctrinal, and Revelation as prophetic.

The proportion of page space thus given to these three main classifications is roughly:—

History	...	...	...	60%
Doctrine	...	...	...	15%
Prophecy	...	...	...	25%

This does not mean that doctrine is to be regarded as of very minor importance; there is much in the historical and prophetic books that is vital doctrinal teaching. What perhaps is a desirable conclusion to draw is this: the amount of space given to historical accounts would seem to indicate that our consideration of the lives and actions of those who served God, or rejected God, in past days is very necessary in the ordering of our own Christian lives. The greatest lessons of life can perhaps best be learned by the study of things that happened in times gone by.

A NOTE ON ENOCH

Relative to the article "The Translation of Enoch" in the Sept./Oct. 1975 issue, a correspondent has commented as follows:—

"Enoch was translated" (moved to another place), but for the explanation given by the Apostle in Hebrews 11, we would not have known the reason why he was translated—moved from one place to another. Why was Enoch translated? The Scripture answer is, "that he should not see death" (Heb. 11.5). That being the only reason as to why God moved Enoch, one must assume that had he not been removed from where he was to some other place where he could not be found, he would have seen death, perhaps a violent death at that!

"Enoch was a man of faith, a righteous man who had pleased God; with such a testimony, his life, like that of righteous Abel, was at stake—exposed to hatred and violence, so prevalent at that time, for so we read, "The earth was filled with violence" by reason of the "Giants" and the "Mighty men" whose wickedness was great in the earth. Bearing in mind Enoch had prophesied against that generation, he endured the wrath and the hard speeches spoken by the "Giants" and the unholy "Watchers" who taught all manner of wicked and destructive inventions to their own progeny and the children of men in the earth. That being so, Enoch's life was insecure in the surroundings in which he lived, God saw the need and took him to a place where he would live in safety and free from the fear of the un-

godly violent men. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly." Moreover, the Lord has and chooses a way to use for their safety. Enoch was taken to a place where he could not be found. Noah was carried to safety in the Ark through water. Lot was rescued from his captors by Abraham going to war. When his life was at risk he was saved by two angels who urged him to flee the land and he was forced out, being told to "escape for thy life . . . escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed; the Lord being merciful to him".

"One may not find it difficult to understand the meaning of "Enoch was translated", but, "that he should not see death", that indeed is perplexing to some because we have not studied it closely enough in the past. The life of this man was limited to 365 years, assumed dead, and that was the end of the matter. The apocryphal "*Book of Enoch*" implies that he lived at least 934 years; there is only the authority of Jewish tradition for that opinion but it does support the idea that Enoch was the subject of Divine protection. It was written also of the saintly Simeon in the Temple at the birth of Christ that he should not see death (Luke 2.26). In both cases it came to the same thing. Their lives came under Divine protection because of their faith in the living God, the one through a physical act by God, the other by revelation from God. Life was prolonged in each case and they knew it to be an indication of Divine approval of their faith."

ROUSSEAU'S EULOGY OF CHRIST

"How petty are the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp, compared with the Gospels. Can it be that writings at once so sublime and so simple are the work of men? Can he whose life they tell be himself no more than a man? Is there anything in his character of the enthusiast or the ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his ways, what touching grace in his teachings. What a loftiness in his maxims: what profound wisdom in his words. What presence of mind, what delicacy and aptness in his replies. What an empire over his passions. Where is the man, where is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die, without weakness, without display. My friends, men do not invent like this: and the facts respecting Socrates, which no one doubts, are not so well attested as those about

Jesus Christ. These Jews could never have struck this tone, or thought of this morality, and the Gospel has characteristics of truthfulness so grand, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that their inventors would be even more wonderful than he whom they portray."

(Jean Rousseau, (1670-1741) French poet and dramatist, born in Paris and living for a time in London, had some reputation in his own day for odes and epigrams on sacred and secular subjects. At this space of time it is impossible to judge how much of sincerity lay behind the eulogy attributed to him which appears above, but the sentiments therein expressed are worthy of preservation and consideration in this more prosaic twentieth century.



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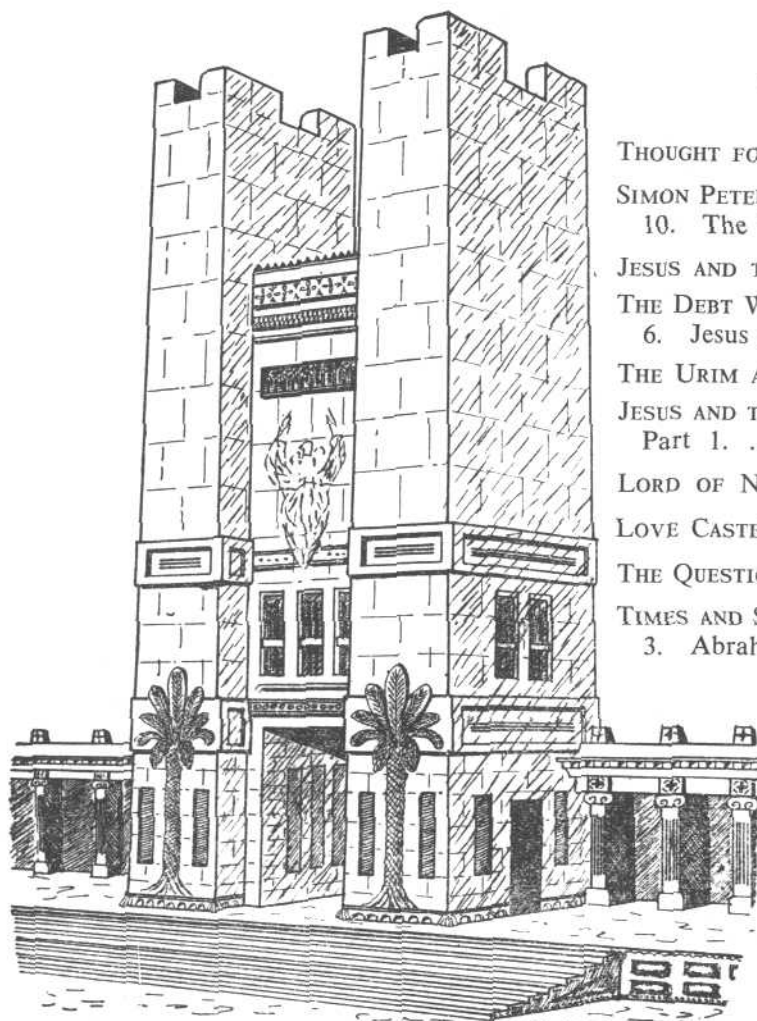
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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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Thought for the Month

There are rumblings of apprehension in some quarters concerning the growing threat of the world's cities, huge agglomerations of steel and concrete swallowing up vast areas of the fair earth and herding its unresisting inhabitants into densely packed masses of humanity living out their lives in increasing unnatural and unhealthy conditions. It is said that by the year 2000 nearly half the world's population will be living in cities, some housing fifty millions or so human beings. It is already accepted as an observed scientific fact that this unnatural crowding of human beings together is responsible for much of the aggression and violence which exists, and in another field the impersonal nature of life in such an environment leads to tragedies of loneliness and heedlessness so that old people can, and do, die in their homes unseen and unnoticed and lie there for weeks or months before being discovered. Much of that which is bad in human society is born in the city and encouraged and facilitated by city life, but because so much that is vital to the maintenance of the present social order depends upon this concentration of life and activity in such artificial centres the process must go on; and go on it will, even though it threaten the destruction of all that is fair and peaceful upon earth, unless and until it is stopped by intervention from on high.

According to the Bible, the first city on record was built by Cain—hardly a good recommendation for the innovation. His city was in practice no more than a small walled settlement built for defence against possible enemies. The second city about which anything is related is Babel, or Babylon, one which became a synonym for complete and utter idolatry and apostasy from God. The third and fourth ones to be mentioned in any

detail in the Scriptures are Sodom and Gomorrah. Cities do not have a good name in the first part of the sacred record.

Anthropologists have recorded their findings that cities are an invention of "civilised" man. Primitive native tribes, it has been established, rarely allow their communities to exceed fifty to a hundred people; sections of them "hive off" and establish themselves as smaller growing villages a suitable distance away. Archæologists have noted the same thing when excavating ancient sites. Prior to the rise of the first known cities, those of Sumer and Egypt in the late 3rd Cent. B.C.—which sometimes boasted as many as twenty thousand inhabitants—their predecessors of the time before known history rarely established centres of population averaging more than ten acres and comprising a maximum of three hundred or so persons.

This is the kind of picture presented by the prophet Isaiah in his vision of the coming Millennial Kingdom of Christ, in his 32nd chapter. "*The palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted. The fort and the watchtower become dens for wild asses . . . my people will live in a tranquil country, dwelling in peace, in houses full of ease. The forest slopes will be quiet and the city utterly laid low.*" Back to the land will be the order of the day, men and women living the kind of lives for which they were created, in close harmony and tune with the world of Nature in which we are born and of which we are a part. Maybe when Isaiah said the desert shall blossom as the rose he was not only thinking of acres of sand; he might also have been thinking of acres of chimney-pots.

For NOTICES see back page

SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

9. The vengeance of Herod Acts 12 & 15.

The prison was very quiet. The flickering lamps, set at intervals along the halls and corridors, cast grotesque shadows on walls and ceilings, illuminating but dimly their surroundings. Outside, the moon shone serenely, for it was Pass-over time, and the streets of Jerusalem were brightly lit by its radiance. Inside the cell where Peter was sleeping, between two soldiers to whom he was chained so that attempts at escape were impossible, one solitary lamp, a piece of wick lying in a dish of olive oil, sputtered feebly to reveal the gaunt stone walls and the heavy barred door. The two soldiers were fast asleep; they were accustomed to this kind of duty and would quickly be jerked into wakefulness by any unaccustomed movement of their charge, but while he was quiet and still they could sleep in peace.

There was not much hope for Peter. Herod the king, nephew of the Herod who slew John the Baptist and figured in the trial of Jesus, had already, after the mockery of a trial, put to death James the son of Zebedee and brother of John. Following the recall to Rome of Pontius Pilate four years after the Crucifixion the Emperor Caligula had placed Judea under the rule of the Herods, and this Herod, desiring to ingratiate himself with the priesthood, had first condemned and killed James and now proposed to do the same with Peter. There was no Roman governor and no appeal to Roman justice; the will of the king was paramount, and as Peter lay in his cell he must have been feeling that this indeed was the end. Perhaps he wondered why his life of service should be so summarily cut short. He was still a relatively young man, only in his mid-forties, and had seen but eleven years' ministry of the Gospel since his Master had been put to death. "*Ye shall be my witnesses . . . to the uttermost ends of the earth*" had been the promise, but so far he had not been outside the confines of Judea and Samaria. There was so much yet to be done, and the Church was still looking to him for leadership. Paul, the other great leader of the Church, he had not seen for seven years and in any case Paul was at this very moment setting out on his first missionary journey far away in the wilds of Asia, preaching to the Dispersion and the Greeks. After all the triumphs of faith he had known in these past hectic days of preaching and conversion, the wonderful manner in which the fury and enmity of the priests had been nullified and rendered impotent, the power by which the Church had gone from strength to strength in all

the regions of Judea and Samaria and Galilee, was he now to accept as the will of his Lord that his time of service was finished? Whatever his feelings as he pondered these things, his faith in the Lord was of that calibre which gave him perfect peace, for presently he too was sleeping quietly between his guards.

It was while thus sleeping that he became conscious of his dream; at least it seemed to him that it was a dream. He was still in his cell; the soldiers were still on either side and the chains were still there. The guttering lamp still cast its flickering shadows on the rough walls, but among those shadows there was a faint light, a dim radiance, which was not of the lamp. It moved, taking shape, the appearance of garments, and a face. The cell was suddenly full of light, and Peter saw that there was a fourth person present, one who was free, one who had not been there just previously; Peter knew intuitively that he was looking upon an angel of the Lord.

Was it a voice, and had the angel of the Lord spoken to him, or was it an impression suddenly formed in his mind? The words were clear enough. "*Rise up quickly!*" He did so, and the chains with which he was fastened to his guards fell away and subsided to the ground, silently and without noise. He looked down at the still sleeping men. The movement should have awakened them, but they slept on, undisturbed, as though he was still tethered between them. He looked again towards the angel. "*Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals!*" Stepping carefully over the recumbent men, he obeyed. "*Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me!*" Picking up his outer coat, he draped it round his burly frame. As he did so the massive door swung open, silently, revealing two fully armed and very wakeful soldiers standing on guard outside.

Peter waited for the denouement, but it did not come. The guards stood there unseeing, as though nothing untoward was happening. His angelic guide was already passing between them without let or hindrance, and, after a moment's hesitation, Peter followed. There was not a flicker of recognition in their eyes when he drew level with them. As he turned the corner of the corridor he glanced back for a moment. The bright light in the cell had gone and the heavy door was already closing. The guards were standing there, their long spears moving slightly as they stood, giving no sign that they had seen or heard anything unusual.

This, thought Peter, is certainly a dream. But his guide was already well along the corridor and he hastened to follow him. At its end, another door, which opened silently at their approach and closed again behind them. Two more guards, betraying no sign of perception as they passed. Now they were in the main hall of the prison. On the opposite side, the main entrance door, closed and locked, with more guards on duty; to the right, a great fire burning around which were grouped several soldiers, evidently off duty, some sleeping and others talking together and playing some kind of dice game. No one took any notice of the intruders. They walked across the hall, the great door swung open, letting in a strong blast of cold night air, but no one took any notice of that either. In another moment they had crossed the outer court and stood before the iron gate which gave access to the city. Four armed soldiers paced slowly to and fro across the gateway but none of them appeared to perceive it slowly opening, the two hurrying figures pass out into the city, and the gate as slowly close again.

Round the corner, out of sight of the prison, Peter suddenly realised that his angelic guide was no longer with him. Moreover, he was cold—night-time in Judea is always cold. He began to realise that this was no dream; it was reality. Perhaps he pinched himself. More likely he suddenly remembered that previous occasion when the angel of the Lord had delivered both himself and his fellow apostles from prison in much the same fashion, and full realisation came. *"Now I know of a surety,"* he said to himself *"that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."*

He stood still for a while in the bright moonlight, considering this wonderful happening. Slowly he became conscious of a tremendous suffusion of new faith, faith that because his Lord was behind him with heavenly power, he was indeed invincible until his work was finished. Twice had he and his been delivered from the clutches of the priesthood who would themselves, had they the power, have had him put to death. Now he had been saved from what had seemed certain death at the hands of a king who possessed the power and would not scruple to use it. The noble words of the Second Psalm came unbidden to his mind; *"the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed . . . He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh . . . then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure"*. Silently he lifted his heart in praise to God for his deliverance and in unspoken prayer for guidance as to his next move.

The cold night air decided that for him; that, and the fact that he was still in uncomfortable proximity to Herod's prison. It was true that the Lord had delivered him from that and put him down in the open street, but it was now surely incumbent upon him to take all reasonable steps to keep out of further trouble. The more he thought about it, the more he felt he would be well advised to get out of Herod's way for a while. And as an immediate first step he knew exactly where to go—to the house of Mary the mother of the lad John Mark.

The house of Mary had become a gathering-place for the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Traditionally the house in which the Last Supper took place, and according to legend the first meeting-place of the first converts, and the scene of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, all the indications are that Mary was a woman of sterling character who was not afraid to make her home the headquarters of the new movement heedless of possible consequences at the hands of the authorities. Instinctively, therefore, Peter directed his steps to the house of Mary.

He could not have known that at that very moment a fully attended prayer meeting was in session at the house beseeching the Lord to effect Peter's release. They knew that from the human point of view Peter was doomed, but they also knew that God could deliver if such were his will, and they were waiting upon him with constant supplication that He would effect deliverance and restore Peter to their midst. Such was the intensity and fervour of their entreaty that when Peter arrived at the door in the outer wall no one heard him save the fifteen-year old Rhoda; at least, if any one else did hear the knock Rhoda was the only one who had the courage to go and see who was there. Visitors at that time of night were usually from the ecclesiastical or military authorities and the consequences often far from pleasant.

Peter, of course, would be well acquainted with Rhoda, and when her—probably rather tremulous—fresh young voice floated across the wall enquiring the identity of the visitor his gruff tones quickly assured her; *"Peter—open the door quickly"*. He was still looking over his shoulder for signs of Herod's soldiers in the street. But instead of entry into the haven he sought all he heard was the sound of flying footsteps and then—silence. Rhoda, in the reaction of relief and gladness, had omitted the formality of opening the door and had run back into the house with the news that Peter was out of prison and standing outside waiting for admittance. The next part of that story is well known, how that the assembled brethren flatly refused to believe her.

"Thou art mad" they said. Peter was in Herod's prison and could not possibly get out; the fact that God might conceivably have here and now answered their prayers and released him does not seem to have occurred to them at the moment. Apparently the argument went on for some time. Had Peter been safely inside the garden he might have registered some grim humour at the situation of his being presented as the answer to prayer and the supplicants refusing to believe it. But Peter was not inside; he was still outside, and the more he thought of Herod's soldiers possibly searching the streets of the city the more thunderous became his knocking, until at last for very shame's sake someone went and opened the door; *"and when they saw him, they were astonished."*

Peter quickly cut short the excited babble of questions and congratulations, interspersed with shouts of praise to God for the deliverance. *"Beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace"* he related the circumstances of his release and told them to pass the news to James the Lord's brother, who was rapidly coming into the position of acknowledged leader of the Jerusalem church, and to others who were not present, and then made preparations for his own departure *"to another place"*. By this time it would be morning; Mary would be sure to insist that he partook of a substantial meal before leaving. By then the streets would be full of the Passover crowds and Peter could mingle with them and get out of the city unnoticed.

Where he went is not stated. Probably it was to a Christian home in some Judean or Galilean village where he could "lie low" for a while until the search for him was called off and Herod had forgotten the matter. But the Lord had no intention of suspending his active service for long. Within a few months, and in that same year, A.D. 44, Herod was dead. The new Emperor, Claudius, felt that Herod's son, the Agrippa before whom Paul later appeared (Acts 26), was too young to succeed as king, and decided to reinstitute the system of Roman governors which had ended seven years earlier with Pontius Pilate. So, late in A.D. 44, the Roman Cuspius Fadus arrived to take over the administration of Judea and Samaria. He was an unprincipled and rapacious tyrant, but while the civil power was in his hands that of the priesthood was curbed. Without much doubt Peter was able after only a few months in seclusion to resume his activities and his preaching, and the believers were left in tolerable peace.

There is only one more definite mention of Peter in the Book of Acts, and that is in connection with the celebrated Jerusalem Conference six years later, recorded in Acts 15. It would

seem that the Apostle was able to pursue his evangelical work throughout the length and breadth of the country during that six years without interference. His headquarters was at Jerusalem but he was probably not often there. This is the time when James the brother of Jesus became the recognised leader of the Jerusalem church; under his administration and guidance it flourished and became solidly established. But it also was avowedly Judaistic. Despite their Christianity, the believers at Jerusalem held rigidly to the Law of Moses and the rite of circumcision. Perhaps it was only natural. They had been brought up under the Law. Jesus himself had said he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They had never had contact with Gentiles and knew little about them. To these Jewish believers the teaching and precepts of Jesus constituted a reformation within the Jewish system but at first sight gave no reason for thinking that the Jewish law and ritual was out-dated and to be rejected. So, naturally enough, when some of them visited the more liberally-minded Church at Antioch and found a different current of thought there they insisted that all, Gentile and Jew alike, must conform to the Mosaic Law if they were to be saved.

This was the question which gave rise to the Jerusalem Conference, the first theological conference of the Christian church on record. Paul and Barnabas, with several other members of the Antioch Church, were commissioned to go to Jerusalem and discuss this problem with the apostles and elders. Against their account of the manifest manner in which God had used them to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles of Roman Asia, and of the churches that had thus been established in many cities, the Pharisaic element in the Jerusalem Church set their inflexible opinion that adherence to the Mosaic Law must be accepted as an integral part of the Christian faith. Here was deadlock, and here it is that Peter comes back into the story.

The conference was under the supervision of James, himself a rigid Judaist. Peter, nevertheless, was respected and accepted by all as the senior Apostle, and when he rose to speak there was quiet attention. In a few well-chosen words he reminded his Jerusalem colleagues of his own experience of thirteen years previously, long before Paul had commenced his own work among the Gentiles, when Peter had been sent to receive into the Church the Gentile Cornelius with all his house. *"Ye know"* he declared in his characteristic forceful fashion *"how that a good while ago God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and live"*. God had witnessed to the fact by the

visible bestowment of the Holy Spirit, as He had previously done to the Jews. *"And put no difference between us and them"* he stressed. *"We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they"*. Peter's forthright championship of the Antioch cause carried the day. Peter, unlike Paul, was their own man, and even the most bigoted of the opposing party would hesitate before challenging him. Perhaps also some of them remembered that past day when Peter returned from Cæsarea with his news of the Gentile converts and how, after explanations made, they had glorified God in that He had granted the Gentiles the opportunity of repentance unto life. So the entire assembly listened approvingly whilst James summed up what had been said and conceded freedom from

the Mosaic Law to all non-Jewish converts. What could easily have developed into a major schism between the Pauline and the Petrine churches was avoided largely by the insight and resolution of the rugged fisherman.

There was to be another twenty years of active service for Peter, but there was no Luke, as in the case of Paul, to record for posterity where he went and what he did. From this time onward nothing certain is known about Peter's life, only vague deductions from obscure references and from the epistles which bear his name, and to a lesser extent from tradition. What is definitely known about Peter is all crowded into the first twenty years of his discipleship; the second twenty years is virtually blank.

To be concluded

A NOTE ON MARK 4. 11-12

Mark 4. 11-12 *"... unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them."* At first reading this seems to be alien to the known character of God. Did Jesus really hide his teaching in parables in order deliberately to prevent the people from hearing and so being converted? Absurd, of course; it cannot possibly be so! His very purpose in coming to earth was to convince and save men, "whosoever will". The parallel passage in Matt. 13. 13-15 has it *"Therefore speak I unto them in parables; because they seeing, see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias 'By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them'".* What is the explanation? The word "that" in Mark is the Greek word *hina* which has a wide range of meaning in the New Testament, and is sometimes used to denote cause rather than purpose. An instance is John 17. 3; *"This is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God"* which can equally well be expressed *"to know thee is life eternal"*. The Lord quoted from Isaiah 6. 9-10 but when reference is made to that passage we are once again faced with an apparent contradiction to our view of the Divine Plan. *"... Make*

the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes..." etc. By comparing Isaiah with Matthew it will be seen that the quotation differs considerably; the explanation is that Jesus quoted from the Septuagint, which was in common use in his day, and the Septuagint of Isaiah 6. 9-10 runs *"Go, and say to this people, Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them"*. This, which evidently better preserves the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, is quite in line with what we should expect. The message is to be preached but the people will deliberately shut their eyes and ears to it, refusing to listen, in case they should be converted. They do not want to be converted and they willingly turn away from the word of life. That is the true situation as we ourselves well know. But not for ever. "How long?" asked Isaiah. Until a time of great desolation and judgment, was the Divine answer (Isa. 6. 11-13). *"Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the land be utterly desolate."* The great Time of Trouble with which this Age will end, the time in which we now live, will have the effect, in conjunction with the softening influences of the Millennial reign which will follow it, of inducing men to listen to the message against which they formerly shut their eyes and ears; and this time they will turn and be converted, and will be healed.

JESUS AND THE WOMAN OF CANAAN

A momentous incident

The incident of Jesus and the Canaanitish woman is often misunderstood, and the surface reading of the text seems alien to the known character of the Lord. This woman had a daughter who was sick—possessed by a demon—and she appealed to Jesus for the girl's healing. At first, so says Matthew's account, Jesus refused to answer her plea; then he told her he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that it was not fitting to cast the children's food to dogs. All Canaanites were "dogs" to orthodox Jews, but one hardly expects to find Jesus openly endorsing that attitude. The woman was quick with a reply. "*Truth, Lord*" she said, "*yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.*" The text reads as if Jesus changed his mind on the strength of this quick rejoinder, and gave her the benefit she desired; her daughter was healed. There is an element of capriciousness about this view of the transaction, which cannot be squared with what we know of our Lord, and the whole story needs more careful examination than a mere cursory reading will afford.

The woman was a Canaanite, a descendant of one of the aboriginal races which inhabited the land before Joshua led the invading Israelites across Jordan fourteen centuries previously. (Mark's statement that she was a Greek only means that she was a non-Jew—a Gentile). That Jesus entertained no prejudice against her on this account is endorsed by his readiness to talk with the Samaritan woman at Jacobs well, and by his parable of the Good Samaritan. Whatever the cause of this attitude on this occasion, it was not reluctance to heal a Canaanite.

The woman's faith has to be noted. "*Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David.*" Canaanite she might have been by birth; it is evident that she shared the faith of Israel and acknowledged our Lord's Messiahship in a manner refused him by many of his own countrymen. It was not lack of faith, or any impropriety on her part which led to the initial seeming refusal of her request.

Nevertheless, He "*answered her not a word*". And his disciples, concluding from his manner that He did not intend to grant her request, exhorted him to "*send her away; for she crieth after us.*" At this point the first pointer to the explanation of the whole incident is revealed. Jesus spoke, as if in reply to his disciples' request, but also in the hearing of the woman, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of*

Israel." That statement was in strict accord with current Jewish theology and with the revealed plan of God also. Messiah was foretold to come to Israel, to raise Israel to a position of authority among the nations that they fulfil their destiny of being a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. To the Jew first, and afterward to the Gentile, although Israel conveniently and consistently ignored the latter clause. They were not particularly interested in the conversion of the Gentiles, only in their own exaltation to power as the chosen of the Lord. So Jesus enunciated a principle which all his listeners—except perhaps the woman—would heartily endorse.

The woman was in no mood for the theological niceties. She only knew that her daughter sorely needed the help she knew the Lord Jesus could give. So "*came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*" By now the disciples and the bystanders were watching and listening interestedly, which was evidently Jesus' intention. An element of his teaching was about to be expounded, and in a manner that would leave the deepest possible impression. Looking on the woman, "*It is not meet*" He said "*to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs*".

It seems a cruel thing to say, as it stands in the Authorised Version. The woman was in sore trouble, and Jesus had already in the synagogue at Nazareth proclaimed himself the One who should come to bind up broken hearts and give joy for mourning. Did he really say what the English words imply?

All Gentiles were commonly called "dogs" and thought of as such by Jews. The word is *kuon*, and denotes the animals which ranged the streets and fields in packs, often semi-wild, living on what food they could find, or was contemptuously thrown to them by householders. If Jesus had called the woman a "*Kuon*" it would by no means have been the first time she had had the epithet thrown at her by a Jew. But Jesus did not call her a "*kuon*". In these two instances, Matthew's and Mark's accounts of the incident, and in these two instances only, the word translated "dogs" is not *kuon*, but *kunarion*, which means a little pet dog, such as might be the children's playmate, and live in the house. Jesus was probably the only Jew who ever referred to a Gentile as a "*kunarion*" and the fact that both evangelists, taking the material for these accounts from different sources, use the same unusual

word, goes far to assure that Jesus did in fact use the word. And in this subtle fashion He indicated to the woman that in his sight she was not outside the pale; she was inside the family circle and even, though not on a level with the children of the family, at least had a definite place in the home. "*Ballo*" which is rendered "cast" is also correctly translated in other texts "put", "lay" and similar words, so that it is not necessary to visualise a contemptuous throwing of the food down to the floor, but quite reasonably the putting down of a meal for the pet dog of the family. Jesus had already said He was sent only to Israel; now He gave the second part of the lesson by pointing out that because of this it was not fitting for the general dispensation of his work and mission, intended for Israel, to be extended also to Gentiles, occupying as they did at that time a lesser status in the disposition of the Divine purpose.

It was the woman who gave the third part of the lesson. Jesus, knowing her mind and her faith, knew that she would; for his disciples' sakes He made her rejoinder possible. "*Truth, Lord, your mission is to Israel; but the Gentiles may expect some of the crumbs.*" That is what she grasped from Jesus' words and that is what Jesus wanted his disciples to grasp too. They were always suspicious when there was any question of contact with non-Jews, and Jesus sought in this incident a means of teaching them that whilst their conviction that his mission was to Israel was right, there were developments in the Divine Plan yet to come in which Gentiles were involved, and they would have a great part to play in those developments. And now that the woman, in her faith and insight grasping his meaning, had given the rejoinder which conveyed the principle He sought to illustrate, He did what of course He had intended to do all along. "*O woman, great is thy faith. Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*"

This incident illustrates an important aspect of the Divine Plan. Israel, bound to God in covenant relationship from the Exodus and the Law at Mount Sinai, was designated the chosen people of God. That was for a purpose, that there might be in a continuously degenerating world a nation which would, however imperfectly, stand for God and his righteousness and preserve his truth amid prevalent ignorance. The history of Israel and their preservation of the sacred Scriptures—our Old Testament—is evidence that they did at least achieve that purpose. But this condition of things was intended also to enable them to recognise and accept Christ when He should appear for the

salvation of the world, and this they failed to do. The salvation of the world proceeded, but the honoured position of God's agents in the proclamation and process of salvation passed from unworthy Israel to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21. 43), the Christian Church. That transfer took place after the rejection and crucifixion of Christ by the Jewish nation, and their rejection of his apostles and their message, only a few years following Jesus' encounter with this woman. Believing Gentiles, who could only expect "crumbs from the table" at the time the Canaanitish girl was healed of her affliction, a few years later entered into the full privileges of Divine service and sonship, in equal partnership with their believing Jewish brethren, and the formal arrangement which made the whole nation of Israel, believer and unbeliever alike, the earthly representative of the Most High, was terminated.

The time of this change was marked by the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to be baptised into Christ. The considered conclusion of the Jewish congregation at Jerusalem, after considering the related circumstances, was "*then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life*" (Acts 11. 18). Writing to the Ephesians in later years, St. Paul, addressing Gentile believers, confirmed this position by saying, "*Ye, in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel . . . without God in the world, now in Christ Jesus ye who were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ . . . who . . . hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*" (Eph. 2. 11-21).

Of course, the rejection of unbelieving Israel is not final, for as St. Paul says in Rom. 11. 29 "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." National Israel will yet achieve high destiny when at last the veil of unbelief is removed, and as a nation they turn to God. The final scene of the Divine purpose for human redemption shows the Christian Church associated with the Lord Christ in heaven, and restored believing national Israel on earth, labouring together in the execution of God's intention to make known his glory to all men, that all may have the issues of life and death placed squarely before them. that "all who hear may live." But for the realisation of that purpose the world must wait for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 6. Jesus of Nazareth

No authentic portrait of Christ exists. His character, revealed in the gospels, has been for centuries the inspiration of artists and writers. By them he has been presented according to individual imagination, but where is the imagination, the skill which could adequately portray in one person the qualities which are attributed to this unique personality? Many of these portraits of Christ adorning the walls of Churches and galleries of art are almost repellent caricatures of One who combined in himself resolution and strength; gentleness, compassion, love, enthusiasm, confidence and the piercing glance which saw through every pretension by which men sought to project a false image of themselves upon society.

Theology has given the world a portrait of a being neither human nor Divine, a mixture of natures abhorrent to creation. Jesus claimed the Fatherhood of God. His life spark came direct from God, not through the imperfect race of men. He was no hybrid, above or beneath humanity. He was the only begotten of the Father, but his designation of himself was, the Son of Man. He was flesh and blood, born of woman, setting a standard before man of what man had been, an image of God, an example of what man could be by the grace of God. The meanest member of the race can look on him, and be encouraged to imitation.

Christ inspires love and devotion. He was 'tempted and tried' at all points of human nature. He was one of Adam's race with a human body, a human heart, a human intelligence and he lived to share the struggles of men, the sorrows of women, the innocent joys of children.

There is no doubt that he disappointed the Messianic hopes of patriotic Jews, anxious for their country's freedom and exaltation. He never wore the outward trappings of kings, conquerors or priests. Simplicity was the keynote of his life. He owned nothing, he built nothing; he never laid down hard and fast rules. He invited men to follow him but he did not interfere with their personal freedom, nor would he arbitrate in their disputes. Man was free. The Son of Man respected freedom, taught freedom. *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* Born in a stable, reared in a village carpenter's shop, he took his place among the poor, the despised, the toilers. As a wandering preacher he owned nothing but the clothes he wore, for which the Roman soldiers later cast lots. He was sold

by one of his own followers for the price of a poor slave, yet he was never a beggar. Dignity marked every step of his way. *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's"*, was advice he himself practised.

Jesus was a Jew, born of a Jewish maiden in a Jewish village. He was of the tribe of Judah. His appearance was that of manly, maturing beauty, the olive-tinted skin, the dark eyes, the dark waving, luxuriant locks of uncut hair common to Semitic peoples. His face refined by thought by natural ability; his glance direct, his smile full of charm, his voice vibrant with all the ringing tones of enthusiasm for the kingdom of God, which he preached upon the hill sides or from a boat on the lake of Galilee. Tenderness, mingled with compassion for the sick, 'the heavy laden', calling with power on the prisoner in the tomb to 'Come forth', exhorting the multitudes, condemning hypocrisy, blessing the children, communing privately with his friends, addressing himself to the problems of women, replying with dignified restraint to the high-priest, to Pilate; what cadences rose and fell in the voice of him who spoke as no other man has ever spoken!

There was no vainglorious display about his dress. He would wear the seamless striped tunic common to the East, girdled at the waist, with a blue outer robe which served as cloak and protection during those nights he spent upon the hills seeking solitude in prayer or rest. Foxes had dens, birds had nests, but the Son of Man had no pillow for his head other than that provided by Mother earth. His sandalled feet trod the dusty roads, his head protected from the eastern sunlight by a white *keffiyeh* which flows down over the shoulders and is bound by a black fillet round the head. He wore no halo other than that of the grace and truth which filled his being with inner beauty. Shining through face and voice as a radiant glory, it made him the Light of the World.

He went about doing good. His work was one of mercy. He was touched with pity for human suffering and misery. A healing hand laid on a leper publicly an outcast, brought soundness of body. Fingers in the ears of the deaf, on the eyes of the blind, restored contact to a world of sound and sight. A command to the lame to walk, brought back powers of locomotion. Had he been as other men he would have made money out of his power to heal. He would have demanded a house and a salary for his power to preach the

everlasting gospel. As heir of David's royal line he could have commanded a throne, a crown, an army. That he did none of these things, that he refused pomp and honour, wealth and office, all the commonplace trappings of common-place life, lifts him up above the rank and file of men.

Had he accepted any of the baubles of this life he would have been lost to the race as a man above all other men, the one altogether lovely. He who never lived in palaces, who never rode in chariots, who never fared sumptuously or dressed extravagantly, was a king above his fellows. The royal dignity of unsullied manhood was evident through the simplicity of his contacts with the throngs which pressed about him daily. Discerning women envied the mother who had borne so grand a son. Even in his last hours of anguish, scourged, insulted, weary, mocked and confronted by a yelling, bloodthirsty rabble of his fellowmen, there was that about him which commanded the admiration of the hardened Roman who set him before them, the priests and the people, with the unforgettable exclamation:—"Behold the Man".

Since Adam, no such man had ever walked the earth. He was the second Adam, tried at all points, yet without sin. The first man failed on one point. This man was pressed without measure but he fulfilled the whole law, the only one of man's race who had obtained the right to life, a life voluntarily forfeited, that through his gift others might live. Life is the gift of God. Out of all the tangled maze of theology this one thing stands out strong and clear. It is the most precious and sacred thing, which man cannot create or obtain for himself or extend indefinitely in a whole sound frame of body and mind.

Christ had life in the fullest measure, a life freely yielded to the service and needs of men. *"He poured out his soul unto death."* His physical energies were spent in giving health, peace and life until they finally expired on the cross. To say that *"He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich"*, is no overstatement of what on thoughtful consideration becomes an obvious fact. The willingness of Christ to give, to bear insults and false accusations in silence, is a contrast to the greed of the avaricious, the loud denials, the plentiful excuses of guilty men.

The courage of Christ, going forward willingly to a known agony of public ignominy and dying; to a loss of friends, to misunderstanding and

misrepresentation, makes him a spectacle to angels and men. Forsaken, betrayed, mocked by rough soldiers, derided by shameless priests, gloating in the cruelty of the deed they had contrived, taunted by the jeering, ignorant crowds who find pleasure in such barbarous spectacles, the innocent Son of Man in his submission to the hands of wickedness is an example of love, humility and bravery which has no parallel in all the long history of men.

In the garden of Eden all the joys of life had been lost in one selfish act. In the garden of Gethsemane the iniquity of the race was laid upon one stainless heart. The evils and sorrows of humanity crushed the Son of Man to the earth in an anguish of pain which racked his whole being. *"He was made sin for us, who knew no sin."* Hostile antagonism, hateful wickedness, treachery and human weakness, were all arrayed against him. He who was innocent was made guilty; he who was right was made wrong; he who was all love was despised, rejected, hated without a cause.

"Crucify him! Away with him! We have no king but Caesar!" Pilate went through the ceremony of washing his hands of innocent blood to the cry *"His blood be upon us and upon our children"*.

Shudderingly the curtain falls. The earthly career of the Son of Man entered its final phase with the Roman command, *"Get ready the cross"*. With heroic fortitude the Man of Nazareth went forth to die, shouldering the instrument of torture, crucified between thieves, "numbered with the transgressors".

Jesus upheld and fulfilled the law, expressed in the two great life-preserving commandments of supreme love for God and unselfish love for man. For that he was sent to his death by the lip-serving rulers whose own self-preservation in luxury and prestige meant much more to them than justice, mercy and love to fellowmen or obedience to God, who had given the golden rule by which men should live in harmony with himself and with one another.

A few understood and responded, but He would have no illusions about the future, or the effects of the gospel of the faith upon the then unborn masses of mankind. Though history was an open book before him, his mission to the end of the age was with the few.

To be concluded

It can never be an easy thing to say a last farewell to one we love, but if our practice has ever been to commend him or her to God, the sting has been withdrawn, and He who has kept the

loved one through a single day or week, can just as truly keep them "till that day"—at least that was Paul's assuring thought, and it will surely be to our eternal good if we daily make it ours too!

THE URIM AND THUMMIM

Investigation into an
Old Testament enigma

"And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make them" (Exod. 28.15).

Taking the words as they come, it would appear that "breastplate" might be taken for a plate to wear, or protect the chest, but the fact that it is made with such beautiful materials—gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, gives us a different line of thought. Further investigation proves that this very important article, to be kept constantly tied with cords and chains to the ephod, is no such thing. Strong's concordance gives some light on this matter: The word "Breastplate" is from the Hebrew "choshen". Strong has it "Breastplate—to contain, a pocket (as holding the Urim and Thummim). Young: Breastplate — (Choshen), meaning "bag", translated "bag" 25 times. Strong: Judgment—(Breastplate of judgment), Hebrew "Mishpat", meaning "Verdict", favourable or unfavourable, from a root word "Shaphat"—to pronounce sentence, (for or against), to vindicate, punish, or govern. With Hebrew words supplied, Exod. 28. 15 reads *"Thou shalt make the breastbag of Verdict, etc. etc. . . ."*

To help prove that this very special part of the High Priest's regalia was a bag and not a breastplate, turn to vs. 16, 23 and 26-27 of the same chapter. Vs. 16 reads *"Four-square it shall be, doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof"*. Vs. 23, *"and thou shalt make upon the breast bag two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breastbag"*. With careful reading of the next verses, 24 and 25, we see that the rings from the top corners of the breastbag are joined with gold chains to the two "ouches", rings already put there from shoulder ouches (Vs. 26). Two more rings on the two ends of the breastbag and two more gold rings on the ephod were to be tied from the breastbag to the ephod with a lace. Young gives this as a "ribbon"; Rotherham gives "cord of blue". So we have chains of wreathen work to hang the breastbag from the shoulder fastenings which have the onyx stones with the six names of each of the tribes on each stone. However, note that the fastenings are of cord or ribbon from the lower rings to the ephod and "curious girdle", as it is seen that the breastbag would appear to hang from the gold rings, which are shoulder ouches as well, by gold chains. The lower rings and ouches are held down

with cords or ribbons to the curious girdle.

The picture is of the breastbag, cunningly wrought with all the colours of the ephod, folded in half, with the stones of the twelve tribes on the front half, two rings on the back of the breastplate and two rings on the bottom or edges (where folded up), and two more on the outside edge of the front flap of the folded breastbag (Exod. 39. 19-20).

"And thou shalt put in the breastbag of verdict the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord; and Aaron shall bear the verdict of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually" (Exod. 28.30). Here is further proof that it was a bag or container, as we are told in vs. 30 *"Put in the breastbag the Urim and Thummim"*, and out of this bag come forth the answers of *Yahweh* when asked for. No answer could be given unless the High Priest was actually wearing the ephod and breastbag. There are many proofs, but one of the most convincing is Num. 27.29-31, *"and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation and give him a charge in their sight. Thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the decision of the Urim before the Lord. At his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation"*. In 1 Sam. 14.36-37 Saul could not ask anything of the Lord unless the priest was present (vs. 36); the priest said *"let us draw near hither unto God"*.—"And Saul asked counsel of God . . . but he answered him not that day".

When Saul slew the High Priest and his sons (1 Sam. 22.17-20; 23. 6 & 9), the younger one, Abiathar, escaped and brought an ephod with him, and as we have seen, the breastbag with the Urim and Thummim in it were always chained to the ephod, so that it could not be removed. Strong's concordance tells us:

"Lot"—(*Goral*) "pebble", i.e. a lot (small stones being used for that purpose), portion or destiny as if determined by lot. The root meaning of *"Lot"* is derived from *"rough"*, or *"a stone"*, or *"a pebble"*. *"Urim"*—*"Light"*; the ocular brilliance of the figures in the High Priest's breastplate (bag). *"Thummim"*—*"Complete Truth"*.

It is thought that as the onyx stone was the most precious, that these were used as the Lots,

Urim and Thummim,—five in all; two for the shoulder ouches, one on the breastbag in the fourth row and two put inside the bag, making five in all. Young says that onyx stones were leek green; according to the English dictionary these were beryls, which were white, and onyx were pale green. The first glimpse we have on how they were used is found in Numbers 27.21—"who shall ask counsel for him, after the "verdict" of the Urim before the Lord?" Here there is no mention of the Thummim; it would appear that the answer would mainly be "yes", as the question as to if they moved camp, came in, or went out, would be a straightforward "yes" or "no", and it is concluded that if no stone came forth out of the bag, this showed God's disapproval. Therefore, the Urim only was mentioned by Moses on this occasion. Another instance used was in the case of Saul asking God to bring forth the Thummim in his favour (1 Sam. 14.41) "Lord God of Israel, bring forth a perfect lot"—the meaning being "perfection" or "truth". There is no scripture where the Thummim is used by name in this way, yet the meaning of the word itself gives a clue as to its use. Strong has it "Thummim"—*'Tummiym'*,—Emblem of complete truth—root "*Tom*", meaning completeness, innocence, full integrity, uprightness.

In the case of Saul calling for a perfect lot, it was the Thummim which was used. In cases of dissension between contending parties, where truth and justice were needed; firstly, Saul wanted God to decide between Israel on one side and Jonathan and himself on the other. This was a case where innocence and truth were in question, so one would expect the Thummim to be used. To help here we could read from Prov. 18.18. "The Lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty". The same verse from Young's translation: "The lot causeth contentions to cease and between the mighty it separateth"; a little proof that the wise King Solomon believed in the use of the Urim and Thummim. So again in Prov. 16.33: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord", or as Young's "into the centre is the lot cast, and from Jehovah is all its judgments" (decisions).

Before moving away from the subject of the way the light and perfection (truth) was used, a little could be said on some of the lengthy replies David seemed to get when he asked questions of the Urim and Thummim on such occasions as 1 Sam. 23.9-11. David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him, and he said to Abiathar, the priest, "bring hither the ephod". David prayed "O Lord God of Israel . . . will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand . . .

"Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? . . . O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant", And the Lord said, "He will come down". Notice here that all the questions are put in such a way as only to need a "yes" or "no", and when the Urim comes forth, which is the Lord's consent, the historian recording the incident uses the whole of the last question as the answer. This we find in other places—1 Sam. 30, 7-8—paraphrasing two verses; David said to the High Priest, "I pray thee bring me hither the ephod", and he brought it forward. And David enquired of the Lord "Shall I pursue after the troop?", "Shall I overtake them", and he (the Lord) answered him "Pursue, for thou shalt surely overtake and without fail recover all".

There is no evidence that the Urim or the Thummim had any means of speaking, but as seen in Prov. 16.33, from Young's translation, "Into the centre is the lot cast, and from the Lord (*Yahweh*) is all its decision". The High Priest had to interpret if the Urim came forth into the lap from the breastbag of decision, then he told the questioner the answer which, in both cases, (1 Sam. 23.9-11 and 1 Sam. 30.7-8), was a repetition of the last question. It could be thought that the High Priest, having recognised God's consent, was moved by the Spirit to speak the Lord's answer!

At the dividing of the land (Josh. ch. 18-19); careful attention must be paid to see how the Urim was used by the High Priest and Joshua; only these two were used of God to do this great work. The key to these chapters is found in vs. 4-6 of chapter 18. At this stage there were seven tribes still without land allotted to them, and Joshua told them in vs. 4 "three men of each tribe I will send and they shall rise and go through all the land and describe it according to the inheritance of them, and they shall come again to me . . . and they shall divide it into seven parts . . . ye shall therefore divide the land into seven parts and bring the description hither to me that I may cast lots for you here before the Lord our God . . . And the men went and passed through the land, and described it city by city into seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua to the host of Shiloh". These verses indicate that there were three men chosen from each tribe; all these men would know what was the extent of family and size of their own tribes (were to "walk up and down through all the land" — Young). "*Book*" here is "*Ciphrah*", meaning a book, evidence, register or scroll (Strong). It is suggested by some commentators that this could also mean a map. The twenty-one men came again to Joshua to Shiloh, and as in the last verse of chap. 19, "these are the inheritances which Eleazar

the Priest and Joshua and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel divided for an inheritance by lot in Shiloh before the Lord, at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation".

We can imagine the description of all the twenty-one men carefully detailing each border and each landmark, so that an accurate division could be made according to the size of each tribe. The three men from each tribe would come forward with the Elders of the tribe, as called by Joshua, and give the size of the tribe, and number of families; they would describe what they had measured for their tribe and Joshua would ask Eleazar to enquire of the Lord if this land was for them. If the answer was "yes" the Urim would come forth into the lap out of the breastbag. If no stone came out, then another tribe would have to try for that described area of land, until the right answer came forth.

Only a few references are made to the Urim and Thummim after the death of Samuel. It is mentioned in Neh. 7.65 and Ezra 2. 61-63. One prophet confirms the other in this statement, that none would eat of the holy bread until a priest stood up who had the Urim and Thummim. It would appear that the Light and Truth was used much more openly in Israel than appears on the surface. We find this in two ways; it is referred to either as Lot (*Goral*), or Light and Truth.

David used the Priest's breastbag on every major decision, and Solomon refers to it twice in Proverbs. 1 Chron. 24.5-6 and vs.31 show how often this is used. In these verses the same conditions were adhered to as when Joshua and Eleazar, the chief Priest, divided the land. Also present were the heads of the household, and at this time the King, with the addition of a scribe, one of the Levites. This was to decide who would be the governor of the sanctuary and governors of the House of God. In vs. 31 the same people were present, Zadok, King David and the chiefs of the fathers of the priests and Levites, with their younger brethren. These verses show that the High Priest was called upon by the king to ask the Lord who would do service in the Tabernacle or Temple, as this solemn occasion of choosing the Heads of the families was just as binding on the younger members of the family, and they all served together in their various capacities.

The next two scriptures show that the lot (*Goral*) still came forth from the High Priest's breastbag and the decision was of the Lord; whatever came forth was accepted without question: —(1 Chron. 25.7-8) "the numbers of the singers that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, . . . and they *cast lots*, ward against ward, as well the

small as the great, the teacher as the scholar". Thus 1 Chron. 26.12-13, "among these were the divisions of the porters, even among the chief men having wards one against another to minister in the house of the Lord . . . and they *cast lots*, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers for every gate . . ." Having seen that the Lord's decision was always accepted by the high and lowly, all took their work, whatever it was, without contention.

The other reference is to Light and Truth; David now uses the words in place of "Urim and Thummim" in Psalms 43.2-3 (*Young*). "Why mourning do I go up and down in the oppression of an enemy? Send out thy Light and Truth, they lead me, they bring me in unto thy Holy hill and unto thy Tabernacles". David has been talking about his enemies and mourning because of their oppression, then calls for God's judgments, or decision, by either his Urim, "yes", or Thummim, "truth, justice". "Send out "light" (perfection) or "truth" (justice). The latter end of the verse: "They lead me, they bring me in unto thy holy hill". These are the same words that God used by Moses to Joshua; the counsel of the Urim would guide him and the children of Israel, would tell them when to go out and come in; so by the Urim (light) would the will of God be made known.

Again, with David in Psalm 37.5-6 (*Young*) "Roll on Jehovah thy way, and trust upon him, and he worketh . . . and hath brought out as light thy righteousness and thy judgment as noonday". In the beginning of this Psalm David is complaining of his enemies, and is told not to fret himself over them; they will wither like new mown grass in the sun, and God has brought forth the (Urim) as light; this is his righteousness.

When it is realised that "Urim" means "light", and therefore God's consent, coming out of the bag of decision, we see more clearly the thought contained in some of the prophecies, such as Hos. 6.5-6 (*Roth*). "For this cause have I hewn them in pieces by the prophets, I have slain them by the sayings of my mouth, and my justice as a light giveth forth". God is here pointing out that if Ephraim and Judah had kept the counsels of old their loving kindness would not be like the morning dew or fleeting cloud. "I have tried to teach them, and had they asked of me my counsel they would have had my justice as a light coming forth, for he longed for loving-kindness rather than sacrifice and knowledge of God more than ascending offerings". Another minor prophet (Micah 7. 8-9 *Roth*) says "Do not rejoice my enemy against me; though I fall I shall rise again. Though I sit in darkness *Yahweh* is a light unto me . . . The indignation of *Yahweh* will I bear, for I have sinned against him, until he

taketh up my controversy. Then will he do me justice, He will bring me forth to the Light, I shall behold his righteousness.

These scriptures are very clear when it is seen that all these Hebrew prophets were very familiar with the use of the Lot (*Goral*), or stones of decision, and how they were used. Isaiah, who was used of God to prophesy the two advents of his Son, had in mind the thought that the Messiah would come as the light and bring justice (Isa. 42.1-3 *Roth*). "Lo, my servant, I will uphold him; my chosen well pleased is my soul, I have put my spirit upon him. Justice to the nations will he bring forth. Faithfully will he bring forth (Thummim) justice"; Isaiah had a good working knowledge of the work of the breastbag of the High Priest. Isaiah here prophesies that God's servant will himself bring forth justice to the nations.

What does John tell us in John 1.4 (*Young*)?—"In him was life, and the life was the light of men and the light in the darkness did shine".

Can it be suggested that in Jesus' coming, as sent by the Father, He himself was the personification of the will of the Father, and the will of God (*Yahweh*) was contained in the breastbag of the decision tied and chained on to the heart of the High Priest. Paul calls Jesus the High Priest of our Profession (Heb. 3.1). Our High Priest is not only the High Priest, but the Light (Urim)

and Truth (Thummim). As Psa. 40.8 tells us, "So, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is written in my heart".

The language of the Urim and Thummim is very largely used through the whole of the Bible. Bring forth! send forth! come forth!—all these are used when speaking of the Lot, coming forth from the breastbag of the High Priest, and in turn are the decisions of God (or his will), and whenever this is mentioned some great event is about to take place. "But when the fulness of the times came God sent forth his son... and because ye are sons God sent forth the spirit of his son" (Gal. 4.4-6 *Roth*). The Heavenly Father sent forth Jesus as his will, his light and truth. Jesus personified his Father to his followers and revealed God's light to the world (1 John 1.5 *Roth*). "And this is the message which we have heard from him and are reporting unto you, that God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all". We can here add another to the collection of titles which belong to the Son of God; Jesus is not only the Lamb of God, the High Priest of our profession, the Ransom sacrifice, the light of the world, but also the Will of God contained in the breastbag of the High Priest, the Urim and Thummim, the complete will of God.

AN EXAMPLE TO AVOID

In his book "*A Pilgrimage to Palestine*" Dr. Harry Fosdick tells of his visit in 1928 to the High Priest of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim. The tiny remnant of this people, who once had a Temple on the Mount in rivalry to that at Jerusalem, still holds to the traditions of their fathers and still treasures a copy of the Pentateuch—the five books of Moses—which dates from the time of Ezra. The point of Dr. Fosdick's narrative is the striking resemblance between the complacent bigotry of the old High Priest and the attitude of some Christians of to-day, quite sure that they, and they alone, have the monopoly of Divine Truth and that all who differ with them must of necessity be in error. His narrative runs:—

"As guests of the High Priest we sat in his tent and through a skilled interpreter talked with the venerable old man about his religion. His complacency, his sense of superiority, his certainty that these few Samaritans alone among men knew the truth about God and practised it, were fascinating. The millions around him, he said, were forgetting the Divine Law; only his little group of despised people were keeping it. He nestled comfortably into that conviction. From every point of view, he said, the Samaritan

religion alone was perfect. Could Jews or Christians divide their edition of the Ten Commandments into two tables so that the same number of words and letters would be on each? Never! The Samaritans could do with their edition! He had visited, so he said, London, Paris, Constantinople, and had always tried with open mind to welcome new truth, but had come back to Gerizim certain that no new religion was so flawless as the Samaritan. All others were simply more or less pleasing superstructures; only the Samaritans had solid foundations in the Mosaic Law. So the old man, venerable of aspect, amiable in spirit, talked on into the night, archaic as the blood sacrifice he had just administered."

Surely we need to be watchful, that we, who have such wonderful opportunities for advancement in the knowledge of Divine Truth, do not fall into the same petty, narrow groove. How different the exultant words of the Apostle, when, comparing our position with the blinded people of old, he cried:

"We all, *with open face*, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory unto glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3. 18).

JESUS AND THE LIFE TO COME

A three-part
essay

Part I

It has often been remarked that Jesus said comparatively little about the future life but a great deal about the conditions of entry to that life. There is more in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets on the details of the life which lies beyond the present, and this fact has led some to suggest that the Apostles were over-zealous in their attention to the subject. If the life to come were of such importance, then surely, it is argued, Jesus himself would have had more to say about it.

Such reasoning is not really justified. The intent of Jesus, when upon earth, was to implant seeds of understanding of God's purposes, which would develop into fuller comprehension in after days under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The parable in Mark 4 illustrates the principle. "*First the grain, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear*". The realities of the future life are so stupendous, so unlike anything known to or conceived by men at the First Advent, that if He had embarked on a full exposition they would have been overwhelmed. He said as much on one occasion. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now, but when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth*". (Jno. 16. 12-13). It is to be expected therefore that the things which Jesus had to say concerning the life to come were mainly allusions which could only be understood as the Christian faith developed and the relation of the Person and mission of Jesus to the teachings and prophecies of the Old Testament became more clearly discerned.

The basic truth upon which Jesus dwelt more than anything else in his recorded utterances, the truth upon which all else depends, is the fact that life, enduring life, eternal life, inheres in him and can come to man only through him. "*In him was life, and the life was the light of men*" (Jno. 1. 4). "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life*" (Jno. 3. 36). "*I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*" (Jno. 11. 25). He told the woman of Samaria that He could give her living water which would be in her a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (Jno. 4. 14). He described himself to the Jews as living bread from heaven, which if a man eat he would live for ever (Jno. 6. 50-51). This was the first lesson of Jesus' ministry, that all life comes through him and that his purpose in coming to earth was to guide men

into the way of finding and receiving that life.

The second lesson is best summed up in the words of Jesus in Luke 19. 10 "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*". The parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Piece of Silver, are eloquent with this theme. "*God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*". (Jno. 3. 17). And the confidence with which Jesus carried out that mission is shown by his own words "*and I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men unto me*" (Jno. 12. 32). Note that the drawing of all men is after and not before the "lifting up". That fact highlights the third great truth, which formed a constant background to all his teaching, the truth that the First Advent was to witness only one part of his redemptive work, that He must come again at his Second Advent to complete the work of winning men back to God. The subject of the Second Advent cannot be left out when considering what Jesus had to say concerning the life to come.

Jesus set the whole of his teaching and his work on the basis of the Old Testament Messianic promise. He presupposed a sound knowledge of that promise on the part of his disciples and hearers. Many of his allusions can only be understood in that light. When opening his ministry, reading from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of Nazareth, He declared himself to be the fulfilment of that prophecy. In so doing He identified himself with the Messiah of all prophecy and of Israel's expectation and the people were not slow to grasp that fact. Without speaking one word He had defined for them and for all time his teaching on the life to come; it was the Divine Kingdom of the Hebrew prophets, the condition of things when sin would be eliminated from amongst mankind and the earth be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Heaven and earth would continue together in complete harmony and allegiance to God the Creator and Father of all. This all stems from the original promise to Abraham to the effect that through his seed all families of the earth should be blessed. In after days the prophets declared that the promised Seed would come of the royal line of David and Jesus now appeared as the Son of David, in his own Person justifying the prediction. It is not sufficient therefore to define the teaching of Jesus on the life to come purely in terms of his own recorded utterances; the whole of that Old Testament teaching and

prophecy which He endorsed and claimed to fulfil must be considered part of his teaching. The apostles accepted this fact and the rest of the New Testament draws heavily on the Old Testament in its development and crystallisation of the oral teachings of Jesus into established Christian doctrine.

It is noteworthy that, whilst Jesus was always intensely interested in the individual and the reconciliation of each individual man to God, He continually stressed the fact that God's ultimate purpose visualises the integration of all individuals into a sinless community, the "Kingdom of Heaven". This expression, or its equivalent, the "Kingdom of God", occur repeatedly in Jesus' sayings, and may fairly be said to enshrine what Jesus taught concerning the life to come. Salvation is not merely a personal matter, as though the individual having safely attained the felicity of heaven there is nothing more to be achieved and no further responsibility to any other creature and no longer any communal duty. Salvation is the attainment of a place in God's creation where every power can be and will be continuously employed in the furtherance of the Divine purpose in creation, without the hampering effects of sin. When sin has been overcome and banished from God's universe, when evil and evil-doers and the effects of evil doing have been eliminated, then the Kingdom of Heaven will have universal sway. And Jesus taught, as the old Hebrew prophets taught, that the Kingdom of Heaven is not confined to a spiritual realm beyond the skies, but is also destined to reach down to this world of man and material things—and for aught we know, to countless other planets like the Earth, where creatures yet unborn may live sinless in the eternal service of God. The pre-

occupation of Christian theology for so many centuries past with the spiritual hope of the Church in the heavenly realm to all eternity has obscured the parallel truth that there is an earthly as well as a heavenly aspect to the Kingdom of Heaven, and that God has not created the material order of things only wantonly to destroy it. Jesus was primarily interested at his First Advent in calling men and women to be his personal disciples for close association in the celestial world in all the future creative work of God, and this is to this day the Christian calling. At his Second Advent, accompanied by those same disciples and subsequent converts and believers, He will proceed to the establishment of the earthly phase of the Kingdom of Heaven among what James in Acts 15 calls "the residue of men".

We shall therefore find that Jesus spoke a great deal about the characteristics of the Kingdom of Heaven and that sometimes He referred to a celestial kingdom inherited by his faithful followers of this Age, all who have dedicated their lives to his service and have served him to the best of their ability, and sometimes to a terrestrial kingdom inherited by men and women who, although slow in turning from sin to serve the living God, have at length done so under the beneficent administration of that order of things which is to be established when Christ has revealed himself in his Second Advent for the final conflict with sin and the establishment on earth of everlasting righteousness.

* * *

Next issue will deal in greater detail with the actual words of Jesus respecting this dual nature of the life to come.

UNIVERSAL LAW IN NATURE

"Everything that occurs in Nature is the result of some law instituted to bring it to pass. No phenomena are in opposition to the laws of Nature, nor are the laws of Nature ever set aside in order to bring about conditions or circumstances that would be more conducive to men's welfare, than the operation of the original laws themselves. Even "miracles" are, no doubt, in strict conformity with the primitive and immutable scheme of Divine government, which has maintained the universe in its integrity and sublime order ever since the time of that sweet aurora when the "morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy"; we call them "supernatural," simply because they are effected, not by suspending the laws, but by ex-

hibiting the unaccustomed powers of Nature. For there is a spiritual law within, and thus above, every natural law, which, being necessarily in perfect harmony with it, may dignify and expand its operation, but can never contradict it. If we feel disposed to regard miracles as works requiring the suspension of the laws of Nature, it is again simply because we do not understand—and in this, our present life, probably cannot so understand—the immensity and fulness of the laws of Nature, nor see how occurrences, apparently quite at variance one with another, may yet be in harmony and be quite compatible when viewed by the light of some grand and omnipotent principle which originates and includes both.

L. H. Grindon c.1890.

LORD OF NEW LIFE

There is a legend in the Koran—the Bible of the Mohammedan faith—concerning the Mohammedan saint Al Khidr. None of the Koran commentators know who Al Khidr was, only that he lived a very long time ago. The legend tells how Moses and Joshua, in obedience to God's command, set out on a long journey to find Al Khidr, the man of great wisdom, who possessed the secret and power of eternal life. They came at last to the place of two seas, which in Arabic is the name of the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, and there they found Al Khidr and the water of life. They placed a dead fish which they had brought with them into that water and immediately it touched the water it came to life and swam away and they lost it, and with its escape they lost the power of the water of life for themselves and had to return home as they came, mortal men subject to death. Al Khidr had told them of his Master Dhulkarnain the two-horned one, who travelled from the sunset to the sunrise and alone had the power to give life, and with that knowledge Moses had to be content.

An Arabic legend, so absurd and so pointless that it has always been dismissed as some fanciful fiction devised by the prophet of Islam when compiling the book which is still the sacred book of his followers. Nowhere else, in history or tradition, was the name of this legendary saint found. Until, only five years ago, the archaeologist Geoffrey Bibby, exploring in the Persian Gulf for remains of the legendary Sumerian land of Dilmun, the Babylonian equivalent of the garden of Eden, found himself on the little island of Failaka a few miles off the coast of the modern oil State of Kuwait. There, on an island only four miles long by two wide, with a handful of native inhabitants, he found an ancient shrine—just a circular stone roofless building with a single upright pillar in its centre. Upon enquiring its name of the natives, he was told that it was the shrine of Al Khidr. Questioned further, they said that Al Khidr was an ancient holy man who lived long before the time of the Mohammedans and that they still paid homage to him at his shrine because he had the secret of life. He lived still in Iraq, they said, and every Tuesday night he visited and stayed at this shrine for the night on his way to Mecca (the Moslem holy city) for his weekly visit. If any woman on the island wanted a son she spent all Tuesday night in prayer at the shrine and Al Khidr granted her wish and gave her the gift of new life.

Intrigued, Bibby started some excavations, and found that the shrine was indeed ancient. Buried in the ground he discovered Babylonian and Sumerian objects going back more than four thousand years, to a time before the life of Abraham. And the nature of some of the objects revealed the identity of the mysterious Al Khidr. He was none other than Noah who brought new life to the world after the flood.

Six hundred years before Abraham there was a Sumerian king called Gilgamesh. Grieved by the death of his closest friend, and saddened at the power of death in the world, he determined to embark on a long and dangerous journey to obtain the secret of eternal life from his ancestor Khadra-hasis, who built the Ark and survived the Flood and was rewarded by the gods with immortality. After suffering many hardships he at length crossed the waters of death to an island where he found his ancestor. In the epic poem which recounts all this, Khadra-hasis told Gilgamesh the whole story of the Flood, and how upon emerging from the Ark the great god Bel and the goddess Ishtar, the goddess of life, had made him immortal and conveyed him to this home far from the haunts of men where he dwelt in the presence of the gods. To the plea of Gilgamesh that he too might possess this gift of life and never die, his ancestor showed where to pluck the plant of life which was growing in the water of life, but he warned him that so long as men continued to fight and strive with each other, just so long would death continue among men. Rejoicingly Gilgamesh gathered the precious plant of life and started on his homeward journey, but before he had gone far the plant was stolen from him by a serpent. So he arrived home still subject to death; the life he craved for was never his, and death continued amongst men.

Bibby immediately realised that the legend of the Koran was a survival of the far older legend of Gilgamesh, and that he had unwittingly stumbled upon a ritual that had been observed by a forgotten people for more than four thousand years. The Arabic name Al Khidr was the same as the Babylonian Khadra-hasis, the Bible Noah; the Arabic prophet Dhul-karnain the two-horned was the god Bel who bestowed eternal life upon the Flood hero, always depicted in sculptures with two horns, and the journey of Moses was a dim recollection of the travels of the old Babylonian king Gilgamesh. Even the fact that it is only on Tuesday nights that the women of

Failaka can expect the gift of life for their unborn children is explained, for in ancient times each night of the week was under the protection of one of the ancient deities and Tuesday night was allotted to the goddess Ishtar, the goddess of life, who in company with Bel gave life to man.

And what, one may ask, has all this mass of legend and folk-lore to do with the significance of Easter? What is there in this to turn the mind to the wonder of our Lord's resurrection? A very great deal!

Those Babylonian legends of the Flood came from the same source as the story in the Book of Genesis. Distorted, mixed up with fables and bits of later history, and coloured by belief in many gods, but based on a foundation of truth nevertheless. A truth that we hold as fundamental to-day. Those ancients believed, as do we, that there was a time when the world was doomed because of its sin, that all men were dead in their trespasses and sins, and so that world came to an end in a great deluge of water, and death reigned over all. But one man was true to God and he came out of that dead world unscathed, and God made him the channel of new life to a new world. That was what Noah was to the new world that was born when he came out of the Ark, and in that he was a type, a figure, of our Lord Jesus Christ who also passed through the waters of death and rose again on the third day in the power of an endless life, to give life to all such as should obey him. Is it not significant that the Ark came to rest on the mountain on the evening of the same day that our Lord rose from the dead? (The ancient year began in the autumn and the seventh month in the days of the Flood was the first month, Nisan, in the days of Israel.) Is it not significant that Peter uses the same happening as a type of the resurrection? "*In the ark*" he says (as rendered in the N.E.B.) "*a few persons were brought to safety through the water. This water prefigured the water of baptism through which you are now brought to safety . . . it brings salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. 3.20-21). The word here rendered "pre-figured" is Greek for antitype; there is a direct correspondence between Noah and his family passing through the waters of the Flood and emerging safely to give new life to the world, and our Lord, and his Church after him, passing through the waters of the true baptism, and rising to walk again in newness of life in order that eventually the dead world shall have new life also.

It may not easily be realised that just as Noah was Divinely protected whilst in the Ark, so was our Lord during the days of his dwelling in the flesh. Once inside the vessel, after as Genesis says, the Lord had shut him in, Noah was dependent

upon Divine care. The Ark might have struck some rocky peak in the first tumultuous rush of the waters, and foundered, but it did not. When the waters began to subside and drain away into the ocean, the Ark could easily have been carried, helplessly, by the current, far from land and lost in the vastness of the southern seas, but it was not. Precisely at the ordained moment, at the time which corresponded to the day of that so much greater thing that was to happen at the garden tomb outside Jerusalem so many thousands of years later, the Ark came gently to rest and was safe. And in just the same way the life of Jesus was supervised and directed by his Father in Heaven. When the people of Nazareth tried to throw him over the precipice they could not, for his time was not yet come. When the Pharisees' officers came to arrest him they could not. Only when God's due time had come did He set his face like a flint to go to Jerusalem and pass through the deepest of the deep waters, and in supreme trust in his Father come out triumphantly on the other side.

Perhaps there was something of that in the prophetic Messianic Eighteenth Psalm. There is no doubt that our Lord's earthly humiliation and ultimate royal glory over the nations is pictured here for the language is altogether too exalted to apply only to David. And here, after telling of the distresses and trials of the Man of Sorrows, and the outward happenings indicative of Divine displeasure with men at the Crucifixion, the speaker says (vs. 16 N.E.B.) "*He reached down from the height and took me; he drew me out of mighty waters*". Like Noah of old our Lord went down into the waters and was buried by his baptism into death. That was the significance of his immersion in Jordan by John the Baptist. For three and a half years He was carried safely through those waters and at the end He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father and entered into a new life, far above all heavens, that He might fulfil the purposes of God in the giving of new life to all who will.

Jesus likened his own death and resurrection to the experience of the prophet Jonah. Cast into the midst of the seas and from the human point of view without hope, the prophet of Galilee was wonderfully saved by the strong hand of God. "*The waters compassed me about, even to the soul*" he said "*the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head . . . yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption. O Lord my God*" (Jon. 3.5-6). Just so, God spake, and Christ the Lord rose triumphantly from the waves of death. There is a rather wonderful comparison pictured by the after experience of Jonah, too, which points to the resurrection work of our

Lord. Jonah went to Nineveh, the centre of the world's sin, and he preached repentance and judgment to people who had not heretofore heeded or even known God, and they repented and were saved. So does Christ the Lord come forth from the grave that He might preach repentance and judgment to men in that day which God has appointed, and those who believe will be saved.

As with the Head, so with the Body. We too, partakers with him in lives dedicated to God, joint-heirs with him of the glory that shall be, must also go through the waters of death if we would live with him. *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"* (Rom. 6.4-5). If we are thus truly dead with Christ, says the Apostle, then we shall assuredly live with him. And that means that we too, as members of the Church which is his Body, will likewise be brought through the waters safely by the power of God that we too might be the bearers of new life to the world. One of the most significant texts of Scripture is that in Rev. 22.17 where the Bride of Christ, the Church, is depicted as acting in concert with her Lord to hold out the blessings of everlasting life to all. *"Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely"*.

Water of life! This is a new word. Up to now we have been talking of waters of death through which have been brought those who will afterward bring new life to the world. But now we are told of waters of life and of He who has the right and power to dispense those waters of life to such as will truly benefit. That takes us back to the old legend. After the Noah of the Babylonian legend had been safely delivered from the waters of the Flood he received power over the water of life and when Gilgamesh came to him he was able to offer him the plant of life and the water of life and it was only by the machinations of the serpent that Gilgamesh lost the blessing. But there will be no serpent when the triumphant Christ offers the plant of life and the water of life to man. And there will no longer be any waters of death. There is a wonderfully eloquent passage in Isa. 54. 7-10 in which God avows his intention to attain full reconciliation with his creation; *"in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee . . . for my kind-*

ness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed". Those words were spoken at the first to Israel but the principle is to be true for all mankind. So those waters of death which provided the means for the earthly experience of our Lord and the training of his Church, the whole duration and extent of the power of evil, are for ever passed away and their place taken by the pure river of the water of life which will bring new life to the nations.

And here we must follow the prophets into their golden visions of the future, for these things are not yet; they are yet to be. When the prophet Ezekiel beheld his wondrous vision of the Millennial Temple set in the centre of the fair Millennial land, he saw a stream flowing out from the sanctuary, taking its direction eastward, steadily broadening and deepening as it progressed, until in a matter of a little less than a mile it was a river so wide and so deep that it could only be crossed by swimming. And he saw trees, trees of life, on both sides of this river of life. And he saw the river continue until it flowed into the Dead Sea down in the valley, and the life-giving waters of that river of life purified those stagnant waters so that the Dead Sea was no longer dead, and it became full of fish, and all the desolate countryside round about became fertile and productive, for, said the angel who showed Ezekiel these things, *"everything shall live where the river cometh"*. Here is the Garden of Eden restored, the river that watered the garden, and the Tree of life in the midst of the garden, which if a man eat, he shall live for ever.

Ezekiel saw the glory of the God of Israel enter into that Temple and take up permanent residence there, never again to leave it, but he knew nothing of the gracious and all-powerful One who was to impart the life to that stream and those trees so that men might take, and eat, and live. It was left to John the beloved disciple to add the capstone to the vision. He saw, not a great Temple, but a mighty city, the New Jerusalem, resplendent in the radiant light of Heaven, established upon earth with its gates wide open that men might enter and rejoice in its light. And, says John, there was no Temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were its Temple. And it had no need of the sun and the moon, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof. And then he saw, as Ezekiel had seen half a millennium previously, the river of life proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, and the trees of life on both sides of that river, *"and the leaves of the trees"* he said *"were for the healing of the nations"*.

That old Babylonian hero, Khadra-hasis, who

survived the Flood, was given everlasting life for himself but he was unable to pass it on to anybody else. He tried, but the endeavour failed. Our risen Lord will not fail; he is *"able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by him, see-*

ing He ever liveth" (Heb. 7.25). And as for mankind *"I am come"* He said *"that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"*.

LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment" (1 John 4. 18).

Better expressed would have been the text by saying, *"There is no dread in love"*. We do not dread that which we love. In one sense, however, the more we love, the more we fear. We would not be so careful about pleasing a person whom we do not thus love. This is not the kind of fear, however, that the Apostle wishes us to cast out. On the contrary, it should be much enhanced. Consequently, the word dread would more accurately express the thought. The Scriptures speak of some who have *"no fear of God before their eyes"* (Rom. 3.18). Evidently these are unregenerate. Often, among men, there is a thoughtlessness in respect to God and the future. The Apostle in this text does not intimate that all hearts have fear; but that if any heart has fear, perfect love will cast it out. As knowledge and love increase fear diminishes. We may say that those who have a reverential fear are in a preferable attitude of mind; they are in better condition than the thoughtless. In life, certain conditions which surround us call for reverence; a man's brain is so constituted that reverence will be a part of his mental attitude if he be not depraved. Hence, the Scriptures say that *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Prov. 9.10). The fear of the Lord, the reverence of the Lord, will bring a blessing. This fear of the Lord increases as the child of God comes to know his Maker but it is a gradual process.

There is a certain fear which comes as the result of imperfect knowledge. We do not credit the Adversary with producing all the evil thoughts of the human mind, yet he has very much to do with the evil influences which surround our race. People may be without fear of God, and even after they have come to the Lord, and are learning to reverence him and to know him, they may lack the right kind of fear. Then the Adversary's plan will be to plant dread in their minds. *"The god of this world hath blinded*

the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. 4.4). This evil influence is accountable for many of the things which seem so remarkable. It explains the fact that the heathen have devilish doctrines mingled with dread of God, and that the worldly who have knowledge of God, both Jews and Christians, have fear also—dread. Yet Christians have much greater light upon God's character than have others, and so should have correspondingly less fear than the heathen.

Our text is not intended to signify that a Christian should have no sense of fear. This fact is shown by the experience of our Lord himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. He there feared, as the Apostle tells us in speaking of this occasion, and He was heard in that He feared. He offered up strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him out of death (Heb. 5.7). If the Master feared, so should his followers. The Apostle says, *"Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it"*. (Heb. 4.1). How shall we harmonise these fears with our text? The text is, evidently, not intended to contradict the great lessons otherwise taught. Our Lord Jesus appealed to the Father who, He knew, loved him: So with us, let us know that *"God is love"* (1 John 4.8), but let us fear respecting ourselves, and have such a carefulness, such a desire to please God, that we feel fearful lest in any degree we come short. Ignorance begets fear, but love for God enables us to cast out that fear, and also enables us to come to God with confidence. So let us *"draw nigh unto God"* (James 4.8), with full confidence that He will bless us. This thought is the very opposite to that of the heathen mind. Their conception of a god is that of a demon. The Christian, on the other hand, who is walking in the footsteps of the Master learns to love his God and to wish to do the Father's will only. Nothing is acceptable in the nature of a sacrifice that is not prompted by that love. *"The Father seeketh such to worship him as worship in spirit and in truth"* (John 4.23, 24).

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *How should the Christian view the turning of water into wine by our Lord at the Cana wedding in the light of the tragedies caused by alcohol to-day? Would Jesus perform this particular miracle to-day if He was upon earth now in similar circumstances?*

A. For all that we know, the wine which came out of the water-pots at our Lord's behest may have been completely non-alcoholic. Created specially for the purpose, it had only to impress the palates of the guests as superior to the wine they had been drinking, as was remarked by the ruler of the feast. One has to remember it did not come from grapes, through the ordinary processes of fermentation; we have here a case of the transmutation of elements so that atoms were instantaneously brought together to form the sugars, acids and other constituents of normal grape juice. There was no fermentation and no obligation therefore to postulate the presence of alcohol. All that was necessary was for the constituents to be right, and the taste to be right, and the Lord saw to that.

As to the larger issue, it is reasonable to assume that our Lord would not have consented to honour the feast with his presence if He had not confidence that the proceedings would be orderly and above reproach. This was not a drunken carousal. It was a village wedding and most of the guests would be God-fearing sons of Israel; this is implied by the invitation both to Jesus and his disciples to take part. It must be remembered that grape wine was the normal drink for almost all purposes in the First Century; the only alternative was milk. Modern alternatives such as tea, coffee, manufactured "soft" drinks, and so on, were not known, and neither were many of the modern more potent alcoholic drinks. There is not much doubt that Jesus used fermented wine in instituting the ritual of the Last Supper, and this implies they must have been drinking such wine at the immediately preceding Passover feast. Whilst Jesus, living in Judea in the First Century, maintained his own high standard of life and conduct within the social fabric and customs of his times, one can hardly imagine him, if physically present in the 20th Century, condoning or assisting in things which have become grave abuses and caused great harm to humanity in this century. We are probably justified in thinking that such wedding feasts as He and his disciples would be likely to be invited to in this our day would be of such nature that the question

would not arise. If He was called upon to remedy any deficiency it would be in the realm of something much more harmless. He once offered the Samaritan woman at the well something better than the water she was accustomed to drink; confronted by a modern habitual tippler, we can be quite sure that He would again offer "water of life", something much better — whether on the spiritual or material level.

* * *

Q. *What is the "sin that doth so easily beset" of Heb. 12. 1?*

The picture is that of a race in which the runners are surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses"—spectators. Seeing then that we are in such a race and in full view of the spectators, let us, says the writer to the Hebrews, lay aside every unnecessary garment and encumbrance that we may be the better able to run with agility and endurance. But beside laying aside "every weight" there is something else we must lay aside. Various translators call it "the close-girding sin" (*Diaglott*), "the easily entangling sin" (*Rotherham*), "the closely besetting sin" (*Young*), "the sin which doth so easily cling to us" (*R.V.*), "the sin that clings about us" (*Twentieth Century*), "sin with its clinging folds" (*Moffat*), and "the sin that so readily entangles our feet" (*Weymouth*). This last one is that which is most in harmony with the picture, and is the best rendering of the words "doth so easily beset", for the Greek expression really means something that "skilfully surrounds so as to prevent or retard running". When the "every weight" of the cares and distractions, the good things and the honours, of life have been cast aside in order that we might devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the Christian calling, and we have counted all things well lost in order that we may win Christ, and be found in him, there still remains sin, clinging as it were around the feet of the runners so as to hinder their steps. If in any individual life there is one form of weakness that has especial power then that can quite easily be a "sin that doth so easily beset", retarding the onward progress of that individual in the race for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is not likely that the writer to the Hebrews had in mind any particular sin; rather that he is exhorting each one of us to give special diligence to the casting off that one failing which we, inwardly, realise is likely more than anything else to be a serious hindrance to our onward progress in the way of the Lord.

TIMES AND SEASONS

3. Abraham and Isaac

The period from Terah's death and Abraham's departure from Haran to Jacob's entry into Egypt is simple to calculate and there is a mass of supplementary detail which throws considerable light on the lives' events of these three patriarchs. Abraham left Haran at 75 years of age (Gen. 11. 24 & 12.4 Acts 7.4) and was 100 at the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21.5). Isaac was 60 at Jacob's birth (Gen. 25.6) and Jacob was 130 at his entry into Egypt (Gen. 47.9). This makes the period between Haran and Egypt 215 years. During this time these three men, with their respective establishments, moved about from place to place in Canaan according to the exigencies of available pasturage, the friendship or hostility of their neighbours, and the incidence of famine.

The first dated event in the life of Abraham in Canaan is the birth of Ishmael, when he was 86. During the intervening eleven years since leaving Haran he had entered Canaan, settled for a while at Sichem (Shechem) in the north, moved on to Bethel, then to the south (the Negeb). A period of famine sent him onward into Egypt from whence he emerged considerably richer in flocks, herds and servants than when he went in. From Egypt he went back to Bethel where he must have stayed at least two years for it was here that the rapid increase of both his sheep and cattle and those of his brother-in-law Lot led to an enforced separation, since the land could not sustain them both (Gen. 13. 5-12). So Lot moved his establishment to the vicinity of Sodom and Abraham remained at Bethel. All of this must have taken at least seven years and by now Abraham was 82. At this point the Lord appeared to him and made the first declaration of his intention to give the whole land, eventually, to Abraham and his seed for ever (Gen. 13. 14-17). Almost at once Abraham moved his headquarters to Hebron, in the south, and within two years there came the invasion of the Elamite armies against Sodom and Gomorrah which resulted in Lot and his family being taken captive and Abraham's successful foray against the enemy to rescue them (Gen. 14). Immediately after this (Gen. 15.1) the Lord again appeared to Abraham to make the covenant which thereafter bore his name, and within a year after the covenant Ishmael was born to his second wife Hagar and Abraham was 86. This succession of stirring events can only just be fitted into the eleven years and it meant that Abraham must have been on the move most of the time, never staying more than a year or so in any one place.

The next thirteen years in the patriarch's life are blank so far as the narrative goes. Gen. 17 takes up the story from the 16th chapter, when Abraham was 99. He was still at Hebron. For the third time the word of the Lord came to him, reiterating the covenant and telling him that Sarai his wife would certainly have a son, the destined heir of promise. Abraham still thought fondly of Ishmael, now in his thirteenth year, but God told him that there was a destiny for Ishmael also and that he also would become the father of a great nation; nevertheless Isaac was to be the heir of the covenant and progenitor of the Seed through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Within a few weeks the three celestial visitors appeared at his tent door (Gen. 18) bearing the prediction of the birth of Isaac within the ensuing year and also that of the imminent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which must have happened almost at once for it was accomplished before the birth of Isaac.

It was probably the fiery end of the doomed cities, only forty miles away, which induced Abraham at this time to leave Hebron and migrate to the territory of Abimelech, ruler of Gerar, a hundred miles farther away. Here he remained, on amicable terms with Abimelech, despite the unfortunate contretemps regarding Sarai. Here Isaac was born, and from here Hagar and Ishmael were banished from the family home (Gen. 21).

Isaac could only have been a few years old when the family was on the move again, this time to Beer-sheba. It would appear from Gen. 21. 23-34 that Abraham's widely spread interests were infringing upon those of Abimelech's people so that in the interests of their friendship a separation became necessary. Abraham stayed at Beer-sheba for something like thirty years during which time the only incident recorded is that of his journey with Isaac to Mount Moriah in obedience to the Divine command, and Isaac's deliverance at the last moment by the substitution of a Divinely provided ram (ch. 22). It would seem, however, that Abraham still maintained his old establishment at Hebron, for it was at Hebron that Sarah died at the age of 127, and to Hebron that Abraham came from Beer-sheba to mourn and bury his wife. From then to the end of his life, a matter of thirty-eight years, Abraham remained at Hebron. Isaac, now nearly forty years of age, had already set up his own home and establishment at Lahai-roi, seventy miles away,

with his own flocks and herds. But the old man was solicitous for his son's unmarried state, remembering the Divine promise that through Isaac the promised seed should come; desirous that Isaac's bride should be of his own race and not of the women of the land around him, he sent Eliezer his steward to Haran, where his own elder brother Nahor had settled, to find a bride for Isaac from Nahor's family. The story of how Eliezer returned with Nahor's grand-daughter Rebekah is one of the epics of Old Testament history (Gen. 24). Three years after his mother's death, and at the age of forty (Gen. 25.20) Isaac was united with Rebekah. At about the same time Abraham married his third wife, Keturah (Gen. 25.1), at the age of about 140. By her he had six more sons—and probably a few daughters; womenfolk are not mentioned in the Old Testament unless they figure in some definite event or situation. He must have been at least 160 when his last child was born.

So, at the age of 175, Abraham died, an old man and full of days. He died in the faith by which he had lived, supremely confident that the promise of God to him and his would surely be fulfilled. *"And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him"* says the chronicler. Despite the circumstances of Ishmael's banishment at the instance of Sarah seventy-five years before, there was apparently no animosity between the two half-brothers, and Isaac evidently knew where to find Ishmael. Their respective territories were only something like a hundred miles apart and they had probably been in touch many times before. Ishmael was now ninety years of age and had a rapidly growing family of his own. Jacob and Esau, the sons of Isaac, were fifteen years old so that Abraham closed his eyes in death knowing that the Divine promise was being fulfilled.

The recorded life of Isaac is by no means so colourful as that of his father, nor yet as that of his son Jacob. In fact Isaac seems to have done little more than provide a link between Abraham and Jacob, with both of whom God had much more to say about the Covenant than He did with Isaac. Married to Rebekah at the age of 40, the father of Jacob and Esau at 60 (25. 20 & 26), he succeeded to his father's estates and possessions at 75. It was probably very soon after this, say five years or so, that another famine descended on the land and he trekked southwards, as his father had done before him, in search of sustenance (26.1). Forbidden by the Lord to go into Egypt, he finished up with his father's old friend Abimelech, ruler of Philistine Gerar, now an old man of at least 120 years. After "a long time" here (26.8), there occurred the incident of Abimelech seeing Isaac "sporting" with Rebekah which made the

other man realise that she was not his sister, as Isaac had told him, but his wife. Isaac must have been at least 82 and Rebekah 58 at this time. The story of his subsequent prosperity (26. 12-15) requires that his stay in Abimelech's domains must have totalled a minimum of six or seven years after which he spent several years gradually drifting back into the highlands of Canaan, finally coming to rest at Beer-sheba (26. 17-24).

A point not generally realised is that Isaac and Rebekah had several other sons — perhaps daughters also—after Jacob and Esau (Ch. 27.29 & 37). These were probably born during this period so that upon finally settling at Beer-sheba at about 91 years of age Isaac was surrounded by a sizable young family. At this point the Lord appeared to him and reiterated the Abrahamic promise (26.24), but it is significant that the full terms as outlined to Abraham and Jacob were never propounded to Isaac. Child of promise he may have been, but without much doubt the real custodian of the covenant was his son Jacob.

Here at Beer-sheba there probably occurred the incident of the birthright, which Esau traded to Jacob for a "mess of pottage" (25. 29-34). The two men would by now be in their early thirties, and Esau's roaming disposition already evident in his adoption of the life of a hunter. A few more years, and Esau at 40 married two of the Hittite women of the land, thus openly avowing his disregard for the Abrahamic promise, *"which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah"* (26. 34-35).

There was not much left in life for Isaac. He seems to have prematurely aged and was going blind, so that at 117 years of age he decided to confer his patriarchal blessing in Esau, so confirming him as the heir of the promise. He evidently did not take into consideration Esau's admitted unfitness for the honour, and of course was not likely to have known that Esau had traded his rights to Jacob years before. The story of how Rebekah and Jacob plotted to impersonate Esau and deceive Isaac into conferring the blessing on the younger son, related in chapter 27, is well known, and its sequel in the flight of Jacob to Rebekah's brother Laban at Padan-Aram four hundred miles away to escape Esau's justifiable wrath. Immediately following Jacob's flight, Esau, in a belated attempt to reinstate himself in his parents' favour, took as an additional wife Mahaloth the daughter of Ishmael, of Abrahamic stock (28.8-9). There is no evidence that this action achieved his purpose; he remained apart from the family, the head of his own tribe which eventually became the nation of Edom (ch. 36). It is of interest to notice that, on the assumption that Mahaloth was not more than

25 at her marriage, her father Ishmael was about 110 years old at her birth. Similar deductions from the Genesis narratives make it plain that not only Abraham himself, but his contemporaries, and his sons and grandsons, were all fathers of children at ages up to 120 and more, and this fact has a direct bearing upon the authenticity of the chronological framework of Genesis.

There is no more said about Isaac. At some time during Jacob's forty year absence in Padan-aram he must have moved his headquarters from Beer-sheba to Hebron for it was there that Jacob

found him on his return. By then Rebekah was dead; Jacob never saw her again. The oversight of the community was probably in the hands of Isaac's other sons. He survived Jacob's homecoming by only some twenty years and died ten years before Jacob and his family entered Egypt. His eldest sons, Jacob and Esau, the old feud forgotten, buried him beside his father Abraham, but by then the Bible story had long since shifted its emphasis to the deeds of Jacob, the acknowledged father of the nation of Israel.

to be continued

DESPISED AND REJECTED

This rendering of one of the finest passages in the Bible is said to represent a compendium of six translators. It may not be so literally accurate as the Authorised Version rendering, but there is a beauty in this presentation of a familiar chapter which perhaps brings home more intimately the pathos of the prophet's theme.

* * *

"Behold my servant shall prosper; he shall be raised aloft, and magnified, and very highly exalted.

"As now many are astonished before him (so disfigured is his aspect before men, and his figure before the children of men) so shall many nations exult in him; kings shall close their mouths before him; for what had not been related to them, shall they see; and understand what they never heard.

"Who hath believed what we have understood by hearing? Who perceives what the arm of Jehovah is preparing?

"He hath grown up as a twig before him, as a shoot out of dry ground. He had no form nor beauty. We looked at him, but there was no fair appearance that we should be desirous of him.

"Despised and neglected by men, a man of sorrow and familiar with sufferings, and like one who hideth his face from us; disdained, and we gave him no attention. But it was our griefs he bare, it was our sorrows he carried. We indeed, accounted him smitten, stricken by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgres-

sions: was smitten for our iniquities: the chastisement, by which our peace is effected, was laid upon him; and by his bruises we are healed.

"All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned each to his own way; but Jehovah hath inflicted upon him the punishment of all. He was severely afflicted, yet he submitted himself, and opened not his mouth. As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, or a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

"By an oppressive judgment he was taken away—the men of his age who shall describe? For he was cut off from the land of the living; on account of the transgression of my people was he smitten. A grave is assigned him with the wicked, but his tomb is a rich man's; for he hath done no injustice and no guile is in his mouth. But Jehovah is pleased to crush him with sufferings. If he will offer himself a sacrifice for sin, he shall see his posterity, he shall prolong his days, and the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand.

"The effects of his soul's pain he shall see and shall be richly satisfied. By his knowledge my righteous servant shall make many righteous, and shall take away their iniquities.

"Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion, and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isa. 52. 13 to 53. 11).

NOTICES

Dublin Convention. The friends in Dublin are arranging a convention over the August Bank Holiday week-end and visitors will be warmly welcomed. Full details and programmes will be sent on request to Michael Heaton, Cappagh, Ballon, Co. Carlow, Republic of Ireland.

Anonymous. Three anonymous donations sent to the special fund of which John Shepherd of Bradford is Secretary are here acknowledged with sincere appreciation: £5 (Whetstone), £10 (Maidenhead), another £10 (Maidenhead).

Gone from us

—:—

Bro. B. J. Drinkwater (Nottingham)

Sis. E. Freck (Nottingham)

Bro. Cedric Smith (Aylesbury)

Bro. T. Watson (London)

—:—

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



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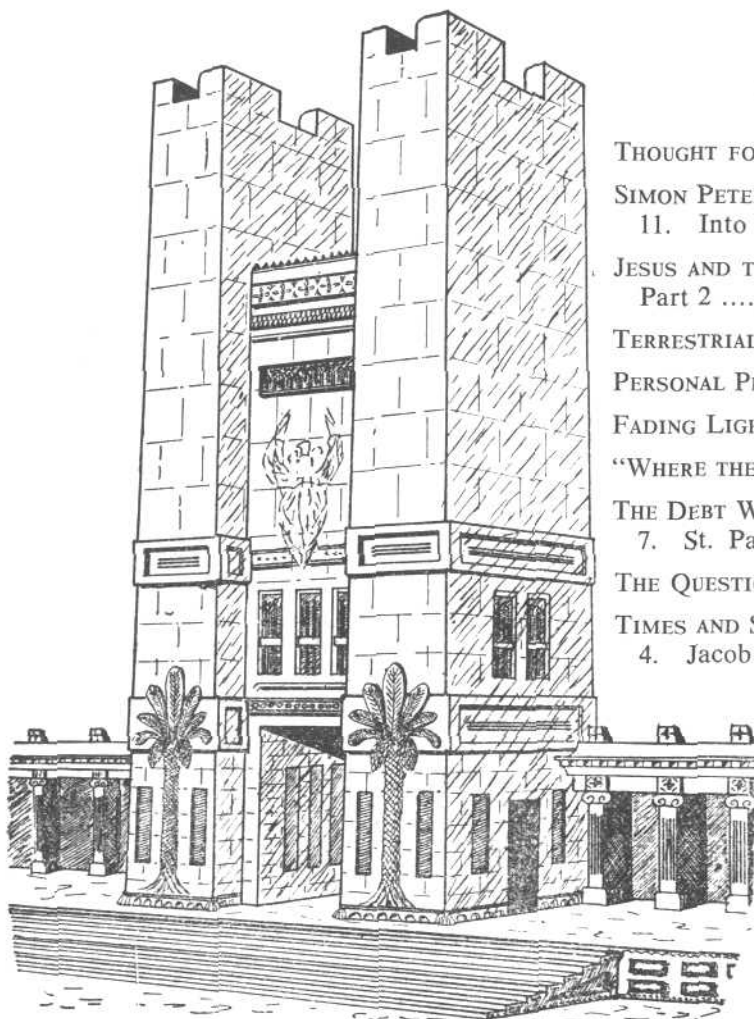
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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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Thought for the Month

"...and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe" (Ezek. 2.10).

At one of this year's Bible Student conventions one teenage participant found the proceedings by no means so helpful as they might have been because "it was all about wars and earthquakes". Perhaps he is not the only one—and not necessarily teenage ones at that—to deplore this tendency, which is sometimes met with, to stress to the extreme the scenes of "battle, murder and sudden death" which some systems of prophetic interpretation assure us is part of the Divine programme for the transfer of world sovereignty from the kings of the earth to the King of kings. One zealous and greatly-loved brother once concluded his vivid description of what might be expected soon to come upon us with the spine-chilling declaration "and there will be much blood, brethren, MUCH BLOOD", which might very well be correct as far as it goes but does not make sufficiently clear that the shedding of blood is man's way of settling awkward problems but not God's. "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." If there is taken a survey of what the Scripture has to say concerning the manner in which this present heaven and earth is to pass away and be superseded by a new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, it will be found that far more is said about the principles and realities and characteristics of that world which is to be than about the admittedly painful and drastic manner in which the transition is to be accomplished. And even more is said in all the Scriptures about the Person and the appeal of the One who is the centre and the power in all this—our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Surely any "holy convocation" of instructed Christians should preserve a rational balance in the exposition of the various

aspects of the Divine Plan, giving an appropriate heed of attention to each, and taking care not to send someone home unsatisfied because it was all about wars and earthquakes and not enough about the one who will make "wars" — and presumably earthquakes also—"to cease unto the ends of the earth".

It is true that the prophet Ezekiel was commissioned to preach "lamentations, mourning and woe" to a rebellious and apostate people but that was because they had incurred judgment by their conduct and what they had coming to them was the natural and inevitable consequence of their own deliberate way of life. Even so, the prophet managed to give them some of the most eloquent foreviews of the goodness of God which was in store for them after the judgment had done its work that the Bible contains. And underlying his whole message was the basic exhortation: God is waiting for you. Come to him and give yourselves to him for this is the whole duty of man. Thus, promised Ezekiel, they would at the last attain their destiny. So it is to-day. The responsibility of the minister, pastor, speaker on a village hall platform, to those who listen is immense. Not the least to be considered are the relatively young in years. They need to be, and they want to be, instructed in the basic principles of the faith, the call to dedication of life to Christ, the meaning of the Christian life, the purpose and place of mankind in the Divine Plan, and the relevance of all these things to daily life. Wars and earthquakes can be left until later—preferably much later. There is food for serious reflection in the story recounted by Rowntree in "English Life and Leisure" of the lassie who had given up trying to "go to church" because "it was all bobbing up and down and I couldn't find the place in the book"!

SIMON PETER — FISHER OF MEN

II. Into the Unknown

With the close of the Jerusalem conference of A.D.50, recorded in Acts 15, Peter drops out of New Testament history. A few brief allusions in one or two of the Epistles afford some slight clues to his later movements but that is all. There are plenty of traditions, based on recollections handed down from generation to generation of the Early Church, but most of them are too fanciful or improbable to take seriously. The two items which do stand out are that he spent some years with the church at Antioch and after that went to Rome where he was eventually martyred. The Second and Third century writers are so unanimous on these phases of Peter's life that they are very generally accepted as factual. A sensation was caused in 1949 when the discovery of what was claimed to be the tomb and bones of St. Peter in a hitherto unknown crypt deep under the basilica of St. Peters at Rome was announced. Expert archæological examination since then has endorsed the validity of the claim and it is now accepted in most quarters that the Apostle's last resting-place has in fact been discovered.

With the aid of this admittedly slender store of data it is possible to frame a very tentative outline of Peter's probable activities during the last twenty years of his life. Nothing definite can be claimed, but the outline is at least consistent with what is known and with what could be expected of a man of Peter's character and calibre.

From the Day of Pentecost to the conference at Jerusalem, Acts 2 to Acts 15, was a period of seventeen years. During the whole of that time Peter had laboured tirelessly and zealously to build up the church in Judea, Samaria and Galilee. He had worked virtually entirely inside the Jewish community whilst Paul had been travelling the wider world taking the Gospel to the Jews of the Dispersion and the Gentiles. Now the Jewish-Christian churches in Jewry were well-organised and ably led — James the Just was leader of the central church at Jerusalem and had many efficient helpers. Some of the original twelve apostles and others were beginning to make their way into distant lands in the discharge of their mission—Thomas to Parthia and India, Andrew to Armenia, Mark to Egypt, and so on. The active mind of Peter must have been questing for a sphere of service offering more scope for his energies than was now afforded him in Judea.

The first move appears to have been to

Antioch. Paul's allusion in Gal. 2.11-14 to an altercation he had with Peter at Antioch concerning the latter's alleged "dissembling" could only have taken place in AD 54, four years after the Jerusalem conference. Paul was with his home church at Antioch for about six months in that year, between his second and third missionary journeys, and after that he never returned to Antioch. It could be inferred therefore that Peter spent the next few years as leader of the Antioch church. There might have been a real need for his service; not only Paul, but Barnabas, Silas, Lucius and possibly others of the church presbyters had all gone off on extended missionary tours.

The next clue to the Apostle's movements is afforded by his First Epistle, written from Rome a decade later and addressed to "*the strangers*" (a term for Jews living in Gentile lands) "*scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia*" (1 Pet. 1.1). These provinces were adjacent one to another in what is now modern Turkey, and some of them were areas into which the Apostle Paul never penetrated. The inference is obvious that Peter wrote to these particular brethren because he himself had been the means of their conversion, that he had undertaken an extensive missionary journey in these lands similar to those conducted by Paul farther west. This would account for Peter's writing to them later on in life when he realised that his own end was approaching and he could not expect to see them again in the flesh. It is certainly a fact that Christianity was very strong in these provinces at a very early date, especially in Bithynia where Luke is reputed to have ended his days twenty years after Paul's death, and it is difficult to account for this fact except on the supposition that they were evangelised by Peter. Antioch was the great missionary church of the times; Antioch had sent Paul and others on many such journeys, and it is quite in keeping to think that after Peter had spent say three or four years at Antioch he too, with the blessing of that church, should set out on this enterprise, the result of which was the establishment of so many Christian communities in these five provinces. On the basis of the time taken by Paul's similar journeys, this tour by Peter would have occupied at least three years and would in such case have extended over the years round about 58 to 60, so that Peter could have returned to Antioch at about the same time that Paul, as a prisoner, was being sent by Porcius Festus to Rome to stand

trial before Cæsar the first time.

This brings us to the most difficult and most debatable period of Peter's life, his residence and martyrdom at Rome. The accounts and statements of so many Early Church writers are so contradictory and confused that it is very difficult to create a consistent sequence of events from them. The time of his arrival is indeterminate over a period of six years or so and so is the time of his death. Rather than attempt the hopeless task of sifting fact from fiction, probabilities from improbabilities, in this mass of tradition and legend, it is perhaps better to construct a feasible narrative from the few hints and allusions found in the New Testament, taking into full account the known characteristics of the leading figures in the story and how they could be expected to act in the prevalent situation.

One significant point does present itself. There is no indication or inference anywhere in the New Testament that Peter and Paul were present in Rome simultaneously. In fact the evidence is to the contrary. The Book of Acts closes with Paul's time in Rome ending in AD 63 after which he left Rome. Had Peter arrived and been present at any time during the two years when Paul was awaiting trial, living *"in his own hired house and receiving all who came in unto him"* (Acts 28.30) it is most unlikely that his name would not have been mentioned, either by Luke in the historical account or by Paul in one of the many epistles dating from this time in which he sends greetings from his fellow brethren. Luke, Mark, Timothy, Aristarchus, Demas, Onesiphorus, Epaphras, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, all visited the Apostle during that two years and all are mentioned, some several times. Had Peter been present with them it is certain that he too would have been mentioned. It must be taken therefore that Peter arrived in Rome after AD 63, when Paul had already left Rome on the unrecorded journeyings which culminated in his arrest at Troas five years later, and his return to Rome for his second trial.

Paul was, in all probability, condemned and executed in the spring of AD 68—certainly not later, for it was in the reign of Nero and Nero died in June of that year. The trial would be within a few months of his arrival and he probably arrived in Rome in late AD 67, alone except for Luke. Here again it is certain that Peter was no longer there. Writing his last letter to Timothy, then at Ephesus, after the first indecisive hearing, Paul says *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me"* (2 Tim. 4.16). Can it be imagined that if Peter was then in the city, he who in time past had defied the rulers of his own country to do their worst, would not have rallied to his fellow-Apostle's support?

The native Christians of Rome, who had so recently endured the horrors of the Neronian persecution of AD 64 following the Great Fire of Rome, might perhaps be excused for not wishing to be involved in the trial of Paul, but not so one of Peter's calibre. Moreover, on the authority of Peter's First Epistle, both Mark and Silas were with Peter in Rome. Would anything have kept Silas, that stalwart companion and fellow-traveller of Paul in days of yore, from standing by his old friend, if he was in fact still in the city? And on the strength of 2 Tim. 4.11, at the time of Paul's trial Mark was away in Ephesus and not in Rome at all. The logical inference is that Peter arrived in Rome after Paul left the city in AD 63 and was martyred before Paul was brought back in AD 67/68 for his own trial and death. Silas had already gone, bearing Peter's First Epistle to the churches in Asia, and Mark would obviously go immediately after Peter's death, so that when Paul arrived there were none of his old friends in the city. That is what all relevant Scripture allusions seem to indicate.

On this basis events begin to fall into place. If, after his return from his missionary journey into the Asiatic provinces, Peter spent a few more years as the leading presbyter at Antioch—which is what the traditions insist—one comes to AD 64, when Nero instigated the first and most terrible of all persecutions. The Church at Rome was decimated and most of its leaders martyred. What more natural than that Peter, fired by his ever-present burning zeal, upon receiving the news should decide to proceed to Rome himself to help his suffering brethren? He would probably arrive as the persecution was ending—although terrible, it lasted less than six months and was virtually over by the end of AD 64—but Peter would find much to do in re-organising and encouraging the scattered remnants of the Church. He took Silas with him—Silas, an old stalwart of Antioch who had originally come from Jerusalem so that Peter had known him from the beginning; it is quite likely that Silas, who had accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey, had also shared Peter's missionary tour to the five provinces. He is described in Acts 15 as one who had *"hazarded his life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"*; just the kind of man Peter needed by his side. The couple were accompanied by Mark, and this is where certain scraps of history fit the picture. Mark is known to have founded the church at Alexandria in Egypt, at a much earlier time. He was at Rome for a short time during Paul's first imprisonment, in AD 60/62, according to Col. 4.14 and Philemon 24. This coincides with the statement of Eusebius, the learned 4th Century church

historian, who says that Annianus succeeded Mark in AD 62 as the bishop of Alexandria. After Paul's acquittal and departure from Rome with Luke and Aristarchus, Mark, as the only one left, would not be likely to stay. Moreover, Paul would want his home church at Antioch to be apprised of the turn of events; most likely, therefore, Mark was sent there for that purpose, and so was available two or three years later when Peter was ready to set out.

Thus, one day in late AD 64 or early the following year, the three friends stood on the deck of a merchant ship as it ploughed the waves of the Mediterranean, heading westward for Rome. Peter, Silas and Mark were following in the course of those other three stalwarts five years earlier, when Paul, Luke and Aristarchus stood on just such a ship bound for the same destination. What experiences lay before them they did not know, only that many of the friends Paul had made during his two years' sojourn in Rome had suffered martyrdom at the hands of the mad emperor Nero. Where Paul and his two companions were now serving they did not know either, only that Mark would have been aware of Paul's intention to carry the Gospel to the "furthest limits of the west" and that meant Spain, Gaul, Britain. None of them knew that three years later Paul would, in his turn, follow them, this time in chains, and that both Apostles would within a year of each other seal their testimony with their blood.

For the present this was hidden from their sight. The sun shone warmly and the wind filled the great sail as the ship made its way steadily towards Rome. And Peter talked vigorously and enthusiastically of the work they must do in rallying the remaining brethren, binding up the wounds they had suffered, and encouraging them to hold fast to their faith. The prospect of persecution he probably dismissed as unimportant; he had already had many conflicts with the authorities and several miraculous deliverances; he was now quite persuaded that he was immortal until his work was finished. It was almost certainly with intense interest and eager expectation that the Galilean fisherman set eyes upon the great city which was the capital of the world, impatient to begin his labours under the shadow of its walls. Perhaps he dreamed of a repetition of Jerusalem at Pentecost here in Rome; perhaps of another missionary Church like Antioch....

It was not so to be. About three years at the most seems to have been the limit of his service for the scattered brethren in Rome. Assuming that he commenced his work there in AD65, he must have written his First Epistle a year or so later and despatched it by Silas to the Asiatic

brethren to whom it was addressed. That left only Mark with him (I Pet. 5.13). That the shadow of persecution was over the church is evident from his use of the symbolic term "Babylon" for Rome when he said in the same verse "*the church that is at Babylon saluteth you*". If the letter fell into the authorities' hands before Silas got clear away from Rome there would be nothing to incriminate the writer or his brethren. Peter must have known, though, that he was a marked man, and in that knowledge wrote his Second Epistle very soon after the First. From the Second Century onwards there have been doubts as to whether this Second Epistle really was from Peter's own pen, but many of the arguments used to discredit its authenticity do not seem to take the circumstances of the time into proper consideration. If Peter did in fact write this Epistle, it must have been within a few months of his death, which he realised was imminent. That is definitely stated in ch. 1 vs. 14-15 of the Epistle. It would certainly have been written as his last message to all believers everywhere whom he had known and among whom he had laboured, hence the absence of any special recipients as was the case with the First Epistle. The urgency of his words, the severity of his strictures against the false teachers he knew would invade the Church after his decease, the vivid vision of the Age-end and the Second Advent, and the exhortation to steadfast faithfulness, all are consistent with the mental state of a man who knew his earthly course was nearly run and he could do no more. If this Second Epistle is read as the last words of a man who, like Paul, felt that he had fought a good fight, and finished the course, and kept the faith, and now was ready to be offered, it becomes much easier to accept it as the parting message of the Galilean Apostle to all Christians of every generation everywhere. And the fact that Clement, Bishop of Rome in succession to Peter, appears to allude to several passages in this Second Epistle in his own "Epistle to the Corinthians" which was written at some time between AD 70 and 90, gives ground for thinking that it must have existed at this time.

If then Peter did write this Epistle, he would obviously entrust it to Mark, to convey to Antioch or Ephesus immediately after the Apostle's death. Perhaps a copy was made for the use of the Church in Rome; they stood in need of the exhortation and encouragement it contained. Tertullian says that Peter ordained Clement to succeed him as leader of the Church. There is some confusion in the traditions here, for Eusebius records that the first Bishop was Linus and Clement came third. The conclusion which has found most favour is that at the begin-

ning there was a Latin Church and a Jewish Church in Rome, that Clement became the first Bishop of the Jewish Church after Peter's death, and Linus (known to Paul, 2 Tim. 4.21), followed by Anencletus, of the Latin Church. Upon the death of Anencletus in AD 93 Clement became the accepted leader of both churches and from then dates the regular succession of the bishops of Rome.

Then the darkness closed in. There was no general persecution of the Church in AD 67, but because Christianity was now an illegal religion prominent leaders were liable to be arrested and executed whilst the general mass of believers were left alone. That was probably how Peter came to suffer martyrdom although Linus and Clement and others of the Roman Church escaped unscathed. The general impression of the early historians is that Peter died a year before Paul. That means he came to his end in early AD 67, Mark thereupon left Rome, and Paul, a prisoner, arrived about a year later for his own trial and condemnation. Writing to Timothy his Second Epistle, Paul asked Timothy to try and reach Rome speedily and to bring Mark with him; he must have learned of Mark's whereabouts from the Roman brethren, who seem to have had

access to Paul to the end. So Paul arrived in Rome too late to see Peter.

So, at last, the stalwart Galilean came to the end of the way. Most of the colourful legends associated with his death, especially that of his being crucified upside down, are fairly certain to be inventions and elaborations of later ages. That he suffered death by crucifixion is highly probable, but nothing is really definite. All that is known for certain is that after thirty-seven years of zealous and faithful service for the Master he loved, marred at times by some very human weaknesses and failings, but stamped all along with the impress of a personality of strong faith and fixed determination, Simon Peter, fisher of men, laid down his task and resigned his turbulent spirit into the care of his Lord. It was the power of the risen Christ that he preached, and in the power of the risen Christ that he conquered.

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn".

The End

JESUS AND THE LIFE TO COME

A three-part essay

Part 2

That cryptic remark of Jesus in Matt. 11. 11 is a pointer to the whole of New Testament teaching regarding the life to come. *"Among men that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist; nevertheless he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* There is one other verse in the New Testament which has a similar ring and enshrines the same principle. Speaking of the ancient heroes of faith of Old Testament times, those who sealed their faithfulness with their death, the writer to the Hebrews says (11. 39, 40) *"These all, having received a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."* In both those texts, as in so much of New Testament teaching there resides the principle of a dual salvation—a salvation first for Christian disciples of this present Age, the span of time between the two Advents, the time for the selection and perfecting of Christ's Church "which is his Body", and a second salvation for those, of whatever Age in human history, who do not attain a position among the saints who shall judge the world (1

Cor. 6. 2) but do eventually accept Christ. Only thus can be understood the many scriptures which picture one company of saved and glorified believers, reigning with Christ over a second company, a world of men who are as yet unreconciled to him when Christ's Kingdom on earth is established and world sovereignty passes from the rulership of this world to the rulership of Christ (Rev. 11. 15).

The "kingdom of heaven" of Matt. 11. 11 is clearly not intended to include all who are eventually to be saved. If the least in that kingdom is greater than John the Baptist then logically John has no part nor lot in that phase of God's kingdom. That is in keeping with the fact that both John and Jesus preached the kingdom of heaven as at hand, not already in being, and that St. Peter was given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16. 19) as though it was by his instrumentality the kingdom was to be opened to believers. So in fact it was. *"The law and the prophets were until John"* said Jesus *"Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it"* (Luke 16. 16). There is a sharp distinction here between the avenue by

which men approach to God before the Advent of Jesus and that avenue which was opened afterwards. Abraham and others in patriarchal times believed God and had faith in God and their faith was imputed to them for righteousness (Rom. 4); the Israelites under their Covenant with God, made and ratified at Sinai, achieved a ritualistic righteousness which gave them a standing before God; none who came to God were turned away and all such entered into a form of relationship with God, but none such could at that time be reconciled to God in the only manner which can ensure man's eternal life because the basis of reconciliation did not as yet exist. After the death and ascension of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the waiting believers there was opened a "new and living way" (Heb. 10. 20) which is available only to those who by reason of an intelligent grasp of the invitation to be dead with Christ have been buried with him by baptism into his death.

It is this latter feature of the Christian calling which illuminates such words of Jesus as "*Strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*" (Matt. 7. 14). "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door . . .*" (Luke 13. 24-25). It is a misconception of the Divine purpose to suppose that these words imply the irrevocable loss of salvation for the vast majority of humankind, even though such is the logical conclusion if they be held to apply to the entire scheme of salvation instead of only a part. The Lucan text contains within itself the rebuttal of this misapprehension, for the Lord goes on to describe those thus excluded as appealing for admittance and admitting his position as Lord. They claim to have feasted in his presence and to have listened to his teaching; nevertheless He knows them not and they are bidden depart. It is inconceivable that the Lord Christ would cut off from all further opportunity of reconciliation those who, despite their past failures, manifested at least this amount of desire to enter his presence. The parable of the Prodigal Son is of itself sufficient to assure us of that. We must conclude therefore that these who have been shut out of the kingdom have been found unworthy of the highest honour, that of entry into the assembly of "called, chosen and faithful" of this Age who are to reign in association with Christ over the nations in the day of the Church's

triumph but, providing they are rightly exercised by their failure, they find their place in the second company of the saved. Instead of becoming rulers in the kingdom they stand as subjects of the kingdom.

Thus Jesus declared at the conclusion of the Parable of the Wheat and Tares "*then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt. 13. 43). This is the revelation of the Church in glory to mankind as yet unreconciled, the time when the Church's humiliation is turned into triumph and she begins her destined work of making known the glory of the Lord in all the earth. This is the time when is realised the fulfilment of the Lord's own prayer, "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven*". At the Last Supper the disciples heard Jesus telling them that He would not again drink with them of the fruit of the vine until the day that He would drink it new with them in the Kingdom of God. That promise looked forward to a future day when they would be associated with him, never to be parted.

The teaching of Jesus insofar as his call to personal discipleship is concerned needs to be differentiated from his declarations regarding the ultimate purpose of God for human salvation. The present call, as it was at the First Advent and has been ever since, is to a life of complete consecration, dedication, to the service of God both in preaching the gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and in personal submission to the Will of God in being conformed to Christ-likeness and in the fellowship of his sufferings. "*As he is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4. 17). But this is not a mere preparation of saints for Heaven, a kind of preliminary grooming for the fellowship of angels. There is purpose in the calling and preparation and perfecting of Christ's disciples, a future work which has much to do with the Divine intention respecting mankind. To all those Scripture texts and all those sayings of Jesus Christ which speak of the Christian calling and the Christian life which culminate in the triumphal entry into Heaven, must be added those which tell in no uncertain terms of the purpose—or at any rate one of the purposes, and the immediate purpose—for which God has selected and fashioned this exalted company of Christ's disciples to become his associates. To the fruits of his First Advent must also be added the fruits of his Second Advent before the tale of salvation is complete.

(To be concluded)

TERRESTRIAL — CELESTIAL

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." (1 Cor. 15. 40).

That rapidly developing knowledge of the universe which is such a pronounced characteristic of this generation is almost sure before much longer to force some definite rethinking by reflective Christians on the traditional conception of earthly versus spiritual nature. St. Paul's momentous words in 1 Cor. 15 on this subject have been very largely ignored for many centuries past. The general idea, inherited from mediæval times, has been that there exist only two places where life is possible, with man upon earth and with God in heaven. The earth was at best a temporary living place for a limited race of creatures, descended from Adam, who would eventually be resurrected in spiritual bodies to enter upon an eternal destiny of weal or woe, in heaven or in hell, the earth itself then being destroyed. For far too long, taken over from those same mediæval times, has heaven been pictured as a dimly visualised celestial region where the floor was all of gold and the chief occupation a devotion to music. Even to-day much too much Christian literature and preaching seems to reflect little more than this conception. In the days of the Ptolemaic cosmogony, when the wisest of men believed the earth to be the centre of the universe and the stars merely lights revolving around it, such beliefs might perhaps be excused—but not to-day. We know now that Divine creation is vaster far than anything the ancients ever conceived; this planet Earth, so far from being the centre of creation, is only one insignificant speck in the immensity of the starry skies. It is reliably estimated that in our own particular group of stars, our own galaxy, to use the technical term, there are at least six hundred million planets so like our Earth that life such as we know could flourish on their surfaces. And the question must eventually come before us for answer: has God created all these Earth-like planets—and others more unlike the Earth—to waste? Or is there some mightier aspect of his creative design as yet unrevealed to us, the possibilities of which we might at least dimly visualise?

That is not all. Beyond this material creation, composed, as we now know, of innumerable atoms fused into the ninety-two God-made elements, atoms which some astronomers tell us are even still coming into existence by a power unknown to scientists and incapable of perception by scientific means, there exists another creation, one which St. Paul calls the spiritual or the

celestial, fundamentally apart from this material one that we know. That spiritual world is incapable of discernment by the five human senses or by any scientific measuring or detecting instrument devised by man. But it is a real world, and the society of angels is a real society, and the presence of Deity in the midst of that society is a real Presence. Now, says Paul, the glory of the terrestrial is one thing and the glory of the celestial is another. The terrestrial body is one kind of body and the celestial another, and because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven it is essential that those who pass from the one to the other do so, not by the physical transference of their material human bodies, but by what Paul calls a "change", a metamorphosis. The material is changed into the spiritual. He elaborates this theme in 2 Cor. 5 by explaining that we must lay aside this "tabernacle"—dwelling-place—of this body in order to be "clothed upon" with a completely new dwelling-place which is from, and therefore of, heaven — the celestial. That world, in every respect as real to its citizens as this earth is to us, is in another sphere of being, a sphere which men, as men, can never reach even though their space ships range through every recess of the physical universe. A world as full of abounding activity as this, albeit one in which sin and the effects of sin find no place. A world in which God is known and revered, in which every knee bows to the Name of Jesus, and every tongue confesses him to be King of kings and Lord of lords—and not content with lip service, is ceaselessly and eternally active in some allotted duty, serving the interests of God's creation.

But that still leaves those millions of planets, potential centres of what we must call terrestrial life. Are they to be eternally waste, or does God create only to destroy? Even this earth of ours has life and living beings in a variety of environments—on the land, in the air, down in the depths of the seas. Even in the subterranean oil deposits, sealed thousands of feet below the surface for unnumbered ages, life has been found. In the light; in the darkness: in the Arctic ice; in desert sand: under almost every conceivable condition, God's creative activity in the production of abundant life is to be found. So many Christians, following tradition, would limit the ultimate purpose of God to the development of one race of ultimately celestial creatures to surround his throne in one celestial environment, relegating all other creation either to annihilation or eternal desolation. Here surely is a subject, important to the Christian faith, which warrants thought.

PERSONAL PREDESTINATION

A doctrinal
thesis

Any discussion on the subject of personal predestination is liable to be without result or to involve confusion unless the participants agree as to what the term means. To reach such agreement, it is usual to resort to the dictionary definition, which should be acceptable to all as a basis for discussion. It is noteworthy that the dictionary brings the Almighty into the picture. Not everyone has taken the trouble to think out what is meant by the word when they use it, or what must be involved when it is asserted that someone is "predestinated".

Collins' dictionary gives the following definitions:

- Predestination** The act of foreordaining; the unchangeable decree of God, ordaining whatever comes to pass, especially man's future lot.
- Predestine** To decree beforehand, to foreordain.
- Predestinate** To ordain beforehand by an unchangeable purpose.

The verb "to predestinate" means, then, to cause to come to pass by an unalterable purpose, or to foreordain unchangeably. Personal predestination was originally the Calvin creed, and apparently in an attempt to be logical, it was applied to good and bad, to angels and to men. Belief in hell and the immortality of the soul made it necessary to accept that God had predestinated the good to heaven, and the wicked to hell. With the current understanding of the immortality of the soul and the hell theories in this modern age, the predestination of the wicked has been forgotten, and we are left only with the predestination of the good to heaven.

It should be carefully noted that the original Greek Scriptures which have been translated into English using the word "predestinate" did not contain any notion of the present-day dictionary meaning showing the certainty of arrival at a foreordained destiny as the result of an irrevocable decree or purpose of God. There are only four occasions when the Bible uses the word "predestinate"—twice in Romans 8, i.e. verses 29 and 30, and twice in Ephesians 1, i.e. verses 5 and 11, and it is now proposed to examine the original meaning of these verses to verify that there is no thought of our being certain to arrive at a fixed destiny as the result of a foreordained, irresistible, unchangeable decree or intention of God.

If this were the case, then no other factors,

such as our obedience to God's requirements, could be involved, because nothing can stop God's intentions. If obedience is required, disobedience must be a possibility. Do we agree with this? If we do not, then surely we must alter our understanding that freewill involves the ability to choose to do right or to choose to do wrong.

The word "predestinate", in the four Scriptures quoted above, is used to translate the Greek word "*proorizo*" originally used by Paul, which Young defines as: To mark off first or beforehand, and Strong defines as: To mark out the bounds beforehand. The etymology seems to be "*pro*"—before, and "*orizo*" which is the root word of "horizon"—an imaginary line marking the bounds of the visible earth. Clearly the word does not contain any sense of certainty of arrival at a place or condition, as does the word "predestinate" but merely indicates the "bounds" or the outline of the objective "destiny"—exactly as we see elsewhere the objective of the Christian as conformity of character to the image of Jesus.

The subject of predestination is treated very fully in the Hastings Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics, which objects to the present-day dictionary meaning of the word "predestination" in the following terms:

It is etymologically unscriptural

It is theologically depraved in its meaning

It is philosophically not sufficiently distinctive.

The treatise shows that the Authorised Version was translated by men who were themselves already predestinarians, as were most of the clerics of the time, resulting in the use of a word conforming to their private views.

The word "*proorizo*" is also translated in other ways than the four instances mentioned above, and a complete list of its occurrences is as follows:

- Acts 4.28 "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel *determined before* to be done." (Diaglott: "before appointed")
- 1 Cor. 2.7 "... even the hidden wisdom, which God *ordained before* the world." (Diaglott: "previously designed before the ages")
- Romans 8.29 "... he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his son." (Diaglott: "predetermined")
- Romans 8.30 "... whom he did *predestinate*, them he also called." (Diaglott: "predetermined")

Eph. 1.5 "Having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children . . ." (Diaglott: "Having in love previously marked us out for sonship")

Eph. 1.11 "... *being predestinated* according to the purpose of him." (Diaglott: "having been *previously marked out* according to a design")

Another similar word which merits attention in this connection is "*horizo*" and it is translated as follows:

Romans 1.4 "Declared to be the Son of God with power."

Luke 22.22 "and truly the Son of man goeth as it was *determined*"

Acts 11.29 "Then the disciples . . . *determined* to send relief"

Acts 17.26 "... and hath *determined* the times before appointed"

Hebrews 4.7 "Again He *limiteth* a certain day, saying in David, To-day if"

Acts 10.42 "it is He who was *ordained* of God to be the judge of the quick"

Acts 17.31 "He will judge the world . . . by that man whom He hath *ordained*."

Just as the word "predestinate" (in its present-day dictionary meaning) is not the equivalent of "*proorizo*" so also the word "determine" (especially in its present-day sense of a fixed and unalterable intention—exactly fitting the predestinarians' ideas of God's intentions towards them) does not correspond to the word "*horizo*". The word "determine" used to mean "to limit", as Hebrews 4.7 quoted above shows, but its meaning has become changed by usage.

It would be difficult to find a single word which would correctly reflect the meaning of the Greek words "*proorizo*" and "*horizo*" and which would fit in elegantly with the Authorised Version translations of the various contexts. But solely with the object of demonstrating how wrongly predestinarians read at least the four key texts quoted (Romans 8.29 and 30, Ephesians 1.5 and 11) it is suggested that perhaps the following will serve well enough:

Proorizo To designate or mark out beforehand the limits or boundaries to be attained.

Horizo To designate or mark out the limits or boundaries to be attained.

Therefore, the correct thought to be taken from these verses would be:

Romans 8.29 "... He also did designate or mark out beforehand the limits or bounds to be attained, as corresponding to the image of his son."

Romans 8.30 "... whom He did thus designate or mark out beforehand their limits or bounds to be attained."

Eph. 1.5 "Having designated or marked out beforehand the limits or bounds to be attained by us—the adoption of children . . ."

Eph. 1.11 "... we . . . having had designated or marked out the limits or bounds to be attained by us, according to the purpose . . ."

There is no thought here of the certainty of reaching the designated limits,—we must understand merely that the standard to be attained has been fixed beforehand. It could be noted that the word "horizon" is used to-day in this sense—for instance, someone recently said over the radio "We must lift our horizons" meaning, "We must extend the scope of our activities". There is on the radio regularly an item for schools under the title of "New Horizons". In "Burmah International" (the house magazine of the well-known oil company) the limits of an oilfield area are described as certain geological strata which "form the production horizon", and in oilmen's jargon, the limits of an oilfield are referred to as its "horizon".

All Scripture shows that the way to the objective destiny which has been marked out beforehand is a trial, ending with the judgment "*krima*" which begins at the house of God—sentence. If there is thus a trial, there must be a possibility of failure—there cannot be absolute certainty of success, which predestination both implies and requires. It is pointless to reply that God guarantees success because the work is his by an unchangeable decree, because thus there would be no trial of the transformation work which we have to perform. It could be argued that God will do it for us if we let him, but the question is not whether we will let God do it for us or not, but whether we will do it ourselves, and moreover, whether we will do it under adverse conditions.

If obedience is required, then it must be possible to be disobedient, and this alone disproves that God has decreed beforehand unchangeably that we should become brethren of Jesus, because we could not then be disobedient, and obedience could not be required of us.

If there is to be a company of specially chosen predestinated brethren of Jesus by God's foreordained unchangeable decree, and if the ratio of these elect ones to all the called ones is as the few are to the many (Matt. 20.16, 22.14) then God has foreordained by an unchangeable decree the failure of the great "many" who are "called" but not "chosen", which would be absurd.

We might well bear in mind the conflict revealed in the Scriptures, between God and Satan, the one who aspired to be as the Most High. God has restricted his power over our wills—we can

choose to do right or to do wrong, to obey or to disobey, and eventually God will demonstrate to Satan that even under adverse conditions a company of humans of their own freewill will choose to obey and run for the prize of Christ and attain to it. Later, God will use this same company to assist the remainder of the willing ones of humanity also to choose to obey under *favourable* conditions. God never interferes with mankind's freedom of will.

Clarity of thought is obscured by predestination being assumed where the Scriptures show that God does, in fact, do the work of bringing about the transformation from the enmity of Adamic fleshly imperfections to the sonship of a renewed mind, and it is important to understand *how* God does this work, and that it is not the result of a changeless decree applicable to each individual concerned, independently of his will, made long before the transformation work commences. The Scriptures insist that God does this transforming work through his Word being received and obeyed, which results in a new mind. Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word—Rom. 10.7 and 1 Pet. 1.23. The Word is the vehicle God uses for operation of his Holy Spirit—1 Thess. 2.13 says that it is the Word which effectually works in them that believe. When that happens, we rightly call it God's work.

History, and the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13. 3-23) show us that with the exception of the bias towards Western nations and away from Eastern nations (as shown by Acts 16.6-7) the Word was to be disseminated throughout the world indiscriminately, just as a sower scatters seed in a field. The seed (which is the Word—Luke 8.11) gives results according to the disposition of the hearer and his environment. Some hearers have such unsuitable characters that the message is not understood, is rejected and lost. Others receive the message but are hindered from developing by subsequent persecutions, or the cares of this world, or the deceit of riches. Others, who have the right disposition, and who are not too adversely affected by their environment, bring forth fruit in varying degrees. The main point is that all have to contend with their environment and overcome it, or be overcome by it. All this was foreknown to and prepared by God before the foundation of the world, and represents his activity—the operation of the Holy Spirit during the Gospel age.

It should be noted that the development of the Church to become brethren of Jesus during the Gospel age is further hindered by the dissemination of a false message by an adversary, which produces false results. This is shown by the parable of the wheat and tares, (Matt. 13. 24-40).

So the Scriptures show that God has designated or marked out beforehand the bounds to be attained by those who will meet with his approval, and that He has completed all the dispositions to achieve his object before the world was. He created mankind freely capable of obeying or disobeying him. What He has done stands for ever—nothing can be added to it or taken away (Eccl. 3.14). God does not personally foreordain by an unchangeable purpose that any particular individual shall be saved, but He has previously marked out the bounds, the shape or character of those who shall become brethren of Jesus by their willingness to transform their human character inherited from Adam to the requirements revealed in the Word. God has not created a machine which cannot fail to obey his will, but on the contrary has restrained his own power so that all can obey or disobey.

Sometimes it is asserted that those who in the parable bring forth fruitage of 30, 60 or 100-fold are predestinated (in the usual dictionary meaning) to this position, because they represent seed "sown" in "good ground". This ground is said to have been prepared by God, Who has foreknowledge of the character and needs of each individual seed. The objection to this line of thought is that the Scriptural use of the term "foreknowledge" is disregarded and substituted by the meaning of God's unlimited knowledge and wisdom from before the world was, with the implication that all those predestinated ones were personally known to and selected by God before they were born into this world. A wise writer in the past has reminded us that whilst we must not place any limitation on the extent of God's knowledge, *in Scripture* the word foreknowledge does not relate to the infinity of God's wisdom, but to the things written in the prophets. *In Scripture* the foreknowledge of God relates to the things foretold, e.g. Acts 2.23: "him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God", and Luke 24.44: "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms, concerning me".

Therefore, as God's knowledge and wisdom preceded his plans and action, so predestination and election refer to that pre-arranged plan by which God will save all who will conform themselves to the image of his Son, through the Gospel. This plan is referred to in Eph. 3.11, where the wisdom of God is stated to be according to the eternal purpose, or as the Diaglott translates it, the divine plan of the ages.

Because in the parable (Matt. 13.19) it says that the seed is sown "in the heart" of each individual concerned, some exponents of personal

predestination consider that the "prepared ground" is the heart, and from this they infer that God prepares each individual heart, before the Word is heard, so that the person is able to receive it. After it has thus been heard, it is believed that God provides special care and protection for the rest of the lifetime. Against this, it should be pointed out that the whole structure of the parable is contrary to such an idea—it is a story to illustrate an indiscriminate broadcasting and scattering of a message in a random way, with results which vary according to the disposition of the hearer and the environmental circumstances which surround him. The main principle of the parable is that the seed sown in the heart (the hearing person) has to result in a modification of character to the required pattern laid down beforehand (i.e. the horizon) contending with and overcoming the environment, or being overcome by it. The basic concept of an allegory showing the indiscriminate scattering of seed would be totally unsuitable to illustrate the "predestination" of the seed to produce fruitage. The Scriptures show that in the Gospel age God does not bring any influence to bear on the called ones by direct personal action, but that He calls and works through his word of truth, brought into being for that very purpose at the beginning of the age. This is shown by 1 Thess. 2:13 "... the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Therefore it should be understood that:

The seed sown by the wayside is an analogy to illustrate a person hearing the Word, not understanding it, it making no appeal to the intellect, and so the Wicked One catches it away.

The seed sown on stony ground is an analogy to illustrate a person receiving the Word with joy for a short time, until tribulation comes.

The seed sown among thorns is an analogy to illustrate a hearer of the Word, who becomes choked and unfruitful because of the cares of the world and deceit of riches.

The seed sown among thorns is an analogy to illustrating a hearer of the Word who understands and brings forth fruit, i.e. who is able to overcome his environment and change his disposition and character to conform to the pattern which God had laid down beforehand.

The thought that the seed in the parable of the Sower depicts individuals sometimes arises from confusion with the parable of the Wheat and Tares, which is explained by Jesus in Matt. 13:36-43 in terms which indicate that the good seed

are the *children* of the Kingdom and the tares are the *children* of the Wicked One. It is wrongly inferred that the good seed are the children of the Kingdom *BEFORE* they are sown in the field, and likewise the tares are the children of the Wicked One *BEFORE* the enemy planted them in the same field. The consequent mistake is then to assert that *because* the good seed and the tares are *children* in the parable of the Wheat and Tares, the seed in the parable of the Sower are also persons *before* being sown in the ground.

The plain fact taught by both parables is that the seeds represent a message which has to be heard by persons, *after* which those persons are affected by the message in various ways:

1. Some hear and associate themselves with the message for a time, then revert to what they were.
2. Others hear and associate themselves with the message in various degrees so that they bring forth fruitages of 30, 60 and 100-fold.
3. Others hear a *false* message and accept it, so that they become associated with a false arrangement.

It is only *after* the messages have been heard and accepted that the good seed or the tares *become* the persons in the explanation given by Jesus in Matt. 13:36-43.

The question naturally arises as to what is the false message of the tares, although this is not relevant to the subject of predestination. Suffice it to say here, that history shows that it must be a message which says that the Church is to reign now, during the Gospel age, that no self sacrifice or suffering is involved, that the reign is not with Jesus administering the New Covenant blessings of the millennium, but that the blessings are to be enjoyed during the Gospel age.

Although the production of 30, 60 or 100-fold fruitage is all said to take place in "good ground" it is clearly wrong to understand that there are no adverse factors to be overcome in such ground. All Scripture teaches to the contrary, that *all* Christians have to overcome *all* that which is represented by the wayside and the effects of the fowls of the air, the stony ground preventing rootage, the thorns and thistles of the deceit of riches and the cares of this life. The Scriptures clearly teach that if the disposition of the hearer of the Word is suitable for fruitage and the environment is hostile, the former must overcome the latter, or be overcome by it.

Mansfield, Ohio—a missing reader

During July we received a printed "change of address" card of the type used in the United States, postmarked "Mansfield, Ohio", but bereft of writing on the other side. We know not the name of the sender, his or her old

address or new address. If the reader who has recently moved to or from Mansfield, Ohio, or district, sees this notice will they please advise us by air mail their present address.

FADING LIGHT

*Faod for
thought*

"And he lighted the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses" (Exod. 40.35).

That was a great day in Israel's history—and momentous for the later history of the Church—when Moses set the first light to the first lamps in the Holy of the first Tabernacle. For God had sent a light into the world, a light that was destined to burn brightly at times, anon to flicker uncertainly and all but go out, yet blaze up at last into the full brilliance of the Millennial Day. But there were to be many times of darkness before that.

Moses had made the Tabernacle in accordance with the instructions he had received in the Mount. "Take heed" the Divine oracle had warned him, "that thou make all things after the pattern". And Moses, ably aided by Bezaleel and Aholiab, the skilful craftsmen whom the Lord called, had faithfully followed that injunction and prepared a sanctuary for the Lord that was true to his plans in every detail. Now for the first time lights appeared and their radiance spread out and touched with their brightness the gleaming gold of furnishings in the Holy, and ran up the lines of the tall posts that supported the roof. For many years were those typical lights to burn, until in the fulness of time their brilliance would fade in the greater glory of that spiritual Light that should come into the world, Jesus Christ, the true Light. But that great event was as yet fourteen hundred years in the future.

Evening by evening, throughout all Israel's generations, that light in the Holy was to be renewed and kept alive through all the hours of darkness. Although the Scriptures do not definitely say so, some think that it burned day and night and was indeed the only source of light in the Holy. Unless daylight filtered through the linen veil that closed the entrance, there could have been no other source of light; but in the intense sunlight of Sinai and Canaan it is quite conceivable that sufficient of daylight did pass through the veil to lighten the interior. That fact need not alter the typical picture. Day by day continually the priests performed their duty of cleaning the lamps, refilling them with oil, renewing the wicks, and seeing to it that never for a moment was the Holy in darkness. Those lamps were to burn before the Lord continuously.

That was the ideal. It was hardly ever realised in practice. Time and time again did Israel relapse into apostasy and idolatry, and neglect the sanctuary of God and the observance of his behests.

The undying flame was not an undying one after all. It burned low and flickered and at times went out, and in its flickering cast grotesque shadows on the walls of the sacred apartment so that the negligent and inattentive priests formed strange impressions of what the furnishings of the Holy really did look like, and in their half-hearted ministrations often stumbled and performed the service of the Lord in an imperfect way. Because there was no clear and steady light, they themselves lost the power to see, and the vision of the sanctuary became to them as a thing that is sealed, and their eyes became blinded, and they stumbled and fell.

Thus it was in the days of Samuel, when as a child he ministered before Eli. *"Ere the lamp of God went out in the Temple of God, where the Ark of God was"* (1 Sam. 3. 1-3). How eloquent the words, how sad the picture! Eli, the aged priest, weak, indolent, no longer imbued with the fiery zeal of his earlier years, content now to minister the duties of the priest's office in a more or less perfunctory manner, heedless of the solemn responsibilities of his exalted position; his sons, openly and avowedly apostate, using their privileges as priests for purposes of material gain and fleshly indulgence, indifferent to their duties as ministers of the sanctuary; the people as sheep without a shepherd, fast losing both their understanding of and their faith in God; the entire nation drifting away from its covenant and its high calling to be a chosen nation, a peculiar people to show forth God's praises and to be a means in his hand of world-wide blessing. And there, in the dimness of the sanctuary, the neglected lamps guttered shakily in the seven-branched lampstand, draining the last drops of oil from the burnt-out wicks before the light, at last, went completely out in the temple of God while as yet there were many hours to go before dawn.

It was in that darkness that the voice of God came to a new instrument lying ready to his hand, and the child Samuel, growing up in the fear and reverence of his God, and mighty in faith and vision, lighted a light in Israel that shed glory on their ways and illuminated the plans of God for many years to come.

The word of the Lord, it is said, was "precious"—rare—in those days. There was no open vision. That word "open" is significant. It has the meaning of bursting open or breaking forth. The vision of the prophets was always a breaking

forth, the release of an irrespressible inward urge that could not be satisfied until it had leaped out and spent all its impetus on the deliverance of its message. Jeremiah felt like that. *"His word" he says "was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"* (Jer. 20.9). Israel had known that kind of thing in past days but there was nothing of it in the days of Eli. The impetus of past faith and enthusiasm had spent itself, and now the priesthood, the leaders and teachers of the people, had become an established institution, performing routine duties in a purely mechanical manner, and with none of that spontaneity which is the hallmark of the work of the Spirit. The loss of their first fiery zeal, their evangelistic fervour, their whole-hearted and confident reliance upon the Lord, had left them a purely human organisation, having its basis and interest in material things, but bereft of any ability to transmit the light and power that comes from God.

Now this fading light within the priesthood had its repercussions on the people of Israel—the peasants, the farmers, the vine-dressers, the keepers of sheep, the craftsmen and house builders in the cities, those who built aqueducts and reservoirs for water and those who felled trees, and dressed timber for palaces and temples. All in Israel were profoundly affected and influenced by this drift into apathy on the part of those who should have been their spiritual instructors. For they followed after the same example of unbelief. Blind guides led the blind, and in consequence both fell into the ditch. The light faded out for the people as a whole, and to such an extent that they became at length manifestly unworthy of any longer being called God's representatives, and their national polity God's kingdom, even in name, and so they lost both their place and nation and went into captivity to Assyria and Babylonia for their sins. Their national attitude at that time was well expressed in the plaint of the people in the days of Ezekiel. *"The days are prolonged and every vision faileth"* to which the Spirit-inspired preacher made reply *"the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision"* (Ezek. 12. 21-28). Ezekiel's day, the time of the Babylonian captivity, was a day of fulfilling prophecy, a day when mighty works were being wrought and mighty signs seen by the saintly Daniel, a time when the deeper thinkers in Israel might have been expected to discern the significance of the times in which they lived, and to look for early deliverance. But the fading of the light had in its turn induced a fading of hope and expectation, and now the people in the main no longer really expected deliverance, or believed in the word of promise at all. They gave themselves up

instead to the interests and pursuits of the present, and recked little or nothing of the future.

The result of that was that Israel rejected the Lord when He came; and the Lord rejected Israel. *"The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you"* He said *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21. 43). That "nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" is the Church of the Gospel Age. The failure of Israel has provided the opportunity for the Church.

That is where the typical teaching of the lighted lamps has its value to us to-day. We, no less than Israel of old, are prone to let our light go out through indolence, apathy and satisfaction with the condition of things as they are. And the result to us is the same as to them. Of us also will it be said in such case *"The Kingdom of heaven is taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"*. For the Lord's arm is not shortened, and He can well find other instruments for his work should those He has chosen prove unfitted to his use.

It is so fatally easy to allow the light to fade. The long history of denominationalism through the centuries, of reformation by sects, is witness to that. From the days of the Early Church right down to our own day there is constant repetition of this same story, of a Christian group or community taking its stand upon the truth of the Scriptures and prosecuting its mission with ardour and zeal, only to become stereotyped and lifeless when the first impetus of its reforming force has been spent. All this has been said so many times, and now it must be said again, and then again and again, for no generation will learn the lesson from its predecessors, and individuals in every century must still emulate Samuel and minister faithfully before the Lord in a day when the light is going out and there is no open vision.

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" come the words of the beloved disciple, *"we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin"*. Here is the guidance for which our souls are seeking. To walk in the light guarantees to us an entrance into the fellowship of the brethren and a standing in justification. To walk in the light means a making use of the talents and the pounds with which our Lord has entrusted us, instead of burying them in a napkin and hiding them in the earth. To walk in the light means to view the world around us, its condition and its needs, from the same standpoint as did Jesus, and proceed to lay down our lives on behalf of the world's need just as did Jesus during the three and a half years of his ministry. We cannot be practical Christians without walking in the light and we cannot walk in the light without being

practical Christians. The surest corrective for fading light, therefore, is to make of our faith a practical thing and to work out in the opportunities of daily life the principles of the belief that is in us.

In his message to the Laodicean Church our Lord spoke of the eye-salve of his providing, the acceptance of which would enable the disciple to see, not only clearly, but into another world. The light of this world cannot shine into spiritual things. The light that is of God can illuminate spiritual things but even then the natural man cannot see them. It is only by the power of the Spirit that the glories of the spiritual can be made known to us. So then the one who would guard himself against the effects of fading light must needs take to himself the eye-salve of the Lord's providing and so behold, no longer dimly as in a vision, but clearly and distinctly, the conditions of his calling and the truths by which his faith is defined and the principles by which his faith is regulated. "Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see" must needs be the continual prayer of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus,

for only by such a continual straining to see more and more clearly may we have our spiritual vision exercised so that it may, at last, take in the whole vast landscape of that celestial realm which is to be the eternal inheritance of the faithful. Like Job of old, we may say "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee" but that can only be if, again like Job, we have retained our integrity and firm confidence in God from the beginning even unto the end. The duty of the priests of old was to keep the lamps burning throughout the hours of darkness; they were never to be suffered to go out. We, each one of us, have our own little lamp to guard and keep. An abundant supply of oil—God's Holy Spirit—is always at our service. It is our part to keep the vessel clean and ready, the wick trimmed, and the flame burning clear and steady. Thus we shall both be lights in the world and have light within ourselves, a light that will never fade, but will at the end expand into a radiance that is to lighten all the world, in that day when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

The Virgin Mary at Ephesus

It is generally accepted that Mary the mother of Jesus ended her days in Ephesus, to which city the Apostle John took her about ten years after the Crucifixion. It is quite definite that John came here about that time and spent the rest of his life here; the fact that Jesus had commended his mother to John's care really demands that he must have taken her to Ephesus with him. There is a shrine still existing, built in the fourth century, which claims to mark the house in which she lived, and this shrine is still carefully tended and visited by pilgrims and tourists. It is said that the shrine was neglected and forgotten during the Middle Ages and only rediscovered early in the 19th Century in consequence of a repeated dream in which a German nun, Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) saw the place in which the Virgin Mary's home was located. Although she had never been in Turkey and the shrine had been lost for centuries, archæologists found the place from her description and confirmed that it was a

fourth century chapel built over the ruins of a much earlier house.

There is food for thought in the fact that a good and well-maintained road leads to this shrine sacred to the memory of Mary, but the site of the great Temple of Diana in Ephesus about whom the townspeople of St. Paul's day were so vociferous is now reached only by a winding footpath, and of the Temple itself nothing remains but a few broken columns standing in the middle of a reed-filled marsh noisy with the croaking of many frogs. When Demetrius the silversmith called his fellow-craftsmen together in alarm at the effect of St. Paul's preaching he predicted that if it was allowed to continue there was danger "*that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth*" (Acts 19:27). He proved a true prophet. The Galilean maiden is remembered and the great goddess Diana forgotten.

Just as a church is the shell which houses a congregation of worshippers and has no lasting value in itself, so also must the whole fabric of our earthly fellowship and service ever remain but an avenue by means of which we can feed and build up each other with the realities of Divine Truth.

The Way of the Cross is a little interlude in the purposes of God—between the spontaneous song of the Sons of God when Earth's foundations were laid, and the thrilling Hallelujah Chorus when the earthly Orchestra will join with the Heaven to sing his Praise.

"WHERE THERE IS NO VISION . . ."

We live in a very material world. Concerned with the present, the here and now, we must earn our living, care for our families, perform our duties in the Church and to our brethren. It is right to give time and attention to these things. The apostle Paul gives a wonderful exposition on the fact that we are seated with Christ in the Heavens and then proceeds to show that as a result of that amazing fact we will be better husbands and wives and fathers and children, recognising our responsibilities as members of our family, Church, place of work and even of the secular State in which we live. But if we are too concerned with these material things we shall soon lose our vision and "perish", or as one translation has it, "act wildly". What an apt description of the world today!

God has given man a truly wonderful brain to cope with all the problems of everyday life. But this brain has also two other marvellous functions. It provides a memory (more efficient than any modern computer) to bring back to the consciousness the things of the past and an imagination which can envisage the things of the future. The memory and the imagination, like most of our abilities, can be used for good or evil. We are told of those living in the time of Noah whose imagination was *"only evil continually"* (Gen. 6.5). We can dwell upon things of the past which would depress or worry, and we can look forward to real or fancied events which might have a similar effect.

For the Christian, the memory and the imagination will both be included in those things which are consecrated to the Lord and they can be of great importance in spiritual development. Imagination, as the word is here used, is not the practice of day dreaming, of vague desires and fancies which can never be realised, but that *"faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb. 11.1). These images of future events, far from being unrealistic, are more substantial than the ever changing and collapsing world around us, for *"the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4.18).

In quiet moments we can ponder on the memory of the Lord's great goodness, as the Israelites were many times exhorted to "remember" how God had brought them out of Egypt and led them safely through the wilderness and had overcome their enemies in Canaan. So we can continually

remember our great deliverance from the power of Satan and the many providences in our lives ever since. How often we have told the Lord of our difficulties and always He has heard the petitions. As we recognise and give thanks for each answer to prayers we go forward in renewed strength and trust, learning by blessed experience that He never leaves nor forsakes us.

But what of imagination? Does faith rise as often or as high as it might, to consider the things hoped for but as yet unseen? Do we really have a vision?

Isaiah had a vision—a splendid vision of the Lord, high and lifted up. He saw the seraphim and heard them proclaiming *"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory"* (Isa. 6.3). As always when men are confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah was immediately conscious of his sin and of the sin of Israel. Nevertheless, in spite of this sense of utter unworthiness, he heard the cry *"Whom shall I send and who will go for us?"* and because of that glorious vision he at once responded *"Here am I, send me"* (Isa. 6.8). His name means *"Jehovah saves"* and this was to be the theme of that wonderful message to Israel, although as part of the message he would have many hard and critical things to say to them, many dire prophecies of the Lord's disciplines. He would warn of invading armies, of the land laid waste, of years of captivity. He would also tell them truths which, in spite of their years of training in the law and the offerings, they would not really understand, and he would give foregleams of a salvation extended to Jew and to Gentile and of the earth restored as the Garden of Eden. Much of the message would be unpopular and the world has a cruel way with those whose prophecies are not acceptable. If tradition is to be believed Isaiah was among those faithful ones described in Heb. 11 as *"sawn asunder"*.

But he had had his lips touched with coals of fire and his sin forgiven and he was activated by the zeal to serve the Lord which always follows the true appreciation of forgiveness. He volunteered before he knew what was entailed, with a faith like that of Abraham who went out not knowing whither he went. His task was made doubly hard because he was told beforehand that much of it would be fruitless labour, that they would not understand, that they would not hear with their ears or see with their eyes. Yet Isaiah went forth in faith and in the strength of

that great vision. He was given the support of the knowledge that a remnant would be saved and that the stumbling of the nation would not be final.

What an amazingly important message was his! By his words, from time to time, the dormant Messianic hopes of Israel were revived and the influence of these words can be traced in the writings of later prophets, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Surely, from the writings of Isaiah Jesus himself learned much of how the Lord God would lead him. He would read of the terrible sufferings to be endured for the transgressions of his people, but He would know also that eventually He would "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" (Isa. 53). From the same book He was strengthened with the promise of the Kingdom which should never end, of which He would be the King, so that Paul could say of this suffering Servant, "*for the joy that was set before him He endured the Cross*" (Heb. 12.2).

In Isaiah John the Baptist found that which defined his position as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness", preparing the way for the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world and with words from this book Jesus himself encouraged John when, imprisoned by Herod, he felt forsaken.

Many are the quotations in the New Testament which show how the apostles read and loved and by the power of the Holy Spirit understood this prophecy. It confirmed their identification of Jesus as the Messiah and encouraged them to look for that new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. So too have faithful Christians throughout the Gospel age been encouraged by the precious promises recorded in Isaiah.

But it was the vision so graciously given by the Lord to Isaiah which enabled him to give forth his message so courageously. How many times when he tried to warn the people and found them so slow to understand would he remind himself "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up!" and when the people continued in their faithlessness and the enemies swarmed over the land, he would rejoice in his heart at the memory of the words, "The whole earth is full of his glory". Because of the vision he even endured martyrdom, surely remembering the words of Isaiah 25.8. "He shall swallow up death in victory".

The record of Hebrews 11 suggests that many of that list of faithful witnesses qualified for inclusion therein because they had a vision. Abraham looked for a "city which has foundations, whose builder, and maker is God". Through all his varied experiences Abraham could look beyond the present and see, in imagination, the

day of Christ. Moses counted the sufferings of Christ of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Surely he had a glimpse of the Messianic reign when he said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet . . . like unto me; unto him thou shalt hearken". Without his vision on the Damascus road, would Saul of Tarsus ever have become the apostle Paul? Not only did he have this wonderful experience but he was able to say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision". Visions are not given simply for man's joy and wonderment. They bring the power to do great things and also a tremendous responsibility. Those who are granted great visions are often called upon to suffer greatly.

We have seen the martyrdom of Isaiah. Moses suffered much from the rebellion of the Israelites. Abraham was called upon to show his willingness to sacrifice his only son and Paul was shown how great things he must suffer for Christ's sake.

Great experiences come in the quiet times, not in those snatched moments of prayer and study which give the Spirit no time to breathe the air of heaven. Noah must have spent much time in communion with God to enable him to become a preacher of righteousness in the midst of that wicked generation. He was saved out of the world because he had proved that he did not belong to it. He and his family were the only ones who did not merit the terrible condemnation "It repented the Lord that He had made man". Moses was alone in the wilderness when God revealed himself in the burning bush and gave him his great commission. As Moses kept himself apart from the evil world around him, so Moses had to come out of the court of Pharaoh. Abraham did not receive his vision until he left the heathen city of Ur. Then God gave him a promise of wonderful blessings for himself, his descendants and through one special Descendant, all the families of the earth. It was not until Paul was in the desert of Arabia that he was taken up to the third Heaven and shown things not lawful to be uttered. Our Lord himself found it necessary to leave the city and go alone into the hills to commune with his Father, spending all night in prayer. We can imagine this was a frequent occurrence. John was alone on Patmos when his great Revelation came, at the end of a long life of loving service.

In different ages and with different individuals God uses different methods. We do not, as a rule, have miraculous encounters with the Almighty, although there are moments when we feel He is so near we could almost say, "I saw the Lord". But these times are rare, perhaps more rare than they should be. Of course we know we are on unsafe ground when we depend too much upon our emotions, but our faith always gains great

impetus when we can form some mental conception of the power and love of God.

We do not have a wilderness, a desert, a Patmos, a Judean Hill. Perhaps we cannot often withdraw from physical contact with those around us, but if we take advantage of what opportunities we have for meditation, we can cultivate a quietness within ourselves which can lead to an ever growing awareness of fellowship with our Father and the Lord Jesus.

How very much there is in God's word to teach of his power and love. See him as the Mighty One, revealed in thunder and lightning on Sinai, while Israel trembled. In all the minutæ of the Law, appreciate how He instructed the nation as to his holiness and their sinfulness. See how He provided for their every need in the wilderness and how, in many varied expressions, types and pictures, he gave them promises of the coming Saviour. He himself said *"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"* (Isa. 5.4). Read of the mighty works he accomplished through Elijah. The faith of this prophet leaves us gasping, but we are glad that a record has been kept of his despondency under the juniper tree, for it shows the loving tenderness of God when He met his depression with comforting words and necessary food.

What scope there is for meditation in the Book of Revelation, as we ponder on the greatness of the One walking in the midst of the candlesticks. We have proved in our own experience that He is faithful and true as we remember that He is the Lamb Who died for us and also the One who encourages every true ecclesia and every individual member. He is the One Who will take the Church to himself as his Bride and to her will be granted all the special blessings referred to in

this book. We too, like God's people of old, can have a vision which will enable us to do all things through Christ.

The poet was right when he said, "The world is too much with us". We can have, not only the memory of God's great love in the past and a bright hope of a glorious future, but a vision of that other world which surrounds us even now. Surely the Secret of the serenity of Jesus was that the spirit world was to him more real than the material one. He was always aware of his Father's presence; He knew He was surrounded by legions of angels.

Can we not give more thought to the eternal realities? God is on his throne; the great High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us; our angels always behold the face of the Father. God's word declares all this to be true. Most thinking Christians are agreed that the time must be short before the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and as his children we are already translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. So by faith we can use our God-given imagination to bring into present experience the mercies of the past, the hope of the future and the unseen but eternal things of the Spirit which even now are ours if we but claim them. As these things become more and more part of daily life we shall be spurred on to greater faithfulness so that we shall be able to say, humbly and gratefully, *"Mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty and I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"*.

*"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful Face
And the things of earth will grow strangely
dim,
In the light of his glory and grace."*

Thy King Cometh

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

"'This Gospel of the Kingdom' I am told in Matthew, 'shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come'. I never read these words without remembering a spectacle which I, in common with thousands of others, saw, and which none that saw it can ever forget. It was when Her Majesty, the Queen, (*Queen Victoria; Ed.*) visited the Scottish metropolis in 1842. Scarcely had the twilight darkened into night, than from every hill surrounding that most magnificent of cities, there seemed to rise simultaneously a crest of fire. Each

mountain lifted up into his hand a torch; and from Berwick to Fife, and Fife to Stirling, the great Firth was at once illuminated. It was a witness, a token to the land that its sovereign was near. It was a token, too, to the approaching vessel, far out at sea, that all was ready for her reception; that loyalty had gushed out into these flaming signals. Thus, when the Gospel beacons, from California to Japan, are fully lit, it will be a witness, a token to earth, that the end is approaching, and a signal to heaven for the preparation of the chariot, the harnessing of the steeds, the furbishing of the thunderbolts, the gathering together of all the elements, the witnesses, and the victims, of that great day of God Almighty. Our part, meanwhile, is surely to go forward, and to light up from land to land the signals for this great and blessed Advent."

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 7. St. Paul: Conclusion

One portrait remains in the gallery of faith, worthy of our attention before we quietly close the door and pass out into the mad whirl of the seventh decade of the twentieth century. It is that of the man who opened up the West to Christianity, with whose words we began our viewing of so many great ancestors.

Hitherto the Gentile nations had been considered outsiders, the unclean and the unchosen who might now and again pick up a few crumbs from the rich man's table. Now all that is changed. The four-dimensional love of God is revealed to every nation, kindred and tongue. Those who were once far off, strangers and foreigners, are invited to become "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God". The man chosen to carry this invitation was the man Saul of Tarsus, to be known to the Christian world as Paul the Apostle.

Because he was a man of outstanding qualities, of fine intelligence, of superb courage, of unwavering faith and loyalty, he claims kinship with all who went before him. As the bond-slave of Christ he carried on the great tradition of the past, widening the bounds of faith, deepening the depths of love, elevating the spiritual life of man, overthrowing the beggarly gods of this world, and dying, bequeathed to every generation of truth seekers a vision of the whole race of man eventually united in peace under the righteous reign of that One whom God has appointed, Jesus Christ, before whom every knee shall yet bend in glad obedience.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4-7). These are the last words of a great man, a much hated, a much criticised man. He had spent the greater part of his life preaching an unpopular gospel which was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. The rewards of his office had been partial blindness, shipwrecks, stonings, beatings and imprisonment. At the end of his day, conscious that his work was finished, he had little outward evidence of success. A few books and an old cloak were all his possessions. An old man, he sits a prisoner in Nero's dungeon, awaiting execution. His friends are few, his enemies many. Of all his perils that of false brethren must have been the hardest to endure. The churches he had founded fell victims to the fear and harshness of persecution, or to the false doctrines of heady high-minded men who got inside the little groups to control them for their

own ends. Like his Lord before him, he left the treasure of his teaching in the hands of a faithful few. Looking back over the years he saw himself as a runner who had held aloft the torch of truth under all conditions and over all obstacles, until the time had come to hand it over to a younger man whose fresh energies would preach the word to the same mixed multitudes, with the same mixed results.

There are no complaints about the hardness of the way, the fickleness of human nature, or the ways of his Divine Master. He has learned contentment under all conditions, to give thanks on dark days as well as fair. He has kept the steadfast, unwavering faith through all his chequered road, and now at the last it shines the brightest. Confidence for himself, confidence for all faith-keeping hearts of the victor's crown is his last declaration to those who will continue the fight and run the race. For fading laurels and earthly trophies men have endured much; for a crown, an inheritance that cannot be lost or withered, the Apostle to the Gentiles had endured all the loss, the sorrow and the afflictions of the way in which his faith had led him, counting it but a light thing compared with the eternal glory of an unending life in the company of Christ and the saintly members of his House.

Against all that would have destroyed him or undermined his faith in Christ, in the resurrection of the dead, in the future of his people and in the love of God, he had fought a good fight. In spite of all the distractions, the persuasions of city life and social position, he had held firmly on his course, the bond-slave of Christ, instant in season and out of season, preaching this gospel to all classes of men. Through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, he had pressed forward towards his goal, holding aloft, for all to see, the pure flame of the knowledge of God and of his Christ.

Now the long race was over, the work was finished, the coveted prize of life, the priceless privilege of knowing Jesus face to face, was at hand. The last words of advice had been written to Timothy, words to infuse courage and patience into a young man's heart, when an old man was no longer there to speak the words of wisdom, or set the undaunted example.

"I am now ready to be offered." In his lifetime he had often faced death and been delivered, preserved to continue the work for which he had been chosen. Now the work was finished. He has

come to terms with life, with God and man, with the last enemy. Neither preaching nor deeds nor suffering will plead for him at the last hour. Only faith and the scars of faith are his passport to eternity. His epitaph is as bright as his crown is glorious; the testimony and reward of all the people of God.

*"Firm as his throne his promise stands and he
can well secure,
What I've committed to his hands till the
decisive hour."*

* * *

It is a far cry now from the days of Christ and the selected band of apostles, further still to the prophets of Israel and to Moses when the faith of earlier men was expressed and compressed into rules of conduct which would keep human life in a sound state. Although centuries have rolled over generations of people, expanding the nations and shrinking the globe they inhabit, the inflexible law is still the standard for those people. It has needed no alteration nor will it ever be lowered to suit man's fancy. When man himself lowers or ignores that standard he does so at his peril. The results are lamentable.

A thoughtful poet once wrote "The mills of God grind slowly". How slowly, history relates in the nineteen centuries which have rolled away since the stone was rolled from the tomb in a rich man's garden and the disciples of Jesus went joyfully forth on their appointed mission to preach the gospel to all nations, to give hope to a dying race of the resurrection of the dead. In their enthusiasm they probably expected an immediate realisation of all the blessings which the life and death of Jesus could release to mankind. He had said he would come again and they looked for his coming with the earnest longing of lovers for the beloved. Like their predecessors they died in faith, not having seen that for which they looked. One generation succeeded another, repeating all the old mistakes, blundering on through bigotry, schism, cruelty, intolerance, ignorance and formality, until students of this long history of religion may well wonder what have been its benefits. The mind shudders at the awful crimes committed in its name. Considering all the hopes and promises of long ago, even the best informed in hard-pressed moments must ask the eternal question, Why? In this scientific, space, jet-propelled age, it is not the bells of heaven but the music of hell which beats about the ears of earth's seething millions, in constant violence, in bomb-blast, gun-fire, roaring roads, screaming skies, industrial clangour and the threatening voices of unrest and discontent. As the spectres of world famine, world domination, world bankruptcies and world destruction stretch

out grisly hands across the moral chaos whose mounting problems have no solution, the voice of the cynic may be heard in the land, "What price religion now and where are all the promises, since all things continue as they were, only worse, for the other side is winning?"

Failure, disappointment, uncertainty, perplexity and materialism have led in these latter days to a serious decline in the faith. Many prime beliefs for which our forefathers suffered have been abandoned, jettisoned in the interests of science, fallen before the pens and tongues of the higher critics, who, in the name of culture, have reasoned away the word of God. Evolution became the gospel of the industrial revolution and in the end Mammon has taken all—but not quite. At the end of the long oppressive, bloodstained centuries, as all the way through them, there are the few, the comparative handful who yet understand the faith once delivered to the saints, who have remained loyal to its highest principles and true to the great vision of the Kingdom of God on earth as the sure and only solution of the many evils which bedevil man's world and destroy his life and peace.

Faith and hope are twin sisters, two members of that trinity of graces which form the backbone of all true religion. Without faith it is impossible to accept God or try to please him; without hope it is impossible to visualise a nobler future for mankind. Without vision people perish. The target, the aim, the life of the future is the star of hope which draws life's pilgrims onwards, which buoys them up above the waves of adversity.

To hope for a whole lifetime, to die without the fulfilment of hope, must be the acid test of faith, the demonstration to God and man that it is the genuine quality. The early heroes of faith who walked with God were all men of hope and vision, looking forward with confidence to a time when all wrong things would be righted under the just government of God. They received certain great and precious promises of world wide blessing, of a Kingdom of God on earth which would bring joy to all its peoples, yet one by one this great household of faith, too numerous to recount, died without having seen this new government in action. Abraham was the prince of the faith who had personally received the promise, bound by the oath of God, yet his biographers state that he died without receiving one foot of the land promised to him, or seeing any of the world-wide blessings, which had been to him an incentive, the splendid vision of the future. "He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This faith and hope and vision shared by thousands since the world began has not in their lifetime become a reality.

Sceptics have jeered and critics have found fault with the faith, but the faith lives on. These men and women of God have been strangers and pilgrims in the earth, out of tune with its varied aspirations and activities, strongly convinced that it is not God's world, not his kingdom of heavenly peace, of just judgment, of abounding life and light and vitality, but a crooked and perverse system of things which must some day be removed to make way for a finer, more beneficent rule which will never pass away. So they died in faith, having believed in and accepted the promises. They saw the vision afar off, hoped for it, died undaunted while the vision tarried, knowing that God cannot and will not break his word. The living God, the God of all the faithful, is the God of the living. For his family of faith, honoured and loved, he has prepared a city, a kingdom, a new day, a new life which will abundantly justify all the faith and hope that has been placed in it. Its reality will outshine the vision which has delighted the eyes and thoughts of those who have believed and kept the faith.

Death does not have the last word. The faith of saints will taste the victory of God over this last great enemy of man. "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?*". These immortal words are faith's reply to all defeat, to all doubt, to all stony indifference. The promises of God concern all that concerns man. They remain unmoved by the turmoil of the centuries, by the theories and agitations of men. The brevity of life, the destruction of death, cannot annul the eternal Word. Every detail will be fulfilled at the appointed time. In the book of remembrance the names of the faithful glow before God. "*They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels*". Those who were given the

title deeds of the land, the keys of the kingdom, and the promises of everlasting life and dominion, will be there to receive them.

So to those still fighting the good fight of faith in these last days of an old world, which has been allowed to run its full course that evil may plant an imperishable lesson in the heart of man, and the wisdom of God be justified, there comes a clarion call from that great Cloud of Witnesses whose illustrious portraits have looked down upon these latest members of the house of God,—*"Be strong and of a good courage, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee"*.

"Hear you not the voices ringing down the ages,

Echoing still the message, though their task be done;

Voices, born of heroes, monarchs, poets, sages,

Yearning still to share the wisdom they have won?"

The thronging, deafening, clamorous world with its vain delusions, its mockeries, its glamorous attractions, must beat and call in vain against that faith in the justice and love of God and to those who stand by its insistent Word to bless man's race, to restore a pillaged and polluted earth and fill it with the glory of God.

A place in the house of God with such knowledge and conviction is not only the greatest possible honour and privilege; it is Divine armour-plating and heavenly peace of mind. For this great inheritance we owe an inestimable debt to all who have lived before us who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. Let us, like them, walk worthily before God, holding fast the same faith, that we may in God's good time gain the crown of life.

The End.

Not as the Scribes

In striking contrast to our own confidence and assurance in the revealed word of God stands the hesitant manner in which the so-called "Modern Scholarship" attempts to explain how the Scriptures came to be written. Here is a typical extract from a book published some years ago (italics are our own) dealing with the 13th chapter of Mark, one of the chapters in which the Lord gave us the signs of his Second Advent. The passage was intended to be a sure guide to Christians living at the end of the Age. Here is what the book makes of it.

"This chapter is different from the rest of the book. An apocalyptic tract, *perhaps* written some years earlier, *seems* to have been incorporated by St. Mark, *perhaps* with some alterations. The two main themes of the chapter, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the world, are inter-

woven in a perplexing way. Three paragraphs, vs. 7, 14-20, and 24-27, may represent the original leaflet; these *seem* to have been combined with some sayings of our Lord . . . it is *not always easy* to decide between actual words spoken and the author's interpretation of them. But the *main* teaching of the chapter is clear, and *must have meant much* to the persecuted Christians for whom St. Mark was writing."

The concluding sentence seems hardly in accord with the dubious and uncertain tone of the preceding words. How different Paul's confident words to Timothy: "All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3. 16-17).

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *On what day of the week did the original Pentecost fall? Is it true that the Law was given at Sinai on the Day of Pentecost? What is the connection with Whitsuntide?*

A. The Day of Pentecost was the fiftieth day from the first day of the feast of Passover (the Greek word *pentekoste*, fiftieth, is from *pente-konta*, meaning fifty). The Passover ritual was observed on the 14th day of the month Nisan, first month of the year, and the Feast of Passover started on the 15th and continued until the 21st. The commencement of Nisan was determined by the first visible appearance of the new moon nearest the spring equinox provided that the corn crop was sufficiently advanced to give promise of harvesting by Pentecost (the "Feast of Weeks" in the O.T.) some two months later. This may seem complicated to us but in fact was a device to ensure that successive years—at a time when the year was regulated by the moon—did not get out of step with the seasons. Thus the 1st and therefore the 14th day of Nisan could fall on any day of the week. It is calculated that in A.D. 33, the year of the Crucifixion, Nisan 14 fell on a Friday, the day before the sabbath, so that in that year, the one in which the disciples were gathered in the upper room, the Day of Pentecost, fifty days from Nisan 15, would have fallen upon the seventh day, our Saturday.

The idea that the Law was given on the Day of Pentecost is a late Rabbinic tradition based on the claim that fifty days elapsed between the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law at Sinai. This cannot be sustained by Scripture. In fact the interval could not have been less than sixty days and was probably still more. There is not the data in the Exodus account to fix the exact day, only that it was more than three days after the arrival at Sinai. The expression "the same day" in Exod. 19.1 probably means that they arrived at Sinai on the same day of the month that they left Egypt, i.e., the 14th, so they were exactly two months on the journey, but there is no certainty. At least a week would be required for the two million people with all their flocks and herds to set up camp and introduce some kind of order into daily routine before the two days sanctifying of vs. 10. In any case the Feast of Weeks was not instituted until Israel

entered the Promised Land thirty-nine years later (Exod. 23.16; Lev. 23.10) so there is no connection with the giving of the Law. So far as is known, no one has tried to determine the day of week upon which the first Pentecost fell, at the first harvest after Israel entered the land. Elaborate astronomical calculations would be involved and some doubt as to the true year of entry does exist over a range of a few years so that any such conclusion would still be open to question.

The significance of Pentecost to the people of Israel was that it marked the beginning of harvest and the presentation of the first fruits as a thank-offering to God. Its significance to the Christian is that it marks the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon the company of believers in Jerusalem and therefore the true beginning of the Christian Church. It was the evidence that Christ had indeed ascended into the presence of the Father and would now be present in spirit with his followers until the end of the Age and then would come again in person in the glory of his celestial being, at his Second Advent, for the conversion and salvation of the world.

* * *

Q. *What did Jesus mean by "strain at a gnat" in Matt. 23.24?*

A. Faulty translation is not an uncommon thing in the Authorised Version; misprints, which were common in the early editions, are now rare. Some have persisted. One is this expression in Matt. 23.24 "*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*". What Jesus really did say was "*Ye blind guides, which strain out a gnat...*" The allusion is to the custom of the more meticulous Jews of passing wine through a strainer lest any defiling insect should have got into it. With this correction, the allusion is more forceful. One is impressed with the gentle irony in our Lord's words. The idea of swallowing a camel verges on the ludicrous. Extreme and exaggerated forms of speech have always been common in the East, and one can imagine the covert smiles on the faces of the bystanders at this biting comment on the punctilious observances of the Pharisees and their blindness to the really vital things.

TIMES AND SEASONS

4. Jacob

Jacob was 57 when he went to Padanaram to find himself a wife and 97 when he returned with four wives, numerous children and a large establishment of servants, shepherds and herdsmen. It is sometimes thought that his period in Laban's service was only twenty years but this is due to an insufficiently careful reading of Gen. 31.38-41. In any case the events of this period cannot possibly be fitted into less than forty years.

Put briefly, the twenty years of Gen. 31.38 is one period spent by Jacob *"in the field"* caring for Laban's flocks and herds; the twenty years of vs. 41 is another period, *"in the house"*, comprising the initial fourteen years service for Leah and Rachel, and the final six years during which he was building up his own flocks preparatory to returning to Canaan. This is shown by the use of what is called the "double demonstrative" which in English is normally expressed by the comparison "this" and "that". The Hebrew demonstrative *"zeh"* is normally "this", but when repeated, as in this passage, has the meaning of difference or contrast. So *"this twenty years"* in vs. 38 is in contrast to *"thus"* (or that) *"twenty years in thy house"*. Other examples of this use of the double demonstrative *"zeh . . . zeh"* are:

1 Kin. 22.20 "One said on *this* manner, and another said on *that* manner".

Exod. 14.20 "It was a cloud and darkness to *them* (the Egyptians) but it gave light by night to *these* (the Israelites)."

Job 21.23, 25 "*One* dieth in his full strength . . . and *another* dieth in the bitterness of his soul". Eccl. 6.5 "*This* hath more rest than *the other*".

The sense of Jacob's words might have been brought out more clearly in the A.V. had the translators rendered *"zeh . . . zeh"* as they did in the Kings and Job quotations, so making him say "One twenty years have I been with thee (in the field) . . . another twenty years have I been in thine house" and this would have made the matter perfectly clear.

A critical examination of the circumstances surrounding the births of Jacob's sons as narrated in chaps. 29-30 supports the forty year period. Jacob served seven years before receiving Leah and Rachel as wives. Thereafter Leah had four sons and probably at least a couple of daughters. This could hardly have been achieved in less than, say, ten years. She then "left bearing" (ch. 29.35). In the meantime Rachel, despairing of herself becoming a mother, gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob in accordance with custom, hoping to

obtain children by her. She must have waited maybe five or six years before resorting to this expedient. Bilhah presented Jacob, probably during the next four years, with two sons, and this must have led Leah, after five years or so barrenness, to present her own maid Zilpah to Jacob for the same purpose. The result was two more sons, Gad and Asher, with perhaps another daughter, and all this implies that Asher could not have been born less than twenty-five years from Jacob's entry into Laban's service.

It was after this that Reuben brought the mandrakes to his mother (ch. 30.14) which led directly to the birth of Leah's fifth son in the following year. Another son, Zebulun, followed, and last of all a daughter, Dinah. Now Dinah could not possibly have been less than eleven or twelve years old at Jacob's departure from Laban if the narrative of Gen. 34, in which Hamor, the son of Shechem, wished to make her his wife, is to be credible and this in turn means that Issachar must have been born at least fourteen years before the departure. Twenty-five years from Jacob's entry to the incident of the mandrakes, plus fifteen years thereafter to his departure, totals forty years which appears to be the minimum possible.

The implication of Gen. 30.25 is that Joseph was born at the commencement of the final six years. Since he was thirty years old when called before Pharaoh, (41.4-6), and therefore thirty-nine in the second year of famine when Jacob came down into Egypt, the period of Jacob's sojourn in Canaan after leaving Laban was 33 years. This however must include the time taken on the journey from Padan-aram. The magnitude of this undertaking is not appreciated by a mere cursory reading of the narrative. According to Gen. 32.13-20 Jacob sent his brother Esau a present from his flocks totalling 580 head of cattle, sheep, camels and so on. This means that his flock must have numbered several thousands at least, and this in turn that they would consume at least ten tons of food per day, and a considerable amount of water. Much of this must have been in the form of stored grain and root crops brought with them from Padan-aram. He would hardly achieve more than ten miles a day, with a day's rest in between, and could easily have been three months covering the 250 miles to Succoth, on the eastern side of Jordan. Here, the narrative tells us (33.17) Jacob built himself a house and made booths for his cattle. This

implies a lengthy stay; a little reflection will show that whilst his cattle could very largely "live off the land" in the uninhabited pasture-lands east of Jordan, once inside settled Canaan, already occupied by farmers and stock-breeders, his food supply problems would be much more acute until he could reach his father's lands in the far south. Evidently the stay at Succoth, with its house building and provision of corrals for cattle, all indicative of a lengthy sojourn, was for the purpose of sowing and eventually reaping crops sufficient to tide them over the last stages of his journey. Such a programme, of course, would require two years. At the end of that time Jacob resumed his journey, crossed the Jordan, stopped briefly at Shechem but had to move on in consequence of the trouble over Dinah, and finally arrived at Bethel in the very centre of Canaan, where in obedience to the instructions of God he built an altar and settled down for a *lengthy stay. Here God solemnly re-affirmed the Abrahamic covenant and pledged that it would be fulfilled through the sons of Jacob.*

All things considered, the arrival at Bethel must have been a full three years after the departure from Padan-aram. It could not have been less, and succeeding events make it unlikely that it could have been any more. One intriguing incident is connected with this sojourn at Bethel; ch. 35.8 records the death and burial at this time of Rebekah's old nurse, Deborah. Rebekah was obviously already dead; it would appear that the old lady, probably now more or less an encumbrance to Isaac at his advanced age, and of no concern to the younger sons of Isaac now managing his affairs, had been sent to Jacob upon his arrival back in Canaan to be looked after. The point of interest is that Deborah must be the longest lived woman mentioned in the Bible whose age can be deduced. According to Gen. 14.59 Deborah was Rebekah's "wet-nurse"—this is the meaning of the Hebrew word—in her childhood and accompanied her when she came to be Isaac's wife. Deborah must have been at least twenty-five years of age at Rebekah's birth to have acted in the capacity indicated, and even if, as is likely, Rebekah was as young as sixteen at her marriage it implies that Deborah died at Bethel in Jacob's encampment at the ripe old age of between 161 and 163. Sarah the wife of Abraham is stated to have lived 127 years, Miriam the sister of Moses died within a year or two of 137; but Rebekah's old nurse appears to hold the record.

The sojourn at Bethel lasted a few years only, not more than three or four. Eight years later, when Joseph was 17 (ch. 37.14), Jacob was reunited with Isaac at Hebron. In the meantime, and while the family was still at Bethel, Joseph

had the dreams which incurred his brothers' enmity (ch. 37.5-11). He would then be about ten or eleven years old and his mother Rachel was still alive (see ch. 37.10). A year or so later, on the march from Bethel towards Hebron, she died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried near Bethlehem (ch. 36.16-20). So, at last, Jacob arrived back at the family home at Hebron after an absence of half a century. There was little happiness in his home coming. He had lost his beloved wife Rachel; within another year or so he mourned her son Joseph, torn to pieces by wild beasts as he believed, in reality sold as a slave into Egypt by the jealous brothers. He only had five-year old Benjamin to remind him of them both. Another twelve years and Isaac died and there was the brief re-union with his brother Esau as together they paid their last respects to the old Patriarch. The descent into Egypt was now only ten years away; already the shadow of *the approaching famine was darkening the land.* The story of Jacob's sons going into Egypt to buy corn for their families' sustenance does not sound as if the vast flocks and herds which Jacob brought with him from Padan-aram still existed. Neither is there any indication of what was left of Isaac's far-flung interests which Jacob had inherited. Only a few years previously Jacob's sons were scattered over the country from Dothan in the north to Hebron in the south (ch. 37.17), whilst Judah was apparently running a separate concern in the south-east at Timnath (ch. 38.18). Much of this appears to have disappeared towards the end, and it does seem as though virtually all of Jacob's achievements had vanished and he was left with little more than his own family and closest retainers, with considerably shrunken possessions, at the end of his sojourn in Canaan. Well may he have said, as he did rather bitterly to Pharaoh when he appeared before him, "*few and evil have the days of my life been*".

So, at 130 years of age, and 215 years after Abraham's entry into Canaan, Jacob and his family and household left the land and went into Egypt. The era of the Patriarchs ended. A new era began, that of Israel, the nation that was to be the peculiar representative of God and of his truth in the world for nearly two thousand years, until the duty and the privilege was taken over by the Christian Church. Jacob knew nothing of all that; he knew only that according to Divine promise his descendants would return to Canaan after four hundred years had passed, and he made his sons promise that he himself would be buried in the family sepulchre at Hebron where his father and grandfather lay, that he himself might be identified with the promise.

To be continued.



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

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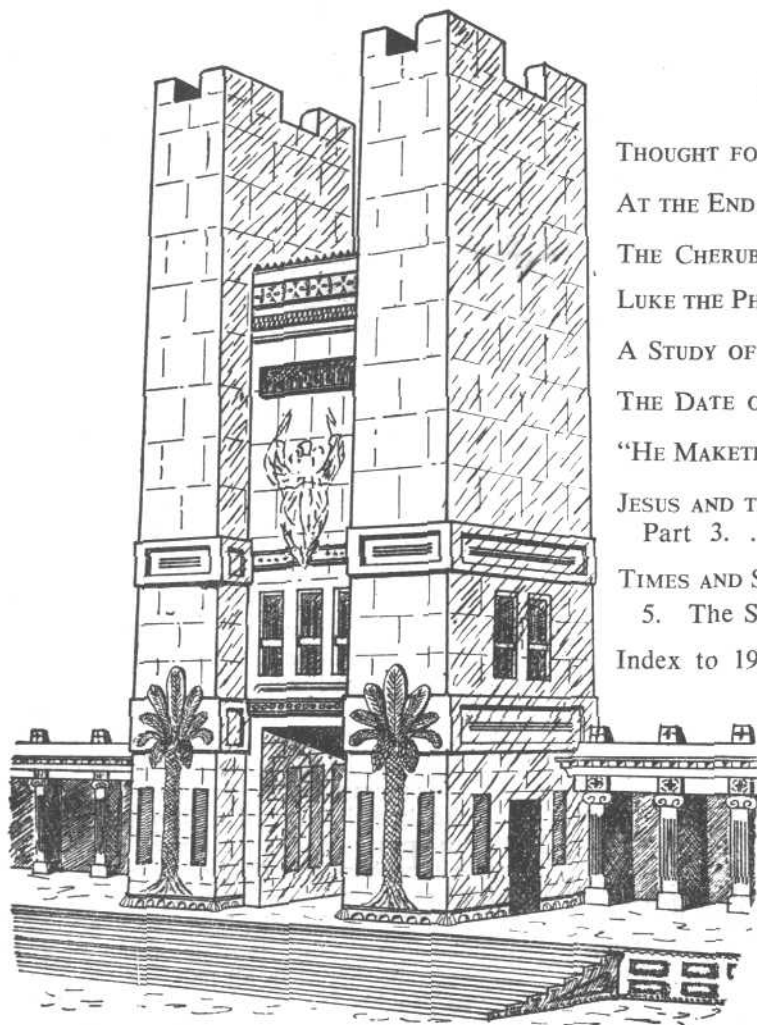
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"...and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22.17).

That vivid symbol of the Messianic era, a river of water of life flowing from the throne of God, available in unlimited measure to all who will partake, takes on renewed significance in these days of acute water shortage in Britain. An everyday amenity, always available in unrestricted quantity and, despite the semi-annual "Water rate" demand, looked upon as virtually free for the taking. So common in daily life that it comes as somewhat of a shock to realise that without water life itself could not continue. That kind of shock has come or is coming now to everyone who stops to think. The parched gardens, the empty reservoirs, the forest and heathland fires, the farmers' dilemma, all pose a problem we have not known for the past two and a half centuries. And nobody yet knows where it is going to end.

Where to place the blame? Some will accuse Nature and some God, according to their belief or otherwise in the existence of a Power beyond Nature. Very few where it rightfully belongs, upon man. No use saying the situation is caused by forces outside human control. Were it not for the prodigal waste inherent in the modern economic system there would have been enough for all, drought or no drought. Great stress is being laid upon the necessity for domestic consumers to go short to ensure supplies to industry; no mention is made of the fact that industry absorbs 70% of water available and the domestic consumer only 20%. Only casually is it let out that the refining of a gallon of petrol uses 70 gallons of water; that the manufacture of a new car involves the use of 300,000 gallons, enough to supply one average household for ten years. Even though, faced now with this crisis, much greater attention than heretofore is being given

to the re-cycling—re-use—of water in many processes, the fact remains that this modern world is wedded to the ruthless exploitation of all natural resources without any regard for the future.

Man *does* have power to deal with the problem. The vagaries of climate may be uncontrollable, but — pipelines thousands of miles long carry oil and natural gas from where they are found to where they are used. No new knowledge or technique is needed to do the same thing with water. De-salination technology — fresh water from sea water—is well established and could be immensely multiplied from the few plants which do exist in rainless tropical areas. But there is monetary profit in oil and gas; not so with water, and therein lies the snag.

Will it always be thus? By no means! God "*created the earth not in vain; he formed it to be inhabited*" (Isa. 45.18), and in his overall creative design He included means by which every legitimate need of man can be satisfied; that certainly includes the most basic of all, water. But man has to play his part. When the wilderness proved incapable of producing enough food for the Israelites in their migration to Canaan God provided them with manna; directly they reached the Promised Land and could raise crops for themselves the manna ceased. Mankind has the knowledge and ability in this modern Age to ensure adequate supplies of water to all men everywhere and God expects them to do it. But of course they will not; until, in the coming Day of Christ's Messianic reign, a new spirit is instilled into the hearts of men and they labour diligently in this as in all fields of human necessity to provide for the needs of all. It is in that way and by that means that the old prophetic foreview will become reality "*in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert*" (Isa. 35.6).

AT THE END OF THE YEARS

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O Lord, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psa. 71:17-18).

There is a ring of mature faith in those stirring words, the mellow confidence of one who gave his heart to the Lord in the golden days of youth and now in the quietude of old age realises that his faith was not misplaced. The One Who gave him work to do in those early days of youthful zeal and enthusiasm has work yet for him to do. Even in old age he may still shew forth the strength of God's righteousness to a new generation that the work of God may continue. Even while the shadows of death close around him he may still, with last expiring breath, tell of God's power and glory to those who are as yet babes in Christ. There is inspiration and encouragement here for those to-day—and there are many such—who look around on depleted numbers and a diminishing fellowship in which the tale of years is many and the signs of youthfulness almost absent. There is more than inspiration and encouragement, too, there is a call to action and service, a reminder that the labours of the consecrated do not finish short of death, that at all times during our sojourn this side the Vail we are capable of some service for our Lord and King, some means of declaring his strength to this generation and his power to that which is to come.

The Psalmist here admits physical weakness but refuses to admit any ageing of the spirit. As a young man and in the heyday of middle age he rejoiced to declare God's wondrous works. That was to him the breath of life and without the joy of service life would not be worth living. The whole object and end of his existence was to give praise and honour to God in the sight of all people, to witness to the wonder of his Plan and the grandeur of his Promise to all who would listen. It needs physical vitality as well as mental alertness to do that; one cannot endure the heat and burden of Christian witness in the outward sense without a goodly measure of physical strength. Those not so favoured can and do serve in quieter ways, in the ministry of prayer, the ministry of comfort, the ministry of healing, and so on, but the active work of prosecuting the Gospel requires the ability to be active in the physical sense. And that is an attribute of the

young; it cannot be expected of those who have passed the prime of life and whose physical powers are failing. Such a time must come to all of us and it cannot be avoided. But there is no reason why the spirit should fail too.

This word comes reproof and chiding to all who have used advancing age as excuse to lose interest in the work of God in this Age. It is an unhappy spectacle, and one that is all too common, that of one who has laboured mightily, spending and being spent, in the service of his Master, maybe from early youth, through the twenties and thirties and forties and fifties, and then lost heart. The apparent failure of fond expectations, the disappointments and disillusionments that the Christian life is bound to bring, instead of performing their intended work of making mature and mellow the Christian character, have been allowed to make virtual shipwreck of faith. For it is no good claiming that faith is retained if the works of faith have been relinquished. It is no good saying we still look for and expect the Kingdom if we no longer evince any outward sign of concern for its interests. Our consecration is unto death, and although it may be true that our outward man perish, yet it is equally true that our inward man is being renewed day by day, if so be that we are still faithful to our covenant.

There is another and more subtle delusion abroad also. It appeals especially to the elderly. It is the feeling that "the end" is so near and loss of faith in the world so general that the Lord would no longer have his faithful ones preach the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it but rather devote their remaining time and energies exclusively to their own calling and election and that of their consecrated brethren. It is not well to condemn such conclusion too hastily; it is a natural reaction to the rebuffs and failures and apparent lack of success of many long years' active preaching and witnessing. But the attitude must be deprecated nevertheless. It is not a healthy one. It breeds egotism and self-righteousness and tends towards an exclusiveness and narrow-mindedness that is the very reverse of what the mature and mellow Christian should manifest. There was no such thought in the mind of the Psalmist when he wrote these words. He did not say "Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not while I abide in splendid isolation before thee, proclaiming no more thy glory to this generation and utterly

ignoring every one that is to come". Far from it. Con the words once more. *"Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."* So far from voicing a plea for a kind of "honourable retirement" from the work of evangelising, the Psalmist passionately beseeches that God will not forsake him in his old age until he has declared the message to yet another generation. He wants to labour to the end; he wants with his last expiring breath to declare the greatness of God to those who still know him not.

There is a certain ring of "up-to-date-ness" in the Psalmist's words. He wants to declare God's strength to *"this generation"*. He himself, old and greyheaded, belongs to a generation that is past. In many things the world has grown beyond him and the fashion of the world is strange to him. Customs, conventions, practices, which in his day were unknown or not accepted have now become commonplace. The very language in which the new generation talks is one that is fast becoming incomprehensible to him. The pace of life has quickened and those things on which he and his once set such value are now lightly esteemed. The temptation is ever present to withdraw from this strange new world and dwell in more comfortable seclusion with other greyheads of like mind until the call comes to "go home". The world is no longer the understandable place that it was; it is better that we shut it out from our lives and beseech the Lord to take us away from it quickly.

Not so the Psalmist. It is this new and strange and in many ways uncouth generation to which he wishes to declare the glory of God. He knows that the fashion of the world must needs change as the clock of Time ticks on; he knows that restless man, ever exploring and seeking something new, must change with it, as generation follows generation. He knows, too, that faith will ebb lower and lower with each succeeding age so that the one who takes his stand on the words of God will appear to be more and more an outworn relic of a past era. He knows all this, and feels within himself that he is getting older and more out of tune with this modern way of life. He realises how easy it would be to accept what appears to be the inevitable, and give up the conflict, waiting for the end. He might reasonably anticipate the words of St. Paul and apply them to himself. *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."*

He might do all this; but he does nothing of the kind! *"Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until . . ."* What though this new generation has a new language? He will speak to them in that language! What though they adopt customs and conventions and practices which seem to him strange and even repellent? He will relate his message to those customs and conventions and show that generation how the truth of God is for them as well as for those of the past! What though their interpretations and ideas, yea, their very practice of the faith he tries to inculcate in them, show features undreamed of in his own youthful days and features that would have been roundly condemned in those days? He will seek to find in all this the evidences of younger hearts giving themselves to the Lord and strive to give them wise guidance in the pathway that they must certainly tread for themselves and in their own way.

Our own position in this day, as life goes on and we find ourselves surrounded by a new generation whose accepted standards differ so much from ours, is to play the part of understanding counsellors and convinced witnesses. No matter what else changes, the truth of God stands the same. No matter how we must change the language in which it is preached, it remains the same message having the same power over all generations new and old. *"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."* Our earthly powers may be failing and days of active evangelism be over, but there is always something we can do to declare God's strength to this generation and his power to that which is to come. Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses while the battle raged; it was little enough they could do but it made all the difference to the outcome. When Israel went out to fight their enemies it was decreed that he who "tarried by the stuff", and cared for the camp property should share equally with the warriors when it came to dividing the spoils. So it is with us; so many there are who must perforce "tarry by the stuff", but all the time they can be "holding up the hands" and contributing to the success of the Lord's cause. Let those who still can, go forth into active service for the Lord and his Gospel; those who can do so no longer, wait upon him in prayer and supplication, perform the countless little services that mean so much to the warriors in the field, help with words of encouragement and confidence, evincing a ready sympathy with the progress of all that is going on, and in these and many other ways demonstrate their own unity in thought and action with the Church militant all over the world.

THE CHERUBIM

*A look at a
little-known subject*

The Cherubim are alluded to several times in the Bible as though their nature and form are well known, but in fact they present something of a mystery. At one time they were regarded as a kind of superior order of angels, and with the "seraphim" of Isaiah 6 have found their way into Christian hymnology on that account, but the fact that Ezekiel, the only one to describe them in detail, pictures them as four-headed, each with the heads of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle, confronts that hypothesis with a difficulty. Josephus (*Ant.* 3.6.5) says that they were "*winged animals in form like nothing seen by man*" but this may only mean that he was familiar with Ezekiel's description. The one thing that is certain is that the cherubim are always depicted as in attendance upon God or associated with the throne of God or in some way as guardians of his holiness.

The Hebrew word *kerubim* is the plural of *kerub* (cherub). They are referred to many times in the Scriptures, both in the singular and plural. Right at the beginning of things, when in the story of the Fall in Eden the first human pair were expelled from the Garden, God "*placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim . . . to keep the way of the Tree of Life*" (Gen. 3.24). No explanation of their nature is given; it is as though the writer knew that his readers were already familiar with them. The next mention is in the time of Moses. The Israelite leader received Divine instructions, when constructing the Tabernacle intended as the centre of national worship, to surmount the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy with two figures of cherubim made of solid gold, and to weave similar figures in the curtains which enclosed the entrances to the Most Holy and the Holy. Again no description of their appearance is given (Exod. 25.18-22; 26.1 & 31; 36.8; 37.7-9). When Solomon built the magnificent Temple which replaced the Tabernacle, he made two gigantic cherubim of gold plated olive wood fifteen feet high for the Most Holy, with representations of them on the walls and doors of the Temple and on the great Vail before the Most Holy (I Kin. 6.23-35; 7.27-36; 2 Chron. 3.5-14). Since the original Ark of the Covenant made by Moses was placed in Solomon's Temple it would appear that the original cherubim on the Ark were still in existence. They were overshadowed by Solomon's much larger ones. (Those made by Moses were probably no more than two feet high.) Ezekiel gives the only, and a most detailed, description

of their appearance, as he saw them in the vision of God's Divinity which prefaced his call to the prophetic office (Ezek. 1.1-28; 10.1-20). This is the passage in which they are described as four-headed and four-winged. A reflection of Ezekiel's vision occurs in the Book of Revelation (4.6-9) where John sees four "living creatures" (not "beasts" as in the A.V.), six-winged and each one possessing one of the four heads seen by Ezekiel.

Thus the cherubim are clearly representations of celestial beings in attendance upon God. Whether they have an objective existence as a specific class of angels or are merely symbols of some attribute or characteristic of the Divine majesty is the question now at issue.

In the endeavour to solve this problem commentators and lexicographers have scoured the Hebrew language to find a root word from which "cherubim" may have been derived and have come up with various resultant meanings which yield little or nothing in the way of an explanation. Their labours have been wasted, for in fact the Hebrew word is a straight transliteration from the Akkadian *kirubu* and this takes us back to Babylon, Assyria and ancient Sumeria.

The Assyrian *kirubu* were winged figures, sometimes with the heads of bulls or lions, but more often, and increasingly into more ancient times, having human heads, which stood guard at the entrances to temples and sometimes to king's palaces. (The giant figures in the Assyrian gallery at the British Museum are *kirubu*.) They had a religious significance; they were in attendance on the majesty of the god or the king and guarded the sanctuary or the palace from the entry of evil. The word *kirubu* itself appears to be derived from the Akkadian *karabu*, "to adore" or "to worship"; this must be a very ancient term for the pictographic symbol (pictographs constitute the most ancient form of writing known and were in use prior to about 2500 BC) represents six wings poised above a temple and this suggests the six-winged seraphim of Isaiah 6 and the four-winged cherubim of Ezekiel. All these considerations seem to point back to a time before there was any written history when men associated the *kerubim* or *kirubu* with celestial creatures connected with the worship of God, which is just the impression given by the various Biblical references.

Although Ezekiel describes the cherubim as each possessing four heads, man, lion, ox, eagle,

there is considerable doubt as to whether this was the earlier or original conception. There is something incongruous in thinking of such mythical creatures inhabiting the Most Holy of the Tabernacle or Temple where God himself was said to dwell, or of adorning the sacred veil or the walls of the Temple. The Assyrian *kirubu* which have been discovered always have one head only and that is usually human. A stronger clue to the original conception is found in Ezek. 28.14 & 16, where Lucifer the Prince of Evil before his fall into sin is referred to as an anointed, covering cherub. This application of the term to a known personal celestial being, admittedly the only such instance in the Bible, does at least strengthen the idea that the cherubim were originally looked upon as multi-winged celestial beings with human faces and their especial function was that of surrounding and guarding the throne of God. The association of the act of worship in their presence is thus easily explained as is also the origin of the name.

These, then, were the cherubim of Eden, appointed to guard the Tree of Life and bar man's access. Unlike the angels of later Old and New Testament narrative, who usually appeared in the form of ordinary men, these were winged creatures to convey the idea of their descent from above. The word "placed" in Gen. 3.24 has the meaning of being set as in a tabernacle or a shrine and this would appear to indicate that here was a kind of vision or appearance very much like that which Ezekiel saw in later years, a place which, with its heavenly guardians, became a kind of meeting place where our first parents could come before God, in worship and perhaps contrition, but advance no further because the guardians barred the way. They need not have been, and probably were not, actual beings at all but just a representation. The memory of their appearance must have remained with men and been handed down through the generations so that when, nearly four thousand years later, Moses was commanded to make replicas of them for the Ark of the Covenant, he knew exactly what they looked like and how to make them. In like fashion Solomon, four hundred and fifty years later still, had no difficulty. Of course he still possessed the original Ark of the Covenant made by Moses so in any case the pattern of the cherubim was there from which to copy.

Up to the time of Solomon it seems probable that the cherubim were always conceived as

winged celestial beings, citizens of heaven but in bodily appearance similar to the sons of men. Five hundred years later the prophet Ezekiel, an exile in Babylon with his fellows, saw a vision in which he looked upon four rather bizarre creatures which, he says, he knew to be the cherubim (Ezek. 1.1-28; 10.1-20). These four, with their four wings and four man-lion-ox-eagle compound heads, stood each by one of the four wheels of a heavenly chariot which in turn carried the throne of God, with the Most High seated upon it. Thus the cherubim became at one and the same time the attendants of the Divine Throne and, with the aid of their wings, the means of raising or lowering it from and towards the earth. This was a vision and it is not to be expected that the prophet took the creatures he saw as actual intelligent beings from the celestial world. They were symbols of the majesty of the Divine throne and of its inaccessibility by evil men and evil things. They are the symbolic guardians of Divine holiness. And the four heads might well symbolise, as has been long suggested, the four attributes of God manifested by his revealed purposes; wisdom, the eagle; justice, the lion; love, the man, and power, the ox.

The final appearance of the cherubim was to John the Revelator. Like Ezekiel, he was given a vision of the majesty and power of God the Almighty, seated upon his heavenly throne, and guarded on all four sides, again like Ezekiel, by four "living creatures" (mistranslated "beasts" in the A.V.) each having six wings. Unlike Ezekiel, these living creatures had only one head each; the first, a lion; the second, a calf; the third, a man; the fourth, an eagle. Here again, there is no suggestion that the appearances were literal heavenly beings; they were symbols, based upon the ancient conception of the cherubim as guardians of God's throne but coloured by the vision of Ezekiel. In Revelation they are pictured as rendering constant praise to God and falling down before him in worship. From beginning to end of the Scriptures, with the one exception of Lucifer in Ezek. 28, the cherubim appear as symbolic guardians of God's throne and attendants upon his chariot wherever He goes. The one exception would seem to indicate that this symbolic application is perhaps based upon the fact that our first parents—or at least Mother Eve—did in fact set eyes upon a heavenly being having such an appearance, that the "cherub" of Ezek. 28 and the "serpent" of Gen. 3 are in fact one and the same.

Mansfield, Ohio—a missing reader

During July we received a printed "change of address" card of the type used in the United States, postmarked "Mansfield, Ohio", but bereft of writing on the other side. We know not the name of the sender, his or her

old address or new address. If the reader who has recently moved to or from Mansfield, Ohio, or district, sees this notice will they please advise us by air mail their present address.

LUKE THE PHYSICIAN

The tall, scholarly-looking man stood by the bedside, looking reflectively at his patient. His fine Greek features contrasted strongly with the dark, bearded Jewish face below. The other looked up and met his glance.

"What is your verdict?"

The words came slowly. "You would do well to abandon your plans and return home to Antioch. This illness which befel you as you came through Galatia is recurrent. It could strike again at any time and you might not be so fortunate in finding a physician as you have been here in Troas. I have done the best I can for you but I cannot answer for the future."

The man on the bed sat up and got to his feet. "And I am deeply grateful. Please do not think I am heedless of your professional advice, but—my Lord told me that He would send me far hence unto the Gentiles, and to the Gentiles I must go." There was silence in the room. Luke raised his eyes to the other two men standing by the bedside.

"Is this mission of yours so important that your friend must risk his life—just for the sake of preaching a new religion?"

Silas and Timothy said nothing. It was Paul who answered.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we serve and preach, did more than risk his life for us. He gave up his life; He willingly died, that men might live. Whatever risk we take is small compared with that".

The physician stood still for a moment, considering, then turned towards the door.

"If you need me again while you are still in Troas you know where to find me. After that—may the gods of Greece protect you".

Halfway through the doorway, he stopped. A moment's pause, and he stepped back into the room, closing the door carefully behind him.

"In all the years I have practised medicine, I have never known any of the gods of Greece help either me or my patients in times of sickness. Either they will not or else they cannot. Always I have had to rely upon my own knowledge and skill. What is there in this one whom you serve and worship to give you this confidence that he will be your help?" Greek and Jew looked each other in the eyes, a long, questioning look.

"Sit down" said Paul "and let us talk."

It is not known when St. Luke first joined the

Christian community or how he first met St. Paul. As the famous New Testament historian, author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, his writings are well known but he is singularly reticent about himself. His name appears in the New Testament only three times and all that is known about him has to be gleaned from his own writings or from casual allusions. Unlike the other New Testament writers, he was not a Jew. Luke was Greek by birth and he lived his life in the Greek and Roman worlds. His literary style—he was a talented writer and a superb historian—reveals him a well-educated man. His usage of medical terms in the Gospel and the Acts testifies to his professional qualifications. The most famous medical college of the East was situated at Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul, and it is often thought that he may have received his professional education and training there, which is very possible. The further suggestion that he and Paul may in consequence have been acquainted in earlier years is not so likely. Eusebius (3rd century) says that he was born in, or his family originated from, (versions differ) the city of Antioch but does not say whether this was Antioch in Syria—where the church of Antioch was situated—or Antioch in Pisidia, a province of Roman Asia; in any case Eusebius would have had to rely upon legend for this statement. Likewise the oft-repeated claim that Luke was also an accomplished painter and had painted a portrait of Mary the mother of Jesus is a legend of much later centuries and not likely to be true. There is no record of the place or circumstances of his conversion; when first we hear of Luke he is already a Christian and has joined Paul and his party at the moment they are about to leave Troas in Asia and cross the sea to Greece in Europe, during the course of Paul's second missionary journey, about the year A.D. 52.

This very fact may afford a clue to the problem. Several theories have been advanced to explain how and when Paul and Luke first became acquainted, but so far as can be ascertained at this moment no writer or commentator has noticed the possible connection between Luke's status as a physician in Troas and Paul's sickness when among the Galatians. Yet it seems so obvious. When Paul and Silas set out from their home church of Antioch in Syria, on what is called the second missionary journey, they passed through Derbe and Lystra, where they added

Timothy to their number, onward through the provinces of Phrygia and Galatia, and thence to Troas. The Book of Acts gives no details of their work in these provinces, but when Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians many years later he referred to a serious illness he experienced while among them during that first visit. (Gal. 4.13-15). The nature of the illness is not known, but from what is said it is obvious that the Galatian believers were greatly concerned over the Apostle's health and would have "plucked out their own eyes" if by so doing they could help him. Now this being the case,—and knowing the Apostle Paul, he probably got on the road again before being really fit to travel—and with the prospect of several years' journeying still before him, is it not reasonable to think that upon arrival at the next important town where he was to stay awhile, Troas, he would consult a physician for expert advice and treatment for whatever malady it was? If Luke was "in practice" in Troas and was the one thus called in, the meeting between the two men is explained. Paul stayed in Troas long enough to make some converts, for on his next visit there was a flourishing church (Acts 20.5-12). Luke might well have been a pagan when called in and his contact with the Apostle result in his conversion. That conversion could have been so thorough and sincere that, when a little while later, Paul dreamed of the man of Macedonia calling for help, Luke abandoned what could have been quite a lucrative practice in Troas and threw in his lot with the little party of missionaries, a decision that has had momentous results for Christians who have read his writings in all generations from then to now.

If that indeed is what happened, then that mysterious illness in Galatia was a means of bringing to pass great things in the Divine purpose. Had Paul not suffered that illness he would have had no need to consult a physician in Troas. Then Luke would not have become a co-worker, the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles would not have been written, and the Apostle himself never had the life-long companionship which meant so much to him and helped him so much to endure his many trials and afflictions. The ways of God are passing strange; oftentimes what seem to be unrelated and unconnected happenings are eventually found to have worked together to bring to pass his purposes.

Despite the important part Luke played in the writing of the New Testament, there is not one single personal action of his recorded. His name is only mentioned by Paul, in three of the epistles. Luke never refers to himself, with the exception of the introductions to the Gospel and

the Acts, in each of which he uses the personal pronoun "I" once, but without giving his name. We only know of his travels with Paul and the others by the use of "we" when he was with them and "they" when he was not. The impression given is that of a quiet, self-effacing man who was content to stay in the background, always to be relied upon when wanted. He was more of a writer and historian than an evangelist, but alone of all the known Apostolic age characters he was supremely fitted for the particular task he fulfilled so well. A man truly humble, destitute of arrogance or self-seeking, his life wholly consecrated to the service of his Lord and ready to go anywhere and undertake anything as that service might require, intensely loyal to his fellow-evangelists and particularly to his great friend the Apostle Paul, so that even when all others had forsaken the Apostle he remained; this all points to a sterling character buttressed by a quiet and invincible faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unlike the writers of the other three Gospels, he never saw Jesus in the flesh. He drew all his information from other sources; nevertheless his Gospel is the most comprehensive and informative of them all. Much of his material he must have gathered during the two years that Paul was imprisoned by Felix at Caesarea awaiting trial; Luke probably spent much time touring the country and interviewing anyone who could contribute any knowledge of the events surrounding our Lord's life. His account of the Nativity must have been obtained in intimate conversation with Mary; hardly from any other source. It does not appear to have been noticed that in endorsing and recording the story of the virgin birth Luke was imperilling his professional reputation; he must have been satisfied as to the facts of the case. His interest in the medical aspects of our Lord's miracles of healing is noticeable; on numerous occasions — nearly twenty altogether — he uses technical terms which only a trained medical man of the day would use. Where, for example, John Mark in his account of the healing of the woman with a haemorrhage (Mark 5.26) says, rather scathingly, that she had "*suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse*", Luke, more soberly and precisely, employs the medical term to indicate that she was incurable; no physician had the power to do anything for her.

Luke wrote for the Gentiles. His intent was to present the Gospel in the form best adapted for Gentile readers. When Mark recorded the story of the paralytic who was let down through the roof (Mark 2.4) he described correctly how they

made a hole in the flat roof for the purpose. Luke (5.19) feeling this might be incomprehensible to Gentile readers, accustomed only to sloping tiled roofs, says they "let him down through the tiling". Roman houses had an aperture (*impluvium*) in the roof of the public room (*atrium*) of the house and Luke pictured the paralytic being lowered through this ready-made hole.

His pertinacity in securing authoritative records and documents on which to base his history is worthy of a modern newspaper reporter. His reproduction of the letter sent by Claudius Lysias, commander of the Jerusalem garrison, to the Roman governor Antoninus Felix at Caesarea is most certainly a word-for-word copy of the original. How did Luke get a sight of it? Did the letter go to Rome with other documents in the case, in the care of the centurion who escorted Paul in the ship, and did Luke make friends with the centurion? How did he, or anyone else, know of the remark of Agrippa to Felix, made in private "*This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar*". Did he interview King Agrippa in his palace at Jerusalem?

Not less striking than his medical knowledge and his historian's instinct is Luke's familiarity with nautical terms, as evidenced by his account of the voyage to Rome and the shipwreck. On this account it has been suggested by some that Luke was a ship's doctor and spent his life acting as medical man on board ship. This is a possibility, but it has to be admitted that there is no evidence that merchant ships—the only kind in use in those days apart from ships of war—carried doctors as part of their complement. The application of modern customs to ancient times is not always justified. It is true though that Luke betrays a deep familiarity not only with seafaring terms but also the physical features of land and sea over all the eastern Mediterranean and as far west as Italy and it is difficult to see how he could have gained this without extensive sailing experience in those areas—unless, of course, he got it all from the ship's crew!

So Luke attached himself to the three friends, Paul, Silas and Timothy, and the little party set sail from Troas to cross the Aegean sea to Europe. It was not a long voyage; about a hundred miles. They landed at the Greek port of Neapolis and made their way to Philippi some twenty-five miles farther on. Here was established the first fruits of Paul's work in Europe, the church of the Philippians, one especially dear to the Apostle's heart in later years.

For a reason that does not readily appear,

Luke remained here with the Philippian brethren while the others went on to Thessalonica and onward through Greece. He did not see Paul again for something like five years. Paul went on to Corinth where he founded the Corinthian church, then back to Asia, Judea and Antioch. Not until he was in Macedonia again in the course of his third missionary journey did the two men join up again; but from this time they were inseparable and Luke went with Paul wherever he went and was with him at his death. Back to Troas (Acts 20.4) then to Jerusalem, the riot in the temple, and Paul's incarceration at Caesarea for two years. It is highly probable that the Gospel of Luke was written at this time, about A.D. 60, and copies circulated among the churches at least in Judea before Paul and Luke left for Rome. Next came the voyage to Rome, with Aristarchus, a Greek from Macedonia, as the third member of the trio. Luke's vivid account of the voyage and shipwreck and eventual landing on the island of Malta belongs to the story of Paul, but Luke was closely involved.

So they came to Rome and the two years in which Paul, awaiting his trial, dwelt "*in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him*". There can be no doubt that Luke lived with him in that house and that his companionship was of inestimable comfort and strength to the Apostle. Those two years saw the coming and going of many visitors—Mark, Timothy, Demas, Epaphras, and others, thus keeping the two friends well acquainted with all that was going on in Asia and Greece. And during this time there can be no doubt that Luke was busy writing the history which is now known as the Book of Acts. He must have brought a sheaf of notes and documents with him from Judea from which to construct his history, and it is rather intriguing to realise that in the turmoil and anxiety of the shipwreck when they all had to swim to land through the raging seas, he must have kept his precious papers watertight and hung on to them like grim death. We do not know how near we came to losing the Book of Acts in the surf of Malta.

Towards the end of those two years the book was finished and ready for copying — the only method of book reproduction possible before the invention of printing. The work was done by a party of penmen, or scribes, who sat each at his table with his parchment and pen, following the voice of the dictator who sat at the front reading aloud the data to be copied. The writing, in Greek, of the Book of Acts could be completed in less than twenty hours so that a group of twenty penmen could make twenty copies in that time. The various brethren who visited Paul

from other parts from time to time would be certain to take a copy back with them and so "Acts" was speedily disseminated throughout the Christian community.

Then came Paul's trial and acquittal. By the spring of A.D. 63 he stood in the streets of Rome, a free man, at liberty to go where he pleased. It has often been queried why Luke terminated his history just short of Paul's release. He records the two years in Rome but not the outcome. The book ends abruptly, too, almost as though it was not intended to finish at that point. One reason may have been Luke's desire to get the book into the hands of the brethren in Greece and Asia and Judea before the trial in case things went wrong. So far as can be surmised from the scanty allusions in the Pauline Epistles, Mark was probably the only one still with them in Rome at the time of Paul's release; the others had all departed at various earlier times and this may account for Luke's anxiety to finish his manuscript and give them copies before they left.

There could be another reason. As a record of the lives' work of Peter and Paul the Book of Acts is incomplete. It breaks off at one of the most dramatic moments in Paul's life. Luke was with Paul during the whole of the ensuing five or six years, up to the latter's death. It is inconceivable that he, with all his instincts as a historian and his strong desire, as expressed in Luke 1.3-4, that there should be a comprehensive and factual history of the development of Christianity on record for posterity, should not have intended to complete the story at least until the deaths of Paul and Peter. And for all that we know, he may in fact have done so, and the manuscript not survived. The events in which Luke may have been implicated in later years could be of such nature that this is at least a possibility. One minor indication pointing in this direction is that the "Gospel" and the "Acts" are each the same length. Perhaps the meticulous mind of Luke envisaged a three-volume work, each part of equal size.

If that volume had indeed been written, and survived, the mystery of the unknown period in the life of Paul would not have been a mystery. From A.D. 63, when Paul was acquitted, to about A.D. 66, when he re-appears in Greece, nothing is known of his movements. This is the period during which he is thought by some to have conducted a missionary tour in Spain, Gaul and Britain. Wherever he did go, Aristarchus and Luke went with him, and that creates the possibility that Luke the physician did once tread the streets of London. That lost third book of Luke's history might well have contained some

revealing side-lights on early Roman Britain! But by A.D. 66 the three travellers were back in familiar territory, Dalmatia, Illyricum, Greece, Crete, leaving Aristarchus at Thessalonica, and finally Troas again, and it was here that, for the second time, Paul was arrested.

Faithful as ever, Luke accompanied his friend back to Rome. The political climate had changed; the Neronian persecution was just in the past, the Jews in Judea in open rebellion, and a Christian Jew could expect to be in trouble on two counts. There has often been speculation as to how Luke could have remained in close companionship with Paul in these circumstances without himself being arraigned as an accomplice. The answer probably is that, being a Greek, he was not so likely to be under suspicion, and the authorities might well have assumed he was travelling with Paul as his personal physician. In any case, Paul was the known ringleader of the Christians and it was Paul the authorities wanted. Luke was there at the end. "Only Luke is with me" said Paul in his last letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4.11) written from the condemned cell. Quiet, retiring, faithful Luke remained with his friend when all others had gone. Perhaps he walked with the execution party to that spot outside Rome where the Apostle finished his earthly course. Perhaps the last earthly sight of which Paul was conscious was the familiar countenance of the beloved physician.

After that, no one knows what happened to Luke. He would not have remained in Rome. He might have gone back to one of the eastern churches, to Philippi perhaps where he had ministered in past times and was well known, Ephesus or Antioch where he was not really known at all. He may have returned to Troas where Paul first found him and taken up his old professional practice, ending his life in fellowship with the Church at Troas. There is virtually nothing recorded about him in early Church history. Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in the 4th century, a historian of some repute, gathered up what statements he could find and says that after Paul's death Luke left Rome and travelled as an itinerant missionary through Italy, Gaul, Dalmatia and Macedonia, finally settling in the province of Bithynia on the shores of the Black Sea, where he died twenty years after Paul at the age of eighty-four. No one knows how reliable are these assertions; one factor which makes them likely is that if Paul and Aristarchus and Luke did in fact traverse Spain, Gaul, Britain, Dalmatia, Illyricum and so to Troas and the final arrest, then Luke might very reasonably have re-visited some of the churches thus estab-

lished in those countries with the object of confirming them in the faith, just as Paul himself had done in earlier times in the cases of the Asian and Greek churches he founded. Such a "pilgrim trip" would occupy two or three years. After that, and approaching seventy years of age, he would have to decide what to do with the rest of his life.

Perhaps, after all, he did settle in Bithynia, where Christians and Christian churches were exceptionally numerous, to write the third volume of his history, continuing the narrative from where it left off at Acts 28.31 and completing the story to the deaths of Paul and Peter. He may have finished it, and the precious manuscript have met an untimely end before copies could be made and circulated. If he did survive Paul by twenty years the last seven years of his life would have been in the reign of the emperor Domitian, which saw sporadic outbreaks of persecution; the book might have got into the hands of the authorities and been destroyed. It seems a very reasonable assumption that Luke did thus finish his history; in such case it is evident nevertheless that the overruling power of the Holy Spirit, which preserved so many ancient writings for the instruction of Christians throughout the Age, was not exerted to that end in this case; the implication is that, for all its

potential interest, it was not necessary to the Church as were the other books.

So, at last, the "beloved physician" came in his turn to the end of the way. He gives the impression of having been a lonely man. A student, a writer, more highly educated than most, he maybe did not fit in very well with the more fervent evangelists who could talk much better than they could put their thoughts down on paper. His devotion to Paul probably left him little opportunity for cultivating the acquaintance and friendship of the others, and when Paul was gone, he found himself in measure outside the circle. But there would be no bitterness or disappointment in his heart when at last he laid down the busy pen and waited for his Lord to call. He knew him upon whom he had believed; conscious that he had used his consecrated talents to the utmost of his ability, he was content. And though he himself never knew it, the honour that the Lord conferred upon Luke the historian, an honour that is his for all time, is that his writings occupy a greater proportion of the New Testament than those of any other single writer, greater even than those of Paul. Quietly and without self-seeking he did his work, and the Lord whom he served in secret will acknowledge him openly in the "day of his appearing".

OUTLOOK EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS AGO *(Canon Scott Holland in "Great Thoughts" 1892)*

"The sense of purpose is fast disappearing out of this huge civilisation of ours. Who professes to see any distinct, emphatic, growing purpose towards which society as a whole is moving? Who pretends to detect a rational and coherent goal for this portentous accumulation of huge masses in great cities, or these gigantic manipulations of capital? What is the end that anybody has in view? Of course, apart from the end of mere money getting, which is no end human or divine, who of our young men see visions, who of our old men dream dreams? Wealth will perhaps go on growing, and poverty will grow with it; there is no visible end to the one or to the other. More money and more misery—a dismal prospect! Who can put his heart into such a work? Enough for us if we can tide through the anxious evil days, enough if we can stave off any desperate social disaster, enough if we can do something to palliate the inevitable sufferings, and soften the strain of the immediate hour. Yes, enough for us if for our day, at least, society can still retain such fragments of its ancient structure as suffice to keep it from going to pieces under our eyes.

"We are not born here on earth primarily that the world may feed and aid and warm us, but that we may feed and aid and warm the world. We need not only to be kept alive, but to devote this life, so kept alive, to some nobler, larger use. We must have a living and lordly purpose, bearing us along with it, reaching back behind our petty days, reaching on beyond our brief stay, something high, strong, good, helpful that will endure when we are gone, and will by so enduring give permanence and give worth to the little effort which we in our passing hour throw into this mighty working. There should be some high purpose to which we all are contributors, with which it coalesces, by which it is dignified. Without this dominant motive to interpret and inspire us, our best manhood never emerges into action; all our exertions on behalf of our own livelihood, if they terminate there, leave us small, impoverished, unilluminated. We cannot revolve round our own centre without the languid weariness of a great futility stealing over us. A great modern industrious life refuses often to do anything more for us than to supply the means of getting along. It seems impossible

concluded on page 143

A STUDY ON ROMANS 8.30

In the article in our last issue dealing with "Personal Predestination" it was pointed out that the word translated "predestinate" in Romans 8.30 does not correspond to the meaning of the original Greek word "*proorizo*", which signifies "to mark out the bounds beforehand" and does not give the thought of any unalterable intention on the part of God to cause the person concerned to reach the boundary indicated.

But the various stages of salvation which Romans 8.30 is thought to show, commencing with personal predestination being the first thought in God's mind regarding the Christians being addressed, merits special consideration. The sequence of "... called ... justified ... glorified" is thought to follow, and some find it difficult to understand how the last term "glorified" can be understood as having already occurred—being written in the past tense.

In the past we have been asked to agree that this verse is usually misunderstood because the impression is obtained from it that Paul is tracing Christian growth progressively. It has been suggested that the predestinated, foreknown ones were the Christian "New creatures" who, as a corporate whole (but not as individuals) were predestinated by God to be conformed to the image of his Son. This predestination is in the dictionary sense of the term—an irrevocable intention on the part of God to cause it to come to pass.

We have been warned (and rightly so) to avoid the obvious error (still accepted by many) that God "calls" before He "justifies". Many do not see that this last verb "justifies" is intransitive—it does not indicate that an action is carried over to the object, but as Barnes states the matter, it is God's mode of regarding such ones. In truth, God does not call any who are still at enmity with him, who have not yet attained to the state of justification, but He only calls *believers*, who are already justified by their faith (Rom. 4.24).

So it has been suggested that Paul is viewing the matter backwards in time—wishing it to be understood that this predestinated body had been previously called, and that these called ones had been previously justified, and that these justified ones had been previously *honoured* (the Greek word used here being "*doxazo*", defined by Young as "to glorify or honour") with the knowledge of the Christian way. It seems impossible to deny that this interpretation is in harmony with our understanding of Truth, and from

a factual point of view it should be acceptable to us. Furthermore, it avoids the serious error that God calls his children before they attain to the state of justification, and it fits our understanding that the Christian "glorification" cannot be said to be in the past.

Some believers in personal predestination however refuse to accept this understanding, and dispose of the difficulty regarding the word "glorified" being in the past tense, by saying that it is *prophetic* of the future glorification of the Church, in the same way as Old Testament prophecies are recorded in the past tense. This, however, is quite an invalid argument. Although in the Old Testament prophetic statements are made in the past tense when they are translated into the Authorised Version, this is because in the Hebrew language there are no past, present and future tenses as there are in English, but only the perfect tense, in which the action is completed, and the imperfect, in which the action has not been completed. The prophetic statements are generally made in the perfect tense, showing the action as completed, and hence the translators have used the past tense in the Authorised Version. But in the Greek language there are past, present and future tenses just as in English, and an examination of such New Testament prophecies as Matt. 24; I Cor. 15.22 and 28; Acts 3.19-20, etc. will convince the unbiassed that the whole of Rom. 8.30 is indeed in the past tense.

The explanation is that God's dealings with his ancient people foreshadowed the doctrine of an *elect remnant within an elect nation*. After God had separated Israel from the nations to be his special or peculiar people, He separated yet again by a special test, shown in Exod. 32.26, the tribe of Levi, and yet again the family of Aaron. This is the framework to which Rom. 8.29-30 looks back. The following commentary on these verses, without the Calvinistic severity of the words used in the Authorised Version, gives a better understanding of what Paul has in his mind. Even the substitution of a milder word like "pre-arranged" for "predestined" falls short of the real meaning of the word "*proorizo*"—to mark out the bounds beforehand.

"For whom he did foreknow" The word "for" is often disregarded in reading this verse. It shows that Paul has in mind his compatriots the Jews, as shown by its obvious connection with the previous verse, rendered by Weymouth "... those ... whom with deliberate purpose He has called".

Indeed, the only others ever mentioned by Paul as "foreknown" are those in chapter 11.2 reading "... his people, which He foreknew". The priestly service was instituted exactly as it was pre-arranged by God. It was all foreknown by him and predetermined, or marked out beforehand by him before the pattern of the Tabernacle was shown to Moses in the Holy Mount. Thus Aaron and his house were foreknown of God in connection with that service from before the foundation of the world.

"them he also called" The call of the seed of the House of Israel went back to Abraham via Isaac (Gen. 21.12-13, Rom. 9.7, Heb. 11.18). That Aaron was specially called is shown by Heb. 5.4. The called ones of Heb. 9.15, having been under the transgressions of the Law Covenant, are clearly also the fleshly House of Israel. (This verse is frequently misunderstood to be referring to the Christian calling of the Gospel age).

"them he also justified" When God commanded Moses to take Aaron and his house apart and prepare them for the priesthood, those whom He had foreknown had now been called to their sacred office. Appropriate vestments, after a ceremonial washing, were put upon Aaron and his sons, to symbolise their righteousness. Thus they were acquitted, justified, in God's sight.

"them he also glorified" For what purpose were these ones called and accounted by God as though they were righteous? The answer is "to approach the Glory". This mysterious glow which constituted the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day can best be understood by referring to the following Scriptures: Exod. 16.10, 24.16-17, 40.34-5; Lev. 9, 6 & 13; Num. 14. 10 & 22; 16. 19 & 42.

After the Tabernacle had been dedicated, that Divine light came to dwell between the Cherubim in the Most Holy place, as shown in the Exodus 40 quotation. All the preceding stages of Aaron's call were for the purposes of his approaching this glory. None but he might draw near, and only he at a certain time and with certain ceremony. The sanctity of that Holy Light was set forth in his robes and his holy estate. Thus, those whom God foreknew, He called, acquitted or accounted as though they were righteous, and glorified.

What happened to the glory with which the Israelites had been glorified? The sorry saga of their many disobediences does not have place in these notes, but their culmination is found in 1 Sam. 4.21-2—"Ichabod"—the meaning of which is shown in the margin of the Authorised Version as "Where is the glory?" or "There is no glory". The story in Psalm 78, verses 51-61 is clear—God delivered his glory "into the enemy's

hand". Although the Ark was returned eventually, and with the later building of the Temple of Solomon the Shekinah glory of the Lord once again filled the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud (1 Kings 8.10-11) in just the same way as it did when the Tabernacle was set up, there are no further references to the Light between the Cherubims—the glory of the Lord had departed, never to return to the typical place.

We ought to note that in addition to their many disobedient acts, there was another stumbling block in the way of the Jews. Their Tabernacle arrangements, which should have led them to Christ, this being the end, or object, or fulfilment of the Law, involved the shedding of the blood of an animal, which *represented* the priest, so that what happened in that the animal was slaughtered as a sacrifice, should have happened to the priest. They wrongly assumed that the animal took their place as a substitute, releasing them from the offering of themselves, and even when the true situation had been made clear to some after the First Advent, they reverted to their former wrong ideas, and the letter to Hebrews had to be written to admonish them for reverting to *men* priests and *animal* sacrifices. This understanding is still followed by some today, who assert that when the priest laid his hands on the head of his bullock, it signified that the animal took his place and released him from paying the penalty for himself and his house.

Rom. 11.7 says "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded". So we see from Rom. 4.23-4 that it was not written for Abraham's (or Israel's) sake alone that righteousness should be imputed for faith, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed IF Therefore, being accounted as righteous because of our faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in HOPE of the Glory of God.

This is a suitable place to record in conclusion that the word "Shekinah" is not a Scriptural term for the light or cloud showing the presence of the Lord, and that in fact the word does not occur in Scripture. But the idea that it represents should be quite acceptable to us. It originated in the Jewish "Targums" which were Aramaic or Chaldee paraphrases of the Scriptures, written by certain learned Jews some 300 years B.C. Copies of the authentic Hebrew writings were only in the hands of the priests, and in any case the common people could not read Hebrew, which was passing out of use. These paraphrases satisfied the needs of the people

until the time of the Septuagint translation into Greek, which had become well known, about 250 B.C. But the idea of the Shekinah Glory

never died out from sacred writings and expositions, and so it has come down to our time.

THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY

Light on a popular misconception

The birth of our Lord is traditionally and popularly associated with Christmas Day, 25th December, 4 BC. Although hallowed by long usage, and not likely to be rejected, there is no doubt whatever that this is not the correct day nor yet the correct year. The observance of 25th December is traceable back only so far as the early 4th century, its adoption at that time being connected with that acceptance of pagan feasts into Church ritual which took place when Christianity began to supersede paganism as the State religion of the Roman empire. The 4 BC date was derived by early chronologers from an incorrect date for the death of Herod, King of Judea. The evidence is conclusive that Jesus was born at the end of September in the year 2 BC. Some of this evidence rests upon the testimony of early Christian writers and some upon deductions from the Gospel of Luke.

At least five noted figures in the early Church—Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons (AD 120-202), Tertullian of Carthage (AD. 139-215), Clement of Alexandria (AD. 150-230), Eusebius of Cæsarea (AD. 264-340) and Epiphanius Bishop of Salamis (AD. 332-403) concur in stating that our Lord was born in the 41st year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus and 15 years before his death. Augustus commenced his reign in 43 BC and died in AD 14; this points to 2 BC as the indicated date (Eusebius and Epiphanius actually give 42nd year instead of 41st but the context in each case reveals this a simple error and 41st is intended). Three of these, Tertullian, Clement and Eusebius, say in addition that the birth was 28 years after the death of Antony and Cleopatra of Egypt; this occurred in 30 BC so that again 2 BC is the date indicated.

Jesus was born just before the death of Herod the Great. According to Josephus, Herod reigned 37 years. He became king in 37 BC so that his death must have been within a few months of the change from BC to AD. Discussing the events which led up to Herod's death, Josephus records his execution of certain patriots who had pulled down a golden eagle which he had erected in the Temple, and comments that on that very night there was an eclipse of the moon. Attempts to fix this eclipse astronomically originally led to the conclusion that an eclipse of 13th March 4 BC was the one indicated and this is why Herod's death is customarily assigned to that year

although this violates the dating of a number of other incidents in his reign. Later research has established that an eclipse occurring on 29th December 1 BC meets the relevant requirements much more accurately and is almost certainly the one to which Josephus referred. Joseph took the infant Jesus into Egypt "and was there until the death of Herod" (Matt. 2.15), so that his birth in late 2 BC, about a year before Herod's death, fits in very well.

Confirming testimony comes from the pen of St. Luke. In chapter 2 of his Gospel he prefaces his account of the Nativity by saying "*it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria). And all went to be taxed, every one to his own city*" (Luke 2. 1-3). This was how Joseph and Mary came to be in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, instead of their home village of Nazareth. If the date of this "taxing" can be established from history the date of the Nativity is likewise established.

Two textual amendments are necessary. The "taxing" should be read "enrolment" as in the A.V. margin; it was a population census that was being taken. This is the correct meaning and usage of the word used here, *apographe*, used also in Heb. 12.23 "whose names are written (i.e. enrolled) in heaven". Then vs. 2 should properly be rendered "*this was the first taxing (enrolment) made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria*". Luke has been accused of inaccuracy here on the ground that Josephus refers to a census conducted by Cyrenius in AD. 6 and this is too late to be associated with the birth of Christ. It is now known, however, that Cyrenius was military governor in Syria for two terms, 4-1 BC and AD. 6-11, and conducted a census on both occasions. The first was a population census and the second an assessment for taxation. Justin Martyr, about AD. 140, said that the Lord was born when Cyrenius was governor and his birth entered in the registry which was compiled at that time. Chrysostom, AD. 354-404, Bishop of Constantinople, recorded that "Christ was born at the time of the first enrolment and it is competent to anyone so desiring to consult the public archives at Rome and learn with certainty the date of this enrolment". He went on to say that in his own time there was not only exact know-

ledge of the period but of the very day.

Several early writers record that the year of the Nativity was at a time of universal peace, i.e. there were no wars in progress in any part of the Roman world. It was the custom at such times for the Temple of Janus in Rome to be closed. The records of the reign of Augustus show that during his reign the Temple of Janus was closed three times, viz., in 29, 25 and 2 BC. Here is further corroborative testimony.

The basis for pin-pointing the precise time of year at which our Lord was born is provided by St. Luke in the details he gives regarding the birth and mission of John the Baptist. The first chapter of his Gospel shows that Jesus was born a little more than five months after John; this will be examined in greater detail presently. The third chapter declared that John's public ministry commenced in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæsar a few months before that of Jesus, and therefore when, like Jesus, he was thirty years of age, the earliest at which he, a member of the priestly tribe and fraternity, could with propriety enter upon a public ministry. Luke defines the precise point of time by placing it "*in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Itured and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests*" (Luke 3.2). All this is very precise and fixes the dates closely. Tiberius succeeded Augustus on 19 August AD 14; his fifteenth year was from August AD 28 to 29. Herod, the son of the Herod who was king at Jesus' birth, Philip, and Lysanias, were all reigning at the same time. Pontius Pilate was governor from AD 26 to 36. Annas was high priest up to 1st Nisan (April) AD 29 and was succeeded by Caiaphas from that date. Luke's mention of both high priests indicates that John commenced his ministry just at the time of the transfer, viz., April AD 29. This implies that he was born in April 2 BC, the birth of Jesus, therefore, following towards the end of September in the same year. It also implies that the vision of Zacharias in the Temple must have been in July, 3 BC, rather more than nine months earlier.

This is where the casual mention of an apparently irrelevant detail in Luke's 1st chapter completes the testimony. "*There was*" he says "*in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain*

priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia..." (Luke 1.5). Zacharias, of course, was the father of John the Baptist. The expression "the course of Abia" refers to the fact that in King David's day the priesthood was divided into twenty-four groups or "courses", each course serving in turn in the priestly duties of the Temple (1 Chron. 24.5-19). The first course was that of Jehoiarib, the eighth of Abia (Abijah in the O.T.; Abia is the Greek form of the name). Each course served for one week in turn, counting from sabbath to sabbath. Says Josephus (*Ant.* 7.14.7). "*He (David) ordained that one course should minister to God eight days, from sabbath to sabbath (i.e. one half of each sabbath plus the remaining six days) . . . and this partition hath remained to this day*". In other words, this orderly succession of the twenty-four courses instituted by David was still maintained in the days of Josephus, AD 70. If historical evidence of the dates that any of the courses were actually in operation could be found then it would be possible to fix with precision the date of Zacharias' vision in the Temple. Such evidence does exist. It is recorded in the annals of the Jewish war of Josephus' own time that upon the day of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, the 9th of Ab (= 5th August), in AD 70, the course of Jehoiarib was on duty in the Temple. Sabbath to Sabbath of that week was 4-11 August and this was the period of their service. This means that in the same year the course of Abia had served during 7-14 April. By calculating back it is found that in 3 BC the course of Abia was on duty 19-26 January, 6-13 July and 21-28 December. The middle one of these three, 6-13 July, coincides precisely with the time Zachariah must have had his vision. At the end of that week, according to Luke, he returned to his home and his wife Elizabeth. A little more than nine months later, in April, 3 BC as indicated in Luke 3.1, John was born. Luke's account goes on to say that during Elizabeth's sixth month the Annunciation was made to Mary; "*the Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy one who shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke 1.35). This then was at the end of December 3 BC; thus the birth of Jesus is indicated as at the end of September 2 BC.

"Personal Predestination"—A correction

A misprint, not noticed during proof-reading, occurred in the course of the above article which appeared in the September-October issue. Towards the foot of column 1 on page 108 the expression "*The seed sown among thorns*"

appears twice; probably most readers would realise that the second occurrence should have read "*The seed sown on good ground*". The correction is made now just in case anyone is puzzled at the apparent anomaly.

"HE MAKETH THE STORM A CALM"

The catastrophic events which are to take place at the juncture of the ages, when the Lord appears at his Second Advent, are portrayed in many and various ways in the prophecies of the Bible, each one having its own particular application. One of these is that of the raging seas. Luke 21:25-26 foretells distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear when they see what is coming to the earth at that time.

To see the significance of this particular portrayal we need to view the picture from the point of view of the people of the land of Israel in Bible times, and more particularly in O.T. times. Their experience of the raging seas was limited to the sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea, but such were the craft they used that the storms thereon would be terrifying indeed. This is seen in the incident recorded in Mark 4:37-41 when the Lord commanded the wind to be quiet and the waves to be still, and the experience of Paul when shipwrecked as described in Acts 27.

God's power over the sea is referred to in many O.T. passages, sometimes in connection with the dividing of the Red Sea, when the children of Israel were being pursued by the Egyptian hordes, sometimes in more general terms. In some passages there is more than a hint of the belief that when the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters, when darkness was upon the great deep, He fought and overcame what is referred to as the "chaos monster" which was thought to dwell therein. This enters into the realms of mythology, but it is not to be dismissed, for it is no more fanciful than many other "beasts" seen in visions described in both the Old Testament and the New. Belief in such monsters, or rather their use in portraying various powers, is seen in those passages which refer to Rahab, Leviathan and the Dragon.

Job 26:12 tells us that God divides (stills or stirs up) the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud (Rahab or the Dragon). Psalms 89:9-10 reads "Thou rulest the raging of the sea; when the waves thereof rise thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain". Psalm 93:3; "The floods have lifted up their voice O Lord, the floods lift up their waves, The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea". According to Isaiah 51:9-10 Zion calls upon God to awaken and put on his strength as in the ancient days when

he cut Rahab in pieces and wounded the Dragon; when he dried up the sea and the waters of the great deep, and made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over. (To those who are aware of the raging seas of the oceans of the world, this may seem a rather exaggerated view of the crossing of the Red Sea, but to the Israelites at that time it appeared to be as described.) Ezekiel 29:3-5 refers to the great monster or dragon (of sluggish and unwieldy strength) lying in the midst of the rivers, uttering boastful words. God will put hooks in its jaws and with its fishes in its scales (parasites) cast it on dry land to become food for beast and bird. Ezekiel 32:2 likens Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to a dragon or monster that troubles the waters and fouls the rivers, but verse 14 foretells that God will destroy all the beasts in the great waters, and will make the waters settle or subside, and the rivers run as smooth as oil. Psalm 74:13-14 says "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou breakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat for the people in the wilderness". Amos had a vision of God standing at the altar declaring that the sanctuary would be destroyed because Israel had departed from his ways, and He declares that although they might hide at the bottom of the sea, he would bid his serpent (Dragon) bite them (Amos 9:3). In some of these passages Rahab and the Dragon are said to represent Egypt, but in the background of them all there is the thought of the chaos monster. Psalm 104:6-7, describing God's creative acts, tells that He covered the earth with the deep as with a garment, "the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over". Finally in verse 26, Leviathan, the sea monster, appears once more, depicted this time as being formed by God to play in the sea.

These passages are quoted at some length to form the background to the prophecies which refer to the raging seas at times of crisis. Psalm 46 immediately comes to mind. It speaks of the waters roaring, being troubled, and mountains shaking in the resulting upheaval; of the nations raging, the kingdoms being shaken, and the earth melting at the sound of God's voice. Psalm 2:1 asks why the nations tumultuously assemble and the people meditate vain plots. Isaiah 17:12 foretells a time when the voice of many people will make a noise like the voice of the seas, and when the

nations will sound like the rushing of many waters. Habakkuk has a dreadful vision which causes him to quake with fear, when he sees God coming from Sinai, and he cries. "The mountains saw thee and they trembled; the overflowing waters passed by; the deep uttered his voice and lifted up his hands on high. Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, by the heap of great waters" (Hab. 3.10-12 and 15).

All these prophecies, and the various passages previously quoted, speak of God's way with the sea, sometimes literally, sometimes symbolically; sometimes allowing it to rage and roar, at other times calming it. The several monsters portrayed seem to symbolise the cause of the calamities depicted, and the question arises, how are they to be interpreted in the light of the present time?

Rahab, the Dragon and Leviathan are said to represent Egypt, and Egypt in turn symbolises the wicked world, far removed from the worship of the Almighty and Everlasting God. It is not without reason that discerning people refer to the present time as the "post-Christian era", for over the past sixty years or so the winds of war have whipped up the roaring seas; the chaos monsters of avarice and greed and the lust for power have overcome the restraining influence of Christian teachings, causing widespread misery and the slaughter of the innocent, and have combined to create the tumult which covers the world today. At the turn of the century an able Bible student wrote, (*"The Battle of Armageddon"*, page 596) *"the roaring sea and waves symbolise the restless masses of humanity, curbed, but not fully restrained, by the laws and regulations of society. Everyone has heard some of this 'roaring' for the past twenty years, with occasional stormy outbreaks dashing like tidal-waves against the earth (social order) and seeking to swallow it up. Restrained for a time, these waves are gathering weight and force . . . and it is only a question of a few years until the mountains (kingdoms) are removed and carried into the midst of the sea in anarchy"*. We would that those "few years" had seen the end of the roaring seas and the destruction of the chaos monsters, but as we look out over the war-torn world, with (so called) religious factions "shooting it out" with murderous intent; the senseless bombing and taking of hostages to further political aims; the deterioration in industrial relations with resultant financial ruin, and the giant multi-national corporations creating new problems which seem to have no solution, we can see that the winds and the chaos monsters are being permitted to take their part in creating and continuing the general uproar.

The prophecies of Ezek. 7.12-13 and 19 may have been fulfilled in a previous age, but who will deny that the symbolic language used therein fits perfectly the present situation, when financial and industrial chaos are rampant the world over. The buyer need not rejoice, and the seller need not lament, for wrath falls upon the entire multitude. Never, so long as they live, shall the sellers get back to their estates, and none shall prosper by false dealings. They shall fling their silver into the street and loathe with disgust their gold; for in the day of God's anger no silver or gold can save them or satisfy their appetite. Money has been their ruin, they prided themselves on the beauty of their silver and their gold, and made out of them detestable idols (see Zeph. 1.18). What then is our position as Christians? That question would appear to be answered in the words of our title "He maketh the storm a calm" (Psa. 107.29), but the raging seas are all around us still, and when faith trembles at the sights and sounds it may well ask "Master, do you not care that we are drowning?"

What can be the ship in which we may safely ride out the storms and raging seas? This question is not relevant, for the disciples were not saved because they were in the ship; indeed it was in danger of foundering, but they were safe because the Lord was with them in the ship. We may each have our own idea as to the ship in which we hope to ride out the storms which are raging today, but all will be of no avail if we have not the Lord with us in the ship. It has been said that the ship is safe in the ocean so long as the ocean is not in the ship. The only way to keep the raging seas out of our little craft, whatever form it may take, is to be sure that we have the presence of the Ruler of the winds and the waves always with us. Even as the disciples in the foundering ship on the sea of Galilee witnessed a miracle in the calming of the wind and the stilling of the waves, so the world will one day witness a sure wide-spread miracle when the symbolic raging seas are calmed by the Ruler of the seas in the future.

The new heavens and new earth are yet to be; in the meantime chaos rules the waves, but we have the comforting words of Psalm 46.1 "God is our refuge and strength, we shall find him very near, therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea". Verses 7 and 11 repeat the assurance "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge".

*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

JESUS AND THE LIFE TO COME

A three-part
essay

Part 3

"Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matt. 19.26).

This is one of those very plain statements of Jesus regarding the future life in which the relative positions of Jesus' followers and all others are contrasted. It is a time of judgment and yet not a time of hopeless condemnation. The disciples — and obviously, all the faithful in Christ of the entire Age—are to occupy positions of authority and administration in a day which is a time of general and universal judgment. The day is one made very familiar to the disciples by the imagery of Jewish apocalyptic. The time when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory is the Messianic Age, following the Second Advent, when the kingdom of Christ is established on earth and the glory of the Lord covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. Every Jew knew that, although at that time they had no conception of the difference between the First and the Second Advents. Every Christian in the first two centuries of Church history knew it too, and looked for the Second Advent which was to mark the beginning of that glad day. The apostles in after days held fast to that same belief, and expressed it in their writings. Thus Paul in 1 Cor. 6. 2 reminded his readers that they already knew perfectly well the saints are to judge the world, and John the Revelator, seeing in vision this same thousand year Millennial reign of Christ over the nations, saw also the saints seated upon their thrones as kings and priests, reigning with him the thousand years (Rev. 20. 4). We must therefore accept as an essential feature of the post-Advent reign of Christ that it is a reign over the earth, upon which men still live, and that his saints, the "Church" of this present Age, will be glorified with him and reigning with him. The question naturally comes to the forefront "What is the purpose and object of that reign?"

This Messianic Age is not the final eternal state of the blessed. Though it be the Kingdom of Christ and an administration of righteousness, with the Devil bound that he may deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20.1-2) yet it is an age that has an end, a kingdom which finally is handed over to God the Father that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15. 24). There is a dark picture in Revelation 20 of a rebellion at its end when

Satan apparently endeavours to deceive the nations once more, fails, and is destroyed with all evil and evil-doers. The Messianic Age is therefore another stage, even though it be the final stage, of God's developing purpose in the reconciliation of "those who will" from among men to himself. The Church has already been thus reconciled and glorified to immortal life. For her, salvation has been achieved. But for other men the end of the pathway has not yet been reached.

Jesus called this period the "regeneration". The word means the giving of new life. Mark well that this is at a time when the faithful in Christ, true believers of the present age, have already entered their eternal inheritance in the presence of their Lord. Here is shown in no unmistakable manner the fact that after the Church has attained her heavenly destiny there is another work of salvation, culminating in another award of eternal life, to others who did not share in the first salvation. That is why James the Lord's brother, leader of the Christian community in Jerusalem in the years just after Pentecost, uttered his memorable judgment recorded in Acts 15 when he declared the Divine purpose in three stages; — first, the calling out from the nations a people for God's name, the Church; second, the raising up the tabernacle of David, the purification and regathering of Israel; and third "that the residue of men might call upon the name of the Lord". It is the "residue of men calling upon the name of the Lord" which is the purpose for which the epoch which Jesus called the "regeneration" is intended.

This realisation throws a flood of light upon those rather cryptic utterances of Jesus when He referred to some of old time who would find things more tolerable in the Day of Judgment than would his own generation. Tyre and Sidon, idolatrous cities long since passed away, would find it more tolerable than would Chorazin and Bethsaida, towns of his own Galilee (Matt. 11. 22). Sodom and Gomorrah will find it more tolerable than Capernaum and the unbelieving towns of Galilee (Mark 6. 11). The men of Nineveh who repented at the preaching of Jonah and quickly lapsed into their old bad ways, the Queen of Sheba who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon but now has been dust these many years, these too are to stand again in the judgment and they will condemn the generation of Jesus' day (Luke 11. 31-32) for its unbelief and

faithlessness. All of this shows that the rising again at the Day of Judgment is for something more than a rehearsal of past sins or righteousness and an immediate passing of final sentence. The Day of Judgment is synonymous with the Messianic Age, a period of time during which the blessings of the Second Advent will be bestowed in full upon all who will heed the voice of earth's King, and conform his life thereto. This is clearly the meaning of Jesus' words linking three things—his word, the resurrection, and the granting of life. *"The hour is coming" ("and now is")* is an interpolation and no part of Jesus' original words) *"when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live"* (John 5. 25). Here again is the giving of new life by Jesus in the day of his glory, the "regeneration".

This is where one of the most vivid parables Jesus uttered has its place—the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. The scene is set "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory". When this event occurs his saints will be with him and sharing his Kingly power so they are evidently not included in the array of "all nations" which in the parable are gathered before him. This is clearly a second work of salvation, ending in eternal life for some and final condemnation for others. But the point just now is that it takes place in the Messianic Age, this time of "regeneration" which is at one and the same time a giving of new life and condemnation to loss of life for the "sheep" and "goats" respectively. In all these pictures and sayings left on record for our instruction the supreme importance of the Messianic Age is clearly shown. Our Lord returns at his Second Advent not only to take his Church to himself and bring to an end the evil institutions of mankind, but also to inaugurate an era of blessedness and peace during the whole extent of which He will make his last endeavour to reach the hearts of all who so far have not believed on him in Whose Name alone can there be salvation. The words of John the Baptist will always be terribly true; they admit of no exception. *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him"*. (John 3. 36). There can be no doubt that the Father, in his unerring wisdom and love, has provided in his purpose a means whereby every man and woman ever born has the opportunity to be enlightened by the Light which has come into the world (John 1.9) and it seems very clear that the day of Christ's reign over the earth, the Messianic Age, is the final era of opportunity, the day when God brings all men into judgment and makes up to each man for the opportunity he may not as yet have had. But

the decision has to be made by the end of that Age. No shadow of sin, no taint of rebellion, may be suffered to mar the blessedness of the Ages of glory that are to follow. The end of that Age means not only the awarding of eternal life to those who have become reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ; it also means the final condemnation of sin and sinners. The 20th chapter of Revelation gives a short picture of that final dark chapter; the rebellion, at the end of the Age, of some who have remained in unbelief and will not yield themselves in submission to their Creator. The fire which comes down from heaven to destroy them is of course a symbol, but an eloquent one. Said the Psalmist *"the wicked shall be returned into sheol,"* the grave, *"all the nations that forget God"*, and that word is fulfilled when at the last those who will not accept life on the Divine terms face the only possible alternative.

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 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.

The vision of the New Jerusalem, the account of which concludes the Book of Revelation and the Bible, is a symbolic representation of the final phase, the consummation of the Divine Plan. John saw a wonderful city descending out of the heavens to settle everlastingly upon the new earth created by God to take the place of that old earth which had passed away. This city was to become the dwelling-place of God, where He would dwell with men, and into it there should nothing defiling ever enter; only those that were accounted worthy of everlasting life. From the city there flowed a "River of Life", having "Trees of Life" growing upon its banks, and

from this water and food of life the sin-sick nations of the world were to derive sustenance and healing. The vision closes with a gracious invitation to all men that they come and partake of the water of life freely.

Here the veil is drawn. The Holy Scriptures do not take us beyond the end of the Millennial Age to talk in detail of the "ages of glory to follow". Of the condition and life of the redeemed through the everlasting years they say nothing. We are shown the Plan of God for this earth at its triumphant conclusion, sin and evil banished for ever, irreclaimable evil-doers

destroyed, the whole world of mankind fully converted to God and enjoying his munificence on the restored and perfected earth. "*Not a stain of sin mars the peace and harmony of a perfect society.*" For the further glories of revelation, of knowledge and of activity that must assuredly be the lot of all the redeemed we must wait, until the time shall come; but we can wait in full assurance that, as Isaiah predicted (Isa. 32. 17), "*The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*"

THE END

TIMES AND SEASONS

5. The sojourn in Egypt

The period between the entry of Jacob and his family into Egypt and the Exodus under Moses is known as the sojourn in Egypt. During this time the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons grew into a nation of some two million people. They went down as a family; they came up a nation. It is from this time that the history of the people of Israel begins.

The sojourn in Egypt lasted for four hundred years. There is no connected history of the period. Between the death of Joseph and the birth of Moses is a blank and were it not for three casual allusions, in Genesis, Exodus and Acts, it would not be possible to determine from the Scriptures just what interval of time did elapse. But these three references do afford all the information that is necessary.

When the Lord told the patriarch Abraham that his descendants would ultimately possess the land in which he had settled, He also made it known that before inheriting it they would sojourn awhile in an alien land. "*Know of a surety*" He said "*that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them; four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again*" (Gen. 15. 13-16). Two significant facts emerge; one, that the sojourn would last four hundred years, and the other, that the return would take place in the fourth generation. With the modern idea of several generations to a century in mind these statements would seem irreconcilable, but this is not the case. In the days of Abraham, when men lived well beyond a century and children were being born at anything up to 120 or so, a hundred years was a reasonable figure for a generation. Isaac, for

example, was born 230 years after his grandfather Terah. One consequence of this was that a much greater number of generations was living simultaneously than is the case nowadays. It can be shown that at the time of the Exodus members of the fourth to the eleventh generations were living and participated in the departure from Egypt under Moses. The four hundred year period is confirmed by Stephen at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7.6) quoting from this passage in Genesis.

The other relevant statement is in the story of the Exodus, where Exod. 12.40-41 reads, in the A.V., "*Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt*". There would seem to be a discrepancy of thirty years between this and the former statements, but this can be resolved by a little investigation. Both the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Alendrian Septuagint render this verse "the sojourning of the children of Israel and of their fathers, which they sojourned in the land of Canaan and in the land of Egypt, was 430 years." This dates the commencement of the "sojourn", not at the entry into Egypt, but at the time of Jacob's arrival at Bethel in Canaan on his return from Padan-Aram about thirty years earlier. His twelve sons were the "fathers" of these renderings: "our fathers" is the expression used to denote them by Stephen in Acts. 7.11. Confirmation of this comes from Paul's words to the Galatians in Gal. 3.17 "*The covenant that was previously confirmed by God, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul...*" (The words "in Christ" are a late intrusion into the text and should be omitted.) It is clear that Paul was either quoting from the

Septuagint, as he so often did, or that the Hebrew text of his day contained the additional phrases which it has since lost so that the A.V. omits them in consequence. The "covenant" therein mentioned is obviously the original one made with Abraham and the "law" is the second covenant, made between the Lord and Israel at the time of the Exodus. The "confirmation" referred to is certainly something other than the original making of the covenant with Abraham, and it does seem very well to fit the occasion recorded in Gen. 35. 1-15 when God met with Jacob at the sacred site of Bethel, reiterating and confirming the terms of the covenant and assuring Jacob that he and his seed would assuredly be its inheritors. The chronological indications in Genesis are reasonably conclusive that this event took place in Jacob's 100th year, thirty years before he went down into Egypt.

It has sometimes been suggested that the 430 years should be counted from the departure of Abraham from Haran 215 years before Jacob entered Egypt, so that the combined "sojourning" of the elder patriarchs Abraham and Isaac could also be included. Against this it has to be recognised that there was no covenant existing at that time. Not until many years later, when Abraham was 86, was there talk of a covenant, and its terms were not fully stated until he was 99. There is no reasonable starting point for the 430 years so far back.

Some additional support for this claimed "short" period of 215 years in Egypt is provided by the apparent pedigree of Moses derived from certain passages in Exodus and Numbers, from which it would appear that Moses was Levi's great-grandson. To fit this into the 400 year period requires that Moses and his forebears were each born when their fathers were 125 years of age, which, whilst not completely out of the question in the light of conditions indicated by the Scriptures as prevailing at that time, is in the highest degree unlikely. Hence the 215 year period is sometimes advocated as the only one to which this pedigree can be fitted. This situation will be examined in greater detail presently but it can be said here and now that a much weightier argument in favour of the 400 year period is the impossibility of the stated number of Levites appointed to the service of the Tabernacle being derived from the three sons of Levi in just four generations. This in turn is associated with the known number of the adult male population at the time of the Exodus, and the question naturally arises as to whether the Scriptures contain sufficient data to estimate sufficiently closely the time required for the twelve sons of Jacob to grow into a nation of that size.

From its very nature, the result of the calculation must be taken with a certain amount of reserve, but its implications are interesting, especially in the light they throw on the manner in which apparently casual and unconnected remarks in the text present, in association with one another, a strong testimony to the factual accuracy of the narratives. This accuracy can only be accounted for by accepting that these early books were actually written at the era with which they deal, and not, as the "modern scholarship" still loves to claim, a thousand years later by priestly scribes gathering scraps of folk-lore and legend out of which they constructed the story. The essential data is as follows:

The census conducted by Moses a few weeks after leaving Egypt showed that the number of adult males above 20 years of age was 603, 550 (Exod. 38.26).

The number of Levites, descendants of Levi, aged between 30 and 50, for the service of the Tabernacle, was 8580 (Num. 4.48).

Jacob's twelve sons fathered 51 sons between them, an average of a little over four per family. From various genealogies and casual allusions the families of another 31 individuals of later generations show a similar average of four per family, falling off slightly in the generation of the Exodus. The span of life was anything up to 137 (Levi and Amram); Moses and Aaron 120 and 123, Joseph 110; probably a century would be a good average. (This was the accepted expectation of life in Egypt at the same time.) It can be deduced from the narratives that births were normally between the early thirties and late seventies, so that so far as can be discerned from the accounts the four sons and four daughters of each average family were born over this period.

On this basis a rather tedious but illuminating calculation shows that the 51 grandsons of Jacob would have grown in 400 years to some 600,000 men above 20 years of age, and the Levites between 30 and 50 to some 8,200, both of which are remarkably close to the actual figures recorded in Exodus and Numbers, as stated above. Too much stress must not be laid on this, since a quite small difference in the basic assumptions, average children per family, for example, or the influence of possible epidemics during the sojourn carrying away numbers of Israelites, could make an appreciable difference to the result. The calculation does at least support the accuracy of the 400 year alternative as against the 215. To attain this number of grown men at the Exodus in 215 years would require that every man had 18 children and this between

the ages of 20 and 60, which, while not physically impossible, is unlikely, especially in that period of history, and has no supporting indication in Scripture. Neither would it be possible to attain the 8580 Levites between 30 and 50; the best that could be attained in 215 years would be 3600 which is much too far away from the Scriptural figure.

There is, though, one apparent argument for the 215 years in Egypt, viz; the Authorised Version statement that Jochebed the mother of Moses was the daughter of Levi. This, if correct, would make Moses the grandson of Levi on his mother's side and imply an extremely short period between the entry to Egypt and the Exodus. Several times Moses is said to have been the son of Amram, husband of Jochebed, and it has been tacitly assumed on the strength of these statements that Amram son of Kohath, son of Levi, is the individual referred to. A little thought shows that this cannot be the case. The male descendants of the four sons of Kohath, (Amram and his three brothers) numbered 8600 at the Exodus (Num. 3.28) and by no stretch of the imagination could it be thought that Moses had something like 2000 brothers. The genealogies do not make clear that Amram the father of Moses was a different individual living several generations later. This points to the necessity of a closer examination of the relevant texts.

Exod. 2.1 says that "*a man of the house of Levi took to wife a daughter of Levi*". "Daughter" is *bath*, which is used for daughter, granddaughter or female descendant. (Example Josh. 17.6—"daughters of Manasseh" although their father was Zelophehad.) The parents of Moses were both descended from the line of Levi but in what generation is not here stated.

Exod. 6.20 has it "*Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife: and she bare him Aaron and Moses*". "Father's sister" here is *dodah*, which means an aunt—father's sister or uncle's wife. The Septuagint gives a variation "*Amram took to wife Jochebed the daughter of his father's brother*" i.e. his cousin. This may be thought a little more reasonable than the A.V. "aunt" although at that time when so many generations were contemporary the aunt in one family could well be considerably younger than the cousin in another. Nevertheless no indication of the particular generation in Levi's line is given.

The most difficult text is the third, Num. 26. 56-59; "*Kohath begat Amram. And the name of Amram's wife was Jochebed, the daughter of Levi, whom her mother bare to Levi in Egypt, and she bare unto Amram Aaron and Moses, and Miriam their sister*". The Hebrew text is admitted to be faulty; the words "her mother" do not

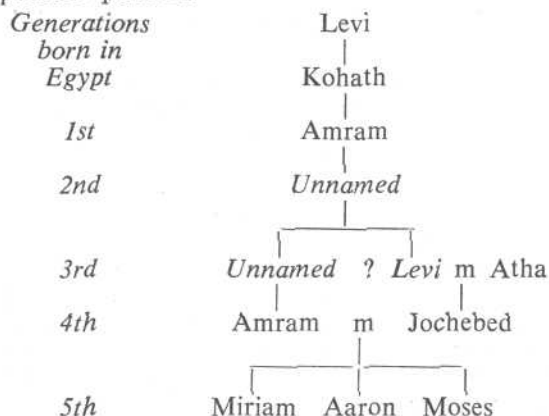
exist and were supplied by the A.V. translators to help out what they thought was the sense. In their place the Hebrew has *atha* which could be a second personal pronoun but then implies that Jochebed "bare" herself to Levi which is an absurdity. The alternative, favoured by a number of responsible scholars, is that "*atha*" is a proper name, that of the mother of Jochebed. The expression "bare to Levi" could then mean that this *Atha* bare Jochebed to a husband who was of the line of Levi so that the child was accredited to its more remote ancestor, a practice met with elsewhere in the Scriptures, generally when for some reason it was not desired to mention the intervening generations, or they were not known. Another and more likely explanation is that the unknown father of Jochebed was himself named Levi, after his illustrious ancestor. There are at least three other individuals named Levi mentioned in the Bible, and this extra one is not out of place. It would not occur to the historian to explain that the Levi to whom *Atha* bore Jochebed was not the famous progenitor of the tribe several generations earlier.

The literal Hebrew in this text runs "*Amram's wife was Jochebed, a daughter (descendant) of Levi whom damsel *Atha* bare to Levi (*asher yaldah atha le-Levi*) in Egypt*". This verse, together with the other two referring to Moses' parents, is consistent with the conclusion that Amram the father of Moses was a descendant of Kohath in probably the fourth or later generations, married to Jochebed who was a daughter of an unnamed descendant of Levi, (perhaps also named Levi), married to the otherwise unknown *Atha*. The purpose of Num. 26.59, set as it is in the middle of an account of the census of Levites taken just before entering the land, is clearly to establish the legality of descent of Moses and Aaron from Levi the father of the tribe. The expression in vs. 58 "*Kohath begat Amram*" can quite as reasonably apply to his later descendant, the "second Amram", father of Moses, despite the fact that one of his own sons had the same name.

This still leaves the fact that Exod. 6.20 does read as if Amram father of Moses is presented as identical with Amram the son of Levi and this should be considered before leaving the subject. An examination of Exodus chap. 6 reveals the very strong probability that verses 14-27 are an insertion by a hand other than Moses, at a much later date, intended to establish the lineage of Moses and Aaron at a time when the fact might be called into question. "*These are that Moses and Aaron to whom the Lord said, Bring out the children of Israel.... These are they which spake to Pharaoh*" say vs 26-27, as if to impress the point. Certainly these words are not from

the hand of Moses and must have been added after his death. Verse 28 connects very naturally with verse 13. At verse 14 the unknown reviser starts off by recapitulating the list of tribal heads of Israel given in Gen. 4-6 but after recording Reuben, Simeon and Levi he diverges to record Levi's posterity down to Moses and Aaron's grandson Phinehas. He never went on to include the remaining tribal heads, his purpose now having been served. His information regarding Moses must have been taken from Num. 26.59 which was part of the official census taken just before the entry into the land, and he might have taken too literally the "Kohath begat Amram" of vs. 58, just as has been done in more recent times, and so confused the two Amrams.

The LXX rendering of Exod. 6.20 which makes Jochebed the niece of Amram's father rather than his sister as in the A.V. is in complete harmony with the relationship indicated in Num. 26.59 and this could lead to the supposition that the original Hebrew from which the LXX was taken asserted this relationship. In such case, since Moses, 80 at the Exodus, must have been born not earlier than the 4th generation and could have been of any one to the 9th, there must have been at least one and probably several generations between Amram the son of Kohath and Amram the father of Moses. On the basis of one generation only the elder Amram could have had one son, unnamed, father of the second Amram, and another one named Levi, father of Jochebed. This arrangement makes sense of the apparently conflicting texts and puts Moses' mother where she rightfully belongs, at the end of the sojourn in Egypt rather than at the beginning. The accompanying diagram illustrates the possible position.



Considerable light can be shed upon the sojourn in Egypt by contemporary Egyptian history but the details of this require a separate treatise in itself. Modern research has quite

clearly established that the Exodus took place during the 18th Egyptian dynasty, in or near the year 1453 B.C. and that Amenhotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus. This date is demanded also by the 480 years of I Kings 6.1 to the 4th year of Solomon so that it can be accepted as Scriptural. The record of Exodus fits in very accurately to the political events of this period. Jacob entered Egypt near enough to 1853 B.C. during the 12th Egyptian dynasty which came to an end about the time of the death of Joseph. A century later came the Hyksos invasion from Syria which gave Egypt its 15th and 16th dynasties, bitterly resented by the native Egyptians but, since the Hyksos were themselves of Semitic race, probably welcomed by the Israelites with whom they would have felt some kinship. Then about 1600 B.C. came the successful rebellion against Hyksos rule which expelled them from Egypt and restored native Egyptian Pharaohs, the 17th and 18th dynasties. It would be only natural that the victors would look with disfavour upon the alien Israelites who were racially akin to the defeated Hyksos. This could have been the time indicated by Exod. 1.8 when *"there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph"*, the "new king", if actually an individual, being one of the early rulers of the 18th dynasty, perhaps Thotmes I, father of the Princess Hatshepsut, the "daughter of Pharaoh" who took the child Moses out of the Nile. This brings Moses' forty years in Midian within the reign of the famous Thotmes III, Pharaoh of the oppression, the only Pharaoh of the period whose reign was long enough to cover that forty years, and whose death occurred only a few years before the Exodus, so that everything fits. The Biblical claim that the Israelites were 400 years in Egypt is thus quite feasible and more probable than any alternative when viewed in the light of Egyptian history.

concluded from page 131

to wring out of the dry routine of these innumerable offices, these crowded clerkships, any hope that we by our labour are serving a great cause, that we are contributing to the permanent welfare of humanity according to the mind and counsel of God. "*According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" How such a message sweeps in to our relief, it lifts us like a breath of fresh air! There is a purpose then—a living positive purpose, a purpose of God's own, to which He holds, towards which He works, to which He steers amid all the bewilderment of history, through all the tangled distresses of man's social growth."

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