



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

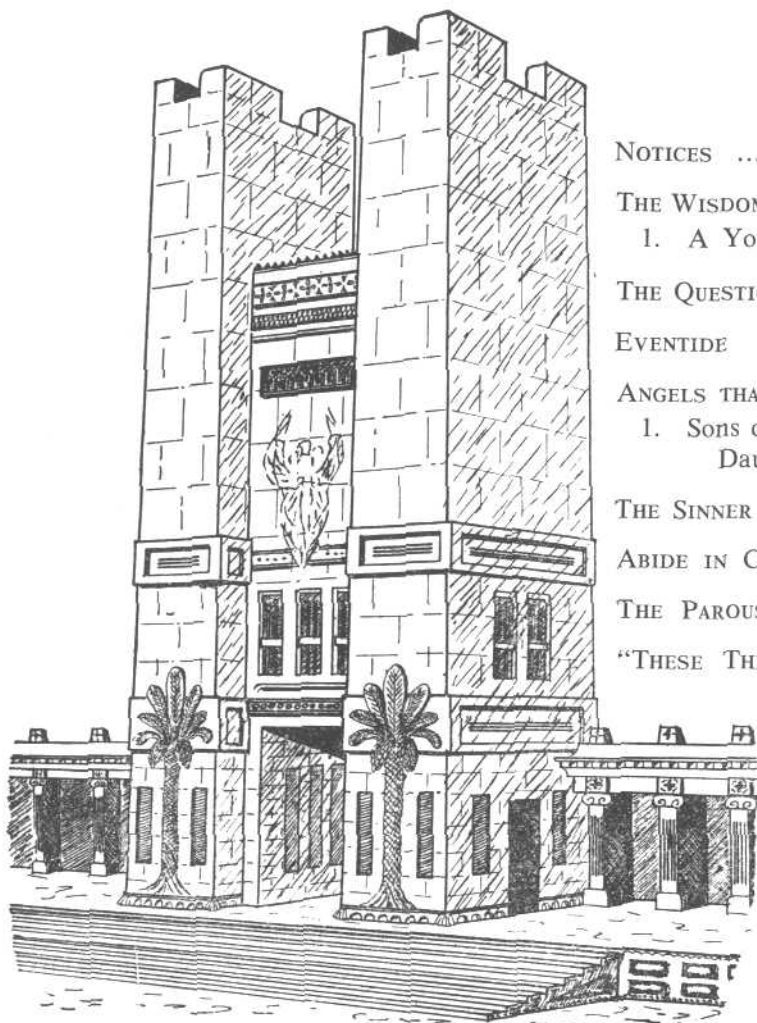
BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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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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New features for 1977

With the current resurgence of interest in demon obsession and exorcism it seems timely to take a look at the Biblical references to the subject and this involves the original cause of these phenomena. A series entitled "Angels that sinned", commencing in this issue, examines this subject.

Nearly twenty years ago the "Monthly" published a series on the discourse of Elihu in the Book of Job and in recent times suggestions for its re-publication have come from several quarters on the ground that it would be of interest to new and also to old readers. "The Wisdom of Elihu" is the title of this series, which commences in this issue.

From time to time in past years we have featured a devotional study entitled "Eventide" intended more particularly for the elderly, and this has always been much appreciated. During 1977 another series of these studies will appear, as from this issue.

New publications

The following have been added to our list since the present publications list was issued and are available on the usual terms—no charge but gifts toward production and postal costs appreciated—upon request.

- Samuel, Greatest of the Judges 40 pp
- The Millennial Gospel of Jesus 40 pp
- Future Probation in Christian Belief 90 pp
- Leaflet 40 The Gifts of the Spirit
- Leaflet 41 Man—the image of God.

Changes of address

May we remind overseas readers that because the "Monthly" is in transit anything between seven weeks (U.S.A. & Canada) to ten weeks (India and Australasia) it is almost inevitable that by the time your notification of new address reaches us at least one more issue is already on its way, and it has to be assumed that you have made arrangements for it to be forwarded. Should anyone however miss a copy from this cause we are pleased to send a replacement if request is made to that effect.

Annual Renewal request

It is our practice to insert a pink "renewal form" in the "Monthly" once every year in the case of those from whom we have not heard during the preceding six months or so and we would like to stress the importance of returning this form, or alternatively advise by letter, to indicate that the Monthly is still desired. We are strongly desirous of keeping on our list every one who is genuinely interested and wishes to have the Monthly but we do not wish to send copies to waste. We do ask every reader to make a point of writing to us at least once every year so that we have this assurance of continued interest and can check that the address is still correct. There are some readers whose names are entered by one or another of their friends, but they should not rely on those friends remembering in subsequent years to renew their entry so that even in their case it is desirable that we hear from the actual reader.

When you find the pink renewal form in your copy, PLEASE REPLY. Those whose reference numbers on the envelope lie within the 3,000, 7,000 and 8,000 ranges will find it in the March/April issue and within the 5,000 and 9,000 ranges on the Sept./Oct. issue. If the pink form never appears it is because we already have assurance of your continued interest and do not need confirmation.

Gone from us

—:—

- Sis. R. Halliwell (Bolton)
- Bro. W. J. Mercer (Liverpool)
- Bro. H. Norris (Pontypool)
- Sis. D. Quennell (Warrington)
- Bro. W. F. Reader (Brentwood)
- Sis. A. Turner (Bristol)

—:—

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

I. A Young Man Speaks

The discourse of Elihu on the supremacy and character of God occupies six chapters in the Book of Job, six chapters of the most remarkably cogent reasoning. It stands in marked contrast to the materialistic philosophies of Job's other three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Twenty-eight chapters of the book are taken up with the debates of these three with Job, hazarding theory after theory to account for the enigma of a righteous man suffering adversity without apparent justification. None of them satisfied Job; "*miserable comforters are ye all*" was his bitter comment. It seems that every possible philosophy had been advanced, every school of thought its thesis put forward, but none furnished the answer. Then did the younger man Elihu, who up to that point had played the part of a silent listener to the discussion, break into the conversation with his contribution. The distinguishing feature of that contribution is that Elihu brings in the relationship of God to Job, and contends for the fixed principle that God is all-wise, all-just, all-loving, all-powerful, working to a set purpose, and doeth all things well. His argument is not a fatalistic one, not a plea for passive acceptance because it is impossible to do anything else. It is a call to co-operation with God and a willing participation in what God is doing to the extent that human powers allow, in recognition that even though much of the affairs of life are mysterious and difficult to understand, the fact that God is in control and pursuing his intended course is a guarantee that all will eventually be well.

The importance of this to the Christian lies in the fact that the Book of Job is a dramatic representation of the human race, submerged in suffering, afflicted by the many aspects of sin which exist in the world, despairing in face of the apparent indifference of God and without hope that things will ever be any better. The philosophies of the three friends represent all that human philosophy has to offer by way of explanation or comfort: the insight of Elihu pictures the evangel which comes from God by the ministry of those who are the messengers of God. If only for that reason, these six chapters of the Book of Job constitute a study of absorbing interest.

The setting of the Book is in patriarchal times, somewhere between those of Abraham and Moses. The land of Uz was the terrain, now desert, then fertile, lying between the Jordan and Euphrates, where Arab peoples, the descendants

of Shem, roamed and mingled as nomadic tribes. Eliphaz the Temanite was a descendant of Abraham through Esau; Bildad the Shuhite through Abraham's wife Keturah. Of Job himself no indication of ancestry is given but he was evidently of the same general stock. Elihu could trace his line back to Nahor the brother of Abraham. We are given therefore a picture of Semitic tribesmen at the time the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and therefore somewhere about sixteen centuries before Christ.

There is every reason for thinking that Elihu could trace his line back to Nahor the brother of Abraham. We are given therefore a picture of Semitic tribesmen at the time the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and therefore somewhere about sixteen centuries before Christ.

There is every reason for thinking that Elihu was an historic personage, that he did live at about the time above indicated and that the conversations recorded in the Book of Job actually took place. It is possible—even probable—that the entire Book was written by Elihu. The only place in which the first person is used, apart from quotation speeches, is in Chapter 32. 16, where Elihu speaks of himself to the reader. Since he was the one who did the most listening throughout the discussions he was probably the best qualified to report what was said. And the fact, asserted by scholars; that the words of Elihu are more strongly marked by Aramaic forms of speech than those of any of the other speakers is strong incidental evidence that the book does describe actual happenings, as Elihu, a descendant of Nahor the ancestor of the Aramaic people would certainly speak a dialect distinctive in that respect from the others.

So Elihu embarks upon his discourse. At first, in chapter 32, he commences by introducing himself and justifying his intervention (verses 1 to 14) then goes on to remark the astonishment of his seniors at his temerity (verses 15 to 22). After this his discourse falls naturally into four sections, each clearly marked by an opening phrase inviting attention. Chapter 33 speaks of the *Wisdom* of God, wisdom exemplified in Creation (verses 1 to 7), revelation of himself to man, (verses 8 to 18), that although the curse of sin must lead to death God has provided a means of escape from death (verses 19 to 28) so that the original Divine ideal and purpose is achieved at last; Job must take heed to this fact (verses 29 to 33), Chapter 34 describes the *Justice* of God, and

in 1 to 4 Elihu appeals for justice in our thinking, that while Job insisted on his own virtue (5 to 9) Elihu must insist on the inherent justice of God's ways (10 to 12) governing righteously, judging impartially and swiftly (13-37). From this he passes to the Love of God in chapters 35 and 36 up to verse 21. God has infinite patience with men (35. 1-16) men are disciplined now by his love but are ultimately to inherit fullness of joy (36. 1-12), even although those who are impervious to Divine love must suffer the wages of their sin (13-14). Job therefore is exhorted to trust in God's love rather than in his own appeal to God for justice (15-21). Finally comes Elihu's eulogy on the Power of God, in chapter 36.22-33 and chapter 37. He stresses the insignificance of man compared with Divine greatness (22-26) and launches upon a description of the powers of Nature as illustrative of the power of God (37. 10-12). But these agents of his power are themselves agents of his work for mankind and have some direct bearing upon man's relation to God (13-18), so man is speechless before God; he can only bow his head and accept the revelation; for this reason men reverence him (19-24).

So Elihu supersedes all the explanations offered by the three friends with the categorical assertion that there is no explanation. Job's adversity can only be seen against the background of God's eternal purpose and Job must accept the fact that whatever God has permitted is an integral part of that purpose and will eventually be seen in complete harmony with the wisdom, the justice, the love and the power of God. In a very real sense Elihu anticipated the Apostle Paul when he said "now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known". Elihu in the Old Testament, just like Paul in the New, had attained a very clear understanding of the "whole counsel of God".

* * *

With scarcely concealed impatience the younger man waited until his elders had finished speaking. The three of them, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, had spent a long time advancing their theories as to the reason for their friend Job's disastrous afflictions, but had succeeded in convincing neither Job nor themselves. "They had found no answer" says the narrative "yet had condemned Job" (32. 3). Elihu's indignation was kindled against them, but not against them only. His resentment was directed also to Job, because he "justified himself rather than God" (32. 2). It is clear that Elihu was profoundly dissatisfied with the result of the discussions, and felt that he must put his own point of view before them even although, in that day and age, such intrusion

by a young man upon the deliberations of the aged and mature would be considered the height of impertinence.

Elihu nevertheless observed the courtesies. "Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then was his wrath kindled" (32. 4, 5). He was indignant, finding that these men who by reason of age and experience could reasonably be expected to understand and express the relation of God's purposes to the immediate problem before them should prove woefully ignorant when put to the test. "I am young" he said "and ye are very old; wherefore" (as the Septuagint has it) "I was fearing to declare to you my own knowledge. I said 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'" (32. 6-7); now in a moment he finds that mere accession of years does not of itself confer true wisdom, and length of days is not necessarily a qualification for dispensing the word of life to those who need it. There is something else, something far more vital, that does not depend upon the attainment of a goodly tale of years. "It is the spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, which giveth them understanding" (32. 8 Leeser). Here is a truth which is not fully recognised in many quarters to-day. All too often it is assumed that the wisdom and understanding which God imparts to men relates exclusively to matters theological. That is simply not true. Just as the life of man depends upon God, so does the whole of man's intellectual power and mental perception derive from God and can only be eternally sustained by the maintenance of a link with God. The wise men of to-day, exulting in the marvellously rapid increase in scientific achievement characteristic of this century, do not stop to reflect that the discovery and formulation of those physical and mechanical and electrical laws and principles upon which their achievements are based was the work of intellectual giants among men, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who themselves were for the most part sincere and avowed believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ. From Sir Isaac Newton onwards, these men pursued their work in the belief that they were working hand in hand with God, uncovering his secrets for the benefit of humanity. The impetus of those centuries may carry us forward a few more generations, increasingly without God, but the penalty will ultimately be paid. Already medical men are beginning to remark that despite the apparently greater knowledge and ability of to-day, the level of average intelligence is beginning to fall. The average man is tending to get

less brainy than his forebears, suggest some observers.

So Elihu gives voice to the scathing rebuke which is in his heart. "*Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged (necessarily) understand judgment*" (32, 9). From the dawn of history the aged in years have arrogated to themselves the prerogatives of rulership and direction, claiming that by virtue of their longer experience they are the best fitted to rule and direct; the younger in each generation have chafed and complained, impotent to alter matters, until they in their turn, have behaved in precisely the same fashion toward the next generation following them. So it has been and is; so it will be, until the weak, vacillating rule of man gives place to the administration of our Lord Christ who will not only render to every man according to his deeds but will also give each man, young or old, full scope for the useful employment of the ability and knowledge he possesses. But that lies in the future; Elihu, more than three millenniums before our own time, is left fulminating against the elderly men whose pretensions to wisdom and knowledge of God he had exposed for the hollow shams that they were.

So Elihu takes the situation into his own hands and demands attention. "*Therefore I said, Hearken to me; I also will shew mine opinion*" (32, 10). It is evident that Elihu has thought long and earnestly over the problem of Job's adversity. Unlike the three friends, he is in no doubt as to the right answer. There is no pseudo-philosophical reasoning, no sententious discourse, no high-sounding speech, as with them. His words are straightforward and to the point, the utterances of a man who knows whereof he speaks and is not afraid to voice his knowledge. But before doing so he lashes the three older men with words which leave no room for doubt as to the contempt in which he holds their failure to achieve their object. "*Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say*"—one can sense the bitter irony of his voice in that last phrase, eloquently defining the floundering of the would-be comforters as they desperately sought for a satisfactory exposition of the case from the stores of their own philosophies—"*yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words; (so that ye cannot say) we have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man*" (32, 11-13). There is the indictment; after all the portentous speeches and flowery language, Elihu's pungent comment brands with failure the entire session. None had explained the mystery, none solved the problem, none satisfied Job. The position re-

mained as it was at the beginning.

The answer was so simple, after all. Expressed in few words, it was, "*God thrusteth him down, not man*". The source and meaning of all Job's adversity was to be found in the inscrutable purpose of God, and it was there that the three wise men had not thought to look. The expression "lest ye should say" in verse 13 is based on the Hebrew word "*pen*" which is difficult to translate lucidly but carries the meaning of an opposing alternative. Because the wise men had espoused a philosophy which was a false one, they were automatically precluded from discerning or expounding the true. Elihu tells them that notwithstanding their superior age and claim to consequent wisdom, they simply did not know what they were talking about. So in verse 14 he makes plain that he has no intention of endorsing their standpoint or repeating any of the arguments they have used. "*He (Job) hath not engaged with me in debate; neither will I answer him with your reasonings*" (32, 14).

At this point the narrator passes from speaking in the third person to the first person. Up to verse 14 the writer records the speech of Elihu, referring to him in the third person "*Elihu had waited . . . Elihu saw . . . Elihu said 'I am young'*" etc. But now in verse 15 to 17 there is a change and the writer indicates that he himself is the Elihu of whom he speaks. It is this short passage which seems to mark Elihu himself as the writer of these chapters and probably the entire Book of Job. Having finished the record of his introductory speech, which runs from verse 6 to 14, he comments of the three older men, "*they were amazed, they answered no more, they left off speaking*" (32, 15). Astonished at his temerity, the three men abruptly broke off the discussion and, probably, looked at Elihu with some indignation. There must have been more than indignation though; something of the inward conviction that Elihu possessed, in consequence of his deeper knowledge of God, told them that here was a factor with which they had not reckoned. Here was a man who saw through their shallow reasoning and outworn platitudes and would brook nothing but a clear statement of truth based upon the revelation of the wisdom of God. Where the three had relied upon human intellect and worldly-wise reasoning this man looked for, and experienced, the leading of the Holy Spirit. Like a far more sublime figure yet to come into the world, he spoke as one having authority, and these three who in that ancient world partook much of the character and outlook of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's day became suddenly conscious that one stood in their midst whom they had not previously known. They were silent, for

in the presence of that burning sincerity of conviction they had nothing to say.

"When I had waited" says Elihu "(for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more) I said, I also will show mine opinion. For I am full of discourse; the spirit in my bosom presseth me in" (32. 16-18). That latter sentence is Rotherham's rendering. It expresses, so much more succinctly than the A.V., the burning vehemence with which Elihu felt he must deliver his message. At all costs he must say those things which God had given him to say. Like Jeremiah a few centuries later, "his word was a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay". Elihu felt like that; he must overthrow all the accepted customs of convention and decorum, outrage the respectability of his elders and cry defiance at all their philosophies, heedless alike of the effect upon them or the consequence to himself, if only he might unburden himself of the word which glowed within him like an imprisoned light. Many a modern evangelist has felt like that and many a modern evangelistic message has battered against surprised society with the same impact.

The crudeness of verse 19 in the A.V., "*my belly is as wine which hath no vent*", a crudeness to the twentieth century but quite normal English when the A.V. was prepared four hundred years ago, is best softened by adopting Rotherham's translation "*Lo! my bosom is like wine not opened. Like new wineskins it will burst. I will speak, that I may freely breathe. I will open my lips and respond.*" (32. 19-20). Only by the delivery of his message could the young prophet feel at ease. How he had chafed against the restraint imposed by his submission to listening to the debate, the frustration of knowing that his own knowledge of God told him better than these men knew, and yet they would not heed. There is no evidence that they ever did heed. The silence which fell upon the company when Elihu made his impassioned outburst was apparently continued after he had finished, for there is no record of any reply or refutation on the part of the three. When Elihu has finished speaking it is the Almighty who intervenes to conclude the

discussion. So Elihu was like any other young man who is filled with a consuming desire to put his elders right on matters in which he is certain they grievously err, but with the difference that whereas in many cases the young man is himself inexperienced and immature, and his exhortation is characterised more by zeal than by knowledge, in this instance Elihu was solidly instructed by his deep pondering over the principles of God's government, and when he spoke it was truly the Holy Spirit speaking through him.

Elihu aims his final shaft. With the impassioned sincerity of the man who has but one ideal, to be a messenger and interpreter of God despite the consequences, he takes his stand. "*Let me be partial to no man, and unto no son of earth give flattering titles. Surely I know not how to give flattering titles; how soon might my maker take me away*" (32. 21, 22). This again is Rotherham's rendering. It is as much a prayer as a declamation, almost as though he prays God for strength to deliver his message without fear or partiality, caring nothing for the praise or blame of men, only that he might speak out loud the word God has given him to speak. He cares not for the opinion his hearers have of him or the attitude they manifest toward him, or presumably the treatment they might afterwards mete out to him. All of this is as nothing to him. He is God's prophet, an instrument in God's hand, and like Paul in later times, it is "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel". Overshadowing all he thinks and says and does is the consciousness of his responsibility to God and the power of God over his life. "*How soon might my Maker take me away*" he says. That is the sublime thought with which he ends this introductory outburst. He has life and ability and a message to which that life and that ability must be devoted while as yet he has the opportunity. His life is in God's hands and in the inscrutable purposes of God he might be taken away at any moment; to Elihu very definitely it was "now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" and he meant to utter his message and discharge his commission there and then, though in the next instant the heavens fall about him.

To be continued

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

Proud Christians—and the Master was meek and lowly! There is nothing that will so shame us out of our pride as to take a good look at Jesus Christ. And He says to those who have come and received that promised rest: Learn not to be selfish, and learn not to be proud.

W. Graham Scroggie

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *The "parousia" or Second Advent has been said by various writers and commentators to have had its commencement, variously, in A.D. 1799, 1874, 1918 and "any moment now". Is it possible to obtain a stable faith and conviction on this basis?*

A. In point of fact one of the earliest dates for the Advent was set by Lactantius (A.D. 250-330) who fixed the time of the event at A.D. 500 on the basis of Biblical chronological indications. A great many revised dates have been set since then—Abbot Joachim set all Europe in a ferment by predicting it would occur in A.D. 1000, and Christopher Columbus, who added to his discovery of America a fervent faith in the promised Advent, said in 1503 that it would certainly occur in 1653. One researcher has said that there have been 300 such dates set since the 4th century. It might well be a better basis for stable faith and conviction to accept the words of Jesus *"of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only"* (Matt. 24. 36), and to realise that when his disciples asked him how they would recognise the imminence of his Advent He did not give them a lesson in Bible arithmetical calculations, but described to them the signs of the times which those then living were to observe and interpret as the basis of faith and expectation. Intelligent correlation of world events and conditions of the past century or more with our Lord's preview of what would certainly characterise the "Days of the Son of Man" would seem to be of greater value in this matter than deductions from Biblical chronology.

Q. *What authorities on the Greek language will agree that "parousia" means invisible presence. (relating to our Lord's Second Advent)?*

A. So far as the writer of this note is aware, no responsible authority, theologian, or student, has ever suggested that the word means invisible presence. *Parousia* means "Presence", without qualification, and occurs thus twenty-four times in the New Testament, of which sixteen refer to the Second Advent. In all cases but one the A.V. translates by "coming", but most modern translations have the correct word "presence". The one A.V. exception is Phil. 2.12 where *parousia* (presence) is contrasted with *apousia* (absence). The word adequately defines our Lord's Advent as enduring for a period of time during which the

successive aspects of the work of his Advent are conducted and completed.

Ed. Note: This subject is raised fairly often and in recognition of this fact an article on "The Parousia" is featured on page 19 of this issue.

Q. *"The child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65.20). Are we to understand that in the Millennium all will have at least one hundred years of trial even if they are incorrigibly evil?*

A. This text is very often misunderstood. The basic principle of God's "Day of Judgment" in which Christ reigns over the world for the purpose of converting and reconciling to God "who-soever will" is that all men, no matter how degraded and rebellious, are to enjoy the thousand years of opportunity. There is no death during the Millennium; only, in the case of the wilfully obdurate, at its end. The fact that the sinner in this verse is said to be "accursed" does not necessarily imply death; the Hebrew word has various shades of meaning and need only mean ignominy and the contempt of his fellows. A full discussion of this text and answer to this question will be found on page 13 of this issue.

Q. *It is said that according to the Bible the seasons will be confused in the End Time so that there is no difference between summer and winter. Is this so?*

A. Scripture teaching respecting the work of the Millennium with mankind demands that the orderly alternation of the seasons continue, for this is essential to human life. God declared after the Flood that henceforth and for all time seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, will never cease (Gen. 8.22). It is probable that the more abnormal climatic conditions such as extreme Arctic cold and Equatorial tropic heat, and the more violent manifestations of natural forces, will be toned down as the earth attains the apex of its development for humanity, but it has to be accepted that seasonal changes are part of the Divine provision for man's well-being and happiness and while man continues to live on earth these conditions must continue. There does not appear to be any Scriptural support for the suggestion.

EVENTIDE

*"So He bringeth them
into their desired haven"*

How dispiritingly few were the interludes of satisfaction and delight during the Saviour's last year on earth! He was increasingly becoming a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief". A deepening consciousness that the "end" for which He had come to earth was already looming darkly ahead drove him repeatedly to mountain-top or solitude for prayer. From the time of his transfiguration this consciousness of approaching death prompted him to make reference to the "*decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*". The outward circumstances of life changed greatly. The period of successful work in Galilee had drawn to its end, mainly because of his refusal to be made a bread-and-fish-providing king. Jerusalem had not, from the start, opened hand or heart to him, deeming him of too lowly birth, and of too inadequate education to satisfy her needs. But Galilee had drunk deeply of blessing from his hands. And now even Galilee had "*hid as it were its face from him*", no longer finding beauty in him that it should desire his company Despised and rejected of men, knowing that the door in Galilee was closed, the Man of Sorrows set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, knowing that she who slew the prophets would have no compunction about slaying him. A state of internal strain had gripped him, mind and body alike, revealing itself in those tense words of censure upon Capernaum and the cities by the sea. It also shows itself in the exacting terms put upon discipleship—such terms as "let him take up his cross",—"can ye drink of the Cup that I shall drink".

Arriving in Jerusalem, the web of malice and intrigue began to weave its strands about his Person. First the cold and calculating Pharisees came, asking by what authority He drove the money-changers from his Father's House. Then the Scribes and Chief Priests sought to enmesh him in their tribute-money trap; after them the unbelieving Sadducees, hoping to succeed where others failed, propounded a petty quibble—each and all a token of the icy atmosphere into which He had thrust himself. Everything denoted that the end was drawing near—the snarling pack of hungry wolves were closing in upon their prey! He, the worthy Lamb of God, had presented himself at Jerusalem as a sheep for the impending slaughter!

On one of those closing days, over against the Treasury, Jesus watched the string of well-to-do

home and foreign-born visitors place their costly gifts in the great chest, in open view of all who might care to see. Edging her way into that ostentatious file a widow, poorly-clad and meanly-fed, cast into the spacious coffer her trivial gift—two mites, in value less than one twentieth of the English penny, not even the price of a single sparrow (Matt. 10. 29)—but, it was "all her living"! What a grim contrast to behold.

One watchful eye observed,—and approved. With a throb of pleasure the near-to-breaking tension was released as the beholder made comparison. More than they all!—two mites . . . more than they all. The austere sternness of the Voice was gone, and for one brief moment in those crucial days pleasure and satisfaction filled his soul. After all, mammon-ridden though the nation might be, there were still those in Israel who would consecrate their all, one little ray of sunshine, cleaving the ever darkening sky; one tiny gush of joy to lighten sorrow's burdening load!

Dear little-statured Brother and Sister in the Lord, thou that art least in the thousands of Israel, this is a word for thee! Not thine with eloquence to sway the responsive audience, nor to enthuse them with ready pen! Not thine to bring the gift like to the costly gold or flashing gem! Only the two mites, so small in value, so unassuming in appearance, but the watching Eye will see, and assess it at heavenly valuation. The smile of Heaven rests on the little things—the one hair requiring a Father's permit to fall; the one sparrow which the Father deigns to know; the one cup of cold water offered in his Name, and . . . the two mites which constitute one's all!

But what can such a "two-miter" do? Perhaps speak only a little word.

*Only a little word, softly and kindly,
Breathed in the ear of the sad and oppressed.
Oh how it tenderly steals like a melody
Over life's billows, and lulls them to rest.
Only a little word, softly and kindly
Dropped in a heart that is blighted and
chilled,
Oh how its gentle strain tunes every chord
again
Waking the echoes that sorrow has stilled.*

If that one little word be the token of thy two mites, then cast it into the treasury of thy Lord, and He will accept it as thine "all".

ANGELS THAT SINNED

*Bible basis of
demonism*

1. Sons of God—Daughters of Men

"And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Gen. 6.1-2).

One of the strangest narratives in Biblical history! Marital unions between angels and humans—for the term "sons of God" in the Old Testament can only mean angels—a situation at first sight seeming so bizarre that small wonder it has provoked incredulity and questioning the veracity of Scripture, and there have been alternative interpretations aimed at denying the plain implication of the words. Bizarre or not, the story of the angels who transgressed runs through the Bible and has apostolic endorsement so that it cannot be ignored. The fact that it is given as the pre-disposing cause of the Flood of Noah's day, bringing the then world of man to an end and leading to a fresh start, invests it with an importance which justifies closer attention.

The Hebrew for "sons of God" is *beni-elohim*. *Elohim* is used in the Old Testament for "God" and often for celestial beings generally. Other occurrences of *beni-elohim* (Job. 38. 7; 1.6; 2.1; Dan. 3.25) confirm that celestial beings are denoted and in fact the Greek Septuagint uses the term "angels of God" in these cases. Since the more usual Old Testament term for angels, *malak*, is properly applicable also to human messengers, this use of "sons of God" here seems intended specifically to stress their heavenly nature. The Book of Hebrews, chaps. 1.6 and 2.7 and 9, quoting Ps. 97.7 and 8.5 respectively, renders the Hebrew *elohim* into "angels". Despite the apparent incongruity, therefore, it must be accepted that Gen. 6.2 does definitely state that at a time before the Flood certain angelic beings from the celestial world did effect alliances with human women. How such a proceeding could be physically possible and what was its object, and what the outcome, will be enquired into presently.

Support comes from two books which were in wide-spread use at the time of our Lord's First Advent, the "Book of Enoch" and the "Book of Jubilees". The one purports to date from before the Flood and the other from the days of Moses but these claims are palpably false. Both books were produced by pious Jews during the two final B.C. centuries, and their value resides in the fact that they incorporate much of ancient Jewish legend, including events immediately preceding

the Flood, and so indicate how Gen. 6 was understood in earlier days. They relate in considerable detail how the angels descended to earth and took human wives, and in so doing transgressed Divine law. This was the accepted understanding in our Lord's day, as is evident from the writings of Paul, Peter and Jude (1 Cor. 6.3; 1 Pet. 3.19; 2 Pet. 2.4; Jude 6). It is also confirmed by the two most famous Jews of the period, Flavius Josephus and Philo of Alexandria, and was the prevalent view of the Early Church.

Alternative interpretations did arise from about the 3rd and 4th centuries, when theologians like Augustine, Chrysostom and Jerome endeavoured to disparage the idea of marriage between angels and humans, not being able, in that day and age, to visualise how such a thing could be. The view then put forward was that the "sons of God" were the descendants of Seth, assumed on that account to be righteous God-fearing men, and the "daughters of men" descendants of Cain, likewise assumed to be exceedingly sinful. In neither case does the assumption necessarily follow; by the time of the Flood "*all flesh*" — whether of Seth or Cain—had "*corrupted its way upon the earth*". And there must have been many other "tribal groups" in existence. Adam and Seth, and doubtless Cain, had "sons and daughters" (Gen. 5) and men had "*multiplied on the face of the earth*". A variant view made the Cainites the sons of God, as being — again assumed—the physically superior race, and the Sethite women the daughters of men, weaker and submissive. A third one is that men of high rank took women of inferior social position, although why such should be more beautiful than those of their own social level is not stated. All these suggestions are without Scriptural support and rest on unjustified assumptions and in no case are they adequate to account for the fearful consequences amongst mankind which Gen. 6 states was the result of this incursion of the "sons of God".

It came to pass, therefore, at a time before the Flood but long enough after the introduction of man upon earth for the human race to have perceptibly multiplied, that human women consorted with angelic visitants to earth and bore children to them. And the obvious leading question is, how can such a thing be?

For answer the Bible history of communion between the celestial and the terrestrial can be reviewed. There are recorded in the Scriptures

some forty instances of the appearance of celestial beings to men, having some special message to deliver or commission to discharge. In each case they appeared in the form of ordinary human beings, generally, where descriptions are given, suitably and normally attired for the occasion. A little thought shows that this is only to be expected. Angels—despite the ethereal winged figures of mediæval Christian art—do not belong to this terrestrial creation which we call the Universe. They are of a different order of creation which, real and substantial to its own inhabitants, is totally imperceptible to human sense and has no point of contact or connection with this terrestrial world. A physicist would say—one who believes in angels, anyway—that they and their world do not partake of our atomic structure. Perhaps by way of analogy it could be said that they and their world exist on a different wavelength. In somewhat more learned and technical jargon, some leading scientists have already suggested that intelligent life may conceivably exist in some such fashion and that we will never be able to detect such life because neither our senses nor our instruments can, as it were, “tune in” to it. It follows that the only way in which a celestial being can be manifest to a human is by “coming in” on the terrestrial wave-length and fashioning for himself, from the materials of the earth around him, a human body having all the attributes and characteristics of man, by means of which he can hold converse with men. Our bodies are constantly built up and renewed from the air, water, minerals and food around us; what we thus accomplish in daily living the celestial visitant achieves in a moment of time. To the celestial powers already possessed he adds the powers, the attributes, and the organism, of the human. If God could create Adam from the “dust of the earth”, and Jesus produce bread and fish for five thousand people out of “thin air”—more accurately, from relevant atoms of material available in profusion around him—it is as reasonable to accept that angels sent on missions to earth can use their Divinely-conferred powers to do much the same thing in order to render themselves visible to men. In some cases such visitors are recorded as partaking of terrestrial food with their hosts; Jesus, appearing to his disciples in a similar body, after his resurrection to the celestial world, did the same on more than one occasion. That their normal extra-terrestrial powers were not inhibited by this temporary dwelling within the confines of human flesh is evidenced by the two angels who announced the doom of Sodom. In the form of men, after leaving Abraham, and passing out of his sight, they cleared the forty-odd miles to Sodom over wild

mountainous country in about two hours!

These “sons of God”, then, were present on earth as men, complete men, having all the attributes and powers and faculties of men. They would most certainly have borne the appearance of magnificent specimens of manhood, much more like Adam at his creation than the already degenerating and decadent men of the time. The fact of their presence on earth at all indicates that they were Divine ambassadors sent to execute a commission, but they used their human powers for a purpose which was outside that commission and in conflict with the laws of God and that constituted their sin. Genesis, incidentally, states the facts but does not brand them as sinners; that is left to the New Testament writers and the authors of “Enoch” and “Jubilees”, and these do that in no uncertain terms.

For what reason were they present upon earth? Genesis does not answer this question either, but one thing is certain. If sent by God to carry out his purpose they were loyal and sinless. Their fall into sin occurred after their arrival upon earth. The rather obscure account in “Enoch” seems to imply that they taught men what today we would call the “useful arts”, such as metallurgy and agriculture, and the sciences such as astronomy, but all this is drawn from Jewish legend. It is rather intriguing, though, that ancient Sumerian tradition, recorded by Berossus the Babylonian historian (c. 275 BC) tells of supernatural beings, part god, part man, coming out of the sea in the days before the Flood to teach men writing, the arts and sciences, and the origin and nature of the universe; “and since then” said Berossus “nothing new has been discovered”! This seems to point to a deep-seated memory from ancient times which might justify the suggestion sometimes made that the mission of the angels was to lead and teach man in their fallen condition and elevate them to better things. In this connection it has been thought that two rather debatable verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews have bearing on this point. After showing, in chapter 1, the superiority of Christ over the angelic creation, the writer says of the angels that they are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.” From this he goes on to say (ch. 2.2.) that “the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward”, using this as a warning to us, “if we neglect so great salvation”, and concluding with “for unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world” (habitable earth) “to come, whereof we speak” as though there had been a previous “habitable earth” which actually had been put under the rule of the angels. It is pos-

sible to read this into these verses, although it is true that the Jews held a firm belief in the ministry of angels during all ages and especially at Sinai. It was believed that much of the lesser laws supplementary to the Ten Commandments were given by such a ministry and this is alluded to in Gal. 3.19 to the effect that the Mosaic Law was "*ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator*". The reference in Heb. 2.2 to every transgression and disobedience receiving a just retribution certainly does sound like the operation of the Mosaic Law. On the other hand, passing to vs. 5, there is no sense in which angels at Sinai had any kind of jurisdiction or rule over the "habitable earth" (*oikoumene*, rendered "world" in the A.V.) at that or any other time. Had the writer intended to contrast the Jewish Age, dominated by the Mosaic Law, with the Age to come, dominated by Christ, he would have used *aionos*, meaning an Age. *Oikoumene* means the inhabited earth or inhabited part of the earth. (To the Romans and Greeks it was that part of the earth known to them; the 1st century Greek geographer Strabo hazarded the opinion that there might prove to be a second *oikoumene* to the far west of the Atlantic Ocean, an opinion which was justified later by the discovery of America.) From the Scriptural viewpoint there have been only two "inhabited earths"; the first from Creation to Noah, which was destroyed as an "inhabited earth" at the Flood, and that which has subsisted since, which according to Gen. 8.22 is not to pass away. On this basis therefore this allusion in Heb. 2.5 might well have reference to the pre-Flood days rather than to those of Sinai.

Be this as it may, it is probably a justifiable assumption that these angels were sent to earth for a purpose beneficent to humanity. Having come and taken up their duties, they, or at least some of them, used their temporary human bodies to marry human women and become the fathers of children. Jude calls them "*the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation*" and there is a world of meaning in that simple phrase. "Habitation" here is the same word as "house" in 2 Cor. 5.2, its only two occurrences in the New Testament; it refers to the spiritual, celestial body, as against the terrestrial. They abandoned the one to concentrate on possibilities offered by the other.

Why did they do it? The idea that life on earth in the company of degenerate and dying human women, no matter how temporarily beautiful, could be attractive to angels accustomed through æons of existence to the glories of the celestial world could only hold water if angels are some kind of variant men from outer space,

but they are not. Man is inferior to the angels in much the same way that the most intelligent of animals—say dogs and dolphins,—are inferior to man. We know little of the celestial world, but that it is a place of abounding activity, peace and happiness, with death unknown, we do know. The angel who would willingly exchange eventual return to that world, after the completion of his mission here, for a perpetual life on earth with, presumably, an unending succession of dying wives would surely, in the expressive jargon of our day, need his head examining. There must be more behind the story than that.

Could it be that these angels had been inveigled, perhaps by Satan who involved mankind in death at the first, into a plot to defeat that death sentence and so outwit God by introducing new, non-Adamic life into the human race? The Jewish legends say that it was in the time of Jared and Enoch that the angels began to take the daughters of men. By then it had become obvious that Satan's original assurance to Eve "*ye shall not surely die*" was a lie. Adam and Eve both were dead; so were many of their posterity. It was evident that death reigned over mankind and that all who received life from Adam must share in that doom. But suppose men and women could be born who had received their life from another, never-dying source? The angels had never experienced death in their own sphere. They must have known of the tragedy of Eden and watched the slow progress of death in the world and they knew Satan as the one responsible. But they also knew that God desired and planned for man's ultimate recovery from death; had He not told Eve that one day future the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head? Perhaps they failed to realise that the thoughts they entertained were prompted by that arch-deceiver. If they themselves could introduce that life from God, which was in themselves, into the dying race and infuse it with new undying life, perhaps it was in that way the promise would be fulfilled. Surely God would look with approval upon such action! And the Devil, watching behind the scenes, knew that even if the plan did not work and eternal life was not restored to man, his dupes would have cut themselves off from God as had man at the first, and he would acquire an empire in the celestial as well as upon earth.

There is a possible basis for this hypothesis in Gen. 6.4, in which the consequences of the angels' action is recorded. As rendered in the A.V. this verse reads "*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bare to them, the same became mighty men which*

were of old, men of renown". The translation is not altogether grammatical and a bit obscure; the seventeenth century translators obviously had some difficulty with it and it will stand further examination.

The word rendered "giants" is *nephilim*; this was the name given to the offspring resulting from these unnatural unions. ("Giants" in the A.V. came from the Septuagint which itself had rendered *nephilim* by the Greek *gigantos*, our gigantic) "Also after that" is a clumsy and non-informative expression more accurately rendered by the intensive "indeed" followed by the demonstrative "afterwards". A lucid translation might go "The *nephilim* were on the earth in those days, and indeed afterwards, whenever the sons of God went into the daughters of men and they bare to them the mighty ones (*gibborim*) which were of olden time, the renowned ones". The birth of the *nephilim* was, therefore, not a single event; it continued over the entire period during which this condition of things persisted.

These mighty ones were the progeny of the angels. Why call them *nephilim*?

The usual explanation is that the word is derived from the Hebrew *naphal*, the verb "to fall" or "to drop", so that the term can be translated "fallen ones" or "dropped ones". In the Old Testament and in the Talmud, *naphal* is used of a premature birth or an abortion—examples are Job. 3.16, Psa. 58.8, and Eccl. 6.3. The same word with the same meaning is found in Arabic. In Jewish tradition as in "Enoch" and "Jubilees" the *nephilim*, though born of women, appear as monsters in human form who ravaged and devoured. Says 1 Enoch 7.3-5. "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 the flesh and drink the blood". The archangels are depicted as appealing to the Most High to intervene; "they (the angels) have gone to the daughters of men upon the earth . . . and have defiled themselves . . . and the women have borne *nephilim*, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness". Genesis contents itself in ch. 6.5 with describing them as "mighty men of olden time, renowned ones". Renowned they were for their

wickedness and ferocity; semi-human abortions they were from which men shrank in horror.

There is, however, the fact that when the events happened, and the name was given, there were no Hebrews and no Hebrew language. The earliest tongues in which Genesis 1 to 11 can be shown to have been written are the Akkadian and Sumerian (Semitic and Hamitic) of the time of Abraham or earlier. Consistency demands that the origin and meaning of the name be sought here. There are many Akkadian and Sumerian words buried in these chapters, carried over into the Hebrew text by whoever translated them. It is possible that the word *nephilim* comes originally from two Akkadian words, *napista-ilu*, which taken together would mean life-breath of God. The Hebrew equivalent would be *nephesh-eloim*; this in ordinary speech would become *nephilim*. If there is anything in this deduction it implies that the original name, or whatever was, in turn, its pre-Flood equivalent in the now unknown language of that era, was indicative of the then belief that these creatures, fathered by the angels, were bearers of life from God. That in turn would lend support to the idea that the intention of the angels was to infuse into mankind new and perhaps eternal life, the life of God which Adam had lost.

It might well be that the word bore the original derivation when carried over into the Hebrew language as a proper name, and was then given a new meaning based on that language. There are plenty of such instances. The name "Babel" in Gen. 11 is said to mean "confusion" as derived from the appropriate Hebrew word, *balbal*, but in fact is *Bab-ilu* in Akkadian, meaning the Gate of God. Likewise Adam is said to mean "red earth" from the clay of which his body was made but is in fact the Akkadian word for man in general.

Thus the angels became the fathers of beings intended to convey new and eternal life to the dying human race. But men looked upon them and called them monsters, abortions. Instead of bringing happiness and life, they brought increased suffering and death. "And as men perished" says the unknown writer of "Enoch", "they cried, and their cry went up to heaven".

Something had gone terribly wrong.

To be continued

True nobility is more often shown in the little things of daily life than in the great things. When a man lives in the full view of public opinion he is keyed up to create a favourable impression

but it is the nature and temperament shown when the lime-light is withdrawn, when there is no inducement to wear a mask, which reveals the true man and what he really is.

THE SINNER A HUNDRED YEARS OLD

A text often provocative of questions is Isa. 65.20, which appears to indicate that an unrepentant sinner in the Millennial Age will be condemned after only one hundred years of trial. This impression, if correct, would seem to run counter to the basic principle of that Age, which is that the whole of mankind, without exception, is to enjoy the full thousand years opportunity for reformation of character and the attainment of union with God. When a single verse of Scripture appears to contradict the otherwise consistent presentation it is desirable to examine the passage minutely; as likely as not the accepted translation is at fault.

The relevant verse reads, in the A.V., "*There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed*".

This part of the 65th chapter, from verse 17 to the end, is a pen-picture of the Millennial Age, the day of the reign of Christ over the earth, when evil is restrained and all have returned from the grave to enjoy the blessings of that age. "I create new heavens and a new earth" says the Lord "and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind". There is to be no more weeping and crying, only gladness and rejoicing. Men will build and plant, and enjoy the fruits of their labours; the whole earth will be at peace. This verse is set against this background; it describes some of the characteristics of that happy day.

Right at the outset one is faced with some anomalies. The absence of infants and old men in that Age can be understood; in a world where death is abolished, (except for wilful sin at its end), and the progress of men is steadily towards human perfection, it can be appreciated that all living beings will advance to the optimum of health and maturity and in that state continue into eternity. But the next clause "*the child shall die an hundred years old*" strikes a discordant and quite antagonistic note. If all, whether righteous or not, are to enjoy one hundred years of life and then die, the whole chapter—and the doctrine of the Millennium also—is an absurdity. This clause is obviously mistranslated. Furthermore, the antithesis with the final sentence is destroyed, for apparently both the "child" and the "sinner" meet the same fate.

It would seem, from an examination of the

Hebrew text in the light of lexicographers' comments, that a more careful rendering of the verse can do much to dispel the difficulty. Thus the word translated "thence" actually has the meaning of repetition, of an action repeated time after time indefinitely, perhaps best expressed in English "again and again". The "*old man that hath not filled his days*" is in the future tense, intensive, "who will not abundantly fill *those* days"; there is a demonstrative pronoun here which refers the "days" to the general subject of the passage, the days of the Millennium, and does not denote "his" days. The preposition "for" in "*for the child*" is incorrect; the Hebrew word is a relative conjunction linking to what has just been said, "*that the child*", and this makes a vital difference to what follows. Finally the word "accursed" has been taken in much too extreme a sense. The word *qalal*, although in its most intensive grammatical sense, does not mean "cursed" in the sense of an oath or imprecation, or condemnation, as is the case in most cases where "curse" (*cherem*) and its derivatives appear in the Old Testament. It has the meaning of despised, disgraced, disesteemed (it is in fact rendered in the O.T. by such words as despised, vile, lightly esteemed, revile, bring into contempt, lightly afflict, a light thing, and so on, besides curse). It is not necessary to assume that the ultimate fate of the sinner, death, is referred to in this verse, but that he is brought into a condition of disgrace or contempt. This sounds more reasonable. If a man experiences a century of Millennial blessings and the power of the Gospel appeal without having renounced his sin it is to be expected that he will be an object of contempt on the part of his fellows, who are themselves making progress towards the standards of righteousness which are displayed before all people in that day.

"Infant of days" is a problematical expression. It can either mean a newborn babe or a baby dying very young, in a matter of days or weeks. The context is probably better suited by the former.

There is a somewhat similar passage in the "Book of Jubilees" ch. 23, 26-29, which must have been derived from the ancient Hebrew text on which "Jubilees" is based, and this can serve to confirm the general meaning of the statement. "*And there will be no old man, nor one that is not satisfied with his days, for all will be as children and youths. And all their days they will*

complete in peace and in joy. And there will be no Satan nor any evil destroyer, for all their days will be days of blessing and healing."

Taking these points into consideration, it would appear that a reasonable English version of the literal original would read:

"From that time there will not be again the newborn babe and the old man who will not have an abundance of these days, that the young man would die in a hundred years; but the sinner of a hundred years will be intensely despised".

In that day, all men, from newborn babes to the old, will return from the tomb to abundance of days with no fear that the span of life is limited to something under a hundred years as it is now; in that day, of course, men will still be "young" even at a century of life. As says Jubilees, they will all be as children and youths. But—and this is a serious "but"—a hundred years of life spent in that "new heaven and earth" without allowing its beneficent influence to effect repentance and conversion in the heart of the sinner will earn for that man general contempt. He will be, not only despised, but intensely despised. The strongest grammatical sense of the Hebrew word, (known as the *Pual* conjugation), is used here to express the intensity of that contempt. The revealing angel said something of that kind to the prophet Daniel. Some, he said, would rise to en-

during life and some to shame and enduring contempt (Dan. 12.2).

But this is not the end of hope for such. Every man has the thousand years of opportunity; the Last Judgment is not until the end. Our God is always ready to accept eleventh hour repentance provided it is sincere and lasting. Perhaps the most important principle enshrined in this verse is that the Millennial Age is one in which there is "nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10.26). If a man chooses to remain in sympathy with evil, he may elect to do so, but he will not be able to conceal the fact. In a world where good is predominant, evil will stand out like a dark shadow on a sunlit pavement and there will be no possibility of dissembling. The goodness of God and the wondrous magnitude of his concern and plans and provision for the children of men will be so patent and obvious that the man who cannot accept these things because he will not, and because he has deliberately steeled himself against all that is good and true and holy, will find himself what this verse says he will be, "intensely despised". And in that condition he will remain, unless and until his heart is at last penetrated by the love of God and he comes in his turn in full surrender to the Lord Christ.

Nebuchadnezzar's Prayer

Nebuchadnezzar II, king of the second Babylonian empire 604-561 B.C., is known to Christians chiefly for his connection with the prophet statesman Daniel and the records preserved in the books of Daniel, Jeremiah, Chronicles and Kings. He is probably the most famous pagan king of the Old Testament. He is also known to history as a wise and enlightened monarch and a deeply religious man, devoted to the worship of the Babylonian god Marduk. The following prayer to Marduk was composed by Nebuchadnezzar and exists still in the records of his times. Although addressed to a heathen deity the sentiments it expresses would do credit to anyone who addressed them to the true God. A very narrow line separates the heart condition of some men who worship false gods and others who worship the true God, in equal sincerity. The conviction is driven home that, given the opportunity of knowledge of God which is possessed by us to-day, many of these ancient pagans might well have become God-fearing men. That in turn prompts the reflection that if God truly "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the

truth" as St. Paul declares, there must yet be some provision for the possibility of Christ-acceptance by those who in their own day and time had no opportunity so much as to hear of his Name.

*O eternal Prince! Lord of all being!
As for the king whom thou lovest,
And whose name thou hast proclaimed as
was pleasing to thee,
Do thou lead aright his life.
Guide him in a straight path.
I am the prince, obedient to thee,
The creature of thy hand.
Thou hast created me,
And with dominion over all people thou
hast entrusted me.
According to thy grace, O Lord,
Which thou dost bestow on all people,
Cause me to love thy supreme dominion,
And create in my heart the worship of thy
deity
And grant whatever is pleasing to thee,
Because thou hast fashioned my life.*

ABIDE IN CHRIST

Thoughts on the
Parable of the Vine

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." (John 15.4).

During the life of Jesus on earth, He frequently exhorted his disciples "Follow Me". It was when about to leave them that He used those words which indicate the more spiritual and intimate union with himself in glory, "Abide in Me".

There are many followers of Jesus from whom the meaning of these words, with the blessed experience they promise, is somewhat hidden. They seem not to have realised to what closeness of union, to what intimacy of fellowship, to what wondrous oneness of life and interest, He invited them when He said "Abide in Me".

"I am the Vine, ye are the branches" (John 15.5). It was in the Parable of the Vine that our Lord first used the expression "Abide in Me". That parable so simple, yet rich in its teachings, gives the best and most complete illustration of the meaning of our Lord's command, and the union to which He invites his disciples. The connection between the vine and the branch is a living one. No external temporary union will suffice; no work of man can effect it. The branch, whether an original or an ingrafted one, is such only by the Creator's own work, in virtue of which the life, the sap, the fatness and the fruitfulness of the Vine communicate themselves to the branch. Just so is it with the believer. His union with his Lord is no work of human wisdom or human will, but an act of God, by which the closest and most complete life union is effected between the Son of God and the redeemed one. God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts. The same spirit which dwelt, and still dwells, in the Son becomes the life of the believer into him.

So close is the union between the Vine and the branch, that each is nothing without the other. To the Vine the branch owes its place in the vineyard, its life and its fruitfulness, and so the Lord says "Without me ye can do nothing". The believer can be pleasing to God only in that which he does through the power of Christ. Christ dwells in him. The daily inflowing of the life-sap of the Holy Spirit is the power which brings forth fruit. He lives alone in him, and is utterly dependent on him alone.

No less indispensable than the vine to the branches are the branches to the vine. Such is the wonderful condescension of the grace of

Jesus, that just as his people are dependent upon him, He has made himself dependent upon them. Without his disciples, his bride, He will not dispense his blessings to the world; He will not offer them the grapes, the fruit. Marvel not! It is his own appointment. This is the honour to which He has called them, that as indispensable as He is to them, that from him their fruit may be found, so indispensable are they to him that through them his fruit may abound. Meditate upon this mystery of the perfect union between Christ and ourselves. All that the vine possesses belongs to the branches. The vine does not gather the soil's fatness and sweetness for itself. All that it gathers is at the disposal of the branches. As it is the parent, so it is the servant of the branches. And Jesus, to whom we owe our life, completely gives himself for us and to us. *"The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them."* *"He that believeth into me, the works that I do shall he do also, and the greater shall he do."* All his fullness and all his riches are for the child of God. The vine does not live for itself, keeps nothing for itself, but exists only for the branches. All that Jesus is and has, He is for us. He has no interest separate from ours, and as our representative He stands before the Father.

The branch, likewise, does not exist for itself, but to bear fruit which will proclaim the excellence of the vine. It has no reason for its existence except to be of service to the vine. As Jesus has given himself so wholly over to him, he feels himself urged to be wholly his Lord's. Every power of his being, every moment of his life, every thought and feeling belong to Jesus, that from him and for him, he may bring forth fruit. As he realises what the vine is to the branch, and what the branch is intended to be to the vine, he feels that he has but one thing to think of and live for, and that is the will, the glory, the work, and the kingdom of his blessed Lord, the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of his Name.

The branches are for fruit, and for fruit alone. *"Every branch that beareth not fruit, he taketh away."* The branch needs leaves for the maintenance of its own life and the perfection of its fruit. The fruit itself it bears to give away to those around. As the believer enters his calling as a branch, he perceives that he must forget self, and live entirely for others, love to sacrifice and to do good unto all men, especially to the "household of faith". It is for fruit, "much fruit", that the Father, the husbandman, has made us one

with Jesus.

O wondrous parable of the vine, unveiling the mysteries of Divine love, of the heavenly life; how little have we understood thee! Jesus the living vine in heaven, and we, the living branches, on earth. How little have we understood how great our need, and also how perfect our claim to all his fulness! How little understood his perfect claim to all our emptiness. Let us in its beautiful light study the wondrous union between Jesus and ourselves, until it becomes to us the guide into full communion with our blessed Lord. Let us listen and believe until our whole being cries out "Jesus is indeed to me the true vine, bearing me, nourishing me, supplying me, using me, and filling me to the full, to make me bring forth fruit abundantly". Then we shall not fear to say "I am indeed a branch to Jesus, the true vine, abiding in him, resting in him, waiting for him, serving him, and living only that through me, too, He may show forth the riches of his grace, and in due time give his fruit to a perishing world".

So, then, it is when one tries thus to understand the meaning of this parable that the blessed command spoken in connection with it will come home in its true power. The thought of what the vine is to the branch, and Jesus to the child of God, will give new force to the words "Abide in Me". It will be as though he says "Think, child, how completely I belong to thee; I have joined myself inseparably to thee; all the fulness and fatness of the vine are thine in very deed. Now thou art one in Me, be assured that all I have is wholly thine. It is my interest and my honour to have thee a fruitful branch. Only abide in Me, yield thyself wholly to my teaching and rule, simply trust my love, my grace, my promises. Only believe I am wholly thine. I am the true vine, thou art the branch. Abide in Me." What sayest thou, O child of God? Shall I longer hesitate, or think how hard it is to live like a branch because I thought of it as something I had to accomplish? Shall I not believe that I am in him, He himself will keep me, and enable me to abide? Beloved, is not our answer "Yes, I will abide in thee, blessed Lord Jesus"? O Saviour, how unspeakable is thy love. We can only yield ourselves to thy love with the prayer day by day that thou wouldst unfold somewhat of its precious truth, and so encourage and strengthen thy loving children to do what our hearts long to do, ever, only, wholly to abide in thee.

God himself has united you to Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made into us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1.30). "My Father is the husbandman" (John 15.1). The whole Christian life depends upon the clear con-

sciousness of our position in Christ. "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus". We must remember our union to Christ, especially that it is not our own doing, but the work of God himself. As the Holy Spirit teaches us to realise this, we shall see what a source of assurance and strength it must become. If it is of God alone that I am in Christ, then God himself, the Infinite One, becomes my security for all that I can need or wish in seeking to abide in Christ. Try and understand what it means, this wonderful "Of God in Christ".

In becoming partakers of this union with Christ, there is a work God does, and also a work we have to do. God does his work by moving us to do our work. The work of God is hidden and silent; what we do is something distinct and tangible. For instance, conversion and faith, prayer and obedience, are conscious acts of which we can give a clear account, while the spiritual quickening and strengthening which come from above are secret and beyond the reach of human sight. So it may be that when the believer says "I am in Christ Jesus" he may look more on the work which he did than to that wondrous secret working of God by which he was united to God. It is of great consequence that the mind should be led to see that behind the turning, believing, and accepting Christ, there is God's Almighty Spirit doing its work, inspiring our will and carrying out his own purpose of love, in planting us in Christ Jesus. So, we learn to praise and worship with new exultation and rejoice more than ever in the Divine favour which has made us partakers of Christ. At each step, as we review it, the song will come "Of God are we in Christ Jesus".

What hope and strength, what a sure standing ground it gives all who rest their right to Christ and all his fulness on nothing less than the Father's own purpose and work. We have thought of Christ the vine, and the called one as the branch; let us not forget that other precious work "My Father is the husbandman". The Saviour said "Every plant which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up", but every branch grafted by him into the true vine can never be plucked out of his hand. The same love and delight with which the Father watched over the beloved Son watches over every member of his Body, all who are in Christ Jesus.

What confident trust this faith implies, not only as to the being kept in safety to the end, but especially in the being able to fulfil in every point the object of being invited to Christ. The branch is as much in his charge and keeping as the vine; his honour is as concerned in the well-being and growth of the branch as of the vine. God, who has chosen and planted us in Christ, has thereby

engaged to secure, if we will but let him, by yielding ourselves, that we too shall be to his praise in Christ Jesus. What confidence and urgency this will give! How it will quicken the sense of independence, and make us see that praying without ceasing is indeed the one need of our lives. An unceasing waiting upon God, who has united us to Christ to perfect his own Divine work, to work in us both to will and to do his good pleasure! What a motive this is for the highest activity, in the maintenance of a fruitful branch life. Motives are mighty powers; it is of great importance to have them high and clear. Here, surely, is the highest. *"You are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works"*; grafted by him into Christ; what for? Unto the bringing forth of much fruit! Whatever God creates is exquisitely suited to its end. He created the sun to give light. How perfectly it does its work! He created the eye to see. How beautifully it fulfils its object! He created the "new man" unto good works. How admirably it is fitted for its purpose!

So then, each branch can say, "Of God, I am in Christ, created anew, made a branch of the vine, fitted for fruit bearing". Oh that believers would cease looking at their old natures, and complaining of their weaknesses, as if God called them to what they were unfitted for; would that they would believably and joyfully accept the wondrous revelation of how God is uniting them to Christ, has constituted himself the Husbandman taking charge of their spiritual growth and fruitfulness. How quickly hesitancy would disappear, and under the influence of this mighty motive—faith in the faithfulness of him of Whom they are in Christ—their whole nature would rise to accept and fulfil their glorious destiny. So then, as we press onwards and upwards to our glorious inheritance, let us yield ourselves to the mighty influence of these words: "Of God are ye in Christ Jesus".

"He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." When we live by faith in the Son of God, the fruit of the spirit is seen in the life. There are times when the great Husbandman trims and prunes the vine. *"Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth that it may bring forth more fruit"*; thus Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the Husbandman. The pruning may cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand, or indifferent heart. Some branches may be found trailing on the ground; these must be cut from earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They must reach heavenward and find their support in God. Excessive foliage which draws life-sap from the fruit must be

pruned off. The overgrowth must be cut out to give room for the life-giving rays of the Sun of Righteousness, so the Husbandman prunes away harmful growth that the fruit may be richer. *"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."* The Lord indicated the kind of fruit when He said *"This is my commandment that ye love one another, even as I have loved you"*. The fulfilling of this commandment is to be the convincing and indisputable token of discipleship. Try to understand how this is so. We know that God is love, and that Christ came to reveal this, not as a doctrine, but as a life. His life in its wonderful self-abasement, self-sacrifice, was above everything the embodiment of Divine love, the showing forth to men, in such human manifestations as they could understand, how God loves. In Christ's love to the unworthy and ungrateful, in his humbling himself to death, He simply lived and acted out the life of Divine love. Just as Christ showed forth to the world the love of God, they, by living and loving just as He did, are to be perpetual witnesses to the love that gave itself to die. Amidst all the diversity of character, of language, or of station, they are to prove that love has made them members of one body and of each other, and has led them to forget and sacrifice self for the sake of the other. Their life of love is the chief evidence of being children of God. It is the love to each other as true followers of Christ that is ever put in the foreground as the link between love to God alone and to men in general. In Christ's intercourse with his disciples, this brotherly love finds the law of its conduct. It studies his forgiving and forbearing spirit with the seventy times seven as its measure. As it looks to his unwearied patience and humility, his meekness and lowliness and entire devotion to their interests, it accepts the instruction *"I have left you an example that ye should do as I have done to you"* (John 13.15). Following his example each will not live for himself, but for others. The law of kindness is on the tongue, for love has vowed that no unkind word shall cross the lips. It refuses even to listen to, or to think, evil of others. In gentleness and loving kindness, in courtesy and generosity, in its life of blessing, the Divine love which has been shed abroad in every heart of the children of God, shines out as it did in the life of Jesus. Does not the heart bound at the thought of the unspeakable privilege of thus showing forth the likeness of him who has loved us? Does it seem too high to attain? Remember that we have but to "abide in him" to be able to love like him. Regard this abiding in him more than ever as an abiding in his love. Rooted and grounded in a love that passeth knowledge, we receive of its fulness and learn to love. We learn

to love the brethren, even those who may be the most trying and unlovable to us. With the love of Christ in the heart, this command will cease to be a burden, and become a joy. *"This is my command, that ye love one another even as I have loved you"*. This is surely some of the "much fruit" which the great Husbandman is looking for. Let us try in all simplicity and honesty to translate this language into the daily goings in our homes and daily conduct that all men may see that we are living with Jesus and learning his ways. Let tempers be under the rule of Jesus. Let

the gentleness that refuses to take offence, that is always ready to excuse, to think and hope the best, mark our intercourse with all. Let the life be one of self-sacrifice, ever seeking the welfare of others. By the grace of God, the most commonplace life can be transfigured with the brightness of heavenly beauty, as the infinite love of the Divine nature shines through frail humanity. Beloved, let us praise God; we are called to love as Jesus loves, as God loves. Then, with fresh faith, accept the blessed injunction, *"Abide in Me, and I in you Abide in my love."*

The Burning Bush

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." (Exod. 3. 2-3).

It was "in the backside of the desert" somewhere in the wilds of Sinai, that Moses saw this strange thing. A more recent traveller through that same district, Louis Golding, in his book *"In the steps of Moses the Lawgiver"* has given a vivid description of something he himself witnessed which may have been the very means used by God to reveal himself to Moses those many years ago.

"I am at this point compelled to quote the apparition of a Burning Bush which was so exact a rendering of the strange and lovely marvel described in the Bible, that I quite literally was afraid to trust my eyes. The apparition lasted several seconds, and though I was aware of its exact rationale while it endured, I still said to myself it was a mirage or inward fancy. The thing happened "in the back of the wilderness" in one

of the wadis under the flank of Sinai. It was the evening of a hot and windy day. As we approached the arena where two or three wadis debouched, the winds met, and, joining forces, became a cyclone, a tall pillar of air violently rotating on its axis, its whole length defined by the sand it sucked up from the dry wadi bed. In the centre of this arena was a large thorny acacia, the only tree which grows in these regions. The sun had for some minutes been hidden behind a long bank of cloud. It remained hidden until the cyclone reached the acacia. Then in the moment the cyclone possessed itself of the tree, the sun hurled its rays obliquely upon their embrace. The whole tree went up in flame. The smoke of it soared in golden gusts. Every thorn was a spit of fire.

"It continued so for several seconds. It seemed as if the cyclone was impaled on the sharp spikes of the branches. It turned and thrust and thrust again. The bush burned with fire, and was not consumed. Then at last the cyclone freed itself, and went hurtling along one of the wadis. The tree was no more than a thorny acacia again, arid and lonely in the centre of the hills."

"Commended to God"—the art and secret of the true leave-taking of saints! "When we asunder part" is no mere empty or formal episode in the lives of God's loved ones. Even if we separate with good hopes (D.V.) of re-uniting again, the farewell clasp must be serious, for so much hangs on every passing hour; and so much yet remains to be accomplished within even the best of us, that it cannot be, in any way, an empty adieu. Spoken or unspoken, the heart should say "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his Grace . . . to build you up and to give you . . ."

The whole substance of religion is faith, hope and charity—by the practice of which we become united to the will of God; all beside is indifferent and to be used as a means that we may arrive at our end and be swallowed up therein by faith and charity.

* * * *

The cure for worry is to make our trust in God more real; to bring our faith in God into the dust and fret of life, into the problems, domestic, business, and personal that confront us day by day.

THE PAROUSIA

The promise "I will come again" (Jno. 14.3) has been associated—and rightly so—with the Scriptural foreview of the end of this Age and the winding up of affairs of this world preparatory to the inauguration of the new world order centred in Christ. There still remains some faith in mediæval ideas of a twenty-four hour Day of Judgment, the annihilation of the earth, the immediate and final condemnation of sinners, and so on, in connection with this "coming again" but Christian thought is increasingly tending towards what is perhaps a more rational and satisfying view of the purpose of the Second Advent. More and more is it being accepted that the Lord Christ comes for the purpose of eradicating evil from human society, by a process of evangelising and conversion bringing as many as can be persuaded into a state of harmony and union with God, so attaining that element in the Lord's prayer which looks forward to God's Will being done upon earth as it is in heaven. But all of this is going to take a long time—the Book of Revelation echoes the ancient Jewish concept that it will require a thousand years—and it is this whole period of time which in the New Testament is called the *parousia*—the presence—of the Son of Man.

This word *parousia* is sometimes made the basis of a battle of ideologies, of variant views regarding the nature and manner, and sometimes the time relative to our present position on the stream of history, of the Advent. There is really no justification for this. Unfortunately the A.V. translators rendered *parousia*—which occurs twenty-four times in the New Testament—by "coming" in all but one instance but in so doing they erred. They were probably swayed by the then universal view of the brevity of the Advent, one day only. In fact the word is not a verb, but a noun, and means literally the fact of being alongside, being here or present. Most modern translators render it "presence" in all its occurrences. No qualification of the word is implied; it does not indicate whether the one present is visible or not, neither does it include any idea of time or duration. It just means being present.

It is vital at this point to realise that the fact of our Lord being, or not being, visible to human beings at his Advent, or at least at the time of his arrival, has no bearing upon the reality of his presence. In the day when the Authorised Version was translated this aspect of Christian theology was very simply explained. Heaven, as believed

by the scientific men of the day, was situated on the outer surface of a great "crystalline sphere"—a kind of glass globe—which completely encircled the earth just outside the sun, moon and stars, which themselves circled the earth. (This was known as the Ptolemaic cosmogony, superseded by more accurate ideas only in the late 17th century.) Christ, according to them, had only to descend through a few miles of atmosphere to the surface of the earth at his coming the second time. Today it is more easily understood that He comes to us, not from another place inside our universe, but from altogether outside it. One can by analogy picture the celestial world as existing upon a different wave-length, so that our Lord may conceivably be present upon the scene of earthly affairs without necessarily "tuning in", as it were, to the material creation of which we and this earth are part, and so not be capable of perception by human senses, sight, hearing and so on. That was the position during most of the forty days between his resurrection and ascension; only upon occasion did He become apparent in a terrestrial body. The rest of the time He was incapable of perception by his disciples and yet still near them. If, as is indicated by Scripture, Satan, the Enemy, has been banned from Heaven since his sin and confined to earth, he also must be invisibly present in a similar manner. This fact might help to explain why the early stages of the Advent are described as being thief-like, unobtrusive, not detected by human eyes and ears, but only by the mental and spiritual faculties, rightly appraising the signs of the times. The outward manifestations, appealing to the natural senses, come later. And this leads to a consideration of the various events which Scripture indicates as occurring during the *parousia*.

There is a climacteric point during the course of this period upon which all the constituent developments converge. Some end at that point, having commenced beforehand; others commence there and continue into the future. This climacteric is marked by the final overthrow of the power of evil and dominion of the rulers of this world-age, and the formal establishment of the sovereignty of the Lord Christ over the earth. Since the Church, the complete body of faithful dedicated Christian believers of all generations, is to be associated with Christ in the celestial sphere for the purpose of this sovereignty (Rev. 20.4; Matt. 13.43) they must have been already resurrected and "changed" (I Cor. 15. 51-52) into

his likeness before this point is reached. Likewise, since the earthly covenant people of God, Israel, purified and converted, is to be the Divine agent on earth for the evangelisation of the world during the Millennium. (Isa. 49.6-9; 62.19; 66.19) their preparation and final ordeal (Ezek. chaps. 38 & 39) must also be completed before this point. On the other hand, since the power of Satan to influence men and incite to evil remains until the assumption of power by Christ but not beyond, his Millennial restraint (Rev. 20.1) commences at this climacteric. It follows therefore that those Scriptures which depict the Advent as thief-like, unknown to man, unseen, describe that part of the parousia which falls before the climacteric, i.e. during the closing years of this present Age, for so long a period as the Scriptural descriptions of events can be identified as in process. During such period mankind at large is measurably or altogether in ignorance of the significance of such events or that the Advent has commenced; only the Church, the "Watchers", are conscious of the fact by means of their knowledge of the Scriptures and their spiritual discernment. Conversely, those Scriptures which depict the Advent as openly displayed, as a glorious spectacle universally seen by all men, describe that part of the parousia which falls after the climacteric, i.e. the entire duration of the Messianic or Millennial Age, a time when "*they shall see the Son of Man coming in power and great glory*" (Matt. 28.30), "*and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together*" (Isa. 40.5).

On this basis the events of the parousia fall into the following categories, each of which would require quite a lengthy treatise if justice was to be done to the Biblical presentation of same, but will be only briefly alluded to at this present.

The first five are events occurring or culminating prior to the end of this present Age and the inauguration of the Messianic era.

1. The destruction of the pseudo-Christian apostasy called by St. Paul in 2 Thess. ch. 2 the "Man of Sin". In his own day, he said, this apostasy was present in incipient form but could not be manifested until a "hindering power" was removed. It would then increase in power arrogating to itself the prerogatives of Christ, and would ultimately be destroyed by the "effulgence of his parousia" (presence). History has justified St. Paul's prediction by the emergence within the Church in early centuries of the thesis that the Church was to rule the world during this Age in the name of Christ; the power of paganism, the official religion of the Roman empire, precluded such development until the time of Constantine, early 4th century, when paganism was abolished

and Christianity made the State religion. The "hindering one" being thus removed, there grew up, side by side with but separate from the true Christian Church, an ecclesiastical — secular system of rule which ruled Europe, and all lands into which European influence penetrated, in the name of Christ but alien from his spirit. The "Holy Roman Empire", of the Middle Ages, the Inquisition, the various combinations of Church and State which have existed, all were aspects of this system. The 19th century saw its decline and end; from the French Revolution in 1794 to the loss by the Roman Catholic hierarchy of temporal power in 1870 the process continued, and it might fairly be said that the latter date marked its destruction by the "effulgence of his presence".

2. The progressive disintegration of the political and social order of this world, marked by the wars and revolutions, descending eventually into complete anarchy, foreseen by our Lord in Matt. 24 and elsewhere as "signs of his presence, and of the end of the Age". Christians throughout the 19th century saw this coming; the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 precipitated the forces of change which were accelerated by the world war of 1914, the Russian revolution of 1917, and the second world war of 1939. The commercial troubles of the present only accentuate this process and justify our Lord's reference in Luke 21. 25 to "*distress of nations with perplexity*" and "*men's hearts failing them for fear*"; Rev. ch. 18 affords a vivid symbolic picture of the effect upon the nations. All this, rightly understood, is characteristic of what our Lord referred to as the "days of the Son of Man", the early days of his presence.

3. The long-desired and long-expected restoration of the nation of Israel to its own land, predicted by so many of the Hebrew prophets as associated with Divine intervention in human affairs at the end of this Age, which in New Testament language is synonymous with the Second Coming of Christ. Commencing with the Zionist Congress of 1897 when the first movements were initiated, the British conquest of Palestine in 1917 and the Balfour Declaration for the national home for the Jewish people, increasing immigration leading to the proclamation of an independent State of Israel in 1948, to the "six-day" war of 1967, the ancient predictions have been fulfilled in such manner that they could not be fulfilled again. All these events signify the presence of the Son of Man.

4. The gathering to celestial life, by means of resurrection, of the complete Christian Church, including those who are still living during this period. A prominent teaching of the New Testa-

ment is that our Lord at his Advent will first thus gather his Church to himself and afterwards be revealed with them in glory to all mankind. It follows that a space of time separates the two events. Unlike the previous three events, there can be no outward or humanly perceptible evidence of this gathering although there will be at the later revelation. It is certain though that it must be completed before the end of this Age and the commencement of the outwardly manifest phase of the Advent and probably some little while before the end. Whether such resurrection is the work of a moment, an immediate and synonymous "rapture" of all, or the process is spread over a period of time, may be debatable in the absence of clear Scripture statements, but the fact that the other events of this initial phase are spread over about, and at least, a century or more may easily warrant the conclusion that the "change" of the Church is spread over a period. There would seem little reason for it to be otherwise, and it could thus be expected that each one on "finishing his course" is translated "in the twinkling of an eye" to join the assembly of the saints above.

5. The final onslaught of evil forces of this dying world against the converted nation of Israel, assembled in their own land, confident that God will deliver; and that unprecedented deliverance which is at one and the same time the end of this Age with all its evil, and the manifestation, to all mankind, of Christ with his Church in heavenly power, for the world's salvation. This must come after the gathering of the Church and it ends that period of the Advent which has been hidden and unseen from the world in general, and commences that which is apparent to all.

The implication of all this is that during this whole period the presence of our Lord has been an accomplished fact, although unrevealed to human sight.

After this climax to the Age come those events which appertain to the Millennial Age and so

also belong to the parousia.

6. The "binding of Satan". A vivid picture in Rev. ch. 20 shows an immediate consequence of the assumption of earthly dominion by Christ to be the restraining of Satan's powers of deceit and seduction "*that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled*". This of itself will prove a tremendous incentive to right living and avoidance of sin on the part of mankind.

7. The resurrection of the dead. Numerous Scriptures assert that the dead will return and be afforded a full and final opportunity to eschew all wrong-doing and declare themselves for loyalty and allegiance to God in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. This involves a stupendous work of world evangelisation which will be carried on by the Church from heaven and the Israel nation upon earth. The consequence will be that none will be lost who can possibly be persuaded to respond to the appeal of the Gospel and be saved.

8. The renovation of the earth. The promise is that the "desert shall blossom as the rose". The earth, the God-given home of mankind, has been polluted and devastated by man's mishandling of its amenities and resources. One of the great works of the Millennium will be the rectifying of the damage that has been done and this will be by the labours of mankind. In all of this men will learn the meaning of the original Divine injunction to administer and have dominion over the earth, and will do so for the good of all. (Gen. 1. 26.; 2.15).

9. Finally comes the end, when the processes of this earthly reign of Christ have done their work in reconciling to God all who prove capable of reconciliation, sin and sinners are no more, and the race of mankind is ready to enter into the eternal state. At this point Christ "*delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15.24-28). The purpose of the Second Advent will have been achieved. This is the end of the *parousia*.

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.

* * * *

It is a duty to think of and for others, in small things as well as in great, to study their feelings, to cultivate sympathy, forbearance, goodwill, and tenderness.

"THESE THINGS"

A study in
2 Pet. 1

The expression occurs no less than five times in eight verses. By "these things" Peter refers to the list of Christian virtues mentioned in verses 5 to 7, where he says "giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and love".

Note these five occurrences, and what the Apostle says about "these things" and their importance. The first is in verse 8. "*If these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*". The marginal rendering for "barren" is "idle", and Weymouth's translation brings out the meaning better; "*if these things exist in you and continually increase, they prevent you being either idle or unfruitful in advancing towards a full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*". Each part of this verse is important. "If *these things* be in you" has in the original the idea of existing in you as your permanent property or possession, something that has become a part of yourself. These things are furthermore not only *to be* in us, but *to abound* in us. In the original, the word "abound" has in it the thought of "to multiply". They are to exist in us not as expressions of a moral code, but as principles of an inner life. Where life exists there must be activity in the reproduction of itself, continually increasing, as Weymouth renders it, just as the cells of the living organism increase and multiply in the process of growth and development. The permanent possession of living principles like faith, virtue, etc., cannot but be accompanied by a process of multiplication in thoughts, words and acts in conformity with these principles. It would be impossible for such a life to be idle or unfruitful.

Notice, further, that the thought is not of not being barren nor unfruitful *in the knowledge* of Christ, as the Authorised Version has it, but of being neither barren nor unfruitful *in advancing towards a full knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ. As one writer expresses it, "the knowledge of the Lord is not the region in which their activity is to work, but the goal to which all that activity should be tending". This knowledge, the writer further points out, is the higher *personal* knowledge, in contrast with the lower general knowledge. We are exhorted to add to our faith, virtue, and to virtue *general* knowledge and all the other qualities mentioned so that we might be able thereby to reach unto the *personal* knowledge and love of Christ.

The second thing that Peter says about *these things* is that where they are wanting it results in spiritual blindness. "*But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*". A fable is told, how in the centre of a great forest a bird is perched on the topmost branch of a tall tree, singing with all his might. A fox at the bottom of the tree asks what it is making all the song about. The bird replies that it cannot help it, the view is so wonderful. "What do you see?" asks the fox. "I see mountains and meadows, a great dome of the blue sky and the sea far away." "I don't believe a word of it", said the fox, "I don't see anything but these trees. There isn't anything else to be seen". Spiritual vision is the ability to see far off, away beyond the things of sense and time, and such vision can only come from the possession of Christian faith and hope. Lacking *these things* no one can see beyond the "trees" of the present and the temporal. Only as the Spirit bears witness by *its fruits* that we are the children of God can there be any assurance that we are God's heirs. If we lack this assurance, there is no real ground for faith and hope, and there can therefore be no real spiritual vision.

Advancing years in natural life is often accompanied by failing eyesight. The reverse should be true of spiritual life. As these things abound in us increasingly the spiritual vision becomes clearer and clearer, until, as Bunyan pictures it in *Pilgrim's Progress*, the Delectable mountains are reached, from where it is possible to see the very gate of the Celestial City.

Continuing, Peter says that those lacking these things have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This implies not only a losing of sight, but an experience of moral relapse. People who are becoming defective in sight are sometimes apt to become negligent with regard to habits of cleanliness. When we lose the vision of God's holiness it is certain to be attended with negligence regarding holy living.

The third thing Peter says about *these things* is that by enabling us to make our calling and election sure they will secure for us an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Verse 10 says "*Wherefore the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure*". This follows naturally after the previous verse, where he has been showing how that the doing of these things will give clearness of spiritual vision, urging us

on to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended. The candidate for parliamentary election makes his *calling* sure when he accepts nomination and subscribes to the rules governing the election. He makes his *election* sure when he gains the approval of the electorate as reflected in their vote. The child of God makes his calling sure when he gives himself in consecration to God and daily seeks to confirm that calling by a life of sanctification. He makes his election sure when he wins the final approval of God. Of Enoch it is said that he was translated for the reason that before his translation he had this testimony, that he "pleased God". As God's approval was expressed in Enoch's translation, so will it be expressed in our "change" in the glory of the First Resurrection, when, called, chosen and faithful, we shall have made our election sure.

Continuing with verse 10, Peter says "for if ye do *these things*, ye shall never fall, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". The word for "fall" in the original means "to stumble". If ye do these things ye shall never stumble. This does not mean that they would never make a mistake, or have a setback. The thought in the Apostle's mind may be gathered from his use of the expression in the previous epistle, where he refers to Jesus as a stone of stumbling to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient. Jesus had come unto his own, and his own had received him not. Because not right at heart, they had stumbled, and so serious were the consequences that they had to be cut off from the favour of God. Stumbling as used here does not refer to the temporary slips of a man who is right at heart, for none knew better than Peter how easy it was to slip. It means rather the serious occasions of offence experienced by the man who at heart is at cross purposes with God. A man whose blood is pure can get quite a deep wound without causing permanent harm, but the person whose blood is unhealthy can develop blood poisoning from the merest scratch.

There is something grand about Peter's expression "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly". It reminds again of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the stirring account of the passing over of Valiant-for-truth. "When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side into which as he went he said, "death where is thy sting?" So he passed over, and *all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.*" What an abundant entrance the Lord Jesus had; "ten thousand times ten thousand", and thousands of thousands saying with a loud voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,

and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing". The picture which the Bible presents of the Christian life here is that of an *abundant* life, comprehending a peace that passeth all understanding and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. In like manner it pictures a fitting end for such a life in *an abundant entrance* into the everlasting kingdom, when as more than conquerors we shall have a Divinely royal reception.

The opposite of an abundant entrance is that of being saved, yet so as by fire. Lot stands forth as an example. In the destruction of Sodom he lost everything with the exception of his own life and the lives of his two daughters. Our ambition should be to live the full life here that God has designed for us, experiencing the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, and to win thereafter this abundant entrance. Do not let us be satisfied with anything less. What the glories are that await us there, neither tongue nor pen can show. One thing we know, "when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is". As the crowning feature of the life to come, Paul, speaking of it, ends by saying "so shall we ever be with the Lord". This will be our greatest joy, and it is manifest that we can be prepared for those delights of his immediate presence only if the spiritual qualities that Peter has been describing, exist and abound in us, here and now.

Going on to verse 12, we have the fourth occurrence of "*these things*". Peter says "*wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in the present truth*". In this section Peter is telling us that the possession of these things is essential to an establishment in the present truth. Present truth is an expression we often use to denote the fuller light enjoyed in these last days. Peter, however, was speaking here of the truth which was present with, and enjoyed by, the believers in his day, and has been present with and enjoyed by believers ever since. That truth was vastly different from the truth belonging to the old dispensation. It was different doctrinally, dispensationally and practically. Doctrinally it embraced all the new teaching associated with the ransom sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, and how the types and shadows of the ceremonial law were fulfilled in him. Dispensationally it comprehended all the new light regarding the ending of the Jewish Age and the opening up of the Gospel Age. Practically it contained all the new teaching regarding the possibility of deliverance from the law of sin and death, because of the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. All these were vital fundamental differences and it is the last feature that Peter has been stressing in his

emphasis on *these things*. Having a good understanding of the doctrines, and a good knowledge of the dispensational features of God's plan are not enough. To be established in the present truth one must possess *these things*. As this was true in Peter's day, so it is true to-day.

There is just one other occurrence, the fifth of the key note "*these things*" in this section. About thirty years before writing this letter, the Lord had given Peter a thrice repeated commission to feed his sheep. On the same occasion He had given him an indication that he was to die the death of a martyr. We find both of these ideas in the verses that follow. He says, "*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*"—performing thus to the very last the duties of a faithful shepherd. "*Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle even as our Lord Jesus*

Christ hath showed me." But Peter does not stop there. Like the Lord, whose spirit he has so richly imbibed, he thinks of the need of the sheep after he has been removed from them, and continues: "Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance". As if he would say, "this is the all important matter, as I have endeavoured to show by both my teaching and by my life. And now since I feel that the death by which I must glorify God is drawing nigh, I will do my utmost in the time that yet remains to impress this same truth indelibly on your minds". This is Peter's parting injunction. It was written not only for those who received it in his day, but for us living to-day. May we take it as a personal message from him, and may we each endeavour to have *these things* of such vital importance always in remembrance.

In, but not of, the world

He was sharpening some pencils, a red one, a blue one, a green one, a yellow one, and some lead pencils. When he had finished, there lay tiny piles of coloured dust and some powdered black lead. The colours showed up startlingly clear in the sunlight. He idly shook the paper on which those tiny piles lay and all the dust coalesced together into an even sprinkling across the sheet; but still the tiny grains of red, blue, green and yellow shone out brightly amidst the black powder, making a variegated mosaic of pin points. Then he drew his finger across the page, rubbing the grains together. And now all the colour had disappeared, only an ugly greyish smudge showing where the coloured grains had become overpowered and absorbed by their too intimate contact with the

black.

So it is with the Christian in the world. Mingled with our fellows, like the coloured grains among the black, we can shine out brightly so long as we are *in* the world and not *of* it. We can be separate although intimately associated with them in the affairs of daily life; and by our association with them we can bring brightness into their lives, and make the world a better place. But if we become infected with the spirit of the world then our colour is overlaid with their black, and there is nothing left but the drab smudge. It is only when we maintain our separateness from the world in our association with them that we can fulfil our mission of being lights in a dark place.

PROGRESS

The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai has now installed a petrol pump to meet the needs of the many motorists from Israel who visit the area. It took Moses and his people forty years to get back to the Promised Land from the holy mount—but that was before the petrol pump was installed. Sharm-e-Sheikh, the territory where Moses spent forty years as a shepherd with his father-in-law, Jethro, has now, since its occupation by Israel during the six-day war, become a

thriving holiday resort, with hotels, sea sports, a nature reserve, and all the amenities demanded by tourists and holiday-makers alike. So far, however, there is no report that the well where the Hebrew leader first encountered the seven daughters of Jethro has been located and identified, but doubtless some enterprising business man will soon rectify this omission and erect an appropriate hostelry alongside.



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

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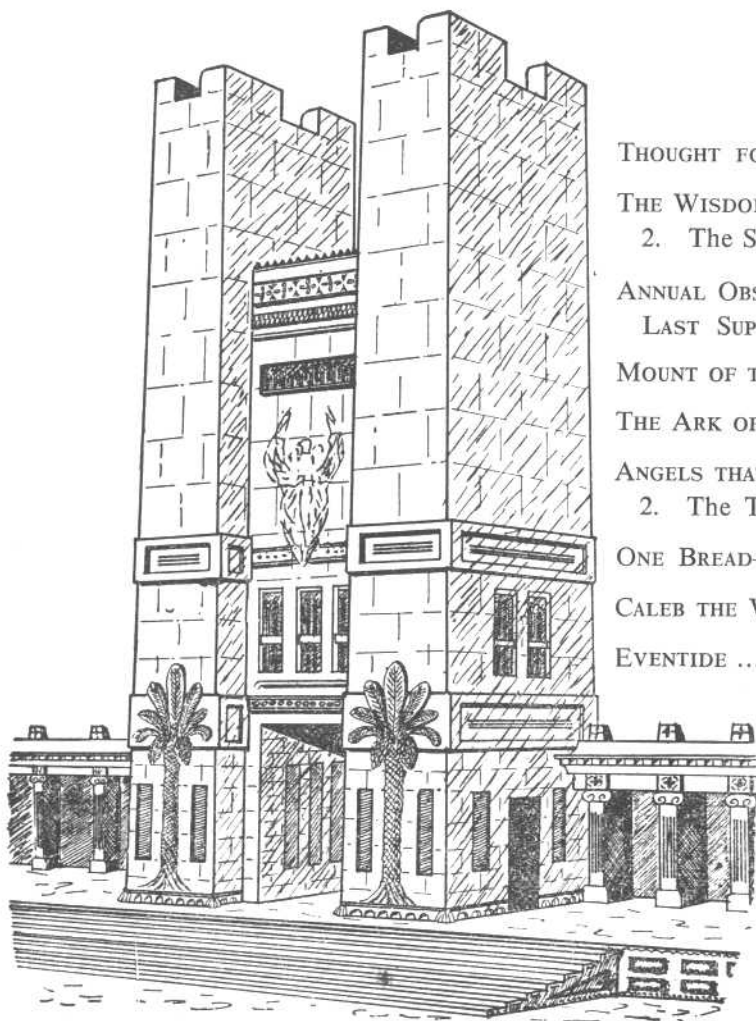
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"Man's conscience is the lamp of the Eternal, flashing into his inmost soul" (Prov. 20:27 Moffatt).

The average dictionary usually offers a passionless definition of conscience along the lines of "the moral sense which determines the difference between right and wrong". Put like that, it could be no more than the net effect of the individual's education and past experience, inciting to one course because of an inward realisation that it is the right course, or inducing feelings of guilt because the wrong course has been taken. In either case it is a matter personal to the individual with no sense or feeling of accountability to an external authority. Only when there is a conviction of one's own relation to the whole external creation and one's own position in the Divine creative Plan does conscience become a matter between one's own self and God. But even that does not altogether fulfil the nature and purpose of conscience. The Wise Man in Proverbs brings us up against the fact that it is the means whereby God probes into the innermost recesses of our hearts and minds and shows us up for what we really are—not to condemn but to help, to lead us away from the things that are wrong and in the way of the things that are right. The New English Bible does not use the word "conscience" in its rendering of this verse but it does say that *"the Lord shines into a man's very soul, searching out his inmost being"*. The very first story in the Bible presents us with the spectacle of a man and woman smitten by conscience, realising that they had severed the link which heretofore had united them with God. Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord as He walked in the Garden in the evening, and they were afraid and hid themselves, afraid of the searching light which already was flashing into their inmost souls. Many a good man has experienced the searching of that light in

times since then—Abraham when he faced the consequences of his denial of Sarai, Samson, blinded, as he turned the heavy cornmill at Gaza, David while he listened to the stern denunciation of Nathan over the matter of Bath-sheba. But it has always been a purifying light, a light that dispels darkness and heals corruption and illumines the way from death unto life. When Adam was created he possessed the enduring undying life, in perfect union with God, but when he sinned he lost that life and became subject to death like all other terrestrial creatures. Nevertheless a little of the Divine gift remained in him and that little was conscience. That little is in all his descendants and therein resides the life-line which will at the end enable every man who so wills to recover full unity with God. This unity is inherent in the word itself. The basic Greek word which gives us "conscience" in the New Testament has as its underlying source the idea of a knowledge shared with another, a participation of two minds, as though each is privy to the thoughts of the other. The Father himself is privy to our thoughts and cognisant of our actions; the voice of conscience is that which conveys to us the knowledge of his approval or disapproval, of his guidance away from the things that are wrong and towards those that are right.

Gone from us

—:—

Sis. D. Hudson (Welling)
Bro. F. Quennell (Warrington)
Bro. J. Sutcliffe (Forest Gate)
Bro. H. A. Taylor (West Wickham)
Sis. N. Watson (Aldersbrook)

—:—

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

2. The Supremacy of God

Elihu's first thesis is the inerrancy of Divine Wisdom. Because God is all-wise, nothing to which he sets his hand can possibly go wrong. If to the untutored mind of man it seems that some things are in fact grievously wrong, the explanation is not that God has erred, not that God is unjust, but that man is unable to perceive the full extent of Divine activity, unable to see the end which God has in view and toward which He is working. In this understanding of the matter Elihu is passionately sincere and grounded upon a basis of firm conviction. "My words" he says "shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly" (33.3). "Out of my straightforward heart come my sayings" is how Leeser translates. There is no boasting here, no egotism. These are the words of a man who knows, and who knows that he knows, and is not afraid to speak of what he knows. There is a reflection of this in words of James the half-brother of Jesus "who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew . . . his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3. 13). There is an old saying, said to have been coined by the ancient Chinese, which runs "He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; shun him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a child; teach him. He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep; wake him. He who knows, and knows that he knows, is a wise man; follow him." Elihu knew, and he knew that he knew; that is why his words, preserved to our own time, still constitute a wonderful exposition of that wisdom from above which is the Christian's guide through life.

Now he comes right down to the fundamental basis of all things with which mankind has to do, "The Spirit of God hath made me" he declares "and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (33.4). The entire theological system of Elihu stands upon this basis and he knows no other. If he lived in our day he would have no time at all for the modern theory of evolution from protoplasm; the language he employs shows that he takes his stand on the literal acceptance of the first story in the Bible "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2. 7). There is a striking exactitude about his choice of terms. "Spirit" in verse 4 is "*ruach*" which word when used in connection with God defines the dynamic energy of the Holy

Spirit, which is the expression of God in the active exertion of his power as in creation ("*the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*") whereas "breath" is "*neshamah*", the life-giving influence which is manifested in the breathing of living creatures. David had the same idea in the 104th Psalm when he said, speaking of the animal creation "*thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*" (Psa. 104. 29. 30). In this text both "breath" and "spirit" are *ruach*, this because the breath is that of the creature, not of the Almighty, and *ruach* is used in its mundane sense of "wind". But in both cases, as so consistently throughout the Scriptures, the breath and life of man are indissolubly linked and both entirely dependent upon God who is at one and the same time the Source and Sustainer of life. All life emanates from him and without him no life can continue. So Solomon says (Eccl. 12. 7) speaking of human death "*then shall the dust return to earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*". Later on in his discourse Elihu is to show that this is the basis and assurance of life after death; man can only attain that after-life by means of a resurrection from the dead, but the fact that the spirit has returned to God who gave it is an assurance that it is in safe keeping and in the resurrection will be "clothed upon" with a body suited to its exalted resurrection state (see 1 Cor. 15. 35-54 and 2. Cor 5. 1-4).

The first verse of chapter 33 makes plain that Elihu's words are addressed directly to Job himself—"Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken unto my words" (33. 1). Now he requests, politely yet firmly, that Job shall put himself in a position to refute Elihu's philosophy, if he can: "If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, and stand up" (33. 5). Lest this attitude should seem in Job's eyes to indicate a claim to superiority, the young man immediately hastens to voice his realisation that he and Job stand together on an equal level before God. "Behold, I am in the same relation as thyself toward God. I myself also am cut out of the clay" (33. 6 Leeser). This is the true expression of what in other connections has been called the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Despite his personal consciousness of the possession of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual enlightenment which comes with that possession,

and the magnitude of his mission as a messenger of God, Elihu insists that he is but a man as are other men, created by God to be a co-citizen and joint-heir of the earth and all that is in it. Peter had the same insistence when Cornelius would have worshipped him as a representative of God, preventing him with the words "*Stand up; I myself also am a man*" (Acts 10. 26). And the revealing angel in the Book of Revelation, even though of a higher state of existence than the human, forbade the prostration of the saintly John, saying to him "*See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets . . .*" (Rev. 22. 9). Many a mediæval—and modern—ecclesiastical dignitary could take a lesson from this far-sighted Arab of so many centuries ago, and reflect that the honour and privilege of being a Christian minister is given not for personal aggrandisement or because God would elevate the recipient to a position of lordship over God's heritage, to use St. Peter's expression in 1. Pet. 5. 3, but rather that he might serve his fellows in things pertaining to God. "*I am among you as he that serveth*" said Jesus. So Elihu is at pains to insist that any effect of his words must be credited to the content of his message and to its Divine Author, not to any personal impressiveness or power of his own, for he was only an ordinary man among men. "*My terror*" says he "*shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee*" (33. 7). From the purely natural, everyday point of view, there was nothing in Elihu of which to take notice. Only in his message, he insists, is he to be heeded.

Now comes the first accusation. Job is to be confronted with his own words and by his own words he is to be judged. "*Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying . . .*" (33. 8). The following words are those of Job, culled from his speeches during the long discussions which preceded Elihu's intervention, and which the young man has remembered that he might use them in his refutation. "*I am clean without transgression*" says Job "*I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths*". (33. 9-11). This is a pretty sweeping claim for a man to make, and a rather serious charge of unjust dealing to lay against God. Even the evident sincerity of Job in making such a statement does not excuse it. He really ought to know better than to claim complete innocence and in the same breath charge God with unjust dealing because he has entered into a share of the evils which admittedly afflict all mankind. But Job is not the only one

who has been guilty of this lapse. Who amongst us has not at some time or another come across someone who has been faced with some personal disaster and has demanded to know "why has God done this to me?" A loved one is stricken with grave illness or the victim of a tragic accident. "Why did God let it happen? She never did anyone any harm? The people down the street are regular blackguards and they get off scot free and everything goes alright for them. It isn't fair." Of course it isn't fair. The incidence of sin and evil comes upon all men indiscriminately; the sins of one have their effects upon another. The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, as said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel when he was faced with a similar plaint in his own day. And the reason is fundamental; *the human race is a unity and in this marvellous terrestrial creation which God has designed for man's happiness and well-being it is and must always be true that no man liveth unto himself.* (Rom. 14. 7). That is why the sin of Adam has affected his entire posterity, why it is that in Adam all die. But it is also gloriously true that in Christ all men can be made alive, that by faith in Christ and acceptance of Christ to the extent of complete dedication of life to Christ, the righteousness of Christ can become the basis on which any man and every man, "whosoever will" (Rev. 22. 17) can become part of that unity which is brought back into full harmony with God in the Messianic Age and ushered into those never-ending Ages of glory which God has prepared for those who will eschew sin and take their appointed place in God's perfect and sinless creation.

But Job was in no mood to philosophise to this extent. At this moment he was angry and embittered with the anger and bitterness of the self-righteous man who feels that God has let him down. Job knew well enough that the words of his so-called "comforters" were empty and hollow; he knew God sufficiently well to realise that nothing they had suggested came as yet anywhere near the root of the problem. He was hardly prepared at this stage to listen with the necessary patience to the younger man Elihu and in any case he had no basis as yet for any confidence that Elihu could do any better than the others. He knew only that he had served God to the best of his ability throughout a long and honourable life and God had rewarded him with complete and utter disaster, and he was morose and resentful. "*I am pure without transgression, I am quite clean, and there is no iniquity in me*" is the eloquent manner in which Leeser translates his plea. Yet God had regarded him as an enemy, putting his feet in

the stocks— mediæval English readers would recognise the force of that allusion better than their fellows of to-day, but is an accurate rendering of the ancient punishment concerned—and watching all his paths so that he could not get away. In the intensity of Job's mental stress and sense of injustice he was hardly prepared to listen to reason.

The younger man's calm yet firm reply sets the standard he will maintain. "*Behold, in this thou art not just*" he says. "*I will answer thee; for God is far greater than a mortal*" (33. 12 Leeser). Here is the first principle to which all must give assent. God, who is the great First Cause and Creator of all things; God, who is the source and sustainer of all life, wherever and in whatever form it appears; God, who exists in eternity, and who was before anything that is made was made, is so self-evidently greater than man and of such infinitely surpassing wisdom and knowledge that no man can ever presume to criticise or question his actions. Whatever God does, that thing must be right. The wisdom of God may not at any time be questioned. "*Wherefore against him hast thou contended, for with none of his reasons will he respond*" (33. 13 Rotherham). It is true that "the

Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3. 7) but that is because the prophets are men dedicated to his service and fit receptacles for his Holy Spirit, men who have completely submerged their own wills into the will of God whom they serve. The Holy Spirit can find no entry into a heart that is trusting in its own reasoning and questions the ways of God when they lead into places not capable of understanding by human knowledge. There must always be a definite place for faith in the life of any man who would serve God, and at this stage in his life Job had found no such place. He did find such a place later on, at the end of the story. So Elihu had to lay down as a preliminary maxim the unpleasant truth that Job could not expect God to come down and state his reasons. Job must first of all concede that whatever God was doing was right and good, and would prove to be such in the end, because it could not possibly be otherwise if it came from God. And to illustrate that principle Elihu proceeds to show how Divine Wisdom is manifested in the operation of his Plan for the redemption of man from the curse of sin and death.

(To be continued)

ANNUAL OBSERVANCE OF THE LAST SUPPER

The sacrament of Holy Communion, or the Eucharist, as it is variously called, has its origin in our Lord's words at the Last Supper, "this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22.19). Although its significance lies in the realm of our relationship to our Lord and his offering on our behalf, the ceremony as such is a ceremony of remembrance, and this is an aspect which ought not to be forgotten. For this reason it has not inaptly been called the Memorial of our Lord's death. The fact that its very institution arose out of the celebration of the Jewish Passover, which was also a festival of remembrance, and that it stands in relation to the Christian very much as the Passover does to the Jew, is a further pointer in this direction.

The annual celebration of the Passover is itself called a Memorial. In giving Moses his instructions for the institution of the Passover the Lord commanded that the day in which it occurred should be remembered or memorialised throughout all subsequent generations. "*And this day shall be unto you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your*

generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Exod. 12. 14). When the Septuagint translators rendered the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, they used the Greek word which appears as "remembrance" in Luke 22.19 and I Cor. 11. 24-25 to translate the Hebrew word appearing as "memorial" in Exod. 12. 14. In other words, "memorial" in the O.T. and "remembrance" in the N.T. have one and the same meaning. When Jesus said "this do in remembrance of me"—as a memorial of me—He was saying just what God had said to Moses fifteen centuries previously "this day shall be unto you for a memorial". Although generally known as Holy Communion or the Eucharist, there is quite good Scriptural ground for associating with these the description "the Memorial of our Lord's death".

Unlike Passover, Christian celebration of the Last Supper is practiced by most communities at varied and irregular intervals—monthly, weekly, upon special occasions, and so on. It tends to lose sight of the element of commemoration and expression of faith in an event which happened

two thousand years ago, stressing more the aspect of personal communion with God and with Christ and the re-affirmation of union with Christ and dedication to his service. It is to be feared that even this latter factor is increasingly being overlooked in these prosaic days and this may be one side-effect of the customary comparative frequency of celebration. The solemnity and significance of any ritual is likely to be blurred by frequent repetition.

It cannot be said that the New Testament gives much guidance on the frequency of observance. The story of the Last Supper is narrated by the three Evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Paul refers to it twice in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. And that is all. Nowhere else is there any mention of the subject.

Luke's preservation of the Lord's request "this do in remembrance of me" indicates his wish that the simple ceremony of shared bread and wine which He had instituted following the Passover meal was to be repeated periodically, after He had left them, in remembrance. It was to be celebrated in recollection of that tragic week-end, to re-invigorate their faith and hope, to preserve in their minds and hearts the meaning and implication of the broken body and shed blood, and to keep alive the consciousness of their living union with him. All these things had their birth around that table that night and each subsequent celebration was intended to revive their memory and confirm their faith in the things that were said and done that night. That is why the ceremony as such is best called the Memorial of our Lord's death.

Paul is responsible for the only expression which makes any attempt to define the repetition of the Memorial. Writing to the Corinthians, he says, "*I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread . . . and took the cup . . . saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*". His version of Jesus' words is more complete than that of Luke's, just as Luke's is more complete than that of the other two. Having quoted the Lord's words, he then concludes "*for as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth (manifest, demonstrate, witness to) the Lord's death till he come*" (I Cor. 11. 23-26).

This introduces another purpose in the celebration. It is not intended solely for the inward stimulus and communion of the celebrant but also as an outward witness to others of the reality of the faith. This continual repetition of the original Supper is a lasting demonstration of faith in our Lord's promised Second Coming at the end of the

Age to receive his own to himself and to convert the world. No matter how long the time be extended, how distant the day when He fulfils the promise "I will come again", each successive celebration of the ceremony, in whatever place and under whatever circumstances, is an additional testimony that his own are waiting and watching for his appearing. Faith in the promised Advent will never die out from the earth.

"As oft as ye drink it" does not define any particular interval between successive celebrations. It could apply equally well to once a week or once a year. It might easily be argued that the matter is left quite open so that every Christian and every Christian body may order the matter according to their sense of what is fitting and what it means to them. It could well be that this is one of the provinces in which Paul's dictum "let every man be persuaded in his own mind" can be held to apply.

There is no instance of any particular celebration by any particular church of the Apostolic Age recorded in the Book of Acts, or alluded to in any part of the New Testament, from which the original practice could be discerned. In Christian literature of the first two centuries the subject is somewhat beclouded, since the Early Church instituted a number of different festivals commemorating various aspects of the Faith and happenings connected therewith, and nothing definite can be gleaned. Additionally it was a long time before observance of the purely Jewish festivals such as Passover died out in the Jewish section of the Church. Not until much later does the evidence of monthly or weekly celebrations emerge, and by then it is fairly obvious that the memorialising of our Lord's death had become confused and identified with a completely distinct and different custom of the Early Church, the *Agape* or "Love-feast".

The beginning of this custom was in Apostolic days and was called by the early believers the "breaking of bread". One reference is in Acts 2. 42-46 and the other in Acts 20.7. The custom was to meet early on the Lord's day and share a simple meal together, with prayer and praise, in symbol of their fellowship and brotherhood in Christ. The expression "love feast" occurs in Jude 12 and an evident allusion to the same in 2 Pet. 2.13. This custom persisted for several centuries and is still to be found in some Christian communions to-day. Despite the impression in some quarters to the contrary, it has nothing to do with the ceremonial of the Last Supper. One very clear description of the procedure is left on record by Tertullian, (A.D. 217) in his "*Apologia*", ch. 39, where he says "*Its object is evident from its name, which signifies love. In these*

feasts, therefore, we testify our love towards our poorer brethren, by relieving their wants. We commence the entertainment" (this word has the sense of hospitality in this context) *"by offering up a prayer to God; and after eating and drinking in moderation, we wash our hands, and lights being introduced, each individual is invited to address God in a Psalm, either taken from the Scriptures or the produce of his own meditations. The feast concludes as it began, with prayer".* It is plain that this ceremonial feast has nothing in common with the celebration of the Lord's death as represented in the Memorial or Holy Communion and was an entirely different custom. In other places Tertullian refers to the "Eucharist" or the "Sacrament of the Eucharist" in terms which leave no doubt that here he is talking about an entirely different thing although even so he gives no clear lead as to the frequency of its celebration.

The meeting addressed by Paul at Troas (Acts 20. 7-12) was commenced by a "love-feast", and from the description it would appear that this was a weekly celebration at Troas.

In the face of this total absence of information as to how often the Apostolic Church celebrated the Memorial we can only put ourselves in the place of those first believers and ask ourselves what would we have done in like circumstances. All their lives they had been accustomed to keep the Passover, once every year, on the precise anniversary of the night of the Exodus, the 14th day of the first month, Nisan. That celebration was a memorial of a past event, looking backward over the centuries to a great deliverance. Now they were told that that ceremony, so far as they were concerned, was at an end, to be replaced by another ceremonial which was also a memorial, one not only looking back to the central principle of their faith but also forward to another and greater deliverance. As Israel kept Passover year by year continually in witness to their faith in the past deliverance which made them the covenant nation, the chosen people of God, so now Christians will keep this Memorial in witness to their faith in that salvation which came at the Cross and in that deliverance for all the world which is yet future. As with Israel the essence of the ceremony was the slain lamb whose blood

delivered them from death when the destroying angel passed over the land, so in this later one the essence is the slain Lamb by whose blood all who believe and participate are redeemed from death. As in the Passover ritual Israel recognised their utter separation from the rest of the world and their consecration to, and union with, God, so now the occasion of the Memorial is a time of more than usual recognition of our dedication to God and our union with him. It is truly a time of Holy Communion.

What more natural then than to celebrate such a ceremony once every year, like the Passover it has superseded, and, so far as is practicable, on the anniversary of its institution? One could hardly expect that the Apostolic Church had any other mind on the matter; quite spontaneously and naturally they would fall into the habit of annual observance and no one would question it. The very infrequency of its occurrence may be partial explanation of the fact that so little reference is made to it in Early Church records.

Our Lord had little use for outward ceremonial. He enjoined only two upon his followers—baptism and the Memorial of his death. The fact that He did enjoin these testifies to the importance that He placed upon both; but a due sense of that importance is probably best preserved by relative infrequency of repetition. Baptism is a solemn and soul-lifting experience for the participant; it occurs only once in a lifetime but its influence remains throughout life. Baptism repeated once a week would speedily lose its solemn significance and come to mean very little. So with the Memorial; it may well be that those who observe the ceremony once only in the year find it a far more deeply spiritual and life-enriching experience than if it were performed monthly or weekly. And yet there must be many to whom their personal Communion with the Lord in the service means so much more than the remembrance of the event that is past that the loss of their weekly time of realised intimate union with him would be a loss indeed. Perhaps Jesus knew all this, and in his wisdom and compassion left the mandate wide open to suit the varied spiritual needs of all who in after days would become his. "As oft as ye drink it" He said "do it in remembrance of Me".

Convention. The usual Warrington Easter Convention is planned for 9-11 April in the Masonic Hall, Winmarleigh Street, Warrington. For information and details write Mrs. D. Shaw, 25, Fothergill St., Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 3QQ.

Face the work of every day with the influence of a few thoughtful, quiet moments. Do not meet other people, even those of your own home, until you have first met the great Guest and honoured Companion of your life—Jesus Christ.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *What is meant by the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven given to Peter? Is it the proclamation of the Gospel? (Matt. 16.19 and 18.18).*

A. Yes, but more than that. The term "bind" used here ("*whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*") which normally has the meaning of limiting or restraining, is used idiomatically to forbid, prohibit or declare illicit. Both Peter in Matt. 16.19 and all the disciples in Matt. 18.18 were commissioned to preach the Gospel to all who would listen and to instruct those who believed in the truths of the faith and the elements of Christian life. In conferring that commission upon them our Lord assured them that whatever they declared to be contrary to his Gospel, forbidden to the converts, on the one hand, and whatever they declared to be in harmony with the Gospel, allowable, on the other hand, would be endorsed by Heaven. Our Lord's confidence in the future soundness in faith and doctrine of his disciples enabled him to tell them that the manner in which they carried on the work of the Gospel after his death would assuredly have his approval. Peter was to take the lead; he was to use the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to open the way to that Kingdom to all who would enter. It has before this been suggested that there were two keys, one to admit the Jews and the other the Gentiles. Peter used both.

Q. *What did our Lord mean by saying we should make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, in Luke 16.9?*

A. He certainly did not mean that we are to make the mammon of unrighteousness our friend; that goes against all the teaching of the Gospels. "Mammon" is an Aramaic word meaning wealth or possessions of any kind. The steward in the parable had control over a considerable amount of his master's "mammon" but he had used that position for his own selfish ends and not to make himself true friends in his dealings with his master's tenants. When he was dismissed he had to resort to questionable methods to gain himself some friends—without real guarantee that he would be successful. Jesus condemned him and called him the unjust steward and then, teaching by contrast, exhorted his disciples to use the mammon at their disposal to make true friends, heavenly friends, that when it, the mammon, should fail, as fail it must do eventually, those friends would receive them into the everlasting home. In other words, make use of such of the

things of this world that we have, to lay up treasure in heaven. The things of this world will eventually fail, but the treasure in heaven will abide for ever. If we do not make heavenly friends now by our use of the earthly mammon we shall not be of those who, when it fails, will be received with joy into the everlasting habitations.

("When ye fail" in the A.V. is incorrect and should be rendered "when it fail". "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon..." is literally in Greek "make to yourselves friends out of the mammon...".)

* * * *

Q. *Jesus told Nicodemus that "no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven" i.e. himself (Jno. 3.13). How can this be understood in the light of Enoch and Elijah, both of whom were taken to heaven without dying?*

A. This very general impression, that Enoch and Elijah went to heaven without passing through death, is quite erroneous. Past ages, but not the present, can be forgiven for not realising that no human being as such can enter the celestial world, which is a different order of life. St. Paul lays down that "*flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 15.50) and Enoch at least is one who is said in Heb. 11.13 to have "*died in faith*". Enoch was "translated" which means to be taken from one place and put down in another, transferred, as we would say. This only need mean that he was taken from among the men with whom he lived and set down at some other place where he lived the rest of his life by himself, not seeing the operation of death in the world. Although the Bible does not go into this extent of detail, the fixed Jewish tradition is that this is what actually happened. According to 2 Kings 2.11-18, Elijah was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven, this obviously indicating the atmospheric heavens—which is as far as a whirlwind could carry a body—so that eventually he would be dropped on earth again, not surviving such a fall. The same thing has happened many times in lands affected by whirlwinds and tornadoes. Elijah's disciples evidently realised that this was what had happened, for they expressed the opinion that the "*wind of the Lord hath taken him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley*" and so they searched for his body, unsuccessfully, for three days. There is really no evidence in either of these cases that the narratives imply the entry of these men, living human beings, as such into the heavenly realm itself.

MOUNT OF THE EAST

Away on the frontier between Persia and Iraq, the ancient Bible lands of Elam and Babylon, there is a mountain. Not a very conspicuous mountain as mountains go, but one that had great significance for the descendants of the sons of Noah in the centuries that followed the Flood. They called it the Mount of the East, the dwelling-place of the gods, and from that mountain, said they, came the survivors of the Flood to bring new life to a world that had died. Generation after generation handed down the story, how the vessel carrying those survivors had stranded upon that mountain, and the great god Enlil had conferred upon the king who built the vessel the gift of immortality, and taken him away from amongst men to dwell for ever in the glory land with the gods. And as the people multiplied and tilled their fields and tended their cattle and built their villages they looked back to that mountain as the symbol of resurrection and new life, a landmark between the old dark world of sin and violence and corruption which had been so utterly destroyed by Divine judgment; and this new one, so full of opportunity and promise, in which God had made all things new.

Came the time when men had migrated so far from the mountain that they could no longer see its twin peaks rising above the horizon, and the distance was too great for them to visit it for worship, and their elders told them it was a sacred place and should not be approached. So they consulted together and determined that they would build themselves a centre of worship where a priesthood should dwell, and a great tower reaching into the heavens which should remind them of, and represent, their holy mountain. So they called the tower by a name which in their language means a mountain peak, and the priestly village which surrounded it, and the great courtyard in which it stood, they called at the first Tin-tir-ki, which means the Place of Life. But in later times, when the tribes had quarrelled and began to separate, the sons of Ham called it Kadingirra, which meant the Gate of God and the sons of Shem called it Bab-ilu, which in their language also meant the Gate of God. And how much they remembered of the things God must have told Noah regarding his Plan for mankind when He walked with him we do not know, for nothing that may have been written down in that far-off day has survived to be discovered. But writings of men who lived in the days when

Abraham was a small boy have been found, writings of an age when the original worship of one God had degenerated into worship of gods many and lords many, and those writings do tell us of Marduk the Redeemer, the son of the supreme God, who descended to earth to fight man's battles and in some way not very clear went down into Arallu, the world of the dead. And at his going light departed from the earth and all joy was stilled, the sun veiled his face and the flowers and trees died, the sheep and cattle died, until the supreme God intervened and brought his son back from the shades so that the earth rejoiced once more and all was well. And because all this became central to the faith of these people there was held every year in the city of Babylon a great feast in honour of Marduk during the first half of the month Nisan, in which all that was related of the death and resurrection of Marduk the Redeemer was enacted, with weeping at his death and then joy at his resurrection. Two thousand years later, when the Jewish prophet Daniel lived in Babylon, those same ceremonies were still held every year, and Daniel must have witnessed them many times during his long life spent in that city.

It is a remarkable thing that so close a parallel to our Lord's life and death and resurrection should be known amongst men nearly three thousand years before He was born at Bethlehem. One wonders how much of the Divine purpose was revealed to Adam, to Eve, to Enoch, to Noah, and others sharing their faith, in those dim far-away days, to be passed down from father to son and then slowly submerged in the rising tide of idolatry which enveloped men in later times. It is a significant fact, only established by the work of quite modern archaeologists during this last half-century, that the many gods and goddesses of the Babylonians and Assyrians and their predecessors the Sumerians grow less and less in number the farther one goes back in history, until at a time which might be equated with the lifetime of Heber the ancestor of Abraham, only one God is known, and He supreme over all. It might well be that the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of Noah, like Abraham in later years, rejoiced to see Christ's day, and believed in the coming death and resurrection of man's Redeemer just as we look back to the reality fulfilled.

It is also a remarkable thing that the day on

which the Ark grounded on the mountain was the 17th day of Nisan (the year began in the Autumn in archaic times and Nisan was then the seventh month) commencing on the evening of the day our Lord rose from the dead. On that day Noah touched the beginnings of a new world and a new life; the old world and the old life were forever behind him. At the dawn of that day our Lord came forth to a new world, higher than all heavens, and the power of an endless life. The old earthly life and the body of his humiliation were left behind for ever; death no more had dominion over him. His resurrection was to power and glory, a rising up to do battle with and vanquish the power of evil, to bring superabundant life to the earth and establish everlasting righteousness.

The ancients caught that idea too. They looked upon that mountain and they likened it to a powerful wild ox at rest, waiting to spring up and do battle. A twelve mile long and five miles wide rounded hump, rising two thousand feet above the level of the plain, with two extensions at the highest end for all the world like two forelegs bent in the act of getting up, and a pair of slender peaks jutting another two thousand feet into the sky where the animal's horns would be. (No wonder they had an ancient psalm of praise in which they sang to the praise of the "*mountain of God in the east, whose double peak reaches into the skies; which is like to a mighty wild ox at rest, whose double horn shines as the sun.*") And that analogy has been carried over into the Scripture and became part of Israel's conception of Divine power reaching out for their protection and deliverance. Balaam likened Israel's conquering might to the fury of the wild ox; Moses used the same simile in his blessing on the two sons of Joseph. Most striking of all, the 22nd Psalm which depicts our Lord's triumph over evil and death and his exaltation to the heavens by the power of the Father, describes him as saying "*Thou hast heard me from the horns of the wild ox*" almost as if there was a remembrance here of that ancient mountain which for so long had been held to be the place of God's dwelling and his power.)

This is the story of Easter. The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed and has come forth to take his rightful place as the champion of righteousness in the conflict with evil. Judah is a strong lion, said Jacob (Gen. 49.9) recumbent in his strength, only waiting for the moment to spring up for the kill. Judah held the sceptre until He whose right it is should come to take and wield it. The Throne vision in Revelation pictures that too. "*The Lion of the tribe of*

Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed". . . . and, behold, there "*stood a lamb as it had been slain . . . and he came and took the book*" and opened the seals (Rev. 5. 5-8). And the voice of many angels, and eventually of all peoples everywhere, is heard ascribing honour, glory and power upon He who gained the victory. Such was the decree of God Most High. "*I have set my king upon Zion, the mount of my holiness*" (Psa. 2.6). Mount Zion, the place of the palace of Israel's kings, in Jerusalem, is the spiritual Mount of the East, the place of Divine sovereignty and power. "*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised . . . in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king*" (Psa. 48. 1-2). Throughout the Scriptures the holy mountain of God is the place from whence comes salvation and deliverance; from thence comes the resurrected Christ in all the glory of his heavenly power to bring that salvation to men. Talking of that hallowed time when He shall reign over the nations the prophet Joel says "*whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance.*" (Joel 2. 32). Isaiah (2.3) foresaw the day when the nations of earth will exhort each other to go up, not to the ancient Mount of the East with its man-made sanctity, but to "*the mountain of the Lord, the house of the God of Jacob*" and thus learn of his ways and his laws in their progress towards life everlasting.

In a spiritual sense our Lord remains at the top of the mountain, at the right hand of God, until in the wisdom of God the hour has struck for his coming again for the final stage of his work in this world. "Sit thou at my right hand" is the Divine injunction in Psa. 110 "until I make thine enemies thy footstool". When the time does come it is from the holy mountain that the powers of heaven issue forth to the destruction of evil and the deliverance of mankind. "*The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion.*" And here is associated not only the resurrection but the ascension of our Lord. In that noble psalm of praise which is the 68th Psalm He is depicted as ascending on high, having overcome all things, and there in the presence of God receiving gifts for men, gifts even for the rebellious of men, that the Lord God might eventually dwell among them. The first two chapters of the Book of Hebrews speak first of that high exaltation to the right hand of God and then go on to show how our Lord's previous submission to the limits of humanity for the suffering of death was the means whereby He might eventually cause death

to be no more and lead man into everlasting righteousness.

Even that ascension was associated with a mountain. It was from the Mount of Olives that the Lord ascended to his Father in the sight of his disciples. It was a hallowed mountain—hallowed by the scenes of the arrest in Gethsemane, the long discourse in which He described to his disciples the signs which should indicate his return, and by many other happenings not recorded, for He often, when in the vicinity of Jerusalem, resorted here with his disciples (Luke 22.39). Not only did he ascend from that mount; the disciples and the early Christians expected him to descend there at his return. The thought was established in their minds by an association of ideas with the words of Zechariah (14.4) where at the last great day of Divine intervention and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, God himself is seen descending to the Mount of Olives amid great convulsions of Nature for the overthrow of all evil powers in the earth. Once again are the powers of heaven manifested from the sacred mountain. The enemies of God are defeated, the people of God exalted, the kingdom of Christ upon earth established; the Lord is king over all the earth and living waters go out from Jerusalem to give life to all the world everywhere.

Jesus had this in mind when He likened his coming at the end of this Age to the radiance of dawn in the east flaming over the Mount of Olives from the viewpoint of dwellers in Jerusalem. "As the *astrape*—the radiant light—cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24.27). Malachi spoke of the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in his wings (Mal. 4.2). The sun of righteousness in Malachi's day was Marduk the god of Babylon, depicted often on the monuments as possessing wings, and he was the reputed healer and saviour of his people. But Marduk never really healed and he never saved; Malachi knew that, and the Sun of righteousness he foresaw was One that was yet to come, one who in the fulness of time would stand in the strength of God Most High to heal and to save.

Ezekiel also saw the Lord coming from the East. In the great Millennial Temple of his vision he saw, when all things were ready, the glory of the God of Israel coming from the way of the east, and entering the great East Gate into the sanctuary, there to dwell forever (Ezek. 43. 1-5). And the gate was thereupon shut, never to be used again, for the Lord was never to leave his people any more. As said the Revelator many years later, "the dwelling-place of God is with

men, and he will dwell with them, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 3-4). That is the Millennial kingdom at its full establishment.

So will the Kingdom of God, ensured and made possible by the sacrificial death and the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, fill the whole earth and all men everywhere rest under its shadow. The great mountain of Nebuchadnezzar's dream pictures that wondrous consummation to the Divine Plan. A stone, cut out without hands, striking and utterly destroying the great image of human dominion and scattering the power of man to the four winds, growing then ever larger and more extensive until it becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. Again did the Revelator follow up the same theme when he saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the world polity of the incoming Messianic Age, descending out of heaven from God, and built as it were upon the sides of a great and high mountain so that its splendour would be seen from afar. Into that city only the clean and the reconciled can enter; nothing that is unclean or defiling. Only God is worshipped therein, for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Strangely, the city lies four-square, and the length and the breadth and the height are equal; strange, because that is just how those men of olden time built the great tower which represented the original "Mount of the East" to them. A square stepped pyramid, each side a Babylonian stade in length, some six hundred and fifty feet, and a stade in height. But that tower was built of dust of the earth and it returned to its dust many long ages ago. The building of the holy city of the future is likened to gold and silver and precious stones, and it will stand for ever. The names of the gods of that old tower have been forgotten these many years, but the gates of the holy city enshrine the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb for all time. The ancient deity Marduk, the Redeemer and Saviour who was never able to redeem or to save, is no longer venerated or praised by men. The eternal light of the holy city is Christ our Lord. Redeemer and Saviour in very truth, ascended into the heavens that to his name may all praise be given and in his name may every knee bow, that in all the earth and all the heavens, reaching to all created worlds and all created beings, He may indeed be Lord of All.

THE ARK OF THE PRESENCE

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Such was God's promise to Israel at the outset of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The thought behind this promise was not so much that God would be with them, but rather that He would go on ahead. Leeser puts it *"My presence shall go in advance"* whilst Rotherham reads *"Mine own presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest"*. Centuries later, at the outset of another pilgrimage, a similar promise was made, *"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age"*. Although the thought of leading, of going on ahead, is not implied in this second promise, a parallel drawn between the two shows that the same significance is there.

The first promise was made by God to an earthly house, the second to a spiritual house by the Lord Jesus. To draw this parallel we must go back a little to the incidents which led up to the giving of the first promise. Exodus 19 records the making of a covenant between God and Israel. The basis of this covenant was the Law, and Israel expressed their willingness to keep this law, and by doing so became "a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation". God gave them a permanent reminder of this promise in the shape of two stone tablets upon which were inscribed this Law, but whilst Moses was with God in the mountain to receive these, the Israelites broke the first and primary law. Moses, in pleading for them, reminded God of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; when Moses descended the mountain the sight of the golden calf and Israel's idolatrous feasting caused his anger to blaze up and he threw down the stone tablets and they were smashed.

As a result of this first defection, God said that He would not go with them, but send an angel instead (Exod. 33.1-3); so failure to keep the Law brought alienation from God.

As a result of this, Moses *"took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp . . . and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation"*. This was not the tabernacle which God had commanded Moses to erect, for that had not yet been constructed; this is made clear in Rotherham's translation of this passage (Exodus 33.7) *"and Moses proceeded to take a tent, and pitch by itself outside the camp, and he called it The Tent of Meeting"* (or trysting tent). Moses was greatly troubled by the alienation which had resulted from Israel's wickedness; on one occasion when

he went out to the "Trysting Tent" to speak with God he expressed his utter inability to face alone the task of leading Israel, and asked God to reveal himself to him, *"that I may understand thy nature, and so know how to find favour with thee"* (Exod. 33. 12-13 Moffatt). God caused his goodness to pass before Moses and assured him that He would manifest himself to him. Acting under instructions, Moses prepared two more stone tablets and ascended Sinai with them, that God might inscribe the Law thereon. On this occasion God declared himself to be, not a God of anger, but *"the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth"*. In order that this truth might be deeply impressed upon Moses, God gave him the assurance that He would not send an angel with him, but that *"Mine OWN presence shall go on, thus will I lead thee to rest"*; (As Moffatt's alteration of the text by placing verses 14-16 of Exodus 33 after the 9th verse of Chapter 34).

In Moses's account, in Deut. 10, of the giving of the Law a second time, he tells us that God ordered him to make a wooden box in which to keep the stone tablets. This he did and on receiving them, he put them in this box, which in turn he placed in the temporary trysting tent. This arrangement continued until the tabernacle which God had designed was completed; then the two stone tablets were placed in the new ark. This was a much more elaborate container than the plain wooden box (Exod. 24. 10-21) and as it thus held the two tablets of the Law, it was called the ark of the covenant, or the ark of the testimony. It was, however, much more than this, for when the Tabernacle was completed God manifested his Presence in the *Shekinah* glory which settled between the cherubim. Thus it became the "Ark of the Presence" (Josh. 4.15 Moffatt). The Ark did not, however, always remain in the Tabernacle; it went before Israel to search out their resting places as they journeyed on; it diverted the waters of the Jordan and enabled them to cross dry-shod; it threw down the walls of Jericho and led them on to victory.

The ark of the presence did not always bring victory. In Josh. 7 and 1 Samuel 4 there are accounts of defeat even when the ark was with them, but this was not due to any failure on God's part, but to the fact that Israel was disobedient and defiled and thus alienated from him. On the second occasion not only did the Israelites suffer defeat, but they also lost the ark to the

Philistines. Even in captivity the power of the ark was manifested. The Philistines placed it beside Dagon in his temple, but on the morrow they found the idol on its face; they replaced it but on the next day they found it not only on its face but with its head and hands broken off. Furthermore the Philistines were plagued with tumours, so that after seven months they were glad to return the ark to Israel. After being lodged three months in the house of Obed-Edom, it was carried up to Jerusalem, where it remained under a tent until Solomon's temple was built. It was then taken from its tent and carried into the inner Sanctuary; after Solomon had recited his great dedicatory prayer, God showed his approval by manifesting his Presence in the *Shekinah* glory between the cherubim.

This manifestation of God's presence in their midst should have nourished the religious life of the Israelites and kept them from idol worship, but alas, they forgot the covenant that they had made with the Eternal, and the memory of many blessings which the Ark of the Presence had brought upon them faded. Thus the doleful prophecy of Jeremiah 3. 16 was fulfilled. *"In after days when you become numerous and fruitful in the land, says the Eternal, men shall no longer speak of the Ark of the Eternal's compact; that shall never enter their minds, they shall not remember it, they shall never miss it, and it shall never be re-made."*

This concludes, in this minor key, the account of the Ark of the Presence in the Old Testament, but we strike a major chord in our consideration of that much more intriguing subject, the antitype.

We, as "Israelites indeed", are journeying from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. What does the Ark of the Presence mean to us? We were alienated from God, and even now we cannot keep God's perfect law unaided; we need the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, and without a leader and guide would soon become lost in the wilderness. As we looked back to the events leading up to the making of the first promise, so we need to consider the events preceding the second promise.

In the type, the two stone tablets were first contained in a wooden box. If wood is Scripturally symbolic of humanity, this would surely represent the law of the Lord deep in the human heart of Jesus (Psa. 40.8). This wooden box remained outside the camp, so Jesus in his humanity was "without the camp". The Israelites were sinful, idolatrous, unbelieving. He was holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners. Thus He remained among them, but not of them, until the antitypical Tabernacle was completed.

Even as the Ark was not made for the tabernacle but the tabernacle for the ark, so in the antitype the spiritual Tabernacle was not made for Jesus; but before He could enter therein, the sacrifice must be consumed and the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. With the consumption of this sacrifice the wooden box was destroyed; but what of the perfect Law of the Lord contained therein? Even as in the type the stone tablets were placed in the golden ark when the tabernacle was completed, so our Lord's love for God's law remained, and when He arose from the grave and later ascended to his Father, He was clothed in the gold of the Divine nature, and entered into the Most Holy, into the presence of God. When the tablets were placed in the Ark of the Presence, it was no longer outside the camp, but in the midst; likewise since Jesus has entered into his glory He dwells no longer without the camp, but has become the first-fruits among many brethren, and as He intercedes on our behalf, he provides for us the way back to God.

Not only does He intercede for us, but he is all and more to us than was the Ark of the Presence to Israel. The Ark should have nourished the religious life of natural Israel; He provides for us spiritual bread from heaven, symbolised by the golden vase of manna, and calls us to become "a peculiar treasure, a holy nation", a fulfilment of the picture of Aaron's budding rod. The manifested presence of God in their midst should have kept Israel from idolatry; so, surrounded as we are with counter-attractions, calculated to draw us from the whole-hearted worship of God, we need to keep our eyes fixed upon our Ark of the Presence, worshipping always and only him Who is worthy of all praise. If we would become and remain spiritually healthy we must come regularly to the fount of every blessing, bowing in prayer and meditation before this holy shrine. Only before God's perfect law are we fully conscious of our shortcomings, only before the mercy seat can we find peace with God, only in the presence of Jesus can we enjoy the fellowship and communion which will enable us to attain that growth in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

This, however, is only the static aspect of the matter. Even as the Ark of the Presence went before Israel to lead them to rest, so Jesus goes on ahead, leading us, through hardship and danger, to our eternal rest. To Israel the Jordan was an impassable barrier; Moses told the people that they were to wait, "for you have not crossed here before". We have our Jordans too; those just starting on their pilgrimage may not yet have come to the place where they have "not crossed before"; on the other hand those nearing the end

of the journey may look back to many such emergencies. To young and old the lesson is the same. Even as the Israelites waited for the feet of the Levites carrying the Ark to touch the water, saw the waters diverted, and were able to cross dryshod, so we must wait until our Ark of the Presence shows us the way across the obstacles over which we must pass.

After Jordan came Jericho. We, too, have our Jerichos; enemy strongholds, within or without, stand between us and the Golden City. Israel waited patiently while the priests carried the Ark round Jericho, day after day, until victory was theirs; we must persevere in our efforts to overcome the enemy, realising that "standing and waiting" will sometimes be our portion, so that all the glory may be given to him Who gives us victory.

Israel lost the Ark of the Presence to the Philistines because, having left it at Shiloh, they had turned from the worship of the true God to idolatry; may the time never come when we shall have strayed so far from the worship of God that we lose our Ark of the Presence! In the type, after its return from captivity the Ark found its way to Jerusalem where it remained in a tent until taken into Solomon's temple. This seems to picture the return of our Lord, after the journeying of the Gospel Age, to gather his Church to himself to dwell forever with him in the heavenly courts.

Beautiful as was the trysting-tent in its simplicity, its beauty was eclipsed by the glorious Temple which Solomon prepared as a final resting place for the Ark. The altar in the court was larger and the laver was more elaborate, the Holy Place was larger and more ornate, but the Inner Sanctuary had a beauty all its own. The woodwork was wonderfully carved, and tons of gold and hundreds of precious stones were used for its decoration. It was eight times the size of the Most Holy of the Trysting-tent and was dominated by two great golden cherubim, each fifteen feet across, standing, not face to face with bowed heads as were those upon the Ark, but side by side facing forwards, standing erect wing tip to wing tip, thus completely filling the width of the Sanctuary. All was new and unsurpassed in beauty, but into this glorious edifice was brought the much-travelled Ark, made so long ago in the wilderness, a fitting picture indeed of him Who is proclaimed "the same yesterday, to-day and forever".

Although this was the same Ark, there was a difference. The golden vase of manna was no longer within. Likewise when the anti-typical Ark

of the Presence finally enters the Heavenly courts there will be no need for the heavenly manna, for the Church will be clothed with immortal life. Neither was Aaron's rod that budded contained therein. This is fitting too, for the Church will have made her calling and election sure, and will have thus fulfilled the significance of this phenomenon. But the two tablets of the Law remained. So Jesus, in all his glory and majesty, still loves the Law of God, and the glorified Church too will be lovers of God's Law, and so the complete Christ, Head and Body, will not only be the Ark of the Presence, but also the great Lawgiver of the New Age.

This picture of the Ark of the Presence in Solomon's temple would then surely represent the completed unified Christ, abiding in God's dwelling place among men (Rev. 21.3 and 4), shining forth as the sun in the Kingdom, prepared to lead men back to God.

This brings us to the outset and the third and last pilgrimage. Is there any promise that God will be with the nations in the same sense that He was with Israel and Jesus was with the Church? Will the Ark of the Presence go on ahead and lead them to rest? No, the wanderings of the Ark are forever concluded. The glorified Bride and Bridegroom will remain at the New Jerusalem, beckoning men up the great highway of holiness which will lead them to that perfect life, health and happiness when God dwells between the cherubim. After the wanderings of the antitypical Ark of the Presence through the Gospel Age its journey is almost completed; soon all the faithful will be safely in the inner Sanctuary. But what of the time remaining? Rest assured that Jesus' promise to be with us all the time, even unto the end, will be abundantly fulfilled. In sickness or in health, in poverty or wealth, in sunshine or shade; through fire and flood, through weal or woe, in victory or defeat; on the heights of joy or in the depths of despair, in the loneliness of seclusion or in the noise of the throng—through any or all of these our Ark of the Presence will safely lead us, until we enter into heaven itself, there to dwell for ever in the very presence of God, beneath the wings of the cherubim.

*"Lord Jesus, make thyself to me
A living bright reality!
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen,
More dear, more intimately nigh,
Than e'en the sweetest earthly tie."*

ANGELS THAT SINNED

Bible basis of
demonism

2. The tyranny of the Nephilim

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6.5).

A terrible condemnation, but even in its black intensity an understatement of the situation. The account in Genesis ignores the part played by the *Nephilim*, the progeny of the fallen angels. Those in the Books of Jubilees and Enoch, whether based on legend, orally transmitted history, or a more full narrative from the alternative Hebrew text of Genesis on which these books are believed to be based, fill in the gap and describe in some detail the terrible tyranny which mankind suffered at the hands of these inhuman and probably sub-human creatures. They place the primary blame for the corruption of the antediluvian world upon the nephilim; men followed the example. The description certainly fits the actions of animals rather than men. Says "Enoch", "and it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them and said to one another 'Come, let us choose ourselves wives from among the children of men and beget us children . . . and they bare nephilim . . . who consumed all the acquisitions of men, and when men could no longer sustain them, the nephilim 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.'" (I Enoch 6.1-76). Later on is said "And the women have borne nephilim, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness". "Jubilees" describes how the angels "against the law of their ordinances . . . took themselves wives of all which they chose . . . and they begat sons the nephilim, and they were different" — significant expression! — "and they devoured one another"; in another passage the effect of all this was that "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. 7.21 and 5.2).

Imagination? Fiction? Or a memory of a tyranny so horrific that it was seared into the

minds of men and preserved through the generations just as vividly as that of the Flood itself, which remains today in the legends and folklore of nearly all the peoples on earth. The fifth chapter of Jubilees is almost word for word identical with Gen. 6 but adds these deeds of the nephilim, almost as if this was in the original Hebrew text and later expunged from the version leading to the English Bible. At any rate, the recollection was still so fresh in the minds of the Israelites of the Exodus, two thousand years later, that the men sent by Moses to reconnoitre Canaan came back in panic saying they had seen the nephilim—the only other occurrence of the word in the O.T.—"and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Num. 13.33). It was a false alarm; some of the Canaanite tribes were unusually tall and massive and their grim aspect had reminded the intruders of the old stories and unnerved them. But there is no doubt of the terror that the name still inspired.

Had the angels made a colossal mistake? Had they, with the aid of their adopted physical bodies and in association with their human wives, produced sons who were human in appearance and physical organism, but whose mental faculties were only those of animals, denied that which God implanted in Adam to make him distinct from the brute creation, so that they were not really men at all, but human-like beasts? Is this why the author of "Jubilees" says they were "different"? Such hypothesis would explain their conduct. In appearance, strong, virile men of the physique and stature perhaps of Samson or Goliath of later days, but in mind and disposition, in nature and instincts, rampaging wild beasts who devoured men and all the acquisitions of men and then treated similarly the animal creation, and finally fought and devoured each other. Was this the result of the angels' endeavour to bring into being a new species of supermen who could infuse new life into dying humanity?

The angels do not have all knowledge. Although superior to men in intellect and powers they are, nevertheless, created of God as are men; one or two Scripture allusions indicate that their knowledge, like that of man, has limits. They are not cognisant of the full extent of God's creative purposes; some aspects are hidden even from them. (1 Pet. 1.12; Mark 13.32). That fact suggests the possibility that in their scheming and

planning the apostate angels overlooked, because ignorant of, one vital factor. Man is endowed with faculties possessed by no other earthly creature—consciousness of God, instinct for worship, powers of reasoning reaching into the past and the future, everything that goes to make up human intelligence as distinct from the instinct which governs the lower creatures' lives. But nothing of this is to be found in man's physical structure; it is an attribute of mind, implanted there by God at the time of man's creation. The Lord, we are told in Genesis, formed man of the dust of the ground—the atoms of elements which constitute the earth—breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul—a sentient, breathing creature responsive to his environment. But if that is all God did, Adam was merely another animal. Animals are all made of the dust of the ground and all possess the breath of life, and all are living souls—Scripture so refers to them in several places. God endowed Adam with something more, something that was not physical and not derived from the atoms of the earth, and it was that which linked him with God and made him man. Something which could only come from God, an unseen bond or power which made Adam both a man and a son of God.

Scientists today are trying to create man from the dust of the earth. They call it genetic engineering and advance all sorts of specious reasons in justification. One research worker has claimed to have constructed a gene—the mysterious determinants of human characteristics carried in the cells of the body—from non-living atoms. But suppose the scientists did one day succeed in constructing a living breathing creature from the correct arrangement of atoms and molecules. It could never be more than an unreasoning animal. Reverence, worship, loyalty, love, appreciation of God, none of these can ever reside in atoms or a conglomeration of atoms. These things are the gift of God and only bestowed by him.

Is that where the angels went wrong? Did they, with what we would call their biological knowledge, create for themselves complete and entire human bodies by means of which they could father sons who turned out to be complete and entire biological specimens of humanity, but lacked that quality which God bestowed upon Adam? Thus their sons were not really human at all; they were brutish, savage monsters in the form of men who followed the laws of their animal nature by ravaging and devouring as the narratives say they did.

If this be indeed the case, another problem is solved. It has been said that these sons of the angels, who perished before the Flood, an illicit

race, not sons of Adam, can have no resurrection. As a theological principle this stands true. So far as this earth is concerned only those who die in Adam are those made alive in Christ. This hybrid strain, half-angelic, half-human, would introduce an element of disorder into Divine creation which could not be suffered to endure. Yet, on the other hand, if these beings were indeed endowed with the intellects of men, at least capable of the hopes and fears, the impulses, and the loyalties toward God, of men, not themselves responsible for the means whereby they were brought into the world, it would seem horribly unjust for them to be denied the opportunity of everlasting life which is extended to all other rational beings. But if, on the other hand, they were in fact as other beasts that perish, the question does not arise.

The later Israelites were in no doubt about this. The nephilim were eternally dead and would never live again. They called them the Rephaim. The derivation of the name is in very considerable doubt. It may come from *rapha*, to cast down or throw down, and this could refer to their destruction. Another suggestion is that it comes from the Akkadian *rabisu*, denoting the "crouching demon" of Sumerian mythology. Certain Cananite tribes were known as the Raphaim (Rephaim in A.V.), this because of their unusual stature; many times they are referred to as "giants". But in general, Hebrew thought pictured the Rephaim as lying in Sheol, the grave, with no hope of return. The most noteworthy reference is in Isa. 26.14 and 19, which, carefully rendered with the name inserted, reads "*They*" (the "other-lords" of vs. 13) "*are dead; they shall not live. They are Rephaim, they shall not rise. There fore hast thou destroyed them and wiped out all remembrance of them Thy dead shall live, my slain ones shall rise, but the earth shall hold down the 'Rephaim'*". The distinction between the hope of a resurrection for mankind and the complete extinction of the Rephaim is clearly shown in this passage.

Following the destruction of the nephilim—according to "Jubilees" God "sent his sword into their midst that each should slay his neighbour, and they began to slay each other till they all fell by the sword and were destroyed from the earth"—came Divine judgment on the apostate angels themselves. Jude says "*the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*" (Jude 6). Peter supplements this with "*God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and delivered them into chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment*". Tartarus—this is

the only occurrence of the word in the Bible—figures in Greek mythology as the place deep below the earth wherein were imprisoned the Titans, a race of semi-divine beings sprung from a union between Uranus, god of heaven, and Gea, goddess of earth. Having rebelled against the gods they were doomed to eternal imprisonment in Tartarus. The similarity to the Scriptural narrative of the nephilim is clear; since Greek mythology had its rise only a thousand or so years before Christ it is fairly obvious that the myth of the Titans was derived from the Bible story. Peter probably took his allusions from the Books of Jubilees and Enoch, where the imprisonment of the angels in Tartarus is decreed by God. "And the Lord said to Michael, Go, bind Semjaza and his associates who have united themselves with women.... and when their sons have slain themselves, and they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them fast for seventy generations in the deep places of the earth, till the day of their judgment (1 Enoch 10. 11-12). "And against the angels whom he had sent on the earth he was exceedingly wroth, and he gave commandment to root them out of all their dominion, and to bind them in the depths of the earth, and behold..... they were bound in the depths of the earth for ever, until the day of the great condemnation when judgment is executed" (Jub. 5. 6-10).

What is the nature of this imprisonment? Banned from heaven, the celestial world, certainly, because of their sin. Banned also from earth, from materialising as men and appearing amongst men as they did in those days. The powers they had so grievously misused were taken from them. Tartarus, the depths, deep places of the earth, the abyss, chains of darkness, these are the terms used but however understood in olden times no one today will take them to mean that the angels are imprisoned somewhere within the earth's core. Not much more logical is the idea that they are confined to "the earth's atmosphere" — a meaningless conception since in fact there is no sharply defined limit to the atmosphere; it goes on attenuating outwards with distance. They can only be thought of as in the "in-between" state, neither "tuned-in" to heaven nor yet to earth, unable to show themselves to men or make physical contact with men, able only, like Satan, to influence the minds of such as willingly give themselves over to be so influenced. Therein resides the power of witchcraft and spiritism through the ages. Confirmed in an environment described as being "chains of darkness" they await judgment.

Is there any hope? Unlike their offspring,

these are rational intelligent beings, of the highest order of life known to us. They are beings capable of moral judgment, of lapse into rebellion and sin, yes, but also of repentance and reformation. Mankind is to stand before God in that same judgment of the great day, and none who eschew whatever of sin there has been in their past, and profess acceptance of Christ and loyalty to God, will be denied entry into eternal life. Will God be any less gracious to the fallen angels? Grievous as was their sin, should there be true repentance and contrition, it must be that reinstatement to their original state will follow. It must be equally true for angels as for men that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth". There is Scriptural support for this. Our Lord is said after his resurrection to have preached to the spirits in prison (1 Pet. 3. 19). There could have been no object—and no justice — in this if the case was already prejudged and hopeless. Paul told the Colossians that Christ will reconcile to God, not only things on earth, but also things in heaven (Col. 1.20) implying there are heavenly beings in need of reconciliation and that in Christ they will find the opportunity. Again, writing to the Corinthians, Paul points out that the saints shall "Judge" not only the world, but angels (1 Cor. 6. 1-3), the latter in contrast to the things of this life; "judge" here is *krino*, which means, not judging in the condemnatory sense, but to examine evidence and select or approve that which is right. This is the work of the Church, with Christ, during the Millennial Age, so that the judgment of the angels is of the same nature as, and parallel with, that of mankind in that Age. It would seem then that the apostate angels will have the same opportunity of repentance and reconciliation as will men, at that time.

So, finally, God turned to men—men, also sunk in corruption and sin, fit subjects for judgment. "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon earth. And He said, the end of all flesh is come before me. I will destroy them from the face of the earth." Only by a clean sweep and a fresh start could the rot be stopped and the earth cleansed. The Divine agent of that cleansing was the great Flood through which Noah and his family were brought to commence human life anew.

Even so there was postponement of the sentence. A span of years was decreed before the catastrophe would occur—a hundred and twenty years of grace. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that this was an opportunity for repentance, that it was during this time that Noah was, as asserted by Peter, a preacher of righte-

ousness (2 Pet. 2.5). This is the logical sense of Gen. 6.3, a verse which has been rather obscurely rendered in the A.V. "*And the Lord said, my spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*" In this text "spirit" (*ruach*) does not necessarily denote the Divine Holy Spirit; it is used on numerous occasions for the Divine life-giving breath (as in Job 27. 3; Psa. 104.30; Eccl. 12.7). "Strive" for *dun* is only justified in certain grammatical classes not involved here; the idea is that of dwelling in or inhabiting and having influence in the heart of man. "For that he also is flesh" is meaningless in the context due to *shagg* being erroneously taken as the demonstrative "that" instead of the verb "to err" or "go astray". The best rendering is probably "*my life-giving breath shall not always remain in man, because of this con-*

tinuing erring in the flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years". In other words, despite the endeavours of the angels to infuse new and lasting life into the dying race, the original death sentence still stood. The Divine gift of life would assuredly be withdrawn and the dust return to earth as it was. So far as that generation was concerned, the execution of the sentence was deferred for a hundred and twenty years, but—it would surely come.

The plans of the angels had come to naught. Instead of a world of new life, free from the curse of death inherited from Adam, they had produced a world more full than ever of sin and corruption and suffering and brought down upon themselves and mankind alike the judgment of God.

The experiment had failed.

To be continued.

ONE BREAD—ONE BODY

A doctrinal
question

"For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10. 17).

In these words, fraught with deep spiritual meaning, the faithful Apostle strengthens his appeal to the Corinthian Christians and through them to us. We, like them, are so prone to idolatry, so easily led into ways which cannot be reconciled with the fellowship that is ours in Christ. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved" Paul pleads "*flee from idolatry*" (vs. 14). That was a very real danger in those days, and to those early Corinthian believers, living in the most notoriously depraved and paganised city of the then known world, it was a very necessary exhortation. But it was not merely that Paul would wean them from the worship and service of false deities, "gods many and lords many"; he knew that such service and such worship involved, not only fellowship with pagan men and women, but also common-union, joint participation, with demoniac intelligences behind the veil. He understood only too well the corrupting influence of those debased and debasing ceremonies and sacrifices; that they had nothing in common with the things of Christ; and with all his heart he strove to turn his brethren away from them and toward the infinitely purer and nobler faith of which he was himself a minister.

The whole burden of Paul's message in this chapter is comparison between the pagan's fellowship with idols and demons and the Christian's fellowship with Christ. Just as the believers' union in worship and offering was not merely an associ-

ation together for the mutual acknowledgment of God's supremacy, but in deed and in truth a fellowship and communion with the risen Christ beyond the Veil, and the experiencing of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, so was the worship and sacrificing of the pagans an actual fellowship with demons, "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies". "*The things which the Gentiles sacrifice*" he warned them earnestly "*they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons*". This danger of being associated with the enemies of Christ was a very real one in the Apostle's mind: doubtless he saw in mental vision the last great conflict at the end of this Age when these same evil powers are arrayed, with all their human dupes, to give battle against the rider on the white horse, coming forth from heaven in righteousness to judge and make war (Rev. 19. 11). He knew that the saints must not be hesitant in the slightest degree about their allegiance. They may in no wise have any interest in common with these powers of evil which with all their followers will be overthrown and deprived of all power before the Millennial Kingdom is set up, and so in all earnestness he reminds them "*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of demons*".

With what emphasis does this call to separation to the fellowship and communion of Christ come to us at this season! Now, more than at any other time during the year, we are mindful of our Master's willing, steadfast consecration to his

Father's Will, even unto death. For him there was no compromise and no hesitancy. Just previously He had "set" his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that death awaited him there. The people had flattered him, had received him as king; the disciples had pleaded with him to set up his Kingdom there and then and give the world the blessings it so sadly needed; to all their suggestions He had turned a deaf ear, walking resolutely along that path which, even although it led to suffering and death and the apparent failure of all his work, He knew to be the only one that could end in the consummation for which He had come into the world.

This same consciousness of a mission and this same inflexible resolution in carrying out the terms of that mission is what Paul seeks to impress upon his readers, and now that the season for more than usually earnest thought about these things is upon us we do well to take from his exhortation all that it can give us of inspiration and encouragement.

"Behold Israel after the flesh" he commands, and his command carries a question. "Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (vs. 18). Participators with the altar; that is Paul's thought. The priests upon whom fell the obligation to eat of the sacrifices were holy unto the Lord and could never be the same as ordinary men again. In partaking of the sacrifices of the altar they had become holy like the altar and were in a very real sense in fellowship or communion with the altar, and through that with God. And so are we. Because we have eaten of the offering, made it a part of ourselves, we have become identified with the Altar which is Christ, and have become joint-participants with him, not only in the power of future blessing for which the altar stands—for more than anything else in the typical Tabernacle the Brasen Altar stood for justification by faith, and only through justification by faith in Christ will man receive blessing in the next Age—but also in the power of present suffering which the same altar symbolises. And it is the power of that present suffering, a suffering in which we participate with our Lord, that is going to mean so much to men redeemed from death by the Ransom given once for all at Calvary nineteen centuries ago.

So the Apostle comes to the central feature of his theme when he takes up this question of suffering. "The bread which we break" he urges "is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" There is a vital difference between the cup and the bread. "This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28), Jesus had told them on the

Memorial night. Remembering that the first Covenant was itself made legal and binding by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9. 18) the disciples must quickly have realised that this New Covenant which was to succeed where the old one had failed was to be made sure by the death of Jesus himself, by the shed blood of He who "gave himself a ransom for all" (1. Tim. 2. 6). His death provided the Ransom and we are redeemed by his blood; the New Testament is positive enough on that central truth. Why such a ransom was necessary; why Divine justice required such an offering before the dead in Adam could be released; in what way Justice is satisfied by the death of Jesus on the Cross; all these are questions which have been asked and answered with varying degrees of spiritual insight throughout the Gospel Age. Independent of all the philosophy and theology that has been built up around the doctrine of the Atonement, the one fact stands out that whether we understand it or not, the death of Jesus was essential to man's salvation, and that without faith in him and a definite and personal acceptance of his sacrifice made for us there can be no release from sin and no entrance into life. "There is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12).

It has been well said that the Ransom does not give men everlasting life. It does guarantee to every man a full and fair opportunity to attain everlasting life. That "life for the world" which is symbolised by the "poured-out blood" of Christ is life as Adam enjoyed it before he sinned, a life which would have made it possible for him to enter upon his eternal inheritance provided he observed the conditions. Much the same is true of mankind in the Millennial Age. All, without exception, will come back from the grave, as Jesus foretold (Jno. 5. 28), awaking to conscious life and recollection in bodies free from the effects of inherited sin. Thus will the Ransom become of all effect to all men. But unless those awakened ones are persuaded so to order their lives in harmony with Divine principles that they do attain full perfection, morally as well as mentally and physically, the blood of Christ will, so far as such are concerned, be of no avail. If under the favourable conditions of that blessed day the heart of any one of the sons of men remains fully set in him to do evil, his blood-bought life can again only end in death, and this time without remedy. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Since it is clear that the risen masses will require something more than the gift of conscious life in a new body, great and marvellous as is that gift, it follows that there is another aspect to the doctrine

of the Atonement parallel to that which is symbolised by the shed blood.

That aspect is pictured by Jesus as the breaking of his body, a body which, thus broken, becomes food for the life of the world. This eating of the mystic bread which is his body is not the *giving of new life*, which is symbolised by the blood, the cup, but it is the *continued sustenance of a life already given*. The blood is poured out once for all; the bread is to be partaken of into eternity. Jesus died on the Cross, once, and that act is never to be repeated. The one act was sufficient to give all men, Church and world alike, new life. But He "ever lives" to sustain men's everlasting lives by that which He gives them, his body. Is that why the people desired him on one occasion "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" (Jno. 6. 34)? "The bread that I will give is my flesh" He had said "which I will give for the life of the world" (Jno. 6. 54).

Neither is this bread a free gift in the sense in which the cup is a free gift. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the benefits of the ransom, are awarded to all men irrespective of personal merits or personal action. All are to receive freedom from Adamic condemnation and reversal of the Adamic death sentence. All who exercise faith in Christ, whether in this Gospel Age or in the incoming Millennial Age, whether of the Church or the world, will receive the free gift of justification and have their past sin, no matter how heinous, no longer counted against them. All who received life from the first Adam will receive life again from the Second Adam. But in order to maintain that life they must partake of the mystic bread, and that, translated into plain language, means to live their lives in exactly the same way that Jesus lived his. It means that no man can live everlastingly except he live in full harmony with God's laws and God's ways. He must, as it were, live "in tune" with God, for as Paul said to the Athenians "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17. 28). In order that he might learn how to live that life, man must have an example, an exemplar, to show him the way. There has only been one such example, Christ Jesus himself, who came to earth for that purpose. For three and a half years He was the perfect example of how a man should live, and the consequence of his steadfast setting of that example was that his body was broken. He had to show mankind that perfection is only attained through suffering. "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sickness" (Matt. 8. 17). "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are

tempted" (Heb. 2. 18). It is the example of that life that will be man's inspiration in the next Age and in that sense they will "eat of the flesh of the Son of Man" and live forever.

In exactly the same way do we, his disciples of this Age, partake of his flesh, this bread. We too, no less than mankind in the Millennial Age, are to order our lives after that perfect example if we would enter into immortality. We too must learn that only by suffering, endurance, the willing laying down of life upon behalf of others, can we ourselves be perfected. "He that loseth his life shall find it." And to us is granted a privilege that can never come to the sons of men in the future Age, for we, who have pledged ourselves to be followers of our Lord to the end of time, who have been "buried with him by baptism into his death", are privileged to have our own lives used as examples for the future Age; our own experience and character-development employed in the instruction and conversion of men in that Day. We too are to be made merciful and faithful priests of the future if we are rightly exercised by our experiences in the Christian life now. But the degree of our fitness for holding forth the Word of Life *then*, and in that sense becoming living bread for the world *then*, is entirely dependent upon the degree to which we partake of the living bread ourselves *now*. Unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, we have no life in us; and a lifeless corpse can never become the medium of new life to a resurrected world.

This, then, is our fellowship, a fellowship in Christ which is also a participation with Christ, a common-union with him. This is why we cannot have fellowship or union with the world and its demons. We have been "baptised for the dead" (1 Cor. 15. 29) and it is only by participation with our risen Lord that we shall make that baptism effective and, in receiving and partaking of the living bread, become the means of giving life to others. "And the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. And let him that heareth say 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." That grand climax to God's dealings with men on the earth can only come to pass when we who are the first-fruits unto God have first entered into our privilege and obligation of renouncing the world and all that is in it, and joined in full communion with Christ our Lord and with each other as a family apart. "The bread which we eat, is it not the common-union of the body of Christ?" "Lord, evermore give us this bread!"

CALEB THE WARRIOR

A goodly number of outstanding men of war figure in the Old Testament narratives—not surprising, for those narratives cover fifteen hundred years of the history and the wars of Israel, a nation which is still celebrated for the courage and valour of its fighting men—but one who stands in the front rank of them all is Caleb the son of Jephunneh. Thirty-eight years of age when the people of Israel left Egypt under Moses for the Promised Land, he came into prominence as one of the reconnoitring party sent to explore the land of Canaan and bring back a true appraisal. Of the twelve men in the party, only he and Joshua dissented from the pessimistic majority report which confirmed the desirability of the land but insisted that the inhabitants thereof were too strong for Israel and the idea of entering it would have to be abandoned. Caleb, stalwart in his faith in Divine power, spoke for himself and Joshua when he countered the others with his resolute “Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it”. He was never in doubt as to the verity of the promises of God and he believed with all his heart and soul that Israel would inherit the land because God had said so; his faith however did not prevent him from exerting his not inconsiderable physical prowess to the utmost when it came to waging war against the enemies of Israel.

Caleb was of the tribe of Judah. This is deduced both from I Chron. 2.50 where he is shown to have been the grandson of Hur, and the fact that he was selected to represent Judah, as being a tribal leader, in the party sent to reconnoitre Canaan (Num. 13.6). There was an earlier Caleb, his great-grandfather, mentioned in I Chron. 2. 18-42 and 2. 9, which fact has given rise to some confusion, especially since the later Caleb appears adjacent in I Chron. 2. 48-50. This earlier Caleb, son of Judah's grandson Hezron, was brother to Ram through whom the royal line descended to reach Boaz, David and eventually Christ, so that while the supreme prince of the tribe during the Exodus was Nahshon, grandson of Ram. Caleb was of only slightly lesser status as head of a parallel branch of the tribe. His father Jephunneh, son of Hur, is twice called “the Kenazite” (Num. 32. 12 Josh. 14. 6, 14) without there being any explanation of this appellation; it is possible that Kenaz was the name of the particular Israelite village in Egypt from which they came. It may be significant that Caleb's younger brother and his grandson were both

named Kenaz. Another point of interest is that he was first cousin to Bezaleel, who superintended the construction of the Tabernacle, the Sanctuary of God in their midst. These two men each served God in their characteristic fashion and according to their talents, the one as a soldier, the other as a craftsman.

It came about that two years after the departure from Egypt Israel was encamped along the southern frontier of the Promised Land. They had been told that by the exercise of faith in God they had only to walk over the frontier and take possession; there would be no resistance by the existing inhabitants. By way of preparation for the “take-over” God had told Moses to send a party of twelve, one from each tribe, to explore the land thoroughly and bring back a report of its extent, nature, natural features, growing crops, cities and towns, and inhabitants. Caleb represented the tribe of Judah, and his friend Joshua, a soldier like himself and at this time the right-hand man of Moses the Leader, represented the tribe of Ephraim. So the party set out.

It is probable that they did so light-heartedly and with considerable enthusiasm. They had heard so much about this land of milk and honey to which Moses was leading them, and although there had been a good many—too many—occasions on which the people had lost faith and cried to be taken back to Egypt, the fact that they were now on the borders of the Promised Land made a big difference. Their troubles were in the past; God had been as good as his word and brought them to this lovely land where the sun was going to shine all day and the rain fertilise their crops and nourish their herds and all would be well. They gazed upon the vineyards and olive groves, saw the richness of the grain in the fields, pictured their own farms dotting these smiling valleys, and talked excitedly as they came across one object of wonder after another.

And then they saw the Canaanites!

It is true that some of the tribes of Canaan were of exceptional stature. The Philistines along the sea-coast were Bronze Age Minoans from Crete, something well over six feet, and their soldiers wore armour and big brass helmets. These Israelites had probably never seen a man in armour before. The Amorite tribes of the valleys were also a tall stock, likewise over six feet. And around Hebron and in some more northerly parts the intruders stumbled across a veritable race of giants, the Anakim, who from one allusion in the

O.T. must have reached something between seven and eight feet. That was the last straw. They thought they had encountered the dreaded Nephilim who had wrought such havoc in the earth in the days before the Flood, and in sheer panic they made their way back to their own people with all their faith shattered and a message of utter and hopeless despair.

All, that is, except Caleb and Joshua.

"We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we" wailed the ten. *"All the people that we saw in it are men of great stature, and there we saw the nephilim, the Anakim."* Caleb peremptorily cut them short; *"Let us go up at once, and possess it"* he exhorted the wavering people *"for we are well able to overcome it. The Lord is with us. Fear them not"*.

But the people believed the ten, and they abandoned what they had of faith in God's promise, and they cried all night, and in the morning they planned to depose Moses and set up another leader who would take them back to Egypt. Better that, they said, than that we and our children should die in this wilderness.

And in the face of that abandonment of their high calling the Lord sentenced them to do just that. For thirty-eight years they remained in the wilderness, within sight of the Promised Land but unable to enter, until all that unbelieving generation, all above twenty years of age, had died. *"And your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised."* Then the Lord turned to Caleb and Joshua and told them that because of their faith in him and his promises they alone of all that generation would enter the land.

Of that thirty-eight years exile in the desert practically nothing is recorded. The narrative is taken up again when Israel was commanded to leave the wilderness and make their way, not across the southern frontier of Canaan, but along its eastern border, and effect an invasion by crossing the Jordan at Jericho. It is soon after this that Caleb comes back into the picture. He still had his mind fixed on Hebron where he had seen those giant Anakims who had so frightened his fellow-scouts. He meant to get to grips with them and destroy them in the power of his zeal for God. And not only that; in the true spirit of the Israeli warrior, ancient or modern, he was eager to take the most dangerous task for himself. The fearsome giants of the south country were Israel's most formidable foes; he would lead the attack on them in person, and by the power of his God he would overcome. So he came to Joshua at Gilgal with his request. Because of his integrity and loyalty in the matter of spying out the land.

Moses had promised him that Hebron should be his inheritance for ever. "Forty years old was I" he said "when Moses sent me from Kadesh to spy out the land . . . and now, lo, this day I am fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." Joshua, looking upon the doughty old warrior, honoured Moses' promise and gave him his request, and he went out with his followers to wage sanguinary war upon the Anakim.

Hebron was a sacred place to every Israelite, for it had been the headquarters of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in those far-off days before Jacob came down into Egypt, and it still held the revered tomb where those patriarchs and their wives were buried. That it should remain in the possession of the Canaanites was intolerable and it is understandable that the ferocity of the invaders was too much for the defenders and they were ruthlessly expelled. This was the most momentous victory gained by Israel at the time of the conquest for with the fall of Hebron the whole of the south country fell into their hands. Hebron became the political capital of Israel from then on until it was superseded by Jerusalem in the time of King David.

Three miles west of Hebron lay the Canaanitish town of Kirjath-sepher, "the city of books". There is not much doubt that this was the library of the Canaanite civilisation where its books and records were stored. For all their valour and loyalty to God the avenging Israelites did a grave disservice to posterity when they destroyed this town and its contents. No one knows what valuable store of tablets recording the culture and knowledge of the Canaanites was destroyed in that furious orgy of destruction and slaughter. Some idea could be gained from the recent discovery in 1976, at Tel Mardikh in Northern Syria, of a similar store of more than 18,000 Canaanite tablets, casting considerably fresh light on much of ancient history. But Caleb and his men had no interest in history and no use for books; his mission was to conquer and destroy. He conquered, and he destroyed.

For some reason he did not lead this attack in person. Perhaps, after all, he was beginning to feel his age. Perhaps though, realising that both he and Joshua would not be leading the armies of Israel for ever, he wanted to discover suitable successors. So he threw out a challenge: *"he that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife"*. To what extent the charms of this damsel were such as to incite to deeds of unusual valour it is not possible to say, but in the upshot Caleb's own nephew

Othniel captured the city and won the coveted prize, who promptly told her father (Josh. 15. 16-19) that the south land—meaning desert land—he had given for her dowry was unacceptable and she wanted in addition land with springs of water. It would seem that the old warrior, perhaps better at settling issues in the field with his sword than negotiating points of domestic disharmony, quickly gave in and awarded some suitable fertile territory to the newly-married couple and so all was well. He had, however, found his man. Years later, after both he and Joshua had gone the way of all flesh, and Israel had relapsed into crass idolatry and apostasy from God, and in consequence had fallen under the dominion of the king of Aram-Naharaim, it was Othniel who emerged as the first of Israel's national leaders, the "judges", to drive out the invader and restore Israel's allegiance to God. The military prowess of the uncle and his sterling faith in God reappeared in the nephew.

After that, Caleb disappears. He probably died twenty or so years later, more or less at the same time as Joshua, at the age of a hundred and ten

or so. With the passing of these two an era ended in the history of Israel. Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, the founders of the nation, were all gone, and Israel was on its own. Nothing is known of Caleb's sons—according to I Chronicles he had three sons by his unnamed wife and five more by his concubine Maachah; the name of one grandson is recorded. He was a strong and resolute man and firm in his conviction that he was called to fight the wars of the Lord. His strength resided in his faith and his faith never failed. Without much doubt he is included in those heroes of faith of whom it is said in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews that they "waxed valiant in fight, put to flight the armies of the aliens". Like the Apostle Paul in much later days, he fought a good fight, he finished the course, and he kept the faith. His achievements in battle have been overlaid by the ebb and flow of later conflicts time and again; his inheritance in Hebron passed into the possession of other invaders of other peoples in later history, but the sterling faith which characterised his life remains a beacon light, shining for the admiration and encouragement of all lovers of God for ever.

EVENTIDE

*"So He bringeth them
into their desired haven"*

How restful and serene was the Master's heart. Nothing could disturb its peace and trust in God! Look at his quiet confidence at the close of that searching day when He said to the twelve, "*Will you also go away?*" The crowd had ebbed away dissatisfied, and now only these twelve stood near him. Would the searching words He had spoken prove too hard for these to hear and understand? Only yesterday He had fed the hungry multitude, giving them satisfaction in an hour of need. Out of a handful He had created more than enough. "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" was the verdict that passed from lip to lip. Like Moses, whose words they had in mind, He had provided bread in the wilderness, with hunger appeased, approving tongues began to talk. "This is the man we need for our King"—this was the conclusion of all. Only Jesus' adroit withdrawal from amongst them frustrated their plan (John 6.15). Now they had found him in Capernaum again, but instead of breaking bread He drew the deeper moral of the occasion yesterday for them. He told them that He was the "bread of God"—of which, if they would eat, they would have life indeed within them. With yesterday's repast in mind they eagerly exclaimed "Lord, give us this bread". In response Jesus

said "I am that bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger. He who believes in me shall never thirst". In conversation and discussion the Jews pondered over what He said. Taking up the theme again in their synagogue (John 6.59) Jesus amplified the former utterances, and said that the Bread which God would give would be his flesh, and the drink would be his blood. (vv. 52-58). A hard saying indeed! How could it be done? "Bread and fish religion" they could well understand, but food for the deeper nature was too hard and abstruse. He was not after all to be their King. And so with scornful lip they turned away and went back to their drab way of life, while He was left with none but the twelve attending him. Was Jesus unduly perturbed at this? Not a bit of it. Enthusiasm created by "loaves and fishes" was not the kind He had come to create. He wanted men who were ready to take up a cross and follow in his steps.

It was not an easy thing for Jesus to watch them depart, for He knew what the end of this would be. The Man of Compassion who could feed them with bread perforce had to watch them drift towards the rocks of doom. The trends of thought which led them soon to take his life had already set in—and, in due time, led them also to

clash with the might of Rome.

Jesus stood among them as the "Gift of God", yet notwithstanding that, there was nothing He could do to save them from that impending crash. No word or act of his could change the trends of self-interested religious thought. It was not easy thus to stand beside the quickening currents and watch them accelerating down the rapids to their final plunge—and he himself at peace and unperturbed. Only a heart at rest in God, and in his promises, can look forward from the darkening scenes, and know that an "afterwards" is provided for in which the broken hearts, beyond the cataract, can be hushed to quietness and sanity again.

We too have that same experience to-day. Another generation, amid the closing scenes of another age, with that same fateful ability to believe, is rushing with quickening impetus to its final plunge, and we, who know the gift of God, stand powerless to avert the inevitable. No effort of tongue or pen can turn aside the deep-drawn tide that bears our generation on its crest. What of ourselves? Does it sap our peace of heart and mind? Have we learned, like Jesus did, to leave our people—with our own loved ones, perhaps in the midst—to the hands of God? It is a lesson still not easy to be learned, to have to stand on-looking and see the fateful drift, yet unable to lend a hand. Day by day we see and feel the cold

reaction to God's gifts of grace. Everywhere, the wide world through, awakening nations say, "give us bread, give us fish", here and now—not in God's way! Whether the channel be democratic or totalitarian, the sequel is the same. The Son of God is not wanted either as the Bread of God or as a sacrifice for sin!

But if we would know the peace which in his day kept the Master's heart at rest, we must also bide within the Sovereign Will of God, knowing, the while, that his way is best. At close of day, let us therefore retire for a little while with him to permit the fret and worry from the world's cold callousness to subside. Has this been a day of worry and perplexity? Let the "*blood of Jesus whisper peace within*". Have we been "by thronging duties pressed"? "*To do the will of Jesus—this is rest.*"

Perhaps our path has had "sorrows surging round"! "On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found." Have we "loved ones far away"? "In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they."

Let us leave them there, assured that Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers—and that He is on the throne!

*It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.
"O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,
and*

He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."

Advice from the past

"We must not betray the reputation of the 'Good News' by puerile mistakes we ought never to make, or by palpable errors which a little reading would prevent. Even when he scorned "enticing words of man's wisdom" in his preaching, as he did at Corinth (1 Cor. 2 4), Paul's hearers knew that they were listening to an intelligent, educated man. That impression undoubtedly prepared a way for the message. The same thing is at least desirable, if not increasingly essential in those who seek to sow and cherish the seed of the Word in the intellectual climate of our times."

The foregoing quotation, origin unknown, makes good sense. In matters of scientific or general knowledge Christians must accept the findings of the current generation whilst realising that all knowledge is progressive, and the next generation will render much of to-day's knowledge

obsolete. The Christian tendency to be out-of-date on such things is apparently an old trouble, as witness the writings of St. Augustine on the subject in the Fifth Century. He said:

"It very often happens that there is some question as to the earth or the sky or the other elements of this world, respecting which one who is not a Christian has knowledge derived from most certain reasoning or observation, and it is very disgraceful and mischievous, and of all things to be carefully avoided, that a Christian speaking on such matters as being according to the Christian Scriptures should be heard by an unbeliever talking such nonsense that the unbeliever, perceiving him to be as wide from the mark as east from west, can hardly restrain himself from laughing."

(Augustine, "*City of God*").



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

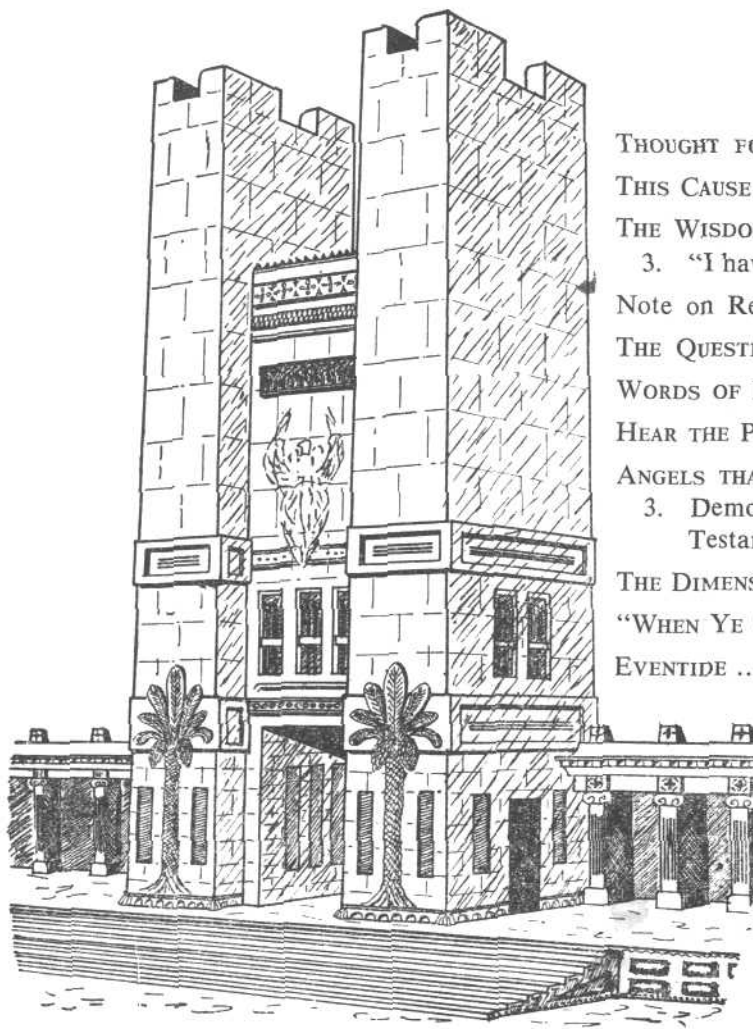
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"I will instruct and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eye"
(Psa. 32.8).

There comes a happening in the life which disrupts the orderly course of events and nothing is ever the same again. And the immediate reaction is "Why has God permitted this?". It seemed so unnecessary, perhaps bringing grief and pain. Things may not have been perfect, but—how much better if God had left them alone! And in all such reasoning we are forgetting that God is fashioning and directing all our lives for his purpose, controlling and ruling our affairs and circumstances to create in each one of us just that heart and character which will fit us for the place in his creation which we are due to occupy at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. He knows, so much better than do we, the extent to which we, each one, has become transformed into his likeness and so be ready for the call to higher service. He knows, so much better than do we, what in the way of our experiences and of other influences are necessary to us that we might be fully transformed. And all the time He is the guide and instructor. He knows what we need and He knows the way. It is for us to watch diligently and perceive his leading and follow his guidance. He is a true teacher and a sure guide; as He led Israel through the wilderness and brought them safely at last to the Promised Land, so will He surely do with us. If He ushers us outside the door and closes it for the last time, He will open another door into which He would have us enter. If He closes one book because it is complete He will open another that we may begin afresh. And all the time He leads, like the guiding cloud in the daytime and the pillar of fire by night, his eye always upon us that we stumble not or miss the way, until at the last we cross the final boundary and are safely home.

There is so much we do not know, about ourselves and each other, so many reasons why what seems to be utter disaster is after all a manifestation of God's love and care for his children. "The eternal God is thy refuge" says the Psalmist "and underneath are the everlasting arms." If He takes one of his own into those everlasting arms it is because He loves that one and knows what is best. And for we who remain there is the consciousness that He leads, that we might follow; He instructs, that we might learn; his eye is upon us that we might realise his watch-care over all our ways and with us in all the circumstances of life, giving guidance in our perplexity, and strength for our weakness, and that peace of mind which comes from knowing that his hand is in control of all our affairs and will bring them forth for good, all the time that we rest them in him.

Convention The usual June convention is planned for 18 and 19 June 1977 at the Malt House, Elgiva Lane, Chesham, Bucks. For details and programmes please write secretary, Mr. F. Binns, 8 Shannon Court, Kirtle Road, Chesham, Bucks.

The cost of the "Monthly"

From time to time various friends enquire the current cost per contributing reader of printing and distributing the "Monthly" as a guide to their own donations for the purpose, realising as they do that such costs are constantly in the ascendant. In reply to such enquiries it can be stated that the present cost is in the region of £2.40 (a little over 4 U.S.A. dollars) for one year's issues. It is realised that not all can afford this sum and once again we would stress that we are happy to send the "Monthly" wherever it is requested irrespective of the reader's ability to meet the full cost or even at no cost at all, provided there is genuine interest and the desire to continue receiving it. The Lord has always seen to it that the costs are met and we have confidence that He will continue so to do.

THIS CAUSE WE SERVE

*An essay on the Church's
commission in the world.*

"And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin". "And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand". (John 16.8; Matt. 10.7).

"The voice said, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry?" The ancient plaint of Isaiah is still heard in these latter days. What is to be the burden of the message? Is it pointing forward to the glories to come, the days of the Messianic Kingdom on earth, a sort of "pie in the sky" promise that takes no account of men's inward needs now? Is it to be the dark foreboding of judgment soon to come, an announcement of Divinely sent doom to destroy all the works of men because of human sin? Or is it to be an impassioned plea for conviction of sin and repentance, a coming in penitence to the foot of the Cross in the best traditions of nineteenth century evangelical appeal? Each of these alternatives is espoused and advocated by one or another, and because most Christian people today find little or no response, the question is becoming more frequently asked "What is the message that should be preached?"

Some attempt to settle the matter by declaring that the Church in the flesh is no longer called to preach the Gospel. The work of sowing, it is said, is ended; the present is the time of reaping. We have come to that point in the development of the Divine purposes where God is gathering to their heavenly home the last remaining ones of a body of people who will constitute the future rulers of earth. All the emphasis is on the final "finishing touches" to the characters of these, that they might be very pleasing to the Most High, the remainder of mankind, whatever their needs or their longings, being ignored. Whilst there is no doubt that all those who hold such view and fashion their lives' activities accordingly will eventually find out for themselves to what extent they have correctly interpreted the Divine Will in this matter, it does remain true that a great many who hold equally positive views about the Divine Plan of redemption in the present and future Ages, and trust just as sincerely to find eventually that they have won the Master's "Well done", find it quite irreconcilable with their understanding of the Christian call not to give outward expression to the faith that is within them. The frustration of so many efforts sincerely put forth inspires the question which this short note seeks to consider. Many are familiar with the theme which rang through Christendom in the last two decades of the nineteenth century

and the first two of the twentieth, a proclamation of Millennial hope and future probation for all mankind at the coming of Christ and his Kingdom. The imminence of Divine judgment on the evil forces of this present world and the end of the power of man was a secondary theme. The call to repentance and conversion, following realisation and conviction of sin, was not sounded at all. There was a reason for that. The message was addressed, not to all men generally, but to people who were already Christians and had already passed those initial steps. There was no secret about it. The impulse was to reach out with a message exceeding in its plane of theological understanding anything which Christendom had hitherto offered. ".....in the interest of his consecrated saints, waiting for the adoption, and of all that in every place call upon the Lord, the household of faith....." That was the formula, familiar to many. The "groaning creation", by the same outlook, was still "travailing and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," and that was not to be until the future Age had dawned in all its fulness. So quite understandingly there was really no place for conviction of sin and repentance or anything else of an evangelical nature. And the message then was not evangelical; it was theological and intellectual. It was not intended to appeal to the heart so much as to the head and it reached the heart only when individual and personal appreciation of the inherent justice and wisdom of the Divine Plan thus outlined led one to come to God in unreserved dedication of heart and life to serve the interests of such a Plan. There was not—or rarely was there—the broken heart of a repentant sinner in that surrender; rather the measured accents of one who had counted the cost and having done so, deliberately came to God saying "Here am I, send me".

It is easy now to look back and disparage the work that then was done and the basis upon which it was done. Not so often is it realised that without that work and that message, conceived and carried on in just the manner that it was, there would not be much of what is held dear today. The world of Queen Victoria was a very different world from that of Queen Elizabeth II. The late nineteenth century produced a number of famous revivalists and their labours brought many to Christ in repentance, and without any doubt at all those same labours gave much joy to the angels in heaven. But none of those revival-

ists gave the lie to the God-dishonouring doctrines of the Dark Ages as did this message. None of them took up the newly unfolding vista of scientific understanding and related it to the old Bible presentation, challenging the specious theories of evolution and materialism on their own level. None of them gave a philosophic and reasoned answer to the fundamental questions which thinking men in an age of dawning enlightenment were beginning to ask. They were not qualified so to do, and they were not called so to do. Their achievements lay in a different field. And the fact that for forty years the more intellectual type of message, having as its chief object the justification of the Divine character by revealing God's plan for man's future, drew its audiences, and good audiences at that; had its circle of readers, a circle of daily and weekly newspaper readers such as no religious body has had since; and a circulation of books which at that time was rightly regarded as phenomenal, is evidence that this message met the need and did a work. It, too, occupied an essential place in the Divine Plan for the present Age. Those who have inherited the tradition should be the first to recognise its true worth, and the last to disparage and criticise.

But that does not demand the same pattern in activity and witness today. We are already a century away from the beginning of those things. The world has changed; it speaks a different language and thinks in a different way. Moreover, its needs are different. The calm, measured stateliness of Victorian exposition finds no responsive chord in the hearts of young Elizabethans who crowd as much into one day of their lives as their forebears did into a month, and who moreover do not know but that at any instant even that hurried existence may be summarily terminated by the detonation of some fearful creation of man's destructive ingenuity. Such words as "atonement", "covenant", "mediator", had meaning to a very large proportion of men and women then; they convey no meaning whatever to any but a very few today. Unless the message is spoken in terms that are understood, and unless we speak of things that find some response in heart or mind of the hearer, something that is relevant to the problems of the day and the questions that are being asked today, we might just as well hold our peace. "I had rather" said St. Paul "speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." It is with that thought in mind we need to examine this problem before us and in that

recognition to find its answer.

Jesus taught, not as the scribes, in a superior, pedantic and vacillating fashion, but as one having authority. He spoke with an air of quiet assurance which commanded attention and won the confidence of the hearers. He spoke of what He evidently knew, and He was at least respected for that knowledge. The common people heard him gladly; that can only be because they understood the words He used and felt that He was speaking to them on their own level and was familiar with the problems of their own generation. There is the example. We must drop any pretence of being some superior class of being amongst others and realise that we are men of like passions with others. We must discard the habits of thought and the traits of speech of a generation that has gone for ever and acclimatise ourselves to those of this generation. That does not mean a foolish aping of present-day mannerisms and tricks of speech, nor a discarding of the natural dignity of the Gospel message in the vain hope that by such means the sympathy of the masses will be gained. It does mean that we must be ready to discontinue old methods which have proved no longer so effective as they were in the past and adopt new methods which give some promise of greater reward. Whatever modern means of the impartation of knowledge may lie within reach, and to whatever extent all such means do lie within reach, it is well to use in the endeavour to spread the glad tidings.

That does not answer the primary question: What message ought we to preach? Perhaps the best answer is given by the declaration of John the Baptist; "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" That was the theme of Jesus' message too, and of all the Apostles. "God..... now commandeth all men everywhere to repent..... because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained". "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out..... and He shall send Jesus Christ..... whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things". There is no separating the two themes in the New Testament. The call to repentance and the message of the Kingdom go hand in hand together, and we who live in a day when the masses of the people need, more than ever they have done, both these things, repentance and the Kingdom, are called to proclaim them both. The story of the Kingdom gives point and reason to the call to repentance.

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

3. "I have found a Ransom"

With verse 14 of chapter 33 Elihu plunges into the essence of all Divine revelation, the process by means of which God will restore the willing of all mankind to himself, exact the penalty of sin upon those who will not accept him, and eliminate the power and effects of evil from his creation. That process has as its centre and essential basis the earthly life, the sacrificial death, and the mediatorial work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such themes could not be plainly defined in concrete terms by Elihu for he lived at far too early a time and the men of his age were by no means ready to understand the story of a suffering Messiah. There was a great deal of history to be enacted before the "fulness of time" could be sufficiently complete to allow God to "send forth his Son". But everything was there in principle in the Spirit filled mind of Elihu. God, who had devised the whole scheme from before the foundation of the world, spoke here by his Spirit, through this man, of the things He intended one day to do. Let the critics scoff as they may, let the "modern scholar" talk learnedly of "primitive ideas of resurrection", the grand truth remains that here in the 33rd chapter of Job we have the first detailed definition of the Divine purpose for the reclamation of man from sin and death, and the fact that this reclamation is to be brought about by God himself providing a redeemer and a teacher to lead men back to him. In the light of Christian knowledge not possible to be understood until the Apostles had left their inspired legacies on record for later generations there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this marvellous passage.

The whole theme of Elihu in this chapter is the Wisdom of God, wisdom which inspired such a wonderful way of dealing with the evil in man and wisdom which is personified in One who would come from God, an earthly manifestation of God, having all the authority of God, to show men what God is and can be. This idea of Divine wisdom personified took firm root in Israel and the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs show just how firmly it did take root. "*Behold, wisdom calleth, and understanding sendeth forth her voice... unto you, O men, I call, and my voice goeth forth to the sons of men*" (Prov. 8. 1-4). Wisdom personified developed into the later doctrine of the Logos, the Word of God, the mind, the thoughts, the words, the revelation of God projected into personality which could become the manifestation of God to men so that

at last John could say "*and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father...*" (John 1. 14). That is the final revelation of something it was first given to Elihu dimly to perceive when he spoke of the one whom God had provided to deliver man from death and show him the way back to the light of God.

Elihu is concerned throughout this part of his discourse, occupying the remainder of chapter 33, with a single theme which revolves around four words in two couplets, the soul and the grave; life and death. Five times (verses 18, 20, 22, 28 & 30) is the theme repeated. The soul goes into corruption, the grave, and is lost; the life swallowed up in death. The Divine mediator appears, to undo the work of evil, and behold, for "whosoever will" (Rev. 22. 17)—and this is important; the deliverance is only for those who will avail themselves of it on the Divine terms—for "whosoever will" the soul comes back again from the grave and death is swallowed up in life. Both the principles underlying deliverance and the process by which deliverance is achieved are already set out here, and it is to these principles and this process that we have now to address ourselves.

"*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth (regardeth) it not, in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*" (33.14-17). Right at the outset Elihu refutes the oft-heard accusation that God does not care, that He is indifferent to the woes and weaknesses of fallen man. God does care, and God is and always has been ready to respond to the slightest opening any of his creatures may offer for the ingress of his words and power. Elihu knew that all too often such overtures are rejected "*God speaketh once, yea twice...*" In the Hebrew this is not limited to one repetition and no more. The words literally are "God speaketh, one, two....." as though He speaks with a kind of constant repetition, stroke upon stroke, word upon word, "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little" (Isa. 28. 10). But just as with the people of Israel in Isaiah's day, of whom it was said "yet they would not hear", so now, says Elihu, men do not regard the constant witness of Divine truth. In a remarkably vivid illustration he

describes the word of God coming to man in a dream, during the silent watches of the night. Traditionally this was held by the ancients to be the most favourable time for God to gain entrance into the human mind. Psychologically there may perhaps be something to be said for it. Freed from the cares and preoccupations of the daytime, without the distractions of sight and sound,—for the Eastern night is tropically dark and there were no jet planes or late car drivers to make night hideous in those days—there must have been many others like David who could say as he did *"when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches"* (Psa. 63. 6) and realise that in such frame of mind God could talk to them as never during the daytime. So here, He is depicted reaching men at such a time to open their ears, and seal their instruction. It is a forceful illustration, derived in all probability from the method of letter-writing in force in Job's day. The use of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform (wedge shaped) characters, thought at one time to be confined to the Euphrates valley where it originated, is now known to have been widespread throughout Western Asia; Job and his friends, educated men all, must have been thoroughly familiar with it. The letter or other document was inscribed on a tablet of soft clay measuring, often, not more than two or three inches each way by an eighth of an inch thick. The tablet was baked in an oven, dusted over with fine dry powder and then completely enclosed in an envelope of clay which was sealed down on all sides, and inscribed with the recipient's address or, if a legal document, with some indication of the contents. The whole thing was then baked again to render the outer covering hard. To open, the outer envelope was cracked and removed and the document found safely preserved inside. Just so, says Elihu, is it with God. He puts his message into the ears of man and then seals it in as though with a clay envelope, and all to the end defined in the next verse, that he might withdraw man from his self-willed purpose, taking away man's self-pride, so evidencing his own love for man and his own desire to deliver man from the sorry state in which, because of sin, he finds himself.

Verse 18 is a pithy analysis of the Divine purpose for man—if man will have it, as later verses make clear; no one is to be forced into a life of righteousness—and it gives in clear and succinct phrase the net result of it all *"He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword"* (33. 18). Here is the first of the five occurrences of "soul" and "pit". "Pit" is *"shachath"* rendered variously in the Old Testament *pit, grave, corruption*; It is derived from

the root *"to corrupt"* and the underlying idea is the corruption and decay of the body in the grave until nothing is left. Be it noted that it is the soul (*"nephesh"*) which is here said to go into corruption. The distinction between the soul and the spirit is often slurred over in everyday Christian thought, and the fact that the "soul" is the product of the union between spirit and body; without both there cannot be a "soul". There is a distinction also between the ideas of soul and life. Life as a principle is inherent in God; the life that animates a fleshly creature is given by God. In the case of Adam *"God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"*. (Gen. 2. 7). And at death the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 10. 7) so that when Elihu says God keeps back the soul of man from corruption, decay, and the life the spirit, from perishing, he is saying in effect, that notwithstanding the apparent hopelessness of human life as seen outwardly, all is not really lost and God is able to preserve man's life and deliver him from the enemies which would destroy him. But not before he has suffered according to the Divine laws of retribution. Not before he has gone down into the depths of despair in consequence of the follies of his own way. Not until it has been abundantly demonstrated that only by accepting and living God's way can man inherit and enjoy eternal life. And most important of all, not until the Redeemer has come, who will show man the way back to God and lead him along that way.

So Verse 19 begins the downward story, the descent of the doomed soul into death and corruption, a doom which can only be nullified by the power of God in resurrection. *"He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and with continuous struggles"* (as Cook has it) *"so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers"*. (33.19-22). Can there be a more eloquent picture of the man, wasted by disease and weary with pain, sinking slowly into that which eventually comes to all men. Soul and life together share in this descent and in its end. When the breath leaves the body and the slow processes of Nature begin to resolve that inanimate frame into its constituent atoms, there is nothing left, only the spirit of life held in the infinite power of God, waiting until it shall be clothed again with its resurrection body in God's own due time. But first of all, says Elihu, before that resurrection can take place, the Redeemer must come and it is to that aspect of the Divine purpose that he next addresses himself.

"If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, (ambassador or mediator) one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him and sayeth, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (33. 23, 24). The messenger is God's messenger, his representative and spokesman, to declare God's uprightness to man. But more than that, he is also a mediator. This word "*luts*", here translated "interpreter", is one that really refers to the treatment of a foreigner, an alien, an enemy, and can be equally well rendered ambassador, teacher, mediator, according to the sense of the context. (See 2 Chron. 32.31 where it is rendered "ambassador" and Isa. 43. 27 where it is "teacher"). Now in this particular passage the setting is that of man sunken in sin and unreconciled to God; the promise is that God will be reconciled and man see his face with joy (verse 26). The obvious sense of the word here is "mediator". The messenger comes to declare the righteousness of God and to be a mediator between God and man in the process of reconciliation. That is exactly what St. Paul declares of Christ. "*There is one... mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all*" (1 Tim. 2. 5. 6). That New Testament word is the exact counterpart of this Old Testament vision; Elihu and Paul are in complete harmony, seeing the same thing. In this is the grace of God manifest, when he says that man shall be delivered from going down into the pit because he has found a ransom. "Deliver" here has the meaning of buying a man out of bondage, of redeeming or ransoming for a price. "Ransom" is "*kopher*", primarily a covering, from which the word "atonement" in the Levitical sacrificial ritual comes; in fact Leiser uses "atonement" instead of "ransom" in this very passage. So the Divine decree goes forth that man is to be bought back from the power of the grave and is not to lie in corruption, because God has found or provided an atonement, a ransom for his condemned life.

Now this matter of being ransomed from the power of the grave is not just merely a figure of speech or an item of academic theology; it is a very real literal thing. Jesus himself said very plainly "*The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live... the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth....*" (John 5. 25-29). "Thy brother shall rise again" he said to the sorrowing Martha. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" she replied. Jesus supplied the essential link. "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me,

though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." (John 11. 23-26). Here is basis for confidence that in the outworking of the Divine purpose men will come back from the grave to face the challenge of Christ. They will find that all their ignoring of God and all their flouting of his laws will have availed them nothing; they will be brought face to face with the Mediator and have the issues of life and death placed squarely before them, and there will be no more evading those issues. It is the purpose of Elihu now to lay down the principles which will obtain when men thus face the mediator who has come to them, the principles and the choice which determine the eternal destiny of every man. For none may escape the crisis of eternal judgment.

This next part of the discourse reminds one irresistibly of the Lord's words to Israel "*I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*" (Ezek. 33. 11). The Divine attitude revealed through Elihu is precisely the same. "*He looketh upon men. and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*" (33. 27, 28). Here is the basic principle; the messenger appears with the message, the ransom is provided and given, the mediator is ready to fulfil the functions of his office, and there and then if the man repents and admits his realisation of the scriptural truth that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 13. 34), God will receive him. This is very reminiscent of the parable of the prodigal son. There, too, the erring one came to himself, realising his true position, and arose, and returned to his father, and his father received him. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the old mediæval idea of God as a kind of grim ogre intent only on casting into hell all but a few saintly ones who somehow manage to live lives of sufficient piety to scrape into heaven is utterly and hopelessly wrong. God made men for life, and not for death; for felicity, not for misery; recipients of his benevolence, not objects of his punishment. True, He cannot and will not condone or tolerate sin or permit the perpetration of evil. After all, sin is intrinsically the transgression of those laws and principles which God has established for the orderly and harmonious conduct of his creation. No man can violate those laws without marring some aspect of that creation or causing harm or unhappiness to one or more of its inhabitants. It is obvious that the gift of conscious life, on what-

ever plane of being, has to be contingent upon willing and active harmony with those laws; it ought to be equally obvious that the logical consequence of wilful and deliberate failure to keep those laws is the withdrawal of that life of which the recipient refuses to make the intended use. So death, that final death which is the ultimate penalty of sin, is simply that withdrawal of life, a return to the condition obtaining before the individual existed. That dark climax can only come after God has, as it were, exhausted all his efforts in the endeavour to win the individual's allegiance to himself, and is actively working all the time so that all men, if only they will, can inherit the glorious destiny He plans for them. But of course the conditions must be maintained. The man must realise, as Elihu says here, that the practice of sin or the violation of the apparently most trivial of God's laws will profit him not. A full and hearty acceptance of the place in creation for which God has made him is the only possible attitude of heart for every man. So on the basis of his repentance the past is blotted out, he is delivered from eternal condemnation, and he enters into eternal life.

That condition of eternal felicity is eloquently summed up in the two preceding verses which Elihu, in his enthusiasm for the final outcome, had to utter before he could settle down more quietly to the basis in verses 27-28 which makes that outcome possible. *"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he will see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness"* (33. 25-26). This is quite obviously a promise of the future. After all the affliction and disease and wasting of physique, culminating in death, the grave, the flesh returning "to dust as it was", the effect of the Redeemer's work and the Teacher's work is a complete restoration to youthful health and vigour, in a new environment. The old background of sin has gone; the man now beholds the face of God, he dwells as it were before him, and he finds that instead of being the slave of sin he has become a freeman in righteousness. This is the time of which Isaiah speaks when he says that *"the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf be unstopped, the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing,"* for, says he, *"the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"*. (Isa. 35. 5-10). This is the time when "the dwelling-place of God is with men, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death,

neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 3. 4). The whole tenor of Scripture, from Elihu to John, is definite on the reality of this coming glorious Age of Christ's Mediatorial reign when, in the words of the old Methodist hymn, repeated from Scripture, *"the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea"*.

"Lo, all these things worketh God often-times with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living" (33. 29, 30). Says Moffatt in his translation *"Now God does this over and over again, twice, thrice, for men, to bring them back from death into the sunshine of life"*. This is the crystallisation of the Divine purpose. God repeatedly brings to bear all the weapons in his armoury with which to break down the pride and hardness of man and show him what is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It does not do to over-simplify this passage and look upon it as meaning no more than the everyday repetition of mundane disasters which may eventually bring a man to repentance in this life. These two verses are the climax to Elihu's whole argument; they cap and terminate what has gone before. He finishes this particular subject here. They must have direct connection with what he has been saying and as such they must define the three factors which in this 33rd chapter stand out as the primary elements in God's course of action for man's reconciliation to himself. *"Oftentimes"* says the Authorised version *"Twice, thrice"* is Moffatt's choice. *"Two ways, three, with a man"* is how Rotherham renders it. What Elihu means here is that God deals with any man in a plurality of visitations through visions (vs. 14-17) which in modern aspect means leading and enlightenment by his Holy Spirit and by his chosen pastors and teachers. Some respond to this and become disciples here and now. Next comes the permission of afflictions and chastening, of earthly disasters and disappointments (vs. 19-22). That has its effect with others who in consequence of such are persuaded finally to turn their hearts to God. Finally comes the messenger, the Mediator (vs. 23-26) and this projects us into the coming Age when all men will be brought under his benevolent yet firm rule and be constrained to face the issues of life and death. Without much doubt Elihu here surveys the whole scope of God's redemptive purpose and perceives its onward extension into the far distant future, beyond the ending of the kingdoms of this world and into the light of the Kingdom of God.....

The young man paused; he had concluded the first discourse of his exposition and he now in-

vited Job to comment, if he would. He wanted to know what Job thought about his reasoning and his revelation. *"Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom"*. (33. 31-33). It is probable that the 31st verse is intended to be understood in the past tense. Job had marked well, had held his peace, while Elihu was speaking. Now Job was invited to make

rejoinder. If he had nothing to say, goes on Elihu, let him continue to hold his peace and hearken, for there was yet much to be said. There is no intimation that Job did say anything, for in chapter 34 Elihu resumes his speech, this time introducing a new aspect. Leaving the Wisdom of God, he now seeks to show how the whole of the questions at issue can be explained in the light of Divine Justice, the Justice of God.

(To be continued)

A Note on Rev. 20.10

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20. 10).

Our Lord's frequent references to the valley of Gehenna, outside Jerusalem, are very familiar, and that valley's fitness as a symbol of utter destruction is well known. It has often been thought that the Revelator had this same valley in mind when he spoke of the lake of fire burning with brimstone. There is, however, an even more extreme example of complete and terrible destruction which could well fit the language of Revelation with perhaps greater propriety, and indicate with greater clarity the meaning of the expression "for ever and ever". It will be observed that in the five instances where the symbol is used (Rev. chaps. 19, 20 and 21), the picture is that of a Lake burning with fire and sulphur (brimstone). We need therefore in endeavouring to appreciate the force of the symbol to find in Scriptural history the supreme example of such an event as associated with eternal judgment. The thought of the "smoke of the burning" going up forever and ever is intimately associated with the symbol, as witness Rev. 14. 10, and 18. 10 where the destruction of other phases of the system of evil is pictured. This conception is evidently borrowed from Isaiah 34. 9-10, where in speaking of the destruction of Edom the prophet declares that her smoke should pass through the land for ever and ever. That this latter does not carry the thought of perpetuity is evident from verse 17 where some are described who shall ultimately possess the land for ever, i.e., after its burning. But verse 10 of Isaiah 34 in-

dicates that he in his turn took his symbolism from a still earlier source, and the vivid words of Jude, verse 7, afford the clue when he speaks of "Sodom and Gomorrha... SUFFERING THE VENGEANCE OF ETERNAL FIRE". Gen. 19. 28 tells us that Abraham looked toward Sodom and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. That catastrophe left such an impression upon the minds of the early progenitors of the children of Israel that the vision was never effaced—the fire from heaven that destroyed the illfated cities. Research has elicited with some degree of certainty that the cataclysm was at least in part of a volcanic nature, and that earth movements, or an earthquake, cleft the ground in many places so that sulphur, asphalt and petroleum vapours were released and ignited, thus completing the work of destruction. It is thought that much of this material was released under the surface of the Dead Sea and took fire upon reaching the surface, thus turning the sea into a veritable lake of fire. The allusion in Isa. 34. 9 seems to be based upon some memory of such an occurrence.

Thus seen, the expression in Revelation would mean, not the continued torment of the Devil in some state of conscious existence, but, first, his utter destruction, and secondly, the continued remembrance of that destruction, just as Jude's reference to the cities of the plain suffering the vengeance of eternal fire by no means denotes the eternal burning of that fire which died down so many centuries ago, but the indelible impression left on the minds of those who witnessed or who afterwards were told of that tremendous demonstration of the wrath which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness.

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *"Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13. 13). What is the meaning of this expression "without the camp" and where is it?*

A. It is a figure of speech. Vss. 11-12 contrast and compare the sin-offering of the Day of Atonement in the Israelite ancient ritual, when the blood of the sacrificed bullock was sprinkled before God in the "Most Holy", the choice parts of the sacrifice offered on the Brasen Altar in the "Court", and the carcass dragged to a spot outside the Camp of Israel (the Tabernacle itself being in the centre of the Camp; see Num. ch. 2) and there burned. The effluvia of the burning carcass would be an offence in the nostrils of the people even although the offering upon the Altar in the Court was an acceptable "sweet savour unto God". All this pictured in allegory the offering of Christ for human sin so that vs. 12 says *"wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without (i.e. outside) the gate"* (the gate of the Court, leading out to the Camp). In the sight of mankind generally the sacrifice of Jesus was, and is, as obnoxious as was the burning of the sin-offering outside the Camp in the days of Israel. Now it is also true that *"as he is, so are we, in this world"* (1 Jno. 4. 17), that we as dedicated followers of our Lord are called to follow him in the same kind of sacrificed life, being "dead with him" (Rom. 5. 3-23). We are therefore pictured as following him to that spot "outside the Camp" where our dedicated lives will be likewise consumed, repugnant in the sight of men but acceptable and pleasing to God.

* * * *

Q. *Who or what is the Antichrist?*

A. This has been a fruitful topic of debate for nearly two thousand years. The Jews in the last two pre-Christian centuries had a belief in a great barbarian power, Gog and Magog, which in the Last Day would attack the Lord's Messiah and be defeated. In Apostolic days there was expectation that the dead emperor Nero would return from the dead and resume his reign of terror over Christians and Jews alike. A variation of this was that the Antichrist would arise from the parallel empire of Parthia in the east. During the course of the Age most of the great historical figures were dubbed Antichrist in their time; in our own day Mussolini, Lenin and Hitler all succeeded to the title in the eyes of various groups of Christian expositors. A view often met with today is that before Christ is revealed at his

Second Advent the whole world will become subservient to a kind of world dictator, a man who will emerge and gain universal control, avowing his implacable hostility to the Lord Christ and all who are his. This man is thought to establish his seat of power, variously, at Jerusalem, Rome or a rebuilt Babylon.

The Scriptural basis for the idea of the Antichrist who opposes Christ at his Coming is found in 2 Thess. 2. The Apostle Paul calls him, or it, the "mystery of iniquity" and indicates that it cannot be revealed until a "hindering one" in his day existing is "taken out of the way". Then will "that wicked One" come to power but will be utterly destroyed by the Lord at his Second Advent.

Complete exposition of this subject is not possible here but it would seem that, in harmony with other related Scriptures, the reality of the Antichrist is to be sought in the general religious-political powers of this present Age which have consistently opposed true Christianity. The "hindering one" of Paul's day was the pagan Roman idolatrous-political system which in the time of Constantine, 14th century, gave place to organised Christianity. From then on there have always been organisations and systems in the world claiming the name of Christ but utterly alien to his spirit; these continue until the time of his Advent but must give way before the advance of his Messianic Kingdom.

(It is hoped to present a more comprehensive treatise on this subject at not too distant a future date.)

* * * *

Q. *In Luke 1.20 Zacharias is rendered "silent and not able to speak" and he made signs to the people; but why should they make signs to him in vs. 62 since there is no indication that he was deaf? (I. McG)*

A. The word rendered "made signs" in the A.V. is *enneuo*, which means primarily to nod at, or otherwise to attract a person's attention (in the Greek LXX of Prov. 6.23 and 10.10 it is rendered "winketh with the eye") so that what is meant is that after the mother's assertion that the child should be called John the bystanders nodded to Zacharias, who, being dumb, was a silent observer of the proceedings, to have his assent or otherwise, which he gave by writing on the tablet "His name is John". They could have asked him outright, and he would have heard, but a nod across the room to attract his attention was all that was necessary.

WORDS OF LIFE

Part I.

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life". (Jno. 6.63).

The Son of Man, speaking to the men and women about him, made this claim for his words. The words themselves were the ordinary, commonplace words in daily use, understood by the unlettered as well as the better educated Scribes and Pharisees. Coming from him the difference lay in their declaration, in the power of the Spirit with which they were charged. In the ring of truth, in the certainty of the knowledge they contained, for He taught them as one having authority. He spoke as no other man spoke and he claimed what no other had ever dared to claim, that his words were life, fused together by the power of the Spirit of God.

Words are the signs and symbols of communication; the agents of instruction; the vehicles of ideas conveying plans, intentions and methods from one mind to another. Man alone has the gift of speech. Animals and birds may understand each other's cries and calls but words are an important necessity to man. They form the small change of common speech. They are the foundation stones of religion, the root of all the arts, the source of all learning. They are the bricks and mortar of civilisation. By their means ideas and dreams have been translated into realities. Systems and cities have arisen through their agency and by that same agency they have been overthrown.

Without words life would be a dumb show. The events of life, the sights and wonders of the world, the thoughts, beliefs and emotions of the human being have urged both tongue and pen to put them into words. Speaking and writing are two remarkable means which convey pleasure, interest, information and inspiration from one human mind to another. Articulate man is the creature made a little lower than the angels. What would the world be without literature, its Psalms of praise, its Odes of joy, its Sonnets of love and perfection, its stories which fascinate the young and enthrall the old, its scholarly treatises which give the intellectual food for thought? Most of all, what would it be without the Law, the Prophets and the Gospels, the things spoken and written long ago that every succeeding generation of man might be educated in the true knowledge and wisdom of God and of life?

Every day an avalanche of words pours from the printing presses of the world, providing a fleeting knowledge, a trifling entertainment. Few

of these words are either wonderful or wise. They are certainly not words of life. Like the grass of the field they are here today and gone tomorrow, most of them not worth the paper they are printed on. The trees of the forest fall to provide the material by which man reports the violence of his race and the sins of society, the intrigues of his world; creating confusion, swaying public opinion this way and that, so people think one thing today and another tomorrow. Senses are titillated by scandal and gossip, by those topics which appeal to the baser elements in human nature; in spite of the power and liberty of the printed page the amount of 'don't knows' and 'you knows' reveal a strange emptiness in the twentieth century mind. Far from lifting man to the noble stature of an educated, intelligent being who knows what he is doing, where he is going and why, the great spate of words by which he is daily harangued and bombarded produces a confused being, lost in the jargon of the printed and spoken word.

The comments of Jesus on the wordy, often worthless, arguments of the educators of his day, who taught for doctrine the commandments of men, whose lips and hearts were at variance with each other, are applicable to the vagaries and inconsistencies of what is termed, "this day and age". *"Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch"* (Matt. 15.14). He had already pointed out that words defile the man; corrupt, unwholesome, misleading and contradictory words. Evil thoughts, expressed in evil words, incite men to evil deeds. All the useless quibble, the idle chatter, the vain, wordy profession without the conduct to back it up, has no power at all to combat the evils common to society, so tersely enumerated by the Son of Man. *"Hear and understand. Do you not yet understand? Are you without understanding?"* He was trying to get through to a people so soaked in the traditions and teachings of men, so far from God in their empty formalities, they had ceased to know right from wrong. They tolerated in their midst evils which would have horrified them had they been in their right senses. Because their thoughts were shallow and selfish, their words superficial and meaningless, they were offended at the clear cut brevity of speech which exposed their lack of understanding. For all their vaunted education they were ignorant. They went their own way, planting their own plants, as the

modern world would say "doing their own thing", but such plants have short lives. They contribute little to the stability of society. What God plants endures, without God even the cultured become caricatures of his original design and intention to have man "created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4.24).

It is here that God speaks to man, illuminating words of life which shine upon the darkened understanding, the confusion and the blindness, separating wrong from right, educating the mind to a full recognition of the sins which degrade and destroy, and the wholesome living which exalts and preserves. God had the first word in the affairs of men and he will have the last. That word is power, life-force. It was the creative energy commanding and it was done. The records of man's history and the revelation of God's purposes begin and end with the same Word.

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is and which was, and which is to come; the Almighty" (Rev. 8.11). Like a trumpet clear and strong the voice repeated, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; what you see write in a book". John wrote "In the beginning was the Word". What he saw and heard in vision while exiled on the island of Patmos he recorded. As John Bunyan wrote the Pilgrim's Progress while in prison so John wrote the Apocalypse while suffering for the faith. Both books have maintained their evergreen quality, fascinating and inspiring Christians of all ages, keeping theologians busy attempting to decipher the revelator's code. The Gospel of Jesus as written by his best loved disciple ranks among the immortals; here are set down the true words of spirit and life as they fell from the lips of one who spoke as no other man has spoken. His words have true ring of gold, he had the gift and the manner which brought crowds to hear him speak. They endured hunger and weariness that they might listen to words which warmed their hearts, which inspired them with hope and gave a new meaning to the complicated business of living, his words, plain and simple, but weighty with instruction, comfort and courage. They were full of good cheer, strong with confidence and authority; tender, compassionate words for the poor and weary, the sick, the outcasts, and the lost.

It was not just his words, thrilling though they were, but himself the Living Word which was important. When God would speak more plainly to man than at any other time he sent his Son into the world, *"that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3.16). God had spoken to Israel at Sinai, he had written out his commandments with his own finger on two tablets of stone; he had spoken

through the mouth of his prophets and they had written down the spoken words with inspired pens. When he would instruct them further, more fully show his character and personality to man, he sent them the Living Word whose deeds and spoken words fully portray his love for the human race, his desire for reconciliation and his fixed intention to bless them with his kingdom established on earth.

Jesus was a preacher. As Paul reasoned with the Romans, *"how shall they hear without a preacher?"* (Rom. 10. 14). How could people believe in the Kingdom of God unless they were told of it, taught to look for it, to alter their lives to a present conformity to its future laws. The first preaching words of Jesus were *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"*.

Whatever the claims of the kingdoms of this world, they are far from godly. God's kingdom is the opposite of everything they were or are. In his parables Jesus plainly showed the contrast, and by his deeds of healing the sick, the blind, the crippled, and raising the dead, he revealed man's kingdom as sick in mind, diseased in body, ending at last in death and destruction. The world of man and the world of God were poles apart. For the few who could see and hear and understand, there was a way out of one into the other of which they readily availed themselves. By repentance they made a right about turn. By belief in Jesus as the sent-of-God they passed from darkness to light, from death to life, from weariness to rest, from anxiety to peace, from confusion to confidence, from despair to hope, from fear to courage. These moral and mental changes were the first rootlets of age-lasting life. *"He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."* *"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"* (John 11.25).

No man has ever put forward such a claim before or since, just as no one born blind had ever received sight. None had ever positively declared himself to be the fountain of living waters, the bread of life come down from heaven, that a man may eat and not die; the good shepherd out of whose hand no power could pluck his trusting sheep, the resurrection and the life, through whom the believing dead should live again, and backed those claims by declarations and deed. *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life."* *"All power in heaven and earth is given unto me."*

He had the power to execute judgment, to forgive sins, to fulfil the Law and the prophets and to be infinitely greater than both. Even the winds and the sea obeyed his voice and the earth yielded her increase at the touch of his hands. All

that Jesus spoke and did, John wrote, and the words and the life are there today with all the power of the Spirit in them, there for the taking, without money and without price. Jesus was the Master, dealing not with intellectual supposition but with facts, the facts of human life, selfishness, hypocrisy, oppression, weakness and disease. Against these facts he set others in simple, direct words; spiritual facts, plain facts, the only remedy for man's sin.

"You call me Master and Lord and you say well, for so I am" (John 13). His words were laws, new commandments, life-forces. "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10.27-28). He never suggested thus and so with any degree of compromise. He asserted, He commanded, He taught with authority, He upheld the justice and purity of the Law, the faith of the prophets, and the Supreme Fatherhood of God. He rebuked and condemned hypocrisy, cruelty and violence. He had the right to claim to be the way, the truth and the life, for no other way or truth or life has shown to man the reason of his increasing dilemmas and the

only solution.

Sin is an ugly word in modern ears. More palatable names for wrong doing do not lessen the evil consequences of those transgressions small and great which harm and hurt people and injure society. The chief mission of Jesus was to save the world from the dire results of sin and inherent selfishness. "*This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*" (John 4.42). The world has not been saved and the cynical may say that at no time has it been salvable or worth saving. Only the word of God which "is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4. 12) can separate the world from the earth, society from its systems and man from his sin. Individuals have been saved during the age of the church, but the age of the Kingdom will salvage nations, lift up races and save men, not by the skin of their teeth but to "the uttermost". Where reformers and doctors, courts and prisons have failed, the man who told sinners to go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall them, will conquer the stubborn heart of man by justice, generosity and love.

To be concluded

HEAR THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Matthew 13: 18.

Of all the gracious words which proceeded out of the mouth of He who spake as never man spake, perhaps none have had a more profound influence in the history of the Church than those uttered by the Master at the beginning of his ministry. In his delineations of the seed and the Sower he revealed the "Secrets of the Kingdom of the Heavens", IN DIVINE WISDOM, emanating from ages past, that which had been pre-arranged from before the foundation of the world. Jesus was He whose reverence for his Heavenly Father radiated from every act and statement of his life. Throughout his human life and ministry our Lord exemplified with exceeding grace the spirit of gentleness, meekness and love, which permitted the Father's purposes to be fulfilled in him, thus bearing witness, to affirm the Holy Spirit's testimony, that the will of the Father was in the Son, enfolding creation and redemption in one mighty sweep (Rev. 4.11, Acts 3.20, Rev. 14.3, Eph. 1.7, Heb. 9.12).

Our Lord having been anointed from on high with the Holy Spirit without measure, (without limitations, John 3.24), to preach the Gospel, (Luke 4.18), and through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's power (Luke 4.32, Acts 10.18), narrated the mysteries of the Kingdom. By his promulgation of the Truth concerning the Kingdom, into

hearing ears and honest hearts of his disciples, He revealed to the probationary members of the New Creation the first fruits in knowledge of the infinite and eternal purposes of his Father, the supremely great and "ETERNAL SOVEREIGN" of the Universe.

The purpose of our Lord in using the parabolic form of teaching in his discourses before the multitude was in keeping with the fulfilment of the prophet (Isa. 6. 9-10) the same thought reiterated by the Master himself in Matt. 13.14. But when teaching his disciples privately, Jesus clarified the symbolic description by which He was conveying knowledge concerning the Kingdom. In the second sense, He thus taught his disciples in a more engaging manner than by direct assertion, much in keeping with the words of the Psalmist (49. 3-4; 78. 1-2) and by our Lord's words in Matt. 13.35 "*I will open My mouth in parables, I will openly declare things having been hid from the beginning.*" (*Diaglott*).

Jesus brought the whole world of Nature to life in the realm of thought. In his discourses and parables, his references to the fructifying elements in Nature were very true to the Heavenly wisdom which they set forth; for example, our growth in spiritual knowledge concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of God is magnificently

elucidated by our Lord's references to the process of procreation in Nature, as we are informed in Mark 4.26, 27, 28. This indeed furnishes a remarkable comparison to the growth in wisdom and spiritual understanding enjoyed by those who serve the Lord in spirit and truth. Jesus in teaching the Divinely inspired words was serving a higher will than his own, (John 14.24). Jesus had *explicit confidence in his Father, by whom He had been endowed with powers of perception beyond any measure of the human mind* (John 7.46; 1 Cor. 1.24; Rev. 4.12). Thus we realise that the transcendent importance of our Lord's gospel concerning the Kingdom of God, in its essential connection with the depth of meaning imparted by the gospel, is heard and understood by those with ears attuned to hearing the Word of God in spirit and in Truth (John 4.24).

The paramount purpose of our Lord's life and ministry is revealed by his bearing witness unto the Truth. The Saviour combined his dissemination of the mysteries of the Kingdom sown in the heart with the exhortation "*He having ears to hear, let him hear*" (Matt. 13.9, Mark 4.9, Luke 8.8). This is also relevant to our Lord's attestation in John 18.37 "*every one that is of the truth hears my voice*" which conveys a deep and significant alert to all who love the truth, that the voice of Jesus is his preached Gospel. The hearing of that voice is not the mere hearing with the outer ear, but a hearing with the heart and soul and life, for the knowing him is of the heart.

All who study and meditate upon the everlasting Gospel are indeed spiritually enlightened by the Saviour's special dispensations during his ministry, in effecting a marvellous sowing to the receptive mind. In so sowing Jesus sowed three very prolific agencies of dissemination (seed sowing) each of which was sown upon the good ground, and all constituting, in part, the positive fertility for growth in knowledge concerning the Kingdom of God. Thus is germinated perceptibility in the understanding of God's Divine Plan,

centering in the Ransom Sacrifice of his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The operation of the Holy Spirit in this Christian dispensation through the Word of God, the Truth, has been the means of the development of prospective joint heirs of the New Creation. As the seed of the New Creation originates with God, the Saviour's first sowing was the "*seed (speiro) of Truth*". Of his will begat He us with the word of Truth (James 1.18, John 14.6, John 17.17). The second sowing we are told in Luke 8.5 "*The Sower went out to sow his seed*" (*sporos*) is further defined in Luke 8.11 as the word of God. How important the inspired word becomes as we come to understand that thousands of years were consumed by God in bringing his thoughts down to the level of the human mind in a form in which they could be studied and acted upon. How gracious the word of God, as it provided the early Church with prophetic photographs of her history, giving point and urgency to the Christian hope and faith, by their seeking and being filled with the knowledge of God's Will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Col. 1.9)!

Thirdly, our beloved Lord sowed the great progenitive Seed (*sperma*). In continuity the progenitive Seed is germane to Gen. 3.15 pertinent to and identified in all Scriptural reference to the "*Seed of Abraham*" embracing the Covenants, and converging into a veritable sunburst of spiritual enlightenment concerning our Lord, the great mediator of the New Covenant and First Born from the dead, to become the Head of the spiritual Seed of Abraham, which will effect the purification of Israel to administer the universal blessings of the Kingdom.

The fourth agency of dissemination (*spora*), the incorruptible seed, was not mentioned in the Divine Oracle prior to our Lord's ascension. This honour was given to the apostle Peter, as recorded in 1 Pet. 2.3.

Serenity

We all know the almost miraculous effect that one strong poised mind can have over a panic-stricken multitude, how a few calm words and clear authoritative directions will produce an immediate result and reduce confusion to something like order. This influence, which is so obvious on marked occasions, is always felt, and leaves its impress everywhere. In quietness and confidence there is always strength. One poised mind has more effect than many restless, uncontrolled ones.

It is well worth while to spend time in cultivating quietness of spirit. It is not until the peace of

God garrisons our hearts and thought that the world and all belonging to it can be seen in their right proportions, and energy needed for co-operation with God in the working out of his plans is set free. Many mysteries remain, problems are unsolved. 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. We know that "*He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.*"

ANGELS THAT SINNED

*Bible basis of
demonism*

3. Demonism in the Old Testament

The wisdom of God in permitting evil to continue among men upon earth is above human understanding. That it is for a wise and necessary purpose none can doubt and that the day will come when we shall understand fully why it has thus been ordained is a certainty. There are limits; Satan the enemy of God and man is allowed a certain range of power in the earth; Jesus himself permitted him the title of the "prince of this world", but he does not have all power. He cannot overcome the resistance of any who are determined to withstand him and in general he can only work through those who are prepared to submit their minds and impulses to his direction. Something of the same seems to have happened in the case of the apostate angels after their condemnation and imprisonment at the time of the Flood. It was a tradition in Israel that although the majority of those angels were imprisoned in the abyss "until the judgment of the Great Day", a proportion were allowed a measure of freedom which permitted them to rally under the leadership of Satan to work more further evil in the world.

Reference has already been made to the statements of both Peter and Jude (2 Pet. 2.4; Jude 6) to the effect that the angels that sinned were, by God's decree, restrained of their liberty and precluded from continuing their sinful behaviour among mankind, thus to remain until the Last Judgment, ordained for men and angels. In both cases the expression used is "chains of darkness"; as though they no longer had ability to appear among men or to have physical connection with the everyday world. The Books of Enoch and Jubilees, repositories of Jewish tradition, echo this idea. The angels were sentenced to be bound fast in the deep places of the earth, the abyss, until the Day of Judgment. So far as this goes it would seem that their power was at an end, but men speedily discovered that this was in fact not so. From behind that veil of darkness came manifestations of sinister and malevolent forces which men were not slow to ascribe to the imprisoned angels attempting to make contact with the world of men, to further the dark designs of their accepted leader. The reality of this development is manifest in the evident and admitted presence in the world from that day to this of the varied manifestations of spiritism and occultism which do exist. Within that darkness there are evil spiritual forces which do penetrate man's world and seek to accomplish evil purposes. There is

nothing material, nothing to be seen and handled; the power to materialise in human form and partake of man's world is denied them, but in a manner we may not altogether understand they can still reach out from the recesses of their prison and establish a pseudo communication with the aid of those who will lend their minds as channels and mediums.

It would appear that the author of "Jubilees" attempted to rationalise this position by describing (Jub. chap. 10) how in the days of Noah after the Flood the unclean demons began to lead the sons of Noah astray; at Noah's prayer, God restrained nine-tenths of them to be bound in the place of condemnation, but left one tenth to be subject to Satan on earth. Whatever the source of this element of early Israelitish theology, it seems clear that these men found a seeming paradox, in that, despite the imprisonment of the rebellious angels in the abyss, manifestations of their activity were still evident upon earth.

Those evidences still exist. After allowing due discount for the element of fraud and charlatanism in claimed psychic phenomena and occultism in its many forms, there is a solid residue which cannot be explained away. Witchcraft, necromancy, communication with unknown intelligent forces "on the other side"—often claimed to be the spirits of the dead—are all accepted nowadays as possessing a solid basis in fact. Every race and nation on the face of the earth, past and present, civilised and barbarian, contributes its quota of examples. Sometimes those alien forces are claimed to be benign but much more often they are admittedly malevolent. The prevailing atmosphere is one of fear and terror rather than peace and confidence.

The Bible, as befits the oldest authoritative record the world possesses, has much to say on this matter. Demonism figures on the pages of both the Old and New Testaments. The ancient Israelites were persuaded that the evil angels, although under Divine interdict and imprisoned in the deepest abyss below the earth, were nevertheless constantly seeking to pierce the barrier which separated them from humanity through the medium of such humans as would lend themselves to the purpose. The laws of God expressly forbade any such communication and the strongest reprobation of the prophets was directed against those who thus endeavoured to communicate with the spirit world.

Perhaps the most vivid picture of this ancient

belief is found in the words of Job when speaking of the omnipresence of God. The passage in Job 26. 5-7 is of interest as confirming what is already known of the beliefs of the ancients concerning the created universe. The earth we believed to be flat, surrounded by ocean and arched over by heaven, the sky, conceived as a kind of solid roof. Underneath the earth was *sheol*, the place of the human dead, and below that was the "deep", the abyss, the prison of the angels. The A.V. rendering, like so much of the Book of Job, is obscure, but Moffat appears to have caught the true sense of the passage in his translation. "*Before him the primeval giants writhe under the ocean in their prison. The underworld (sheol) lies open to his eyes; the nether regions are unveiled. The northern skies he spreads over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. The dome of heaven he arches over the deep, bounding the darkness from the light*". "Primeval giants" in this passage ("dead things") in the A.V.) is "*rephaim*", this being the name by which the Hebrews referred, in the main, to the *nephilim*, the progeny of the angels, eternally dead in the grave, but here and as in Isa. 14 applied to the angels themselves, confined in their prison in the "abyss", below the grave, *sheol*. Job acknowledges that the eyes of God are upon all his creation, from the imprisoned angels in the lowermost abyss, the human dead asleep in *sheol*, the grave, the earth itself suspended in space, and the dome of heaven arching above. God is everywhere, says Job, and even although we today possess a far wider view of cosmogony, of the nature of the universe, than did Job and his friends, we can still echo his sentiments and realise that the eyes of God are upon all the creatures his hand has made, whether disobedient angels under restraint, men now dead, men still living, angels in heaven carrying out his wishes in a state of perfect harmony and loyalty to him. This passage demonstrates that men at the time of Job—roughly that of Israel's sojourn in Egypt—did adhere to this understanding of the continued existence of the rebellious angels in a condition of restraint, awaiting judgment.

The other instance of this belief is found in the Book of Isaiah where, in the splendid poetic rhapsody of chapter 14, under symbol of the king of Babylon, the prophet foresees the eventual overthrow and final end of Satan the Adversary—here called Lucifer, the shining one. Verse 9 pictures the imprisoned angels, the *rephaim*, receiving him into their midst and into the prison from which he will never escape. "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming," says the A.V. but this translation does not fully convey the idea. "*Sheol mit-tachath*" is literally "from underneath sheol", i.e. the abyss

below sheol where the angels are imprisoned "it stirreth up the dead (*rephaim*) for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth". The imprisoned angels gather together to witness the downfall and condemnation of the one who first instigated evil amongst mankind and now comes down to share their fall.

It was suggested many years ago that there is every possibility some of these angels under this interdict are repentant of their sin and would that they might find reconciliation with God, and that such repentance would logically be manifested by their quietly abiding the terms of their imprisonment and making no attempt to transgress the Divine command against communicating with mankind. This is logical; there is repentance among men and the endeavour to come into harmony with God even although the effects of past sin remain. There is no fundamental reason why the same principle should not be at work in that other sphere of God's creation where sin also has gained a foothold. Of course we no longer visualise the prison of the angels being in some dark gloomy abyss below earth's surface, but we might logically think of some at least of these unhappy celestial beings as abiding quietly in their ordained state of separation from both heaven and earth, perhaps witnessing all that is going on in both places but making no attempt to interfere. That would at least be a token of repentance and the Scriptures do indicate—Paul to the Colossians—that there is to be reconciliation in Christ for celestial beings as well as terrestrial. If then there are others of their company who remain unrepentant and do endeavour, with what powers God has left them, to penetrate man's world and in so doing show themselves servants of Satan rather than of God, we do have a parallel with the old Jewish tradition recorded in "Jubilees" wherein some are in prison without freedom and others free to serve Satan in the earth: these latter then are the real forces behind spiritism and occultism.

When Israel became a nation at Mount Sinai there were written into the Mosaic Law express prohibitions against any kind of communication or dealings with the spirits. The extent to which the people had become involved in this kind of thing whilst in Egypt, no less than the similar dangers which faced them when later on they came in contact with the native races of the Promised Land, is indicated by the severity of that Law. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Deut. 22.18) was the uncompromising fiat. A variety of terms is employed in the Old Testament defining the activities of those individuals who did give themselves over to this kind of thing. In Deut. 18. 10-11 there are mentioned

diviners, intermediaries between spirits and men, familiar spirits, necromancers, witches and wizards, all under the Divine ban and forbidden to dwell in the community of Israel or to have any association with Israel. The prohibition is repeated in Lev. 19 and 20, and again the death sentence for any of Israel who transgress. It is easy enough to shrug off all this as the superstitious ignorance of a simple and primitive people but the records of the past show that even the most highly civilised nations of those and earlier times had exactly the same thing in their midst—and we have it still, and to an increasing degree, today. These Divine Laws dealt with a very real evil, and when they were flouted as in Israel's after history they often were flouted, the consequences were invariably disastrous.

At the centre of this system of spirit communication was the *ob*, a word which is translated "familiar spirit" in the O.T. The *ob* is a spirit which obsesses a consenting man or woman and is able to speak through such by influencing the brain. The term was applied to any witch or wizard professing to have power to call up the dead by means of magical incantations. The classic example is that of King Saul who persuaded such a woman to call up the prophet Samuel from the world of the dead. A superb description of the *modus operandi* is afforded in Isa. 29.4 "*and thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust*". A somewhat parallel word is *yiddeoni*, normally rendered "wizard," used to denote a man using magical arts whereby he received messages from the "other side"; in the Bible the term is always used in a bad sense. There were no "good" wizards. Isaiah combines the two together, with their characteristic mode of utterance, in ch. 8. 19-20 "*when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits, (ob) and unto wizards (yiddeoni) that peep and that mutter—should not a people seek unto their God, to the Law and to the testimony . . . ?*" "Peep" here is *tsaphaph*, to chatter or whisper, a characteristic mode of utterance of the wizards whilst under the control of their "familiar spirit".

Next came witches and sorcerers, denoted by *kashaph*, utterers of incantations or magical words, coming from a word meaning "to mutter", and usually associated with the worship of idols, which led Israel always to associate idol worship with spirit communication. "All the gods of the nations are demons" (*diamenia*) says the (Greek) Septuagint version of Ps. 96.5. Closely associated with these are diviners, rendered from *gasam*. The *gasam* was one who was able, or

claimed to be able, to call up the spirit of the dead, and to obtain from them forecasts of the future. They are usually associated with false prophets in Israel, which would seem to indicate that the information thus obtained was not always reliable. There are a great many references in the O.T. to diviners and divination and in a substantial proportion of these cases the implication is that the information thus obtained was false or misleading. The diviners have seen a lie, says Zechariah (10.2). They divine a lie, says Ezekiel (21.9 & 23; 22.8) and so on. Another class of dabblers in the black arts were the enchanters, the *nachashim*, a word which means a serpent and is derived from the serpent's hissing. In ordinary parlance it meant the whispering of soothsayers and foretellers in the dark. The "necromancers" of Deut. 18.11 were men who held converse in secret with the dead; the "charmers" of the same text and of Ps. 58.5 those who had ability to join a spirit from the beyond to a human body; the "observers of times" some whose intimate knowledge of the other world enabled them to decide and determine the future and the fate of individuals.

One very detailed account of such forbidden communication is recorded in the O.T. King Saul, cut off from God's guidance by reason of his own conduct, and sorely beset by the invading Philistines, resolved to commit the unpardonable sin of consulting the spirits of the dead for advice. The story is found in 1 Sam. 28. He had in former and happier times upheld the Divine Law by ridding the land of all practitioners in the black arts but now in his extremity he told his servants to find him a woman possessed by a "familiar spirit" who could consult the unseen powers on his behalf. They found him such a woman at En-dor in the northern part of the kingdom and there he went in disguise with two of his attendants. Demurring at first, but persuaded by Saul, who wanted her to raise the spirit of Samuel from the dead that he might ask his advice, she cast her incantations with a measure of success which she evidently did not expect, for she visibly beheld a god-like form arising from the earth, and cried out in terror. At the same time, and in some unexplained manner, she had her visitor's true identity revealed to her, and in fear begged him "why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" Reassured, she told Saul that she could see an old man, covered with a mantle, and the king, believing that this was indeed Samuel brought back from *sheol*, the grave, although he himself could see nothing, prostrated himself in reverence.

There ensued the conversation which is recorded in the account. The voice of the ghostly visitor was, of course, that of the woman, who

was the essential intermediary in the affair. Reference was made to matters known only to Saul and Samuel and the king felt sure that there was no trickery involved. But the message was uncompromising and merciless. "The Lord will deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me" i.e. dead. And Saul went out into the night in utter despair.

Of course it was not Samuel who spoke through the woman to Saul. Samuel was asleep in the grave; even had it been possible for him to appear it would have been at variance with Divine Law and therefore was out of the question. The woman saw an old man and she spoke words under the influence of an unknown power; Saul assumed it was Samuel but he was wrong. The power came from one of the apostate angels breaking through the barrier, and assuming the name and manner of Samuel in order to deceive. It was comparatively easy to prophesy; Saul and his army were in a state of panic and the Philistines superior in number. Israel was apostate and could not expect Divine deliverance. The dark power which uttered the messages was safe enough in prophesying as he did. And he was a true prophet. Saul and his two eldest sons were killed in the ensuing battle, which also witnessed Israel's defeat.

The Lord shall have them in derision

The following comment is from the pen of Dr. J. A. Seiss in "Lectures on the Book of Revelation" c 1875.

"The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa. 2. 1-3). Never was there a more wicked or more disastrous madness. But when men cut loose from the bonds of obligation to their Maker, there is no limit to the delusions to which they expose themselves, and no enormity of daring or wickedness into which they are not liable to be betrayed, thinking it the true wisdom. And thus the kings of the earth and their armies gather toward Jerusalem, to conquer the Son of God, and to crush out his rule and Kingdom for ever.

"One of the most awful expressions in the Word of God is that which the Psalmist utters with regard to these enraged and deluded kings, and this their expedition, where he says *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision"* (Psa. 2.4). That laugh of God, who shall fathom it? How shall we even begin to tell its dread significance? From the depths of his eternal being. He so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son for it. No gift was too precious in his sight, no sacrifice too great, to be made for its redemption. For six thousand years He has been ordering his gracious

Every such claim of communication with the dead from that day to this has been under the same misapprehension. Dead men cannot and do not communicate with the living. Such communications come only and always from these angels, who, in a continuing state of rebellion against God, are constantly seeking ways and means of crossing the forbidden zone and making contact with mankind.

There are other references to this sin in the O.T. Manasseh king of Judah rebelled against God and set up a national system of idolatry which included every form of association with the unseen powers of evil (2 Chron. 33 and 2 Kings 21). But he repented and renewed his allegiance to God and removed the idolatry from the land. The same sin on the part of Hoshea king of Israel, unrepented of, resulted in the ten-tribe nation being carried away in the Assyrian captivity. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, all make reference to the prevalence of this sin in Israel in their days. The Old Testament affords abundant evidence that the activities of what St. Paul at a later date was to describe as "spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies" were active among men, to their debasement and corruption, for the whole of the period between the Flood and the coming of Christ.

To be concluded

Providence in heaven and earth for its recovery from sin and death. His prophets and his Son have laboured, wept and died, and the ministries of his sublimest servants have been unceasingly employed, to bring it to salvation. But now He laughs! What failure of love, what exhaustion of grace, what emptying of the sea of his infinite mercies, what decay and withdrawal of all kindly interest and affection must have occurred that there should be this laugh! The demonstrations of these confederates with the Beast are tremendous. The whole world moves with one heart, one aim, with all its genius and power concentrated on one end, and with all the potencies of Hell to nerve and help and guide it. Never before was there such a combination of forces, natural and supernatural, directed with such skill, or animated with so daring and resolved a spirit. Yet, Jehovah laughs! What an infinitude of majesty and sovereign contempt does He thus express? The rebels are confident. They believe their leader invincible. They are sure of powers to handle all Nature's forces. They have no question about being able to cope with mortals or immortals, with men or gods. They despise alike the names and the sword of him who rides the white horse, and all his heavenly cavalry. They deem themselves ready and equal for any emergency of battle even with him who calls himself Almighty. But God laughs! Oh the disappointment and destruction which that laugh portends!"

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE ARK

A supplement to
"The story of the Deluge"

What is called the "Babylonian story of the Flood" is often cited as the source from which the Bible account is taken. Although a leisured examination of the — still very fragmentary — Babylonian story soon shows that the Genesis narrative could not possibly have been thus derived, the fallacy is often repeated. In actual fact the two accounts must both have come down from a common source which has not survived, one written long before the time of Abraham, who would have brought the present Genesis account with him when he left Ur of the Chaldees. One line of thought tending to support this conclusion is prompted by a comparison between the Genesis figures for the dimensions of the Ark and those of the Babylonian accounts. The results of such comparisons are often themselves indications of the superior accuracy of the Bible narratives over the legendary stories of other nations.

Genesis 6.15 gives the size of the vessel as 300 cubits long by 30 high by 50 wide. The various Babylonian accounts give various figures ranging from 120 cubits to over half a mile. The consequence has been to dismiss them all as irreconcilable and the story as fable. The purpose of this note is to show that reconciliation is possible and that the legends help to establish the extreme antiquity as well as the accuracy of Genesis.

There is plenty of evidence—not to be elaborated here — that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were brought into Canaan by Abraham, inscribed in Semitic cuneiform on clay tablets, similar to the thousands of such which are constantly being discovered to this day. These tablets, the records of origins of the Hebrew people, must have been preserved by the patriarchs and most likely came into Moses' possession at the Exodus, to be translated and rewritten by him in the Hebrew of his day to form the beginning of his "Five Books". There is quite a possibility that they were in fact translated at some earlier period during the sojourn in Egypt as the family of Jacob began to grow into a nation. In either case it is logical to think that the length measures would be converted to those used in Egypt at the time, just as the newly published "Living Bible" has converted them to English feet (and incidentally probably got them wrong at that!). This is where the first difficulty arises. It is a matter of great difficulty to determine the true length measures of ancient nations; there were different "cubits" in different coun-

tries and at different periods, and most nations had cubits of several lengths used for different purposes. In Egypt at the time of Moses the common cubit, used for most purposes, was 20.6 inches. Measuring rules marked with such a cubit and its sub-divisions belonging to the time of the Pharaoh who "sought Moses' life" have been found. At an earlier time, however, and in ancient Egypt, this cubit was a little longer, 21.6 inches. One evidence of this is provided by the markings on a "Nilometer", a vertical pillar marked in cubits to indicate the depth of the Nile at flood times, which still exists. Some scholars, however, advocate the later Hebrew cubit of 18 inches so that we have three choices for the problem.

Prof. Yahuda has shown that the later part of Genesis abounds in Egyptian derived words so that it seems likely that the book did take its present form at some earlier time in the sojourn. Since Israel did not use the 18 inches cubit until after leaving Egypt this one should be eliminated. From a constructional point of view the necessary headroom in the three stories of the structure demands as long a cubit as possible and the ancient 21.6 inch one best meets this need. On this basis the Ark was 540 feet long by 54 high and 90 wide at the base, tapering to a point at the Apex. This "triangular" form has long been established as the only structural shape that could have withstood the impact of the Deluge and incidentally is confirmed by the Babylonian accounts.

There are many versions of the Babylonian story in existence, some only fragmentary and others tolerably complete, and they range in time from that of Berossus the Babylonian historian of 275 B.C. to archaic Sumerian tablets dating as far back as 2000 B.C. Most of these are illegible or incomplete in places but from some of them can be taken four versions of the size of the Ark.

The best is the Assyrian account of about 750 B.C. of which several copies were found at Nineveh a century ago. This account gives 600 cubits long by 60 wide by 60 high. (After being deciphered by Smith, Lenormant, and Oppert, during last century, the characters became illegible, probably due to handling, a common fault with cuneiform clay tablets, so that most modern publications no longer state the figures.) The Assyrian cubit in use at the time was the archaic Sumerian one of 10.8 inches, traceable back to

2000 B.C. at least, used for Assyrian building and constructional work at the time of the tablets. These figures for length and width therefore confirm Genesis, for 600 10.8 cubits equals 300 21.6 cubits. The width differs; 60 cubits of 10.8 equals 54 feet instead of Genesis 50 of 21.6 which is 90 feet. It is possible here that the older tablet from which the scribe made his copy was itself defaced, as in the modern instance, and so misled him. It only needs the illegibility of four tiny indents at the side of the Sumerian figure for 60 to convert an intended 100 to 60 and this is apparently what has happened, especially since the lower figure would imply a vessel so narrow in relation to height that it would be in danger of capsizing under flood conditions. It may be taken reasonably enough that the original story in the Israel history was expressed in terms of the Sumerian short cubit, 600 in length, and that the translation made during the sojourn in Egypt converted this to Egyptian cubits.

Berosus, who was a priest in the Temple of Marduk at Babylon, writing in Greek about 275 B.C. says that the Ark was five stades long by two wide. The Babylonian stade was 548 feet so this makes a vessel over half a mile long and disproportionately wide. There is evidently a mistake here. Berosus, by virtue of his position in the Temple, had access to the ancient records from which he compiled his history, but probably had nearly as much difficulty as more modern translators in understanding those ancient records written in Sumerian, which had by his time been a dead language for some two thousand years.

It is likely that the sign he read as the stade of 648 feet (*ku-gal*) was in reality the next lower one in the series of length measures, the *ku-tur* of

108 feet. The similarity of the two signs suggests this and if impressed roughly on an ancient tablet could easily be misunderstood. If in fact this is what happened then Berosus' five *ku-tur* concurs with the Genesis length of 540 feet. As to the figure given for the width, which is obviously suspect, it is possible that at some time during the succession of copyings and translations from early times to Berosus himself, the word for width, *sag*, was read in mistake for *sag-du*, triangle. The girth of the Ark, i.e. the sum of three sides of its triangular shape, taking the Genesis 54 feet high by 90 wide, is 231 feet. Two *ku-tur* of 108 feet gives 216, which would be accurate enough as a general statement. This then brings Berosus in line with Genesis.

Certain versions in the Babylonian language written between 800 and 1000 B.C. contain some vague references to the "covering" and "deck" of the Ark, each measuring 120 cubits or its equivalent in other units (10 *gar*). If this refers to the girth as is suggested in the case of Berosus then it is interesting to note that 240 cubits of 10.8 inches amounts to 216 feet, exactly as in the Berosus account, for the girth of the Ark.

The consensus of these varied descriptions, written at different times quite apart from the book of Genesis, all agreeing with the sizes stated in Genesis, is a powerful argument for holding that at some remote time in history prior to the call of Abraham there existed a true and detailed account of the Flood of Noah's day, the most detailed version of which remains in the Bible, whilst many distorted fragmentary versions have come down to us through the medium of Sumerian and Assyrian and Babylonian legend quite independent of Genesis.

Job, in the midst of all his afflictions, was careful not to sin with his lips. He knew that his words would be taken by the Lord as an index of his heart, and he was careful to keep both the heart and the words right, saying, "*What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil* (calamities, troubles—for discipline or refining)? . . . *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.*" There was no spirit of rebellion in a heart out of whose abundance came such words of loving submission, patience and faith under severe testings, and that, too, without a clear apprehension of the Divine wisdom in permitting them.

How necessary to the stability of Christian character is such a resolution, and the self control which develops under a firm adherence to it. In

an unfriendly world we can expect to receive only the reproaches of our Master, for the servant is not above his Lord. The world, the flesh and the Devil oppose our way: there are fightings within and fears without, and many are the arrows and fiery darts aimed at the righteous. But what is the safe attitude of the soul under afflictions and severe testings? Is it not in silence before God, waiting and watching first to see his leading, his will, in every matter before presuming to touch things that often involve so much? So the Psalmist suggests, saying, "*I was dumb with silence: I held my peace, even from good* (even from doing or saying what seemed good in my own sight); *and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, and in my self-communing there burnt a fire* (description of a fiery trial).

"WHEN YE COME TOGETHER"

The "coming together" for fellowship of the Corinthian Church was frequently the occasion for the most disorderly conduct, and unseemly behaviour. Even so, when the worst has been said that can be said, they were perhaps but little worse than many others of the congregations scattered up and down the land. Only, in their case, we are treated to an eye-witness point of view of their sad condition by one who had their best interests so much at heart. One commentator has called this Corinthian Church "the Church with the lid off". Because of Paul's letter to this Church, its congregation stands stripped of all personal pretensions; only their repulsive realities remain. Sectarian divisions separated them, each with its own intense preference and hatred; undisguised sin had raised its head, sin such as was not to be found among the heathen at their door. Personal disputes, which found their way before the heathen magistrates, had arisen in their midst, making the sad scene within the Church most pitiable. Moreover, when the hour of fellowship had come, and they had "come together" to the appointed place, undisciplined individuals, possessing the gift of tongues, would turn the hour appointed for prayer and praise into a babel of confusing sights and sounds, several being engaged in speech simultaneously, babbling in unknown tongues, throwing the session into hopeless confusion, and laying the assembly open in the eyes of "the unlearned" to be accounted mad (1 Cor. 14.23).

Again, in the "*Agape*"—the Love-feast with which some of these sessions closed—scenes of gluttony and intoxication were sometimes seen, scenes in which the poor and indigent were put to shame by brethren who had wealth (1 Cor. 11. 22). These indictments present to our view an unsatisfactory picture of a Christian Church; were it not that some true saints were hidden among so much that was corrupt it would be difficult to characterise it as a Church of Christ in any sense.

The Church in Apostolic days has sometimes been styled "the Church of the first Love"—a Church kept pure and unspotted by Apostolic care and oversight. But such a description scarcely tallies with the facts. Censure and reproof is found in every Apostolic writing—not even excepting the letters to Ephesus and Philippi—a sure token that the human material within the Church was still rough and raw, and still had much of the way of life brought over from

heathen days or from Jewish insularity incorporated in it. Jewish aloofness and touchiness, Grecian licentiousness and pride, and barbarian brutishness and callousness made a motley mixture of perversity, which to all human appearance was impossible of amalgamation or unity.

Ostensibly, this patchwork of humanity came together for the purpose of presenting worship to God, of reminding themselves what they owed to his Son, who had redeemed them, and for whose return from heaven they had been taught to long and wait. "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven", Paul told the Thessalonians, and what was true of them was true of their neighbours in the Corinthian metropolis.

To some degree the God of heaven had superseded their former gods of gold and stone, but unfortunately, the old things had been so deeply impressed that complete change was most difficult. Their worship at the idol shrine had been sensuous and visible—sights and sounds presented to eye and ear that made strong and deep appeal. Worship in an upper room, or in some school (Acts 19.9) was shorn of all that sensuous appeal which the wild music of the chant, the gorgeous drapery of the priest and the stately pile of masonry could produce in them. Lacking thus the awe-and-passion-provoking influences which these visible ceremonial things produced, these companies of "called saints" found it difficult to enter into the spirit of the "Spiritual" and "Unseen". Inability to visualise the Presence of the Invisible led to unbecoming levity and laxity, setting the atmosphere of the gathering on a purely human plane. Their association was mainly after the flesh—that is, in the common things of this earth-life. Paul spake of it as "carnal"—not of necessity vile, or voluptuous, but of a flesh-life lived on the level of a man; eating, drinking, working, thinking within the range of the five senses common to man.

Then, further, though they were professing followers and disciples of Christ, they seemed to think of him as a man who once trod this earth, and started this selective organisation into which they had been invited—this Church fellowship—and had then gone away, but who, at some future time, was expected to return to take it to himself, but, for the time now present was away in the far distance of heaven, a place far remote from this earth. That He was now possessed of such super-human Personality that, though seated

at God's right hand, He could be present in their midst unseen, was a thought they seemed too earth-bound to grasp. Even those among them possessed of some spiritual gift seemed to have accounted it to be for phenomenal display, and not as a means to deepen reverence, or intensify adoration. The spirit of true devotion is a state of heart and mind difficult to apprehend at all times, among any people, and we need not wonder that the brethren at Corinth, that most carnal and commercial city of ancient Greece, failed so grievously to attain thereunto. Even in our own times, among Bible-respecting peoples, and after nineteen centuries of Christian influence, it is a frame of heart and mind most difficult to apprehend. When little companies "come together" in the appointed place there are very many factors that may block the way of approach to the holiest things. If a comer thereunto has the "artistic gift", heightened at times with a sense of the lofty and sublime, yet finds in his coming that he is ushered into a bare room, unadorned, and without softened lights, the chord of true reverence may, for him, be hard to strike. Or if another, of cultured refinement himself, hears ill-chosen words spoken in rough husky tones, it may be a thing impossible for him to respond becomingly in reverential praise. Who of us in these Christian lands knows not the power of some stately Church to subdue the soul, or the throb of some deep-toned harmonies to hush the senses, and make one step more lightly to some quiet seat and there lay ones inner self prostrate before the Lofty and the Divine?

Church authorities have traded on this fact in human responsiveness, and have built their stately piles accordingly. But in a cold bare room, or in some public hall, devoted, at other times, to many secularities, it is not an easy thing to respond from the depths.

The sense of worship has suffered, perhaps, too often from these things, while the attitude towards such occasions may have become merely casual—just a case of being "there"; just a matter of being one of a company possessing mutual views, and for whom there is some degree of pleasure in hearing or exchanging those views. Or it could be that the subject for consideration has become well-trodden ground, and one feels so well-rooted therein, that it fails to arouse enthusiastic gratitude to God, and no sense of loss had one not been present at the gathering.

It needs here no emphasis to say, both first and last, that our "coming together in the church" should be to worship God. Never should it be to while an hour away, nor to be entertained by lofty phrase or cultured utterance. Nor should it be a time exclusively set apart for intensive

study, or analytical research. Nor an occasion given over to harmonic or melodic song. It is no sin to tell the story of Love Divine in words of rare charm or satisfying beauty, nor to find "heart's delight" in the cultured voice as it sets forth the loftier things. Neither is it a crime to analyse the subject with minute care, or make our definitions with exactitude. Indeed, it should be to our mutual pleasure, not less than to our common profit, so to do. The story of Divine Love is worthy, at all times, of our best endeavour. But these things, at their best, are matters of but secondary import—a noble means to a worthier end, and should ever be seen in that secondary light.

An Unseen Presence is in attendance wheresoever God's consecrated saints have come together in the church. That Unseen Presence alters everything. We do not need to ask how Divinity can project "Itself" into all the assemblies here and everywhere. Spiritual sensibility and experience activated by a living faith assures repeatedly that the "Unseen Presence" is there "in the midst". To the spiritually sensitive the "Presence" brings and sets the atmosphere for the holy hour. It casts a sense of sacred calm over the gathering, and in the quiet hush the keen susceptibility can feel "It" there. To such, "It" seems to lift the hanging folds of a veil, beneath which comes, from the other side, a sanctifying influence, or, from another point of view, it thins the curtain which divides this sensuous world from the ever-brightening realities of that beyond. It makes the place of meeting the very vestibule of heaven itself; the ante-room of the very Presence-chamber of God, spite of the bare coldness of the room. To the alert and hungry heart this over-powering sense of the Unseen can mean so much more—so extremely and incomparably much more—than lofty dome or intoned chant, or cultured voice or ornate vestments; it can subdue that heart to rest, and hush it down in reverence more than all other things beside.

And, standing thus invisibly revealed in the midst "It" stands there waiting for the upward reaching of the soul, for the heavenward glancing of the inner eye; and, within the quiet of that hallowed atmosphere, though words be few, or unspoken altogether, communion becomes complete. The yearning spirit, rising from this world of sense, meets and unites with that hallowed Spirit descending from that purer sphere, and in the sanctifying mingling of desire—He with us; we with him—we feel ourselves encouraged, enriched, and enlarged. We take from him new strength and satisfaction for our needs; He takes from us our sacrifice of praise, and presents it enriched with his own righteousness to him who

dwells in Light unapproachable.

How easy it is to fall short of this "other-worldly" contact in such seasons of "coming together". How easy to fail to sense the atmosphere which that Presence brings; how lightly gravitate to earthly things, and mar the hallowed influence proceeding from the "Sanctifier" himself. It needs but little more than the thrust and parry of the "keen" debate, the too keen intensity of question and reply, then as passions rise, and the intellect takes control, a canopy of earth-born things spreads itself above the scene, and the link between is snapped, and communion with him is at an end. Thenceforth the study may proceed, but the worship be at an end; the discussion may be prolonged, but communion have ceased. We may, to our best understanding, have defended our abstract truth, but our very exuberance may have dammed the flow of Living Truth. We may have stood defensively for "It", but have overlooked our need for "HIM"! We may have called upon our memories in defending or defining long established doctrine, and have forgotten that our needs can be supplied by him alone.

In the study atmosphere one may, by long experience, become established; in the atmosphere of communion the memories are of the heart, and may often be quite outside the range of tabulated doctrine in the realm of living experience wherein the Great Dispenser makes provision for the daily needs of every moment of the day—of all who live their lives warmly unto him; and from which, of his own accord, no child of God can afford to absent himself when opportunity presents.

What more can be said? Surely it will be admitted on every hand that every time we "come together" in the Church it should be an occasion for the most devout worship of God; an occasion when the veil between earth and heaven becomes thin and the Light from the other side filters through into the soul. Ought we

not to be more ready to come together, if we were more surely blessed with the eye that can see and sense the Blessed Presence in the midst, and if we had a keener hunger of the soul which none but He can satisfy? Could we ever come to think that we were so well-established in the Truth that we could live without this Spirit-knit communion with our Father and our Lord, and that our need for the coming together was not so great or urgent now? Or, if our eye and heart has learned to see him ever present, could we ever meet our brethren just to become engaged in the thrust and parry of debate, and then depart thinking we had experienced all there was to have?

If, on the other hand, we have learned the secret of finding him behind and above every gathering, then we shall find that lovely thoughts and well chosen words will add fragrance to the atmosphere, and bring enchantment to the inner man, and make the occasion sweet as an oasis on a desert road. Lacking the secret of finding him, even beautiful words and lovely thoughts can diffuse only an odour of the flesh—mere intellectuality, or gleanings from philosophy.

This ability to see and sense the Blessed One at all such times is part and parcel of a larger thing. It is only when this sensitivity is part of the whole life that it becomes easy and natural when in the Church. To those who cultivate and practice the Presence of the Lord everywhere, all the time, this is the obvious thing when the hour of fellowship arrives. It is not for them an experience that needs to be conjured up, by effort of the will, but is one that rises spontaneously out of a life of unbroken companionship, by day and night, with the dearest object of the desire. If we seek for him behind doctrine, behind experience, behind Providence, behind everything, then we shall find rest to our souls, and salve for every sore. The highest truth is "Him". To know this is to know the secret of the Lord in the art and act of fellowship.

The Needle's Eye

Sir William Ouseley, in his "*Travels in Persia and Kurdistan*" (1823), Vol. 3, P.572, commenting on our Lord's words in Matt. 19.24 respecting the impossibility of a camel passing through the eye of a needle, remarks that in some ancient Chaldean proverbs it is the elephant which is so referred to. The Babylonian Talmud, he says, follows suit. He suggests that Christ changed a popular proverb to camel since the elephant was unknown to his hearers. A variation is introduced by Tischendorf, who says that some ancient texts have *kamilos*, a ship's cable, instead

of *kamelos*, a camel. The Koran (7.41) repeats Jesus' remark about the camel so that there is 7th century authority for the traditional rendering. The usual suggestion, that the "needle's eye" was the name given to the small gate in the city walls by which pedestrians could enter after the main gate had been closed for the night, is the most appealing and best fits our Lord's words in the context. A late arriving camel could only get in through the small gate at the expense of having all the goods it was carrying unloaded. So with the rich man, said Jesus; he must leave all his possessions behind.

EVENTIDE

"So He bringeth them
unto their desired haven"

How greatly different from that of other men was the attitude of Jesus to popular acclaim! Which of the many leaders of Jewish thought would have opposed or curbed the rapidly rising tide of eager sentiment to make him king, as Jesus did? Had they no good cause for this? Even in mighty Rome he who could bring in the grain—thus ensuring ample food—could always count upon the approval of the multitude for his Imperatorship. But here in Israel was One who, without ships or Egypt's stores at his command, could multiply "the little" into "much", and feed from a mere handful of bread the insistent needs of a hungry multitude. No imperial Cæsar, even in mighty Rome, had attempted at any time to do a thing like that! Surely therefore, more than any occupant of the Roman throne, Jesus seemed to be a man born to be a King!—so the people thought.

Israel had been fed with bread once before—fed in its passage through a wilderness. Messiah, when He came (so the Rabbis said) would do this again, but on a far surpassing scale. Moses—so they assumed—had for many years provided bread unceasingly; Messiah would do all this and more. When therefore Jesus sought to drive home the deeper meaning of the miraculous supply of food, the eager multitude gave voice to the Rabbinic expectation when they said "Evermore give us this bread". Accepting his correction that God, not Moses, gave the former bread, and the assertion that God would give "bread" yet again "to give life to the world", their immediate response was "Sir, let the provision begin right now, and let it never cease". (John 6. 25-34).

How completely earth-bound and immediate was their concern! Bread, in plenty, and at no cost—such was their expectation now! Having once been fed to satisfaction's full content, might this not now go on unceasingly forevermore? Before a Provider-King like that the whole wide world would soon be on its knees, and Judea, not Rome, would rule the world!

But Jesus could not foster expectations like that. He had not come to be the world's Provider-King, as yet—and hence had need to dissuade this expectant following. Lifting his explanations to a higher plane Jesus even went on to say "I am that bread of life . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any eat of this bread he shall live for ever . . ." That was a conundrum they could not solve. "How shall this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. To intensify their mystification Jesus then said, "... except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you". In this first shadowy enunciation of Memorial truth

Jesus showed how greatly his mission in the earth exceeded their utmost thought.

Thereupon, with no more easy bread forthcoming, many of these followers turned away and forsook him. "From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" (v.66). Turning now to the twelve Jesus said "Will ye also go away?" "To whom can we go, Lord?" was Peter's reply from them all. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The Baptist was dead; his former disciples could not go back to him; there was no other teacher in Israel to whom they could go; moreover they had believed and were sure that He was the Holy One of God.

There is a pathos and depth in that heart-felt response, a response which has leaped from countless hearts as the centuries have passed! When the great crises of life have fallen over saintly souls, and great decisions have confronted them, the same deep need has shaped the same response. Mighty nations may rise and fall; gifted men may come and go; times of plenty give place to times of want; amidst it all there has been but One sure retreat, but One unfailing Friend. When the fairer prospects of life have suffered blight, and chilling frosts have nipped earth's fairest blooms, when friends have failed, and even loved ones turned false, the language of the lonely has ever been the same. "To whom else can I turn, O Lord, but thee? Who, like thee, can satisfy life's deepest needs?"

We, too, in the deepening chaos of this turbulent world, have our needs of him intensified every passing day. Thousands walk no more with him, but have turned away for lack of understanding of the heavenly bread. Openly they oft deride him whom we love, blatantly they ask for "pie" not in the "sky" but on the earth; for to-day, not for another day. What shall I say when the Saviour turns to me? Shall I also go away? Nay, Lord, for

*I need thee every hour, most precious Lord,
No tender voice like thine can peace afford.*

*I need thee every hour, stay thou near by,
Temptations lose their power when thou art nigh.*

*I need thee every hour, in joy or pain,
With me, dear Lord, abide, or life is vain.*

*I need thee every hour, Teach me thy Will
And thy rich promises in me fulfil.*

I need thee, oh I need thee, every hour I need thee.

*O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to thee.
With every closing day let us turn inwards
unto him and say with all our heart.*

*Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find.*

M. J. L. H. M.



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

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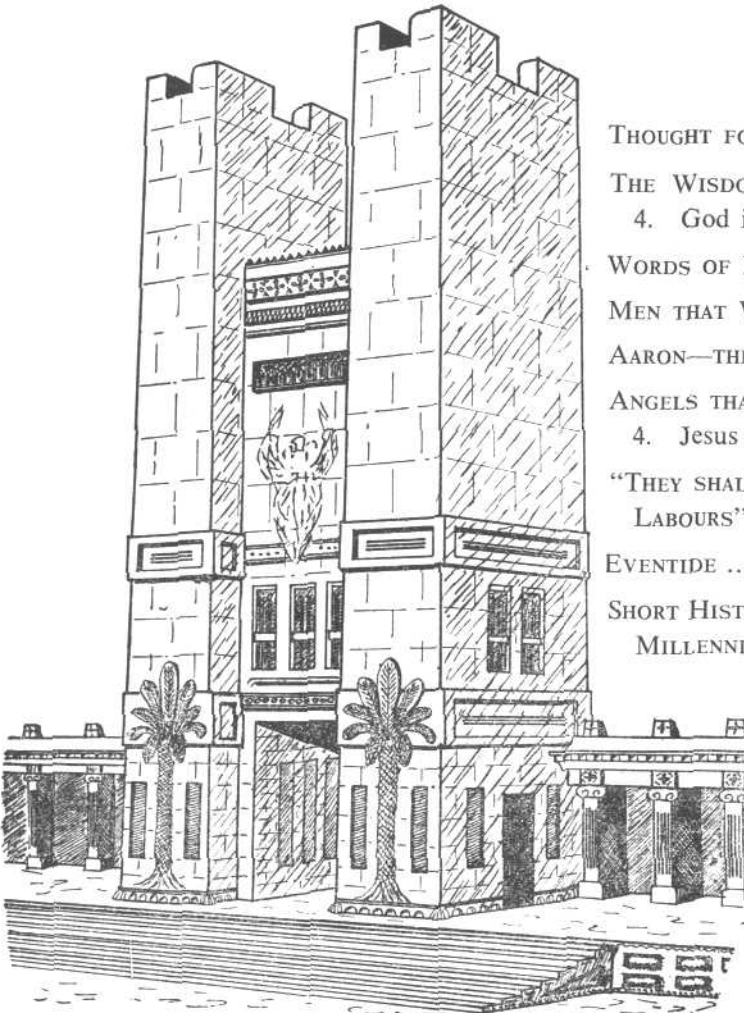
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life"
(Job. 33.4).

There is a new theory explaining the origin of life upon earth. Elihu the Arab philosopher did, of course, furnish the correct explanation in the Book of Job, as above quoted, more than three thousand years ago, but the modern experts would take no notice of that even if they had heard of Elihu, which is questionable. It is, however, with some relief that we now learn the stock theory which has held the stage for a century or more past is not the right one after all. The idea that there was in archaic time a kind of "primordial soup", a mixture of chemical substances in the warm waters of the primitive earth, acted upon by lightning and ultra-violet rays and what-not to produce living cells from inanimate substances, is not now to be accepted as true, we are told. Life could not arise from such a basis. This of course means scrapping all the text-books and revising every university syllabus. Most unfortunate! The words of Elihu have stood for three thousand years without any need for revision. But of course the new theory is true—at least until another group of scientists comes up with still another theory. It seems that life originated in the clouds of gas and dust which exist in the recesses of outer space between the stars. Organic molecules existing in those clouds got themselves caught up by meteorites which were very conveniently manufactured in the same place at the same time and these meteorites headed straight for the earth and discharged their passengers, which then proceeded to develop into living creatures in the best traditions of evolution—and here we are.

One small point appears to require clearing up. Who put the organic molecules in the remote dust clouds in the first place?

The theories of scientists are legion, but they are all attempts by thinking men to explain the nature and origin of an observed condition of things on the basis of the knowledge they have and the data they can collect. And it is inevitable that both knowledge and data are incomplete and sometimes incorrect. No scientific research can or will ever explain with absolute accuracy how life originated upon earth, for no scientist really knows beyond question what were the conditions upon earth at the time nor yet what is the true nature of life. All that the scientists can see is the effect of life upon the organism by which it is manifested in the environment in which it is placed. All the rest is the result of reasoning of things unknown on the basis of things known, and every time there is an increase in knowledge and a wider or more accurate view of the things known, then the old theories go by the board and new ones have to be devised to take into account the effect of the new knowledge that has been acquired. Eventually men will conclude that the physical evidence shows that all life comes from a single central starting-point, and from that it will be only a step to say that central point is God. But how much better if that conclusion had been accepted from the beginning? There were wise men in ancient times, just as wise as the intellectuals of our own times; the twentieth century in its arrogance thinks that no man in past times could have been as wise as its own. Those ancient wise men knew the limits of earthly wisdom and behind those limits they placed God, and credited him with responsibility for the things which human wisdom can not explain nor understand.

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

4. God is Just

The thirty-fourth chapter of Job records Elihu's defence of the justice of God. Whatever may be the appearance of things; to whatever extent it may seem on the surface that Job's adversities were visited on him unjustly and that God is culpable in allowing them, it will yet be demonstrated that God is supremely just and that in the final outcome no man will be able to claim that he has been unfairly treated. Elihu is at pains to stress this fact, and rightly so, for it is of first rank importance that all who serve and honour God should have confidence in the justice of his dealings.

Elihu commences therefore by appealing for the close attention of his companions. *"Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear to me, ye that have knowledge. For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat. Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good"* (34.2-4). It is quite a masterly approach, giving no hint of the nature of his coming discourse, avoiding the mistake of plunging too soon into the crux of his argument, seeking first to arouse and fix his listeners' attention. There is stress laid also upon another most important factor, the natural dignity and responsibility of man. Although he is going to talk about the justice of God and the weakness of man in comparison, he starts off here by dwelling upon the duty of every man to make his own decisions according to his own lights, and act up to the knowledge and understanding he possesses, whether it be great or small. *"What is right let us choose for ourselves, let us know, among ourselves, what is good"*. That is how Rotherham translates verse 4. Elihu is encouraging and exhorting his companions to use their God-given powers of free-will and self-expression to consider right and wrong, truth and falsehood, judgment and indecision, and take a stand firmly and intelligently on the right side—on God's side. The Almighty did not create men to be weak-willed puppets, virtually incapable of aught save automatic responses to influences or stimuli imposed from above. He made men to be kings in their own right, lords of terrestrial creation, intelligently and consciously taking their intended places in God's creation and espousing the right because of inward and understanding sympathy with that which is right.

Of course it is not possible fully to reach that ideal whilst still under the dominion of sin. Like Paul "the good that I would I do not; but the

evil which I would not, that I do". (Rom. 7. 19). But the effort is worthwhile and produces good fruits. The day will come when the power of inherited sin shall be broken and the Devil, who is the god of this world (2. Cor. 4.4) be bound that he may deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20. 1-3). When that day comes every effort that any man has made in this present life to live nearer the standard God has set will have its reward in a position of closer approximation to the ultimate standard to which every man must attain before he can be adjudged worthy of everlasting life.

So before talking to Eliphaz and the others about the manner in which Divine justice and judgment is displayed before men he tells them first that they themselves must use such powers as they may possess to reason for themselves concerning, and put into execution in their own lives, the principles of justice and judgment to the extent that they discern them and in accordance with the ability they possess. There is more than a modicum of truth in the old saying "the Lord helps those that help themselves" and although it is true that remission of sins and the blessing of salvation came through Christ and upon the basis of acceptance of Christ, every man is required and always will be required to testify the sincerity of his conversion and his allegiance by his endeavours to reach up to the standard which is set.

Now Elihu quotes Job's own words as basis for the development of his argument. *"For Job hath said, I am righteous; and God hath taken away my judgment . . ."*—perhaps Rotherham's rendering is better *"I am righteous, but God hath turned away my right, concerning mine own right shall I tell a falsehood? Incurable is my disease—not for any transgression"* (chapter 34. 5-6). It is certainly true that Job did talk like this and chapter 9 records his words in this strain. Conscience—perhaps too conscience—of his own integrity and innocence, the apparent unfairness of his affliction, he does seem to come perilously near to accusing God of injustice. And the younger man can see, what Job, with all his greater maturity of experience, evidently did not see, that the next step to harbouring thoughts against God is receptiveness to evil men's accusations against God.

So Elihu proceeds *"What man is like Job? He drinketh in scoffing like water and is on the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity and to walk with lawless men"*. (34. 7-8 Rotherham).

That was a pretty serious charge to lay at the door of Job, who held so high a reputation amongst men for his godliness and uprightness. It only goes to show how narrow is the dividing line between the outward aspect of a righteous and honourable life and the secret corrupting influences which can so easily and quickly destroy such a life. Here is Job, without doubt a righteous, clean-living, godly man, becoming so steadily broken down by his misfortunes that whilst he does not swerve one iota from his allegiance to God and his loyalty as God's servant, he does begin to doubt the inherent and absolute justice of God's dealings. And in so doing he fails to realise that that very doubt could be the first step towards sympathy with the ungodly and unregenerate.

"On the way to keep company with the workers of iniquity". It is a fine phrase but a terrifying one. Not yet a worker of iniquity; not yet disloyal to God; not yet keeping company with God's enemies, — but because of that nagging doubt, he is "on the way" so to do. "*For he hath said*" Elihu goes on "*it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*". (34.9). Although those precise words do not occur in any of the recorded sayings of Job they are implicit in much that he does say, particularly in his wonderful impassioned final speech which occupies chapters 26 to 31 of the Book. It was not that Job accused God, not that he entered any kind of complaint against him; it was only that he registered his conclusion that God did not necessarily reward the righteous with felicity and the unrighteous with misery; as often as not it was the other way round, and he as a servant of God must accept the position even although every instinct cried out that it was wrong.

That is where the situation comes home to us to-day with such force, for even now the same phenomena is observed and the same conclusion is drawn and voiced. Because oft times the righteous do suffer, because oft times the unrighteous do not reap retribution for their deeds, it is said that God is at best heedless and even some who are the servants of God feel sadly that they do not understand his ways. And all the time the only answer is that, despite all appearances and our own failure to perceive or understand the outworking of Divine dealings with man, God is just and God does, at the last, see to it that in every case, righteous and unrighteous alike, man reaps what he sows. The Almighty is inherently just; there cannot be unrighteousness with God.

That is the tremendous truth which Elihu now proclaims with all the emphasis he can muster. Neither Job nor his three friends had reached this level of understanding and Elihu means to im-

press it upon them. "*Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding; far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity*", and then, as Rotherham has it "*For whatever any son of earth doeth, he repayeth him, and according to every man's course he causeth him to find*" (Ferrar Fenton has it "But man's actions return on himself, and the tracks of a man find him out") "*Nay verily, God will not condemn unjustly, nor the Almighty pervert justice*" (34. 10-12). Again and again does Elihu insist that God is just, inherently and absolutely just, and that no matter what the apparent injustice of any possible earthly situation or circumstance, we must still take our stand upon the justice of God and wait with patience until in due time the apparent anomaly is explained. His words reveal another facet of this truth also; that our own instinctive demand that righteousness shall reap the reward of eternal felicity, and sin be eventually eternally condemned, is a right instinct and a true instinct, and is well-founded in the basic constitution of the human mind, implanted at the first by God. "*I know*" says Solomon "*that it shall be well with them that fear God*" (Eccl. 8. 12). That knowledge rides high above all the philosophic debates and the endless arguments over the permission of evil and the effectiveness of Divine power over the Devil. It stands as a basic principle which can never be challenged or overthrown: "*It shall be well with them that fear God*".

Now to buttress his argument Elihu interjects a word respecting the supremacy of God. The One whom he puts forward as the very embodiment of Justice, rewarding every man according to his deeds, from whose sight no good deed and no evil deed can possibly be hid, is the One who created all things and in whom all things subsist, the One without whom all things would cease to be. "*Who set him in charge of the earth?*" asks Elihu in rhetorical vein: "*Who appointed him the whole world?*" (34. 13 Rotherham). He waits not for the answer, for of course only one answer is possible, and so he goes on to the omnipotent power of the One whom he is eulogising. "*If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust*" (34. 14-15). Here we have the three elements of God's terrestrial creation, the three things which make man—the dust of the ground which constitutes his body, the animal breath, *nephesh*, which makes him a breathing, sentient creature, and the Spirit of God which is the vehicle of life, the channel of the Divine gift of life to man, and the power by which man lives. God has only to withdraw the life which only he can give, and the

man returns to dust. God has only to withdraw the Divine energy which has made this world what it is, and this whole terrestrial creation returns to its original chaos. The whole of creation depends on God, says Elihu, and its continued sustenance is only by the power of God. It goes on its orderly way and man goes through

his pre-destined course of development, attaining at last, if he will, and if he profits aright by his experience, the glorious liberty of the children of God. It is in God that we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28). How can we then charge injustice to God?

(To be continued)

WORDS OF LIFE

Part 2.

Part 1 of this essay took as its theme "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (Jno. 6.63), dwelling first upon the words of Jesus during his earthly ministry, leading to consideration of Jesus as the Living Word, the Alpha and the Omega, the Saviour of the world, at which point this concluding part takes up the thread. * * *

When John in his vision saw the Son of Man in all the risen glory of white raiment, eyes of flame and burnished feet, he saw also the sharp two-edged sword in his mouth. That weapon of authority he recognised as a fitting symbol for the Word of God (Rev. 19.15). He who refused the offices of the literal sword during his arrest is Divinely equipped with the spiritual sword by which to subdue and instruct the nations. It is a sword which lays wide open the corruptions of the heart, strikes at the sinews and muscles of long-established evil practices, searching and probing to the very root and core of all human maladies. He is even now the Great Physician, revealing men to themselves when they look at him and listen to him through the written word, but then his name will be "King of kings and Lord of lords" with power unlimited. His sword will smite and heal, subdue and conquer, cut from man's race the deadly canker of its sins and break down every obstacle that would keep it from truth and life. As the Word in the beginning created, the Word in the end will recreate. What beside this Word and the words he spoke on earth are all the words of man, his everyday words, his written words, his eloquent high-flown words, his oratory, sophistries and bombast which are often so much chaff blown before every wind, so much crackling thorns and snapping twigs and sounding brass?

When God writes, men pause to see what He has written. When God speaks, the earth trembles and men are forced to listen. At Sinai not only Moses and the people trembled at the voice of God issuing his commandments from its smoking summit, the mountains also trembled. "The voice

of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness" (Psalm 29). In the picturesque imagery of eastern words the Old Testament writers leave none in doubt of the powerful effects of the spoken word of God. The earth obeys his every behest, trembles at the presence of her Maker and a "Thus saith the Lord" is an end of all argument. The engraven commandments may be mocked, ignored or intensely disliked but they are still there; they will always be there, the safe conduct for human society, written on rock by the finger of God.

When Belshazzar at his great banquet drank wine from the golden vessels looted from the House of God, he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall, and the sight caused his royal knees to knock together with terror. He knew before the interpretation of the words that the Owner of the Temple vessels was spelling out his doom. "Weighed in the balances and found wanting," has been the brief and pungent summing up of many a nation, many an institution grown stale and effete and many a life which has not fulfilled its golden promise through moral weaknesses. The words are few but they are enough. They have about them the clean, decisive thrust of the two-edge sword. They cannot be gainsaid. These and many others like them have so penetrated the minds of men that in any dramatic situation they leap readily to the tongue or the pen. Nathan's words accusing David, "Thou art the man!" were God's words to all who deal crookedly and hope to get away with it, as his words to the slayer of the priests of Baal, "What doest thou here Elijah?" were a rebuke to all who run away from their place, their task and the circumstances which are their own peculiar challenge.

The story of the woman taken in adultery, avoided by some early copyists as too controversial or too pointed for comfort, has all the ring of truth about it. John, with his instructions to write, was not likely to miss the drama of Jesus writing with his finger in the dust, ignoring the sly cunning of the self-righteous men who rushed

into the very Temple, dragging into his presence the poor, dishevelled victim of unlawful behaviour. Looking up from his writing He spoke words as few and pointed as those written for the ruler of the Chaldeans. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Jesus resumed his writing. What he wrote and what he said silenced the accusers. One by one they silently stole away, abashed as must all be who dare to affront the presence of God with their own unrighteousness. "Thy word is truth", and truth has a sterilising effect upon the germs of selfishness, the seeds of evil responsible for the fevers, deliriums and illusions by which the world deceives and is deceived.

"Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12.36-37). This is a sobering thought, one which might well stem the torrent of words spilled out by every human creature except the dumb. Jesus took those words seriously as indicating the true state of the heart and mind. Frivolous, flippant, unkind, disloyal, unjust, cruel, pernicious, double-sided, malicious, sly, slanderous, crafty, unprofitable, unkind, unthankful, unholy, impure, etc., etc. This long catalogue of injurious words of which the tongue and pen are capable all spring from the poisoned fountain of the mind. How easily these damaging words leap out, fluent and glib, yet how slow, how halting the words of apology, if they come at all; how few the words of affection and praise, so rare their sincerity is often suspected as empty flattery. How damaging the words of violence, slander and lies.

How discouraging is the word of the critic snapping at flaws, how vain the gibberish that poses as knowledge, how tiring the din of a gabbling throng, how inane the gossip, how silly the chatter where more than two or three are met together to discuss the affairs of friends and acquaintances. Around many a conference table there hangs the strange futility of words vainly beating the air, of councillors taking council together to bring everything to nothing. The shouting demagogue, the screaming mob, the frenzied fanatics literally foaming out words which daily beat about the revolving earth like a sandstorm.

If the scientific theory is correct that all sound is trapped somewhere in the airy bag of the earth's atmosphere, someday to be captured and reproduced, then how accurate will be the words of the Lord in the day of judgment and how poetic the justice when all that has been said in secret will be shouted from the house tops (Luke 12. 2-3). "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee" (Luke 19.22). Then, if ever, all tongues will

be silenced, for all tongues have sinned and fallen short with respect to words. Job, that near perfect man, said *"If I justify myself my own words shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse"* (Job. 9.20). At a later date both James and John dwelt on the evil of words from the untameable tongue, of the impossibility of perfection in this respect, regardless of the finest ideals and the best intentions.

There were times when even the poet king of Israel was dumb with silence, not because he, a master of words, experienced a shortage but because he realised the futility of even fine words in the presence of God who reads the heart. God does not need man's words but man needs the words of God because they are spirit and life. The words of God are much more than guidance. They are energising words which put new life into those whose hearts and ears are attuned to the ring of truth. If the earth is ever to become a perfect home for a perfect society according to the promise of God and the inspired visions of the poets and prophets, it must first become a silent earth. "The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him". (Hab. 2.20). The words are both a rebuke and a command. A silent earth means a cessation of uproar, of war and commotion, of vociferation, of tumult and the strife of tongues. When events have finally destroyed a misplaced trust in machines, money and men, a chastened race will be put in a mood to listen in a new atmosphere of quiet.

It is in periods of silent meditation that the voice of God is heard, that men come to their senses and learn what they have to do. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Isa. 65.17). These are God's words, words of assurance and hope, words of life. Man's endeavours at peace and quality fail for obvious reasons, the spiritual and social elements dissolve in the fiery heat of troubled times, but "the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Pet. 1.25). "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24.35).

A new earth, a new social climate of love and goodwill in which all the natural virtues of courage, truth, kindness and justice will prevail will require new words. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent" (Zeph. 3.9). In the final vision of the new civilisation which is poetically known as Paradise Restored, John heard a mighty thunder of praise bursting from the hearts of eager, thankful multitudes. This new and glorious sound he recognised as a great paean of triumph, a hymn of rejoicing. Hymns have been a choice

medium of praise for Christian people since the angels sang their sublime chorus at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace". Poets have conjured their finest sentiments to fit that vision, to extend that praise to every corner of the earth, so that somewhere, every hour, a more worthy set of words might be heard ascending to the ear of the high and holy One sitting upon the rainbow-circled throne.

Vulgar, coarse, inferior and common words have been somewhat offset by uncommon words, by beautiful words of prayer and praise.

*Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words, beautiful words,
Wonderful words of life.*

Above the torrent of profanity and worldly words the sweet chorus of praise and the solemn words of prayer rise unceasingly, an offering and an incense to heavenly places. "A word fitly spoken, how good it is, like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25.11).

The spoken word is powerful, swaying multitudes, changing lives by its spell-binding tongue. Unless the words are recorded much of their power is lost, their eloquence blown like the spray from the surface of the sea. When God would have his words impressed into the minds and lives of men he either wrote with his own finger or commanded his servants to write. "It is written" is the sharp reminder to those who would plead ignorance or loss of memory. The man with the writer's ink-horn in his belt was the man who went about making notes for future reference, setting down what he saw and heard. The immortal, essence of words is the truth they

contain. "They are spirit and they are life." They are eventually to be written into the very fabric of man's nature. "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts" (Jer.31.33). This will be the greatest feat of writing ever achieved, the finest words put to the best use. No longer will men need to consult books, with their mixed ideas and varied advice, their complicated rules and complex explanations. The written instructions for the new man will not be something he can lose or misunderstand. They will be so plain, so much a part of himself that even a simpleton could not go wrong.

Imagination alone can visualise what sort of words will issue from the regenerated hearts and minds of these new days. The arts of the past will fade into insignificance before those which the inspired talents of the hand written men and women of the future will give to a golden age of peace and life.

*These things shall be; a loftier race
Than e're the earth hath known shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.
New arts shall bloom of finer mould
And lovelier music thrill the skies.*

The harmony of the times will require new and finer words. Whatever their form they will be beautiful words, to gladden the heart, to ennoble the mind, to carry the spirit of man into hitherto unexplored realms of thought and happiness. Coming from him whose words were always gracious, who spoke as no one else had ever spoken, they must be and will be words of peace, spirit and life.

Psa. 55.22.

In Psalm 55.22 there is a word which is full of rich suggestion. We are bidden to "Cast our burden upon the Lord". In the margin, however, is the word gift—thus reading—"Cast thy gift upon the Lord". So our burden is God's gift to us. This is true whatever the burden may be—duty, sorrow, pain, loss, care. Being God's gift, there must be a blessing in it, something good, something we could not miss without sore loss. It may be a blessing for ourselves, or it may be for others—in the garden it was the blessing of the world's redemption in the cup that was pressed to the lips of our Lord. In every case, our burden is God's gift, and it would not be a kindness to us if He were to lift it away.

But there is more of the promise. We are to cast our burden upon the Lord and He will sus-

tain us. That is, He will give us strength to carry our load, to endure our suffering. The story of Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates this. The torturing burden was not removed, but instead there came grace sufficient—the strength of Christ to balance the human weakness, so that Paul was enabled to rejoice in his infirmities because of the blessing which came to him through them.

*"We must live through the weary winter
If we would value the spring;
And the woods must be cold and silent
Before the robins sing.
The flowers must be buried in darkness
Before they can bud and bloom;
And the sweetest and warmest sunshine
Comes after the storm and gloom."*

MEN THAT WAIT FOR THEIR LORD

"Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord . . . that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately" (Luke 12. 36).

The severest test of the Christian life is waiting for the Lord, abiding in patience and trust until He reveals himself in his providences, continuing as life goes on in fervent hope of his appearing, the Advent which is to usher in his Kingdom. On the one hand we are waiting on him in almost every experience of life, trying to discern his hand in the circumstances of the day, looking to him for guidance and strength and instruction that we might be fully conformed to his likeness; on the other hand we are earnestly watching for evidences and indications of his personal coming to earth to end the present age of sin and death and commence his promised reign over the nations for their blessing. Although in this passage our Lord must have been speaking primarily in the dispensational sense, of his coming at the end of the Age, and of those who are then ready to receive him, there is also contained a principle of action which is applicable to all Christians of every generation since the beginning. None can be watchful and ready in a dispensational sense if they are not already watchful and ready in the day-by-day Christian life, irrespective of the imminence or otherwise of our Lord's Advent.

Let your loins be girded about! This is the first injunction. The flowing outer garment usual in the East in our Lord's day had to be "hitched up" and bound round with a belt or girdle when any active work was to be done. This is a call to active service and this applies both to the personal life and our communal life in the fellowship in which we serve Christ. The fundamental principle is laid down in Rom. 12.1 in which the Apostle exhorts his readers to "*present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of your minds*". In Scriptural language this is termed consecration, the full and unreserved dedication of heart and life to the service of God and this is the apex of Christian experience in life. In the preceding chapters of Romans Paul traces the successive steps by which the believer comes to this position—justification by faith in Christ, in chap. 5, followed by baptism into Christ's death, in chap. 6, resulting in the believer becoming dead to the world, in chap. 7, and walking in the Spirit in a new life, chap. 8. So is he brought into an understanding of the Divine calling of the Church of

which he has now become a member, chap. 9, and the parallel understanding of God's purpose for Israel the earthly counterpart of the Church in the work of world reconciliation in the coming Messianic Age, chaps. 10-11. On the basis of all these truths, and in the inspiration afforded by realisation of them, what can we do but yield ourselves to God for his purpose according to the disposition of his will as we are exhorted in chap. 12?

This was the position in which the youthful prophet Isaiah found himself when he saw the vision of God in the heavenly Temple with attendant angels, and heard the voice of God calling for a messenger willing to execute his commission. Isaiah at that moment had no idea of the nature of the commission or what it might involve in labour or even danger, but in the ardour of his devotion and loyalty, and his desire to do God service, he stepped forward and said "*Here am I; send me*". And for forty years thereafter he was constantly engaged in conveying the Divine warnings, admonitions, and promises to a generally disloyal and faithless people. He became a prophet of judgment and blessing, the twin principles which always go together in God's dealings. In the inspiration of that vision in the beginning he girded his loins and they remained girded to the end of a long and devoted life. That is consecration.

In the picture outlined by Jesus there were servants—plural. A band of men and women were associated together in the service of their lord. There is a communal aspect of this matter; we have each a responsibility as one member of the Church of Christ comprising many members, all consecrated for service. Just as Israel of old was a "people for a purpose" so we too are called for a purpose, both now and in that future which lies beyond the gates of death. As members of the Body of Christ we have a work to do; not always the same work or in the same place. Much depends upon our natural abilities and circumstances and much upon our Lord's will for our particular case. But there is a sphere of Christian service for each one of us and for that we must have our loins girded. We are not called to be members of a kind of rather exclusive religious club in which we find congenial fellowship and can indulge in a little hymn-singing and a bit of mutual congratulation. The kind of character-development our Lord desires to see in us demands sterner stuff than that. Likewise we

have to remember that an important part of our duty and mission in this life is to be Christ's witnesses to his gospel and his kingdom, exemplifying both in our lives' conduct and proclaiming both to the extent of our ability. Even though the world is not converted in consequence, and the continuing decline of any real response from those to whom the word is preached renders the work increasingly apparently hopeless, the commission is not abrogated and will not be, until the Messianic kingdom has become a reality and the Church's endeavours are superseded by those of our returned Lord in power.

This ideal fellowship of service is eloquently defined by the Apostle Paul in Rom. 12 immediately following his plea for consecration. The Body of Christ has many members "*and all members have not the same office*" (vs.4). We are "members one of another" each using to the best effect the gift or gifts we have, whether ministry, teaching, helping the afflicted, or whatever it may be; above all things manifesting sincere love to all, abhorring evil and cleaving to the good. The entire chapter is a mine of information on the characteristics of the Christian life but they all stem back to the basic consecration exhorted in verse 1. And if any should demur that this chapter appears to concentrate on the internal life of the fellowship to the exclusion of that wider commission of the Church, the preaching of the Gospel for a witness to all nations, the answer might well be that Paul has already dealt with this aspect in his 10th chapter where in vs. 9 he reiterates the primitive Apostolic Pentecostal declaration that acceptance of Jesus Christ as the source of life is the means of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike, for all nations. Further, since none can call upon a Name of which they have not heard, but whosoever shall call upon that Name shall be saved, it follows that some must be sent to declare the Name. By quoting a word from Isaiah which is applicable to the junction between this Age and the next, (Isa. 52.7) he combines in masterly fashion the evangelical witness of the Church in this Age which achieves a world-wide witness without world-wide conversion and the Messianic evangelism of the next Age in which the Church is also concerned and which does achieve world-wide conversion. All of this is included in the communal "girding of loins" which our Lord was talking about, and since the emphasis of this outward witness as well as the inward life of the Church becomes more crucial as this Age nears its end the admonition may well be taken as having a definite end-of-the-Age and time-of-the-Second-Advent implication.

Your lights burning! Here is the second injunction, in a different sphere of the Christian life but

of equal standing. In this word is stressed the importance of doctrine to effective service. Our Lord spoke with commendation of those scribes who were instructed in the things of the kingdom of heaven and so were able to bring forth out of their store things both new and old for the edification and upbuilding of their hearers. All too often Christian pastors and teachers content themselves with repeating what great men of the past have said without directing the minds of the listeners to present and new developments in the revealed purpose of God. They forget that the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more until it is swallowed up by the radiance of meridian day (Prov. 4.18). And this light must burn both inward and outward. "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path*" sang the Psalmist (Psa. 119.105); in that short phrase he epitomised the fact that all our inward illumination on the Plan and purpose of God, all our knowledge of his character and his ways, all our instruction and guidance in onward progress, comes to us by the power of the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures, the Word of God. This inward reception of the light is essential before we can manifest the light to others in an outward sense. The Apostle Paul tells us in Phil. 2.15 that we are to shine as lights in the world and Jesus previously had told his disciples the same. That shining is associated in Paul's injunction with the holding forth the word of life and this clearly means not only presenting and preaching Christ crucified to the unconverted but also offering a tolerably correct and reasoned exposition of the Divine Plan for mankind so that the whole effort makes sense, and this is where the knowledge of doctrine comes in.

The lights must be kept burning. One of the saddest passages in Scripture is that in I Sam. 3 where the "*lamp of God was gone out in the temple of God*", the ever-burning lampstand which the priests should tend continually and never suffer to be extinguished. But Eli the High Priest of that day was neglectful and indifferent; it was said of his ministry "*the word of God was rare in those days; there was no open vision*". The people were perishing for lack of knowledge, until the child Samuel grew up and was revealed as a prophet of the Lord to re-ignite the light. At a later time Isaiah said of the teachers of his own day "*the vision of all things is become unto you as a book that is sealed*" (Isa. 29.11) which the learned men could not interpret because to them it was a sealed book and the unlearned could not interpret because they could not read. "*If the light that is in thee become darkness*" said Jesus "*how great is that darkness*"; the Parable of the Ten Virgins illustrates the disaster that comes to

those who fail in such a way.

Light must be received before it can be given out. There is an electrical phenomenon known as electroluminescence in which certain materials to which an electric current is applied immediately glow brightly with a radiant colour—red, green or so on according to the material. As soon as the current is turned on, the atoms in the material begin to vibrate and produce the colour. So with the Christian; the power of the indwelling Spirit can excite the grains of knowledge stored in our minds so that we can manifest that knowledge to others. And there is power in light. The famous evangelist Moody used to liken the Christian to a lighthouse. He said lighthouses do not ring bells or fire cannon to draw attention to their whereabouts; they just shine. Put like that, there would almost seem to be a passive, static atmosphere about the Christian witness. That is not the case. Light is active, powerful, full of energy. Sunlight falling upon certain metallic elements can so activate their constituent atoms as to produce an electric current which can operate mechanical or electrical devices. Most people have heard of the "solar cells" fitted to space satellites which transform the sun's rays into power to operate the satellite. A car has been made with a roof constructed of such cells and is literally driven by sunlight. The miracle of growth in the vegetable world is achieved by means of the light that falls upon the plant or the tree. Even here there is an analogy with that spiritual light by which we grow into the Divine likeness and are able to furnish the bread of life to others. Sunlight is a mixture of light of many colours ranging from red and orange through yellow and green to blue and violet, and all the colours are necessary. A plant grown under red light only will grow short and squat and bear little or no fruit; one grown under violet light only will be tall and spindly and weak. Each colour in its due proportion as provided by Nature is necessary for full growth to maturity and fruitage. So it is with the doctrines and elements of the faith. To emphasise or give undue attention to one aspect only, shall we say, end-of-the-Age prophecy, or the philosophy of redemption, or the symbolism of Israel's ritual observances, to the exclusion of perhaps weightier matters concerning our life and growth in Christ, can lead to a somewhat similar result in the spiritual sense. "All scripture" said Paul "is given that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto every good work".

With this preparation completed, said Jesus, be ye like men that wait for their lord, ready for his return to them. Readiness and watchfulness; these are the keynotes. Paul's words to the Ephesians are right on this point when in his

sixth chapter he pictures the Christian arrayed in the whole armour of God in the fashion of a Roman soldier completely accoutred and armed ready for combat. Having done all, says Paul, stand; stand fully armed and alert for whatever move the enemy might make. In this picture the emphasis is on waging a good warfare in this world for Jesus Christ; in the Lord's words the emphasis is on intelligently watching and waiting for his coming. That coming is two-fold, into the individual life as spiritual guide and teacher, and into the life of the Church as a whole at his Second Advent. But the preparation and alertness for combat is an essential part of our waiting for him. So the armour-clad soldier is taking his stand, not only in continual watchfulness against the inroads of every power and influence of this world that would draw him away from his allegiance to Christ but also in determined and steadfast waiting and looking for the event in history which is to end the Church's career on earth and commence its destiny in heaven, with all that event means for the rest of mankind—the promised coming again of the Lord at the end of the Age. "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup" said Paul "ye do publicise the Lord's death till He come." "Till He Come"; those three simple words sum up in themselves all the longing and all the faith and all the hope of all the Church in all the generations from Pentecost to the present. It will surely be. The prophet Habakkuk, straining his eyes to peer into the futurity which concealed the promised day of Divine rule on earth, heard the Lord saying to him "though it tarry, wait for it; because it will not tarry" (Hab. 2.3). To men in general the watching seems pointless, for the promised coming seems visionary and unreal, but to the watchers it is more real than anything else in this world. That was the assurance given the disciples on Olivet after they had watched the risen Lord ascend out of their sight. The visitant angels told them "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1.11). That expression "in like manner", rightly understood, is a word expressing the absolute certainty of the one event following the other. As surely as the sun sets in the west at night so surely shall it rise in the east next morning; as surely as the Lord had gone from them into heaven that day so surely would He return to them at the end of the Age. That was the meaning of the angelic declaration and it was that which gave confidence and joy to those disciples. So the verity of the First Advent becomes to us the guarantee and assurance of the Second.

It is still necessary to watch; not that kind of

watching which consists of a constant scanning of the sky that one may catch the first glimpse of the king returning on the clouds of heaven. Not that watching which derives its inspiration from a mathematical exercise on the time periods of the Bible in the endeavour to fix the precise day and hour of his appearing. Christians in the past have done both these things and grievous has been their disappointment. "I come as a thief" said Jesus (Rev. 16.15) and added the caution to watch. In his masterly reply to the disciples' enquiry as to how they would know when his coming was at hand (Matt. 24) the Lord told them to watch the signs of the times. When they or their successors should perceive the description of the events which would end this Age becoming realised in history then they would know that "he is near, even at the doors".

It is at this point, to continue with Jesus' words, that they open to him immediately. Again there is a personal and a dispensational application. There is a sense in which we individually are continually opening the door to Jesus, more and more as life proceeds. "I stand at the door and knock", He said "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" (Rev. 3.20). This is rightly applied to the beginning of the Christian life when we first take Christ into our hearts and lives. But the coming in is also progressive. The strong desire of Paul for his Ephesian converts was "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend . . . the love of Christ . . . that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3.17-19).

Quite evidently though Jesus was thinking particularly of the dispensational aspect when He spoke thus, the sum total of all the watching and waiting of all his followers throughout the Age. A time has to come in history when his actual personal return is so imminent an event that the "Watchers" realise the fact and are prepared to receive him accordingly. At first the interpretation of the evidence is hazy and uncertain; there are successive disappointments due to incorrect expectations. The signs of the times are observed and compared with the foreviews in the Scriptures but the stress is applied in the wrong places and undue emphasis placed on passing events which proves to be unjustified. Our Lord indicated that such would be the case. "If he shall come in the second watch, or in the third watch, and find them so" (watching) "blessed are those servants". The second watch of the night in New Testament times was nine to midnight and the third watch midnight to three a.m. The parallel account in Mark's Gospel expresses the timing in terms of

all four watches: "Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even (6-9), or at midnight (9-12), or at the cock crowing (12-3), or in the morning (3-6)" (Mark 13.35). True to this element of uncertainty, there has been anticipation of the imminent Advent of Christ to an extensive degree since the beginning of the 19th Century, developing at certain specific times (1840-44, 1869-74, 1914-1920) into the formation of quite significant movements devoted to proclaiming that the time had come. Defective views as to the nature as well as the purpose of his coming, and the manner in which that coming is manifested, has led to disappointment, but always the injunction has held good "blessed is he that watcheth". But the very fact that our Lord's words indicate there would be this element of uncertainty and failure to realise long-cherished expectations serves but to establish confidence that, notwithstanding the apparent delays, we are indeed living in the days of the Son of Man. This is the important thing; not that we behold or realise the outward manifestations of Divine power which will convince all men that the Lord Christ has indeed taken his power and assumed rulership of the world, but that we perceive the evidences which demonstrate the time is now present in which he is bringing to a head all those forces which will destroy the present world order in preparation for his accession to actual rulership. It might well be said that the signs of the times which He himself indicated would evidence the commencement of his Second Presence on the stage of world affairs, the initial stages of the chain of events which are to constitute his Advent, may be divided into the early signs and the latter signs. During the latter part of last century great stress was laid upon the general increase of knowledge and of communication, many running to and fro, as predicted in Daniel's prophecy; upon the fact that the Gospel had by mid-century reached every people and language throughout the earth, declared by our Lord in Matt. 24 to be a sign of the imminent end; upon the development of atheism and rationalism, and the decline of religious belief; upon the growing unrest in world affairs and increasing antagonism between rich and poor, kings and people; upon wars and threats of wars and enmity between nations, upon the first tentative movements among the Jewish people to begin the re-colonisation of the erstwhile "Holy Land". All these were hailed as fulfilments of Scriptural foreviews and evidences that the time had come. But these were the early signs; they awakened many in Christendom to an awareness of the significance of current events relative to the out-working purpose of God but the expectation of

the speedy establishment of the Messianic kingdom built upon that awareness was not fulfilled. *The time was still that of the first watch or the second watch.* Now during this present century there have been other and more momentous happenings. These are the latter signs. Israel has become a sovereign nation in full possession and control of her ancient land. Not yet a converted and dedicated people of God; that is yet to come, but at any rate diligently prosecuting the material work of preparing the territory which is to be the centre of Messianic administration in the next Age. Irreligiousness has increased a thousandfold so that the Lord's prediction concerning the state of things regarding faith in him at his Advent is already an accomplished fact. The state of affairs between contending factions among men, and between nations professing differing ideologies, and the inventions and instruments of war, and the consequences of war, are such as to render the strife between nations of last century like child's play by comparison. Added to all this are developments which were quite unknown a hundred years ago, but now bid fair to destroy the earth and all that is on it—threats of over-population, of food shortage and famine, of the exhaustion of fuel sources so that civilisation as we know it cannot continue, and the grim spectre of world pollution. All these things taken together have convinced many thinking men of the world having no particular concern for or belief in Divine control that the world must inevitably enter a great crisis by the end of this present century or soon thereafter. *These are the latter signs which indicate that we are now in the third or the fourth watch and that at the time of the world's extremity, when all seems lost, God will intervene.* Since it is fundamental that the "days of the Son of Man" are those during which the Lord is superintending many works which must be completed before that intervention takes place, these latter signs, even more than the early signs, should convince us that we are now living in the days of the Second Advent.

Jesus' final words in this context enshrine a very important truth to those who are thus watching and ready. He will *"gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them"*. Whatever this promise means, it cannot be made to refer to any time subsequent to the end of the Church's career upon earth. There is no sense in which in the glorified state "beyond the veil" Christ the Head of the Church can be said to "serve them". That is a time of work, of activity, in which the Church will be actively associated with her Head in the evangelical work of the Messianic Age. All preparation is by then completed. This coming forth to serve

the waiting and watching ones has to do with their own time of need of such service and that is *here and now*. Of course the Lord has been serving his Church from the beginning of the Age. On the road to Emmaus he opened the Scriptures to two of the disciples and true to his promise He has ever since taught and guided his followers by the medium of the Holy Spirit; this is lucidly elaborated in the 14th and 16th chapters of John's Gospel. But He cannot be talking of that service here for the promised sitting down to meat is associated with the discovery of the faithful watchers at the time of his return but before those watchers are taken to their eternal home. This "sitting down to meat" must obviously bear relation to the giving of "meat in due season" to the household of faith (Matt. 24.35 Luke 12.4) and the usage of meat and milk by the writer to the Hebrews as synonyms for the deeper truths of the faith compared with the elementary principles. The Lord comes forth to serve his faithful watchers with an understanding of aspects of Scriptural truth, of features of the faith, not fully known before and having greater relevance to the dispensational changes about to be inaugurated, in order to equip them for the remaining work they are to carry out on earth before the full end of this Age.

This is perhaps better understood when viewed in the light of the first years of the Early Church. A special work had to be done, the establishment of Christianity in the world and the speedy proclamation of the good tidings throughout the Roman world. To accomplish this end speedily and effectively the Apostles and their early fellow-Christians were the recipients of miraculously conferred powers, of knowledge, wisdom, ability to speak in various languages, insight into the philosophy of the faith and ability to expound it lucidly, all that they might commence their commission at once without the necessity for the normal processes of learning and training. These powers were called the "gifts of the Spirit" and they continued so long as there was need of them and until the written word in the Gospels and Epistles was being circulated and there was an adequate number of evangelists, pastors and teachers available. Then the "gifts" lapsed and were in evidence no more. Now at the end of the Age there arises another need, one for an understanding of Christian truth particularly relevant to the end of the Age and conditions and characteristics of the coming Age. This had been largely neglected in past times when the emphasis in theology was on the personal salvation of the individual believer, and the idea that the Lord Jesus Christ was to return to earth for the purpose of reconciling to God "whosoever will" both

from the living and the dead, was barely known and hardly ever discussed. It is a fact of history that from the middle of the 19th Century onward there has been a flood of light cast upon these matters in consequence of the preaching and writing of numerous men of God and above all things a world-wide witness to the manner and purpose of the Second Advent. It is true to say that since 1850 there have been more books written, more sermons preached, more Conferences held, more Christian interest solicited and manifested, on the subject and imminence of Christ's coming than in all preceding centuries since Pentecost. This is the feast of meat, undeniably "in due season", which is in itself another pointer

to the fact that at this time the world, unknowingly for the most part, has entered into the "days of the Son of Man".

But the watchers know. Differences of comprehension, differences of viewpoint and understanding, but united in one conviction, and in that union they are able not only to wait for their lord in faith, not only to recognise his knock and open the door, but also to sit down to the feast He has ready for them, and in the strength and power of that meat go out to proclaim through the length and breadth of Christendom and the world the thrilling proclamation "*the time is fulfilled; the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord*".

AARON — THE MAN BEHIND THE PRIEST

He was elder brother of the nation's military leader and deliverer, he himself its first and greatest High Priest, connected by marriage with the royal tribe—but a very ordinary and undistinguished personage of whom nothing noteworthy is recorded. His life left no permanent impress on later generations and he is remembered only on account of the dignity of his office.

Aaron was born in Egypt three years before his more famous brother Moses. Unlike Moses, who was brought up in the royal court and educated in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, he spent his youth in the family circle in the Hebrew territory of Goshen and almost certainly worked as a slave of the Egyptians. There is not much doubt that Amram and Jochebed, his parents, were a devout couple, loyal to God in faith and hope that one day the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled and the people of Israel be restored to the land from which their forefather Jacob had emigrated three centuries earlier. The first eighty years of his life were probably uneventful, marked only by two events. The first, his marriage, at probably round about thirty to forty years of age, to Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, ruling prince of the tribe of Judah, the designated royal tribe through whom Christ would one day come. This union incidentally constituted him an uncle by marriage of Salmon the father of Boaz, the hero of the story of Ruth. The other event, a more saddening one, not many years later, was when his brother Moses, having incurred the wrath of Pharaoh on account of his slaying the oppressive Egyptian overseer, fled into exile in Midian on the other side of Sinai, three

hundred miles away, and any dawning hope that Israel's kinsman in the royal court might prove to be the deliverer for which they looked was extinguished. And so Aaron toiled on, hopelessly, not expecting to see his brother again and wondering if God had indeed forgotten to be gracious.

Came Aaron's eightieth year and a few more and life continued as it had done for as far back as he could remember. He could expect another forty years of life but it could only be continued labour and sorrow. He and Elisheba now had four sons but life held out no different prospect and the Divine promise seemed as far away from fulfilment as ever. Of his brother Moses he had heard nothing for forty years past and he did not know if he was even still alive. He believed that God would one day deliver, and he knew from the records of his people that the four hundred years God had spoken of to Abraham was just about expired and the promised deliverance was due. But the people were still slaves and there was no champion to espouse their cause and lead them to freedom. The old warrior Pharaoh, Thothmes III, who had held them down with so iron a hand, the one who had sought Moses' life forty years ago, was dead these six or seven years or more, but the new Pharaoh, Amen-hotep II, was even more rigid and merciless than his father and it did not seem that any power could ever deliver Israel. And God did seem to have forgotten . . .

"*And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses*". . . . He sat up, rubbing his eyes. Had it been a dream, that authoritative voice, so unlike anything he had heard before. It

had been so long since his brother's name had been uttered in his hearing. Despite his many prayers and his constant waiting in faith, God had never spoken to him before. *"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses!"* The tones still rang in his ears, compelling, commanding. He could not banish them from his mind. Somehow he knew them to be from God. The Most High had spoken to him, given him a command. He could do naught else but obey. Slowly he got to his feet.

It was only then that he realised the enormity of his task. He had never been out of Egypt in his life. The expression "the wilderness" was clear to him. That was the term used by the Semitic peoples in Egypt for the district of the sacred mountain of Sinai, sacred to all the peoples of Syria and Canaan and Arabia and the east but not to the Egyptians. In times before their own it was dedicated to Sin the Moon-god—hence its name—the god worshipped by Terah the father of Abraham, but even so it was revered by every Hebrew as the mountain of God. So Aaron must go to Sinai and there he would meet his long-lost brother. But how to get there? He would only have had a vague idea where the mountain was situated. He went to his labour that day in thoughtful mood.

Aaron probably got his directions from some of the Bedouin merchants who were constantly entering and leaving Egypt with their merchandise, like those who brought Joseph into Egypt four centuries earlier. They were of Semitic race like himself and had no more love for the Egyptians than he, and would readily tell him all he wished to know. Then he had the problem of getting across the frontier into the eastern desert. The only crossing point was at Etham where the caravan route passed through for Canaan. Most of the rest was the impassable Red Sea. And Etham was a strongly guarded military garrison post! Perhaps he slipped across under cover of night; perhaps, disguised as a Bedouin, he persuaded some merchant to take him through with his caravan of men and animals and goats. At all events, he attained the other side, and faced his two hundred mile journey. For the first half he had to be circumspect for he was on the road leading to the Egyptian copper mines at Serabit-al-Khadem in Sinai, and there would be frequent detachments of workers and copper convoys and military guards to avoid. After that the going was safer but more arduous. After about three weeks' journeying the huge mass of the holy mountain loomed before him, and there he met Moses.

The rest of that story is well known, how Moses told him that he too had received a Divine command to await his brother here, of the incident of the burning bush and his commission

to return to Egypt, confront Pharaoh and demand the liberation of the people of Israel, then lead them to the Promised Land. So the two returned together and presented themselves to their fellows, meeting only with a mixed reception, for a new generation had arisen since Moses fled, and those of his own generation hardly knew him except as the highly placed court favourite who had fled from Pharaoh's wrath forty years ago. But eventually Aaron and Moses did stand before Pharaoh and did lead Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

Moses was the man of vision and the man of action; Aaron, quieter and more hesitant. Moses was born to lead and he dominated every situation in which he was involved; Aaron, more easily led and swayed by others and more likely to accede to the wishes of others. But Moses was physically slow of speech whilst his brother was quick and eloquent, wherefore God made of these two a pair that together were able to outwit the machinations of the Egyptians. "I know" said the Lord "that he can speak well". There must have been something in Aaron's powers of expression and the fixed faith in God which vitalised those powers of expression of which the Lord had taken notice, back there in those past years in Egypt.

The weaker side of Aaron's nature comes out in the only two substantial incidents in which he figures during the subsequent Exodus journeyings. The first is that of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32). Moses had been so long upon the mountain with God that the people concluded some disaster had befallen him and he would not return. They demanded of Aaron that he make a graven image of God, like those they had seen in Egypt, to go before them as guide, *"for as for this Moses, the man that brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him"*. This is where Aaron, whose authority as chief in the absence of Moses was unchallenged, should have firmly denied the dissidents their way and reminded them of the law they had so recently enthusiastically accepted *"thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"*. An uncompromising stand at this point would have stopped the rot—for almost certainly only a section, albeit the most vociferous section, would have been clamouring for this innovation—the better sense of the remainder prevail, and the tragic consequences would not have followed. But, weakly, Aaron gave way and acceded to the demand, even taking the lead in collecting gold and having it fashioned into what the Psalmist later scornfully described as *"the similitude of an ox that eateth grass"*. Moses, coming down at last from the mountain, saw all the depravities of idolatrous

worship in full swing, and in his wrath threw down the tablets of the Law and dashed them to pieces. To his violent remonstrance Aaron, weakly, blamed the people and excused himself by saying that he cast the gold into the fire "and there came out this calf" which would be comic were it not so tragic. This episode right at the beginning of the Exodus journeys showed up in sharp relief Aaron's unfitness for leadership.

The other occasion, related in Num. 12, concerned the altercation over Moses' wife. Moses, when in exile in Midian, had married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro the Midianite, by whom he now had two sons. (The A.V. in Num. 12 describes her as an Ethiopian woman from which some have surmised that Zipporah was dead and Moses had married again; the truth is that the Hebrew text has "woman of Cush," the Hebrew word for Ethiopia, and it is likely that this is an early copyist's error for Cushan, the general name for the Sinai area from which Zipporah came; see Hab. 3.7.) Aaron and Miriam their sister apparently started some kind of vendetta against Zipporah. The reason is not stated but it can be inferred. Sooner or later the question of a successor to Moses would arise. Aaron and Miriam were not prepared to tolerate any possibility of a half-Midianite son of Moses succeeding to the position of leader of Israel. Hence the claim that they held equal shares in the leadership. If the Jewish tradition that Miriam was married to Hur of the tribe of Judah has anything in it then she as well as Aaron was connected with the royal tribe and the argument would be that the succession should come through one of them. The Lord took another view and vindicated Moses' authority by striking Miriam with leprosy which was only removed at Moses' supplication. This seems to indicate that Miriam was the principal actor in this conspiracy and Aaron fell in with her, again revealing his inherent indecision and weakness of character. In any case the Lord eventually appointed Joshua to succeed Moses.

The glory of Aaron is that he was called of God to occupy the position of first High Priest of

Israel, to represent the people before God in worship and sacrificial ritual, to institute a succession of priests which was the only permanent institution in Israel's history. The system of rule by Judges in the early days gave place to the monarchy, under which kings reigned at Jerusalem, and that in turn to a tributary province of Persia, Greece and then Rome under appointed governors, but all the way through until the time of Christ there were the sons of Aaron in direct line officiating as High Priests. Aaron was a greater man in his official capacity than in his private life. Perhaps it was intended; by such means the Lord might be indicating that, despite our own personal failings and shortcomings and weaknesses, He can use us to do great things in his service and the execution of his Plan if we are truly and sincerely consecrated to him. That Aaron, despite his human failings, was thus consecrated to God there can be no doubt. He was something like Peter in that he failed grievously on two notable occasions in his life yet made amends by continued faithfulness to his calling to the end. He is honoured to all time by becoming in Scriptural symbolism the head of the system of sacrifice which prefigured the presentation and giving of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Like Moses, he never entered the land. He died, at the age of one hundred and twenty-three, on a mountain in Edom a few months before the hosts of Israel arrived at the river Jordan where they were to cross and take possession. Miriam had already died, ten or more years previously. Moses also was to come to his end before the actual entry. The children of Amram and Jochebed who in the Lord's hand had been the means of freeing Israel from Egyptian slavery and realising the age-old dream of leading them to the Promised Land did not themselves taste the sweets of success. The people entered in; they themselves await the reward of all their endeavours and all their faithfulness in that day when their Lord and ours "makes up his jewels" and recompences to all men according to their works.

Spiritual life needs opposition to bring out its best development. It flourishes most luxuriantly in adverse circumstances. The hardness of our experiences, which seem to us to be more than we can possibly endure, make the very school of life for us in which we learn our best lessons and grow into whatever beauty and Christlikeness of character we attain.

It is true that we cannot all be intellectual giants, but many of those who want to serve their Lord seem content to do so in a "first-form" way, and then are surprised and hurt when the "sixth-formers" will not listen to them. Let us "give attendance to reading", for the Truth's own sake, for the sake of the generation to which we must witness, and for the sake of our own soul's growth and experience.

ANGELS THAT SINNED

Bible basis of
demonism

4. Jesus and the Demons

There are something like thirty-six references to demon-obsession or the casting out of demons in the New Testament. It is a favourite assumption on the part of theologians and the like to dismiss these elements in the Gospel narratives as concessions to the popular belief, not to be taken as endorsing the reality of the demons, or at best to conclude that the individuals said to be thus obsessed and coming to the Lord for healing were in fact victims of epileptic fits and the like. Anything which explains the narratives without admitting the actual presence and power of demons, malevolent intelligences from outside man's world, obsessing and using the minds of their victims, has been seized upon and used in the attempt to avoid the implication of the plain statements of Scripture.

If, however, the integrity of the New Testament as a true historical record of things that actually happened is to be upheld, and the reliability of Jesus and the Apostles as true guides and instructors in matters of faith and belief for future generations to be asserted, it must be accepted that the demons in Jesus' day, and therefore in other times also, did and do have an objective existence. According to the Gospel narratives, Jesus held converse with demoniac intelligences and they with him. Several allusions link directly with what the Old Testament reveals as to the nature and destiny of the demoniac beings. There is no room for superstition and epilepsy in these records. These are the rebellious angels of antediluvian times, acknowledging the authority of One whom they knew as Lord of all created beings from times far preceding even those, and the entire position can only be satisfactorily explained on that basis.

Perhaps the most noteworthy example of these contacts is that of the Gadarene swine, recorded by the three Evangelists, Matt. 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-18 and Luke 8:26-35. The story briefly is that Jesus was met in the way by a man obsessed by a number of demons so that he was completely crazed. Jesus commanded them to come out of him, and in obeying they were permitted to enter into a herd of swine feeding nearby. The resultant effect upon the swine was to cause them to run madly down the hillside into the waters of the lake below, where they all drowned. It is only when the undertones of the story are examined that its true significance is realised.

"They" (the demons) "*besought him*" says Luke "*that he would not command them to go*

out into the abyss." Here is an allusion that bears the stamp of truth; it could not possibly have been invented to embellish an otherwise ordinary happening. The Old Testament pictures the fallen angels as confined in the abyss, (*tartarus* to the Greeks, far below *sheol*, the place of the human dead), and these demons feared that they would be commanded by Jesus to return to that prison where were most of their fellows. It is to be noted that they did not dispute the authority and power of our Lord; if He so commanded them they would have to obey. In the upshot he gave them leave to obsess the herd of swine, a concession which availed them nothing, for in the disturbance of mental faculties consequent upon that obsession the herd rushed into the sea and was drowned, leaving the demons without any physical organism in which and through which they could operate. Presumably they were then compelled to return to the abyss their prison—not, of course, a geographical locality, below *sheol* or anywhere else, but the condition of separation, banishment, both from heaven and earth, so that in the absence of an environment they were cut off from any means of contact with any world and any created beings, heavenly or earthly.

Matthew records another factor in the episode. Upon being confronted by Jesus, the demons are said to have cried out "*What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?*" "Torment" here is *basanizo*, which has the primary significance of putting to the test, to make trial for fitness or excellence. Only in a secondary sense does it indicate torment or torture, and that because in those days that, unhappily, was a frequent preliminary to the trial of an accused person. In this instance the demons revealed their knowledge that at a time still future they were to be put on trial for their apostasy and this squares with the Apostle Paul's statement that in the Millennial era of Christ's rulership over the nations when the Church will reign with him, we, the church, shall "*judge angels*". It also supports Peter's assertion that these angels are kept imprisoned in "*chains of darkness*" until the judgment of the great day. These demons knew Jesus as the One who would ultimately be their judge; they also knew that the time of their judgment was not yet. This again is so precise a correspondence with what other Scriptures reveal concerning the destiny of the fallen angels that it has to

be accepted as factual; there actually were demons there who did say these things to our Lord.

Another incident, of rather less import, is that of the obsessed man healed in the synagogue at Capernaum (Luke 4.33-36). In this case the demon cried out, through the man *"Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God"*. Again, at the Lord's command, the demon ceased to obsess the man and, as in the previous instance, demonstrated the Lord's absolute power, even in his human state, over these rebels against God.

Most of the references to the casting out of demons are brief, almost as if the incidents were so common and frequent, and universally accepted for what they were claimed to be, that no one thought them at all unusual or subject to question. The people generally firmly believed in the power of demon obsession and as firmly accepted that a man of God such as they saw in Jesus was fully able by Divine power to cast out demons. *"With authority and power"* they said *"he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out"*. Both Peter and Philip, after Pentecost, are recorded as exerting the same power and casting out demons, and so too, Paul, in the incident of the damsel possessed with a spirit of Python (Acts 15.16-18) whom Paul exorcised and so got himself and Silas into trouble with the authorities at Philippi. (The name Python comes from the famous oracle at Delphi in Greece, where a priestess called the Pythia gave mystic prophetic utterances, inspired by a demon in the name of the god Apollo. Thus any demon which gave such communications in the name of Apollo was called a Python.)

In one instance Jesus referred to "the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25.41). Only one instance, but sufficient in its context to confirm that Jesus did assert the reality of evil angels banded under the leadership of Satan. In like manner Paul refers in Eph. 6.12 to evil celestial powers, belonging, not to the human, but the spiritual world, alien from God and in a state of rebellion against him. These, he says, are powers with which the followers of Christ are in conflict because they are allied with the Devil.

Finally, there is the enigmatic reference in 1 Pet. 3.19 to our Lord, having been put to death flesh and raised spirit, going to evangelise the spirits in prison who were disobedient in the days of Noah. Whatever the precise meaning of this rather strange remark it does at least support the general position taken by the New Testament that there were such apostate angels held in prison and yet capable of hearing the evangelising word spoken to them by our Lord. The very fact that He is said to have preached to them is a sure evidence that they had the opportunity of repentance and consequent reconciliation with God. Had the contrary been the case there would have been no point in the preaching.

So the New Testament, like the Old, is positive that there are such malevolent intelligences "behind the scenes", seeking to break the bounds God has imposed upon them and deceive, corrupt and destroy whoever of mankind they can seduce into their power. These intelligences are the angels who "kept not their first estate" at the time of the Flood, came under the Divine interdict and since then have been seeking ways and means to evade the Divine prohibition against communicating in any way with mankind. They are to come up for trial and judgment at the same time as humanity during the Millennial reign of Christ, and the Church, who with Christ are to judge the world in that day, will be their judges also.

It can easily be said, as it has been said, that all these references are merely reflections of the popular beliefs of the time, and do not substantiate the genuine existence of the demons. If that is so, quite obviously Jesus was mistaken in his evident belief in the demons and therefore could have been equally deceived in regard to other elements of his teaching and his mission. In such case He could not be the One sent from God as He claimed and the whole fabric of the Christian faith is founded upon myth. No really instructed Christian would accept that position; the only possible alternative is that these things are true as stated and that Jesus did indeed come face to face with the powers of darkness, and vanquished them.

The end.

The inclination we all have to settle down and make things comfortable for ourselves has directed very much of Christian effort into a wrong channel. The importance of things seen and temporal has overshadowed the unseen and eternal.

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

"THEY SHALL REST FROM THEIR LABOURS"

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14. 13).

The New Testament does not appear to say a great deal about the time period involved in the raising of the "sleeping saints" and the "change" of the "living ones". That the one takes place first and the other afterwards is plain from I Thess. 4. 17 but how long afterwards is another matter. It would seem however that there is sufficient evidence in the few Scriptures concerned to justify the conclusion that following the resurrection of the sleeping saints there is a fairly lengthy period of time—lengthy as human measurements go—during which the living ones are being "changed". The taking of the last member of the Church to be with the Lord is not counted in minutes, but in years, after the dead in Christ of past Gospel Age centuries have been raised.

The basis of the whole matter lies in I Thess. 4. 16-17. "... *the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...*" and so on. "First—then". These are the determining words. It is sometimes suggested that both events take place at the same moment of time and this is the general view of evangelical Christians but it is not the correct view. In this text "First—then" quite definitely denotes sequence, one event occurring *after* the other, although no indication is given how long after.

The word "then" in this verse is *epeita*, an adverb of time meaning thereupon, thereafter, then, afterwards. When combined with *proton*, "first", it becomes an expression of time and order, that is, of the relative sequence of the matters discussed. There is another example of the two words in I Cor. 15. 46 "That was not *first* which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and *afterwards* that which is spiritual." It is very easy to pick out a number of examples of this word *epeita* showing that it is used to denote events separated by short periods of minutes or long periods of years. Thus we have Mark 7. 5 "Then the scribes and Pharisees asked him" Luke 16. 7 "Then said he to another"; John 11. 7 "Then after this, he said" in each of which cases the interval, though not stated, is obviously short, probably a matter of minutes only. Another example is in I Cor. 15. 5-8 where we have "He (Christ) was seen of Cephas, *then* of the twelve,

after (epeita) that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once... *after* (epeita) that, he was seen of James..." Here the order in which the appearances of the Lord occurred is plainly indicated. There is also Gal. 1. 18 "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem" and Gal. 2. 1 "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem". These are periods of years. In I Cor. 15. 23 "*afterward* they that are Christ's at his coming" demands a space of two thousand years between the two events mentioned.

The question may therefore well be put at this point; is there any Scriptural indication that there is such a lapse of time during which the living ones are being changed, and if so, what is the position and occupation of the "dead in Christ" who have been raised to immortal life at the beginning of that time, during such period.

The first element of the answer to that question lies in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. In the first chapter of that epistle, Paul declares the retributive judgment of God destined to come upon the wicked, and a corresponding compensation upon all who have suffered for righteousness at the hands of those same wicked ones. The promise is *tribulation* to those who persecute the Church (vs. 6) and *rest* to the persecuted (vs. 7). This "rest" is not the final state of eternal felicity with Christ. It is not the complete assembly of the entire Church with Christ when all have been presented with exceeding joy in the presence of the Father. It is something in the nature of an interim position. Verse 7 promises a rest to the suffering saints of Thessalonica in company with Paul and his brethren *when* the Lord is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels for the purpose of executing judgment upon the wicked. But later on, in verses 9-10, there is a subsequent phase of his coming when that judgment has been carried into effect and other men have commenced to believe on him, described as "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints". This latter aspect of his coming is obviously that which is referred to in Matt. 13. 43 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father". What we have in 2 Thess. 1. 7-10 therefore is, first, the commencement of a "rest" for the faithful at the time of our Lord's revelation from heaven to initiate judgment in the earth, and then, afterwards, when that judgment has been executed, and "all them that believe" have recognised the fact of the Lord's advent, another phase of the "Coming" which is

characterised by the Lord being openly glorified in his saints. In other words, we have here one more example of the Scriptural two-fold nature of the Advent; first, *for* his saints *before* judgment is executed at the end of the Age, second, *with* his saints *after* that judgment is executed and the Kingdom has been established in power.

Paul, then, promises these believers a "rest" during that period. There is confirmation of this in the Book of Revelation. The vision of the six seals in chapter 6 is familiar to all. It is possible to trace in this chapter a parallelism with the general characteristics of the Gospel Age. Those characteristics were given in Matt. 24 as seven in number, evangelism, war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, persecution and judgment. The same theme runs through Rev. 6. The identity of the four horsemen with the first four characteristics is fairly apt and has often been remarked. If that be conceded, these four seals must picture virtually the whole of the Age until the "End Time". Thus we come easily and logically to the fifth seal immediately prior to the great Time of Trouble, which is of course pictured by the sixth. Now in connection with the fifth seal there is a tremendously significant statement. John says he saw under the altar the souls of those who evidently represent the Church of the early centuries and the Dark Ages, the principal times of persecution and martyrdom. They are pictured as crying out and asking how much longer they must wait for justice and judgment—exactly the same theme as in 2 Thess. chapter I just considered. Here is the reply. "And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should *rest* yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (vs. 11.)

They are then to *rest* for a "little season", waiting for others of their fellows whose earthly course is not yet completed. Where do they thus rest? In the tomb, where they have already been for many centuries? Not with white robes! That statement about the white robes means a great deal. It means that those "souls under the altar" are no longer in that condition, no longer hidden in the grave, no longer cut off as it were from the presence of God. The gift of the white robe signifies in symbol the conferring of spiritual life, the spiritual body, the righteous one of past time being clothed upon with the "house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. 5. 2). This same symbol is used of the Church in Rev. 19. 8 where the reference is to the "marriage of the Lamb". We must take it therefore that the "souls under the altar" are the sleeping saints and that the opening of the fifth seal marks a change in their condition in

that the death state into which they entered in consequence of persecution has come to an end; they are raised to spiritual life, receiving the white robes, and enter into a condition described as "rest" while they wait for their fellows, the "living ones left over", to finish their course. The succeeding symbols comprising the events of the sixth seal are clearly the symbols of the Time of Trouble and end of the Age and it is therefore logical to conclude that it is during the progress of these events, the earthquake, darkening of the sun, human perplexity and terror, etc., that the "killing" of the "fellow-servants" is to be completed.

If this be a reasonable interpretation of this chapter, it does mean that the sleeping saints were raised before the onset of the great Time of Trouble on the world, and that the "change" of the living ones will be completed during the progress of that Time of Trouble. Such a view accords well with 2 Thess. 1, and is not contradicted in any material particular by I Thess. 4.

A later vision in the Book of Revelation lends still further support to this theme of the "rest" which those already resurrected to spiritual life enjoy whilst waiting for the last of their number to join them from earth below. This vision is in the fourteenth chapter and is as well known as *u! pæp,, æ! saraucoc u! pæssnos!p !sn! æuo æu!* Christ" and again it promises them "rest". Following this there is a gathering by the returned Lord and then comes Armageddon. The likeness to the vision in chapter 6 is so marked as to warrant further examination.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle... And he... thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped." (Rev. 14. 13-16.)

This necessitates a brief survey of Revelation chapter 14. Although this chapter is intimately connected with chapters 12 and 13 it is complete within itself. Against a background picturing the Church during the Gospel Age "seated with Christ in the heavenlies" and viewing earthly matters from that standpoint, there come forward in succession seven heavenly messengers. Six of them are angels and the remaining one is the Son of Man himself. The nature of their messages makes it fairly clear that we have pictured here certain aspects of the Gospel Age viewed from what might be called the heavenly standpoint,

corresponding to the same things in chaps. 12 and 13 where they are viewed from the earthly standpoint. Thus the first angel, having the everlasting gospel to preach to all nations, clearly pictures the Gospel witness going out into all the world in the beginning of the Age and onward. The second angel proclaimed the next great event in the "religious" history of the Age, viz., the downfall of Paganism, which in the "earthly" view is described in chap. 12. 9 as the dragon being cast out of heaven. We are all familiar with the history of the great anti-Christian power which succeeded Paganism, described in chap. 13. 1 as a beast with seven heads and ten horns, and we are all more or less acquainted with the fact that toward the end of the Age that power is succeeded by another which, whilst verbally repudiating the oppressive and dictatorial methods of the first "beast" does in fact prove to be even more oppressive and dictatorial, so much so as thoroughly to merit the description given in chap. 13. 12-17. The third angel of chap. 14 is commissioned to proclaim the Divine warning to all of God's own people not to acknowledge or worship these anti-God systems, and to call to separation and consecration of life. Now that is obviously getting very near to the end of the Age; indeed the third angel's message must of necessity extend right up to the close of the Age. And it is just at this point that a sudden word comes to John intimately concerning God's own people. From this time there is to be a special blessing for those who "die in the Lord". The phrase in verse 13 "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" does not mean that the blessing is only for those who die from that time forward, i.e., after the message is given. It means that *from the time of the message* there is a blessing for all, whether already literally dead or not, who are of the class that "dies in the Lord". The Diaglott makes this more clear than does the A.V. "From this time blessed are those dead who die in the Lord". The blessing is rest—a rest from their labours, with the additional comfort that their works go with them into that condition of rest.

This word means therefore that from that point of time there is no more sleeping in the tomb for those who die in Christ. All who are at that moment in the grave arise to that "rest", and all who "pass over" thereafter enter also into the same rest. At this point of time, indicated here as being between the third angel's message and the "harvest of the earth", there comes this change in the condition of all who are dead in Christ, or who subsequently die in Christ, which is declared to be a blessing. That change can only be the resurrection to spiritual life. Confirming this thought we find that John, hearing the message

and lifting up his eyes, immediately saw a vision of the Second Advent, one like to the Son of Man coming upon a cloud, crowned and holding a sickle.

The "white cloud" of vs. 14 is really a bright, glowing, dazzling cloud. The word "white" is normally used in the New Testament to denote such. John saw a vision of the Lord returning in glory on the clouds of heaven, crowned to denote his kingly dignity, armed with a sickle to signify the work He was to do. Thereupon the fourth angel appears from the temple of heaven and announces the gathering of the harvest of the earth.

It is strongly urged by many that this harvest work cannot picture anything that takes place on earth; it must refer exclusively to the gathering of the saints into heaven. Now there is no doubt that the harvest of the earth does involve the gathering of all the Lord's faithful ones into the heavenly garner but it does not seem necessary to insist that there is no aspect of the matter having its place on earth. The harvest of the vine of the earth, coming next in order in this chapter, refers primarily to Armageddon, where the Heavenly Rider and his armies confront the Beast and his forces, but that involves a previous gathering together on earth of all those who are set against the Lord and his Kingdom and his righteousness. Likewise we can quite reasonably look upon the literal gathering together, in this End Time of the Age, of those who "look for his appearing and his Kingdom", preparatory to their being taken to be with him, as a feature of the "Harvest Work". The whole point is that the returned Lord is gathering his own, first the dead ones from their graves, then the living ones, as He sees meet, until all is complete. And all this is the work of harvest.

So "the earth was reaped", in the words of verse 16. Only one great event remains to conclude the Age, the "winepress of the wrath of God"—Armageddon. The fifth and sixth angels of the chapter are concerned with this and the vision ends at this point, the final overthrow of Gospel Age evil in the greatest of all judgments.

The united testimony of these Scriptures, then, would seem to be that the sleeping saints are raised and ushered into "rest" at a point of time just before the great Day of Trouble dawns upon the world, and the living ones still "running for the prize of the High Calling" are "changed" as and when the returned Lord is ready to call them, but certainly extending well into the Day of Trouble and perhaps almost up to its end. The "marriage of the Lamb" cannot take place until all are gathered and neither can the Kingdom be

set up or proclaimed; but meanwhile preparations for Armageddon continue and the raised saints, joined to their Lord, remain spectators of what is transpiring on earth and wait for the completion of their number.

It may seem a long time to us—one, two, maybe three generations. But it is a very little time indeed in the mind of God. If a thousand years is with him as one day, as a watch in the night, what are three short generations of humankind? If the “souls under the altar” have waited nineteen hundred years, some of them, for their blessing, shall not we wait with patience our few

short years? *“Here is the patience of the saints”* says this very chapter (14. 12), *“Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus”*. This knowledge that our fellows of past ages have already been ushered into the presence of Jesus and that the turn of the living saints is at hand ought to be an inspiration and encouragement to each one of us as we go about our allotted tasks. Let us lift up our heads and rejoice, knowing that our deliverance draweth nigh—for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

EVENTIDE

*“So He bringeth them
unto their desired haven”*

The day must have been one of considerable strain for Jesus. A great grief lay heavy on his heart. The Messenger “sent before his face” had been put to death because he had dared to rebuke royalty for a flagrant sin. Hearing the news, the Lord withdrew into a place of solitude there to ponder and pray. The crime had made a deep impression upon his mind, and He needed quiet and seclusion to think this tragic happening out in the light of his Father’s providential permissiveness. A man devoted to the holy life had been stricken down by wicked hands, and Heaven had not interfered to stay the cruel blow. The act contained a presage and a warning to himself, for if resentment and bloodguiltiness began to flow they might yet become a raging flood which would engulf his own and his disciples’ lives.

Desiring greatly to reflect on this act of violence, Jesus had withdrawn from active work to this desert place, there to give himself to prayer. But it was not to be. The crowd had sought him out, and intruded itself into his grief and solitude. It was a hungry crowd—and the day was far spent! Taking the scanty store of food at hand, He blessed and brake and fed the multitude. The repast ended, He constrained the little band of disciples to take ship and go to the other side of the lake, reserving for himself the task of dismissing the still excited multitude. *“And after He had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain to pray, and when even was come he was there alone.”* (Matt. 14. 22-23). Alone!—alone with his grief! alone with God, for now was come for him the hour and the opportunity for prayer! With the one example of his spoken prayer (John 17) before our minds we can well

believe how his words would well up from the depth of his soul, seeking to know why this black deed had been done in Israel, and what it might portend. For four full centuries no prophet had arisen in Israel, and now the first to present himself with inspired lips had been done to death. Would the wayward nation never learn to turn its callous heart to God?

The great tragedy had brought the Man of Sorrows to the place of prayer unattended—alone. What a sight for angelic hosts to see! Did they bend down to hear what He would say? That we know not—but this was a scene they had never seen before, and even they, as well as He, had need to learn the deeper, darker things of Providence. Surely they watched the Man of Sorrows in his grief!

What an inspiration here for men. If He, who more than any other was daily the Father’s delight, needed thus to pray, and in this way to be re-assured and comforted, how truly vital to lesser souls than his, must be this thing called prayer. And surely, if He, pure and sinless beyond reproach, in his hour of grief and pain, thus found consolation for his stricken soul, how vitally potent is this act of prayer! Just the simple act of telling God about it all; just the elementary mood of trusting him to set the wrong thing right; just the humble unaffected attitude of resignation to his over-ruling Will. Just that—but in this act of prayer the soul is ushered into the hallowed presence of the Most High God, and God bends down to listen, to soothe and comfort, and to answer in his own way the ardent plea. Audience with God—yes, just that, an audience that deepens into con-

fidence and communion with him! It was just that, when Jesus was alone with God in the mountain's solitude!

We too have our days of grief and pain, when tidings come which make us sad. We also have our days of blank defeat with scarce a single victory won. We look around and hear creation's groan—and groan, in turn, because we cannot give their burdened souls relief. Lives there one among us who never feels the plough-share of sorrow and remorse cut through his soul when frailty within, and world-suffering without, confronts him? That is just the time for prayer! That is just the object of prayer! That is just the theme for prayer! The need and the privilege co-exist together—the one fully commensurate with the other. When the need is deep so also is the privilege. And when both need and privilege call us thereto, how sweet the hour was spent!

*Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!
That calls us from a world of care,*

*And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.*

When therefore the pressing throng can be sent away, let us go at eventide into our mountain solitude and be there alone with God in prayer—opening up before him all the deeper burdens of our heart. And should the eventide of life be drawing on apace let that stand as an hour of greater need for being much alone with God. It is in these declining years that we need to seek the keeping power of prayer. As the mental aspects of our faith press with less insistence upon our minds, the need for that simple type of heart-assurance increases day by day, and prayer—fervent, simple prayer, is the ever present means to keep the anchor “grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love”.

“God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9—7.)

“The liberal soul shall be made fat.” This is one of the bountiful dispensations of Providence, that the more you give away, the more you have. The generous often find themselves richer rather than poorer while the grudging seem to lose what they so carefully hoard, seeing it dwindle in its usefulness.

Generosity is without doubt a God-like quality, a human likeness of the open-handedness of God whom the Psalmist describes as “opening his hand to satisfy the desire of every living creature”. Those most conscious of the bounty of God in turn become bountiful. They are large-hearted, their own liberality brings them happiness and peace. There is nothing mean or petty about their dealings with any situation; nothing trivial in their outlook, in their way of life. It is not only material wealth in which the generous display their benevolence, but in sympathy, in interest and in practical kindness.

There are many people in distress who do not need money, who are much more in need of a kind word, of some cheerful company or useful deed to assist them in sadness or difficulties they often try to hide. All generous souls have not money to give. They give themselves, their time, their talent, their knowledge, their work, the love and compassion of their hearts, that others may be satisfied with strength, with revived hope, with new courage, or with assistance in periods of illness or helplessness. Like the Apostles they say

to the lame, “we have neither silver nor gold, but what we have we give you”. What they gave was power to put a man back on his feet.

The widow casting her mite into the Temple treasury won the approval of Christ. He pointed out she had given all she had, which was an act of generosity surpassing those who gave of their abundance. They never missed what they gave. It did not cost them anything to give, but the poor woman had given her last penny to God. Giving to God is only giving back what is his own. Life and all its gains are God's gifts to men. The Christian pilgrim especially realises that he is merely the steward of God, that what he has received must be wisely used, that he must bring his accounts to the great day of reckoning.

“Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. With the same measure that you give shall it be given you again.” This is the measure of God, a giving God who has supplied everyone with something they can do or give daily. The mean are warped characters but the generous, liberal givers are men and women made in the image of God. Satisfying the needs of others they are themselves more than satisfied.

*Were the whole realm of Nature mine
That were an offering far too small.
Love so amazing, so Divine
Demands my heart, my life, my all.*

A Short History of the Doctrine of the Millennium

The doctrine of the Millennium was under a cloud between the Fifth Century and the Reformation. Before that time, and since that time, it was and is a definite and widely accepted factor in general Christian belief. In this present century it meets with considerable opposition from the so-called "modernist" element in the Church and this chiefly because it implies acceptance of the necessity for Divine intervention in history to save the world; the promise of a Messianic reign on earth involves the parallel premise that man, unaided, will inevitably ruin the earth and himself and can only be saved by Divine intervention. The Apostolic Church and the Church of the first two centuries were under no misapprehension about this. They held tenaciously to the expectation that Christ would return, as He had promised, at a time of world-wide calamity and dissolution, to establish the universal Kingdom predicted in the Book of Daniel and described in glowing terms by Isaiah and other prophets. It is true that their conception of the practical details of this Messianic kingdom were somewhat crude and largely tinged with the spirit of Jewish exclusiveness, but this is only to be expected at a time when Christianity was only just becoming distinguished from Judaism. Virtually all the noted Fathers of the Church during the first two centuries were Millennarians. Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr of Samaria, Papias of Hierapolis, Tertullian of Carthage, Melito of Sardis, Irenæus of Lyons, Cyprian of Carthage, to name but a few, give evidence by their writings or recorded declarations that they held this belief and expectation, some claiming that they had received it from the Apostles of the Lord. A century later Lactantius, Christian scholar and tutor of the son of Constantine the Christian emperor, declared in his voluminous *"Divine Institutions"* that there is to be a *"thousand years of the heavenly empire; when righteousness shall reign on earth..... all wickedness shall be abolished out of the earth, and justice reign for a thousand years. When the Son of God shall have destroyed injustice, and restored the just to life, he shall be conversant among men a thousand years. and shall rule with a most righteous government..... This is the doctrine of the holy prophets which we Christians follow."* So much was belief in the Millennium in the Second Century an article of faith that Justin Martyr held it to be the criterion of perfect orthodoxy.

The first rumblings of dissent came in the late Third and early Fourth Centuries. The sect of

the Montanists, followers of one Montanus of Phrygia in the Second Century, began to bring discredit upon the belief by reason of their extravagant and crudely material interpretations, their fanaticism and Judaistic practices. Nevertheless the Council of Nicæa in AD. 325, the first general Church Council, attended by bishops from every part of the Christian world, reaffirmed the orthodoxy of the Scriptural doctrine of the Millennium in the words *"we expect new heavens and a new earth..... at the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; the saints of the Most High shall take the Kingdom, and there shall be a pure earth, holy, a land of the living and not of the dead..."* For three centuries this doctrine was unchallenged but after that a new factor emerged which crystallised itself round the person of St. Augustine.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, was born within a year or two of AD. 355 and converted to Christianity when a young man. He went on to become the most celebrated theologian of the ancient world and his monumental work *"The City of God"* became the textbook of ecclesiastical and political rule in Europe for more than a thousand years thereafter. In the hands of lesser men who never rose to the heights of his insight it unhappily led to the evils of the Crusades and the Inquisition, for the kernel of Augustine's theology was that the Millennium was already in progress and the Church therefore commissioned to rule the world. Augustine lived at the time when paganism was being suppressed by the rising influence of Christianity, the Roman empire itself was in process of dissolution, and the only stable power was the Church, with its ecclesiastical centre at Rome. Persecution had long since ceased and the empire, with its emperors, professed and propagated the Christian faith—as defined by Rome. Faced with this apparent proof of the Church's triumph, Augustine propounded the theory that the Millennium began at the First Advent and would endure for a thousand years thereafter, during which time the Church would go from triumph to triumph so that when Christ returned at the end of the thousand years, the world would be completely converted and awaiting him. In the meantime the Church was to rule and evangelise the world, by force if need be, the secular power carrying out the decrees of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. All of which was quite unscriptural but seemed well to fit the circumstances of the day and was decidedly congenial to the ambitious prelates of the incipient Papal Church of the time. Dr. Mosheim,

the 18th century church historian, said of these developments "*The new philosophy was extremely prejudicial to the cause of the gospel, and to the beautiful simplicity of its celestial doctrines*", and Edward Gibbon, in "*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*" "*If in the beginning of the fifth century Tertullian or Lactantius had been suddenly raised from the dead to assist at the festival of some popular saint or martyr they would have gazed with astonishment and indignation at the profane spectacle which had succeeded to the pure and spiritual worship of a Christian congregation*". Even the few surviving thoughtful pagans perceived the change. Eunapius, a celebrated pagan of the late Fourth Century, observed bitingly "*These are the gods that the earth nowadays brings forth, these the intercessors with the gods, men called martyrs, before whose bones and skulls, pickled and salted, the monks kneel and lay prostrate, covered with filth and dust.*" Finally the Council of Rome under Pope Damasus in AD. 373 formally denounced Chiliasm, as belief in the future Millennium and the pre-millennial Second Advent was called, and from that time the doctrine of the Millennium dropped out of orthodox theology for eight hundred years, being kept alive only by a few obscure sects and in the hearts of individuals.

The first glimmer of revival came in the Twelfth Century at the hands of Abbot Joachim and Bishop Anselm, who pointed the way back to Apostolic teaching. By the Sixteenth Century the tide was flowing fast and freely. Early English champions for the pre-millennial Advent were the martyrs William Tyndale and Hugh Latimer. With them in this were John Knox and John Calvin. A glimpse of the basic principle of the Millennial reign, better understood in much later times, was given by Calvin when he declared "*strictly speaking, Christ will come, not for the destruction of the world, but for purposes of salvation*". Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession, drawn up by Melancthon in AD. 1530 as the Creed of the German Reformers, condemned and repudiated Augustine's doctrine of the Millennium and by implication endorsed the original faith. The "catechism" of Edward VI of England, which is said to have represented the theology of the Church in England at that time, affirmed faith in the Millennial reign of Christ over the earth with his saints for the restoration of all things; "*the world shall be brought to its utmost perfection; man shall likewise be freed from corruption and change. So for man's sake, for whose use the great world was created, being at length renovated, it shall put on a face that shall be far more pleasant and beautiful.*" Men famous for Christian scholarship and in some cases in the world of science during the next few centuries, such as Sir Isaac Newton, William

Whiston, John Wesley, Bishop Butler, Matthew Henry the commentator, added their names to the growing mass of believers.

By this time, of course, Augustine's theory of the Millennium was out-dated. That which in AD. 400 seemed a reasonable proposition, a thousand year Millennium starting with the Early Church and destined to close in AD. 1000 with all the world converted, had little force in AD. 1700 with most of the world still unconverted, and no sign yet of the Second Advent. It was, however, not long before a modern adaptation was forthcoming. Dr. Daniel Whitby, rector of Salisbury, England, at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, a theologian and writer of no mean order, propounded what has since become known as "post-millennialism". His thesis was that the Millennium has not yet commenced but that it will run its course before the Second Advent and be terminated by that Advent. There must first be the re-establishment of the Jews in the Holy Land—not even in sight in AD. 1700—and then the Christian Church by dint of extensive evangelical and missionary work would subdue and eliminate all other religions and achieve the conversion of the world. Until that end had been accomplished Christ would not return. The thesis was of course a great incentive to universal missionary endeavour and it has been widely accepted. It also had the effect of putting off the Second Advent for a long time—looking at the world today and the steadily decreasing impact of Christianity upon successive generations, a very long time! The practical implication of Whitby's theology is that since the Millennium has not yet commenced the Advent is at least a thousand years away; its defect is that no provision is made for the generations of unbelievers who in the meantime pass into death. Whitby's Advent is strictly for the purpose of winding up earthly affairs and taking the "elect" to heavenly glory and in this Twentieth Century so limited a view of the Divine purpose is quite untenable.

Notwithstanding Whitby, the Apostolic doctrine of the Millennium, restored after the Reformation, has remained, and is well elaborated in press if not in pulpit. The Nineteenth Century was one of widespread interest and discussion on the twin subjects of the Second Advent and the Millennial Kingdom. Prophetic conferences were organised and attended by Christian ministers and leaders from every denomination—Albury Park in 1826, Powerscourt in 1833, Boston (U.S.A.) in 1840, Mildmay in 1878, Clifton Springs (U.S.A.) in 1878—and a voluminous literature produced. The hope and expectation of earth's imminent Golden Age, when Christ will rule in truth and righteousness for the abolition of evil and the establishment of everlasting peace, is a feature of contemporary Christian faith.



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

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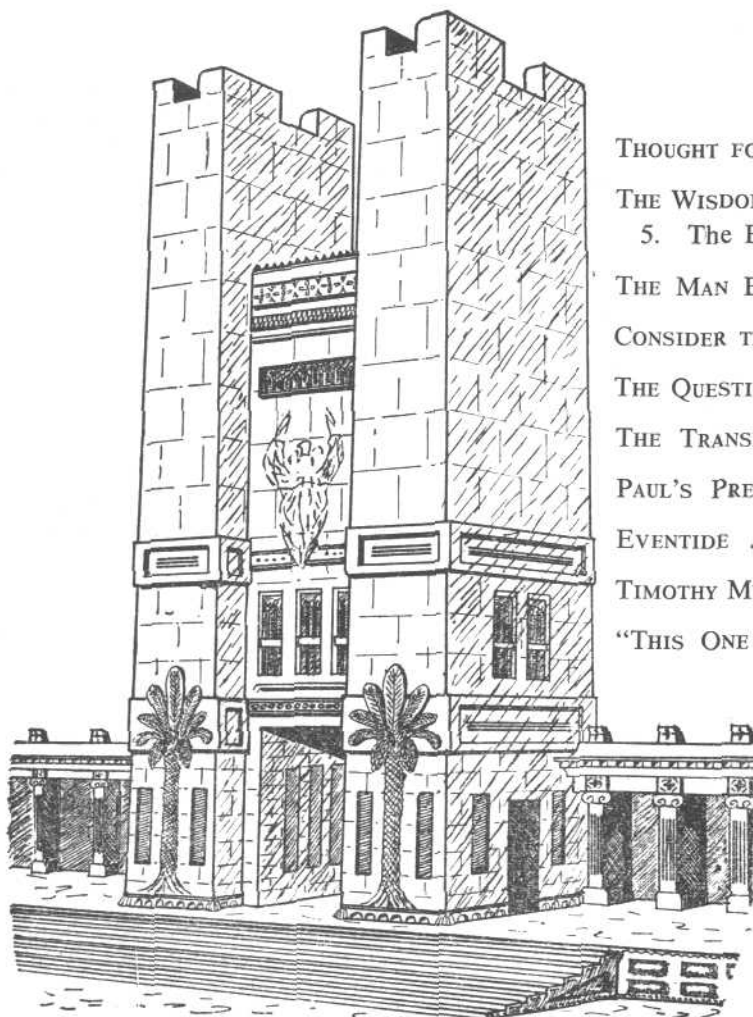
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Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.

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Thought for the Month

"The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16.33).

Rather an obscure remark—until the basis of the allusion is understood. In Old Testament days the will of God concerning a given matter was determined by the casting of lots. Two stones, one white and one black, were put into a closed bag, an eliminating question posed to the Almighty, and one stone drawn out. If this proved to be the white one the answer to the question was in the affirmative; if black, the negative. A succession of suitably framed questions soon brought the required guidance and this to the pious Israelite was the veritable voice of God. In matters of national importance the ritual was performed by the High Priest who carried on his chest the "ephod" which was the receptacle for the two stones—in this case probably precious stones—which were called the Urim and Thummim. The word "lap" in the text is one that means "bosom" and probably refers to the High Priest's ephod.

To the extent this arrangement was instituted by Moses under the command of the Lord it must be accepted as a means by which God did communicate his wishes to Israel. The answer of the Lord by the Urim and Thummim is held out in the Old Testament as such and there are many recorded occasions when Israel received Divine guidance or instruction in this way. The casting of lots became an accepted channel for Divine leading in times of difficulty or when the Divine will was sought. When there was an evident transgressor in Israel and his identity was not known the casting of lots revealed the offender as being of the tribe of Judah among all the tribes; then the clan of Zarhi within the tribe; then the household of Zabdi within the clan; finally Achan the grandson of Zabdi. That the lot was correctly

taken is evidenced by Achan, thus unmasked, making full confession of his sin. When the sailors on the storm-wracked Phoenician ship sought to find on whose account they were in such peril, they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah—again a correct finding. Even in New Testament times, when the eleven apostles sought the Lord's will regarding a successor to Judas they cast lots, but this time they only gave the Lord a straight choice between Joseph and Matthias, so that the unfettered intention of the Lord—as for instance in the eventual choice of Paul as his Apostle—was not allowed for. Sometimes the casting of lots was obviously and flagrantly alien to the will of God, as when Gideon *"made an ephod . . . and all Israel went a-whoring after it"*; in this case the decisions taken by this unauthorised procedure might have been accepted as Divine answers but were not so in fact.

But the Proverbs citation refers to the ideal, as exemplified by the actions of the High Priest. The lot is cast into the bag by man and drawn out by man and the result may appear to be entirely by chance—the "luck of the draw" as we say nowadays. Not so, says the Wise Man. *"The whole disposing thereof is of the Lord."* He controls the outcome. And that is the position in all the affairs of men in all the world throughout all ages. It may seem that the progress of events in history is entirely fortuitous and is dependent only upon the action and inter-action of man's deeds, but in fact the Most High is overruling and controlling all things toward the execution of his own purpose. Let the world take whatever course it will; let it seem heading for inevitable disaster; God is in control, and He will bring all things to a triumphant climax.

For "Gone from us" see page 108

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

5. The Eyes of the Lord

The second part of chapter 34, whilst still maintaining the theme of Divine Justice, is devoted to showing that the administration of God's justice is ensured by the fact that He sees all things that are happening in the world of men. Elihu says in verse 21 "*his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings*". The Wise Man knew that; he said "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15. 3) and so did the writer to the Hebrews; "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4. 13). So Elihu here buttresses his assertion that God is inherently just with the fruits of his own observation of God's ways. The wickedness of the wicked shall by no means escape Divine scrutiny; the righteousness of the righteous will most certainly be recorded in God's Book of Remembrance.

"*Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?*" (34. 17). The first phrase is not well rendered; a better expression of the thought is "*What, doth He, hating right, govern?*" to which can be added Leiser's "*or wilt thou condemn the righteous Mighty One?*" It is a rhetorical question. Is it conceivable, asks Elihu, that God can govern creation whilst hating righteousness and justice? The very idea is unthinkable. The very fact that God is ruling all creation is of itself a guarantee that He is inherently just. Job and his three friends must accept that, insists Elihu, or else they themselves will be guilty of condemning the righteous Mighty One. And he drives home his point by reminding them that they would not in the ordinary way have the courage or the conviction to accuse even an earthly King or potentate of iniquity or unjust administration; how much less then should they, even mentally, so accuse God? "*Is it fit to say to a King 'Thou art wicked?' and to princes 'Ye are ungodly?' How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands?*" (34. 18-19) Rotherham has verse 18 "*Doth one say to a king 'Abandoned one' or 'Lawless one' to nobles?*" which is more expressive of the point which Elihu is making here. Kings and princes, even the best of them, are apt to allow considerations other than those of absolute integrity and impartiality to becloud their judgment and influence their actions. Not so with God. He cannot be bribed or cajoled, flattered or blackmailed. If

we are prepared to accept the endeavours of a good king as being right and proper in all the circumstances, and to feel that there is no cause for complaint, how much more should we accept the dealings of God as absolutely just and righteous, whether we understand those dealings or not, whether the present effect appears to be in line with his avowed character or the reverse. That is what Elihu is insisting here.

The kings, the princes; the rich, the poor; they are all the work of God's hands, and He has complete control over them. The hand of death, laid upon all men, ensures that the power of evil men can only extend thus far and then be cut short. "*In a moment they die;*" he says ("shall" ought to be omitted in verse 20) "*at midnight the people are shaken and pass away, and the mighty are taken away by no human hand. For his eyes are upon the ways of a man and he sees all his steps. There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves*" (34. 20-22 RSV). This is a vivid picture of the unceasing vigilance wherewith Heaven maintains its watch upon Earth and encompasses the operation of sin and evil by the restraints of the Divine purpose. Jesus spoke of the rich fool who prospered exceedingly in the good things of this world and said at last to himself "*Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years. Take thine ease, eat and be merry*". But that night God sent for him "*This night*" He said to him "*thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall those things be that thou hast laid up?*" In a moment all was gone. In a moment he died. At midnight God came to him and he was taken away. That is how it is with all men, for the eyes of the Lord are always upon all their doings and there is nothing that can escape his keen scrutiny.

There is a fascinating vision in the Book of Zechariah in which Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the High Priest, picturing the secular and spiritual rulership of the nation restored from captivity and establishing itself in righteousness, discharge their administration in the presence of seven eyes, "*the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth*" (Zech. 4. 10). Israel of the Restoration never did reach up to that glowing picture painted by the prophet; the ultimate fulfilment of Zechariah's visions belongs to a time still future; but it is and always has been true that the eyes of the Lord are everywhere in the earth and nothing can escape the administration of his justice. "What a man

soweth, that shall he reap"—in due time.

Perhaps one of the most eloquent passages in all the Bible describing how the all-seeing eye of God will seek out the evil-doer wherever he may go to escape the Divine Presence is in the 9th chapter of Amos. Elihu may well say, as he has done at this point "there is no gloom or deep darkness where evil-doers may hide themselves", in the light of those burning words from the lips of the Tekoan herdsman. *"Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up into heaven thence will I bring them down. Though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them."* (Amos 9. 2-3). Well might Elihu stress the fact that the evildoer and the transgressor can never hope to escape from God.

From verse 23 to the end of the chapter the text has given translators a great deal of trouble. Certain scholars whose work on the intricacies of the passage is admittedly authoritative have not hesitated to say that these verses are "unintelligible, ambiguous and insoluble," and "bear signs of considerable corruption of the text". Were this the work of Virgil or Homer or some other ancient secular writer the opinion of the experts might be accepted without question, but here we are dealing, not only with the work of a man named Elihu who lived about three and a half millenniums ago, but also with a work prepared under the supervision of the Holy Spirit of God for the instruction of all who in after ages would serve God and know of his ways. The use of terms such as the above to describe the work of the Holy Spirit is inadmissible; rather must we conclude that our understanding is defective and seek the better to discern the meaning behind the words. It is in such passages that comparison of the renderings of various translators is often helpful towards an understanding of the text. For this reason the next few verses are taken mainly from Leeser's translation.

"For he need not direct his attention a long time upon man, that he should enter into judgment before God. He breaketh down mighty men without long searching, and placeth others in their stead, for the reason that he knoweth their deeds; therefore he overturneth them in the night, and they are crushed". (From here the Margolis translation is adopted) *"He striketh them as wicked men, in the open sight of others; because they turned aside from following him, and would not have regard to any of his ways"* (34. 23-27).

This remarkable passage reveals a fresh facet of the Divine character, to wit, the swiftness of

Divine judgment when necessity so requires. God does not need to hold a protracted investigation into the merits and demerits of the case, or to stage a lengthy trial at which counsel for the prosecution and defence can each have their say before the final verdict is arrived at. God knows, at any time and at all times, the degree of culpability and of guilt in any matter which comes before him for attention and He can render an infallible verdict in a moment of time. Says Elihu *"he need not direct his attention a long time"*. Mighty men are broken down without a long investigation into their cases, and others appointed to their places without hesitation. Instances which come readily to mind are those of King Saul, given the sentence of deposition when as yet the smoke of his unlawful sacrifice had hardly died away; Ananias and Sapphira, within a few hours of their sin. It is not that execution of the judgment is necessarily immediate—Saul discharged the duties of King for years after Samuel conveyed the Divine decree against him—but Elihu's point is that judgment is immediate and just, because God is omniscient and infallible.

It is this distinction between the passing of sentence and the execution of that sentence which forms the basis of Elihu's argument. Men criticise the Almighty because they do not perceive the immediate punishment of the wicked and assume that God has therefore not even passed sentence and has in fact taken no notice of the evil-doer. *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"* (Eccl. 8. 11). The Wise Man only put into words what a great many have thought at all ages in human history. "To every purpose" he says "there is time and judgment" (verse 6) and it is because men ignore the time element in God's plans they fail to appreciate that although the execution of the sentence may not follow immediately upon the passing of that sentence, it does not mean that God is either heedless or limited in power. It often means that God has a purpose in allowing the "wrath of man to praise him" as with Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. No matter how long drawn out and protracted may be the operation of Divine judgment, we must accept as fundamental and absolute the truth that God does bring his stroke upon the wicked "in the open sight of others", because they turn aside from him and have no regard to his ways. "In the open sight of others" insists Elihu when all the time his critics' argument is that men do not see the judgment of God executed. Again there is only one answer to the enigma, and it is the answer already given us by the writer of Ecclesi-

astes. There is time and judgment; sentence against evil work is not necessarily executed speedily; but when it is so executed, it will certainly be "in the open sight of others".

There is something here that connects with the words of Jesus when He said that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10. 26). In the resurrection, said the revealing angel to Daniel, there are some who come forth to enduring life, and some to shame and enduring contempt (Dan. 12. 2) and Jesus added a more solemn note to that when, speaking of the same great crisis in God's work with human kind, He said that some would come forth to the resurrection of life, and some to a resurrection of judgment (John 5. 29). All this will be in the plain sight of all men, and nothing that men will have done in their past life will escape being brought out into the light of day, revealed before the Father and the holy angels, and all mankind—verily God is just who judges in the earth.

"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether unto a nation or unto mankind altogether, that impious men may not reign nor be ensnarers of the people" (34. 29. 30). Two questions wherewith to round off the argument before Elihu taxes Job and his friends with the implication of all he has said in defence of Divine justice. The theme is still that God is omnipotent. If He gives quietness, peace, then obviously no one can make trouble. If He elects to hide his face, then obviously none can behold him, and these things are true of a community or a nation just as they are true of mankind as a whole. There is none, of all the sons of men, individually or collectively, who can demand of God, "What doest thou?" And because of that inassailable fact men have no option but to accept and believe in the inherent justice of God.

Now Elihu turns round upon his four listeners with a challenge which brings all that he has said in chapter 34 to the forefront. Here is the practical application of his discourse in defence of the justice of God. *"Truly it is only fitting to say unto God 'I bear cheerfully; I will not do any wrong. What I cannot see myself, do thou truly teach me; if I have done what is unjust, I will do so no more'. Should he then according to thy view send a recompense, because thou hast rejected him?—because thou must choose and not I—and what thou knowest do speak?"* (34. 31-33 Leeser).

This is an exhortation to Job; the other three appear for the moment to be ignored. Elihu is telling Job, in brief, that in view of the admitted infallibility of the Divine character, God's per-

fection in justice and the certainty of his judgment for sin, it is only fitting for Job to admit to God his fault in his previous impatience, and undertake not so to offend in future. Job had previously demanded compensation, a recompense, from God because of his unmerited sufferings, but Elihu, more harsh perhaps in his condemnation than God would have been, accuses him of rejecting God because of that very demand. Should God grant Job a recompense? No! says Elihu, because Job had, at least in measure, rejected God; but he admits the responsibility lies with Job and the onus of decision whether or not to admit his fault to God lies with Job—*"thou must choose, and not I"*—and having decided, he tells Job, God must be told the decision. *"What thou knowest, do speak"*. It seems almost like an admission on the part of the younger man that with all his reforming zeal and all his clear insight into the ways of God and all his hortatory skill in showing Job where he had diverged from the Divine ways, the relationship between Job and his God could only be established and maintained by Job himself. No other man, not even Elihu, could act on Job's behalf in matters affecting Job's personal standing with God. Elihu might show the way, but in the end the decision rested with Job. That is something we all do well to remember as we endeavour to bring others to Christ. The type of high-pressure conversion where the subject is hurried along by intensive prayer and exhortation until he or she "accepts Christ", sometimes even in sheer self-defence, counts for little or nothing in the Master's sight. The final word to the would-be convert, when we have said all that we have to say, must always be *"But thou must choose, and not I"*.

And so to the final word in this part of the discourse, as Elihu finishes his plea for the justice of God. *"Men of sense will say unto me, and every wise man who heareth me, that Job hath not spoken with knowledge, and that his words are without intelligence. Oh that Job may therefore be probed continually, in order to give answers against sinful men. For he addeth unto his sin transgression; among us he uttereth too many loud words, and multiplieth his speeches against God"* (34. 34-37 Leeser).

It is noteworthy that here, at the end of his second discourse, that concerning the justice of God, Elihu should find occasion to reprove Job just as at the end of his first discourse, that concerning the wisdom of God, he uttered an implied reproof. At that time he indicated that Job had no effective reply to his representations (ch. 33. 31-33). Now he speaks more strongly. Job has impugned the wisdom of God and Elihu in his vehemence claims that any man of discretion and

wisdom will agree with him in his assertion that Job has acted in an exceedingly unwise manner. He has spoken without knowledge and without intelligence, claims the younger man. For that reason it is Elihu's prayer that Job may be led through still further crucial experiences—"probed continually" is his expression—that he might eventually come to the understanding which is already so crystal clear to Elihu, in order that, like Elihu, he may be able to give the true answers to the irreverent and agnostic queries of unbelieving men. It is not that Elihu bears any animosity against Job; his whole demeanour towards the older man throughout all these long discussions evidences that; it is only that he is so sure himself of the vision he has seen, so zealous for the honour of the God he serves, that he desperately wants Job to see the same things and voice the same confidence. There is a reflection here of the attitude of God himself to the fallen human race; he does not want to condemn and punish; he wants to see the barrier between creature and Creator broken down so that in the light of the glory of God the man who is at heart

God's man may rise to the apex of his privilege and speak for God in the hearing of those who decry God. Job has not yet attained to that position, in the opinion of Elihu. He has yet to learn in quietness and meditation on his sufferings instead of declaiming aloud his innocence of any crime deserving them. "He uttereth too many loud words" comments Elihu, rather scornfully it would appear "and multiplieth his speeches against God". For one who himself has had a great deal to say it seems a case of the pot calling the kettle black, but the difference is that the whole of Elihu's speech is an impassioned defence of the supreme wisdom, justice, love and power of God, whereas the words of Job are devoted very largely to self-justification in consciousness of his own integrity, with the underlying implication that God is afflicting him unjustly. So the second discourse ends, as did the first, with an exhortation to Job to consider afresh his position before God. Elihu turns then to introduce his third thesis, the overwhelming evidence for the third of the Divine attributes, the Love of God. *To be continued.*

On the Bible

"If in these books (the Bible) I meet with anything which seems contrary to truth, I shall not hesitate to conclude either that the text is faulty, or that the translator has not expressed the meaning of the passage, or that I myself do not understand it." Those words are from the pen of Pope Leo 13th, who died in 1903. They are words of good sense and breathe the right atmosphere of Christian caution in dealing with the Word of God. So many there are who read a passage of Scripture, draw a conclusion, and immediately brand as in error all who view the matter differently. The Bible is a book to be studied, carefully, reverently, prayerfully, and always with the thought in mind that the best and ablest of men can only glean its secrets in proportion as he is led by the Holy Spirit of God. Though a man live a thousand years twice told, he will never be more than a student of the Word, and will always find new aspects and views of the old truths opening up before his vision. Not one of us will attain to full knowledge until "that which is perfect is come" and if that fact is allowed to rule our minds while we study and pray and fellowship together we shall be blessed indeed in our searching.

The Silver Lining

There has just been a violent summer storm. Trees are still shaken from the fury of the wind. The grass is strewn with leaves and twigs. Tobacco plants and stock, fragrant but fragile, bow their heads, weighted with splashing from the rain. The sky above is darkened by grey clouds of evening thunder. But out to the west, the last rays of the setting sun are tinging the distant sky line with fiery red, and fringing the scudding rain clouds with a tender halo of gold.

Life is like that for us. Storms and tempests, with all their wrenchings and partings, are bound some time or other to drift across our path. But the sun is always shining, even though a storm cloud may for a while hide its face. And the clouds will pass. And as we strive to look for the sun let us help others to find it too. For storms are often local, and a kind word, a friendly smile, and, above all things, a reminder that the Eternal God is our Refuge and that underneath are the everlasting arms, may tinge somebody else's storm cloud with the gold halo of human sympathy and quiet understanding.—(Selected).

THE MAN BORN BLIND

A story
of Jesus

It was Jesus who saw him first, the blind beggar standing by the wayside. His affliction and his poverty had aged him beyond his years; on closer inspection it could be seen that he was still a comparatively young man, doomed by his blindness to a life of utter hopelessness. He had never seen; he had been blind from birth, an unhappy victim of the dirt, disease and ignorance so characteristic of his day. Now he stood by the wayside, probably only partially conscious of the milling crowd, waiting mechanically for the clink of the occasional coin as it was carelessly cast into his little bowl. Thus had he stood for more years than he could well remember; thus would he stand for as many more without circumstance or event to vary the dull monotony of his days. He was evidently a recognised member of the local synagogue; in a day when everybody, practically without exception, observed the formularies of public worship on the Sabbath that would not in itself be surprising. There were many of his kind in Judea, and no one took very much notice of them.

For once, this one was noticed. The disciples, moving down the road in converse with the Master, made the beggar the subject of a question. It would appear that some of them at least were acquainted with him and his history; at least they knew that he had been blind from birth. They do not seem, at that moment at any rate, to have done anything to mitigate his misery by way of almsgiving. Their interest in him was theological rather than benevolent. They propounded a question which has been repeated a myriad of times since. "*Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (John 9. 2). In how many different forms has that question been cast, by the devout and cynical, the student and the atheist? Why do the innocent suffer; why does the consequence of one man's sin fall upon another? Men have evolved a variety of answers but outside the Christian faith there is none that is really satisfactory. Even within the general popular understanding of the faith the answers are all too often only suggestive or frankly hazy and uncertain. It is only against the background of God's eternal purpose that an outline of the answer can be traced, and even then it is not good that we be too dogmatic or precise about our definitions. There is much yet for us to learn about God and about man before we can look at this matter clearly from the Divine standpoint and fully understand why.

Jesus gave an immediate answer, of a nature

which was as much as his disciples could be expected to understand and perhaps we also. "*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (vs. 3). Both the R.S.V. and the N.E.B. make the reply a little more accurate by rendering "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him". It is a mistake to assume, as some have done, that Jesus meant God had deliberately caused this man to be born blind so that in after years he might become an example of the Lord's saving power; the operation of the law of sin and death had produced plenty of blind men in Israel at that time suitable for such an example without the Lord having to create one specially. And the idea savours of a callousness to human infirmity and distress which does not square with the loving character of God. Our Lord's words conveyed a deeper meaning and had a wider scope than that. The disciples in putting their question, with this man as the particular subject, really embraced the entire problem of undeserved suffering. Our Lord answered in similar vein; the whole purpose of God in permitting the reign of evil under which the innocent must inevitably suffer was and is that his purposes should be plainly revealed and made known to man. Because from the beginning men refused to learn in any other way, God has ordained that they shall experience for themselves the evil effects of sin, and by comparison with the good effects of righteousness make, at the last, the irrevocable choice—for life, or death. The whole purpose of the permission of evil which God could so easily have restrained, but did not, is that his wisdom and justice and love and power, all that the Apostle Paul in Eph. 2. 7 calls the "exceeding riches of his grace" should be demonstrated openly to all intelligent creatures who have or will ever come from his creative hand.

Whilst the onlookers were pondering the meaning of that remark Jesus moved into action. Unlike the disciples, He had consideration, not only for the theological question to which the incident had given rise, but the physical needs of the man himself. That man, at least, could hardly be expected to join in a dispassionate discussion on the relation of innocence to blindness with the underlying assumption that anyway one day it would be all well with them that feared God. Whether he was conscious of the power of the One who stood compassionately before him we

do not know, but he was certainly conscious of his own pitiable condition. And now Jesus was doing something to him; He was anointing his sightless eyes with a damp clay made from the dust at his feet, and He was telling him to go to the Pool of Siloam and wash it off. Whether he had real faith that he would thus be healed of his blindness does not appear from the record; the later part of the narrative shows that he did not at this time recognise Jesus as anything more than man. Perhaps the calm authority of that sympathetic voice, perhaps some inner glimmering that this was no ordinary man and no ordinary incident; maybe he was something of a God-fearing man despite his affliction and poverty: at any rate something there was which led him unhesitatingly to obey the command, and he made his way the half mile or so to the Pool outside the city walls, and washed, and came seeing.

This story is intriguing for the many details it does not record. Did the disciples who asked the original question realise that the man's blindness had been cured? We do not know. The New English Bible points out that the chapter division between John 8 and 9 may possibly be in the wrong place and that the last verse of 8 and first verse of 9 may reasonably be taken as reading that when the irate Jews took up stones to stone Jesus He hid himself and escaped their notice and this ends the verse, and that then the account should read *"He left the Temple, and as he went on his way he saw a man blind..."* If this is right then the man probably went the half mile to the Pool and made his way to his home while the disciples remained with Jesus in the vicinity of the Temple so that they did not see him cured or after his cure. The next development was with the man's neighbours and friends, when he got home. There was considerable discussion and speculation as to what had happened to him; some of them refused to believe that he was indeed the same man and he had to assure them of his identity. Once convinced, they wanted to know all about it, but all he could tell them was that *"a man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the Pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight"* (vs. 11). All that he seemed to know about his benefactor was his name.

This man has been criticised in many a sermon for not going straight back to Jesus to express gratitude for the miracle. Maybe that criticism is unjust. Modern cases are known in medical history where a person born blind has gained sight, by surgical operation or otherwise. In such cases it is usually weeks before the patient is able to recognise and distinguish objects properly; there has to be a sense of association to be

acquired and powers of focus to be developed. It was probably some considerable time before this man was able properly to make use of the sight he had been given; he looked upon things the shape and appearance of which he had formerly been quite unable to visualise. He almost certainly found it more difficult at first to make his way along the street than he had done in his blindness. So it would not be surprising if he quite instinctively made his way home first, back to the only refuge and place of security he knew, until all the implications of this tremendous thing that had happened to him had sunk in. By that time, if he had the impulse to find the man who had done this and thank him, he was not to be found. That at least is what he told his neighbours. *"Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not."* (vs. 12).

The neighbours did the obvious thing. They took him to the Pharisees. In the old days, under Moses and the Judges and the Kings, when a man of Israel was healed of any grievous disease, he went to the Priest with a thank-offering to God. Now the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat and arrogated to themselves the avenue of approach to God. So they received the little deputation with their usual superciliousness, listening with faint contempt as the story of the miraculous cure was unfolded, a contempt that abruptly changed to angry attention when the hated name of Jesus was brought in as the one who had done this thing. Apparently it was on the Sabbath day that the incident occurred, and after hearing details the first reaction of the Pharisees was indignation. *"This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day"*. Some of them were not so sure. *"How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?"* Before very long the Pharisees were involved in an argument between themselves and that did not improve tempers. Failing to reach agreement they resolved the matter by turning to the blind man and asking his opinion. That Pharisees should demean themselves by seeking the views of a beggar-man on any subject at all indicates a definitely serious state of affairs and shows how deep the cleavage between them must have gone. The healed man did not intend to be drawn into their quarrel; he stated, simply and succinctly *"He is a prophet"*. No one could find much fault with that definition for the office of a prophet in Israel was hallowed by antiquity.

Balked at this fence, and unwilling to accept the evidence, the Pharisees called the man's parents, and demanded of them how their son was now able to see. The parents had no more intention of being drawn into the controversy than had the son. *"We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means*

he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not; he is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself" (vs. 20-21). Any comment which could be construed as an expression of faith in Jesus could result in excommunication from the synagogue, and they had no intention of risking that. Round Three closed with the Pharisees still on the losing side.

The Pharisees were getting rattled; somehow or other they had got to discredit the Nazarene but so far they could find no weak point in the case. They called the man again. "Give God the praise" they told him "We know that this man is a sinner". This was a subtle move to put the unfortunate beggar in a tight corner. The formula "Give God the praise" was an expression making it incumbent upon the person addressed to answer as if in the sight and hearing of God and as if it was God who was demanding the answer; such an injunction made it obligatory upon the one concerned to give a truthful reply. Now if the man refused to admit that his benefactor was a sinner, he could be arraigned for blasphemy, for—in theory at least—all men were sinners. If he did so admit, then the healing was no miracle and merely a natural event and their purpose would be achieved. The man, however, was still one jump ahead of his interrogators. "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see" (vs. 25). To the chagrin of the Pharisees, Round Four ended with no better result than before. The beggar had very neatly side-stepped the question which had been framed with the intention of incriminating him one way or the other.

In desperation they returned to the original question. "What did he do to thee? How opened he thine eyes?" (vs. 26). His answer shows that he had all the time been leading them on; he was much more astute than they had imagined. At this point he shifted his ground entirely and assumed the offensive. "I have told you already, and ye did not hear; wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples?" (vs. 27). The sarcasm was not lost upon his interlocutors; anger at being so neatly trapped led them to lose self-control; they roundly abused him and referred to their own association with Moses. "We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (vs. 29). That vicious remark was mistake number two; they had laid themselves wide open to a crushing retort from the opponent they had so greatly under-rated, and the retort was not long in coming. "Why herein is a marvellous thing"—the irony of the words penetrate even through the English translation—"that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes.

Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (vs. 30-33). That was probably one of the most telling sermons ever preached to Pharisees by a layman, and every word in it stung them to fury. All pretence of finding a valid reason for rejecting the miracle was cast aside, and in their rage and resentment they shouted at him "Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?" and there and then excommunicated him. They could not disprove the miracle; they refused to admit it; so they solved the dilemma by getting rid of the man whose continued presence in their synagogue would be a constant evidence of the reality they denied.

No wonder Jesus called them blind guides. The man had sight, and knew he had sight. The Pharisees were blind, but they did not know they were blind, and they resolutely refused to do anything to enable themselves to see. The man knew one thing, and one thing only: "He hath opened mine eyes". The Pharisees, at the end of the story, could only say weakly to Jesus, "Are we blind also?" The man received his sight because he was prepared to step out in faith at the start; the Pharisees adopted an attitude of antagonism at the outset and in consequence they never had their eyes opened.

Later on Jesus met the man. It was at that meeting he realised for the first time the identity of his benefactor. Verse 35 in the A.V. renders Jesus' question "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" but some ancient manuscripts have it "the Son of Man". It matters little either way; either expression meant one thing, and one thing only, to the man. It told him that his deliverer was in fact the long-promised Messiah, the One for whom all Israel watched and waited, and he believed, and he worshipped. One cannot resist the conclusion that in this man Jesus had found a disciple of sterling worth, and although, so far as can be discerned, he never again appears in the Scripture record, there is little doubt that he must have become one of the stalwarts who pioneered the new faith after the tragic events of the Crucifixion had passed into history, and perhaps for four or five decades after that historic sabbath gave evidence that not only were his natural eyes opened that day, but his spiritual eyesight glimpsed a vision which inspired and led him for the rest of his life to serve with joy and tenacity of purpose the One who first saw him standing begging by the wayside, as He passed by on his way from the Temple.

CONSIDER THE LILIES

Reflections on
Matt. 6:28

Many and varied are the lessons taught by the Master during his earthly ministry, and they never grow old. To the true disciple of Christ they are ever new, ever fresh. Whether He taught by the seaside or on the mountains or by the wayside, as He walked and talked with his chosen Twelve, his words of wisdom and grace come to us vibrant with meaning, pulsating with life, full of strength and power, cheering, encouraging and blessing our hearts.

To the people whom the Master generally addressed, the matter of providing for the necessities of life was a very important one. He rarely had the very rich amongst his audience, generally the poor; and the poor in Palestine and other Eastern countries found it very difficult to obtain food and clothing. In many parts of the world to-day, as in India, there are people who scarcely ever go to bed without going hungry; and to these the necessities of life are a very important consideration.

Our Lord Jesus indicated that this was so in his time, saying that the important consideration with most people was, "What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" They were anxious and worried. "After these things do the Gentiles seek", said the Master. Their object in life was to procure food and raiment. That was the burden of their prayer. And even the Jews, though professedly the people of God, had not learned implicit trust in him, but were to a large extent grasping after the material things, seeking chiefly worldly gain rather than the true riches. Our Lord said that his disciples were to realise that God knew what things they had need of before they asked him, and should rest fully content in the matter of what God would provide them respecting their temporalities. Jesus wished them to be sure that God would so supervise their interests that they should not be in want of anything really good and needful to them.

This seems to be the whole lesson that our Lord was inculcating in bringing in this illustration from Nature—"Consider the lilies of the field". It was a forceful reminder that the things of the Kingdom were the things of paramount importance, and that in seeking these things first, they might have the assurance that all needed earthly things should be theirs.

What is it that we are to consider about the lilies? "How they grow!". What does this mean? Jesus himself answers, "They toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these". That is, the lilies grow in a very reasonable way; they develop grace and beauty, and are adorned in robes of loveliness without putting forth unnatural, unusual stress or effort. They are not worried about growing. The lily does not wake up in the morning and say, "Now, I wonder if I can make another quarter of an inch to-day. I wonder if I shall be able to grow as fast and to look as beautiful as that lily over there; and I wonder what people will think about me". It simply assimilates what it can absorb from the earth, and from the atmosphere what God has provided for it there. It does not say, "I think that I shall go to another place, I cannot grow here", but it does the best it can wherever it happens to be.

The lilies of Palestine, to which our Lord referred, were not the flowers that we term lilies, but of another plant family, and a very numerous species, growing everywhere. Those who are accustomed to the flowers of Palestine point to a common reddish flower which they think was meant by "the lilies of the field".

Our lesson, then, is that since we have given our hearts to the Lord we are not to be worried, anxious, about the things of the present life. Nor are we to be over-anxious regarding our spiritual growth. We are simply to do our best, and trust the growing to him. But we are to be particularly engaged respecting the things God has promised us, that we make our calling and election sure and attain to the glories which our Father has in reservation. If we give our attention to these things, the Master assured us, the Heavenly Father will so supervise our affairs that we shall not lack any necessity of a spiritual kind or of an earthly kind. He will give us whatever of spiritual blessings and of temporal blessing we need as children of God that we may "finish our course with joy".

We are not to interpret our Lord's words to mean that we are to neglect proper duties in life; that He would not have us do any more spinning or toiling than the lilies do; that He would not have us labour with hands and brains in order to care for our family or home. Surely not, for these

things are inculcated in the Word of God. Here, evidently, He is impressing us with the thought that while we are doing to the very best of our ability in harmony with the surroundings and conditions which God has provided for us, we are not to be worried. We are to be as free from anxious care as are the lilies, to be fully content and to look up in faith to our Heavenly Father, expecting and accepting his providential care and overruling in all our affairs and interests.

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soil, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable, temporal needs can be better obtained, He can arrange for it. He knows just what is good for us, best for us, temporally and spiritually. It is our part to look for his leadings, not attempting to take the helm into our own hands, not concluding that the Lord will never change our conditions. If it is best for us that they shall be changed, He will change them, if we trust in him; and surely, if we are his children, it is his will that we desire, not our own! We are to be perfectly restful in whatever conditions or circumstances we find ourselves, restful in the thought, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him". (Matt. 6.8)

Will this not mean sometimes strong tests of faith and endurance, if the conditions of our lot are painful and hard to bear? It may be such, but if the Lord's providence does not for a time offer a way of escape, we may be sure that the test will

prove one of the "all things" that will work out our good, if we submit to his will and wait for him to point out a different way, if it shall seem best to him. Let us, as lilies of his planting, bloom for the glory of the Heavenly Husbandman.

While Jesus tells us that we should ask, "Give us this day our daily bread", this is not a specification of what we would prefer to have in a temporal way. We are not to specify things that would be most pleasing to our palate. We are to leave that part to him. We are to acknowledge that we are dependent upon him, that we are waiting on his providence and will accept those things which his Wisdom provides as proper for us in connection with the instructions of his Word.

So on we go, growing daily, happy and content in God, and preparing for the Kingdom; for Christians who cannot learn now, under present conditions, to trust in God, would probably not be able to learn this lesson under other conditions. Present conditions are especially helpful, indeed, for those who would cultivate trust, dependence upon the Lord. In this respect we see that the poor have an advantage over the rich; and it was those who were poor, like the lilies of the field, that our Lord Jesus was addressing in the words of our text. And it is to those who are poor in spirit, who realise their own impotency, who long for the rest and peace that Jesus alone can give, who come to him for that rest, that all the Master's gracious promises and lessons of wisdom, comfort and instruction are given.

The Tower of Babel

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

adorned at the zenith of its glory was estimated in the early years of this century at a figure which in 1977 would be equal to four thousand million pounds. It was destroyed in the 5th century B.C.; thus it endured throughout practically the whole of the Old Testament historical period. Of all monuments erected by man, the great Tower of Babylon is the most symbolic of man's reliance on his own power and determination to live without God—and to-day there is nothing left of it but a few pieces of broken brickwork and the remains of one corner of the platform on which it stood, about four feet high. "*Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be broken down and shall be found no more at all.*"

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *How can we explain Psalms 137:9 "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" in the light of the claimed love and benevolence of God?*

A. The first thing to notice is that God was not responsible for this bloodthirsty sentiment. Psalm 137 was composed by some unknown Israelite at the time of the Babylonian captivity as a poetic lament upon Israel's misfortune. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." This unknown writer called for Divine vengeance upon their captors, incidentally ignoring the fact that Israel had brought the captivity upon themselves by their violation of the Covenant. The spirit of revenge which is so marked in this verse was that of the man who wrote it but not of God.

* * *

Q. *Who are those referred to in Hebrews 12:23 as "the spirits of just men made perfect"?*

A. It is most likely that they are the same ones mentioned in chapter 11 who, having received a good report through faith, must wait until the "better thing" God has provided "for us" (the Church) has been conferred before they in their turn can be made perfect. Called, variously, by Christian commentators and writers the "Ancient Worthies" or "Old Testament saints" they are the heroes of faith in pre-Christian Israel who are to be raised from the dead to lead restored Israel in the days of the Messianic Kingdom, and so in a very real sense to be the representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth during that Age.

* * *

Q. *What are the "husks which the swine did eat" of which the prodigal son would fain have eaten also in his extremity?*

A. Large, fleshy pods about ten inches long and one inch across, the fruit of the "*kharub*", a small bushy tree which grows in profusion in Syria. The swine eat this fruit with relish, and the natives in the East used to grind up the pods and make a species of sweetmeat from the thick, sticky juice thus obtained. Thus to partake of food which was gathered for swine was degradation indeed to any honest hearted child of Israel, and so it was that when he found himself reduced to this expedient, the prodigal "came to himself" and realised at last how far he had fallen from his former estate.

* * *

Q. *Does God know whether we will or will not fail to attain the promised "crown of life"? If we say He knows all things then do we have to say*

He knows in advance whether we will fail or overcome?

A. It is difficult to discuss or reflect upon matters which concern Divine omnipotence because our human minds are finite and there are things outside our range of understanding. We can no more understand the nature and scope of Divine foreknowledge than visualise how the universe can be infinite in extent, that no matter how far it extends there must be something beyond that; or how time can be endless; or God never had a beginning and was "always there". God says He knows "*the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done*" (Isa. 46:10) but whether this refers to the general outcome of his creative plan or is to be extended to the individual fates of each creature to which He has given life we really have no means of knowing. Some thinkers have defined the eternity in which God dwells as an eternal "NOW" in which past, present and future all exist together and God can see them all, but that is human speculation and we have no mandate to say that God is really like that. There is progression and development and free will in God's creation, and even if in some manner incomprehensible to us God is able to take into account all the causes and effects and all the influences which impinge upon our lives, and deduce from them all how we are going to react and so perceive what the ultimate outcome will be, it remains true that we ourselves are unconscious of all this and are still able to exercise our own free-will and choose our own course without any kind of ordained future to which we are compelled willy-nilly to conform. It is an undisputed fact that God has given us, as He gave Adam at the first, the free and unfettered choice of good or evil, and we are the masters of our destiny. Whether or not the infinite mind of God is such that He already knows which we shall choose does not in any degree affect our own freedom of choice, nor yet any further development of our mind and will, in the ages of eternity which are to be ours beyond this life.

Gone from us

—:—

Bro. W. Clarke (Ipswich)

Bro. H. Linford (Tonbridge)

—:—

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

THE TRANSFIGURATION

One of the strangest incidents in the Gospels is the Transfiguration. In its nature it seems to belong to the Old Testament rather than the New and to be revelation of the kind we normally associate with the Hebrew prophets rather than Christian apostles. That it was given for a purpose there can be no doubt, and that the happening deeply impressed itself upon the minds of the three witnesses is obvious from the unanimity of the versions in each Gospel. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record it and in much the same words. Memory must have been very clear as to the precise details of what happened on that eventful day.

It was about half way through the ministry of Jesus that his disciples had this strange and thrilling experience. They had already followed him through two journeys in Galilee and the north, beside attending him on one visit to Jerusalem. He was becoming well known by now and the authorities were taking notice of his movements and his message. Jesus himself knew that the sands were running out and He must begin to prepare his disciples for the grim realisation that their immediate hopes were going to be dashed by his death, and the golden promise of the Kingdom recede into an indefinite future. But more than that, He must also commence to instil a consciousness of their lives' mission in their minds, to give them the groundwork upon which after his death they might go forward in confidence to proclaim his message in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. He must needs implant in their minds a vision that would never fade while life lasted, and the means He chose to achieve that end was a vision of another kind impressed upon their natural eyes.

The Pharisees and Sadducees had already been to him, asking a sign from heaven, a request which He refused (Matt. 16. 1-4). That incident had passed as it were almost unnoticed, but it served to show that the forces of the enemy were beginning to marshal themselves and Jesus knew that the time would not be prolonged. So he tested his disciples, "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" (Matt. 16. 13). There was a variety of answers. Apparently some had thought He was John the Baptist, raised from the dead, others, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. Still others surmised that He was the mysterious unnamed one of whom Moses had spoken, "that prophet" who would be raised up

like unto Moses, but who, unlike Moses, would be heeded by all the people. But all the opinions and reasonings had one basis; the One standing among them was a man and no more than a man, one who may have been a great man of God and a great champion of righteousness in time gone by, but nevertheless a man still, of Adam's race. It was when Jesus turned to the disciples and put his second question "*But whom say ye that I am?*" that a great light dawned on Peter and he spoke out, impulsive as ever, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" "Son of man"; they had been accustomed enough to that title and thought no more of it than when they read in their Scriptures of the same appellation being bestowed upon the prophet Ezekiel. There was in Jewry at that time no real realisation that Messiah himself would be anything more than a man; a great man raised up by God admittedly, but for all that only a man. It was at this point of time that Peter saw in a flash of inspiration that Messiah was more than man; He was in verity the sent of God, come down from heaven to take human form to execute his Divine mission. He was not only Son of man; He was also the Son of God.

That sudden frank declaration was the beginning of the whole spiritual understanding of the Church. All that we, any of us, comprehend or understand of the unseen things within the Vail have their source in Peter's historic reply. Until then the ideas and thoughts, and consequently the hopes and aims, of the disciples and all of Jesus' followers were exclusively earthly. From that time their progress in the understanding of spiritual things began, and that is why Jesus, rejoicing in spirit at the evidence thus afforded him that his work was at last bearing fruit, exclaimed "*Blessed art thou, Simon . . . flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.*" A new phase of his ministry was entered upon there and then. In a very real sense Jesus began that day to build his Church. Even although Pentecost must come before that Church could be formally inaugurated by the descent and baptism of the Holy Spirit upon those first believers gathered in the Upper Room, it was here that Jesus began the gathering out of the first few. It was here that He found some who manifested the attitude of heart and beginnings of an understanding mind that was to make them fit recipients of the Holy Spirit when the time should come. It is a very significant thing that this passage contains the first occurrence of

the word "ecclesia" in the New Testament. "Upon this rock," this rock truth just enunciated by Peter, "I will build my church" (Gk "ekklesia") said Jesus. The term properly denotes the entire assembly of Christ's disciples the world over, the whole "Church in the flesh" at any one time. So it is very appropriate and very significant that here for the first time Jesus avows his intention to "build his Church."

Not less significant is the fact that immediately after this revelation of Peter's grasp of this great truth and the indication thus afforded that the minds of the disciples were getting ready for spiritual instruction, Jesus began to speak of the deeper things of his mission. Heretofore He had worked miracles, preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, and discoursed with his disciples on the virtues of his ways of life, the "fruits of the Spirit" as we might call them, the inherent value of love and joy and peace and mercy and humility and so on. Now He embarked upon a totally different style of instruction. "From that time forth" says Matthew in verse 21 "*began Jesus to shew unto his disciples . . . the things regarding his presentation of himself to the Jews as their Messiah, their rejection of him, his condemnation, his death and his resurrection. They did not comprehend fully what He was endeavouring to teach them, Peter even going so far as to say 'Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee'*" but the fact that Jesus deemed it a suitable time to speak of these things is evidence enough that they were at least in a fit condition of mind and heart to appreciate them partially. As the weeks and months passed by they became the more fully receptive to this aspect of our Lord's teaching and although even at his death they had still not sufficiently understood it all to retain complete faith in the face of that supreme tragedy, nevertheless they had imbibed enough to turn the scale when the events immediately following the Resurrection restored their faith and opened to them new vistas of revelation. The work whose beginning is narrated in Matthew 16 achieved its consummation in Acts 2, and the fruit of that which was sown at the Transfiguration was reaped at Pentecost.

One thing yet was necessary to establish their faith in these necessarily unsubstantial and unreal spiritual promises. Although they did not, as did the Pharisees and Sadducees a little while previously, ask for a sign as evidence of his authority, Jesus knew, none better, just what tremendous value a sign would be to them at that juncture. Some visible manifestation upon which their physical senses could fasten would become a landmark in their memories to be recalled in after days and remembered as an evidence for

belief and a foundation for faith that could not be overturned. Because of that necessity they were given the vision of the Transfiguration.

It was vitally necessary that the disciples' hope and understanding of Jesus' teaching be intimately related to the prophecies of the Old Testament. In after days the whole development of Christian doctrine was going to be dependent upon a full and accurate knowledge of the writings of Moses and the words of the prophets. So Jesus proceeded at once to relate his mission and their hopes for the future to the apocalyptic visions of olden times. "*The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*" (Vs. 27). That is about the earliest New Testament prophecy of the Second Advent that we have—in fact it is remarkable how much of the origins of Christian doctrine is to be found in embryo form in this sixteenth chapter of Matthew and the corresponding accounts in Mark and Luke. The disciples were quite familiar with the old prophetic visions. They knew that Moses had predicted the coming of a greater than himself to whom the people would hearken and by whom they would be saved. They knew that Malachi had prophesied of the same one in different terms, a Son of Righteousness who would arise with healing in his wings; and they knew too that Malachi had also promised that God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel before the great day came, to initiate a preliminary work of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. They knew all this, and they knew also that God would appear in glory and power to execute judgment on the wicked and bestow rewards upon the righteous, at the Last Day. So many of the prophets had described the events of that Day in symbols more or less lurid and they could not but have been acutely aware of the vision seen by Daniel where the Ancient of Days was manifested in fiery glory and one like a Son of man was brought before him to receive honour and glory and a kingdom that would never pass away. Now Jesus was clearly referring to that prophecy and telling them in effect that He himself was that Son of man who would eventually come in that glory and receive that Kingdom. They had already realised the fact and Peter had expressed it for them in words. And there was something more. They all knew of the stirring passage in the Book of Enoch where the Lord was depicted as coming with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He was not coming alone; He would be accompanied by his faithful disciples. Daniel too had spoken of the holy ones of the Most High who would possess the kingdom

in companionship with their Lord, the Son of Man. It was all very exciting and thrilling and what was needed now to seal their faith was some kind of outward evidence that all these hopes were well founded and would not be disappointed. And it was just at that point that Jesus said to them—surely He must have said it very quietly, letting the words sink into their minds... *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."*

There have been endless discussions as to precisely what Jesus meant by those few simple words—for it is manifest that all the disciples have long since tasted of death, but still the Son of Man has not come in the glory of his Kingdom. Some have interpreted the words to mean the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and others the inauguration of the Church on earth, the incipient Kingdom of heaven, whilst its members are as yet still in the flesh. And some, critically, have said that Jesus himself expected to return in power within a few years but that He was mistaken and so the disciples were misled and disappointed, but those who say such a thing are grievously wrong. Jesus had just been talking about his appearance in glory at the day of his "appearing and kingdom" at the commencement of the Millennial Age when his saints would be with him and the world ready to receive him and his words cannot logically be taken to refer to anything else. Without any doubt at all the few men who heard those words uttered must have taken them to mean that within the foreseeable future, while as yet they lived, they would see with their own eyes that which He had just been telling them would surely come.

So there passed, in eager anticipation, six days; then Jesus called three of them, Peter, James, and John, and led them apart, up into a high mountain. Tabor is the traditional mountain where the incident is said to have taken place, but since Tabor was crowned by a Roman fortress at the time it is unlikely to have been the spot. More likely one of the slopes of Mount Hermon in Galilee was the place where this strange and thrilling scene was enacted.

Before their astonished eyes the Jesus they knew was transformed into a glorious Being whose countenance shone as the sun and whose whole form blazed with a dazzling white radiance. The description is so startlingly akin to that of the vision which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus that one is forced to the conclusion that Peter and James and John saw exactly what Paul saw on that occasion. Then, in company with this transfigured and glorious Lord there

appeared two other figures, apparently not so glorious yet evidently not of this earth. In some mysterious way not explained in the accounts, the onlookers knew these two to be Moses and Elijah. How did they know? Possibly they were not able to explain that even to themselves. They just knew that they were gazing on Moses and Elijah discoursing with the Lord of all glory. They heard enough of the conversation to gather its general drift. It was to do with the "decease" of Jesus. That is an unusual word in the New Testament and it does not mean death. It is the Greek word "*exodos*" which means a going out or an outgoing, the leaving of one place to go to another. "Decease" meaning "to die" is a wholly improper translation. Used only three times in the New Testament, one occurrence is in Heb. 11. 22 referring to the "*departing*" of the children of Israel out of Egypt, where "*departing*" is "*exodos*". (From this of course we get the name "*Exodus*" for the second book of the Bible).

So they discoursed not of Jesus' death, but of his "outgoing". The significance of that may become more apparent presently. But in the meantime Peter, quick of mind as ever, grasped, or thought he grasped, the meaning of what he saw. Here surely was the fulfilment of words spoken six days previously. Here at last was the Son of man appearing in the glory of his Kingdom, and Moses and Elijah were attending him as supporters and witnesses. Here was the sign for which Pharisees and Sadducees had asked, a sign none of them would dispute, backed as it was with all the authority of Israel's two greatest men, Moses and Elijah. What wonder that Peter, with all his usual impetuosity, immediately proposed that "tabernacles," booths of branches and leaves, be at once erected to shroud some of the glory which human eye could barely endure, doubtless with the further intention of bringing all of Israel who would come to pay homage to the glorified Lord and be among the first to accept his Kingship and his Kingdom.

There is not much doubt that the vision was at the first thus understood by the three disciples. They must have thought that the Kingdom was about to be proclaimed and here was the first appearance in glory. Thoughts must have raced through their minds... the spectacle of the three glorious Beings descending the mountain in solemn state, joined perhaps by a retinue of angels such as appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem; the running of many people to see the sight; the gathering of the twelve around their deified Master; the submission and tribute of the scribes and Pharisees and priests, of the Roman legions and of Pilate... their quickly-woven

fancies abruptly disappeared. A radiance, brighter than before, swiftly approaching and engulfing them, so filled them with awe and perhaps fear that, like Saul in later times, they could do naught else than fall prostrate on their faces. As thus they lay, a Voice came out of that blinding Radiance *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."*...

How long they thus lay, with covered eyes, awe-stricken and reverent before the Presence whose majestic voice they had heard, they could not have known. The moment was too solemn, the happening too tremendous, for any thought or sense of time to intrude. Peter's hasty words were forgotten; their suddenly awakened thoughts of the Kingdom were forgotten; they only knew that they were face to face with the Almighty.

A light touch, a familiar voice; "Arise, be not afraid".

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

It was a thoughtful trio that made its way down the mountainside, with Jesus, as usual, in the lead. There was no glory now, no voices, just Jesus as they had always known him. And He was saying to them *"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."* So the Kingdom had not come in power after all! They were still in this present evil world and the Son of Man must yet be crucified and slain, and rise again the third day. One would have thought that the sudden transition back to everyday matters and the sudden shattering of brief hopes would have destroyed all faith. Strangely, it did not. We find the disciples in a more thoughtful and serious mood than ever before. They wanted to know more about the promised sending of Elijah. They apparently understood at last the peculiar mission of John the Baptist. All the evidence goes to show that in the weeks immediately following the Transfiguration the disciples went about their duties with at least the faith they had immediately before. The impression we are left with is that the vision achieved just the purpose that it was intended to achieve.

Thirty-five years later Peter looked back to this day as a red-letter day in his life and the one that was to him the most powerful witness he had to the truth of his faith. *"We have not followed cunningly devised fables"* he said, *"but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."* (2 Pet. 1. 16-18).

"Majesty-honour-glory-excellent glory!" These are attributes of the Second Advent, of the Kingdom in power. Yet Peter says he saw them back there in the First Century. After the development and consideration and experience of thirty-five years he still insisted that he and his companions saw the glory of the Kingdom and heard the voice of God. And that is exactly what Jesus had promised in Matt. 16. 28 he would do before he died.

That verse becomes completely understandable and literally true if we consider that Peter, and James, and John, on that memorable day up there in the mountain, were miraculously given to see an incident in the days of the Kingdom which has yet to take place. Paul was taken up into the "third heaven", the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness" and shown in advance scenes in a world which has not yet come into existence. What wonder if to these three men was granted a similar privilege? Is it not to be expected that Moses and Elijah, in their capacity as "princes in all the earth", "Ancient Worthies" as they are often called, will yet in a future day hold converse with the Lord of Glory in respect to matters concerning the administration of the Kingdom? And if so, what more likely than that they will talk of the great theme that is the means by which the Kingdom has become possible, the death of our Lord at Jerusalem? But will they think of it and talk of it as "death"? From our human point of view, looking at the matter from this side of the grave, it is indeed death, for at the Cross He left this earth and vanished from the sight of men. But what of those who themselves are on the other side of the Vail. To the angels, waiting, that which was his death to us, was to them a home-coming, a return to his own abode. *"I leave the world, and go to the Father"* He said himself. Was that strange word *"exodos,"* "outgoing," used deliberately? Is it that Moses and Elijah, talking to the Lord in the dawn of the Kingdom Age, speak of his "outgoing" from the world of men to the world of the spirit, back there at Jerusalem? If so, this would be an incidental corroboration of the thought that what the disciples saw in the mount was not just a kind of tableau or symbolic representation of the Kingdom, but a glimpse in advance of an actual Kingdom scene in which Moses and Elijah will yet definitely figure, two thousand or more years before it happens. And if this be the true thought, then of course the three disciples did actually see the Son of man coming in the glory of his Kingdom, even though what they saw was a prophetic foreview of an actual incident that has not yet happened, but will definitely happen on a day still future.

The Most High, Who sees the end from the beginning, can assuredly grant such glimpses, or "pre-views", as we might call them. There is nothing difficult of acceptance about that.

It is noteworthy that Peter in his Second Epistle, when referring to this incident, refers to his own "decease" (2 Pet. 2. 15), using the same word "exodos", the only other occasion besides Heb. 11. 22 where the word is used. The recol-

lection of the happening still meant so much to him that he could not use the word "death" in the same breath; he had to say "outgoing" because he also felt so near to the Kingdom.

No wonder that in after days these men had to tell their judges "*We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard.*" Who could do else, after such a glorious manifestation of the realities that lie "beyond the Vail"?

PAUL'S PREACHING

*Reflections on the duties
of a Minister*

2 Cor. 4.5 defines part of the work of a minister of the gospel. It was a phase of the Lord's work to which Paul was very partial—that of evangelism. Not for him the staying in one parish tending the needs of one flock. He did not despise those duties but he himself was ordained to preach the good news in many cities and countries. In his day much depended upon the integrity of the preacher, due to lack of education and lack of parchments. Blessed were those Bereans who were able to search the Scriptures daily to see if the things proclaimed by the apostles were so; but few had that opportunity and for several centuries believers had to rely on their teachers. Hence the teachers were mostly preachers and they had, as in Nehemiah's day "to read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and give the sense, and cause them to understand the reading". Paul's own procedure in similar service is expressed in vs. 2 as "*not handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*". Extra care devolved upon the Apostle, because not only was he an exponent of revealed truth, but he was called upon to disclose new truths and hopes consequent upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having new and added truths to announce he would choose preaching in many cities as the method for himself. He had a message based upon the word of God; the book of Acts details his activities in conditions and hazards. We know from Acts 20 that he preached lengthily, which presupposes that he had much to say and an audience willing to hear. The preaching of those days would seem inordinately long by modern standards and few nowadays would think Paul's long preaching allowable. We know from 2 Cor. 2.12 that he went to Troas expressly to preach Christ's gospel and we may assume from 2 Tim. 4.13 that he was so occupied with his message that he forgot his cloak on

departure. He had glorious truths to proclaim and preaching was the Divinely ordained mode of promulgation. To-day Christians seem to prefer short periods of preaching and it is a moot point whether we are better served by it. Possibly we think preaching has served its purpose and now that we are able to read the words of God at home we should have shorter sermons, shorter lectures, shorter expositions and shorter exhortations. But the question will arise—has preaching served its purpose? Does the Bible hint that preaching would be discontinued as a method of circulating the gospel? And, in passing, it should always be remembered that when Christians meet to hear the gospel, at the same time they join in prayer and praise in a way they lack when not assembled together. Whatever be the answer to the question as to length of sermon or address, it is certain that there is a need of good preaching in these days. It is a sign of the times manifest in the speaker and the hearers. Perhaps the worshippers are not so patient as former Christians; perhaps the audience is wiser than its teachers; perhaps the preachers have less to say about the Word; perhaps the meeting wants smooth things; perhaps they do not want to be bothered; perhaps radio supplies an easy substitute which can be switched off if not to taste. Let us be quite sure that we do not hinder the means God has chosen to declare his purposes.

He could have devised another and far-reaching way of spreading the truth, and one that would never be affected by the frailty of human nature. He could have commissioned such as Gabriel, or he could have blazed it across the sky for all to see; and had his plan been the quick conversion of the world some such method may have been chosen. Instead He chose the way which was foolishness to the Greeks, a way which required the listener to give attention to the words of truth and by that means He found those who had the hearing ear. To-day we have preaching in

printed form and though it reaches believers far afield it lacks the personality of the speaker.

In 2 Cor. 4.5 Paul regards himself and his fellow preachers as servants of the Church. He had high rank in the service of his Master but still he is servant of all; and ostensibly all ministers are servants of the flock. They are not servants in the sense that they could be at the beck and call of those they serve, yet they voluntarily spend their powers in the furtherance of the faith. Like the Apostle himself they have at times to fill the role of leader and ruler rather than servant: they have decisions to make for the good of all, often under criticism and when it would be so easy to be free of it all. They serve out of love for the truth and the church without waiting for instructions from those they serve and frequently before the flock has realised its needs.

In addition to declaring the truth, Paul was definite as to the message the servants of the church must proclaim. In his parting advice to his successor Timothy he emphasised the preaching of the Word, and to Titus he wrote God had "*in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the commandment of God our Saviour*". He wished these two evangelists and all preachers to follow him in heralding the word of God. For this there is no substitute; and preaching without ample reference to the Bible lacks conviction. Too often the preacher dilates on some trivial happening or anecdote and occupies his time weaving moral teaching upon it, when right before him are the words of life! It will help preachers and listeners if we recall what Paul himself preached, and this we can do by noting his points when he uses the phrase "we preach..." They reveal important truth from which we gain assurance and faith in God's purposes for mankind.

A verse which instantly reveals Paul's message is 1 Cor. 1.23 "*We preach Christ crucified...*" All knew that Christ had been crucified, and the meaning of it all was the apostle's message. He had two opposing parties to convince. The doctrine was a stumbling-block to the Jew, partly because he believed he was covered by the sacrifices of the God-given law of Moses and partly because the Jew had been responsible for the death of Jesus on the cross. The idea that the judicial death of Jesus of Nazareth at the hands of Pilate (though prompted by the Jew) was in fact a sacrifice for sins, and at that, for the sins of the whole world, was indeed a stumbling-block, or as some would translate it, an offence. And to the world of the Greeks the message of the cross was foolishness; the truth is foolishness to the wise of to-day and all those who because of superior knowledge and culture think that they

are able to work out their own salvation. How did Paul deal with the situation of unbelief and opposition that he encountered? His downright methods are a lesson to us all. Upon receiving back his sight at Damascus he "*straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*" (Acts 9.20). There we have it—straightway he preached! And in 1 Cor. 1.17 he writes that the preaching of the gospel was his calling rather than baptising. Further, he did not speak with the wisdom of words lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. Paul could have used wordy argument (at Lystra they called him Mercurius) but he chose direct declaration of truth supported by Scripture as the better way to spread the truth. We are well-advised to follow him—how often have we heard eloquence and the wisdom of this world befog the cross of salvation! Again we have Paul's directness revealed in 1 Cor. 15.3 "*I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*". His opening theme was ransom atonement, the basis of every Bible hope and the kingdom of God. All our hopes are centred in the truth that when man was utterly unable to free himself from sin and death and we were without strength, God sent his Son to be the saviour of the world. The subject is somewhat old-fashioned in the view of some modern speakers, and all will notice that their words lack conviction. But let us also note the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 1.21 that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Thus we have another truth additional to the primary truth that we are saved by the sacrificial death of our Lord. And by these words we may know that not only is preaching the Divinely appointed way of circulating the gospel, but that God actually has pleasure in the method which was foolishness to the Greek and a hindrance to the Jew. And by the apparent foolish method He finds those who in the latter part of the chapter Paul refers to as the weak of this world; and in choosing and ennobling them we have proof of his power and wisdom.

Closely following the truth of Christ's atoning death must come his resurrection. And this also Paul said "We preach" in 1 Cor. 15.4-11. It is expected, for Paul knows that if Christ be not risen then preaching and faith are vain (vs.14). The remainder of the chapter provides us with one of the grandest portions of Scripture full of sanctified reasoning and giving basis for eternal hope. The hope for this world rests upon the associated truths of the death and resurrection of our Lord, and therefore they must be the foundation of all Christian preaching.

Allied to these points of Paul's gospel we have

one which some think to be peculiar to him, that of faith. This message we find linked to the death and resurrection of Christ in Rom. 10.8-15. He pointedly explains it as *"the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"*. Note that Paul connects belief in the heart with spoken confession of one's belief. To him belief in the heart is a truer proof of the Christian than belief in the head. If the heart is touched with the two truths that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected to glory to appear in the presence of God for us, and that the believer expresses his belief by word of mouth, we may be sure that we have found a true Christian! Then Paul follows in his reasoning by emphasising that this is equally true for Jew and Greek for the same Lord is rich to all that call upon him. But then he propounds some questions. How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?—How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?—How shall they hear without a preacher?—And how shall they preach except they be sent? And thus he has got back to his topic of preaching and the word of faith.

These are the truths that Paul consistently preached and wrote in his epistles; the death and resurrection of Christ and the word of faith; and as we read we see how loyal he was to the message committed to him. He was loyal and thorough in his mission because he knew that the god of this world had blinded the minds of them which believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel (and to him it was a glorious gospel) should shine unto them. But that God who commanded the light to shine had shined in his heart that he would pass it on to others. This was the treasure he had in an earthen vessel, and none knew better than he that the excellency of the power essential to his service was of God and not of themselves.

Another truth preached by Paul and found in his epistles concerns the Church. This he did so well that whenever we seek information about

the church which is his body we promptly refer to him. The Christian church probably owes more to him for his faithful service than any other apostle. In referring to his writing the believing Christian finds that the promises of God's word reveal that he may be associated with his Lord in the church which is his body. Previously he may have thought that the church is an association of believers. He finds it is much more than that. He learns from Paul that he is now a son of God, that the standing of sonship carries with it heavenly prospects undreamed of when he first heard the gospel. He reads that the promises relative to this calling reach fulfilment at the Second Coming of his Lord, when he and the faithful members of the past will all be eternally united with their Lord and commissioned to direct mankind and dispense God's blessings to them. He finds that his Father's purposes for his sons are described as being a sacred secret, long hidden but now revealed. And he reads that the fluent of speech apostle cannot find words to describe the glories, present and future, of this church of God.

Of the many words of Paul on the subject we select those where the expression "We preach" occurs. Col. 1.28 closes the fine chapter which speaks of Christ's creative work of long ago; his redemptive and reconciliation works; his resurrection and work for and within the church. We see in verses 23 and 25 that Paul was specially called to preach this mystery among the Gentiles, and he briefly sums it up in the phrase *"Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach warning every man and teaching every man..."* Yes, Paul's preaching also included encouragement and warning to his fellow-members in Christ. His was a great responsibility and by the grace of God alone was he able to proclaim the fundamental doctrines of the faith as well as guide the church during her many trials. His words are with us to-day and among his printed preaching we have advice and help for our own trials and doubts. How grateful we should be that heaven raised up such a champion for the gospel!

John 14.2 is rendered by Moffatt and Phillips in question form as follows:—

Moffatt "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, would I have told you I was going to prepare a place for you?"

Phillips "There are many rooms in my Father's house. If there were not should I have told you that I am going away to get a place ready for you?"

We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. We should not wonder if in the beginning we often failed in our endeavours but at last we should gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care and to our exceeding great delight.

EVENTIDE

"So He bringeth them
unto their desired haven"

It would be a bedraggled travel-stained company which, at length, made its passage along the Appian Way on the last stage of its journey to Rome. It had been a hazardous adventurous journey from Cæsarea across the Levantine, and up the Italian coast. Only by the providential care of God, for Paul's own specific sake, had the journey been accomplished free from serious injury and death. At a time when passengers and crew expected to be entombed in a watery grave the angel of the Lord appeared to Paul to strengthen and comfort him, and to assure him that he would, in very deed and truth, stand before Cæsar to testify, as the Lord had intended from the onset of his ministry. Additionally the angelic comforter assured him that God had granted him the lives of all those who sailed with him. (Acts 27.24.) Presumably Paul had prayed for his own and his fellow-passengers' safe-keeping through the stormy darkness, and had been heard. Thus for the Lord's messenger's sake two hundred and seventy-five other lives were spared, and granted safe passage to terra-firma, though apparently with the loss of all they possessed. Even so the Maltese natives bestowed on them "unusual kindness" because it had "begun to rain and was cold".

During this enforced stay among the Maltese people, the Spirit of the Lord, in the heart of Paul, availed itself of the opportunity to repay their generosity by the healing of their sick—the people on the island who had diseases came and were healed, and without doubt would hear the Word of God proclaimed by Paul as he wrought these kindly acts. It is a touching commentary upon the native goodness of these rude islanders when Luke could say of them, "they presented many gifts to us." and "when we sailed they put on board whatever we needed." From thence another ship brought them at last to Italian soil. A messenger was immediately dispatched to the brethren in Rome, informing them that Paul and his company had landed at Puteoli, and would soon be en-route again for Rome.

Presumably the tidings of his coming had had an electrifying effect among the brethren in Rome, for immediately two contingents of them set out at once, one of which, when they met him, had travelled no less than three and thirty miles, while the other also had come twenty-three—both of them on foot! And their attitude towards the prisoner, what of that? Imagination must provide the answer here, for "on seeing them

Paul thanked God and took courage". Surely, blest was the tie that bound their hearts in Christian love, to produce such an effect such as that! As the prisoners' company came alongside the little waiting group, the eyes of Paul would search the faces of each in turn, and recognition would be prompt and mutual. Paul had many friends then resident in Rome—Priscilla, Aquila, Epænetus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys and quite a host of other names (see Rom. 16), to whom he had sent love and greetings but a little while before. Who, and how many of this well-beloved company had come to meet him on his Romeward way we cannot say; what we can say with complete confidence is that the light of a deep affection would be beaming from every eye. Prisoner though he was, it was as a brother in the Lord that they greeted him.

What a meeting that would be—love welling up from every heart towards this travel-stained and bedraggled prisoner—and he, giant though he was at heart, found new courage from the out-poured love! How had this warmth of attachment and solicitude come about? How was it that this had come to acquire such a grip upon the hearts of those he met? There is but one answer here—his absolutely selfless life, a life spent in imitation of the Master whom he served. "Not I, but Christ" was the magnet of their love.

*Not I but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted,
Not I but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard,
Not I but Christ, in every look and action,
Not I but Christ, in every thought and word.*

Breathes there the desire in any heart to be a rallying centre to the fellowship, a nucleus to the group? Let him emulate the man who found that draught of pure joy on the Appian way! Let him "live" Christ day by day—Christ Jesus will do the rest!

Then on the other hand if we may not be called to occupy Paul's place towards the fellowship, let us not forget that not only Paul was the better for that display of love and encouragement—others, too may thank God and take new courage from it! Seas of trouble may give to others a bedraggled look as we meet them on life's crowded highway, and the light of our eyes and hands may be to them as sweet refreshing wine!

*Play thou a brother's part,
Strength, love and hope impart,
Bid thou the fainting heart
Look up again.*

TIMOTHY MY SON

Perhaps the most human aspect of the Apostle Paul's complex character was the affection he felt for the young man he had converted during his first visit to Lystra in Roman Asia at almost the beginning of his evangelical life-work. "My dearly beloved son", "my own son in the faith" he called him. The depth of feeling he felt for the youth who became one of his most loyal co-labourers is manifest by many an allusion. The association between Paul and Timothy lasted only some twenty years but during that twenty years there was forged a bond that led to one of the most pathetic pleas in history—Paul's letter from the condemned cell at Rome to Timothy at Ephesus, urging him to come quickly that he might see him once more before he died.

Timothy was evidently quite young, probably in his teens, when Paul visited Lystra for the first time during the course of his first missionary journey. The time, about A.D.45, some twelve years after the Crucifixion. He was of mixed parentage, his father being a Greek and his mother, Eunice, a Jewess. Despite this fact the lad was evidently brought up in the Jewish faith and when Paul came to Lystra with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Timothy, as well as his mother and his grandmother Lois, at once accepted the faith and declared themselves for Christ. In concert with other converts, they formed a Christian community, a local church there in Lystra, and in these surroundings the boy Timothy rapidly grew in knowledge and grace. Thus when Paul again visited the town some six years later during his second missionary journey, his attention was taken by the zealous young man, who by now was "*well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium*" (Acts. 16.1). The consequence was that Paul invited Timothy to join him in his journeys and work, an invitation which was enthusiastically accepted. When Paul and Silas left Lystra to continue their journeying, Timothy went with them.

From then on, Timothy became a kind of ambassador for Paul, often being sent on missions which Paul was unable to execute himself, in consequence of which he speedily became well known to the Christian congregations in Asia and Greece. Unlike Luke, who was the constant companion of Paul and never left his side, Timothy was away in some distant place carrying out some special commission as much as he was in attendance on the Apostle. He became, in short, a trusted and trusty right hand man whom Paul

could send anywhere knowing that whatever it was he had been commissioned to do would be well and truly carried out.

Upon Timothy's acceptance of this offer of service with Paul, the three made their way through Roman Asia to the seaport of Troas, where they made the acquaintance of Luke, who then joined them. Here Paul had the dream of the man from Macedonia, beseeching him to cross the sea to Greece and preach his message there. So the four found themselves at Philippi, where Paul and Silas were thrown into prison in consequence of the affair of the demon-obsessed slave-girl. Luke and Timothy appear to have escaped involvement in this affair. Then on to Thessalonica and Berea—where Timothy and Silas remained while Paul went on alone to Athens and Corinth. Rejoining Paul at Corinth they laboured together for eighteen months in the establishment and nurturing of the Corinthian church, then to Ephesus, Jerusalem and finally the home church at Antioch which had sent out the two missionaries in the first place. Timothy must have made himself quite at home at Antioch and speedily won a place in the service of the church.

This state of affairs was not to last long. Paul's restless spirit demanded renewed travels in the interests of the Gospel, and before a year was out he embarked on his third missionary journey, the one that was to end in Rome, and his first trial and acquittal. This time he headed quite a party; besides Timothy and Luke, his two closest companions, there were Erastus of Corinth, a little later Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia, and at a still later stage on his route an additional five stalwarts. All this indicates a very extensive evangelical campaign, including as it did a two year sojourn in Ephesus which evidently became the headquarters for a vigorous extension of the Gospel message throughout Western Asia. Obviously under these conditions Timothy must have been busily employed over the period of some five years as a trusted auxiliary, continuing work that Paul had started in various cities or going on ahead to prepare the ground for the Apostle's visits. Some such are recorded; whilst at Ephesus he preceded Paul to Macedonia for that purpose and in so doing escaped becoming involved in the riot instigated by Demetrius in the matter of the images of Diana (Acts. 19.22). Later, when the party was working in Greece, he with others went on in front to Troas to organise arrangements for Paul's later arrival (Acts. 20.4). These

must have been days of intense activity and soul-satisfying experiences. It involved much hard work but for a young man like Timothy—he was probably still in his late twenties—it was a richly rewarding service.

At this point Paul commenced the journey to Jerusalem which culminated in his arrest and despatch to Rome. There is no further mention of Timothy in the narrative and what happened to him afterwards has to be deduced from occasional references in the Pauline Epistles. It is probable that he stayed at Ephesus while Luke and others went forward with Paul to Jerusalem. Timothy's later connection with Ephesus and the fact that he afterwards became the first presiding elder or "bishop" of Ephesus, according to Church tradition, lends colour to this hypothesis. Quite possibly, and under Paul's appointment, he assumed the direction of the evangelical work which was still being prosecuted in Western Asia and had much to do with the nurturing and building-up of the "seven churches in Asia" afterwards made noteworthy by St. John in the Book of Revelation. It does seem fairly certain, however, that not very long after Paul's arrival in Rome and during the two years that the Apostle "dwelt in his own hired house" (Acts. 28.30) Timothy joined him there for a short while. Paul's epistles to the Colossians and Philippians, both written at this time, include greetings from Timothy, indicating that he was with Paul at the time. Paul also told the Philippians (Phil. 2.19) that he hoped to send Timothy to them in a short while, to take news of his welfare and bring back to the Apostle news of their progress. Whether this hope was fulfilled is not known; probably it was, for there is no further hint of Timothy being at Rome and within another year Paul was acquitted and free, and had set out with Luke and Aristarchus on the "unknown" journey which lasted about six years and culminated in his second arrest and second trial at Rome, and his condemnation and death. It was then, sitting in his cell awaiting execution, that Paul wrote his last letter, the second Epistle to Timothy. "*Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me*" urged the aged Apostle. "*Only Luke is with me.*" All the others had gone, some sent by the Apostle to various fields of labour, others returning to their own home churches. Luke was the only one to stay with him until the last. Whether Timothy got to Rome in time is not known. He would certainly have made the attempt. "*Do thy diligence to come before winter*" wrote Paul. That must have been the winter of A.D. 67 and Paul was executed in the early part or spring of A.D. 68, during the reign of Nero, who died in June A.D. 68. There might have been just time for the letter to reach

Timothy at Ephesus and he to make the journey to Rome before it was too late. If he did do so there is no doubt he would have left Rome immediately afterwards and returned to Ephesus; and there he passes off the Biblical stage and is seen no more. According to tradition he served the church at Ephesus as Bishop for another thirty years and was martyred in A.D. 97.

There is one enigmatic reference to Timothy in Heb. 13.23 "*Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come soon, I will see you.*" Since the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the people to whom it was sent, and the place from which it was written, are all in considerable doubt, it is difficult to establish a satisfactory explanation of this remark. The usual assumption is that Timothy had been imprisoned whilst in Rome with the Apostle Paul and then released, but this is founded on the assumption that Paul was the author of the epistle and this is by no means certain. The expression "set at liberty" does not necessarily imply a release from prison; the word can equally well imply a being made free to engage in some service or a being sent away to undertake some service. In any case nothing is known of such an occasion in the recorded life of Timothy and it contributes nothing to our knowledge of his career. This verse remains one of the minor unsolved mysteries of the Bible.

We are left then with the picture of a quiet and industrious young man, fully dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and prepared to express that dedication in a life of service for the Apostle to the Gentiles, willing to go anywhere or do anything in the interests of the work to which the Apostle himself was dedicated. There is no saying of his recorded; he never opens his mouth to speak, but is always there in attendance on the Apostle and ready to be sent anywhere to undertake some commission or duty in furtherance of the work of the Gospel. He was apparently not physically strong—the Apostle refers in one place to his "often infirmities" and recommends that he take a little wine "for thy stomach's sake". He was loyal, he was self-sacrificing. He left his mother and his home at an early age and there is no indication that he ever returned. His service, taking him all over the Roman world could not have left time or opportunity for more than perhaps a very occasional brief visit to the old home and what happened to his mother Eunice we have no means of knowing. Like Hannah and the boy Samuel in Old Testament times, Eunice must have given her son to the Lord for as long as he should live, and found consolation for the parting in the knowledge that he was being used mightily in the work of the Gospel. Perhaps during his later life

as Bishop of Ephesus, he was better able to revisit the scenes of his boyhood, for Lystra was only three hundred miles away, and if his mother still lived she might then have had the joy of reunion with the son who, so willingly given to the Lord, had proved so stalwart a pillar of faith and strength to the Church.

He must have worked side by side with the Apostle John during the later years of that Apostle's life, and the two died at about the same time. Luke had breathed his last some ten years earlier. With the passing of these three none were left who had known the struggles and the triumphs of those early evangelical days, of the founding of the little communities of first-generation Christians in the towns and villages of Asia and Greece. Younger men, who had not known the earlier days, were now picking up the torch and leading the Church into a new era of experience and progress, men like the famous Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who as a young man must

have been well known to the ageing Timothy. But the fact that Ephesus survived as a Church and was noted among the churches of Asia for its spirituality and its influence is a silent testimony to the young man whom Paul converted at Lystra and afterwards used so effectively in helping to lay the foundations of the Christian church. His own admonitions, addressed to his beloved adopted son when he himself lay under the shadow of the executioner, were fully and grandly heeded by the one to whom they were addressed: "*continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them... watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*" The few references to Timothy and his work, brief as they are, fully support the assurance that he did indeed heed and fulfil these admonitions of his father in Christ.

"THIS ONE THING"

An appraisal of
Saul of Tarsus

Saul of Tarsus was a promising young religious leader. A Pharisee, he seemed destined to play a part in restoring the former glory of his sect. He had been brought up by strict parents who were careful to observe the Jewish Law and traditions. A native of Tarsus in Cilicia, at the appropriate age he had been sent to Jerusalem to complete his education. There, in the centre of Jewish learning, Saul as a student had been instructed in the faith by the greatest scholar of his day. Thoroughly trained in the legal practice and religious philosophy of Judaism, he emerged from a brilliant college career fully prepared for a leading place in his nation. He was an enthusiastic young man and did with his whole heart those things in which he believed. So Paul narrates briefly the stages of his early life in Philippians 3.4-6.

It is not difficult to imagine with what disgust this young Jew viewed the new sect of the Nazarenes. They were mostly peasant folk from Galilee, uneducated and lacking in the refinements of speech and manners of this graduate of the Temple. Jesus, the leader of the sect, had been hanged upon a tree, evidence to a Jew of the curse of God. To believe in and follow the hated Nazarene was the height of folly, a waste of life and the passing upon one's self the death penalty. They were, to his young mind, a blot on the Jewish landscape, a disagreeable interference in the religious life of his people, a source of defiance

to their leaders. Perhaps afraid of the outcome of their preaching Paul was incensed against Jesus' disciples. He determined not to rest until, like their leader, they lay in the tomb. The Jewish rulers supported his cause and must have been delighted to have found one so able and willing to prosecute their plans. But God had another plan for Saul of Tarsus. His great career, so wonderful in the eyes of sinful men, was brought to an abrupt and premature end. He suddenly found himself face to face with Jesus of Nazareth!

From the moment when Saul met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, he began to discover new values in life. Until then, life was human achievement and he calculated in material things. He could look back over the long history of his nation and family and trace his pedigree for two thousand years. He took pride in his home training and college learning. He had almost everything he could wish for from man's viewpoint, yet in God's eyes he was poverty stricken. How different was the story of Jesus and Saul up to this time! Yet here was a man, possessed of a religious zeal for which he would yield up his life, thoroughly learned in Jewish theology, conversant with the Old Testament scriptures and able to argue in all the teachings of the Law and Prophets. These were things not likely to be despised. "*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count every-*

thing as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord . . ." Phil. 3.7-8 (R.S.V.).

When Paul wrote these words to the Philippian church he was sitting in a Roman prison, reflecting upon his early years. He was able to see his youthful pride in true perspective. The Law and the Prophets which he knew so well had shown up the flaws in his character but they could not remedy his weaknesses. In his letter to the Roman church he revealed the conflict which raged in his sensitive soul (Rom. 7.7-25). Moses had given the Law to the people of Israel, and if they obeyed, they would qualify for everlasting life. For so long as Paul trusted in the Law, he kept it scrupulously. Yet as the years passed he realised how utterly impossible it was to keep the Law perfectly. Outwardly he was a very respectable man and in the eyes of his countrymen he was blameless. Nevertheless within his mind there raged a battle between right and wrong. He knew that God was not deceived by any outward facade of words and actions. He knew devout Israelites, living in various ages, had struggled against their natural failings. But he saw that the power of sin was too strong for the good intentions and will power of men. Like him, the "holy men" of old were all under the penalty of sin. *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"* (Rom. 5.12). The rule of conduct which Moses gave to the people of Israel was the highest moral pattern that men could understand and was much greater and more full of meaning than the ethical principles of Greeks and Romans. Yet that Law, given by God, was but a form of words. Saul, like his fellow countrymen through all the history of Israel, had tried in his own strength to please God; in spite of religious ritual and burnt offerings his conscience condemned him. Like many another religious person he had to learn that he could not earn God's approval. That which he inherited from Adam, like all other human beings, was a sinful mind and body which made it impossible to be perfect. The lesson for him to learn was found in the life of Abraham, whose faith and trust in the promises of God and whose complete dependence upon him for everything in life had made him pleasing to God.

As Paul observed the Nazarenes he must have realised that in spite of their material poverty and their sufferings, they were possessed of that inward peace and calm for which he had longed and struggled. Was it possible that Jesus was the Messiah and had given to these men that which the Law had been unable to give? He quickly

banished the thought. But his doubts were not readily dismissed. From the time of the death of Stephen until he travelled along the road to Damascus he was oppressed not only by his unworthy condition but by fears that his opposition to the Nazarenes was mistaken.

Just when Paul uttered the victorious cry in the last verse of Romans 7 is not easy to decide. He did not reach his ultimate goal in a single day, nor had he reached it when he penned those words to the Philippian church, *"I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 3. 13, 14). The turning point was reached when Ananias visited him in Damascus. From then onwards only one vision filled his mind. No longer did he dream of a successful young graduate making a name for himself, but of Saul of Tarsus learning to be selfless, and being filled with all the fulness of Christ. God used his wonderfully developed talents, and he became a source of strength and wisdom to the believers and a remarkable evangelist in converting Jews and Gentiles. Paul's greatness as a disciple of Jesus Christ lay not in his natural ability but in his humility and willingness to die to self, in order that the new life of Jesus might grow within him. The great passion of his life was that he might follow in the steps of his Saviour and suffer as He had done. He desired above everything else to have the companionship of Jesus and that the Lord's power would subdue his natural desires and strengthen him to preach the Gospel.

Human nature cries out to be praised and encouraged. Conceited hopes and cherished ambitions try to retain a small part of our affections, so that they need not be surrendered to Jesus. As long as we do not yield everything to him, just so long are we hindered in our progress toward the mark of the prize of the high calling. He demands our "unconditional surrender" in every phase of life. When that is complete, the peace about which Paul wrote in Colossians 3.15 will dominate our hearts and we shall experience a fuller and happier life. Sometimes the battle is long and weary, while we try, as Paul did, to fight it alone. Victory does not come to everyone in quite the same way, nor are we saved by one single act of submission at the cross. We are "more than conquerors through him that loved us" day by day. Thus at last we may say with Paul in answer to the question "Who shall deliver me from the bondage of this death? . . . I thank my God through Jesus Christ our Lord".



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

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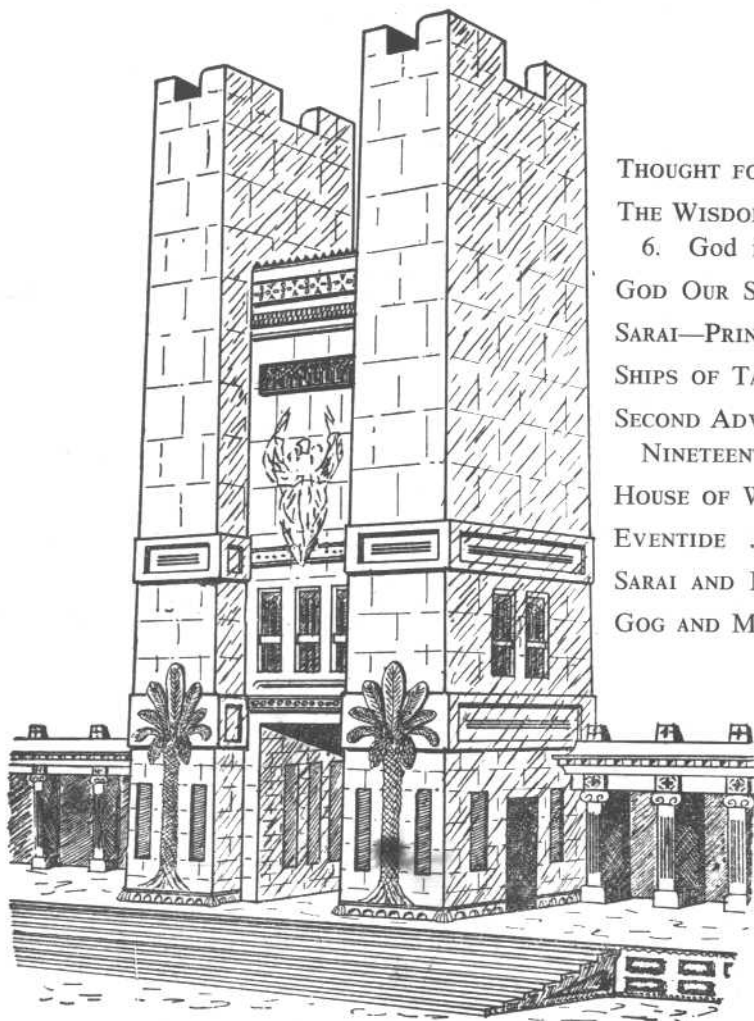
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

The Old Year is dying, and the New, with all its hidden secrets, is at the doors. Although the festive season which marks the end of each year is generally thought to be three months removed from the true date of our Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, there is yet a singular appropriateness in the fact that the angel's message and the story of the coming of the Light and the hope of the world should dwell specially upon the mind at the ending of the old year, with all that it has seen, and the coming of the new with its problems as yet unsolved, its difficulties as yet unfaced, but also—and let us not forget this—its victories yet to be won.

From time immemorial men have burned the Yule log and set up the fresh young fir tree—the Christmas tree so familiar to us—in commemoration of this perennial renewing of Nature's cycle. What matter that these observances had a pagan origin, that the legendary death and resurrection of old-time idolatrous deities was symbolised by these things? Do not we as Christians hold to the self-same belief, stripped of much of its crude materialism? Was it not Christ that died, yea, even that is risen again, and now sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede for us? If Christmas has no other lesson for us, it will serve us well if it causes us to turn our thoughts more definitely to the essential basis of our faith and the whole purpose of our life in Christ.

In the year now closing we have made mistakes. Let us admit the fact. We have come short of the

standard set before us and in many ways we have failed to glorify our Father in Heaven as we ought to have glorified him. The least we can do is be honest about it and admit that we have been unprofitable servants. Yet there have been victories. There has been a sanctifying power operating within us; the Holy Spirit has been at work. In some respects at least we have overcome. The care of the Good Shepherd is still ours and if in the depths of our hearts we sincerely desire to be his disciples then the year about to dawn will assuredly witness continued progress toward the heavenly Kingdom. The Old Year, with its record of failures and victories, is past, like the page of a book that has been turned. The New Year, with its possibilities and potentialities, for good or for ill, for declension earthward or ascension heavenward, is before us. We are a spectacle to men and to angels; all creation is watching us. How can we fail God now?

Gone from us

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Bro. C. Bowman (*Whitchurch*)Bro. Geo. Chilvers senr. (*Nuneaton*)

—:—

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

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

A study in
Job 32-37

6. God is Love

Elihu has completed his argument from the Wisdom of God and the Justice of God; he now takes his stand on the third of the four Divine attributes, the Love of God. The whole of chapter 35 and the first twenty-one verses of chapter 36 are devoted to this theme. The Love of God, revealed in his attitude toward, and his care for, his creatures, is evidence that a Divine purpose lies behind Job's sufferings, and all the philosophical reasonings of Job's three friends pale into insignificance before that triumphant fact. God is Love; because that is so there can be no recriminations and no complaint against that which God has permitted. The outcome will show, what the circumstance itself is quite incapable of showing, that God's way is best.

"Do you say" he demands of Job "It is my right before God that you ask 'what advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?'" (35. 2-3 RSV). The Revised Standard Version poses the question so much more forcefully than the Authorised. And what an age-old question it is? So many have asked the same thing, querulously, cynically and, sometimes, despairingly. "I have always tried to do the right thing, and what good has it done me?" "He gave his life to God but God doesn't seem to have done much for him." That is the same short-sighted view which Elihu accuses Job of taking here. The life of righteousness is viewed in terms of reward, as though the creature would strike a bargain with the Creator and serve him in return for an agreed wage. Unfortunately that is just the attitude which characterises so many who start out in the Christian way. They expect to draw dividends at once, and payable in local currency for immediate spending at that. The fact that the life of allegiance and dedication to God is the right and proper and normal condition of every man and woman, irrespective of reward or consideration, has not penetrated. Heaven is viewed as a kind of prize to be awarded to those who fulfil the required conditions, and the fact that God is the Lord of creation is taken to be an assurance that those who render him professed allegiance and service will get preferential treatment and freedom from adversity in this life here and now. That, of course, is by no means the case. The Lord is not looking for a retinue of time-serving parasites who come to him only on account of the loaves and fishes. He is seeking a body of earnest, devoted men and women who would serve and honour him because they know

that to be the whole duty of man, because they know the vast majority of mankind to be pitifully remote from any such understanding and intention, and because they intend that they themselves at least will put themselves into position for use in God's creation in the manner He intended from the start. So they have no thought of price or reward and they have no expectation that any especial material privileges will be theirs in this life. They do expect that in the world to come there will be a place where they can continue to serve God, to a degree and with a power which is transcendently greater and more effective than anything they can be or do now. They know that their espousal of the ways of righteousness is more likely to bring deprivation and adversity than the reverse, but because this is the way God has indicated, because this is the way their Lord elected to tread when He himself was upon earth, they are well content.

It is not likely that Elihu himself saw the matter as deeply as this. The problem of righteous suffering is a very mysterious one and we ourselves in our day cannot claim to possess a full understanding of its philosophy. But Elihu certainly did see one great truth and this is prominent throughout the whole of his discourse. God is too mighty and wise to be deflected from his course by any petty action of man. The righteousness of one individual and the wickedness of another is certainly recorded in the courts of Heaven but neither the tearful pleadings of the righteous nor the scornful antagonism of the wicked can divert for one instant of time the onward progression of the Divine purpose. Elihu is able to bear this knowledge with absolute confidence and content because he knows that God is not only wise, not only just, but God is also Love, and what He is doing is for the best interests of his creatures. So he replies to his own recapitulation of Job's complaint "I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee" (35. 4). "I will truly reply unto thee" is Leeser's rendering, and that phrase brings out in striking relief the absolute conviction which inspires Elihu in all that he says.

"Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds above thee" (35. 5). That is the hallmark of the true teacher; he does not direct attention to himself, but to the skies above, beyond which is the dwelling-place of God. "I will lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help . . . from the Lord" cried the

Psalmist in a very similar frame of mind. Job's chief trouble was that he looked to the earth in his affliction and failed to see God. He admitted as much at the end of the story. Elihu bade him look up to the heavens and there he would see the vision which would bring enlightenment and peace. There he would, like Ezekiel in a later day, "see visions of God", and enter into the understanding his soul craved. The same precept holds good for every disciple of Jesus; "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4. 17). It is only as we look at the unseen things, the things of the spirit, by what we must describe as our spiritual eyesight, that the afflictions and sufferings of life can be made to contribute to that "exceeding eternal glory" which awaits all who truly "endure to the end". That is just what Elihu is trying to tell Job; his sufferings could be made to contribute to his own development and growth in the likeness of God and his own attainment to the destiny God had planned for him, if only he would look up to the heavens instead of down to the earth.

"If thou sinnest, what dost thou effect against him? (Leeser) or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? (A.V.) and suppose that thou art righteous, what wilt thou give him? (LXX) or what receive he at thine hand? (A.V.). Unto a man like thyself might thy lawlessness reach, and unto a son of the earth-born thy righteousness" (Rotherham) (35. 6-8). A polyglot of several translators seems desirable in this particular passage in order to bring out the meaning. Suppose Job does backslide into sin on the ground that righteousness does not bring any specific reward, what effect does that have on the eternal purpose of God? Can Job hope thereby to coerce God into taking some action He would not otherwise have taken in order to reclaim his erring one and calm his troubled mind? How can such a thing be postulated of the One "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1. 17). "I am the Lord, I change not" said God to Israel to his prophet (Mal. 3. 6). And suppose, on the other hand, that Job became a paragon of righteousness, upright and unswerving in his service for God. What then, even then, could he bring to God as a gift that would earn for him a position of high favour in the heavenly courts? What value in his righteousness that could entitle him to demand as of right a place of standing before the Most High? "When ye have done all" said Jesus "then say, we are unprofitable servants". Something like that must have been in the mind of Elihu. He knew, what every in-

structed Christian to-day knows, that it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3. 5) that we are at length ushered into the Divine Presence. The Lord of all cannot be moved by threats nor cajoled by bribes. His purpose moves steadily on, effecting the purpose He ordained before the world was. So it is other men, and not God, who are affected and influenced by a man's wickedness or righteousness. And that is quite a sobering thought; sobering for Job and sobering for all of us. *"Unto a man like thyself might thy lawlessness reach, and unto a son of the earth-born thy righteousness."* It is true that no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, as Paul told the Athenians. We are all of us our brother's keeper and the lives we ourselves live, whether for good or ill, have their effect and repercussions on our fellows around us. That fact in itself effectively answers the primary question. If Job, or any man, enquires what merit resides in righteousness above iniquity; if righteousness seems to reap no immediate reward, the answer surely is that the life of righteousness cannot help but have some effect in influencing others to righteousness and thus contribute to the work of God in calling men back to himself, whereas the life of iniquity must surely affect some among men in the direction of a wider separation from God.

It is these, men and women of the world, largely "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2. 12) whom the servants of God can so easily influence for good or ill, by the precept of their own lives, who now gain Elihu's attention. He is under no illusion as to the sorry state of mankind in general, oppressed and downtrodden by the mighty, unable to help themselves, and yet, strange paradox, quite unheeding of the help that could be theirs did they but turn to God who waits to save. Elihu has here a most eloquent picture of hopeless humanity in their distress and God waiting to bless if only they will open the door.

"By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (35. 9. 10). How true that is in all ages; men suffer and cry out because of their afflictions but will not call upon God for deliverance. They will try every possible human means of extricating themselves from their troubles but God is usually the last to be called upon, if indeed He is called upon at all. There is more than a modicum of truth in the story of the old lady who made her way to the captain of an Atlantic liner during a fierce storm, seeking re-assurance. The captain was not very

comforting. "Worst storm I've ever seen" he said "We can do nothing now but trust to the mercy of God". "Good gracious, captain" exclaimed the old lady "Are things as bad as all that?" There were times in the history of Israel when matters came to that pass and Israel cried to God only after they had tried everything else and everything else had failed. "Therefore he brought down their hearts with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death" (Psa. 107. 12-14). How much better is it for Christians to go to the Lord for deliverance right at the outset instead of relying on the arm of flesh. There may be a seeming delay in delivering; it might appear that for the time being God has not heeded; but if so the answer can only be that in the Divine wisdom there is some good purpose involved in God's apparent failure to lift the burden. The truly consecrated child of God will in that case be content to leave the issue in those higher hands and believe that "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be proved above that ye are able, but with the proving will also direct the issue, that ye may be able to bear it". (1 Cor. 10. 13. "Proving" is substituted for the archaic English "tempting" which has a different meaning to-day, and "direct the issue" is Wilson's Diaglott rendering for "make a way to escape" which seems a more fitting expression.)

A variant rendering of verse 10-11 in the Septuagint has it "*But none said, where is God that made me, who appoints the night watches, who makes us to differ from the four-footed beasts of the earth, and from the birds of the sky*". Whether it is that God teaches men more than the brute creation, as in the A.V., or makes them to differ as above in the LXX, the appeal is the same. Man, of all the living creatures on the face of the earth, stands in a unique position before God. He has qualities of intelligence, reflection, reasoning, anticipation, not possessed by any other. He alone can lift his heart to God in adoration; he alone can appreciate God's purposes intellectually and enter into co-operation with God, if he will. And Elihu's complaint is that man does not remember this when in trouble. If only he did he would realise that God surely created man for some noble purpose, some destiny which sets him apart from all other terrestrial creatures, and this being so then all the troubles of man must be of concern to God; He cannot possibly remain idle in the face of such things. And if God does not act at once, if injustice and oppression seem to be retaining the mastery, it can only be because the outworking of

the Divine purpose demands that temporary silence.

Verses 12 and 13 hint at the reason for such a silence. God has decreed that the evil which man chose at the beginning—a choice which most men repeat for themselves in daily life—must endure until, like Israel, men's hearts are broken down in labour and they realise there is truly none to help. And the righteous, the innocent, are involved in this; it could not be otherwise whilst all men inhabit one world. So Elihu says "*There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men. Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it*" (35. 12. 13). The unbelieving man cries for help but he gets no answer because his cry is addressed to a quarter which cannot save. "Vain is the help of man." And God, who is waiting to help, can take no notice of such a cry; He cannot give regard until the man in true humility and repentance comes to him. When Israel went for help to Baalim and Ashtaroth, God was silent; when they repented and, putting away their false gods, cried to him, He hastened to help them and save them.

So Elihu comes again to a climax in his argument. Of all that has gone before in this chapter verses 14-15 constitute the summing-up. Leeser's translation again puts his thoughts into cogent words. "*Although thou sayest, thou canst not see him; yet the decision is before him; and do thou wait for him. But now, because his anger has punished nothing, shall he not greatly take cognisance of the multitude of sins?*" (35. 14. 15). The whole of the discussion reduces to the one inescapable fact that man does not see what God is doing and draws the wrong conclusions therefore. Nevertheless, insists Elihu, God is a God of justice and judgment and has the situation well in hand and will act at the right time. "*The decision is before him*". It remains for Job, and for all men too, to do one thing. "*Do thou wait for him*." Despite all the seeming inconsistencies of life, the apparent failure of God to judge and curb sin and the effects of sin, the lack of protection for the righteous, the long-drawn out delay in the execution of God's promise to bring this present evil world to an end and introduce a new one "wherein dwelleth righteousness", the injunction always is "Do thou wait for him". It was said first to Job, but it is intended for all of us. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and he shall strengthen thine heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord". (Psa. 27. 14).

"*But Job openeth wide his mouth for nought; without knowledge he heapeth up words*" (35. 16). There is no doubt that Elihu feels very keenly Job's failure to realise things which seem so

crystal clear to the younger man. The trouble, he says quite plainly, is that Job has relied too much upon philosophical argument and in this his other three friends have not helped. Between the four of them there has been a great deal of heaping up of words to the detriment of quiet thinking. It were much better, Elihu thinks, that Job went quietly to God and put the entire case in his strong hands, then sat down in silence to see what God would say to him. One might almost think

that Elihu was being moved by the Holy Spirit to say a lot of things which might well have had a true and direct application to Job at that time, but which certainly were intended to come with considerable force upon all Christians in these later days, for these are just the short-comings with which we are all familiar. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass". (Psa. 37. 5).

(To be continued)

GOD OUR SAVIOUR

An Exposition of
1 Tim. 2. 4-6

With the increasing number of churches dependent upon his care, Paul found himself obliged, at times, to depute some of his authority and over-sight to other men, in whose integrity and trustworthiness he had every confidence. One of these men, near and dear to the ageing Evangelist, was "Son Timothy".

To prepare and equip this young lieutenant for these responsibilities, Paul sent him the first letter that bears his name. Timothy was but young in years in comparison with many over whom he would be called to preside, and on that account likely to be despised because of his youth. On his young shoulders responsibility was laid to "set things in order" in the Church gatherings, as well as to administer necessary discipline upon obstinate and wayward offenders both in Church affairs and in their outside public demeanour. Though Timothy may well have known the methods of Paul's own procedure in these things, it was an advantage to him to have, from the Apostle himself, this letter of authority and guidance, for it placed him, during Paul's absence, in a position in the Church second only to Paul's own.

In the Church assemblies were men of many kinds. Some of them were of Jewish birth, with all the touchy sensibilities peculiar to their race. Many were of heathen origin, and before the Gospel attracted them were brutal, rough and uncouth. Some of them were cultured men according to the standards of Greece, then prevailing. Together they would make a motley crowd, with interests almost as varied as their faces varied. It would be no easy task for Timothy (or others taking this oversight) to keep a state of peace within the assemblies, or to impress upon them the need for a pure and upright life.

Among the items of advice given to Timothy were those found at the beginning of the chapter from which we have taken our text. "I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings be made for all men,

for kings and all that are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." (V. 1 and 2 R.V.).

This may seem unusual advice to our point of view to-day, but in a day when disregard of the reigning monarch was a dangerous thing, it was expedient that such advice be tendered for the peace and welfare of the community. Most heathen peoples would pay their regards to the Imperial bust; only the Jews, as a rule, would dare to disregard the Emperor's claims. For this disregard they were punished very frequently. The Christian communities could not offer worship before Cæsar's effigy, but Imperial resentment could be tempered and softened by causing it to be publicly known that they were praying to their God for the welfare of the Emperor and his government. All legally permitted religious systems were expected to pray to their respective gods for the blessing of their God upon the Empire and its Emperor. Paul's advice to Timothy was that this practice should be encouraged and practised publicly—not because it needed those prayers to persuade God forcefully to interfere in the affairs of the nations, but that they should not incite or aggravate the Imperial petulance unduly. God's control over the affairs of the nations would go on, and influences from the higher sources had gone out at times, in earlier days, and curbed or modified royal and Imperial proclamations, and could do so again.

Proceeding, Paul says "For this (public prayer) is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . ."

Paul says, as the ground and reason of his assertion concerning the salvation which God wills, that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men . . ." Was there anyone in Paul's day who said that there was more than one God?

Indeed yes! That there was but one God was a belief peculiar only to Christian and Jew. Every other nation, people and tribe, the wide world through, had its god or many gods. Greece, Egypt and Rome numbered them by hundreds—each with its own province and attributes. For what purpose did the peoples approach or appease these myriads of gods? To protect them in danger; to give victory in war; to provide food and all necessities, to act, in all cases, as a watchful dispensing Providence—in a brief word, to give them their daily bread, in peace and quietness of life.

Did any claim that there was more than one Mediator between the high gods and men? Yes, assuredly! This was a belief gaining greater currency every day, against which Paul warns Timothy at a later stage of his advice (Chap. 6. 20-21). More particularly Paul combats this thought in his letter to the Colossians. Heathen philosophers had claimed that there were many intermediary ranks of intelligences between the highest authority (whatever its name may be locally) and the level of brutish carnal man. Some initiates into these things claimed inner knowledge (*gnosis*) of these ascending and descending ranks, and by their activities some of these thoughts had invaded the Colossian church (Col. 2. 8-20). Heathen religions had many of these intermediaries, of which the lower interceded for their devotees before the higher, and the higher before the highest, till their prayers eventually reached the pinnacle of all power. For what did they intercede? For food, for raiment, for home, and homeland—for all those things that made up the round of life. The god who was accounted the dispenser of these things was their Preserver and Saviour. The intermediary who interceded on their behalf was their patron deity, and to both of these higher powers their crude reverence was expressed.

Paul had made contact with this pantheon of gods previously, notably at Athens, where among its numerous altars he found one inscribed to "an unknown God" (Acts 17. 22-31). Eliminating the whole hierarchy of these intermediaries, Paul told them "He is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being".

Again at Lystra Paul had contact with a rude people which reacted immediately to his kindly act, (the healing of the impotent man) by naming the Apostles Jupiter and Mercury, (two among many of these intermediaries) before whom they would have done sacrifice. In his amazement and horror at such an unexpected consequence, Paul told them these things had come about because God had suffered the nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, though they worshipped and invoked their many gods, through their numerous

intermediaries, it was not these gods but the Living God—the God who made heaven and earth—who had fed them. "*He did good, and gave you from heaven, rain and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness . . .*" (Acts 14. 8-18). God had sent his sun and rain upon both the just and the unjust, and had preserved the nations alive through the centuries. God had been, and still was the Saviour of men—the Preserver and Maintainer of such life as there was in these rude barbaric times of ignorance. It was to dispel some of this ignorance that Paul had been sent among the nations, to teach them that "*though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or on earth, as there are gods many and lords (intermediaries) many . . . to us there is one God, the Father; of whom are all things, and we for him; and one Lord (one intermediate) Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and we (made nigh to God) through him.*" (1 Cor. 8. 5-6).

If God is thus the Provider and Saviour of all men through the bounties of all natural resources, we may easily understand a later reference to these self-same things when Paul says "*we trust in the Living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe.*" (2 Tim. 4. 10). To the believer there was a 'plus' or 'special' factor. Something was common to believer and unbeliever alike; but something else was 'special' to him that accepted the message of the Living God. The whole creation was his charge, but saints were his peculiar care. The knowledge that the nations needed (whereby they might be saved) was that there was but one God—the Living God—and one Mediator between God and them, himself having been Man, Who had given himself a Ransom-price for all.

Timothy was being sent by Paul into Macedonia—a province in which the very notions against which he had apprised Timothy had prevailed. Timothy was therefore fore-warned and put on his guard against what to expect when he arrived at his journey's end, and also what he ought to do to guard against giving unnecessary offence to the fickle susceptibilities of those exercising authority there.

The key to the right understanding of this reference to God our Saviour, who willeth that all men should be saved, is found in that little word 'one', twice repeated, applied by Paul to both the Living God, and to his Son. It implies, by comparison, the many gods of the heathen nations around, which, to the darkened minds of these people, were their protectors and Saviours. The salvation which God willed for them was their deliverance from the superstitious reverence paid to all these varying grades of gods, so that they might know him as the one Universal and Living

God—the provider for all men—and approach him through Jesus Christ, his Well-beloved Son.

How apt is the statement of Paul to the Thessalonians (natives of the very country to which Timothy was being sent)—“... ye turned unto God, from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth

us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess. 1. 9-10 R.V.). In so doing, the Thessalonians had become participants in both the ‘common’ and ‘special’ salvation, a privilege then open to all the nations and peoples everywhere, who would heed and obey the call of God to the Light, as the Thessalonians had done.

The Three Worlds

Here is an interesting extract showing how the Scriptural thesis of the “three worlds” was understood and propounded as far back as the year 1806.

* * *

Francis Lambert, a Roman Catholic ecclesiastic of some eminence, was born in France about the beginning of the eighteenth century. He was the author of a work on the prophecies, which was first published in Paris, 1806. On the phrase “end of the world,” he writes: “In order that we might rightly understand what the Holy Scriptures announce concerning the destruction of the ungodly, and the punishments which are to fall upon apostate Gentiles, we must distinguish the great judgments of God, which are the consummation of three periods which the Scriptures call worlds. The first of these worlds commenced at the Creation, and was ended by the Deluge, which is the first universal judgment pronounced by the Creator against all flesh. Peter calls this first world ‘the world that then was,’ or the old world. The second world commenced when Noah left the ark with his family to re-people the earth. It comprehends the time from Noah to Moses,

before the Law—from Moses and the giving of the Law to the Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that which shall elapse from thence till the reprobation of the Gentiles, and the return of the Jewish people—that is, the time which shall intervene between the First and Second Advents of our Lord. This second period, or rather the last portion of it, is often called by the sacred writers ‘the last times’—the last days. It was in reference to this corrupted world (or age) our Lord said to Pilate: ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’ In fact, it will not be until the third world, or ‘the world to come,’ as Paul calls it, that the kingdom of the Messiah, so often spoken of in the Scriptures, will be established. This second world, which still continues, will be ended by a judgment which is called by Malachi ‘the great and terrible day of the Lord.’ Then the Lord will ‘shake the heavens and the earth’—of, as it is immediately explained, ‘will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.’ (Hag. 2. 21.) In fine, the third world, which is yet future, is that which the Apostle calls ‘the world to come’; or (Gr.) ‘the habitable earth to come.’ (Heb. 2. 5.)”

(Taylor's “Reign of Christ on Earth,” p. 284.)

A NOTE ON MATT. 12.43

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out...” (Matt. 12. 43).

What is the meaning of “dry places”? Why should be dispossessed demon desire to avoid?

Jesus had in mind a very popular idea, to the effect that evil spirits shunned the crossing of water, and were unable to negotiate the passage of rivers or streams. This idea, so obviously absurd to us with our greater knowledge of the nature and powers of both holy and evil spirit beings, was a tradition, but very real to the people of our Lord's day. This verse is an interesting example of the fact that Jesus sometimes spoke to the people within the framework of the common thought of their own day—not that He him-

self necessarily endorsed these fables and legends, but used them in illustration of the truths He wished to inculcate. In referring to this popular idea of the evil spirit seeking a place of rest remote from the imaginary dangers of running water, He brought before his hearers the obvious sequel—that if the cleansed man's mind has been left empty and not occupied by the Spirit of God, the dispossessed demon would return from his wanderings, and settle down in the safety of his former home; and the last state of that man, said Jesus, would be worse than the first.

A homely illustration, built upon a Rabbinical fable having no basis in fact, but capable of teaching a vital spiritual truth. When the evil spirit is cast out, let the mind be filled with that which will prevent such a calamity as demon obsession ever befalling the man again.

SARAI—PRINCESS WITH GOD

She was born and brought up with a family devoted to the worship of the Moon-god. Her name, Sarai, or Sarratu in her native tongue, was a title of the moon-goddess, consort of the Moon-god to which her native city, Ur of the Chaldees, was dedicated. Her sister's name, Milcah, Malkatu in the native tongue, was a title of the goddess Ishtar, the planet Venus. Her grandfather's name, Tarakhu, which is Terah in Hebrew, means sacred to the Moon-god. And her uncle's name, Abu-ramu, in Hebrew Abram, whom she married, was a title of the Moon-god himself. When Joshua told Israel that Terah and his forebears dwelt on the other side of Euphrates in old time, and served other gods, (Josh. 24.2), he had access to sources of knowledge no longer existing but he spoke truth. Terah was an idolator; he worshipped and served the gods of the Sumerians and Akkadians, the apostate sons of Ham and of Shem in the land where still stood the Tower of Babel. The faith of his ancestors, of Shem and Eber and Peleg, meant nothing to him. And so his sons Haran and Nahor and Abram grew up to be idolators too, and when Haran died at an early age and his brothers married his two daughters they continued in their devotions to Sin the Moon-god of Ur.

There came a time when Abram and his wife Sarai turned away from that idolatrous worship and found God. The circumstances of that finding we do not know. Jewish traditions speak of Abram looking first at the sun in the heavens, visible symbol of the sun-god Marduk, and watching it set, and realised there was no god there; then beholding the moon in the evening, visible symbol of the Moon-god Sin, seeing it also hastening to its setting, and knew that Sin was no god either. Then he began to realise that God was transcendently beyond all these visible things and yielded his adoration, and so God revealed himself to him. It may have been like that. Perhaps though he read in the ancient records of his family of men who long ages before had walked with God, of Enoch, of Noah, of Shem, and so accepted the faith his own father and grandfather had rejected. However it came about, when Sarai appears upon the stage of Bible history she is already a woman devoted to God, her past life of idolatry behind her, and only her name as a reminder—and in due time God changed that name.

Abram was probably about fifty years of age when God called him to leave Ur of the Chaldees

and go to a land that He would show him, and Sarai ten years younger. Her father Haran was already dead—he was seventy years old when she was born. But Terah her grandfather was still alive, and it must have been under his direction that the family settled in the Syrian town of Haran some six hundred miles from Ur instead of continuing the remaining four hundred miles into Canaan. The reason is not difficult to perceive. Haran was the other great city of the far-flung empire of the sons of Shem which was also sacred to the Moon-god. Whatever it was that decided Terah to leave Ur with his family it was not dissatisfaction with his idolatry; he settled in another city where he could practise it still.

There was probably another reason. Certain indications point to the district of Haran as the original homeland of Abraham's ancestors. Four successive names in the family line, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Haran (Gen. 11. 20-26) are those of ancient towns in that area; in fact the town of Haran, where Abraham settled awhile, is still in existence today! It almost seems as if these men were named in memory of the homeland from which the family came, perhaps in the days of Eber or earlier. Terah may have felt he was coming back to his own.

Twenty-five years later Terah died and Abram, now free to please himself, immediately set out for Canaan. Thus Sarai, who all her life had been accustomed to the amenities and refinements of the civilisation in which she had been born—for Haran, today little more than a village, was at that time, like Ur, a wealthy and highly civilised city with all the luxuries that heart could desire—had now to face the life of a nomadic cattle-breeder's wife. Henceforth for the rest of her hundred and twenty-seven years she was for the most part to dwell in tents.

It says much for Sarai's character that she thus embraced a life which must have been irksome in the extreme. From now on she must follow her husband wherever he went, wandering through Canaan from Sichem to Moreh and from Moreh to Bethel and from Bethel to Beer-sheba and from Beer-sheba into Egypt and then all the way back again to Bethel and then to Hebron and then to Kadesh and Shur and Gerar on the way to Egypt once more and then back to Beer-sheba and finally to Hebron where she died. Abraham had his fixed faith in the promise of God to sustain him but what had Sarai? Not even the child of promise through whom all families of the earth were

to be blessed, for as yet she was still barren and no real hope that a child could ever be born! And there were times when even her husband, with all his reputed faith in God, failed her. Within five years of entering Canaan they were driven by famine to emigrate to Egypt, and it was here, at seventy years of age, that her beauty attracted the attention of the royal court, and the ruling Pharaoh of the time exercised the customary rights of ancient kings and took her into his harem on the strength of Abram's assertion that she was his sister. Abram had feared that the Egyptians would kill him to secure possession of Sarai had they known of the true relationship, but he need not have been apprehensive. As soon as the truth was known, Pharaoh restored him his wife with a well-deserved reproach for having deceived him. But it must have been a trying time for Sarai.

Another five years and Sarai gave up hope of a child. To what extent she shared her husband's faith in the Divine promise of an heir who would be the seed of the promise does not readily appear; perhaps her interest lay more in the direction of a son who would inherit Abram's now not inconsiderable estate. Her chagrin was probably not mitigated by the fact that her younger brother Lot had now become the father of two daughters. At any rate she decided to invoke the law of the land of her birth, one that was customary in such cases. She would give her husband one of her own slave-girls, and the fruit of that union would be counted as her own son and become Abram's legal heir. The girl selected was one they had acquired when in Egypt and brought back with them; although described in Genesis as an Egyptian, the name Hagar is a Hebrew one and it is very possible that Hagar was of Semitic birth and therefore racially akin to Abram and not true Egyptian, descended from Ham. Semitic infiltration into Egypt was very pronounced at the time and there is nothing improbable in this.

The plan miscarried. Hagar became the mother of a boy all right, much to Abram's delight and satisfaction, but, not unnaturally, Sarai became exceedingly jealous. Even before the child was born, she "took it out" on Hagar, who thereupon ran away and only returned after being urged by the angel of the Lord, who had found her lost in the wilderness. Another aspect of Sarai's character, and an unpleasant one, came to light; it is probable that for the next fourteen years the household was not a happy one and Abram must have been hard put to it at times to keep the peace.

But the longest road has its turning. At ninety years of age, long after Sarai had abandoned all

hope, the unbelievable happened. She was to become a mother! A year previously, the angel of the Lord had appeared to them both and announced that the promise of the Lord, which never fails, was about to be fulfilled. As indication that a momentous happening was in prospect the Lord had already changed their names. Abram with its pagan association was gone, replaced by Abraham, which means father of many people. The Sumerian Sarai, goddess of the moon, was gone and replaced by Sarah, which in Hebrew is Princess. So God's Princess bore to the father of many peoples Isaac, the child of promise, through whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed—for of Isaac according to the flesh came Christ the son of David. Sarah knew nothing of all this but to whatever extent she shared her husband's faith in the promises of God she must have been conscious of an abounding happiness that she had at last been brought within the sphere of the purposes of God.

Sadly, however, the old jealousy asserted itself. At the ceremonial feast associated with the weaning of Isaac, Sarah happened to see Ishmael, the fourteen-year old son of Hagar "mocking" (Gen. 21. 9). The word here used, "*tsachaq*", has the meaning of playing, sporting, jesting or laughing light-heartedly. Instances are Exod. 32.6 where the people "*rose up to play*". Jud. 16.25 where Samson "*made sport*" and Gen. 26.8 where Isaac was "*sporting*" with his wife. In this case it would seem that Ishmael was "larking about", as we would say, with the child Isaac. The sight reminded Sarah that the presence of Ishmael could be a threat to her own son's supremacy. By law, Isaac was the undisputed heir, but knowing of her husband's fondness for his elder son, she may have feared the outcome. At any rate, she demanded of Abraham that he banish both Hagar and Ishmael from the family home, for, said she scornfully, "*the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac*". Abraham was reluctant, but in the end he gave in, and the pair were expelled—probably only to some distant part of Abraham's far-flung estate, for when Abraham died Ishmael and Isaac joined together in the burial ceremonies. It seems that the antagonism was only on the part of Sarah, and it is a sad reflection on her character.

So far as is known, Sarah had no more children. Something like fifteen years after Isaac's birth came news of her sister Milcah (Gen. 22.20) who since they had separated back in Ur some sixty-five years earlier had given birth to eight sons—one of whom was father of Rebekah, one day to be Isaac's bride. That news did nothing to improve her obviously jealous nature. It would be about this time that Abraham took the con-

cubines mentioned in Gen. 25.6. Later on, after Sarah's death, he married Keturah—probably a young woman of his household—and by her had another six sons. He must have been about 160 years of age when he fathered the last one.

Sarah died at Hebron at a hundred and twenty-seven years of age. The account says "*Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her*" (Gen. 23.2). One wonders if that phrase infers that they were no longer living together, or merely that possible ill-health confined her to her tent in Hebron whilst Abraham toured the land seeing to his many interests. It was, anyway, a quiet and inconspicuous ending. A complex character, capable of great endurance and faithfulness on the one hand but fiercely intolerant and jealous of any threat to her own interests. As with all of us, Sarah had qualities to admire and faults to deprecate. The writer to the Hebrews says that Sarah received strength to conceive seed by the power of faith and because she trusted in the verity of God's promise. That does not show up

so well in the Old Testament account but it could well be true. When the angel told Abraham of the coming child Sarah "laughed" in the tent behind him, and when taxed denied that she had laughed "*because she was afraid*". But that "laugh", like Ishmael "mocking" is *tsachaq* and could mean that she laughed light heartedly and only semi-disbelievingly. Perhaps the realisation of faith in the promise came a few hours later when she had time to think about it a little.

Sarah commenced life an idolator, amid all the luxury and glitter of a pagan civilisation which offered all the good things of this life, without God. She ended her life in a nomad's tent after long years of hardship, disappointment and frustration, but immeasurably richer in her possession of the Divine favour and the honour of being a channel through whom the seed of blessing all families of the earth will come. The proud city of Ur has long since crumbled to dust; Sarah the princess lives in the gallery of faith for ever.

SHIPS OF TARSHISH

One of the minor—and not very important—mysteries of the Old Testament is the location of the land of Tarshish, chiefly notable for the number of occasions "ships of Tarshish" are mentioned. Since these ships are recorded as setting out, alternatively, from the coastal ports of Canaan which meant they headed westward toward Spain, and from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea which implies southward voyages to Africa or India, they cannot all have been going to one single location called Tarshish. The usual—not very illuminating—conclusion has been that Tarshish was somewhere a long way away or perhaps a general name for all the distant places of the earth.

A closer examination of all relevant texts indicates that Tarshish as a place-name seems to refer to some definite land or country to which ships could, and did, go from Canaan, but that the expression "ships of Tarshish" denotes a special kind of ocean-going merchant vessel irrespective of destination.

The most illuminating reference is that in Jonah 1.3. Jonah "*rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa: and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord*". This implies that Tarshish was one definite land, that it was reached by sailing westwards through the Mediterranean from Joppa,

and that it was a great distance away, so far away that the influence of God did not reach there and Jonah would be beyond his reach. The sea trade in the time of Jonah was in the hands of the Phoenicians, whose central trading city was Tyre, on the coast not far from Israel. Their merchant vessels went regularly to Spain, and out of the Mediterranean into the Atlantic Ocean and thence to West Africa, to Britain, and to the West Indies and South America—which the Phoenicians had discovered, and with which they had established trading relations, more than two thousand years before Christopher Columbus in turn sailed to America. The question is, which of these lands is the Tarshish of Jonah?

A clue is afforded by Ezek. 27.12 which lists the commodities the people of Tyre imported from Tarshish—silver, iron, tin and lead. Of the possible contestants for the title, the only land which produced all four of these metals in ancient times was Britain. Spain could supply silver, iron and lead but not tin. Practically all the tin used in the ancient world came from Cornwall in Britain, for which reason the British Isles were known to the ancients as the Tin Islands. Silver came from Cornwall, lead from Cornwall and Wales, and iron from Sussex. Jer. 10.9 says that "silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish" for the manufacture of idols. The reference is to extremely thin sheets of metal made to adhere to the surface of wooden idols by

a process which is not now understood and could not be repeated today. Apparently Britain was a manufacturing nation even in those far-off days and British craftsmen found a market for their skill in producing this less than paper-thin silver sheet for the idol constructors of the Middle East.

Ezek. 38.13 refers to the "merchants of Tarshish and her villages" (mistranslated "young lions" in the A.V.) If Tarshish is Britain the "villages" would be the outlying islands, the Isles of Scilly, Wight, Man and Thanet (then an island although now joined to Kent) all of which were well known to the Phoenicians, Scilly and Wight being used as landing points and warehouse bases. Napoleon's scornful reference to Britain as a "nation of shopkeepers" has an earlier parallel here; Tarshish was a nation of merchants.

Two other references to Tarshish as a locality are Psalms 72.10 and Isaiah 66.19. In both cases there is an association with islands or coastlands (the Hebrew word can mean either) and the inference is that the distance is great; Tarshish is a long distance away.

In Isaiah's memorable foreview of the destruction of Tyre at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, fulfilled some two centuries after that prophet's death (Isa. ch. 23), the inhabitants of Tyre are recommended to flee to Tarshish as the only means of escape from the all-conquering Babylonians (Isa. 23.6). The "ships of Tarshish" are told that Tyre can no longer receive them and conversely that ships will not longer come to Tyre from Tarshish. All this confirms what is already well known to have been the case, that in pre-Christian times the Phoenicians carried on an active and lucrative trade with the south of Britain.

A final clue is given by the conferring of the name "tarshish" to a certain precious stone known to the Israelites. In the A.V. the word is translated "beryl", occurring seven times, twice as one of the stones in the High Priest's breastplate (Exod. 28.20; 30.13), three times in Ezekiel describing the glorious brilliancy of the cherubim and once in Daniel describing the radiance of the visiting angel. The beryl is a green stone and quite inappropriate to the texts in which the word

occurs—an angel shining in a green glory is hardly the kind of vision one would expect. It is believed by scholars that "tarshish" really refers to amber, which has a translucent golden appearance and was much prized by the ancients; the colour of amber is much more appropriate to the references in Ezekiel and Daniel. (The three instances where "amber" does appear in the O.T., as a translation of *chashmal*, actually refer to brightly polished copper or electrum, a gold-silver alloy.) Now the amber used by the ancients in the Middle East came only from one source, Britain. The British obtained it from Scandinavia, where it had and still has its origin. Thus "tarshish stone" obviously meant the precious stone obtained from Tarshish, and this seems to pin-point Britain as the land known by that name.

"Ships of Tarshish" are associated with Tyre, with King Solomon and King Jehoshaphat. It is evident that the name was applied to large ocean-going merchant vessels of the type engaged in the trade with Britain irrespective of the part of the world to which they sailed. Thus in 2 Kings 10.22 and 2 Chron. 9.21 Solomon was associated with Hiram king of Tyre in sending a fleet of such ships to Ophir for gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. The round trip occupied three years and Ophir is thought to have been located either in South Africa or in India, probably the former. Again in 1 Kings 22.48 and 2 Chron. 20.36 Jehoshaphat essayed to repeat this expedition and had ships built for the purpose but they were wrecked before they set out. Perhaps the Israelites were not such good shipbuilders as the Phoenicians of Tyre! Isaiah 23 and Ezek. 27.25 associate ships of Tarshish with Tyre, and Psalm 48.7 speaks of such ships being wrecked by the east wind, which is almost certainly the "Levanter" of the Mediterranean, so that these ships did not belong to the Ophir trade but to that carried on in the west—Spain, Britain, Central America, West Africa. It might well have been that in those far-off days, nearly three thousand years ago, our ancestors in Britain knew something of and had contact with the lands and peoples made familiar to us in the pages of the Old Testament.

Of the many archaic words in the Authorised Version, words in current use in 1611 but which have now dropped out of the English language, perhaps "sith" in Ezek. 35. 6 is the most strange. "Sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee". The word "sith" was a term used in the same sense as we now use "since" or "whereas". The same Hebrew word "*im*" is rendered

"since" in Jer. 23. 38 "Since ye say, the burden of the Lord . . ." and "whereas" in Job 22. 20 "Whereas our substance is not cut down". The word ceased to be used over two centuries ago and it is probable that many have passed it in their Bible reading without really knowing just what it means.

SECOND ADVENT DOCTRINE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The manner of the Second Advent has been visualised in various fashions at different periods in the Christian era. The early Church believed that those living at Christ's coming would see him descending from the skies, much as the disciples had watched him ascending from the Mount of Olives. This impression persisted for the greater part of the Age, assisted no doubt by the fact that no one realised that the celestial world differs so much from the terrestrial that the idea of a terrestrial organism dwelling in and returning from heaven is in fact an absurdity. Nevertheless until the beginning of the nineteenth century the original conception remained unchallenged. The Day of Judgment was thought to be a solar day of twenty-four hours and the Last Assize to be held here upon earth; what more natural than to take all the vivid symbols of Scripture literally and expect the visible appearance of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, descending to take his place upon the Throne of Judgment, assigning righteous and sinners to heaven and hell respectively, and conclude terrestrial affairs by burning up the earth and everything on it?

The first challenge to this understanding of the Divine purpose came during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the recovery of the doctrine of the pre-millennial Advent from the oblivion to which Augustine had consigned it in the fifth century. This was not universally accepted, and neither is it today, but there has been an increasing awareness that the long-promised Kingdom of God upon earth, when evil will be eliminated and the nations converted, is to be ruled by Christ as King and his Second Advent is to introduce that Kingdom. This in turn has led to the realisation of a difference in the respective destinies of the "Church" and the "world". Christ on his return must of necessity take his Church to be with himself in the heavenly sphere; this concludes the call and career of the Church in the flesh but there is still a work of evangelising and conversion to be conducted among the "residue of men" before the Divine design for humanity is complete. It was inevitable therefore that before long the impact of the Advent upon the world began to be seen to have two aspects; first the coming of the Lord *for* his Church, and second, his coming *with* his Church to the world. By the end of the eighteenth century growing interest in the Millennium and Messianic Kingdom was leading to a more serious and thorough investigation into Scriptural teach-

ing regarding the Second Advent than had before been known. Of all periods the nineteenth century was the century of Second Advent expectation; this is evidenced by the many Advent Conferences during that century, attended by leading Christians, ministers and laymen, involving a great part of the Christian world.

It would seem that the first serious presentation of the principle of the two-stage Advent was at the Albury Second Advent Conference, held at Albury Park, Sussex, England, the home of the celebrated Christian writer and thinker, Henry Drummond. This conference was convened annually between 1826 and 1830, among the participants being Joseph Wolff, the famous Jewish evangelist, and Edward Irving, founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church. The effect of this conference was such that within fifteen years over three hundred Church of England ministers were preaching the imminence of the Second Advent from their pulpits. Among the theses presented to this Conference was the view that the Second Advent would commence by the arrival of the Lord unseen by, and unknown to, the world, for the purpose of translating his Church to heavenly conditions. There would then ensue the "marriage feast" of Rev. 21 in heaven, and seven years later—this period being dictated by the then accepted chronological considerations—the Lord, with his Church, would appear visibly to the world, restore Israel to the Holy Land, and commence the Millennium. A variant view asserted a continuous change to heavenly conditions of living members of the Church during the seven years, after which the "Call of the Church" would close. During this seven years the world was to pass through the "great tribulation" which would close the Age.

Albury was followed by the Powerscourt Conference, held fortnightly between 1830—1833, at which what had now become known as the "secret rapture" or "pre-tribulation" Advent doctrine was repeated and developed. An active associate was J. N. Darby, joint founder of the "Brethren" movement. Another ardent exponent at the time was William Cunningham, celebrated Scottish Congregational minister and writer on prophetic subjects. By 1834 six regular journals devoted to "Second Advent truth" had come into existence in Britain and sixty books on the subject published. There was, as might be expected, considerable difference of opinion as between the traditional single event, "in a moment", "catas-

trophic", belief, and the doctrine of the two-stage Advent with its preliminary unseen coming for the Church, but the newer view made headway, particularly among the Evangelical element in the Christian community, and before long there were detailed discussions as to the length of the "unseen" period, alternatively seven or three-and-a-half years, and whether some of the "saints" would or would not go through the "great tribulation". But in it all a slow progress towards a more realistic view of the nature of the Advent was being made. By the middle of the century Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey was proclaiming that the resurrection of Christ was to a spiritual, celestial, nature without the terrestrial body, thus bringing understanding of the Advent more into accord with New Testament statements regarding the spiritual world.

The last great Conference, the Mildmay Conference of 1878, was held in the belief that the Advent was at hand. Addresses by the many speakers, including J. Hudson Taylor, Horatius Bonar, and the Earl of Shaftesbury, stressed various aspects which had emerged during the immediate past. The London "Christian" at the time commented upon *"the remarkable and widespread change of Christian opinion and belief which has taken place with regard to the close of this dispensation during the past thirty years, and the progress of what we believe to be the truth as to our Lord's return"*.

The general decline in Christian belief characteristic of this present century has precluded the maintenance of that level of expectation, but there is a solid core of (generally) Evangelical ministers and others who keep it alive. Thus Dr. Herbert Lockyer in *"The Rapture of Saints"* propounds two phases of the Advent, with seven years between them, which he designates *parousia* and *epiphania*, (meaning, respectively, presence and appearing). He likens the two aspects of the one Advent to the events of the return to England of Charles II after his exile; first a private consultation with his supporters to discuss the plan of campaign, the nation knowing nothing about this, and second, his presentation and revelation to the nation as their returning king. Of the first stage he says *"Apart from his own, none will be aware of such a great event and Advent"*, and referring to the voice of the Archangel *"the accents of this majestic voice will not be detected by a deaf world"*. Theo. M. Bamber, late minister of Rye Lane Chapel, London, in *"His Personal Return"* outlines the current shades of belief in his experience, all on the basis of a seven year period commenced by the coming of the Lord for his Church and ended when he *"proceeds with them from the air down to the earth to set up the*

Millennium". He notes the variant view, which has survived from the days of Albury, of a gradual resurrection of the living saints; *"the rapture will be, as far as the company of believers on earth is concerned, over a period..... like the principle of the harvest field..... as the saints are ripened and matured so they will be drawn up to meet the Lord"*. Space forbids the quotation of similar examples but this is enough to show that the principle of the two aspects of the Second Advent is well established.

Concurrently with all this, similar developments were taking place on the American continent. The first Second Advent Conference was held at Boston in 1840 but prior to this the work of the Baptist minister William Miller, afterwards to expand into the Adventist movement, was well under way. Miller's understanding of the Millennium was not the same as that current in Britain; he expected a literal descent from the skies and translation to heaven of all true believers followed by an immediate Day of Judgment and destruction of all things terrestrial; consequently the developing idea of a two-stage Advent found no place in his thoughts. It was not until the disappointment of 1844, when the expected "catastrophic" descent from heaven failed to materialise, that the thoughts of the Adventists turned in this direction. Two of the then leaders, Edson and Crosier, pondering over the problem, decided there was nothing wrong with their chronological calculations but that they were looking for the wrong thing. They had failed to realise that prior to the Lord's open manifestation in glory to the world there must be a behind-the-scene "cleansing of the sanctuary" in which he would examine the lives and deeds of all living, and pronounce judgment, afterwards leaving the "temple of God" to execute that judgment at his open revelation. There was another view, that in 1844 Jesus "rose up" and shut the door to further probation, and came to the "Ancient of Days" to receive his kingdom and authority to reign; at a later date unspecified he would stand up as Michael to assert his power and raise the dead. A further variation, advanced by Apollos Hale, Joseph Turner and others, was that in 1844 Christ had come spiritually and unseen as a Bridegroom, taking his throne in preparation for his actual revelation to the world. It is easy, as some antagonists have done, to dismiss these conclusions as mere theories invented to explain away the failure of the 1844 date, but unfair. These men were earnest students of the Scriptures and they had logical reasons for the theses they put forward. In their varying explanations there was one area of common ground—their realisation that to satisfy the Scriptures there has

to be a preliminary phase of the Advent unperceived by the world in general prior to our Lord's open revelation to all men.

Although the main body of Adventists eschewed "date fixing" after 1844 — and the movement continued to grow despite the disappointment, being represented today mainly by the Seventh Day Adventist Church—some of the rapidly disintegrating smaller groups did continue to propound new dates. 1847, 1854 and later dates all had their advocates until in 1870 Nelson H. Barbour and William H. Paton, co-editors of an Adventist journal "*The Midnight Cry*" presented a view of the Advent which brought into one focus the differing views which had originated on the two sides of the Atlantic.

For twenty years prior to Barbour the doctrine which had developed in Britain, based upon a primary unseen coming for the Church and a secondary visible one to the world, had seeped into America, largely in consequence of the extension of the "Brethren" movement into that continent, and with its more logical view of the Millennium was making an impact upon the earlier Millerite theology. Barbour and Paton, although Adventists, advocated the Bible principle of a Divine purpose for the Church of this Age as distinct from the general work of world-conversion in the next, and had also grasped the principles of the distinction between human and spiritual natures and of the essentially Divine and celestial, therefore non-human, nature of the resurrected Christ, like Dean Stanley of London twenty years earlier. On this foundation these two found reasons for declaring that the unseen phase of the Advent which they believed began in 1844 would terminate in 1874, and the second phase, in which the Lord would be manifested in glory and initiate the Millennium, would commence on that date. They were, however, members of a relatively obscure Adventist sect and their influence correspondingly limited outside the Adventist movement. When 1874 passed without the expected Millennium an adjustment was made to 1878, on the basis that the events of the Second Advent were to parallel those of the First in duration. Thus the periods between the birth, baptism and ascension of Jesus were thought to correspond to the years 1844, 1874, and 1878 and the preliminary unseen phase of the Advent was to cover this period. They proclaimed that in 1874 the Lord came into the "middle-heaven", the "air" of 1 Thess. 4, as king, and until 1878 would be raising the "sleeping saints"; at the latter date the rapture of the living ones would take place.

In 1876, Barbour and Paton were joined by Charles T. Russell, only twenty-four years of age

but destined to found the world-wide Bible Student movement for which his name is celebrated. He shared their view of the invisible Advent, but he also saw clearly, what Barbour and Paton had hardly begun to sense, that the ultimate purpose of the Advent was the conversion to Christ and consequent reconciliation to God of all from among earth's millions who could be reached with the Gospel. None would be eternally lost who could possibly be persuaded to accept the salvation that is in Christ. This involved the dead as well as the living, for many had died without hearing of the "only Name". The old Adventist controversies as to whether human probation ended in 1844 or 1847 or 1874—a doctrinal theme known as the "closing of the door"—were nullified when C. T. Russell showed that human probation continues to the end of the Millennium and none who have lived at any time in earth's history will escape the challenge of Christ and a full and fair opportunity to accept Christ. He was not the first to advocate future probation; the doctrine had been known and urged from the beginning of the Age, and at this very time the Congregational Church in America was in the throes of an internal upheaval—known as the Andover controversy—on this very subject; but he was the first to show that the purpose of the Millennium and of the reign of Christ upon earth was for this final probation of all men preparatory to the elimination of sin and sinners from Divine creation and the culmination when Christ shall be "all in all".

The combination of the convictions of these three became the key which harmonised the varied views of the past. (In later years their paths diverged into separate movements but by then the basic fusion of fundamental principles was accomplished and has not since been lost.) The first work of the Advent is the gathering of the Church, a work unseen by and unknown to the world in general, who know not that the Lord as Chief Reaper is present gathering his own. The Evangelical view that during this period the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn from the earth and the Antichrist arise to weld all earthly powers into one vast controlling system opposed to God, and the Adventist belief that during this period Christ officiates, as King and Judge in the middle heavens, "in the air", preparing to bring the world into judgment, were together rationalised into an understanding of the prophecies concerning the "Time of the End" which showed that the evil forces of this world combine to resist the incoming Messianic Kingdom, that the world itself encompasses its own judgment by its own heedless selfish course, moral, social, political, economic, so that at the

end it can only be saved from disaster by Divine intervention. Attempts to predict the duration of the period were given up; the original idea of seven years, still met with in some circles, was based upon certain prophecies of Daniel, and when the latest date for the rapture, 1878, passed without incident, reasons were found for suggesting that the "sleeping saints", the "dead in Christ", only, were then raised and the rapture of the remainder would be completed in the final three and a half years ending in 1881; but 1881 also passed and there were no more forecasts. The second phase of the Advent, traditionally expected to feature the visible descent of the Lord in a body of flesh surrounded by various manifestations of glory, was now realised to demand a manifestation of Divine power sufficient to convince all mankind of the fact, but a manifestation which is consistent with our Lord's Divinity and spiritual nature without necessarily

demanding a visible appearance.

As to the time aspect, the old preoccupation with chronological calculations has given place to a sober appreciation of the significance of the signs of the times in their relation to the prophetic Word. The course of world events for many decades past has been observed and compared with the Scriptures in many Christian circles and it is the correspondence between those and what is said therein as to the things that must be accomplished before the revelation of the Lord from heaven and his Church can take place that has convinced many, on a basis more sure by far than that of the old-time date-fixing, that the present is in fact the time of the initial unseen aspect of the Advent, and that the sequel, the manifestation of the returned Lord to all mankind, must follow, in measurable time, as surely as day follows night.

HOUSE OF WISDOM

"Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine: she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city—" (Prov. 9. 1-3).

The "Wisdom chapters" of the book of Proverbs, Chapters 1-9, are important to an understanding of the relation between the Father and the Son, and between Christ and his Church. It is in these few chapters that for the first time God began to become manifest to men, although that manifestation could only be said to be completely effected when the Word, made flesh, stood before men in the full sight of men and declared *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14. 9). Jewish thinkers in the centuries immediately before Christ identified the Wisdom of God with the Word of God, and began to anticipate in a vague kind of way that which became a reality when, to use John's words *"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory"*, (John 1. 14). This identification of Christ the Son with the Wisdom of God is alluded to by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 1. 24 and 30 (*"Christ the Wisdom of God"* and *"Christ Jesus, who is made unto us Wisdom of God"*).

The intimacy of this relation between the Son and the Father is eloquently phrased in Heb. 1. 3 *"Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person"*; this is evidently based upon the pre-Christian conception of the Wisdom of God. Here is one definition in chapter 7 of the *Wisdom of Solomon* (from the Apocry-

pha) *"... the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty... the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness"*. There is an anticipation here of Col. 1. 15. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation"*. Reasoning back to the 8th Chapter of Proverbs, in which Wisdom speaks to man in the first person *"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old"* (Prov. 8. 22) the early Christians began to develop theological views respecting the origin of the Son which led eventually to the great Arian controversy of the Fourth Century, when the fact that the word "possessed" in that verse might equally logically carry the meaning of "created" started a theological schism in Christendom which has never been healed.

The Book of Proverbs knows nothing of these theological distinctions over which so many Christian voices and pens have waxed eloquent down the centuries. Wisdom, in Proverbs, is the means of God revealing himself to man. Wisdom is the Word of God—the *"Logos"* of Philo—at first thought of as merely the voice of God coming from behind the veil, but later on assuming the attributes of personality, though still behind the veil. The fact that Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, claimed pre-existence with the Father: *"What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?"* *"Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"* (John 6. 62

and 17. 5), shows that the personality of Wisdom prior to the First Advent was real, and that the One who in the flesh manifested God to man for a few years (1. Tim. 3. 16) had also manifested God to man, admittedly in a far less personal manner, in the times before his flesh.

The Wisdom chapters of Proverbs, therefore, are truly descriptive of the Son administering his executive power as the one seated at the right hand of the Father, interpreting the Father to the sons of men and putting into effect the Divine Plan for human redemption and development from the Fall in Eden to the final reconciliation and entry into the everlasting Kingdom. Throughout the whole range of human history Wisdom is calling to the sons of men, extolling the virtues of righteousness and warning against the effects of sin. There is a definite structure in these chapters which corresponds very well to the great epochs of the Divine Plan. Thus at the very commencement (1—7) man is told "*The fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools (simpletons) despise wisdom and instruction*". This is basic truth and must have been the first principle God gave the first human pair in Eden. On that basis rises the three-fold structure of these chapters, three proclamations made to mankind by Wisdom, picturing three great epochs in the Divine Plan.

The first epoch is introduced in chapter 1. 20 "*Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets*". The proclamation goes on to Chapter 7 and all the time it expresses the message of God to fallen man, urging him to seek the heavenly counsel and eschew evil, but largely to no avail. "*I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded*" (ch. 1. 24). That was at the beginning; but at the end the story is still the same "*With her much fair speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she forced him*" (ch. 7. 27). Against the counsel and advice of heavenly Wisdom there is set, time and again in these chapters, the attractive influence of the world, the flesh and the devil, personified here by a seductive woman, whose "*house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death*" (ch. 7. 27). The story of Eden is repeated consistently throughout the ages down to the coming of Christ.

The Garden of Eden story has a place in this. The law of Wisdom—the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge—was certainly imparted to Adam at his creation, and there was a Tree of Life, the partaking of which would ensure continuing life. But there was an alternative and another tree, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and there was at the very least an impression given to our first parents that the partaking

of this tree would also impart wisdom, and by a shorter, easier and more pleasurable route. There is an old Sumerian legend that seems to tell of a garden, and a man and woman, and two temples in the garden; the man and woman worshipped in the wrong one and death came in consequence. That legend may enshrine a survival of the truth. Perhaps the two trees of Eden were ritual trees, the eating of the tree of life, and the forbidden fruit, ritual meals, the partaking of a meal which signified a sharing of life with God—or with the devil. Perhaps the sin of which Adam and Eve were guilty was that which formed the theme of the First Commandment—they worshipped another god!

Be that as it may, the story of Proverbs 1 to 7 is one of continued apostasy in the face of the pleadings of Divine Wisdom. Throughout the whole long period of time which separated the Fall in Eden from the coming of the man Christ Jesus Wisdom had called from behind the veil, beseeching men to turn to God, and live; but men in the main had not given heed. Up to the last moment before the birth of Jesus, the human race was, in the words of the last verse of this first section, going steadily "down to the chamber of death".

The second section, Chapter 8, is heralded by Wisdom's second proclamation. Wisdom "*standeth in the top of the high places, by the way in the places of the paths . . .*" It is better to read the Margolis translation here "*In the top of high places by the way, where the paths meet, she standeth: beside the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors . . .*" (ch. 8. 2-3). This is a more widespread and universal appeal than the first; there is the same eulogy of the virtues of Divine Wisdom but the appeal is more personal and direct. The frequent references to apostasy and evil-doing so prominent in the first section are absent from this; the impression given is that the hearers now are much more inclined to heed the voice of Wisdom than were those of the previous call. "*Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death*" (8. 34-36). That passage is paralleled by words attested by Jesus "*He that believeth on the Son hath life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3. 36). It is noticeable also that whereas in the previous section there is material prosperity promised to the one who heeds Wisdom, ("*so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine*" ch. 3.

10) the blessings here promised are of a spiritual nature ("my fruit is better than gold . . . and my revenue than choice silver" ch. 8. 19). All this leads to the conclusion that just as the first section pictures Wisdom appealing to pre-Christian mankind, when the promise to Israel, at any rate, was of material prosperity by conforming to the Covenant (see Lev. 26. 2-13) so the second section pictures the Wisdom of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, appealing throughout this present Age of the Gospel to all who will heed his words and cast in their lot with him. It is to such that the message of 8. 22-31 comes with force—the One who speaks to them was with God in the beginning; the Lord constituted him at the beginning to be the agent of his creative power and the means of his revelation of himself to men. That, after all, is what the Apostle John declared at the beginning of his Gospel "*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God . . . all things were made by him . . . and the word was made flesh*". There is a striking correspondence between Prov. 8 and John 1.

If then the first section does picture the mission of Wisdom before the First Advent and the second section the mission during the Christian dispensation, analogy would require that the third section, Chapter 9, must prefigure the mission of Wisdom during the third great epoch of God's dealing with man, the Messianic or Millennial era. Chapter 9 has a note of triumph in its call, as though Wisdom has completed a work of preparation and is now about to execute a purpose long cherished. The house is built; it has been sanctified by monuments and sacrifices. The feast is spread, and now the invitation goes out to all "Come, partake". It is easy to see in this a poetic allusion to the work of the future Age. Wisdom's house, built at last, is quite clearly the Church, the building of which has been going on steadily through this present Age, its completion constituting the signal for the end of this Age and the commencement of the next. We, members of Christ's Church, "*are built upon the foundation*

of the apostles and prophets . . . all the building . . . groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2. 20. 21). "*Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house*" (1 Pet. 2. 5). Wisdom's slain beasts are the sacrificial offerings which sanctify the house "*Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*" (Rom. 12. 1). The newly mingled wine is the new wine of the Kingdom, that to which Jesus referred at the Last Supper when He told his disciples "*I will not drink henceforth with you of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom*" (Matt. 26. 29). And the furnished table is without doubt the feast spread in the sight of all mankind in the day Messiah's Kingdom is established "*In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees . . . and it shall be said in that day Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us . . . we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation*" (Isa. 25. 6-9). The messengers have gone forth to call all to the feast "*Come eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled*" (ch. 9. 5) a call that is expressed by John the Revelator in eloquent words when he says "*And the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'. . . and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22. 17). The nature of the call is clearly shown in the next verse of Prov. 9. "*Forsake the foolish and live; and go in the way of understanding*" (verse 6). Here in this chapter is God's last word to man, spoken in that day, yet future, when all, the dead and the living, will hear the call to this feast and will make their decision, for good or for ill. "*If thou be wise*" says verse 12 "*thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*". Wisdom's task—so far as this earth is concerned—is finished when at last every man has made the final choice, when the wilfully obdurate have suffered the inevitable consequences of sin, and the righteous ushered in to the everlasting years of eternity.

"The gift that meant most to Grannie was a new Bible from six-year-old Kenneth. Kenneth had chosen it himself, and he wanted to write a message inside the front cover. He knew that was the thing to do. His father had recently been given a book by a friend and there on the fly-leaf he found what he was looking for. Though he

wasn't at all sure what it meant, he copied it carefully into Grannie's Bible, showing it to no-one. Grannie was a bit surprised to read: 'With the compliments and best wishes of the Author'—but she's quite sure the message is true, for all that!"

(Source unknown)

EVENTIDE

*"So He bringeth them
unto their desired haven"*

Two men stood almost face to face, one fateful day in old Jerusalem, around whose lives an overruling Providence purposely wove the shuttles of its mysterious Will. One was about to die a cruel and ignominious death; the other, standing by, registered an ill-considered consent thereto! Strange indeed was this state of affairs in Israel—for each man thought verily he did God service in what he did! A new order stood confronting the old, the spirit contending strongly against the letter, the reality against the shadow; and these men were the symbols of the difference!

That the Spirit of the living God indwelt Stephen there could be no doubt; for life, and words and bearing all gave testimony to that! But what was the directing motive which indwelt Saul, the consenter to a dark and cruel deed? Was this spirit of the consenter also of God, the outcome of a zeal for ancient holy things? Had Stephen been too razor-edged in the clash of ideologies in that over-tense atmosphere, and brought upon himself an unnecessary recompense from an affronted Sanhedrin? Or had that ancient and venerable estate of the Elders been too precipitate and blood-thirsty in their response?

That Stephen's mission and testimony called for zeal and holy courage none can gainsay! Half-hearted enthusiasm never generates sufficient power for new causes in the earth; and as this was the "cause par excellence", none could ever rise too much for this! Not because there had been too much zeal was Stephen in this pioneer predicament, but because God was moving in a most mysterious way his wonders to perform!

That the Sanhedrin would defend itself with all its might was surely to be expected! Did they not sit in Moses' seat, that most ancient and honourable seat of Authority, and had they not a code of laws and statutes which demanded "death without mercy" for such apostates and renegades as this man they had tried and condemned? Was not the honour of the Law, the authority of her Colleges, the traditions of the Fathers all involved in this attitude of defence? So thought one ardent mind, to say the least—and he himself should be the sharp spear-point of the defensive attack! Hence the sad catalogue of persecutions and home-breakings which followed that eventful day!

But the same sad story runs also at a lower depth, at a depth unseen and unperceived save by a high watchful Eye! An arrow from the quiver

of Divine Providence had struck home, even as the consenter watched faithful Stephen sink down in death! The dying man, far from expiring as an outcast should, possessed a peace of heart, a restfulness of mind, which betokened a soul at rest in God! How could that be, if the extreme Pharisaic claim was true? Ought not this man to have crept out of life abashed, ashamed, and as one meet for Gehenna fires? Instead he passes out triumphant, a song of rejoicing in his heart, a prayer of forgiveness on his lips! And it was this state of peace and confidence which the consenter had longed and sought for all his life, without finding it! How could that be? Why should the seeker in the old paths fail, and the turncoat in the new path find?

The probing and provoking thought was as the constantly repeated prick of the goad in the tardy oxen's flank, and forthwith the stubborn creature's will began to "kick against the pricks", to fight and curb and smother the better thought under a more intensive programme of persecution and revolt!

How marvellous and complex were the ways of Providence as it shaped the ends and purposes of these two lives! The one ready, submissive, grounded well in grace; a life already tempered and changed to an image of the Son, yet surrendered up to die as bait to catch a larger fish; a grain of wheat sown deliberately in death to win a larger and fuller return!

Truly, *"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."*

God works no injury to those who must die to serve his higher purpose! There was no loss to Stephen because his days were few by comparison with those of John! The short life and the longer life were all as parts of one great plan, and each was spent to serve the Providential end, not that of each mere man! That Providence should design to use the longer or the short was the all important thing—their times were in his hands; the disposing thereof was therefore in his care. But what an amazing sequel was the outcome of that fateful day's event!

We too are in the same providential hands! We too are dedicated to the same far-reaching Plan; who knows, another Saul may be cruising around, seeking for deeper things of God! And I, or you, may yet play a Stephen's part and be the radiant

witness of the deeper grace of God! Have I, or you, the "Stephen" heart, the same readiness?

Can we each truly say:

*My times are in thy hand
My God I wish them there,
My life, my friends, my soul I leave
Entirely in thy Care.*

*My times are in thy hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to thee.*

*My times are in thy hand,
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause,
His child a needless tear.*

SARAI AND MILCAH

*Light on an
obscure text*

There has always been some uncertainty as to the blood relationship between Abraham and his wife Sarai. Abraham's statement to Abimelech king of Gerar in Gen. 20. 12 "*She is my sister: she is the daughter of my father but not of my mother: and she became my wife*" has been taken to mean that Sarah was his half-sister, perhaps by a concubine to Terah, or by a second wife. Josephus, however, says that Sarai was a daughter of Haran, Abraham's eldest brother, and was therefore his niece. He says "...*Abraham had two brothers, Nahor and Haran: of these Haran left a son, Lot, as also Sarai and Milcha his daughters, and died among the Chaldeans... These married their nieces. Nahor married Milcha, and Abram married Sarai*" ("Antiquities" 1.6.5). Abraham's own words above quoted do not conflict with this, since the word of "daughter" is used for any female descendant of the family and what Abraham inferred might well be that Sarai was of his family although not a full sister in the strict sense of the word.

The source of Josephus' statement is unknown. There are many indications in his writings that he had access to a variant Hebrew O.T. text which is not now in existence and this might have set out the matter in more detail than does the Received O.T. Hebrew text on which our Authorised Version and most modern translations are based. In any case the information must have come in the first place from Gen. 11.27-29 which reads in the A.V. "...*Terah begat Abram, Nahor and Haran, and Haran begat Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah, in Ur of the Chaldees. And Abram and Nahor took them wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah, and the father of Iscah.*" According to this, Haran's daughters were Milcah and Iscah, but this latter name is not mentioned anywhere else.

In this connection it has been noticed that there is a striking similarity between the Babylonian cuneiform signs for Sarai and Iscah. It is now well established that the first eleven chapters of Genesis originally existed in cuneiform in something like the 23rd century BC and were translated into Hebrew at the time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. "Iscah" in Akkadian is e-su-ka, the name of a minor god. It is very possible that the translator, working nearly a thousand years after the chapter was written, misinterpreted the sign for "Sarai" and rendered it "Iscah". The signs themselves are indicated below to demonstrate the similarity. The clay tablets in which these inscriptions are written are usually very small and the characters quite minute, so that errors in reading, even by modern decipherers, are quite frequent.

 SARAI
SAR - RA - TU

 ISCAH
E - SU - KA

If there is any significance in this, the statement of Josephus is confirmed and an additional link in the chain of evidence pointing to the extreme antiquity of Genesis forged. If there had in fact been a daughter of Haran named Iscah, it would appear rather strange that nothing is said as to her future after Haran's death when that of both Milcah and Lot are described. If however Sarai should be read instead of Iscah the whole story becomes luminous. Upon Haran's death his two brothers married his two daughters and one of them, Abram, took his son into his own household. Haran was sixty years older than Abram so he could well have had a daughter ten years younger, as was Sarah, who would then have been born to Haran in his seventieth year, not unusual in those times.

GOG AND MAGOG

*An examination
of origins*

One of the most intriguing themes of prophecy in both Old and New Testaments is that of the final and unsuccessful assault of the forces of evil against the victorious powers of good at the culminations of the two Ages—this present Age in the case of the Old Testament and the yet future Millennial Age in the case of the New. In both instances the attack is associated with the names Gog and Magog and in order properly to understand the passages some knowledge of the background is necessary.

Ezekiel, chaps. 38 and 39, depict a great invading army descending upon regathered Israel dwelling unarmed in their own land and incapable of resistance save by intervention of God. This host is said to be led by Gog, of the land of Magog, and to come from the north. The Lord intervenes to deliver and the host is scattered, this event marking the full end of this present Age, the institution of the Millennial Age, and the reign of Christ over the earth.

John, in Rev. 20. 7-9, speaks of the Devil being loosed at the end of the Millennium and going forth in an attempt to deceive the nations in the four quarters of the earth, which are denominated Gog and Magog as a general all-embracing term. The resultant attack upon the forces of righteousness by those who thus ally themselves with Satan is likewise defeated and the attackers destroyed, so effecting the elimination of the last traces of evil and the ushering of redeemed mankind into the eternal state.

These are the only references to Gog and Magog in the Scriptures; Ezekiel and John both assume that their readers will readily understand who are referred to but we, two thousand years later, are not so fortunate and a certain amount of investigation is necessary.

Jewish apocryphal literature produced during the last two B.C. and the first two A.D. centuries contains quite a few references to Gog and Magog, sometimes referring to them as individuals and sometimes as the names of nations. Thus the Jerusalem Targum, commenting on Num. 11.26, says that Eldad and Medad prophesied that in the end of days Gog and Magog will come up against Jerusalem with their army and will fall by the hand of King Messiah. The Apocalypse of Baruch, 2nd Cent. A.D. has a similar statement in ch. 70.7-10. The apocryphal 4th Book of Ezra, (about A.D. 120) and the Apocalypse of Elijah (3rd cent. A.D.) also

describe this final assault of the heathen nations upon Mount Zion and the Messiah. Rabbinic literature has a number of references to Gog and Magog as leaders of a great army which attacks the faithful during the Messianic Age. These references clearly derive from the passage in Ezekiel 38/39 and it is evident that the Jews of the first Advent, who knew nothing of the Christian Gospel Age which was to precede the Messianic, expected Ezekiel's prediction to be fulfilled at the coming of Messiah and his Kingdom. The basis of the conception of the Gog and Magog invasion and its consequences is therefore to be found in the Book of Ezekiel.

Gog, of the land of Magog, in the north parts, is Ezekiel's definition. The people of Gog, whoever they are, enter the Holy Land from the north. The Book of Jubilees, (about 150 B.C.) in ch. 98 gives the position of the land of Magog as north of the Black Sea and therefore in southern Russia, the Ukraine. Josephus (Ant. 1.6.1) says that the people of Gog and Magog were the Scythians, the warlike race which originated in Central Asia and gradually moved westwards into what is now the Russian Caucasus and Turkey. The Jews in general applied the name to any unknown barbarous people from the uttermost ends of the earth. Egyptians, Arabs, Persians, Assyrians, Greeks, surrounding them on the west, south and east, they were familiar with, but these unknown people from the furthest reaches of the north they did not know. In like manner the Arabs understood by the term "Gog and Magog" the unknown nations in northern and eastern Asia, and the Koran (chaps. 18 & 21) refers to their invasion and destruction by God at the Last Day. Mahomet drew his inspirations for the Koran from the Old Testament so that we are once again taken back to Ezekiel. The question therefore arises, from whence did Ezekiel derive his allusion to the names?

This question is answered by recourse to history. Ezekiel himself, when a lad in his teens during the reign of king Josiah, was witness of a cataclysmic invasion of the Bible lands, Media, Assyria, Syria, Israel and Egypt by a horde of barbarian invaders from the far north, invaders of an unknown race never before seen in those lands. Sweeping down from the Russian Caucasus across Armenia they first attacked Media and Assyria, where Cyaxares of Media was at the time laying siege to the Assyrian capital of

Ninevah. Cyaxares made a temporary alliance with them and partly by their help destroyed the Assyrian power. Continuing through Syria and Israel, where they killed and destroyed without mercy, they were finally halted at the Egyptian frontier by Psammetik I of Egypt. After a few years occupation they were slowly pushed back whence they came and were seen no more, although for more than a century they held on to the Israelite town of Beth-shean which became known as Scythopolis in consequence.

These invaders were Scythians. The name was given by ancient geographers to a division of mankind which, originating in Central and Northern Siberia, spread eastward to give birth to the Chinese and Japanese, and westward to the Turcomans, Turks, Finns, Lapps, Hungarians and even the Basques of Spain. They were a hardy, warlike and completely ruthless race of warriors, adept horsemen, of nomadic way of life, and a scourge wherever they went. At the time of Ezekiel the area surrounding the river Volga in Southern Russia, and around the Caspian and Aral seas, was in the hands of the Scythians and it was from here that they descended upon Israel.

The Scythian people as such was composed of many tribes. Those concerned in the invasion were probably those mentioned by Ezekiel (38.2) Magog, Meshech, Tubal, Rosh (Assyrian equivalents are *Sakhi*, *Musku*, *Tubalu*. Rosh is not mentioned in any known Assyrian inscription but is confirmed by early Arabic writers as a Scythian tribe). The A.V. of Ezekiel 38.2 has it "*Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal*" but there is a mistake here in "chief prince", due originally to Jerome who knew nothing of such a tribe and took the Hebrew "*rosh*" as meaning "head". In fact "chief prince" would be *rosh nasi* as in other O.T. instances whilst in Ezekiel it is *nasi rosh* meaning prince of Rosh. The full sentence should properly read "Gog, of the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal".

The Scythians had threatened Assyria for a long time. Sennacherib in 695 BC led an expedition against the Tabalu (Tubal). Tiglah-pileser I about 1100 BC fought both Meshech and Tubal. Most of the Assyrian kings had trouble keeping them away. Finally in about the 25th year of Josiah came the great invasion which none could resist.

The federal head of this assemblage of Scythian tribes was Gog (*Gaagi* in Assyrian inscriptions). This doughty warrior lived in the time of Asshur-bani-pal of Assyria although the actual leader-

ship of the invasion was under Madyes who was the grandson of Gog. The two sons of Gog were taken prisoner by Asshur-bani-pal and held captive until the fall of Assyria. At the time of the invasion Gog was probably advanced in age so that although he is addressed by Ezekiel as head of the confederacy he may well have assigned the active conduct of the assault to the younger man.

This is the historical background, the actual happening in Ezekiel's boyhood which left such an impression on his mind that when, later in life, his prophetic consciousness was stirred by the Holy Spirit to visualise Israel's final trial of faith in the end of the Age he was inspired to clothe his prophecy in terms of the event which both he and all Israel at that time knew so well. The invasion of the Last Days was to be like that of Gog and his Scythians, but because the prophetic fulfilment on the world stage is to be so much greater and more momentous than the local illustration, every element of the prophecy in Ezek. 38-39 must be magnified and understood in terms of the wider world accordingly. The invaders of the Last Days will not be headed by a modern man named Gog, neither will they consist of Scythians riding upon horses as in the narrative; nor yet will they come—at least exclusively—from the narrow defiles of the Caucasus and cross modern Turkey to reach their goal. The leader will be the representative, not of a few Siberian tribes, but of a combination of powerful world forces; his followers not just the thousands of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, but the disciplined might of every vested interest in the maintenance of world evil, challenging the emergence upon the world scene of the incoming Messianic kingdom of God. They come, not merely to "*take a spoil and to take a prey*" as Ezekiel puts it, to gather to themselves much loot and retire with their ill-gotten gains, but to overcome and obliterate the nation and polity which at that time has begun to extend its influence for righteousness and justice in the world. They come, as did Sennacherib the Assyrian a century earlier, to dare battle with God on his own ground, and they will fail as miserably as did that haughty and unhappy monarch. The hosts of Gog in the days of Ezekiel got back safely to their own land; the Gog of the Last Days will never get back. And here Ezekiel does part from his historical analogy. "*Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel*" says the Lord through his prophet; the assembled powers of world evil will be broken there by the power of God, Israel the covenant people of God delivered from the menace, and the Kingdom of God established supreme in the earth. The fulfilment of

Ezek. 38-39 is on the world stage but with the land of Israel as its focal point.

Israel, of course, never forgot this invasion in the days of King Josiah. To a great extent Jerusalem and Judea were spared much of its horror since the invading hosts passed through the coastal strip on their way to Egypt and were speedily repulsed by the Egyptians so that no mention is made in the O.T. historical books. But the writers in Israel after the Exile remembered them as *savage barbarians from the remote parts of the world* and that is what the names Gog and Magog have always meant since; the distant and unknown peoples from the ends of the earth. So the Jews and afterwards the Christians correctly interpreted Ezek. 38-39 as describing in more or less metaphorical terms the last great conflict between good and evil at the end of the present world-age and the establishment of Christ as earth's new king, ruling in righteousness and judgment. From then onward, the power of evil is definitely broken.

That is the Old Testament presentation of Gog and Magog. What of the New!

John the Revelator, in his foreview of the Millennium or Messianic era, saw at its close an attempt to bring back the power of evil into the world. *"And when the thousand years are expired"* he says (Rev. 20.7-9) *"Satan shall be loosed out of his prison and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them to battle, the number of whom is as the sands of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them."*

The likeness of the allusion to the vision of Ezekiel is obvious. Here again is the assault upon the citadel of God's holiness by an evilly disposed people from the ends of the earth under a ruthless leader, Satan this time instead of Gog. Here again there is Divine intervention from heaven and the invaders are destroyed and the people of God delivered. The only difference is that the time setting is at the end of the Millennial Age instead of this present Age.

The key expression here is "the nations which are in the fourquarters of the earth, Gog and Magog; the emphasis here is that these are all the nations of earth to its farthest extent, all who are not included in the holy people in the Divine centre of administration. This is why they are described as Gog and Magog, the old Jewish term

for remote and unknown peoples, and not because they are necessarily evilly disposed. In fact, at the end of the Millennium, it is illogical to think that many of them are evilly disposed and the fact that Satan is depicted as setting out to deceive them again would infer that they are in fact righteously inclined. So Satan goes out *through the length and breadth of a now predominantly righteous human society to deceive if such is possible.*

Apparently Satan does succeed in deceiving some and staging some kind of rebellion against God. *"And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city"*. Nothing is said as to the number thus deceived who thus go up to war. It might be an extremely small number. The pronoun "they" refers, not to the whole number of the nations who are as the sand of the sea, but to those whom Satan succeeds in gathering together to battle. One would logically expect that after the beneficent work of the Millennial Age few, if any, would be found susceptible to Satan's wiles but the vision does indicate that some at least do ally themselves with him in a final rebellion against God. The text, however, is equally applicable be the number large or small, and the most reasonable conclusion is that out of the hosts of redeemed mankind in the whole four quarters of the earth, in number like the sand of the sea, only a very few are found so much out of accord with the principles of righteousness and so wedded to evil that they do take part in this attack. A full exposition of Rev. 20.7-9 will not be attempted at this point; suffice to say that the allusion to Gog and Magog is only to stress the fact that Satan goes to the farthest corners of the earth and reaches the most remote peoples in his attempt to win supporters. As once in history Israel faced a vast multitude of warriors inhabiting the far distant regions of the earth and knew them by the name Gog and Magog, so now at the end of the Millennium the accredited representatives of the Most High—the Church in Heaven and God's restored and converted covenant people on earth, which is what is probably indicated in Rev. 20.9 by the "camp of the saints and the beloved city"—face a vast multitude of restored and perfected humanity inhabiting the entire earth. From out of that multitude, in number like the sand of the sea, come forth the rebels, small in number but determined to achieve their object. As with the earlier assault at the end of this present Age, God intervenes; *"and fire came down from God out of heaven and consumed them"*.

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