



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

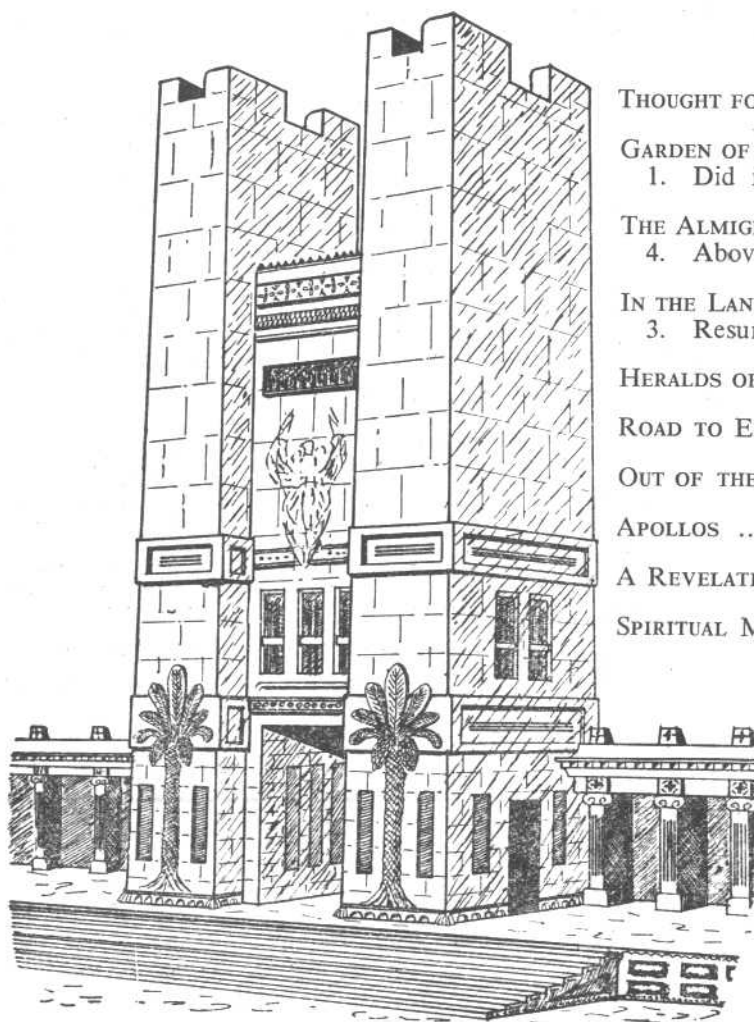
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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	2
GARDEN OF EDEN	
1. Did it really happen?	3
THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL	
4. Above all heavens	7
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN	
3. Resurrection by judgment ...	10
HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM	11
ROAD TO EMMAUS	12
OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE	16
APOLLOS	17
A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL	21
SPIRITUAL MANHOOD	23



*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

What happened to Noah's workmen? There must have been a vast army of men engaged upon the construction of the great vessel which became the means of Noah's deliverance. The transportation of the necessary material to the site of building must itself have been a task for many men; then the erection of the vessel, its interior rooms and fittings, living quarters for the family, store rooms for food, and so on. What became of these people who laboured so diligently to complete this great structure?

They all perished!

Not one of those, outside the family of Noah, who helped to build the vessel accepted the opportunity of deliverance which it afforded. There can be no doubt that the opportunity was theirs, if they would accept it in faith and belief. But not one apart from Noah and his family, did believe. And they all perished!

We may spend a lifetime working zealously and tirelessly in the service of the Lord, helping him build some system or organisation through which his work can be performed for a while, but that of itself does not guarantee our acceptance with him. We can so easily become of those who have done many wonderful works in his Name, and yet be disowned by him at the last. There is not really any salvation by works. Our acceptance with him depends upon our own personal one-ness with him, our "deadness" with him, our submission to his moulding our life and character into his likeness. These are the things that will endure when all our outward organisations and works, like Noah's Ark of ancient time, have disappeared into nothingness. For when they have served their purpose, and are waxing old, then are they ready to vanish away.

NOTICES

New feature for 1981

Twenty-two years ago we featured a series entitled "Garden of Eden", which examined the Genesis story of the creation of man and his fall into sin in some detail. Very considerable interest was expressed at the time and it is thought that after the lapse of nearly a generation the republishing of this series will be of equal interest to our present readers as well as those of longer standing who may recall the original publication and be glad to go through it again. Since there is always progress in knowledge there has been considerable revision and addition to bring the series completely up-to-date. It is hoped that many of our readers will find in this series a reasoned and satisfactory explanation of the narrative as it stands in Genesis.

Publications

Three booklets, each outlining the Divine Plan from a different viewpoint, are available, singly or in quantities on the same terms as the "Monthly", viz., voluntary donations as seen fit by the recipients, although we do ask for postal costs at least. These are:

"God's Fulfilling Purpose". A complete exposition of the Divine Plan from Creation to the end of the Millennium.

"The Golden Future". A foreview of better times to come.

"The Millennial Gospel of Jesus". Relation of our Lord's teaching to the New Testament in matters concerned with his predicted reign over the world following the end of the present Age.

A further booklet of interest is:

"The Coming of the King". An extended treatise on the doctrine of the Second Advent.

Gone from us

— ❖ —

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✠ Bro. A. Webb (Maidstone)

— ❖ —

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

GARDEN OF EDEN

1. Did it really happen

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

Strange, shadowy scene, when the world was young. So little said about it; so vague the picture which can be visualised, for none of the trappings and interests of present-day living existed then. Nothing had been discovered; nothing had been made. A man and a woman, newly awakened to consciousness of their surroundings, intelligent, impressionable, capable, but with everything yet to learn and everything yet to do. That is the Bible picture of the coming of man to the earth, and the question so often posed to-day is—did it really happen like that? Are all earth's millions really descended from one original pair, endowed with procreative powers for such purpose? And did that first human pair commit some great sin against God, a sin so fundamental that its effects remain with humanity these many thousands of years later and on account of which the misery of man is great upon him?

These are not idle questions; the validity of the doctrine of the Fall in Christian theology is important. It is put before us in the Book of Genesis as the explanation of the presence of sin and evil in the world. Nowhere in later pages of the Bible is that explanation contradicted; in several places it is confirmed. Belief in the literal accuracy of the story is not much in evidence to-day, even amongst Christians, for two principal reasons; one, that it seems incompatible with current claims of scientific research; two, that it involves accepting the dogma that all men are fallen sinners who cannot redeem themselves but need the redemptive power of a Saviour. The pride of man in his own knowledge debars many from rejecting the first and accepting the second.

The alternative to belief in the story is the adoption of the evolutionary hypothesis, that man is steadily making his way onward and upward in every sense without the help of God. The theory of human evolution has not held sway for very long—not much more than a hundred years out of all the long millenniums of human history, —and already it is beginning to be recited less confidently by many of its most ardent supporters. There can be no reconciliation between the two theses; if the evolution of man is a fact, then the Genesis story of man's creation is a fable. The evolution theory claims that life upon earth arose spontaneously from non-living matter, that chemical and electrical action between certain elements in accidental proximity to each

other set in motion a chain of happenings which resulted in the formation of molecules able to group themselves together into cells which then had the power to take other elements to themselves and multiply and grow, so constituting the dawn of life. As such assemblies of cells continued to grow they developed into varied kinds of plants on the one hand and creatures on the other, these latter acquiring self-consciousness so that they became sentient creatures—endowed with sense perception. Finally some of these creatures developed intelligence and became the first men—brutish, ape-like, showing many of the characteristics of the more primitive creatures from which they came, but nevertheless men. In all of this there is no room for a Creator; the material of the Universe just happened to be there and produced life of itself.

There is of course no proof of all this, for no one has ever observed evolution at work. The thesis was framed to explain the existence of so many varieties of animal and plant life showing at least some evidence of development from a smaller number of common ancestors, without admitting the existence of a Supreme Being who could have been the author and director of life.

The Genesis story describes the direct creation of man, as a new species of creature, by such a Supreme Being, and his immediate endowment with qualities which no other creature possesses. It claims that at his creation man was physically, mentally and morally perfect, sinless and undying. His human organism was perfectly adjusted to his environment; by means of the earth's products his metabolism was kept in constant balance so that his material body could continue as the repository of life indefinitely and eternally. He drew his continuing life from God, the source and sustainer of all life, and there was nothing to cause death. Only afterwards, consequent upon rebellion against God, was the bond of union which held him to God severed, interrupting the life-flow which sustained him, and so he became sinful, imperfect, and subject to death. The rest of the Bible makes clear that without the introduction of a Saviour sent from God, and man's acceptance of that Saviour, there is no release from this condition. Life comes from God, and is sustained by God, only the while man obeys the laws of his being. If those laws are transgressed, life ceases.

There is therefore a difference between the theory of evolution and the Bible position. Evolu-

tion claims that life arises spontaneously in the mass, produces individuals which live out their allotted life span and then die. There is no future for the individual, only for the species, the race. Man is therefore animal, despite his intelligence, having no greater purpose in Nature than any other creature. The Bible has a much more exalted view. Man is the crown and centre of terrestrial creation, all other things terrestrial having been brought into existence to constitute's man's environment, to sustain his life and promote his happiness, and all this that as an independent intelligent creature he may form a definite part of, and fulfil a definite purpose in, God's entire creation. So this present life is only the first stage of a continuous existence which will eventually attain heights undreamed of by evolutionists in their wildest speculations.

There used to be a divergent hypothesis called, at the time, "Christian evolution", which tried to combine the two views by picturing the Creator giving life by a single act to the most primitive of earthly organisms and leaving them to differentiate into the many varied forms of life now existent, so that man represents the end product of such an evolutionary chain, and in fact goes on to everlasting life as a consequence of evolution. The question has to be faced; does this explanation fit the implications of the Genesis narrative. The answer is that it does not. This theory envisages a plurality of men emerging, in different places and at different times, from their sub-human or animal ancestry. The Eden story of primeval perfection followed by degeneration into sin and imperfection is the precise opposite of this. There is also the reflection that at some point in the ancestral line of such beings there must be a point at which the son is true man and a candidate for everlasting life from the Divine standpoint whereas the father is just slightly sub-human and not therefore a candidate, which can be an anomaly biologically and is certainly objectionable ethically.

The only rational course therefore is to accept the Genesis story of the creation of man as a literally true statement of the facts. God brought into being one single human pair and from that one pair all human beings now living upon the earth are descended. It is easier now than it was a few generations ago to bring independent supporting testimony to the reasonableness and credibility of the story. So much more has been discovered in more recent years concerning the early history of man and so much more is known of the biological aspect of the case that many old-time objections have been robbed of much of their force. It used to be very generally believed that polytheism—the worship of many gods—was

practiced long before monotheism—the worship of one God—had dawned upon the world. Some said that Moses was in fact the first monotheist, and that the monotheism of Genesis only proved that the book was written no earlier than Moses' time. The claim was that monotheism was itself an evidence of the evolution of the human mind. Nowadays it is being increasingly accepted that monotheism came first; that polytheism arose as a degeneration of originally purer and loftier forms of worship. Scholars tracing back through modern knowledge of the history of Sumer, the oldest known civilisation and nation, find that the number of the gods progressively diminishes until at about the beginning of the 26th century BC only one god is known, and He identical with the One God of Abraham, Shem and Noah.

Quite apart from the eternal question of the "missing link" which has obstinately remained missing for more than a century of diligent search, it is an obvious fact that the comparative scarcity of human beings in early historical times denotes a fairly recent date for the appearance of the first men. The present three and a half thousand millions of earth's population covers most of the land surface of the planet save the Antarctic regions, but less than three centuries ago world population was only five hundred millions, and it was estimated by Prof. Julian Huxley that in the First century of this era, at the time of Christ, the number did not exceed one hundred millions. There are some parts of the earth's surface, such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Polynesia, which were only reached by man at various times during the Christian Era; through all the years of Old Testament history they continued virgin territory. There is evidence that China, South-Eastern Asia and parts of India were not settled until between two and three thousand years B.C. More and more, as the gaps in human knowledge are filled in, does the story of man's occupation of the earth take the pattern rather speculatively drawn by H. G. Wells in his "*Outline of History*" sixty years ago, an outward migration in all directions from a common centre in south-western Asia, the lands of the Bible. Wells was an agnostic and no believer in the Bible story, but his shrewd appraisal of the facts toward which the research of his time was tending has been justified by the clearer knowledge of to-day. And the effect of all this is to render it perfectly logical to consider the possibility of a very small beginning of the human race in or about the "Fertile Crescent" of western Asia,—the ancient lands of Sumer and Canaan—at a time which may not have been more than eight thousand years ago, and perhaps was appreciably less.

It is significant that it is in that part of the world that it has been established the basis of cultured human life—grain and domestic animals—originally existed in their wild state. Two leading archaeologists, Braidwood and Gordon Childe, vouch for this. Says the former (*"Pre-historic investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan"* 1960), *"Nowhere else in the world were the wild wheats and barley, the wild sheep, goats, pigs, cattle and horses to be found together in a natural environment"*. The oldest reliable remains of human habitation, agriculture and handicrafts are found here and there is no other area on earth, not even Dr. Leakey's—father and son—much publicised sites in South Africa, which can be shown to yield conclusive evidence of so ancient an occupation. There is much material evidence outside the Bible that the vicinity of modern Iraq was the home of the first men upon earth.

The old-time question so beloved of those who would show the Genesis story incredible, "where did Cain get his wife?" with its mock pious horror at the inescapable answer "he married his sister" is not heard so much nowadays. Here again modern knowledge has cast much-needed light upon the problem of consanguinity and shown that a prohibition which exists today in civilised countries, on account of the degeneration of human physique and the existence of so many undesirable characteristics in the physical and mental constitutions of men and women, had no validity at a time when the original God-given physical and mental perfection—"in the image and likeness of God"—had hardly begun to be sapped by the destructive effects of sin.

The simple directness of the story is probably its best recommendation. Granted that it was the Divine intention, in creating this planet and making it the scene of teeming vegetable and animal life, that it should eventually be the home of a race of intelligent beings knowing and acknowledging their Creator and Lord, what need was there to start with more than one pair? The Divine method has ever been to sow seed and let it develop and bring forth fruit a thousandfold. Modern astronomical discovery has shown that there are literally millions of planets similar in general characteristics to the earth, scattered through the galactic heavens. Is it not possible that all these are destined yet to be the abode of living creatures likewise knowing and praising God, perhaps when the lessons of sin and evil have been well learned on the stage of this earth? May it not be that the same creative power which mysteriously and quite inexplicably produced the first recognisable living animals, the trilobites, in the warm Cambrian seas of the

Palaeozoic Age, something like five hundred million years ago, and then, æons later, produced the first reptiles, and later still the first mammals, could just as suddenly in the close of the sixth day of creation, when the Garden was ready, have produced the first man? The history of the differentiation of species into their varieties through geological time is marked at certain points by the emergence of definitely new forms of life which cannot easily be connected with pre-existing forms of life. Even from the scientific point of view, therefore, the sudden appearance of one man, a new kind of creature, on the earthly scene is not without its precedents in earthly history.

From the doctrinal point of view it is essential to accept that humanity began with one man and all are sprung from him. The basis of the Christian faith is that Christ gave his life for the sin of the world, to save the many who were involved in the fact that one man sinned. In what manner the sin of the one must involve the rest and make them all sinners is difficult to comprehend; it may have something to do with the possibility that all men are in some mystic way interdependent so that what affects one must affect all in a kind of racial sense. *"For none of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself"* said Paul (Rom. 14.7); there may be much more of essential truth in that remark than is generally realised. There can be no ignoring the New Testament insistence that the scheme of Atonement is built upon the fact that all men were involved in the sin of one common ancestor and can only be redeemed from the effects of that sin by one Saviour, Christ. *"By one man"* says Paul in Rom. 5 *"sin entered into the world by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive . . . the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ . . . As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous"*. Again, writing to the Corinthians, he returns to the same principle. *"Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"* (1 Cor. 15. 21-22). The fact that we may not fully understand the philosophy behind all this, precisely how it is that the death of Christ became the means of man's release from Adamic condemnation, that his offering of himself and his yielding up of human life became an equivalent, a "corresponding price", as both Jesus and Paul declared (Matt. 20.28; 1 Tim. 2.6) does not mitigate its force. The theology of the Christian faith as expounded in the New Testament demands that there was one single literal man who

sinned, and was the progenitor of the human race, and that Christ by his offering reversed the condemnation of that one man and therefore of the entire race which was condemned in him.

As a final consideration it must be borne in mind that the story of the Garden of Eden was prepared and preserved under the supervision and care of the Holy Spirit to be a source of instruction to all generations concerning the entry of sin into the world, the effect that entry has had on all men, and an explanation of the fact of sin in us and around us in our own time. This clearly is so that men should be able to appreciate both the necessity of redemption and the nature of the things from which redemption

is necessary. That being so, it follows that a definite understanding of the facts of the story and a true appraisal of its literal or metaphorical content is very necessary to an intelligent grasp of the Christian faith. It is to that end that the chapters which follow are written, that this ancient story which lies at the root of our faith may give its testimony to the verity of "those things which are surely believed amongst us".

* * *

Next month's instalment will consider the background of the story, the time it was first put down in writing, the validity and meaning of its geographical indications, in preparation for the introduction of its principal character, Adam the first man.

An angel of light

"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11. 12).

It is thought that St. Paul took this allusion from an incident in an apocryphal book in existence in his own day and with which he was certain to be familiar, the *"Book of Adam and Eve"*. Purporting to record the lives of our first parents from the expulsion from Eden to their deaths, the book was probably written in Greek not long before the time of Christ and based on Jewish legends; it was never, of course, accorded canonical authority. It tells of a second temptation of Eve by the Devil, the relevant passage (ch. 9.1) reading *"And Satan was wroth and transformed himself into the brightness of angels, and went away to Eve and found her weeping, and the devil himself pretended to grieve with her"*. It seems that this time Eve resisted the Tempter and he did not succeed in his purpose. The entire incident as therein narrated formed an illustration of the Apostle's theme in Corinthians, viz., the danger of false apostles appearing in the guise of ambassadors of Christ, and it shows that the Apostle was not above drawing his illustrations from religious books which were admittedly not in the Canon of the Old Testament but yet could point a good moral.

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

The brightness of his glory

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

* * *

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

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

THE ALMIGHTY—THE ETERNAL

*"Whom no man hath seen
nor can see"*

4. Above all heavens

The one who ascended is the same who once descended to the world of man, and now is returned from whence He came. That is a very bald statement of what is perhaps the most profound mystery of the work of Christ. His life on earth as Man is tolerably easy to visualise, the manner of his death and subsequent appearance to the disciples. That He came from God, having laid aside the celestial glory He possessed with God, and for a short time accepted the limitations of human nature, is a belief which can be accepted even if there be only a partial understanding of what the words imply. But what is the truth behind the statement in Ephesians 4. 10, a statement which summarises all that the Scriptures have to say regarding Christ's post resurrection glory, to the effect that He "ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things"? The relatively frequent mention, in the New Testament, of his ascension and of his participation in the "fulness" which is otherwise ascribed to the Father makes clear that these are no casual words: they are indicative of a fundamental truth.

The elementary statement that Christ since his ascension is seated at the right hand of God is a figure of speech which provides a convenient visual image to the mind but does no more than sketch a very broad outline of the basic truth involved. No instructed Christian nowadays believes that God exists in the form of a venerable aged king seated upon a great throne set somewhere in the midst of the stellar heavens, with the Lord Christ eternally passive upon a somewhat lesser throne beside him. It may be a closer approach to the reality to picture him as a radiantly glorious being "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto," but even so we cannot with our human minds hope to formulate a picture which comes anywhere near the truth. The nature of the Divine Creator remains for us an impenetrable mystery. And to some extent the Person of Christ must share that mystery. We should no longer think of him in the form of the Man who was crucified, rather as the "Lord that Spirit" (2 Cor. 3. 17. 1 Pet. 3. 18 N.E.B. and R.S.V.) partaker of the Divine glory.

"Far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." (Eph. 4. 10). This is a more profound and comprehensive truth than the simple and matter-of-fact statement in 1 Pet. 3. 22 *"Who*

is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" but both texts refer to the same thing. The words of Peter are capable of interpretation in terms of space and time and open up to view a picture of Christ sharing the glory of the Father in heaven, the while He is waiting for the "due time" in human history when He is to return to earth again, and that is about the easiest manner in which human beings can grasp the great truth. St. Paul goes deeper; whether by inspiration of the Spirit, or by an inward knowledge of a nature not possessed by any other of the intellectuals of his day, and gained perhaps by reason of the "visions and revelations" which had been his experience, he was able to declare that Christ ascended not into a place inside the heavens, but outside all heavens. He goes *outside* the creation his own hands constructed in the beginning and that links him in a very definite manner with the omnipresence of God the Father. That is a state of being men find hard to conceive; the space and time characteristics of our environment constitute for us the only conceivable attributes of existence. Perhaps the nearest approach we can make to an understanding of St. Paul's words in this text is to reflect that just as the Word existed "with God" before anything of our material creation was brought into being and was therefore of necessity "outside" the bounds of that creation, just as the same Word came "inside" this creation in order to be made flesh for the suffering of death, so at his ascension He went outside the creation again, "far above all heavens", to be re-united with the Father and enjoy once more the glory He had with the Father "before the world was" (Jno. 17.5). At that moment when the ascending Lord, watched by the little group of disciples on Olivet, entered into the cloud which received him out of their sight, He must of necessity have discarded the material trappings by means of which He had been able to talk and deal as man with men, and entered immediately into that condition of union with the Father in his control and government of all creation which Paul here defines as *"far above all heavens, filling all things"* and elsewhere in 1 Tim. 6. 16 *"Dwelling in the light no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see."* It is from that condition He comes back into our material creation and our world at the time of "his appearing and his kingdom."

The entrance of the Son "far above all heavens" in order to "fill all things" provokes the question whether the Son did at any past time "fill all things" or was this, on the contrary, an aspect of that additional exaltation which according to Phil. 2. 9 was conferred upon the Son at his ascension. The expression "fill all things" is based upon the idea of pervading or diffusing through all creation that which makes it complete. The Greek word *pleroma* which is at the root of "fill" and "fulness" in a number of related texts in the New Testament indicates the filling of a vessel or a space so that it is completely occupied. It would seem as if, basically, creation itself is not complete until the ascended Christ has been re-united with the Father and partaken of that "fulness" or all pervading power which in Col. 2. 9 is expressed as an attribute of God. "For in him" (that is, Christ) "*dwelleth all the fulness of the Deity bodily*" ("Godhead" in this verse is a mediæval term for Deity and a rather clumsy one) "*It pleased the Father*" says St. Paul again in Col. 1.9 "*that in him*" (in Christ) "*should all fulness dwell*." At the very least this declaration in Col. 2. 9 means that all which makes the Father what He is, the Almighty, the Eternal, is manifest also in the Son in his embodiment of the Father toward all created beings. "*I am in the Father, and the Father in me*" said Jesus (John 14. 10-11). It might well be therefore that the Son by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made that was made; the Son, who is the Father's right hand agent in all the works of creation, could not and does not finish that creative work, filling it up to completion, until He has visited earth, suffered and died, risen again, and by those things conquered and made an end of evil and sin. In such case the "filling all things" is still going on, for not until the Second Advent of Christ has finished its work of eliminating sin and sinners from all creation can it be truly said that the fulness of Christ has "filled all things". Perhaps, then, creation is not yet finished, man is still in the formative stage, and God has yet to look upon the work of the seventh creative day and pronounce it, as Genesis says He did pronounce the work of six creative days, but not, at that time, the seventh, "very good".

This is where Phil. 2. 9 is apposite. "*God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*" This quite evidently implies an addition to the glory which Jesus enjoyed with the Father "before

the world was"; the heavenly chorus in Rev. 4.12 "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing*" indicate that. The difficulty is in conceiving the nature of that greater Name or higher exaltation which can justly be said to be the possession of the Son now which was not his before. There is an element of advance, of development, here which might not accord at first thought with the customary view of the Son, the Word of God, as already supreme over all created things at the beginning.

Does the answer lie in the realm of his conquest of sin? Explain it how we will, there is much in the philosophy of the permission of evil and its relation to the Divine purpose which is still mysterious, and there are questions posed which are still unanswered. That Divine creation, celestial and terrestrial, was sinless at the start, and that sin is a later intrusion, is fundamental to a correct understanding of the Scriptures and the nature of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That sin and evil will, one day in history, be eliminated and all creation continue into eternity in full harmony with the ways and laws of God, is demanded alike by the vision of the prophets, the teachings of the Apostles, and our own common sense. It is inconceivable that God, who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1.13) could allow this marring of his own handiwork to all eternity. And that the earthly life and death of the Lord Christ was, in a manner we do not fully understand despite all our theological definitions, a necessary prelude to the overcoming and eliminating of sin from both the earthly and the heavenly worlds is also a fundamental of Scripture teaching. "... *having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself... whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.*" (Col. 1. 20). It might well be, therefore, that the greater glory and the higher exaltation devolving upon our Lord at his return to the heavenly courts was the glory and exaltation of sin challenged on its own ground, the power of sin overcome and conquered, the fate of evil definitely sealed, and what might yet be demonstrated to be the final phase in the progress at least of earthly creation triumphantly achieved. St. Paul did describe the nations as at one time "*having no hope, and without God in the world.*" (Eph. 2. 12) but at the ascension of Christ that grim prospect was turned into the triumphant certainty of a glorious eternity for "whosoever will". In a very real sense, therefore, the ascension of Christ to the presence of the Father set the seal upon the work of creation and made certain in the eyes of all beholders the attainment of God's purpose in that

creation. Reason enough, surely, high exaltation and a Name above every name.

Even so, there is a headship of the Father upon which the station of the Son does not infringe. St. Paul, in his famous "resurrection chapter"—1 Cor. 15.—referring to the consummation when Christ shall have destroyed all sin and evil and shall have reconciled to God all who can be reached with the saving power of the Gospel, declares that "*when all things are put under him (the Son) it is manifest that he (the Father) is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued under him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.*" (1 Cor. 15. 27-28). There can be no dispute that the subordination of the Son to the Father is indicated in this verse: great as is his exaltation and unique as is his Name the oneness and unity of the Father and the Son still permits the difference in degree that is implied by this statement. The Father is still the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose own majesty as the Great First Cause He will by no means share with another. There seems little doubt that at the end of the Messianic Age, which all prophetic Scriptures unites in looking upon as the full end of the course of sin upon the earth, the Lord Christ relinquishes the commission which brings him to earth for the whole period of his First and Second Advents, presents the reunited human race to the Father to whom they have been reconciled, and turns as it were to manifest his Father and execute his Father's will in whatever other sphere of Divine activity is then due in the Divine purpose to be opened up.

Perhaps Eph. 2. 7 contains just a hint of those future activities. "*In the ages to come*" writes St. Paul of the times which lie beyond the glorification of the Church with Christ, God will "*show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*". "Show" is a word meaning to demonstrate, manifest, give evidence. "Kindness", likewise is moral goodness, integrity, from a root word meaning virtuous. "Exceeding riches" is better read to-day as transcendent wealth. In ages yet to come God is going to demonstrate and give evidence of the transcendent wealth of his own grace and favour, of his own moral goodness and integrity in the evident exercise of that same goodness and integrity toward the Church of Christ which He has taken out from amongst mankind. But to whom is the demonstration directed? By that time all mankind will themselves already have become subjects of that same goodness and integrity and have received of the surpassing wealth of his favour. They will already

have received of the ministrations of Christ and the Church during the long period of the Messianic Age then ended. The conclusion is almost irresistible that St. Paul had in mind other races of intelligent beings yet unborn, creations which the Most High has not yet brought into existence, the subjects of purposes which for aught we know may well constitute part of the original plan of God but the execution of which must needs be deferred until the dark history of sin and death has run its course and closed in a triumphant demonstration, for the benefit of all who should know life in future time, of the beneficent qualities of righteousness and the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is hardly likely that, even on the material plane, the creative activity of God is going to be satisfied with the glory and the potentialities of life on one world out of all the immensity of this vast universe. Hardly likely that life as we know it is the only kind of life possible within the power and the purpose of God. Much more likely that in a fashion we cannot be expected to understand at this stage of our experience the fact and the record of sin and death on this planet in human history will be the means of so enlightening future created beings that none such will ever embark upon the same disastrous course; all will be persuaded of the rightness of God's ways. And if this be so, what is more logical than to expect the Church, joined in eternal association with Christ her Lord, to become the means throughout all ages of demonstrating, and being a demonstration of, the goodness and integrity of God and the transcendent riches of his grace?

This then is our God; wise beyond all understanding, loving beyond all comprehension. In his power, infinite; in his justice, terrible toward all sin but infinitely patient toward the sinner. In the far distances of past ages He commenced to fill his creation with life; the work has as yet hardly commenced, for the basic principles upon which alone life can eternally endure have as yet only imperfectly been comprehended by those first few who have experienced life. One day in the future that comprehension will be complete, and the purpose of God will take a great step forward as life begins to fill every recess of this vast universe.

"To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? It is he that sitteth over the sphere of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these: that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power. The End.

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

Short stories of
the Millennium

3. Resurrection by Judgment (John 5.20)

He came striding along the road, a fine figure of a man, vigorous and healthy, but with eyes betraying a haunting sadness. The other, seated by a wayside pool embowered in brilliant flowers, held up his hand in that gesture of greeting and invitation so familiar in this strange new world. The newcomer halted, hesitated and came across, voicing an easy greeting as he sat down on the grassy bank.

For a moment neither spoke. A lark soared up into the azure sky, the throbbing sweetness of its song holding the two listeners enthralled. The fields and trees shimmered in the heat of an afternoon sun, and all creation seemed at peace.

"You are on a mission?" queried the one by the pool.

"A mission which spurs me ever onward without rest" returned the other, "and until it is accomplished I may not know happiness."

"It needs the help of a friend, perhaps?" ventured his questioner, but the traveller shook his head.

"My sorrow is of my own making. I once defied the powers of Heaven and thought to outwit God. Now the hand of God is outstretched to me in blessing but I cannot enjoy his munificence until I have made amends for the evil which I have done."

"I have read in the sayings of Jesus that there are those who in this day come forth to a resurrection by judgments" observed Gerhard, his eyes on two goldfish disporting themselves in the pool.

The newcomer nodded. "Those words are true. There was a time when a man of God, crying his message to a heedless people, declared, 'Every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.' 'What a man soweth' said Paul, 'that shall he also reap.' I knew of those Divine laws, but in my folly believed that I, a king, could flout them with impunity."

"You were a king then?" returned the other with interest. His companion did not answer at once. A party of children racing along the road in joyous abandon, perceived him as he sat, and in a minute had surrounded him with every evidence of recognition and affection. "Elder Brother, elder brother" they cried. "Here is Michael. Tell him the story of Jesus." Michael came forward shyly — a chubby golden curled toddler of three. He looked up into the friendly face above him and climbed confidently upon his

knee. A strong arm held him safely but the man's eyes were misty with tears.

"Yes, I was a king," he said at last, almost reluctantly. His eyes looked away across the quiet countryside as though they saw other and far different scenes. His thoughts came back to the present and he turned to Gerhard. "You are a resident here? You have offered the help of a friend. Perhaps you can indeed assist me."

"That I will gladly do" came the ready answer.

"I seek a woman named Miriam, who in the Days that Were lived in the land of Judea. Her home was in the village of El-Ramallah near the royal city of Bethlehem. I am told she lives in this district and I must have conversed with her."

"Then I can help you; for Miriam of El-Ramallah lives yonder on the slopes of the hill." Gerhard pointed, and following his outstretched arm, the other perceived a cluster of red-roofed cottages surrounded by trees. "You see the house beside the rhododendrons? Miriam lives there, praying daily for the raising to life of her first born child, slain by Herod, the King of Judea, in the days when Jesus was born."

"Then I must haste there to-day" said the stranger, rising to his feet and gently putting Michael upon the ground, "for my prayers must be joined with hers for the restoration of that life which was so ruthlessly cut off by my fear and cruelty."

"Then," said Gerhard quickly, "You are..."

"My name is Herod. I was King of Judea in the Days that Were. To-day I serve the Lord Christ whom I sought so blindly to destroy. But I have learned that 'by mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.' There are words which ring in my ears day and night, written in letters of fire before my eyes, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.' Until I have sought out every mother whom I made desolate — until I have prayed with her and witnessed her joy as her loved one is restored to her arms, I may not rest. Then, and then only, shall I be free from that age-lasting reproach spoken of by the prophet Daniel when he told of this blessed day."

With the shouting children running at his side and baby Michael nestled comfortably in the crook of his arm, Herod, slayer of the Innocents, strode up the hill to the place where a woman of

faith waited for her heart's petition to be fulfilled in glorious reality.

* * *

Time has yet to prove whether King Herod will

indeed repent in the manner imagined in this story; but the Scriptures are definite that he, with all men, no matter how depraved, are to have the opportunity in the day of the resurrection.

HERALDS OF THE KINGDOM

*Reflections on
Paul at Athens*

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said 'We will hear thee again of this matter'." (Acts 17.32).

That was two thousand years ago. Paul, standing upon Mars Hill in Athens, preached Jesus Christ to an audience of the world's foremost philosophers and learned men. The resurrection and the Kingdom was the centre and keynote of his message to them in that notable day, and because of that he exhorted them to repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ. The one went with the other. "God calleth every man everywhere to repent, *because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.*" Impossible for Paul to preach repentance without preaching the Kingdom also; the two messages went together. So it is throughout all his writings: Christ is not only the solution to the troubles and woes of this life, He is also the hope and certainty of the life to come. Paul never forsook that faith or lost that enthusiasm. To the very end of a busy, arduous and oft-times intensely disappointed life, he kept his vision of the coming Kingdom clear and undimmed; was always ready to talk about it and describe his understanding of its details, even although he knew that understanding to be "in part" and imperfect. One of his last utterances ended with the hope of the Kingdom upon his lips—"which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me *at that day*, and not to me only, but also to all them that love his *appearing*". (2 Tim. 4. 8).

In our own day there is a growing tendency to lose interest in this vivid expectation of an imminent Kingdom. We have been familiar for many years with the message that declares "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" But the misapplication of Bible chronology has disappointed and discouraged many, and the failure of some, blessed with a knowledge of these things, to live up to the standards of their profession has disappointed and discouraged a great many more. And because the majority have preferred to remain in that phase of understanding regarding the resurrection and the Kingdom which was given them when first they "came to a knowledge of the Truth", without increasing and clarifying that knowledge as year succeeded year,

they have become weary of waiting for the Golden Age which seems never to come, and have allowed its beauties to recede to a secondary place in their thinking.

This is becoming a noticeable feature today. There is plenty of enthusiasm for prophecy—of a sort; usually the lines of thought advanced by commentators of a century ago and already therefore a century out of date. The secondhand bookshop has proved an inestimable blessing to some students of the Bible and an unmitigated evil to others. The mind that seeks to exercise itself upon something novel without the trouble of serious thinking can always do so upon the writings of one or another saintly student who expounded the light that was shining in 1850 or 1750 or even 1650; but that is not Present Truth. And it is the student who assesses at its proper value this light of the past, and looks forward and perceives in the light of the present how immeasurably clearer is the vision of the future, who realises the fashion in which prophecy is now passing into history, and sees with clearer sight than ever man has seen before the details of the coming Kingdom. He is the man whose faith in that Kingdom will neither waver nor be relegated to a minor place in the life; it remains the beacon which illumines his path, the lodestone which guides his actions, the glory-cloud that leads him ever onward to increasing heights of vision and of achievement, until his own work for the Master is done, and the torch drops from his hand to be caught by younger and equally fervent spirits, and he himself is called home to his promised rest.

There are influences abroad to-day which draw in the opposite direction. The tendency to retire more and more into a "devotional" Christian life, taking comfort from the more personal promises and exhortations of Scripture, and ceasing from the outward work of testifying to the goodness of God and the Plan of God, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and the principles of Jesus' teachings, is not good. It is the pitfall into which so many promising movements of the past have fallen. Especially is it true of Christian bodies that have ceased to attract the younger element into their ranks, and the not-so-young are realising the passing of the years. Their meetings tend

to become pleasant Christian social gatherings where the glories of the past are recounted and enlarged upon but there is no looking forward to the future. Their personal witness is to the converted, and the testimony meeting takes the place of public witness. And the vision of the Kingdom fades; it can do no other, for the basis of its inspiration—the Baptist message, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand’—is lost. And that is why some in this day are reluctant to talk about the Kingdom or to discuss the details of earth’s coming glory, dismissing any attempt to do so as “idle speculation”.

We have, in all our studies, our conventions and our literature, only touched the fringe of what the Scriptures can be made to yield concerning the Messianic Kingdom. There is a store of information as yet unexplored which ought to be brought to light and embodied in our message.

The events of to-day show in no uncertain manner that we have no need to change the outline of expectation which we have inherited from earlier times; but we can do a great deal to fill in the details, and in so doing we shall both find encouragement and comfort for ourselves and inspiration for our work of witness. “*Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?*” “*Lord, here am I; send me.*” If the live coal has touched our lips we can go to “this people” in confidence; but we must go armed with knowledge of the message for the day, and that message is “*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*” And when asked concerning the details of this promised Kingdom, we can, if we have been diligent students, set the seal upon our witness by saying in no uncertain tones, as did Jesus in times gone by, “the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto this—and this—and this!”

ROAD TO EMMAUS

“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26)

That was an enthralling talk which Cleopas and his companion had with the stranger they had encountered on the way to Emmaus upon the day of the Resurrection. Enthralling, because it had brought into one focus all those apparently contradictory Old Testament prophecies of the Christ which they knew so well and understood so little. They had so often conked over them, hearts uplifted as they read of the glory of the coming Messiah and minds puzzled as they laboured through the eloquent descriptions of the One who must suffer and die before the purpose of the Lord in the restoration of his people could be fulfilled. Suffering and glory; both were there, on the sacred pages, but in their impatient longing for the realisation of the golden days of Messianic power they turned away from the suffering and thought only of the glory.

But why had there to be suffering? Why could not Christ have come in all the plenitude of his Divine power and entered straight away upon his ordained work of reconciling whosoever will to God, through the successive stages of evangelism, repentance, and conversion, and so bring to pass the ultimate reality so vividly pictured in the Book of Revelation, where the dwelling-place of God is with men, and there is no more death, no more sorrow and crying, because the former things are passed away and all things are become new? Someone will answer that before all these things can transpire mankind must be redeemed

from the death sentence which rests upon the entire race, inherited from Adam, and this is true. So Christ must first die, giving his humanity a Ransom for all, before He can breathe new life into the dead and set their feet upon that Highway of Holiness which can at the last lead them to the happy condition described in Revelation. But even so, the question must be asked, by us today as it was by those earnest souls of so many centuries ago, why did Christ have to suffer? Could He not have died naturally and quietly immediately after his baptism in the Jordan—even gone literally into death in the very baptising waters themselves—and so give his life for the world at that moment, relinquishing a humanity He would never take again? Could that not entitle him, risen from that death by the power of the Father as He in fact was later on after the agony of the Crucifixion, to bring back from the dead the human race He had thus bought by the laying down of his life, and commence restitution processes with them straightaway?

Had that been possible surely that is the way the Divine plan in Jesus Christ would have gone. How can it be thought that God, who is Love, would deliver his beloved Son into the suffering and ignominy which did surround his earthly life and death if it was not necessary? The very fact that our Lord was called upon to tread this pathway of suffering is full evidence that this was the only way. “*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*” He said to those two wondering disciples “*and to enter his glory*”. There must be

a definite relation and connection between the suffering and the glory; the one is an essential pre-requisite to the other. It was not that God would not confer the glory without the prior suffering; it was that He *could* not. For some fundamental reason clear to the Father, and clear, too, to the Son, even though not at all clear to us, it had to be that Christ must first suffer, and after that enter into his glory. That is why the Apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 1.11 referred to the Holy Spirit in the prophets of olden time speaking of "the suffering of Christ, and the glory that should follow".

The supreme purpose for which our Lord came to earth and took upon himself our human nature was that He might achieve the salvation of men, their deliverance from the effects of sin and their restoration to the Divine likeness, that they might be fitted for the Divine purpose. But this great work is not to be accomplished by waving some kind of magic wand above men's heads, nor yet by reciting the laws of God to them and expecting them instantly to obey. Man at the first had the opportunity of attaining the at the first had the opportunity of attaining the Divine likeness by heeding the Divine commands, but they proved unable to attain the goal that way. And so sin entered, and with sin came suffering, and death, even upon those, says Paul "*who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*". So it is through suffering that man comes ultimately to his destiny in glory, just because there is no other way. And whether we think of this as a destiny attained by the learning of lessons taught by hard and bitter experience, or whether there is some deeper and hard to be understood principle in God's creation which decrees that perfection can only be attained through suffering, it is clear that this is the way through which man must pass. It is also the way through which our Lord passed. He was of God and with God in all the eternal ages before man was; He came to earth, having emptied himself of that high heavenly estate and took upon himself the bondman's form of human nature, still retaining his oneness with the Father the omnipotent; yet we are told that while in the flesh He "*learned obedience through the things which he suffered*" (Heb. 5.8). That word "learned" means literally to learn by practice or experience; "obedience" means to render submissive acceptance, the obedience of one who conforms to God's commands. The writer to the Hebrews in the next verse goes on to say that being thus "*made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" So something more than the act of dying on the cross was necessary; there was something im-

parted to our Lord in consequence of his suffering which was not there before, something which itself became the means by which men might eventually attain union with God. The captain of our salvation, says Heb. 2.10, is himself made perfect through suffering. That word "author" has the significance of that in which the cause of anything resides. The essence of the power by which Jesus will turn the hearts of men to God in the coming age of his kingdom on earth, or in this Gospel Age in the case of those who do come to him now, was instilled into Jesus by virtue of his sufferings, and until that was accomplished He was not ready or able to commence his great work of reconciling man to God. So the test must be understood as his being made perfect or complete for this particular work by his sufferings.

Perhaps a glimpse of the hidden principle that demanded this situation is afforded by the words of Heb. 2.18 "*In that he himself hath suffered, being tested, he is able to succour them that are tested*". It is as though He says to those who so sadly need his ministrations that they might eventually attain eternal life, "I have walked this pathway of suffering and I have come through triumphantly. Now I can show you the way with sympathetic understanding and positive knowledge, for I have gone this way myself". Is it that Jesus can only save the fallen by positive and actual identification with them, in all their troubles and all their suffering, experiencing all the injustice and violence and hardship which is their lot and bearing it with them? A word from the Old Testament expressive of the relation of God the Father to his people Israel expresses just the same principle. "*In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them*" (Isa. 63.9). If the Father shared the sufferings of his wayward creatures, could the Son do less?

And now there must be related to the sufferings of Christ the grandest theme of the Scriptures, that there is life, eternal, everlasting, undying, life in Christ and only in Christ. "No other name is given, no other way is known" runs the old hymn, and that only echoes the words of Peter "there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved". Life for the world comes in and through Christ highly exalted and given a name which is above every name. But the suffering had to come first. Is it then that the seed of life has to be rooted in the soil of suffering? Is there some law of creation not yet understood by us which rules that life can only be born out of suffering? Is there, embedded deep in this mystery, the final answer to the problem of the Divine permission of evil? When Jesus spoke of the seed of corn cast into

the ground and there dying, that it may afterwards spring forth into new life and bear much fruit, was it this that He was thinking of? When He talked about men eating his flesh as bread, consuming it utterly until it was no more, that it may be for the life of the world, was it this that held the foremost place in his thoughts? The youthful prophet Isaiah, receiving his first Divinely-bestowed commission to take God's word to Israel, was told of a leafless oak which had suffered all the vicissitudes of summer and winter, and now stood, a bare hulk destitute of apparent life. But those same adverse processes had created the living sap which in a new year would rise again into the tree and bring forth leaves and flowers and fruit. So is the holy seed to apostate Israel, said the Lord to Isaiah. So is the new life inherent in the glorified Christ to the suffering and death which preceded his resurrection.

Before the creation of man there were untold ages during which the earth was being prepared for life. Through æons of geologic time the elements of which this planet is composed were passing through stupendous transformations and mighty convulsions, fire, frost and water all paying their part, until all the strife and upheavals and turmoil culminated in the quiet serenity of Eden and man entered into the home prepared for him. So life came out of chaos. But until all that preliminary work, violent and savage as it was, had been accomplished there could be no life. Out of the suffering of the inanimate creation was born the life of animate man.

Joseph the son of Jacob, lord of all Egypt, could never have attained to his high office had he not first endured the school of physical suffering. Envied and hated by his brethren, sold as a slave into Egypt, unjustly condemned and left to languish in prison, he spent most of his early manhood in the abyss of suffering. But it was in that abyss and by means of that suffering that he developed those elements of character which enabled him to discharge with wisdom and judgment the duties of his later high position and all the responsibilities of all his regal glory. So he became the means of salvation to his father's family and their preserver and life-giver.

Moses was prepared for his historic mission in the school of mental suffering. Perhaps it is not easily realised what those long years in Midian meant to Moses. At forty years of age, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, mighty in words and deeds, burning with zeal to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land, he had all his high hopes dashed to the ground in an instant. "He supposed that his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would

deliver them" said Stephen at his trial "but they understood not." And in the outcome Moses, for all his zeal and ability, found himself doomed to spend forty years in a camp of Midianites, keeping sheep. But it was that experience in Midian which prepared him for leadership in Egypt, the opportunities for calm, leisured reflection on the ways and the laws of God which fitted him for the office of Law-giver to Israel, and the knowledge of the ways and byways of the trackless wilderness in which he pastured his flocks which enabled him to lead the people unerringly to their desired haven. Out of Moses' travail in Midian was born that which ultimately became the salvation of Israel.

Had Job never endured the darkness of his sufferings, and only afterwards emerged into the light, purified and enriched by his experiences, he would never have been able to say to God, as he did say "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee".

None of these men would have accomplished the great works they did accomplish had they not, like our Lord, been "made perfect through suffering". As with our Lord, they all must first suffer these things, and afterward enter their glory.

But not only is the suffering of Christ related to his resurrection life; it is also related to his resurrection power. He possessed power before He came to earth yet the Scriptures declare that in some mysterious manner He possessed greater power afterwards. The second Psalm, the Hundred and Tenth Psalm, almost the whole of Hebrews, and many other allusions, all attest this. Just before his ascension Jesus told his disciples, as though it was a thing only recently conferred upon him, "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28.18). At his ascension the Father set him at his own right hand "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named . . . and hath put all things under his feet" (Eph. 1.21). What kind of exaltation is this, so far and away beyond his dignity and office before He came to earth, and what was the cause of this exaltation? Whatever it was, it was and is intimately associated with experiences through which He passed whilst on earth and which Scripture specifically declares fitted him for his mission of reconciling man to God. "He is made" says the writer of Hebrews "after the power of an endless life . . . wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7.16 & 25). Paul adds his testimony: "For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived"—entered upon new life—"that he might be Lord

both of the dead and the living" (Rom. 14.9). Why must He die to be mankind's Lord? Was He not, as the Word of God, the manifestation of God to man, the one by whom all that is made was made? Was He not man's Lord before, right back at the beginning? At the resurrection Christ must have become man's Lord in a new sense and He was empowered to deal with men in a new fashion which had not been possible before. "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly" said Peter on the Day of Pentecost "that God hath made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2.36). Must it therefore be concluded that out of the ruins of a broken body, and only out of the ruins of a broken body, must rise the all-powerful Lord of all mankind. Out of suffering, willingly and patiently endured in conformity with the will of God, is born power which will eventually save all mankind.

Now if all these things be true of Christ the Head what of the Church which is his Body? It is fundamental in Scripture doctrine that as He was, so are we, in this world, that we are called to follow in his steps, to endure whatever of hardship and suffering may come our way as He endured, and afterwards to be associated with him in the work of reconciling mankind to God. When toward the end of his life Peter penned his epistle to his converts he exhorted them to "rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4.13). If the Church is partaker of Christ's sufferings then surely in the new life beyond the veil the Church will receive an endowment of power made possible by and born out of suffering. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment" says Paul in 2 Cor. 4.17 "worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The one is the direct cause and source of the other. Reverting to the typical picture of these things contained within the Levitical ritual of ancient Israel, Hebrews 13 declares "the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin"—for a sin-offering—"are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also . . . suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bear-

ing his reproach." The reference is to the Day of Atonement successive offerings, first of the bullock, then of the goat, both following a precisely similar ritual. There is no thought of the Ransom here, for these are two offerings, and the Ransom is only one. But besides the death of Jesus on the Cross, one death for all, which is the Ransom, there is also the life of suffering of Jesus which generates the power by which Jesus will remove sin from the hearts of men in the next Age—and the offering of the bullock in the Levitical ritual was for the removal of sin. But afterwards there came a second offering, that of a goat, lesser by far in excellence and degree than the bullock, yet in treatment identical. If this second offering pictures the lives' experiences of the Church in their "partaking of Christ's sufferings", and the burning of the goat's carcass "outside the camp" the consuming of the earthly lives of all the members of Christ's Church unto death as that of the bullock pictured the "pouring out his life unto death" (Isa. 53.12) of our Lord, then the exhortation in Hebrews "let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" becomes charged with meaning. In similar fashion to our Lord, the lives' experiences of his followers become the source, although in infinitely lesser degree, of the power with which they will be endowed in the day that they are openly manifested with Christ for the salvation of the world.

So then, the experiences of life arising in consequence of our dedication to Christ's service, with all the hardships and tribulations and sufferings that may be involved, are not only preparing us for the future but, in the wisdom and under the hand of God, creating the power by which will be executed the work of turning men from sin to serve the living God. In Rev. 22.17 it is not only the Lord the Spirit, but also the Bride, who calls all men to take of the fountain of the water of life. Not only the Bridegroom, but also the Bride, will play a part in giving life to the world. Like their Lord, every member of the Church will have learned obedience by the things which they have suffered, and, again like him, being made perfect, will have their part in conferring eternal salvation upon all who obey God.

Although there must be trying experiences, there is also possible to us a great joy as we realise how we may have partnership with our Lord's sufferings,—broken with him—with the knowledge and anticipation of being raised with him to co-operate in his future work of blessing.

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall

be revealed in us" (Rom. 8. 18). *"If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him"* (2 Tim. 2. 11).

Daniel could sleep better in the den of lions than Darius in the royal palace; he who could not find rest in the lion's den, when *that* was the place for him, could not gain rest by a mere removal to a palace.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

The Resurrection

A well-known resurrection text, Isa. 26.19, is difficult to understand in the form in which it appears in the Authorised Version. It is evident from the italics that the translators were not sure of the precise sense. The Septuagint rendering throws more light upon it and makes its Millennial setting more definite. *"The dead shall rise, and they that are in the tombs shall be raised, and they that are in the earth shall rejoice; for the dew from thee is healing to them: but the land of the ungodly shall perish."*

* * *

Prospect

"What a glorious prospect the new dispensation will present when fully inaugurated! The changes from one dispensation to another in the past have been marked and prominent, but this change will be the most eventful of all. No wonder that the thought of such a spectacle—of a whole race returning to God with songs of praise and everlasting joy upon their heads — should seem almost too good to believe but He who has promised is able also to perform all his good pleasure. Though sorrow and sighing seem almost inseparable from our being, yet sorrow and sighing *shall flee away*; though weeping in sackcloth and ashes has endured throughout the long night of the dominion of sin and death, yet joy awaits the Millennial morning, and all tears shall be wiped away off all faces, and beauty shall be given for ashes, and the oil of joy for the spirit of heaviness." (*selected*).

* * *

"After their Kind" (Gen. 1).

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

On Judgment

If any of us had been appointed to supply the list of ancients who, according to Hebrews 11 "obtained a good report through faith" how differently it would have read. Probably many would have excluded Jacob on the basis of his treachery, Rahab on her reputation, David for his heinous sin, and Samuel because he failed to "rule well his own household". If we would have failed so noticeably in the selecting of the Ancient Worthies, what folly it is for us to pass judgment on any of our fellows for whom the "better thing" has been provided!

* * *

Three crystals

An old story tells of three men who were each presented with a crystal to use as he pleased. The poet tells of the outcome and how these three men used their gifts.

"The *fool* contrived of his a *lens*,
Wherein, to gloating eyes,
The smallest blot that could be found
Was magnified in size.
"The *just man* made of his a *pane*,
All clear without a flaw.
Nor summer sun nor winter rain
Affected what he saw.
"The *wise man* pondered long and well
How best to search, to aid.
Then taking up the crystal given,
Of his a *mirror* made."

* * *

The Flood

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

APOLLOS

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The reader closed the roll reverently and laid it down. He turned to face his congregation. The eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed upon him.

"This day"—his commanding voice rang out, rivetting their attention; "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." His burning eyes swept the building, and the Christian Aquila, seated at the back, leaned forward to listen.

"My brethren, sons of Israel, children of the covenant, heirs of the Divine promise to Abraham, to you is this word sent. Woe betide you if you fail to perceive the day of this visitation. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. If you will comprehend it and accept it, you will inherit the promises made to our fathers and enter in; if you reject it, then the Kingdom will be taken from you and given to another people who will bring forth the fruits thereof."

Silence reigned. This Egyptian Jew from Alexandria was speaking to them in a manner not normally experienced by these Greek Jews of Ephesus. Their religion meant a great deal to them, surrounded as they were by all kinds of pagan faiths and deities, but in the comfortable exercise of their legalistic rites and rituals they had in measure forgotten the ancient promises which were Israel's mandate for existence as a people. Now this stranger was awakening half-forgotten memories in their minds, and some among them began to remember that they were, after all, a people for a purpose. Thoughts were broken as the speaker resumed.

"Away there in ancient days the holy prophet Malachi spoke of the time when the most high God shall rise up to judge the nations, deliver his ancient people from oppression, and establish upon earth his own kingdom of everlasting righteousness, the day of Messiah". He stopped for a moment, his eyes sweeping the audience, mute and attentive before him. "The day of Messiah" he repeated slowly; then "but before Messiah is revealed, there must come his herald, to prepare his way before him, as spake the holy prophet Isaiah 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our

God. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.'" He leaned forward, enunciating his words in measured tones, evenly, impressively. "That herald has come; he has appeared in our midst and given his witness. He was for a season a burning and a shining light, and then the powers of this world took him and silenced him—but the witness goes on". He stood erect, eyes lifted to heaven. "Twenty-five years ago, John the son of Zacharias stood forth in the deserts of Judea, the homeland of our people, and proclaimed the imminent coming of the Messiah. There went out to him all Jerusalem and Judea and they were baptised by him in token of repentance and for the remission of sins. The word of God had been fulfilled and God had sent his messenger to declare the coming of the sun of righteousness". He came back to his hearers. "And now, although the light has gone, for Herod the king slew him, his message lives on. To this day the disciples of John wait and watch for the coming of the One he preceded. To this day we, of the sons of Israel, wait in expectation that He who shall lead Israel to victory and glory over all enemies will shortly appear, to open to us the Kingdom of Heaven. Though it tarry, said one of old time, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry. Wait patiently, ye men of Israel, and be ever watchful, that ye may not be taken by surprise at his appearing, for, the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

* * *

The worshippers streamed out of the synagogue, some thoughtful, some indifferent, some earnestly discussing between themselves. The preacher stood in the doorway for a moment and Aquila, watching, caught his eye. Aquila came forward.

"My name is Aquila; I am a Roman Jew exiled from Rome by decree of the Emperor Claudius" he said simply.

"I am Apollos of Alexandria" came the quiet reply. "I am here to awaken our people to the importance of the signs of the times and to bring them the message and hope of John."

"But that was twenty-five years ago and you have not yet realised the coming of the Lord he heralded" rejoined the other.

A faint shadow crossed Apollos' features. "There are those of us in Egypt, and some few here in Ephesus, who believe that He will surely come, even as John predicted, though the time be delayed".

"For what do you look? How will you know him when you see him?" asked Aquila.

"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He it is for whom we look, the one who comes as a conquering king, to destroy all evil and bring in everlasting righteousness."

"But is it not also said that He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, brought as a lamb to the slaughter, pouring out his life unto death, so seeing of the travail of his soul and then being satisfied?" urged Aquila gently.

Apollos looked thoughtful.

"I know those words well. I do not understand them. How can the Sent of God be slain; and if he be slain, how can He ever become King?"

"For the transgression of my people was he stricken, the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all and with his stripes we are healed!" Aquila quoted the well-known words softly.

"Our iniquities are purged by the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement" returned the other man.

"But can the blood of bulls and goats really take away sin?" ventured Aquila.

A dawning comprehension appeared in the eyes of Apollos. "No—no—, they cannot. Those rituals of olden time can be no more than pictures, shadows, of some greater thing which is yet to be revealed. There must be a greater and more real giving of life that sin may be removed and the blessing come. There must be sacrificial death before kingly glory. Why did I never see that before? The Messiah must come first in suffering and death and afterwards in glory and never-ending life. First, a high priest after the order of Aaron; afterwards, a royal priest after the order of Melchisedek. But if that is so, how shall we know him when He comes, in lowliness and humiliation such as that?"

"Did you ever see John?" asked Aquila.

"I saw him once, when I was a young man on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. I was enthralled and captivated by his message and was baptised by him in Jordan. I returned to Egypt and never saw him again but his teaching has remained with me throughout life".

"Did you ever see Jesus of Nazareth?"

"I later heard that a man called Jesus had been hailed by John as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world and as greater than John himself. I did not credit it. To me John was the greatest of the prophets and none could ever excel him. I heard that Jesus had been put to

death by the Romans and I did not give him another thought".

"Put to death by the Romans" repeated Aquila thoughtfully. "And the prophet says he was taken from prison and from judgment, and was cut off from the land of the living, and made his grave with the wicked in his death." He was speaking very softly now.

There was a long pause.

"The Lamb of God," Apollos murmured the words as if to himself and the other could hardly hear him. "The Passover Lamb; only by coming under its blood could the man of Israel be saved. The glory came later, forty years later, when Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. Suffering and death first; afterwards glory and life. Is it then that Messiah must suffer these things first and afterwards enter into his glory?" He paused, thinking deeply. "Then you are telling me that Jesus of Nazareth whom John pointed out is indeed the Messiah, that Messiah has already come and we knew it not?"

An almost imperceptible nod was the answer.

Apollos straightened himself up. The resolute look was back. "I am to read the prophets again next sabbath in the synagogue. I shall read the story of the suffering servant in the Book of the holy prophet Isaiah, and I shall preach Jesus".

He looked at Aquila almost beseechingly. "May I come with you to your home to-day. I have much to ask you and much to reflect upon. You may talk and I will listen".

* * *

The entry of Apollos into the Christian community must have been something like that. He first appears in the 18th chapter of Acts just after St. Paul's first visit to Ephesus. Paul had gone to that city from Corinth, where he had founded a church, during the course of his first missionary journey, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla who then settled in Ephesus whilst Paul continued his journey. There was as yet no Christian community in Ephesus and the three worshipped and ministered at the Jewish synagogue where their ministry seems to have been accepted and appreciated. After Paul's departure this Apollos made his appearance and seems to have been equally acceptable. He was not a Christian, as were Aquila and Priscilla, but he had accepted the message of John the Baptist and counted himself one of John's disciples. This fact, together with the presence of a "group" of John's disciples in Ephesus twenty-five years after his death (Acts 19.3) is an interesting indication of the persistence of his ministry into a second generation,

much as a group gathers round some noted minister today and persists for many years after his passing.

Apollos hailed from Alexandria in Egypt, a city where a numerous and powerful Jewish community had existed from much older times. There was no Christian church there as yet—the Church at Alexandria is reputed to have been founded by Mark the evangelist but that must have been rather later. The reason for his coming to Ephesus is not stated; from the scanty references to him in the New Testament he seems to have been free to move about as he wished and perhaps he was an itinerant missionary like Paul but in the interests of John's message rather than that of Jesus. If so, Aquila and Priscilla changed all that.

At Ephesus he was convinced of the truth of Christianity and he became a Christian. He seems to have been a vigorous, resolute and eloquent speaker, studious and learned. He might well as a young man have sat at the feet of the famous Jewish philosopher and theologian Philo of Alexandria. He was still alive in A.D. 68 so could well have seen John the Baptist in his earlier days and probably did so and was baptised by him. He most likely never came in contact with Jesus. Now he was perhaps in his forties and vigorously propagating John's message, which means of course that he was one who sincerely looked for the coming of Christ and his kingdom but like most Jews expected a victorious conqueror at the head of a mighty army bent on destroying the Roman occupying power and establishing a Jewish kingdom in its stead. Anything he may have heard about the Man of Nazareth he would have dismissed without further thought. The "Way of the Lord" in which he "was instructed" i.e., learned, knowledgeable, must have been the current interpretation of the prophecies concerning the Messianic Kingdom, the "way of the Lord" of Isa. 40.3 and similar passages, the triumphal procession of the coming Messiah as He assumes kingship to reign over the earth. He had probably worked up the message of John the Baptist into a kind of systematic theology.

By the time Paul returned to Ephesus during his second missionary journey, some two years later (Acts 19.1) Apollos had left. He had gone to Corinth and was already influential in the Christian community there—so much so that a party spirit had developed, some proclaiming themselves adherents of Paul and others of Apollos (1 Cor. 1.12). It is very probable that the two men were very much alike in their characteristics and abilities, the most noticeable difference lying in a closer adherence to the letter of the

Mosaic Law and a lesser interest in the conversion of Gentiles on the part of Apollos than was the case with Paul. Thus the Jewish members of the Church at Corinth might well lean towards Apollos whilst the Greeks and Romans to their champion, Paul, and so the schisms of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 1.11 quite naturally developed. It might well be that Apollos was no less dismayed at this development than was Paul, for after a very short stay in Corinth he was back again at Ephesus before Paul had completed his two-year sojourn there which was terminated by the riot in the city stadium (Acts 19). It would appear from 1 Cor. 16.12 that Paul wanted him to go back to Corinth but he refused, probably because he did not wish to encourage the spirit of partisanship which his ministry there had unwittingly created.

This is all that is known of Apollos' ministry. Paul went to Jerusalem and from there to Rome and his first trial. It was to be some eleven years before he was in the vicinity of Roman Asia again and he was then a prisoner en route to his final trial and execution; he never visited Ephesus again. Nothing is known of Apollos during that period. He may have stayed in Ephesus at least for a time and ministered with Aquila and Timothy and others. He may have journeyed among the communities Paul had established when he was free. His name only appears once more.

Following Paul's acquittal at Rome in the year 62 and his unknown travels for the next five years or so, he was at Nicopolis on the west coast of Greece, on his last pilgrimage among the churches, interrupted by his arrest at Troas and his dispatch to Rome and his death. Writing to Titus, one of his old companions and fellow-ministers, now in Crete, he requested Titus to come to him at Nicopolis and to bring Apollos with him (Titus 3.13). It is evident that Paul was still planning fields of service for these friends of his and that Apollos was at that time still in active service and ready for more. It is to be presumed that the two, (with "Zenas the lawyer", otherwise unknown, also summoned,) reached Paul and set out on whatever new commission they were given. But at that point Apollos passes out of sight. Nothing more is known of him. He comes into view at Ephesus in about A.D. 55, serves zealously and loyally in concert with Paul at Ephesus, Corinth and Crete at least for some thirteen years to A.D. 68, and then, doubtless, for a further period until in his turn he was laid aside to await his "crown of life". Jerome (3rd century) the early Church historian, says that after Paul's death he went back to Crete and

finally returned to Corinth where he eventually became the leader and bishop—presiding elder—of that Church.

It is becoming increasingly generally agreed that Apollos was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The ascription of that Epistle to St. Paul is known to have no valid authority. Whilst several others have been suggested as the possible writer, the nature of the Epistle, the manifest familiarity of the writer with the Mosaic ceremonies, and various other considerations, point to Apollos as the most likely choice. It is thought that it was addressed to the Jewish believers at Ephesus and written at some time after Paul's death. It is believed by some

scholars that the Apocryphal work known as the "Wisdom of Solomon" was also written by Apollos.

Zealous—active—studious—learned; an eloquent speaker and a fluent writer, this man may well have exercised a much greater influence among the early Christians than the brief allusions to him in the New Testament would suggest. More like St. Paul in many ways than any of the others whose names are more familiar, he may well have been a veritable pillar of the Church. If indeed he is the unknown writer of Hebrews, then Christians of all generations, not least we at this present time, owe him, under our Lord, a debt immeasurable beyond words.

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

The spiritual individuality of every person can be preserved only by his personally receiving and digesting the truths of the Divine Word. This is why our Lord and the Apostles so earnestly exhorted the early Church to search the Scriptures—to make the Truth their own personally, to know and understand its meaning. Thus the Apostle points out that one of the important purposes of an individual understanding of the Truth is that the Lord's people might be given such a comprehension of the Divine will and the principles of righteousness that, having their senses exercised, they might discern both good and evil, and thus experience sanctification by the Truth. The noble Bereans were especially commended because of such personal search of the Scriptures daily to prove whether or not those things were true. Nor does our study of the Truth and our standing fast in the faith signify that we are to contend and stand for innumerable and fanciful interpretations of the parables, symbols, and types of the Bible, which were never designed of the Lord as a basis for the Christian's faith and practice, but were arranged merely as a pictorial method of confirming truths and facts already known and understood. Types should never be used to teach doctrines, but to illustrate those already taught in plain terms. It is on the clear, plain fundamentals of the Christian's faith that all should unite. But upon the theories and speculative views of the figurative expressions of the

Scriptures there can be no satisfactory union. Our motto rather should be, on essentials, unity, on non-essentials, liberty and charity.

In the light of the foregoing we find that accordingly our Lord and the Apostles sought to put the Church on guard against the yielding up of their right and liberty to see the Truth for themselves, and to settle every matter of doctrine and faith each for himself. Hence, the forceful warnings of the New Testament against submitting to any self-appointed leaders, or any person or combination of persons who might attempt to lord it over God's heritage and to take away the liberty of the "sheep".

God's people are to be just as much on guard to-day in reference to these matters as at any time in the Church's history. Any organisation of professing brethren, therefore, making the claim that they are God's exclusive channel through which truth must flow to the rest of the Church, that they are the custodians of the sheep, that they have been set over the Church as its special authorities and spiritual guides and that they are to decide all matters of faith and service, such organisation of brethren is surely to be regarded with apprehension; for such boastful claims, such assumption of authority over the sheep is entirely without any Scriptural warrant. Such leaders would only mislead and enslave the sheep. Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and a stranger will they not follow". *From "Herald of Christ's Kingdom"*

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

"The universe is not a steel gauntlet, hard and inflexible. It is a silken glove. And what is more wonderful still, it is a silken glove with the hand of God in it."
(Prof. Cairns)

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

7. The Davidic Throne

St. Paul's vision
of the future

2 Cor. 12.1-9

Resuming our discussion of the statement which solved the problem of the Early Church, we note again that the next phase of the Divine Plan destined to succeed this Gospel Age—the period of the “taking-out of a people for his Name”—is that of the restoration of Israel and the re-establishment of the Davidic Throne. It is not stated quite so explicitly as that, but both phases of restoration lie implicit under the words of the text. James was Divinely inspired to quote and apply a prophetic text which reads, “In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof: and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord that doeth this.” (Amos 9. 11-12. marginal rendering). James quotes the words somewhat differently, (the Septuagint rendering), to supplement an observation, which, a little previously, had been made by Peter, relative to his visit to Caesarea to open the door of entrance into full Divine favour for Cornelius and his household.

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his Name” said James, “and to this agree the words of the Prophet, as it is written,” “After this I will return . . .” Amos, after saying “I will sift the House of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve” proceeds, “and I will bring again the captivity of my people . . . and I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord, thy God.” (Amos. 9. 9-15). Israel’s return to their own good land is taken by James to indicate the Lord’s return to his people; he therefore says, “After this I will return and will build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down . . .” “After this . . .” After what? Obviously “after” the taking out of a people from the Gentiles. The next stage, therefore, of the Divine Plan destined to succeed that of the calling out of a Gentile remnant, is that of the restoration of Israel to their own promised land and the re-establishment of David’s royal throne. The restoration of these two factors of Israelitish national existence stand equated by James to “a return of the Lord”.

Though James makes no direct reference to the Davidic Throne—speaking of the Davidic Tabernacle instead—the thought beneath it is the same. David’s Tabernacle stands for the Royal Home in which David dwelt, in which, and from which, went forth his royal commands, and to which came the tribute from his people and from wider nations subject to his sway. Rebuilding his Tabernacle stands tantamount therefore to the restoration of kingly rule in Israel, which implies the restoration of the nation in a standing of grace and acceptance, so that the national polity shall stand complete before God and the world. But for this present period that Tabernacle is spoken of as “fallen down”. Its royal prerogative has not become extinct, but is under temporary suspension. The sublime picture of Rev. 4 and 5 depicts its restoration and re-establishment in the hands of One who is the Lion of the tribe of David, and who sets in motion those forces and influences in the earth which eventually result in the establishment of that Throne and Kingdom over God’s chosen people again.

Jesus himself had had to pronounce sentence upon House and Nation, and, while doing so, found comfort for himself in the prophecies. One day, the then rejected people, their long exile being ended, would welcome his Home-Coming, and in exultant strain, shout, “Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord”. (Psalm 118 26; Matt. 23. 39). So also, but in simpler measure, the Council at Jerusalem accepted prophetic assurance that the rejected, estranged people, after their sieve-tossing experience among the nations, would return home again to Land and Throne, never again to be dislodged therefrom.

In those far days Israel’s unbelieving sons were broken off from the Good Olive Tree because of unbelief (Rom. 11. 20). Lacking the proper faith (in Jesus) they still remain broken off, and must remain ungrafted back into the Abrahamic Olive Tree, until they acknowledge him whom they despised. She still labours under the penal terms of a broken Covenant—as she did in Apostolic days—but has neither Temple nor Sacrifice whereby to effect her cleansing! She lacks, moreover, the holy Altar-fire from heaven, which alone has warranty to consume a sacrifice on God’s behalf!

If, then, the Spirit of the Lord—the Glory-Cloud that leads the way—is not yet poured

out and resting on the returned Israeli people, now dwelling in the Holy Land, neither is that Spirit resting on the larger "residue" domiciled in Gentile lands throughout the wide earth. The same lines of evidence which determine concerning the one, determine also the other. Much Scriptural evidence (in line with James' declaration at the Council of Jerusalem) indicates that the Tabernacle of David, together with its Kingly Rule in Israel, must first be restored and set up in Kingdom Power, so that through this agency, the Word of the Lord may go forth to the Gentile Residue. In such case it is safe to presume that the stage preceding that Davidic stage is still under way. This is the period of the "taking-out" from the Gentiles a "people to bear God's Name". It will be obvious to all who will take time to think that, as this period was ushered in by a most drastic change of procedure in the Divine dealing towards Israel of old, so also, at the close of the period, another drastic change must occur in order that the formerly rejected people might be brought back into grace, and to their rightful place in the earth. And that the one yet to come will be as marked and definite as the one that is past, needs no undue emphasising.

That the first change was drastic and deep from the Divine standpoint, is beyond question. Israel's long exile among the Gentiles proves it, the call of a people from among the Gentiles—the Church, as seen mainly in Gentile lands, confirms it. There is no uncertainty or dubiety about it. It stands as an unchallengeable matter of historic fact. Now the assuredness of that first change presupposes the certitude of the second. The same Divine supervision that imposed the first stands pledged to bring about the second. Spite of the expectations that the Gospel Church will continue '*sine die*', that second change is quite as certain as that, at the beginning, there was a first. For the latter, as for the former, stands the testimony of a 'Thus saith the Lord'.

Israel, once more established in grace, will not again be plucked up from her homeland soil for ever. Her place among the nations will be assured. With the re-establishment of the Davidic Throne, God's Kingdom will come, and as it spreads throughout the earth will displace the present Gentile sovereignty that has existed so long among men.

Prior to the re-establishment of that Throne, the Remnant Church, (by that time made ready for the "inheritance of the Saints in Light") will be complete, and will go to her heavenly home, to be forever with the Lord—the first-fruits of those that slept.

Concerning the world-situation as it stands to-day—with the Bible as our guide—we would say that first and foremost among the many eventful things around us stands the fact that Israel has been permitted, after long waiting and wandering, to return to the land of her fathers. True, she has returned in unbelief, her heart still hard, her eyes still blind, and without discernment as to the purpose of her return. Yet, notwithstanding that disability, a nucleus of that people is back again in the land from which they were expelled some nineteen centuries ago! Israel is back in the one land, where, alone in all the earth, the Davidic Throne and Kingly Rule can be re-established and set up. That is to say, she has now returned—a token return—to the very spot to which the statement of James at the Council of Jerusalem distinctly referred, and to which many other specific prophecies also apply, and where alone in all the wide earth their fulfilment can take place. So long as Israel was still exiled in Gentile lands the question of its re-establishment could not possibly arise. So intimately and inextricably bound up in the purposes of God is that royal Throne with David's ancient city, Jerusalem, that its re-establishment was an utter impossibility while the city remained in alien hands. The first and fundamental condition for the re-establishment of that historic Throne, in that historic City, is the return to that long-deserted land, and to that oft-smitten city, of David's own kith and kin.

Conformably to that fundamental requirement, a nucleus of that people has now returned to the land, and in part, to the city!

No matter how, nor yet in what state of heart, the great outstanding fact of these modern days is that the long separation between the 'People of the Land' and the 'Land of the People', is now drawing to its close. True again, it is only a foothold that Israel holds, but the fact that that long-exiled people is back again in that land, is the one out-standingly important thing for the student of God's Word and ways to consider.

How often, through the long centuries, this tossed, sieve-shaken people thought to build a nest of repose for itself, saying the while, "Here let us rest", only to find God's hand thrust disturbingly under it, saying as He upset the nest, "Arise ye, and depart, this is not the place for your rest". God has ordained one exclusive place of "Rest" for this chosen people, one land alone in all the earth, and till their feet tread its desolated soil there can be no place of rest for their souls. And though now gathered to the place of God's fire and God's furnace (Isa. 31.

9) and there destined to be melted and refined as metals are purified by fire, (Ezek. 22. 17-22) still, for all that, the great fact stands challengingly clear, that the Divine hand which drove them afar has cleared a way for their return to the land of their desire. To-day, Israel again dwells where the Davidic Throne can be set up, and where 'Rest'—God's chosen Rest—can, in

due time, be found! That is the great epoch-making fact of these epoch-making times! Can this be accepted as a sign of an impending change? Does the transformation in this tiny nation's historic experience indicate a turning-point in the destinies of the Gentile world?

(To be continued)

SPIRITUAL MANHOOD

*A study in
1 Cor. 13. 11*

Spiritual law is as fixed in its principles and operations as is physical law. If it were not so, the physical could not be so frequently used as it is for illustrations of spiritual things. Thus, for instance in spiritual life, as revealed in the Scriptures, we have duplicated that principle so well known in physical law, of growth and development—first the blade, then the ear, and afterward the full corn in the ear; first the infant, then the boy, and afterward the full grown man; first the babe in Christ, then the growing child, the young man, and finally the full stature of a man in Christ. (Heb. 5. 13, 14; 1 John 2. 12-14; Eph. 4. 31-15). In both cases there is also a marked similarity in the process of development. As in nature both plant and animal life are sustained by appropriate nourishment, food, light, heat, air, etc.—thus strengthening them to perform the various functions of their being, so the spiritual new man in Christ must have and appropriate nourishment that he may continue to live and grow. There is this difference, however, to be observed between the physical and the spiritual life in the process of development; viz., that the former matures quickly, while the latter is of slow growth—a plant to bloom in eternity.

As babes in the family of God we realise our adoption as sons only when we have renounced the pomp and glory of this world and turned fully to God, claiming no righteousness of our own, but accepting the righteousness of Christ. No one is a babe in Christ who still cherishes iniquity in his heart, or fails to recognise his need of the covering of Christ's righteousness. But having been converted, turned about, from sin to God and righteousness, having learned of Christ, having put off the old man, and put on the new, which is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4. 24), and having been renewed in the spirit (disposition) of our minds, we become sons of God, babes in Christ. And from that infantile standpoint, which has in it, undeveloped, all the elements of the man, the

duty and privilege of such is to grow, to develop in Christ. We are not to content ourselves with the lisps and prattlings of infancy, nor with the milk diet suitable to that age, but, making due use of these as stepping-stones, go on unto perfection.

It was in view of such considerations that the Apostle penned the words of this text. He himself had passed on from the early stages of Christian character to higher degrees of development, and yet was not counting that he had attained the perfection which was the mark at which he was aiming. (Phil. 3. 13, 14). He had, however, passed beyond both infancy and boyhood to the stature of a young man in Christ. Looking back over the pathway of his Christian experience, he recognised these different stages, and recorded his thoughts, "*When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things*".

This was true both of his natural life and his spiritual life—the reference being specifically to the latter, of which the former was an illustration. By the illustration he draws our attention to the fact that if we have been children of God for some time we should be able, on looking backward over our Christian experience, to trace a degree of advancement toward the mark of perfection. While as babes in Christ our hearts must always be loyal to God and true to righteousness, our very inexperience causes us often to stumble; our knowledge of the right ways of the Lord is very imperfect, and our powers of discernment are unskilled; we have much to learn both of revelation and experience. The child in Christ has his own childish understanding, thoughts and ways, and his brethren in Christ should not expect from him the wisdom of the sage. Nor should he himself presume to have such wisdom; for only through knowledge and the discipline of experience does wisdom come; and then, only when we have allowed

them to work in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

For our growth and development in the Christian character God supplies all that is needful in the way of nourishment, and it is our part to make use of all the help He sends. By study and meditation upon his Word of truth, by prayer and communion with God, we partake more and more of his Spirit, and are led into a closer acquaintance both with the Lord himself, and also with his works and ways. And by exercise of the strength thus gained in active service of the Lord, we are prepared to receive more and more of the fullness of his grace, and so to go on from grace to grace, and from one degree of advancement to another.

But notwithstanding these recognised principles of Christian growth and development, it is a lamentable fact that many who can point with exactness to the day and hour when first they gave their hearts to the Lord and received the Holy Spirit, the seal of their adoption, are compelled to realise, when they consider the matter at all, that instead of advancing toward the stature of men in Christ, they have actually retrograded. Often such painfully look back to the blessedness of that first experience of the grace of God in their hearts, and say:—

*"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I sought the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his Word?"*

It is a thing of the past with them, and its joys have fled. Why? It is because they have failed to appropriate the means of grace which God has supplied, and because, instead of striving against the downward tendencies, they have allowed those old dispositions to rise up and re-assert themselves. In some cases a desire for something new and strange has led away from the truth into the forbidden paths of human speculation—philosophy and science, so called—until the mind became bewildered and confused in the labyrinths of error, the snares of the Wicked One. In other cases the measure of truth possessed has been held in unrighteousness. The tongue has been permitted to wag in the service of sin and uncleanness, manifesting unkindness, lack of Christian courtesy and forbearance, evil surmising, self-exaltation, pride, boastfulness, vaunting, and these unholy indulgencies have not been striven against nor repented of; hence the spiritual decline.

It is for these causes that the blessed sense of fellowship and communion with God, experienced when first the Holy Spirit set the seal of adoption upon the heart, has been lost. God

cannot dwell in a heart so unfit for his presence; no Christian can look back to the time of his first experience as a child of God and recall any such evil dispositions at that time. Had his heart been in such condition then, God would not have accepted him; and it is only as we strive against sin that we can continue to abide in his love and favour.

Who cannot look back to his first experience in the Christian life and remember how the love of God filled his heart and overflowed, especially to them of the household of faith—a love that could bear well the beautiful description of 1 Cor. 13. 4-7. "*Charity (love) suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*"

Realising such to be the will of God, this was the attitude of heart which the seeker after God sought to attain; and such an attitude he was enabled to realise when the Spirit of adoption sealed him as an accepted son of God. Yet God, who remembers that we are dust, that we are morally weak from the Fall, knew with what difficulty we must endeavour to maintain this condition of heart and mind when assailed by temptations, and worn with the disappointments and trials of life. Nevertheless, He does look for the cultivation of these graces of character in us. He does, and has a right to, expect us to strive to live godly, and to war a warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. And, therefore, notwithstanding the facts of trials and temptations, the maturer growth of Christian character should find our first love deepened into a more steady, constant and enduring thing, not characterised, perhaps, with so much of the gush and fluster of youth, but rather with the mellow benedictions of a more nearly ripened character.

That the church in this sifting and proving time will be individually tested as to character, as well as to faith, is certain. The prospective heirs of the kingdom must, like their Lord, be tried and tested in every point; and it behoves everyone, therefore, to watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, and diligently to cultivate such a character as will stand every test applied to it. But in the hour of testing let none mistake love of peace for love of righteousness. Let us see to it that the same mind dwells in us that is in Christ, our pattern. So shall we be children of God beloved and owned of him.



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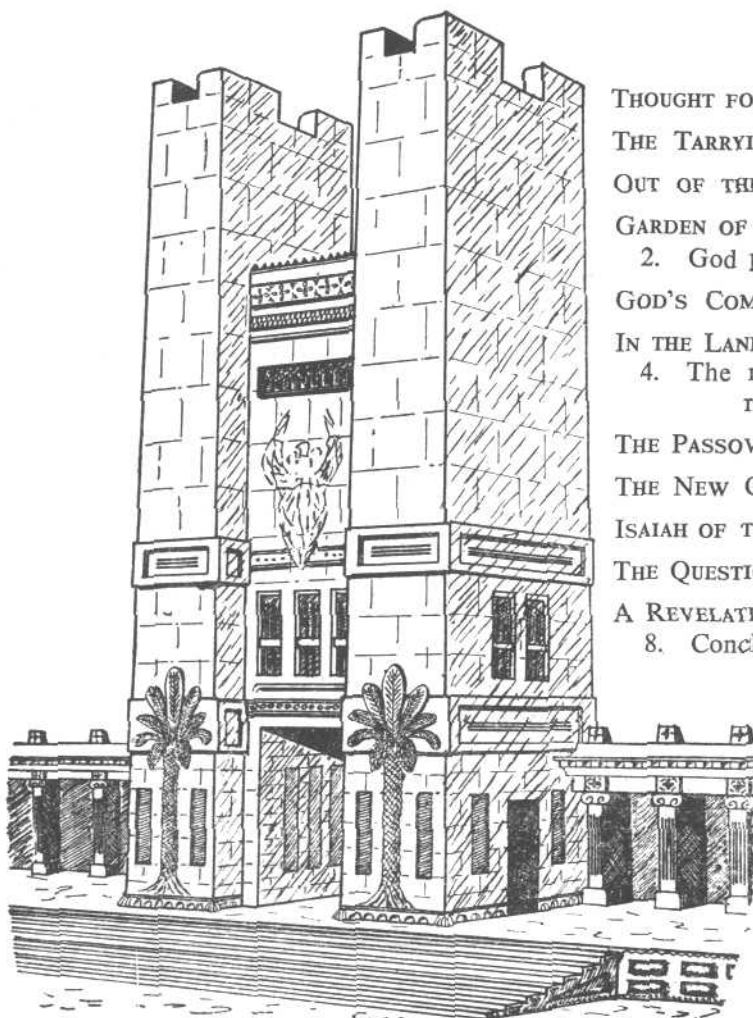
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published March 1st

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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	26
THE TARRYING VISION	27
OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE	28
GARDEN OF EDEN	
2. God planted a Garden	31
GOD'S COMPREHENSIVE LAW	36
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN	
4. The rule of the shepherding rod	37
THE PASSOVER MUST BE KILLED ...	38
THE NEW COVENANT	40
ISAIAH OF THE GOLDEN TONGUE ...	43
THE QUESTION BOX	46
A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL	
8. Conclusion	47



*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

"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times" (Isa. 33.6).

Stability is an ingredient sadly lacking in world affairs to-day, one that is desperately sought by the world's leaders but not found. The Hebrew word combines the factors of firmness and reliability, something which stands upon a sure foundation and can thereafter be relied upon to remain without failure. The policies of the nations are disintegrating and falling to pieces almost before they are put into practice and this because they lack stability. This in turn is because one of the vital factors is missing. Wisdom and knowledge are necessary to stability, said the prophet to his own generation. Men have the knowledge—plenty of it—to-day but they lack the wisdom. That is not God's fault. He implanted wisdom in man at the beginning, the wisdom necessary to administer man's environment, wisdom to order his own life aright and to live in peace and harmony with his fellows, but men have allowed greed and self-interest to dictate their actions and through the generations that innate wisdom has been obscured and become lost. The consequence is that this marvellous knowledge men have acquired is running amok and uncontrolled and the fruit of that knowledge is driving the world to destruction.

Isaiah preached his message at a time not unlike the present. His own nation, Israel, was the unwilling victim of the contending political interests of two super-powers. Assyria and Egypt, the two principal empires of the day, were at each other's throats and the land of Israel lay between. The prevailing political opinion in Israel was to conclude treaties of mutual help with Egypt in the hope that safety from Assyrian aggression would thereby be assured. Isaiah told them in effect that they were leaning upon a broken reed and would certainly fall victim to

Assyria if they persisted in their course of action. The sequel proved the accuracy of his diagnosis; Israel was eventually carried captive into Assyria. But Isaiah saw beyond the immediate prospect. He also told them that in a day yet future, when they would at last have learned the lesson of their reliance upon human knowledge without the heavenly wisdom which could have been theirs for the asking, the Lord himself will come into the picture and establish a social order in which wisdom and knowledge will indeed conspire together to bring about stability.

Therein lies our hope, the hope for all mankind. It is quite beyond the power of man, Christian or non-Christian, to extricate this world from the calamity it has brought upon itself. Only God can do it now, and God will. The old proverb "Man's extremity is God's opportunity" will prove to be wonderfully true. It has been the Divine intention all along to allow men full reign to govern themselves in their own way by their own standards and only when they have lamentably failed, and can see for themselves that they have lamentably failed, will He step in to show men the right way. The Biblical presentation of the Divine purpose is crystal clear that the majority of men will hail the new order of things with relief and enthusiasm. Of the reign of Christ over the nations during that coming Age it is said "they shall say in that day, Lo! this is our God, and He will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation".

The Memorial The date for the Memorial Service this year is Good Friday, April 17.

Gone from us

— ❁ —

Bro. F. R. Mulley (Ealing)
 Bro. A. Spain (Meopham)

— ❁ —

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

THE TARRYING VISION

*A talk for
the times*

"The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." (Hab. 2. 3).

The splendid faith of the prophet Habakkuk shines down the ages, a standing reproof to all who have allowed the slow passage of many years to undermine and finally destroy their faith in the coming Kingdom. There is not much consolation in the thought of a world wherein dwelleth righteousness that is still many thousands of years away. The great incentive that led so many despairing souls in the First Century to fling away their sadness and come rejoicing into that wonderful missionary society that was the Early Church was their fixed conviction that the time was at hand and the Kingdom of light was at the doors. The splendid imagery of the Book of Revelation was full of that theme to the early Christians. Little did they reckon of the two thousand years that must yet elapse before the New Jerusalem would in fact descend to the earth to the blessing of all mankind. They interpreted the mystic symbols to refer to their own day and the events of their own times—as they were intended to do—and they fell asleep in the secure conviction that the days of evil were numbered and the Rider on the White Horse all but ready to cleave the heavens in his meteoric descent to the salvation of men. In their admittedly partial and incomplete understanding of the dispensational features of the Plan of God they found all that was necessary to Christian fortitude and steadfastness. In that faith they lived, and in that faith they died.

So it was through the successive centuries of this Gospel Age. There has hardly ever been a time when the Second Advent of Christ and the speedy ending of this present evil world has not been looked upon as an imminent event. There were times—round about A.D. 500 and again in A.D. 1000 and to a lesser extent in A.D. 1600 when that general belief increased to the dimensions of a well-nigh universal expectation. On each such occasion the belief was founded upon chronology and each time the chronology was proved to be erroneous; but the impetus thus given to a wholehearted and zealous "watching for His appearing" was on each occasion the cause of much blessing. It is not the failure to discern aright the details of the vision that is the cause of falling away from faith and hope, but the failure to discern any vision at all. The in-

accurate details can be replaced by more accurate ones as fast as the passage of time reveals their inaccuracy without disturbing our view of the vision itself; nothing can fill in for us the details of a vision that has faded into nothingness.

In our own day we need to remember these things. It is not that we have just the same basis for concluding that maybe we ourselves are equally mistaken with those of five or ten centuries ago and that the world is doomed to continue yet for an unspecified length of time before the transition to the Kingdom becomes an accomplished fact. There are factors in the case which did not exist before. It is reasonably evident to-day that humanity, left to itself, will fairly soon destroy itself from the earth unless there be some intervention from outside. It is reasonably evident to-day that the continuing increase of earth's population will in a very short time render the fulfilment of the Divine promises physically impossible, if the end is not to come soon—assuming that our understanding of the Scripture doctrine of salvation is the true one. It is true to-day, as it has never been true before in the Age, that the Divine promises to "Israel after the flesh" have commenced to be fulfilled, and that the preparation of that Holy Nation which is to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth has commenced. It is true to-day, as it has never been true before in the Age, that this Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, that no corner of the inhabited earth remains into which Christian missionaries have not at one time or another penetrated with their soul-saving message. All these things are signs of the End; for the first time in history it was possible to anticipate the imminent Second Coming of our Lord and the consequent speedy setting up of his Kingdom on earth on a basis other than that of chronology. That is a most important thing. Whatever may be the merits or demerits of any particular chronological scheme, none will deny that the signs of the times and the inexorable logic of events constitute a far more sure and reliable basis on which to found our expectations. Therefore it is with serene confidence that we in this Twentieth Century ought to take our stand, as did Habakkuk of old, upon our watch tower and view the close approach of those things for which Christians all through the Age have longed and prayed and waited.

Fine words, these, say some! Logical, and perhaps difficult to refute from the standpoint of reason. But our lives are not altogether governed by reason, and oft-times the discouragements and difficulties of the way and the more immediate appeal of every day happenings makes it hard to take and hold to ourselves arguments such as the above, logical and truthful though we know them to be. That was how the children of Israel in captivity to Babylon felt. They knew, in a theoretical sort of way, that after seventy years in Babylon they were going to be restored to their own land and all the glorious promises of God to their nation come true. But that belief had not become so much a part of their lives and an object of assured expectation that they could hold it unsullied against the background of their present miseries in Babylon. So they invented that proverb which has become the catch-word of all who could not "stay the course" through all time since, *"the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth"*. What utter hopelessness and despair is embodied in those eight words! Nothing left of all the rosy promise of youth, of all the zeal and enthusiasm with which one set out, maybe many years ago, to serve the Lord God as an ambassador of his Kingdom. The commission renounced, the service abandoned, the hopes dashed, the future—black. Disappointment; bitter, keen disappointment, was the lot of many in Natural Israel in those dark Babylonian days, and it has been the lot of many in Spiritual Israel in these latter days also. This past century in Christian history has been a grand epoch of watchfulness and expectation, a time of Bible exposition and understanding, of evangelism and revival, of missionary endeavour and Christian activity of every description, but for many that wonderful experience has proved fruitless. They have consecrated their lives to the Cause, have borne the heat and burden of the day, have done mighty and wonderful works in his Name and perchance have led others in turn to the feet of the Saviour—and then in evening time have abandoned their hope and faith in the face of unfulfilled expectations. The Bridegroom has tarried—has seemed to them to tarry, for in fact He does not really tarry; He comes "at the due time"—and the test of waiting has found the chink in the armour which all other tests had failed to penetrate. So they sought "other salvations", or have gone to the world and its mundane affairs and petty interests—or glittering attractions—for consolation, or have retired into their own shells to lament the apparent futility of all their life's work. *"We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there any amongst us that*

knoweth how long."

But some there are who do keep the vision undimmed. Some there are who endure to the end, "as seeing him who is invisible," and these are they who perceive the hidden truth which explains all things. These are they who know that God once looked out upon a wild chaos that was "without form, and void" and because He had faith in himself took up the great work of making it a home for mankind. These are they who know that God once looked down upon a human creation apparently wrecked and ruined through sin, condemned to return to the dust from which it had been made—but because He had faith in man, continued the development and outworking of his great redemptive plan. He knows that despite the apparent hopelessness of the case, mankind one day will win through to the full standards and standing of the sinless and everliving sons of God. And his faithful ones know that too.

Habakkuk was one of these. His noble words have been an inspiration to the perplexed and discouraged, time after time. No one will ever know, this side the Vail, how many despairing souls have been induced to pick up the broken remnants of their faith and piece them together and struggle on still to keep the vision in sight. "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3. 17-18). That was the spirit which led the prophet Joel, looking forward rapturously to the Kingdom that shall be, to break out exultantly *"your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions"*. (Joel 2. 28). That word really belongs to the Millennial Kingdom itself but there is a very true sense in which the principle it enshrines is applicable now. We who have enjoyed the inestimable blessing of knowing about the coming Kingdom in advance, as it were, of mankind generally, can surely take to ourselves some of the Millennial insight which will be granted to men and women of God in that day. We too, according to the tale of physical years or maturity of Christian character, or both, can be of those who "dream dreams" or "see visions". Be it remembered that in the meaning of this verse the "dreamer of dreams" is the one to whose Spirit-filled mind God can reveal himself and make his purposes known, as He did to Joseph and Daniel and the Apostle Paul. The "elder" who dreams dreams is the one

who by reason of long experience in the Christian way and a steadfast faith that has survived the years does habitually "walk" and "talk" with God. He is one whose ministry is a spiritually profitable and acceptable ministry, one who can interpret aright the outward signs of the development of the Divine Plan and explain the apparently obscure or contradictory features that seem to deny rather than confirm our expectations for the future. The "younger" who sees visions is the one who, only recently having started on the Christian pathway, directs all his enthusiasm and all his zeal and all his faith into a heartfelt and active consecration of life and all that life holds to the service of God in the interests of his Kingdom. The trials of faith have not yet come to test the staying power of his consecration. All he has is zeal and enthusiasm—and the vision! God grant that all such may hold firmly to their first resolve until in their turn

they become of the "old men" who can "dream dreams" because they have learned to walk with God.

So the vision leads on, never standing still, never appearing quite the same to any two people or at any two moments of time, but ever enduring a sure and faithful guide to the heavenly city. Lose the vision, and all is lost; we wander aimlessly and blindly in a darkened world indeed. "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Hold fast to the vision and it will lead on with beckoning fingers, the light growing more intense and the outlines of things to come more definite, until the day of fulfilment has dawned and faith is swallowed up in sight.

"As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall have no occasion to use this proverb any more in Israel. Say unto them, 'the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision.'"

THE POISON WIND

Professor David Brunt, F.R.S., in "*Climate and Human Comfort*" makes an observation which throws an interesting sidelight on the "vehement east wind" of Jonah 4. 8. He says: "If a man is exposed to wind of just over 11 m.p.h., at a temperature of 110 degrees F. and relative humidity 42 per cent., his body temperature can remain normal so long as he sweats at the rate of 2 pints per hour. If he stops sweating, he will thus be exposed to conditions in which radiation and convection heat the body, while there is no evaporative loss of heat from the skin. His body temperature will then rise, and he will die of heat-stroke. This appears to be the explanation of the deaths from the Simoom, the hot dry Poison Wind of Arabia, in which whole parties of men have perished together."

These climatic conditions are those which are experienced in Iraq. The account in the Book of Jonah states that a "vehement east wind" sprang up, and the sun "beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die". No dweller in the cooler hill country of Israel could have imagined such a technically accurate incident as this, for there is no "poison wind" in Israel. This is but one of the many unnoticed details that confirm the historical accuracy of the Book of Jonah.

The Rev. Wigram, who lived in this same locality early in this century as the representa-

tive of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Nestorian Church, adds parallel testimony in his book "*The Cradle of Mankind*" (1936), page 340. He says:

"On the road from Amadia to Mosul in the summer it is often 120 degrees in the shade. By day the heat is very trying, and there is a real danger occasionally of that strange phenomenon, the 'Sam'. This is apparently a very small whirlwind, akin to those which cause the 'dust-devils' common enough in the land at all times, but composed of intensely heated air, flavoured often with sulphurous fumes. A man struck by it simply collapses, and unless prompt attention can be given to him he dies in a few minutes. . . . The natives not unnaturally refer to it as a poison wind. . . . A British Consul has told the writer how on one occasion, turning to speak to his kavass who was riding a few yards behind him, he suddenly felt the hot blast and smelt the sulphurous fumes, while the kavass collapsed and fell from his horse as if he had been shot."

The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, who travelled these lands in the year 1296 A.D., tells of this same type of wind suffocating sixteen hundred horsemen and five thousand footmen belonging to the King of Kirman (a district of Persia). "Not one escaped", he says, "to carry the tidings to their lord".

The name "Calvary" in Luke 23. 33, applied to the hill of the Crucifixion otherwise called Golgotha is taken from the Latin word *calvaria*,

which is a translation of the Greek *kranion*, in turn a translation of the Aramaic "*golgotha*"—"the place of a skull".

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

Arab testimony

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

God is Love

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

The Only Begotten

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

An Arab's faith

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

Wisdom

"Great is the truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon the truth, and the heaven blesseth it: all works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing. It endureth, and is always strong: it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards: but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth."

Zorobabel in 1 Esdras 4 (Apocrypha)

Man's Primeval Perfection

"Neither in Egypt nor in Babylonia has any beginning of civilisation been found. As far back as archeology can take us, man is already civilised, building cities and temples, carving hard stone into artistic form, and even employing a system of picture writing; and of Egypt it may be said, the older the country the more perfect it is found to be. The fact is a very remarkable one, in view of modern theories of development, and of the evolution of civilisation out of barbarism. Whatever may be the reason, such theories are not borne out by the discoveries of archeology. Instead of the progress we should expect, we find retrogression and decay; where we look for the rude beginnings of art, we find an advanced society and artistic perfection. Is it possible that the Biblical view is right after all, and that civilised man has been civilised from the outset?"—Dr. R. Bell Dawson, F.R.S.

GARDEN OF EDEN

2. God planted a Garden

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

The story of man's creation includes a description of the place where it took place. The narrative is tantalizingly brief; it informs us that *"the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed"* (ch. 2. 8), adding a few geographical indications which have exercised the ingenuity of many commentators of many generations, producing a variety of conclusions. It is evident though that the unknown writer was at pains to define the location of the Garden for the benefit at least of his contemporaries if not of future readers. It is hardly conceivable that the Holy Spirit would have preserved such a description if it had no basis in reality or nothing to teach those who would read it so many millennia later. No Scripture narrative is without meaning or preserved without reason. The fact that the majority of students have failed to make much of this narrative is no proof of its unreliability. A great many of the statements of Strabo, the Greek geographer of the time of Christ, were dismissed as fanciful nonsense by educated men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but when the wilds of Africa and Asia had been explored by Europeans much of that which had been thus dismissed was found to be perfectly accurate. Strabo himself repudiated with scorn certain findings of still more ancient geographers and they too have since been proved right. The search for the site of the celebrated Garden is not satisfied by looking at Bible maps; it requires an investigation into very early history.

Moses was not the original author of Genesis. His function was to assemble together and edit—and perhaps translate—a collection of very early documents which preserved the history of his forebears back to the first man. Internal evidence shows that the first eleven chapters of Genesis go back to Sumerian originals; Abraham must have brought these with him from Ur of the Chaldees. The remainder are replete with Canaanite and Egyptian words and were probably composed during the lifetimes of the patriarchs and so came into Moses' possession. All Moses could do with what is now the second chapter of Genesis was to repeat the story as it was written in the ancient document before him, without himself necessarily knowing anything about the locality it describes. In fact he could not have done so, for the knowledge had been lost for nearly a thousand years and it is only the achievement of modern research that has

made its recovery possible. Because of this fact it is possible to look at this chapter from a new angle and form a tolerably clear picture of when, where, and in what language it was first written, and this in turn casts an entirely new light on this description of the Garden.

The narrative is notable for its brevity and yet the information it conveys in so few words. *"The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed . . . and a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became unto four heads. The name of the first is Pison; that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon; the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is it which goeth eastward to Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates"* (Gen. 2. 8-14).

The place names given in the narrative are obviously those current in Sumer at the time it was originally written, whenever in the past that may have been, but certainly long before Moses. There are four districts, Eden, Havilah, Ethiopia, Assyria, and four rivers, Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. Any reasonably well-educated person having this account before him at the time—and probably at any time up to the days of Abraham—would be at no loss to determine exactly the places in question; thanks to research in Bible lands we need have little greater difficulty to-day.

Although it is customary to speak of the Garden of Eden, the narrative describes it as a garden *in* Eden which is therefore the name of a district. "Eden" is the Hebrew spelling of the Sumerian *"Edinu"* meaning "The Plain"; this was the name borne by the low flat country at the head of the Persian Gulf where most of the Sumerian cities were built. It is in fact the same *"plain in the land of Shinar"* (Sumer) which Noah's descendants entered much later after the Flood (Gen. 11). A more precise definition then follows. The garden was "eastward in Eden". "Eastward" here is Hebrew *"qedem"* which has the significance of being "before" or "in front", either in respect of position or time. When used in respect of position, since the Hebrews viewed themselves as facing the east, "east" is the natural meaning, and the word is so translated

about 25 times in the O.T. When used in respect of time it denotes that which is past, first or ancient, and is rendered by "ancient" or by equivalent words about 31 times in the O.T. The early translators, thinking of the Garden in terms of position and knowing nothing about Eden anyway, took the word as defining "position" and adopted "east" as the probable meaning. In fact, the unknown scribe really meant the "ancient, or olden, Eden" as distinct from the then modern existing "Eden" or "The Plain" known to his readers. In other words, the Garden had been located in a part of Eden which no longer existed; as the upshot will show, since the days of Adam and Eve it had been submerged by the waters of the Persian Gulf.

This conclusion is demanded by the geographical indications which follow in the narrative. Additionally, some confirmation is afforded by the persistent tradition that the events of man's original "Golden Age" when sin and death were unknown took place in the land known to the Sumerians as Dilmun, in the vicinity of modern Bahrein, some three hundred miles down the Gulf. Gen. 2.8 should therefore read "*And the Lord God planted a garden in ancient Eden*", this contrasting with the still existing part of Eden with which his readers were acquainted and where many of them had their homes. This ancient part of Eden had become submerged under the sea during the intervening centuries.

The physical appearance of Iraq is always changing. At the present time the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, join forces a hundred miles from the sea and complete their course as a united stream, the Shatt-el-Arab. Halfway along this united stream the waters of the Kherkhah come down from the Persian mountains and flow into the Shatt-el-Arab through wide marshes; on the other side the Wady al Batin, a deep gorge which once brought a mighty river down from Central Arabia, now contributes a minor flow. The land is flat and marshy, built up by sediment carried down by these rivers, and is constantly encroaching on the sea and pushing the shore line farther south—at the present time at the rate of one mile every seventy years. Ur of the Chaldees is to-day more than a hundred miles from the sea; in Abraham's day it was on the coast, and the four rivers entered the Gulf through separate outlets. These same four rivers are those whose ancient courses the old-time chronicler now sets out to describe.

"A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted and became unto four heads" (ch. 2.10). The implication of this rather cumbersome sentence is that a river

in Eden watered the Garden, and that above the Garden it separated into four tributary watercourses, each starting from its own fountainhead, converging to form a river which flowed through and fertilised the garden. It follows that the garden was situated somewhere below the confluence of the four streams, between their junction and the sea.

"The name of the first is Pison; that is it which surrounds the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone" (ch. 2.11-12). Havilah is correctly spelled in Hebrew Khavilah. There were two lands of Khavilah known to antiquity, one peopled by the descendants of Khavilah of the line of Ham (Gen. 10.7) and the other by Khavilah of the line of Shem (Gen. 10.29). This latter was situated in what is now Northern Arabia but is too late in time to be the one under consideration. The location of the other is deducible from the description of its products as being situated in north-western Iran between the Iraq frontier and the Caspian Sea. The A.V. gives these as gold, bdellium and onyx. The ancients mined gold in these mountains and modern travellers report that it is still there, together with silver and lead. The onyx of the O.T., Hebrew *shoham*, the *santu* of the Sumerians, was a blue-green precious stone greatly prized by them and now known as lapis-lazuli. This also occurs in the same mountains. William Loftus, a celebrated geologist, conducted extensive researches in this area in 1850 and in his "*Travels and Researches*" (1857) verified the existence of gold and lapis-lazuli among other metals and minerals in this area, so confirming the Genesis account, although he was unaware of that fact.

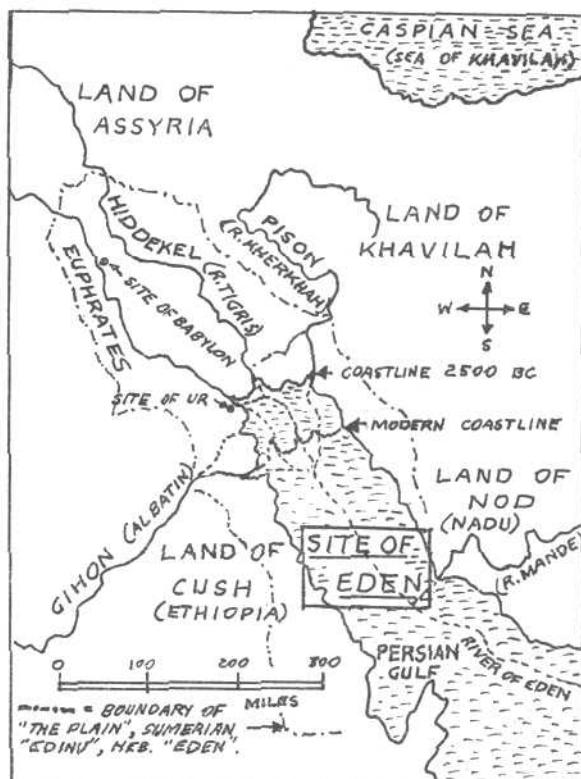
Bdellium appears to refer to pearls. The only other occurrence of the word is in Num. 11.7 where the manna is said to have the colour (lit. appearance) of bdellium, the tiny grains of almost transparent manna thus being likened to pearls. Benjamin of Tudela in the 12th century when visiting the Persian Gulf told of seeing pearls and pearl fishers at work, something quite new to him, and he referred to pearls as bdellium "*Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*", modern edition, Adler, 1907). Those of Genesis were probably river pearls from the fresh-water mussel, occurring in the river which traversed the land. This river, now known as the Kherkhah, rising far inside Iran, traverses this region in wide curves. In its lower reaches, and around its outlet to the sea, the Sumerians gathered these freshwater pearls. To-day the same river empties itself into the stagnant marshes of lower Iraq, and the pearls are no more, but the gold,

the lapis-lazuli and the pearls establish the modern Kherkhah as the Pison of Genesis and the territory it drains as the ancient Khavilah.

A remarkable fact is that the name still endures. Until recent times the area south-west of the Caspian Sea was known as Khavila, and the Caspian Sea itself was the Khvalynski—the sea of Khavila. (The modern name Caspian comes from the later people of Trans Caucasia. Prior to that it was the Khasarsky, from the Khazars, a hybrid Jewish-Scythian nation which occupied the Ukraine in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D., and prior to that the Khvalynski, from the people of Khavila.) It would appear that this ancient Sumerian land of Khavilah extended across Iran from the Iraq frontier to the shores of the Caspian. But as yet the name has not been found in any inscriptions that have been discovered; a century or so after the probable date the Genesis narrative was compiled the area was occupied by the powerful city-state of Aratta, the existence of which only became known a few years ago, so that Khavilah as its predecessor may turn up in future discoveries at any time. It is known however that Aratta supplied gold and lapis-lazuli to the city-states of Sumer so that the Genesis story is thereby additionally confirmed.

"And the name of the second river is Gihon; the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia (ch. 2.13). "Ethiopia" came to the A.V. from the Greek Septuagint as the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Cush". The African country of Ethiopia was known as Cush in ancient times and is so referred to in the O.T. from Isaiah's period onward. But Isaiah's Cush was not the Cush of Genesis; here is the story of a great migration. Cushites were the descendants of Cush the son of Ham (Gen. 10.6) and were therefore a Sumerian people. They originated on the Euphrates and history finds them being forced down the west side of the Persian Gulf by the pressure of Semitic tribes (sons of Shem) descending the Euphrates from the north. As the Semitic Arabs filled the Arabian peninsula the Cushites moved along its south coast, the Hadramhaut, crossed the Red Sea near Aden and by the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt were colonising eastern Africa, when the application of the name Cush (Ethiopia) to the African land still bearing that name, (although the Ethiopia of Isaiah was actually the present Sudan). This migration had hardly begun when Genesis 2 was being written and the land of Cush was at that time confined to the district west of the Euphrates and southward toward Arabia. The Gihon was the modern Wady-al-Batin, watering the whole of Northern Arabia. In ancient times

this was a fertile land and the Wady-al-Batin a major river; during subsequent times that whole part of the earth's surface has been slowly elevated and with the rising land level the river has shrunk to a winter trickle only and the land has become desert. This may be a comparatively recent development; the Wady al-Batin is shown as a major river on the map accompanying Thomas Herbert's "Travels in Persia" of 1627, less than four hundred years ago. W. B. Fisher in "The Middle East" (1966) gives the depression which once marked its outlet in the Bay of Kuwait as being four miles wide, so that the



meaning of "Gihon"—the bursting forth river—might be literally correct and this a mighty river in those far-off days of Genesis.

The Arabic equivalent of Gihon is Jahran. Near the point where this dried-up channel meets the sea there is to-day, marked on large-scale maps, an Arab village called Al-Jahran.

The Alexandrian Jews who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek (the Septuagint) in the 3rd century B.C., anxious to include their own national river, the Nile, in the story, translated "Gihon" by Nile, which is why many commentators give this as the equivalent. There is no

basis for this; Egypt is many miles away from the scene of the Genesis story.

The existence of this land of Cush on the western side of the Persian Gulf has been confirmed by the investigations of the archaeologist Geoffrey Bibby, who has been leading an expedition more or less continuously since 1953, uncovering the remains of an archaic Cushite civilisation which goes back to what is called the Ubaid period—say six or seven centuries before Abraham—corresponding roughly to the time of this Genesis story. All along the coast are the buried ruins of Cushite towns and villages betokening a large and influential population which lived by trading and agriculture.

"And the name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria" (ch. 2.14). In this case the word rendered "east" is *qidmah*, which has the significance of "eastward" or "to the forefront of"—because "east" and "front" derive from the same Hebrew word. This river, Hiddekel is the modern river Tigris, which flows from the highlands of Turkey all through Iraq to the Persian Gulf. The archaic Sumerian name was Idigna and the Semitic name Idiglat, which transliterated into Hebrew becomes Hiddekel. As late as the days of Daniel it was still called the Idiglat or Hiddekel (Dan. 10.4) but shortly after his time when the sovereignty had passed under control of the Persians they changed its name to Tigris, by which name it has since been known.

This river, says the narrative, "goeth eastward, or to the forefront, of Assyria". If, as will be shown presently, the narrative is written as though the scribe occupied a position on the river Euphrates, which flowed to the west of Assyria, this would be a good and accurate geographical indication. The land of Assyria in Old Testament times lay in the north part of the present Iraq plain, around the present town of Mosul, which is the site of Nineveh the ancient capital. Assyria as an influential nation did not appear on the stage of history until much later, something like five hundred years after the probable date of Gen. 2, but during this present century one of the greatest of Assyrian archaeologists, Sir Max Mallowan, has, over a period of twenty-five years, found the remains of Assyrian villages and peoples going back to pre-historic times, well before that of the writer of Gen. 2. According to Gen. 10 Asshur the son of Shem was the first to settle in this land soon after the Flood and build cities (more properly, villages) so that it is evident that Assyria (the Greek form of the native name Asshur for the land, named after its founder) was in existence

at this remote time. The Tigris, then, is established as one of the four rivers of Eden.

"And the fourth river is Euphrates" (ch. 2.14). The style in which the fourth river is introduced, with no further description, shows that it was perfectly well known to the intended readers. It was in fact their own national river, running through the centre of their land. It is still known by its original name—*Puraṭ* in Sumerian, *Ufratu* the Persian equivalent, of which Euphrates is the Greek and therefore the English equivalent. This is the "Great River" of the Bible and perhaps the most famous river of all history. All the Sumerian and Semitic city-states were grouped on or near the lower reaches of the "Plain" of Eden. Some are mentioned in the Old Testament. Gen. 10.10 lists "Babel (Babylon) Erech (Uruk) Accad (Agade) Calneh (Nippur) in the land of Shinar" (Sumer). Ur of the Chaldees from whence came Abraham some seven centuries later stood at the Euphrates outlet to the sea. Ellasar (Larsa) is mentioned in Gen. 14. Others not mentioned in the O.T. are Kish, Eridu, Isin, Shuruppak, Umma, and a host more, although many of these were not in existence at the time Gen. 2 was written down. But somewhere in this area with its clustering population of Sumerians and Semites, sons of Ham and sons of Shem, lived the man who first put down on some ancient writing material a connected story of the Garden of Eden in the form in which we have it to-day.

One further clue to the location of the Garden is given in the story of Cain in Gen. 4. After his crime, Cain was banished to *"the land of Nod, on the east of Eden"*. "Nod" is the Hebrew transliteration of the Sumerian name "Nadu", mentioned in inscriptions as a land halfway down the eastern side of the Persian Gulf, where the present river Mande—ships of Nadu—preserves its name to this day. The name obviously continued into historic times from those of the Genesis writer; reference to the map above shows that it is precisely to the east of the area indicated in Genesis as the site of the Garden.

When and where was the story written? The only clues from which deductions can be made are the two place-names Havilah and Cush, and the "land of Nod" of Gen. 4.4. Havilah preceded Aratta in the same area, and Aratta existed some six centuries before Abraham; Cush preceded Dilmun which latter is first mentioned in the Sumerian literary work known as the *"Epic of Gilgamesh"* who lived some five centuries before Abraham. Probably the nearest very tentative approximation is that it was six centuries before Abraham and six centuries after

the Flood, and this would bring it within the lifetimes of the patriarchs Eber and Peleg.

It is easier to say where it was written. The narrative is written from the point of view of a dweller on the lower Euphrates, in one of the cities of that region, anywhere between Babylon and Ur. Six hundred years later Abraham was living at Ur but there is nothing to show where his forebears lived. The writer was not necessarily one of his ancestors but there is a strong likelihood that such was the fact. The mixture of Semitic and Sumerian words in early Genesis seems to point to a man who lived in Sumer and was thoroughly conversant with both languages. An attractive hypothesis is that the author was the patriarch Eber, six generations above Abraham. This man was the reputed founder of the Hebrew and Arab peoples and may well have been the means in his own generation of preserving the Divine oracles. At any rate, the one who wrote the story possessed a good knowledge of the geography of the Sumerian lands of his own time, and the relation of those lands to the Garden of Eden of older time; he was well informed in the details of the Creation story and well able to place his knowledge before his immediate readers.

The time was before that of any writing of which examples now exist. The earliest writing now known is a kind of picture writing used by the Sumerians before the development of the familiar cuneiform (arrow-headed) script. That goes back only to a time which may not have been more than a few centuries later than the original of Gen. 2. It may well have been written in that same picture-writing in the first place. But no one can say; the available data is all too scanty.

So the students of that day, reading the story of creation, learned that rivers of their own land had in the days of Eden joined together to form one main watercourse which traversed the Garden before reaching the sea, thus implying that the area now covered by the Persian Gulf was dry land, a great valley through which the main river made its way to an outlet somewhere in

the present Indian Ocean. Geology shows that at some indeterminate time in the past this was in fact the case, that both the Gulf and part of the Indian Ocean were dry land, that the river Indus from India met the Euphrates and they emptied their joint waters into an ocean somewhere in the distant south. That unknown scribe anticipated the findings of modern geology by more than four thousand years.

The writer of Genesis 2 intended his readers to understand that the lost Garden was situated somewhere under the shallow waters of the Persian Gulf. A more fitting place for man's introduction to the earth could hardly have been selected. This spacious valley, three hundred miles wide at its greatest width by six hundred long, with the great river meandering through its centre, ran roughly north-west to south-east. A glance at a map shows that it was almost entirely surrounded by the mountains of Iran and the high table-land of Central Arabia, a wonderfully sheltered stretch of parkland in a region where summer would be virtually perpetual. The soil, composed of fertile silt brought down by the river, and therefore rich in everything that makes for plant growth, must have supported a profusion of tree and plant life. Here, if anywhere, is the place where the first few generations of men, sprung from Adam and Eve, could have made progress in knowledge of the earth's resources untrammelled by the necessity of labouring in the sweat of their brows. The great valley, extending from the Indian Ocean to the Armenian mountains, could have supported many millions of human beings before need existed to penetrate the encircling highlands and find living space in the wider world beyond. By then they would have been more prepared for the task of subduing the earth and making it fruitful (Gen. 1.28) than were those two who entered that wider world prematurely because of their sin.

* * *

The next instalment will consider the story of the creation of the first man and the reality behind it.

The word of God shows clearly where to step, now. If we take the next step in the light, the lamp moves with us, until we come to the eternal day.

R. Hammond.

If you agree with God's purpose, He will bring not only your conscious life, but all the deeper regions of your life which you cannot get at, into harmony.

Oswald Chambers.

If the peace of God keeps your heart and mind, then the state of your heart will be calm and tranquil and you will find rest unto your soul. The circumstances of life cannot ruffle this peace for it is founded upon God. *H. W. Fry.*

All the trouble that ever came into the world came by two things—listening to the lies of the devil and disbelieving God. And every conceivable blessing comes by the converse of these two things—turning a deaf ear to the devil's lies and fully believing God.

GOD'S COMPREHENSIVE LAW

A quotation

"Let us briefly view the exhibition of God's character as displayed in his dealing toward mankind whom He made a spectacle to angels. (I Cor. 4.9). In so doing, let us guard against the common error which judges of God's actions exactly as of our own. Let us remember that Justice, Love, Wisdom and Power, as commonly displayed by the fallen race, in dealing with each other, and by human parents with their children, are far from being perfect, as at first—the image of those qualities in God. In consequence of the Fall these qualities are constantly at war with each other, in our experience. Sometimes Love has a victory over Justice, and sometimes Justice has a victory over Love. But with God there can be no conflict; and neither ever gains a victory or ascendancy over the other. Both are perfect and work only in perfect harmony.

"Before man was created, the Justice, Wisdom, Love, and Power of God held conference on the subject, and devised the plan which has since been developing. The plan was suggested by Wisdom and concurred in by the other attributes, the arrangement and execution of it being left in Wisdom's hands. Wisdom designed to have the largest returns of experience and benefit to man, and the most valuable illustration of God's character to all his creatures, on every plane of being. Accordingly Wisdom said, Let the man come under the control of Justice, Love, and Power, separately, that the force and operation of each may be the more forcibly illustrated. Let Justice first have complete control, let the man be dealt with by strict law; "Thou shalt not"—"In the day that thou dost—Dying thou shalt die", and so it was.

"Man, inexperienced and unused to self control and liberty, violated the law, and experienced the full weight of Justice, as Wisdom had foreseen and prepared for. The lesson under Justice has been long and severe, but the lesson must be thorough, so that it shall never need repeating. Men and angels must learn that Justice is relentless, irrevocable and unalterable. Meanwhile Love stood ready to manifest itself at the moment Wisdom should give the word. Love would have done so at once, but for two reasons: First, it could not oppose or interfere with the action of Justice in condemning man and delivering him over for the execution of the prescribed penalty. Secondly: Though Love might have acknowledged Justice and approved

its action by promptly providing a ransom, Wisdom objected and did not permit this course at that time, because it saw best to make the lesson complete and thorough. Hence for over four thousand years Love was not permitted to manifest itself, and might only speak in shadowy sacrifices and ceremonies and more or less obscure promises. But finally, when the right time had come, in "due time" in the fullness of time, Wisdom gave the word and Love began to manifest itself for man's relief. The first act was to provide a perfect and sinless man to be a suitable ransom for all, and it must be one not under the Adamic curse, who would meet all the requirements of Justice and therefore be acceptable as a ransom and propitiation for our sins. And Love's great exhibition was seen in the gift of the grandest and greatest, the Head of all creation, who "became Man" to redeem men; and He CALLED HIS NAME JESUS when he became Man.

"Ah! says one who judges by his own habits and feelings; Now comes Love's victory over Justice. We shall see that God is more loving than severe. But not so: He is perfect in both respects. It will be indeed a victory for Love, but not over Justice. It will be much grander than that. It will prove a victory for both Justice and Love; for it will be gained by Love's paying the price demanded by Justice — a Ransom, an equivalent price. Thus did the Love of God magnify the Justice and law of God, and make it honourable, by acknowledging its claims in the payment of the very penalty demanded—man's death. Long and faithfully has Love laboured, yet all her labour will yet be lost unless in due time Wisdom shall commission Power to do its special part in the great plan. Power thus far has stood in the background, doing nothing directly in man's relief, save in the resurrection of our Lord and in the miracles which shadowed forth its coming work. Now, we are living in the day when Power begins to act, not in opposition to Justice, but in harmony with Wisdom, Justice and Love, in crushing out sin and evil, and in legally removing the penalty of sin and dominion of evil, cancelled through the ransom paid by Jesus. Oh, blessed day! The Lamb that was slain and who redeemed us by his blood is now invested with Power to restore and bless all whom He bought, and He is now about taking unto himself his great power, and shall reign until He hath put all enemies in subjection." (C.T.R.)

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

*Short stories of
the Millennium*

4. The Rule of the Shepherding Rod

The dark man — the well-built one — leaned back on the grassy bank, hands behind head, and smiled sardonically.

"Say what you like, Caspar, I do not believe a word of all this talk about a new order in which Christ is king and men are being progressively converted to him and leading good and honest lives."

The other, seated near by, looked up, hands between knees.

"How do you account for your being here, then—and the obvious fact that there is a different order of society with the old lawlessness gone—and no one is dying any more?"

Ferdinand looked at the peaceful scene before him through narrowed eyelids, lips curled contemptuously.

"I do not have to. Here I am, in full strength of mind and body, in a world with no police and no prisons, where the majority of people are peaceable and non-resistant, and I can go my own way as I please. I still don't have to work for my living, any more than we did in the old days. Anything I want I can take, and no one seems to resist. Granted that all I have had so far is food and clothing, but I have my eye now on something bigger." His gaze turned speculatively to a house standing in a trim garden at the bend of the lane.

Caspar looked thoughtful.

"I don't see how you can maintain that attitude. You know as well as I do that we crashed in that car with the police chasing us and the next moment found ourselves in this new world which is being universally proclaimed and generally accepted as under the rule of Christ, in whom neither you nor I ever believed, and that all forms of wrong and injustice are to be gradually eliminated. You know the mood of the day; 'What a man soweth, that shall he also reap', that retribution for wrong-doing will certainly come. How do you expect to get away with it?"

Ferdinand shifted his position and looked across.

"For an expert crook such as you were once, I am surprised that you should ask such a question. I greatly fear me that your decision to work for—shall we say—an honest living and

your claimed acceptance of whom you call the Lord Jesus Christ, has led to some deterioration of your one-time very keen intellect. Of course I shall get away with it. You see that house at the corner? I want that for myself. I shall go down there and order the owner out. If he refuses, I shall throw him out. If he comes back, I shall break a few of his bones and drop him in a nearby field. And so far as I can see no one will do a thing about it."

He stood up, flexing his muscles. "Are you coming with me?"

"No. I have already told you I have finished with the old life. There is something in this new world that I want, and I am not going to get it by going your way."

"Suit yourself." Ferdinand moved off, traversing the hundred yards or so to the corner with lithe and springy steps. He stood, surveying the cottage with an appraising eye, and as he did so became conscious of someone standing beside him.

"So you have come after all, Caspar" he said without moving his head. There was no reply.

Mildly irritated, he turned. A stranger stood beside him, a stranger who had not been there a moment previously. The face was pleasant, but it was the eyes that caught and held Ferdinand's attention. Friendly, but piercing, extending what appeared to him to be a challenge. He gazed, held and fascinated by those eyes. The stranger did not speak. Ferdinand felt that somehow he must say something.

"I am going to take that house from its owner for myself" he said. He looked back towards the cottage as he spoke. He felt rather foolish in saying it. He wanted desperately to resolve this situation by walking straight into the cottage and carrying out his plan, but somehow he could not do it with this silent stranger standing beside him.

He turned round again. "And neither you nor anyone else are going to stop me" he announced aggressively. The calm eyes remained fixed on him still, even more friendly, even greater challenge. It struck Ferdinand most oddly that everyone in this strange new world wanted to be friendly, a quality he himself had always despised, and he became suddenly conscious of an entirely new feeling—shame.

The stranger had turned as if to walk away. The slightest inclination of his head invited the other to accompany him. Ferdinand hesitated, and to his own surprise fell in step beside him.

"Tell me, who are you?" he heard himself asking. Receiving no answer, he looked again. The eyes were warm, compassionate, he thought, and instantly felt a thrill run through his being. "Compassionate! . . . I never knew the meaning of that word before" he thought confusedly. Words came, unbidden, to his lips, words that appalled him even as they were uttered. "Why am I so different from everyone else here? Will

you tell me that?"

A slight, warm pressure on his wrist and the stranger was gone. Ferdinand looked round; there was no one in sight. Farther up the road Caspar was still sitting where he had left him.

Ferdinand came up to him and sat down quietly. For a moment he said nothing, and then "Caspar, I want you to tell me exactly what made you give your life to Christ. To use your own expression, what made you believe in him?"

There was a short silence. Caspar looked up at his friend. "It was like this . . ."

THE PASSOVER MUST BE KILLED

The term Passover was frequently applied as the name of a festival week, otherwise called the Feast of the Passover, beginning on the fifteenth day of Nisan. We must not confound this with frequent references to the Passover found in the Scriptures when the word feast is not used, which generally referred to the lamb that was killed, the Passover. For instance, "*Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed*". Again, our Lord sent disciples to enquire of a friend, "*Where is the guest-chamber, where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?*" Again we read, "*And they made ready the Passover.*" When our Lord sat down with the disciples to eat of the lamb He said, "*With desire I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you I will no more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.*"

God's arrangements for Israel were typical and full of valuable lessons for we who belong to Spiritual Israel. In the type the Lord provided for two great religious occasions amongst his people, the one at the beginning of the secular year and the other at the beginning of the religious year. The religious year began in the spring, counting from the first new moon after the vernal equinox, approximately April 1st, but varying because of the difference between lunar and solar time. It was in connection with this, the beginning of their religious year, that the Lord appointed the Passover—the killing and eating of the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day, to be followed by a Passover week of unleavened bread. The civil year with Israel began six months later, in the seventh month, approximately October 1st; and it was in connection with this civil year that the Atonement Day sacrifices were appointed in connection with the "Feast of Tabernacles", in which the Israelites

called to mind their wilderness journey on leaving Egypt *en route* for Canaan.

These two great religious celebrations pictured the same lesson from different standpoints: the first emphasised more particularly the passing over of the first-born, who subsequently were represented in the tribe of Levi, at whose head stood the priesthood. Although the type seems to carry forward and to picture the deliverance of all Israel through this priestly tribe, to which Moses belonged, yet specifically, particularly, in detail, it dealt merely with the deliverance, the blessing, of the priestly tribe, the first-born. The other type, in the seventh month, more particularly pictures the atonement for the sins of the whole world, the forgiveness and reconciliation of all mankind.

There is a force and meaning in the Apostle's expression, "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*", which is not generally appreciated. (1 Cor. 5. 7). All Israel prefigured the world of mankind, and the bondage of the whole people represented all mankind under the bondage of sin and death, the great taskmaster in the type being Pharaoh, in the antitype Satan. Deliverance is desired for all, and the Lord's arrangement is ultimately to deliver all. The Apostle so explains when he writes, "*The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God*". The Apostle divides the groaning ones into two classes, saying, "*The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*"—"waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God". (Rom. 8. 19, 21, 22). His reference is to the world of mankind, whose deliverance from the bondage of Satan and the power of sin and death will only come through the manifestation of the glorified Church, the Christ in glory and power, as God's Kingdom ruling the world. The Apostle also mentions the

Church of the FirstBorn in her present condition, saying, "*But ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the deliverance of our body*". Both classes have an experience of groaning, both classes have an experience of waiting, but they wait for different things. The latter, the Church of the First-Born, waits for her deliverance as the Body of Christ through a share in the First Resurrection. According to the Divine promise the former, the world, waits until the Church shall have been perfected, glorified, empowered, and shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father for the blessing of all the families of the earth, for the uplifting of all who desire Divine favour on Divine terms.

Look now at the type: notice that it is not all Israel that is in danger from the destroying angel, but only the first-born. Only the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. Hence it was only the first-born of the Israelites that were spared or passed over. These first-born ones, protected by the blood of the lamb, the Lord declared to be specially his; and, with a view to marking them out and keeping them as a special, peculiar people, an exchange was made whereby the first-born of all the tribes were exchanged by the Lord for the one tribe of Levi, which He accepted as specially his and which in the type represents the household of faith. Out of this household of faith, in turn, a priestly family was selected, which typified Christ our High Priest and the Church his Body, the under priesthood, the Royal Priesthood. So, then, those who perceive the matter clearly see that the Passover has to do only with the household of faith. *It is in full accord with this that the Lord's Supper, which antitypes the eating of the lamb, is not offered to the unregenerate, but is strictly and exclusively an institution for the household of faith.*

Seeing in the type the slain lamb, its blood sprinkled upon the posts and lintels of the home and its flesh eaten with bitter herbs, we see Christ the antitypical Lamb, see that his blood sprinkled upon our hearts cleanses them from a consciousness of evil and gives us an assurance of our being *passed over*, of our being granted life through his blood. This sprinkling represents our justification by faith; and the subsequent eating of the lamb with bitter herbs is represented in the antitype by our consecration, our partaking of Christ, our participation with him in his sufferings and self-denials—also represented by the bitter herbs, which give zest to our appetite and encourage us to partake more and more abundantly of the Lamb. All who believe the testimony, all who trust in the precious

blood, are passed over, and, more than this, are expecting a general deliverance of the whole people, of all who love God, who desire to do him reverence and service. So many as thus believe realise themselves pilgrims and strangers under present conditions, looking for a better country, the heavenly Canaan. All this was represented in typical Israel, for while eating the lamb on that night of Passover they stood staff in hand, girded for a journey. Likewise the Lord's faithful to-day should realise themselves pilgrims and strangers, having no continuing city, but setting their affections on things above.

We meet not as Israel, to remember the deliverance from Pharaoh and Egyptian bondage, but as antitypical Israelites seeking to escape the power of Satan and the dominion of sin. We meet not to eat literal lamb and bitter herbs and to commemorate the passing over in Egypt, but as spiritual Israelites to recognise and commemorate the death of the Lamb of God as our Passover—to feast upon him, upon the truths which He gave us.

More than this, as explained by our Lord, we not only will use the unleavened bread to represent the purity of his flesh broken for us, and the fruit of the vine to represent his blood shed for us, but also in the light of the Apostle's explanation we perceive that it is a part of our privilege to be broken with Christ as a part of the same larger loaf, and to have fellowship in his cup of suffering and death as a part of the larger cup. From this double standpoint is viewed our relationship to the Lord, first as those whom He passes over, and secondly as those who share also with him by and by in the great work of leading forth from bondage to sin and Satan all who will accept of the Divine favour and liberty as the sons of God! How wonderfully grand is the privilege thus accorded! No wonder the Apostle said, "*Let us keep the Feast*"!

Our feasting upon this bread which came down from heaven and which was broken for us is not merely for the special occasion of our assembling. Rather that assembling which our Lord enjoins represents our experiences throughout the entire night of his absence, until He shall establish his Kingdom in the morning. It is for us to keep the feast, not merely in this special and commemorative manner, but day by day, hour by hour, to feed upon the Lamb of God, by faith to realise and appropriate to ourselves his virtues and merits, and to grow in grace and knowledge and love and all the fruits and graces of the Spirit. "*As often as ye do this, do it in remembrance of Me*".

THE NEW COVENANT

A Bible
study

The New Covenant is the name given to the arrangement whereby God will reconcile to himself all who are willing, after full instruction and enlightenment, so to be reconciled. The time for the accomplishment of this purpose is the future Age when Christ reigns over the world to eliminate evil and bring the human race to that condition of unity with God which is essential before they can enter the eternal state. Since it is promised that all dedicated Christians, his Church, are to be associated with him in the life beyond it follows that they have a share with him in the administration of this Covenant.

The Bible contrasts the New Covenant with the old Law Covenant, concluded between the Lord and the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai with Moses as Mediator, and shows that it will succeed where the old Law Covenant failed. In becoming the people of the Covenant at Sinai, Israel undertook an obligation to extend the benefits of Divine rulership and law to all mankind, "*a light to the nations, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth*" (Isa. 49.6). They never attained that goal. The New Covenant will be made primarily with Israel to replace the old one and this time they will achieve the Divine purpose.

The first intimation of the Lord's intentions in this respect was made known through the prophet Isaiah. Ignoring the fact that Israel was already under the Law Covenant of Moses, the Lord promised that one day He will make an everlasting covenant, a covenant of peace, (Isa. 54.10; 55.3; 61.8) with which He associated the extension of its blessings to all mankind (54.3; 55.5; 61.9). Ch. 66. 3-7 pictures those not of Israel willingly coming into the Covenant. Israel herself, says 42.6 and 48.8, is to be the embodiment of the Covenant, and by its means will open the blind eyes, bring out the prisoners from the prison, establish the earth, and in general carry out all the beneficent activities which will result in the conversion of the world and the reconciliation of man to God. The Spirit of God will be upon Israel and his words will be in her mouth, never again to depart, and the result will be that the Name of the Lord will be revered from one bound of earth to the other (ch. 59. 19-21). Isaiah thus predicted that his people were to become the custodians and administrators upon earth of an arrangement the benefits of which are to be shared by all peoples on the face of the earth.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a century and a half later, were inspired to amplify this very general outline and define more clearly the work of the covenant. In Jeremiah's 31st chapter the Lord speaks of his intention eventually to restore dispersed Israel to her own land in consequence of her repentance for past waywardness. The days come, He says, "*when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... and this shall be the covenant, I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my people*" (ch. 31. 31-34). This is the essence of the covenant, the impressing of Divine law in the hearts of men, and this of course is the great purpose of the Age of Christ's reign on earth. Again in ch. 32. 37-41 the theme is reiterated; God will give them one heart and one way and they will be his people. The sincerity of Israel in this matter is shown by Jer. 50.5 in which the scattered nation, about to be regathered by the Lord in order to embark upon its pre-ordained mission, seeks the way back to the land so that they might be joined to the Lord in a "*perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten*". Ezekiel crowns the presentation by associating the making of this "everlasting covenant of peace" with the end-of-the-Age regathering of Israel, and her constitution into an agent in the Lord's hand for his future plans, as pictured in his vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 27. 25-28).

So far nothing has been said as to who will fulfil the role, in respect to this covenant, that Moses did in respect to the old Law Covenant which it replaces. It was left to Malachi, the last of the Hebrew prophets, to introduce him and to provide a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New Testament views of the New Covenant. "*Behold*" he says, speaking as it were on behalf of the Almighty, "*I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant*" (Mal. 3.1). The context places the application of this prediction at the end of this Age when the Lord is about to inaugurate his Millennial reign; here is pictured the arrival of the "messenger" of the covenant to commence its work—which is shown to be one of cleansing and purification as well as restoration. This word "messenger" in the A.V. is *malak*, angel. The angel of the covenant is obviously the angel or

representative of God Most High and therefore easily seen in this context to be synonymous with the Lord Jesus Christ at his Advent and his kingdom. It is not difficult to see the parallel between the coming of the angel of the Lord at this time and that passage in the Book of Job where the same messenger or angel comes down to restore men from the grave and show to them the way of uprightness. *"If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, to show unto man his uprightness, then (God) is gracious unto him and saith, Deliver him from going down into sheol, (the grave), I have found a ransom"*. This angel is also an "interpreter". This word is *luts*, meaning in general one who can converse with those of foreign language and so act as intermediary between two persons who do not understand each other or who are at variance, for which reason it is also used in the sense of ambassador or intercessor. So Christ comes as intercessor between God and man in respect of the operation and making of this New Covenant just as Moses was the Mediator between God and Israel in respect of the previous one.

The New Testament takes up the theme with Paul's words in Rom. 11. 26-27, where he quotes Isa. 59.21 as evidence for his argument that Israel is to be restored to Divine favour after the close of the call of the Church at the end of this present Age. The covenant is to be the outward expression of that restoration. He associates the New Covenant with the house of Israel, therefore, at the time of the removal of the national sins, which again is at the dawn of the Millennial Age. In a similar fashion the author of Hebrews, in Heb. 8. 7-13, quotes Jer. 31. 31-33 to indicate that the New Covenant is to be established to do for Israel what the old Law Covenant failed to do. In fact he concludes by pointing out that by promising a new covenant to effect this desired end God has made the old covenant obsolete so that it is ready to vanish away.

So far as this goes the New Covenant would appear to be purely a substitute, albeit a more effective substitute, for the old Law Covenant, and applicable only to Israel, and to others of mankind only in a secondary sense inasmuch as they embrace its principles and precepts. At this point, however, Jesus himself steps in.

During the Last Supper Jesus made a statement which so impressed those who heard it that it has been recorded in virtually the same terms in three Gospels. *"This cup"*, He said, referring to the wine which was about to be shared by the assembled disciples, *"is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matt. 26. 26; Mark 14. 24; Luke

22. 20). There is some textual evidence for thinking that the word "New" should probably not appear in the text but that is of little consequence, for Jesus was obviously referring to the New Covenant. He was saying, as plainly as could be, that just as Moses sprinkled the blood of the burnt offerings associated with the Law Covenant over the people, so He himself was the corresponding offering for the New Covenant, and his blood the means of purification for the people in that day when the covenant should become effective, the day of the remission of sins for the whole world. Again, that day is the future Millennial Age. By that one allusion Jesus extended the scope of the New Covenant to include all mankind, in the future Age.

It is important to notice at this point that although the blood of Christ—symbol of life given—is efficacious for the remission of sin of all men who so choose, not all obtain that remission through the Covenant. Those during this Age, from Pentecost onward, who receive the gift of justification by faith, through faith in Christ, and so dedicate their lives to him by becoming members of his Church, have their sins remitted at the time of their accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord (Rom. 4. 24-25; 5. 1-2). This in many cases is centuries or even two thousand years ago whereas the New Covenant is not yet inaugurated and when it is, it is made with restored Israel. This seems to be the intent of Heb. 9. 14-15 where vs. 14 maintains that the blood of Christ purges our conscience, that of the members of the Church, from dead works to serve the living God, whilst vs. 15 declares that *"through this"* (not "for which cause" as A.V.) *"he is also the mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death for deliverance from the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance"*. Vs. 14 obviously refers to the deliverance of Christians in this Age by faith in the blood—death of Christ,—whilst vs. 15 equally obviously refers to the same blood—same death—being equally efficacious to those who, being of Israel, are freed from their first covenant and enter into their own "everlasting inheritance". This last word, inheritance, Thayer defines as "the eternal blessedness in the kingdom of God which is promised", a good definition of the effect of the New Covenant in the next Age.

This reflection leads logically to 2 Cor. 3.6 *"God hath made us able ministers of the New Covenant"*. Paul here is contrasting what he calls in vs. 7 *"the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones"* i.e. the administration of the old Law Covenant with its record of

failure, with what he describes in vs. 8 as "*the ministration of the Spirit*"—the administration of the coming New Covenant, something which he says is infinitely more glorious. This statement infers that Jesus, Mediator of the New Covenant as Moses was of the old one, will have his Church associated with him in the work of administering that Covenant from the heavens. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, makes the same point clear without so much as mentioning the New Covenant. He says (Gal. 4. 12-31), that the family circumstances of Abraham constitute an allegory of the two covenants preceding the as yet non-existing New Covenant, Sarah, he says, pictures the original Covenant God made with Abraham, which promised that through his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed. Isaac, the son of Sarah, prefigures the promised Seed of that Covenant, and Paul himself is authority for the dictum that that Seed is Christ, and not only Christ himself, but all who are his Church. "*If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal. 3.29). Hagar, the second wife, prefigured the Law Covenant, and Ishmael, the son of that union, the "earthly seed", the nation of Israel. The one is Jerusalem from above, the other Jerusalem upon earth. The Church therefore, children of the Abrahamic Covenant, become ministers of the New Covenant when that is established and in operation.

If indeed, as seems most likely, Apollos was the author of Hebrews, his familiarity with the old Levitical ritual and the Law Covenant would account for the stress laid on the "blood of Christ" in that epistle. He had already, in Heb. 7.22, elaborated the fact that the word of the Lord constituting Jesus a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek made him a surety or pledge of a covenant "better" than the old one. This association of the Priest-Kingly rule of Melchisedek with the New Covenant confirms the place of that covenant in the next Age, but it also demands the appointment of our Lord to the position of Mediator at the time of the Divine decree, which was "*when he ascended up on high*" (Eph. 4.8). That association of

Melchisedek with the Covenant justifies the author of Hebrews in referring to the "blood of the covenant" even at a time so long before that covenant can come into operation. Hence in Heb. 10.29 he refers to the "blood of the covenant wherewith we are sanctified", in Heb. 13.20 of the "blood of the covenant" making us perfect to do his will, and in Heb. 12.24 of the "blood of sprinkling" speaking better things than that of Abel. In the first instance the disciples partook of the Cup at the Last Supper and were thereby "sanctified"—set apart for the Lord's service—and in that have been followed in later times by all who have similarly given themselves to the Lord. That sharing of the Cup signified full and complete association, participation, with the Lord in all that He stands for and all He will do for the human race in the day of his kingdom. It may be not without significance that in the days of the old Covenant Moses sprinkled one half of the blood upon the people and poured out the other half upon the altar—the place of consecration to God. *what scripture?*

So, at the end, all men everywhere will share the blessings of the New Covenant. It was not always thus. Paul told the Ephesians (Eph. 2.12) that they, Gentile Christians, were at one time "*strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*". The Abrahamic Covenant promised the development of a "Seed", and life for all through that seed. The Law Covenant promised life for those who could keep its provisions, but that was only for Israel. The Gentiles were outside the pale, until Christ came. "*But now*" he says "*ye who were sometime afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*" (vs. 13). "*Christ is made an end of the Law (Covenant) to every one that believeth; the blessing of Abraham will come on the nations—Gentiles—through faith*" (Rom. 10.4; Gal. 3.14). By virtue of his office as Mediator of the New Covenant He will restore all who will, of all the sons of men, to the Divine likeness, and together with his Church, able ministers of the New Covenant, will cause them to enter that blessed state which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Christian, as a matter of complete certainty, you are risen with Christ. The only question is, whether we are living up to our high privilege and walking after the power of His resurrection. Christ is where the centre of the resurrection life lies and when all our life revolves around Him this is indeed—full salvation.

Canon Guy King.

Every human idol eventually totters and falls. The dearest and best we know among our fellows cannot satisfy our craving for the highest fellowship. But no Christian has ever been able to say truly that he has grown tired of the fellowship of his Lord, or that Christ has failed to satisfy the believing heart.

E. F. Harrison.

ISAIAH OF THE GOLDEN TONGUE

He could hardly have been more than twenty years of age when he saw the vision of the Lord and received his commission, this clear-sighted youngster who so eagerly gave himself to the Lord's service and laboured so diligently as his messenger. He must have been turned seventy when he finished his course. In his early days there were brother prophets — Hosea, Micah, Amos and Joel, all in active service while he was in his teens and twenties, but towards the end of his life they had all gone and only he was left. And with his death the voice of prophecy was silent for half a century, until a new group of prophets came to the front—Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Zephaniah—to announce the dissolution of the nation and the onset of the Babylonian Captivity. But in that long ministry of more than fifty years Isaiah established himself as the premier prophet of Israel, one who saw with crystal clarity not only the shortcomings of his own people and the inevitable fate that awaited them, but also the glories of the Millennial world to be established when the judgments of the present had run their course.

The vision must have been his first experience. It is recorded in chap. 6 as the means whereby he received his commission to witness and prophesy to Israel concerning both judgment and blessing to come. He saw the Lord seated upon a great Throne in the midst of his sanctuary, attendant seraphim, six-winged guardians of his majesty, around him, and Isaiah prostrated himself as one unworthy to look upon such a sight. But the Lord wanted a messenger, and the lad immediately offered himself, spontaneously and sincerely. "*Here am I; send me.*" Here is the true spirit of consecration. No bargaining for reward or recompense; no questioning as to what the commission might involve, of sacrifice or hardship or suffering. Jesus at a later time is depicted as saying "*Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God*", and this was the spirit in which this young man only just out of his teens gave himself to God for his service, whatever that service might be or might involve. He was told that his message would be largely ignored by Israel, that they would resolutely close their eyes and their ears and their hearts to what he had to say, but there would be a remnant who would listen, and that remnant would be as the sap in a leafless tree which would in the course of time put forth new leaves and live again. The glowing foreviews

of the then far-distant Millennial Age which constitute the second half of his book show how thoroughly he understood and accepted the Lord's mandate.

It is virtually certain that this vision marked the commencement of his prophetic ministry, which of course was primarily a spoken one. The first five chapters of the book most likely record in brief what he had to say to the people of Judah and probably of Israel at this time, the year that King Uzziah died. The captivity of the Ten Tribes had not yet taken place, but its first stage, when the Assyrians took some of the northern tribes away (2 Kin. 15.29) was only two years distant. That disaster might have inclined some to listen to his message but in the main men were indifferent. The general attitude in Judah was that even if their brethren of the Ten Tribes should be taken into captivity Judah would remain unscathed. Isaiah spent the greater part of his life warning them of their mistake but they never believed. A generation after his death they realised bitterly how grievously wrong they had been.

Some four years were spent in this phase of warning the people and priests of Judah concerning the coming judgment and this is epitomised in chaps. 1—5. Then came a second commission from the Lord. Isaiah was to present himself before Ahaz, the reigning king of Judah, and give him a message. To understand the message it is necessary to appreciate the political position obtaining at the time, as is recounted in chap. 7. Pekah, king of the Ten Tribes, (here referred to as "Ephraim", the name of the leading tribe) and Rezin, king of Syria, were plotting together to invade Judah and put their own puppet king on the throne. Ahaz and his people were desperately worried. Had they possessed faith in God they would have known that by no means would He allow any king not of the Davidic line to rule at Jerusalem but they forgot the Lord and did not think of going to him with their problem.

This was apparently Isaiah's first contact with the royal house. As a young man of about twenty-four it could have been thought the height of impudence for him to thrust himself upon the attention of the king. Nevertheless he went without hesitation and without delay. The kings of Judah were accustomed to being accosted by the prophets, especially when they had been guilty of transgressing the laws of God,

and Ahaz was very guilty in this respect. He was an idolator, serving the Canaanite and Phoenician gods more than he did the God of Israel. But at the moment he was apprehensive of the enemy threat and probably more than usually disposed to listen to what the God of Israel was prepared to do for him. The Lord's message was to the effect that the projected invasion would not be attempted; despite the king's faithlessness the Lord was having regard to the sanctity of his dwelling-place at Jerusalem, and the Lord himself would deal with the plotting kings. Within sixty-five years, the prophet assured Ahaz, Ephraim would themselves be taken captive by their enemies and be no longer a nation. Ahaz need not fear their threats.

All this came to pass. In order to satisfy all the allusions in chap. 7 this encounter between the king and Isaiah must have taken place in the first year of the king's reign. Two years later Rezin of Syria died and two years later still Pekah followed him to the grave. Sixty-five years from Isaiah's prediction Esar-haddon of Assyria carried the last surviving remnants of the Ten Tribes into Assyria and replaced them by the mixed peoples who afterwards became known as the Samaritans (Ezra. 4.2). Isaiah was a true prophet of the Lord.

The next point of time with which the life of Isaiah can be identified appears in chap. 20, when the Lord used him as a three-year sign of the coming invasions of Judah as retribution on the people for their continued unbelief and apostasy. This is set (ch. 20.1) in the year of the siege of the Philistine city of Ashdod by Sargon of Assyria, which was approximately twenty-six years from the first year of Ahaz. During that twenty-six years Isaiah witnessed faithfully to kings, priests and people on two major themes, judgment and blessing. Judgment must come first because of unbelief and disloyalty to God. They would ally themselves with Egypt as an unavailing defence against Assyria, playing power politics just as the nations of the world do to-day, and their policies would fail them and lead them to disaster just as happens now. But they would eventually learn their lesson and return to their God, and then God would accept their contrition and bring blessing upon them, the blessing of the Age of Christ's reign over the nations, the Millennium. These contrasting themes, intermingled in all the prophet's discourses, eventually found themselves woven into the fabric of chaps. 8 to 35, a comprehensive record of visions relating sometimes to the troubles of Isaiah's own day and sometimes to the Messianic reign which is to put all those troubles right, and sometimes to both. Without

much doubt those twenty-six years of the prophet's life laid the foundations of that clear understanding of the nature and purpose of the Millennial Age which is so characteristic a feature of his later writings.

Another eight years passed; Isaiah was now about sixty years of age, still warning, still improving, still imparting the word of the Lord to successive kings of the land. But Ahaz was dead and the reigning king was Hezekiah, a devout and godly man. The time was the fourteenth year of his reign, and the counsel of the prophet began to be heeded more than of yore. So when Sennacherib the Assyrian laid siege to Jerusalem and sent a letter demanding instant surrender the king did not solicit help from Egypt as had his predecessors; he called in the prophet and laid the matter before the Lord. The consequence of that act of faith was the exercise of Divine power to destroy the invading army in one night, leaving the boastful Sennacherib to make his way back in shame and confusion to his own land. That must have been the crowning achievement of Isaiah's life. The story, in his 36th and 37th chapters, is one of the most shining examples of Divine deliverance in response to faith recorded in the Old Testament.

It was in this same year, either just before or just after the Sennacherib deliverance, that Hezekiah suffered the serious illness which threatened death. In consequent of fervent prayer he was assured by the prophet that God had given him another fifteen years of life. To his functions of prophet and statesman Isaiah apparently added that of physician, for it was by means of his ministrations that the king recovered (chap. 38).

Now, for the first time, there appears a discordant note in the relations between king and prophet. At or about the same time, says the narrative in chap. 39, Hezekiah, delivered from Sennacherib and recovered from his sickness, received an embassy from a land the people of Judah as yet knew little about, the land of Babylon. The monarch of that country, a notoriously crafty and skilful enemy of the Assyrians, had sent to Hezekiah congratulations on his recovery and a present. It is very likely that Merodach-Baladan wanted to know more about the manner in which the usually invincible Assyrians had been so signally defeated at Jerusalem; he himself was constantly at war with them and might be glad of a few tips. Hezekiah, rather injudiciously, showed the Babylonian ambassadors everything he and his country had got, Temple treasures, armaments, military strength, everything. They went away, doubtless to tell their master all that they had seen, and Isaiah came

in to the king desiring to know who these men were and what the king had shown and told them.

Confidently, perhaps boastfully, the king related the whole story. Probably he was feeling a little arrogant now that the Assyrian menace had been removed. "Now hear the word of the Lord" said Isaiah when he had heard all. "The day will come when everything you have shown them will be carried away into Babylon; nothing shall be left". It would seem that Isaiah in that moment realised that nothing could now avert the consequences of the unheeded warnings and admonitions of fifty years; perhaps in vision he already saw Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers looting the Temple and destroying the city, leading the people into captivity and leaving their land desolate. He knew now that it must surely come. He must have left the presence of the king a sorrowful man.

There is no indication that Isaiah ever went to see King Hezekiah again.

At this point the book which bears his name changes its tone and timbre, as well as its theme, suddenly. Instead of denunciations of Israel's shortcomings and warnings of coming disaster, the last twenty-seven chapters, from 40 to 66, are devoted to an enthralling description of the glories of the Messianic kingdom of the Millennial Age and the position of restored Israel in that kingdom. The tone is on a higher level, the literary style more polished and fluent, to such an extent that it would seem to have come from another pen. It is this difference which has caused many scholars—in fact the majority—to declare that this part of the book could not possibly have been written by the same hand as was the first; hence the expression "Second Isaiah" or "Deutero-Isaiah" (*Deuteros* — Greek for "Second") so often used to designate the presumed author of this part of the book.

This is not the place to go into the relevant arguments pro and con for this assertion. Suffice to say that a very simple suggestion can obviate the need for assuming two Isaiahs on this ground of difference of style.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah Isaiah was about sixty years of age. For forty long years he had preached assiduously to the people, the priests and the royal court. They had for the most part ignored him. As a statesman he had warned successive kings of the folly of looking to worldly powers like Egypt for defence, but to no avail. Only on the last occasion, that of Sennacherib's invasion, did the king listen to him, but immediately after that the same king began to enter into negotiations with Babylon, and Isaiah knew that this policy also would fail.

What more likely than that Isaiah at this point decided to retire from active participation in affairs of State and public oratory, and devote himself to writing for the benefit of future generations? His earlier prophecies, up to chap. 29, are consistent with their being transcripts of messages actually delivered by word of mouth, or speeches actually made, uttered in the open air in the hearing of the people, or in the royal court before the king. The later part, chaps. 40 to 66, exhibit the measured tempo and the lofty flights of a literary composition deliberately and soberly set down in quietude and solitude. Whereas the earlier chapters reproduce the impetuous and fervent evangelism of a young man, these later ones mirror the maturity and spiritual insight of a man approaching the end of life, whose long familiarity with the guiding hand of God has enabled him to perceive with increasing clarity the reality of that which lies within the Veil. Tradition has it that Isaiah survived into the reign of Hezekiah's successor, Manasseh. In that case he must have lived into his eighties or nineties. Any man who writes at that age develops a far different literary style than that which characterises his earlier years and this alone is sufficient to explain the difference which admittedly does show up between the earlier and later parts of his book.

So for fifteen, perhaps twenty or more years, after the memorable fourteenth year of Hezekiah when Sennacherib was humiliated and Jerusalem saved, the golden-tongued prophet might well have been living quietly in seclusion penning those gloriously colourful pictures of the Age of blessing that will one day come upon the world, of the felicity that will come to Israel, repentant and restored to Divine favour, of the redemptive work of the Messiah, his suffering and his glory. Here is embedded a theme that is peculiar to Isaiah, that of the Lord's "servant" who will fulfil his creative and redemptive purpose. From chap. 41 to 51 that servant is Israel, purified, regathered, embarking upon its destiny of becoming a light to the nations and playing its part in the turning of the hearts of men to God. In chaps. 52 and 53 the servant is our Lord, appearing first in humiliation and suffering leading to death, afterwards rising to glory and the reconciliation of all mankind. The beginning of this section dwells upon the majesty and uniqueness of God, passes on to his call to Israel for his service, to their fitness for that service, and finally the service itself, the invitation to all mankind to take their place in Christ's Millennial kingdom, a service in which also the Christian Church of this Age has its part although of course Isaiah could not portray that aspect so

long before that Church existed. He closes his book with a resplendent vision of a world at peace, sin and evil banished, all men in willing union with God, and the Divine purpose for mankind fully accomplished. He must have laid down his pen with the feeling that the commission given him by the Lord more than half a century previously had carried him to the utmost heights of Divine revelation, that nothing now remained but to yield up his spirit in full confidence that he would one day awaken to see with his own eyes those Millennial glories the outlines of which he had by the power of the Holy Spirit been able to describe for the instruction and the upbuilding of all who in later days would seek to know the way of the Lord.

Isaiah was a man of sterling faith and fixed conviction, of keen political insight and consistent loyalty both to God and to his nation. He served a succession of kings with sincerity and

candour although his service was not always accepted or appreciated. He saw very clearly the relation between Israel's sin and rejection by the Lord, their eventual repentance and consequent restoration, and their position and duties in the Millennial kingdom. He understood clearly the fact that God never leaves himself without a witness and that even in the darkest hour of apostasy there is always a "remnant" who retain faith, a remnant which is always the seed of later revival. He possessed a clear view of the universal appeal of the Gospel; unlike the later Jews, he saw Israel as an instrument—one instrument—in the Lord's hand for the eventual reconciliation of all the willing of mankind to God and the establishment of that order of things on earth which is described in New Testament phraseology as "Christ being all in all". Above all the seers and prophets of the Bible, Isaiah is pre-eminently the prophet of the Millennium.

THE QUESTION BOX

Q. *In the allegory of the Sarah covenant wherein Sarah is a picture of the arrangement under which the Church is developed and Isaac the "Seed" of promise, which is Christ and his Church (Gal. 3.29) does the fact that Sarah died three years before Isaac married Rebekah indicate a lapse of time between the completion of the Church and the "marriage of the Lamb"?*

* * *

A. Since Rev. 19.7 is the only reference to the "marriage of the Lamb" in the N.T. and no indication of time scale is given in that passage this would seem to be a question impossible to answer. Like most enquiries into the "time scale" of events shown in the Scriptures it is probably undesirable that it should be answered. The fact that our Lord comes "for" his Church at one stage of his Advent and at a later time is revealed "with" his Church to all the world for their salvation does seem to indicate a time lapse between these two events, during which perhaps the final stages of the disintegration of the end of the Age takes place, but this is not quite the point raised. Since we know so little of what is involved in proceedings "beyond the Vail" when the Church is at last united with her Lord we may have to wait until then for the answer.

* * *

Q. *Is it possible to reconcile the punishment of the wicked "for ever" with "Behold, I make all things new" without understanding that "eternal" may mean "age-long" and not necessarily endless, and that in the end hell will be destroyed and death abolished?*

A. It is certainly true that "eternal" which in the Greek is "aionian", does not necessarily mean endless or perpetual, but has the sense of enduring or lasting in contrast to the transient and limited duration of earthly things. The meaning of that eternal life which is derived through union with Christ has to do with the quality of life rather than its duration although it is also true that eternal life is endless. When, however, for example, Jude speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah suffering the vengeance of eternal (aionian) fire he does not mean that the fire burns endlessly—in fact the fires of Sodom and Gomorrah were extinguished long ages ago—but that those fires endured until they had completed their work of destruction. In the same way must be understood the "aionian" fire of Matt. 25.41 "*prepared for the devil and his angels*". The "punishment of the wicked" can only refer to any who at the end are so irrevocably opposed to God and his righteousness that He in his wisdom knows that no hope remains that they will ever be converted, and so they come to their end in the same manner. That is not a punishment in the everyday human usage of the word; it is the logical and inevitable consequence of their own deliberate choice. Such a destruction is as complete and final as was that of Sodom and Gomorrah. If it should turn out that some men will not accept life from God, there is no other source of life. "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*" said Jesus. (John 5.40). That is a fixed and inviolate principle; there is no other way and no alternative.

A REVELATION AND ITS SEQUEL

St. Paul's vision
of the future

8. Conclusion

2 Cor. 12:1—9

What then can we do and say as servants of our Lord in these crucial times? Whom should we serve, and with what message should we serve? If we are persuaded that we are on the threshold of the great Change in the Divine Dealings with Israel, and that the era of the Christian Church in its present form is all but at an end, then the situation is greatly simplified and clarified for us. Our first task is to bring ourselves into right adjustment with the coming change. Does the idea of the passing of the "Old", with its ancient privilege and old-time Institution, occasion regrets or disapproval in our heart? Or does it kindle hope and satisfaction in our souls? Are we sad, or glad, as we peer forwards towards that root-and-branch Restitution of all things spoken.

Our first work is to bring ourselves into alignment with that stupendous reformation. Long have we prayed "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done in earth, as in heaven"—it is that Kingdom that lies just over the borders beyond that Change!

When we have brought ourselves into line with the Will of God in that respect, what can we do for others of like precious faith? The answer here most certainly is "help them to do the same". Here we shall find a class of fellow-pilgrims who will be right glad to hear and learn of that far-reaching Change! Indeed, it is just what they want; just what they long for and pray for every passing day. Here is the only class of people within the four corners of the earth who will hail the nearing prospect of that impending Change. And why? Because for them, it means 'going Home' to be forever with the Lord! The 'taking out of a people' will then be complete, and the work of the Christian Faith at an end! The next scene in the Drama of Redemption will then take the stage with Israel as the Principal of the Cast.

Till strikes the hour-bell bringing in that scene, it is your privilege—and mine—to be positioned like our Brother Paul! We too have had our glimpse of 'Paradise Restored' and right gladly would we tell the news to earth's remotest bounds! But like him, we find ourselves hedged about with external inhibitions and frustrations through lack of hearing ears. Like him we find ourselves tied down — "staked down" — to a present-day ministry lest we squander our life away by dreaming dreams, or by attempting to interpret them. He could have been the Apoca-

lyptic picture-painter 'in excelsis', had he been left uncontrolled, but Jesus kept him in check by his "stake". Again, like him, we have messengers of Satan to buffet us because our hopes are, as yet, no more tangible than hope; because, while informed of that coming Kingdom day, the realistic world around us groans and moans out its bitterness unceasingly night and day! Aware of so much intended good, yet incompetent to translate awareness into actual result!

Are not all God's true people like this? Is it not just the smart from the Satanic taunt of present incapacity to rectify the world's wrongs, that makes us long and yearn for the Advent of One who can, and will? All who are God-taught and God-touched, long for that Day of Rectification to come, if only because no institution or organisation exists to-day which can rehabilitate the depraved human soul, and elevate it into a perfect man-soul! And it is because all God's "called-out" sons and daughters are thus handicapped that they need help and comfort in these crucial days. It is for this purpose that our "stake" pins us down to a present-age ministry on behalf of God's struggling saints!

Only by being thus pinned down can grace sufficient be a satisfying portion for our souls. Only by waiting expectantly with Jesus, the coming of God's due time for other greater things, can our hearts find unison with his! Only by dedicating our little lives to the selfsame task—the one and only task He has in hand to-day—can our souls be tuned-up into resonance with his! And only when thus attuned to him, can grace sufficient flow from his great heart of love unhindered, into yours and mine to-day, as once it flowed into that of Paul long ago!

Since that glorious Ascension Day, when Jesus bade his loved ones adieu, our blessed Lord has been seated at his Father's right hand, waiting the day when his enemies will be made his footstool. Come that happy day He will ask, and God will give him, the nations for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Till that day arrives, our Saviour has been shepherding the Flock, in keeping with his promise in his last committal prayer, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified through the Truth" (John 17. 19).

Our gracious Master has been our constant intercessor, Shepherd and Bishop to our souls. His activity during the long "waiting" days, has been that of helping his brethren—God's many

sons—to attain the eternal glory, to which they have been called. It is still his task to help home the Flock, to whom He promised that assistance at his departure from this earth. It is for their Home-Gathering He waits with keen anticipation, and to make that Home-gathering sure, He provides his sufficient grace.

If we desire to walk with him, to work with him, to live with him, we too must serve the cause as He is serving it. We too must help to lead home the Flock! We too must leave the unrepentant world to await its coming day of grace; we too must leave heart-hardened Israel to the furnace and the fire (Ezek. 22. 17-22) till its silver has been refined and its dross removed! Not an easy task to leave it to its fate, you may perhaps say! Granted! but that is exactly how it was for our brother Paul long ago, and for which he needed his Master's special grace! That is exactly how it was for the Master himself when the wise and prudent were cast off, and only babes and sucklings blest! (Matt. 11. 25-30).

If therefore, in these eventful days our hearts are deeply touched by Creation's increasing groans (Rom. 8. 19-22) and Israel's worsening plight (Matt. 12. 44-45) and find ourselves unable to tell them of the impending change to come, let us bow submissive to the Will of God and wait till his Glory-Cloud moves on, desiring not to choose our service of ourselves, but only to participate with him where the Holy Spirit is still working out God's sovereign Will. The temptation to out-pace God can be very strong; our very sympathy for the wayward sufferer could be our undoing, and prompt us to want to steal ahead of him in what we think He ought to do.

God is still engaged in "taking out a people for his Name"—first by a call to repentance from sin, next, an invitation to present our bodies a living sacrifice, and third, a conformation of character into the image of God's dear Son. This fact cannot be repeated and emphasised too often, or too much. Should any of us be blessed with a Missionary inclination in the foreign field, that would still be the course to adopt. Or if we are constrained to minister as the evangelist at home, we still should have that end in view. Or if our interest centres in the returned people in Israel, there is no other course open to us than that. It is still right and proper to call Jew, as well as Gentile, to repentance, to accept Jesus as the Saviour, and to follow him by baptism into death!

Because the Master himself is engaged on this special Ministry, his veto stands unremoved against any other work; and it is this prohibition

that is intended to be our "stake"—our thorn in the flesh—to pin us down to a present-day service. But if that is so, it is just this "staking-down" that makes us need—and appreciate—his special grace. And so, what time we feel the chafing and the fret, yet bow submissive to his Will, the words of tenderness and sympathetic care will steal home upon our inner ear, as once they did with Brother Paul, and we too shall hear him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee" also.

Let us hear the Psalmist's plea and so find rest to our souls;—"O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire".

THE END

AN IDEAL CLIMATE

Scientists have defined the ideal climate as that in which it is possible for a lightly clothed man to walk at four miles an hour in sunshine without sweating, and to sit in sunshine, or stand or sit in shade or indoors, doing light work, without shivering. Experiments have shown that with relative humidity of 60 per cent. this requires a temperature of 66-68 degrees, and for a nude man, 70-71 degrees. ("Nature," 12th May, 1945). Markham, in "Climate and the Energy of Nations," points out that the 70 degree Isotherm (a line connecting those points on the earth's surface where the mean annual temperature is 70 degrees) passes through the sites of the ancient empires of Egypt, Palestine, Assyria, Sumeria, and Persia, and concludes therefore that these lands are capable of producing the best and most virile types of men.

This is of interest to those students of the Scriptures who expect the establishment of a nation, located in some of those lands, through which the administration of the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be conducted. The Old Testament consistently proclaims Israel to be a most desirable land, one "flowing with milk and honey," and it is noteworthy that the Divine promise to Abraham takes in the entire stretch of country from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, and from the Arabian Desert to Lebanon, as the territory which is to be the headquarters for Divine government upon earth. That part of the world in which the human race probably originated and from which it spread outwards has evidently been endowed by Divine Providence with all the natural amenities to make it the most fitting source of the new life which will come to all nations in the time of Messiah's Kingdom. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2. 3).



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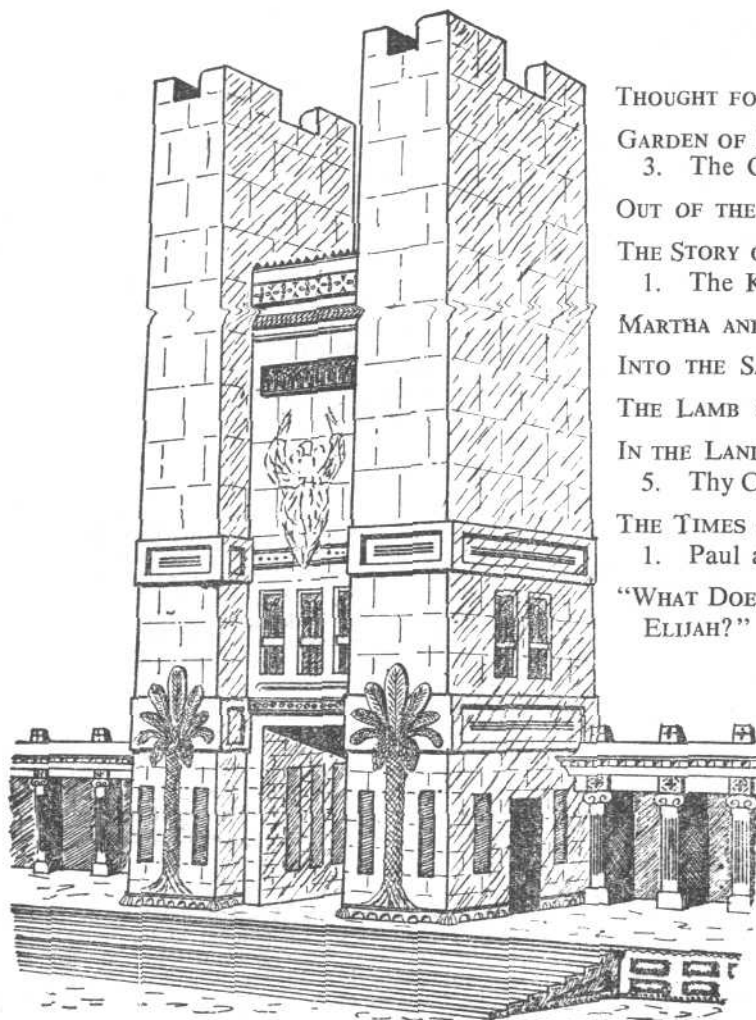
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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Next issue July 1st

CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	50
GARDEN OF EDEN	
3. The Creation of Man	51
OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE	54
THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH	
1. The King's Cupbearer	55
MARTHA AND MARY	57
INTO THE SANCTUARY OF GOD	49
THE LAMB GOES FORTH TO WAR... ..	61
IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN	
5. Thy Children shall come again	65
THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE	
1. Paul at Athens	67
"WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?"	70



*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

"Not greedy of filthy lucre." (I Tim. 5. 5, 9).

One of the characteristics of the modern world is the incessant scramble to get money. The urge permeates all classes of society. On the one hand the workers agitate and strike for more and more money in their wage packets and on the other hand the commercial interests, whether small concerns or huge financial empires, strive to increase profits often at the expense of the quality of their products or services. Nationalised industries go out for ever higher revenue irrespective of its relation to their operating costs. Those who live by theft devise increasingly ingenious schemes to rob and defraud. Greed comes in at the door and morality flies out at the window.

Five times does the expression "filthy lucre" appear in the New Testament. It is an apt expression. The word "filthy" really means shameful or sordid. *"The love of money"* said Paul *"is a root of all evil"*. Says Proverbs *"He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye"*; that sentiment is echoed by Paul *"they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction."* (I Tim. 6.9). One has only to note the consequences, in too many cases, to people who win fantastically large sums of money on the football pools to realise the truth of that judgment.

It is not always easy, even for the Christian, to dissociate himself from this mad scramble for material gain. It is woven into the very fabric of our society. It is worth fighting against. With all its apparent attractions and advantages, money, with all the things it can buy, will disappear when this world order comes to its end. A time is coming—it may be very near—when men will *"cast their gold and silver into the streets"* for it will have become valueless. Only "treasure in heaven", said Jesus, will remain.

Notices

Chesham Convention: At the Malt House, Elgiva Lane, Chesham, Bucks, Sat-Sun June 13-14. Details and programmes from Mr. F. Binns, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks., HP5 3ED.

Acknowledgments: Due to high cost of postage we feel all readers will concur with the decision to send acknowledgments of donations only when these are £2 or 5 dollars or above. At the same time we do express our sincere appreciation of the many gifts received which are below these figures, and feel such gifts are better applied in their entirety to the purpose for which they are given rather than hand an increasingly substantial portion to the Post Office. Contributors sending cheques above these limits may, if they so choose, indicate that a receipt is not required and this will further assist to this end.

Cost of the "Monthly": As is well known to our readers, the "Monthly" is sent without charge and the voluntary gifts of readers is relied upon to meet the cost of printing and postage. There are no salaries or honoraria to meet—those engaged in the preparation, publishing and distribution of the journal give their services on a voluntary basis, "as unto the Lord". Quite often however we are asked how much the "Monthly" costs to produce as a guide to giving. In order to be up to date on this point and in view of recent postal and other price increases it can be said that the cost of one year including postage is at present approximately £2.75 in U.K. and £3.00 or seven dollars overseas. In passing on this information we do so with the proviso that we are happy to send the "Monthly" no matter what value of gift is sent—some may be able to manage only the postage and this is just as acceptable. We believe our Lord will overrule all things so that the necessary funds are found.

BSM back numbers: A sharp increase in postal costs has necessitated an amendment to the notice appearing in the Nov./Dec. issue. Back numbers are still available for the years 1976-1980 and will be sent on request without charge except for postage. (Gifts towards printing costs are nevertheless sincerely appreciated.) The new postal costs are:

No of years	1	2	3	4	5
UK Pence	30	60	90	£1.20	£1.50
Overseas dollars	1	2	2	3	3

GARDEN OF EDEN

3. The Creation of Man

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

A green, sunlit glade, alive with the hum of insects and the song of birds. A grassy bank, across which lay the still form of a man, a man of magnificent physique and perfect proportion. A moment ago that form had not been there; now it lay motionless as though waiting for something. The busy insects ceased their hum; the songs of the birds fell away into silence. The earth waited . . .

A light wind, sweeping over the tree-tops and down into the glade, ruffling the tall grass and setting the leaves nodding, bathing that motionless form in a soft caress . . . the body quivering, closed eyelids flickering open to reveal expressionless eyes slowly taking on a look of deepening wonder and enquiry. Limbs quietly stretching and flexing; the man sitting up and looking around him . . .

Is that the manner in which man made his appearance upon earth? An almost instantaneous gathering together of earthly substances and their constitution into a human body by Divine power is easy to understand and accept when in the stories of the Gospels we find Divine power doing precisely the same thing, creating wine where before there had been only water and replacing the already decaying flesh of Lazarus four days dead in new and healthy flesh. We in this generation are so accustomed to popular descriptions of the creation of new elements or the transmuting of one element into another by nuclear processes that we have far less excuse than had our fathers for questioning the credibility of this story.

The earth had been in existence a long time when God created man. He had worked through the ages making every necessary preparation for this climax to his terrestrial creative activity. The first man opened his eyes to a world of luxuriant life, both animal and vegetable. There were already many living creatures, pursuing their multifarious activities, showing him by force of example what sentient life could mean and could offer. But the earth had not always been thus. In the dim past it had been a place silent and dark, where stark, sterile mountains thrust their savage peaks from a universal sea devoid of any kind of life. That was no home for man. Then the sea and the land divided; in the sea there appeared living things, lowly things, seaweeds and rock-scum, and corals and sponges neither plant nor animal but partaking of the qualities of both; to the land there came mosses and ferns, scorpions, beetles, grubs and creeping things; this

too was no home for man. The slow ages passed and the misty hothouse atmosphere gave place to arid heat and a desert landscape over which prowled grotesque giant reptiles, and raging seas tenanted by terrifying marine monsters; here again there was no home for man. But the out-working Plan of God was taking great strides towards fulfilment. The hot, harsh conditions of the Mesozoic Era gave place to the soft rains and pure air of the Cainozoic; the enormous reptiles and sea creatures disappeared and in their place came the animals and birds we know today. Something quite new was seen on earth, a flower. Soon there were myriads of flowers, and with the flowers came bees and butterflies, noble trees like the oak and the beech and the elm, fruit trees like the apple and the pear and the orange, flowering grasses and aromatic herbs, and finally grain, wheat and barley and maize. The great ice ages were in the past and, if C. E. P. Brooks, the celebrated Twentieth century climatologist is to be believed, the earth entered upon an era of genial warmth and salubrious climate such as it never knew before and has not since. Then God saw that the earth was ready for man's home and He came down to create man.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image." (Gen. 1.26-27).

This is the general description of the appearance of man upon earth. Chapter 2 has the particular, the detailed story associating the actual act of creation with the garden in which it took place. In that chapter stress is laid upon man's bodily frame being of the dust of the ground; in this the emphasis is upon the fact that he is made in the image of God. In that chapter man is made first and woman later; in this the creation of male and female is treated as a single act and both bear the generic name of "man". In that chapter God is pictured as working alone but in this it is "Let US make". . . "in Our image". To whom then was God speaking and in what sense was man made in the plural image—"in OUR image"?

It has been suggested, and there may be some substance in the suggestion, that here is an indication of the Father and the Son working together in harmony in this great act of creation.

One thing upon which the New Testament is definite is the fact that the Son is the executive agent of the Father in things pertaining to man just as He is the way by which the Father is manifested to man. *"All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made"* (John 1.3). *"By him were all things created . . . in heaven . . . in earth"* (Col. 1.16). *" . . . God, who created all things by Jesus Christ"* (Eph. 1.9). At the same time it has to be recognised that the Genesis story depicts God as a unity, one who is conducting every step in creation by himself, until He comes to the final act, the creation of man, and then for the first time admits the joint work of another; *"Let us . . ."* Since the Son admittedly was the active agent in all the preceding creative works as well as in that of man the use of the plural in this verse alone would still seem to provoke enquiry.

Jewish scholars of an older time, such as Maimonides (1131-1201) suggest, in effect, that God took counsel with the earth, the earth supplying the body and God supplying the soul, so that the expression *"in our likeness"* was to be referred to God and the earth. This is worthy of thought before passing over. The angels were made in the likeness of God but, being celestial beings, have nothing of the likeness of earthly or material things. The lower animal creation which preceded Adam had the likeness of earth but nothing of the spiritual. Man alone has that which makes him a citizen of both worlds; he is of the earth, earthly, but God has implanted in his nature the capacity for spiritual intercourse with the higher world, the ability to worship and have communion and fellowship with God. It can quite reasonably be imagined that God, in a metaphorical kind of way, could say to the earth *"Let us make man"*.

It is of interest to note in this connection that the old Babylonian mythologies do present man as having been created by the joint efforts of heaven and earth. There was a supreme god of heaven, who in collaboration with the earth-goddess produced the first man. This theme, that man is the product of heaven and earth, runs through most of the ancient mythological traditions, and if it can be accepted that these traditions are distorted recollections of a one-time tolerably accurate knowledge of God and his works it might well be that this expression in Genesis is a reflection of this basic truth—both heaven and earth had their part in the creation of man.

The expression, *"in our image, after our likeness"* has to be taken very literally, for both words definitely indicate true resemblance. We do not have to confine the meaning to physical likeness; the whole man, moral, mental and

physical, is included. So far as the moral aspect of man's nature is concerned, the implication is easy to accept; man is made in the moral likeness of God, having the same power of discernment between right and wrong, the same appreciation of moral values. Of all terrestrial living creatures, man alone possesses this moral sense and alone can be considered accountable for the morality of his actions. From that aspect one passes to the mental powers of man; here again there is a difference from the brute creation, in that men possess powers of reflection and deduction, and can reason of things unknown on the basis of things known. These faculties make possible increase of knowledge, discovery and invention, achievements which lie outside the powers of any other sentient creature. In this, also, man is in the likeness of God, although his mental powers lie on an immeasurably lower level. It is in connection with the idea of physical likeness that the difficulty arises; it is evident that the body of man is devised and constructed to fit him for life on this earth and would be totally out of place in, and unfitted for life on, any other plane of being. Perhaps the best understanding of this passage is found in thinking of man as possessing the mental and moral image of God enshrined in the likeness of an earthly creature. That there are essential differences between earthly and heavenly bodies is evident from the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 15 where he makes clear that there is one glory of the terrestrial and another of the celestial, that *"as we have borne the image of the earthly, so also we shall bear the image of the heavenly"*; yet James tells us that man is made in the similitude of God (Jas. 3.9). But James is talking of human emotions, not of physical appearance, and it may well be that the human emotions of love, joy, zeal, loyalty, gratitude and so on are all counterparts of qualities finding far richer expression in the celestial world, and in this sense also man is made in the image and likeness of God.

How did God create and vivify the first man? Did He take some pre-existing animal body and adapt it to his purpose, so that what started life as one of the lower creatures found itself exalted to a thinking, reasoning being? Did He allow the various species of anthropoid (man-like) apes to evolve, generation after generation, until one day He looked down and saw one specimen almost man-like in appearance and took that one and in-breathed his Spirit to make it a man? These and other hypotheses have been proposed but none involve any less simple and straightforward an exercise of creative power than the narrative in Gen. 2.7 *"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and*

man became a living soul". There is every indication here that God constructed something new from entirely primitive and original material. He took "dust of the ground" where "dust" is *aphar*, the fine ingredients of the soil, and "ground" is *adamah*, the surface of the land in general, and He formed (*yatsar* moulded or shaped, as a potter does clay) man from the variety of ingredients in the ground itself. How literally exact is that description is demonstrated by the fact that the human body contains at least forty-one of the ninety or so elements found in nature. A scientist could take from the shelves of his laboratory so much carbon, so much calcium, so much sulphur, and similarly with the remaining elements, and produce some nine or ten stone weight of material which would be an exact replica of the substance which makes up a human body; but he would finish with a heap of powder and in no way could he fashion it into a human being. God caused to be gathered together in one place the right quantities of those forty-one elements, brought them into chemical combination the one with the other so that they formed a complex system of carbohydrates, proteins and the like, caused that combination to develop into a collection of living cells, tiny pinpoints of life too small to be seen with the naked eye but present in such myriad quantities that together in all their variety of shape and purpose they took on the outward appearance of a man, and inwardly became the organs and arteries and muscular system of a man—the man Adam. It may have been—must have been—the work of a moment of time from the gathering together of the hundredweight or so of particles from the surrounding earth to their metamorphosis into a symmetric and perfect human body lying there in the sunlight; and then God inbreathed into that inanimate frame the breath of life and man awoke to consciousness, a living soul.

Here again ancient legends, apart from the Bible, preserve this belief that man is made from the "dust of the earth" with the infusion of the Divine breath of life. In one such legend the Sumerian god Enki is depicted as speaking. "Mix the heart of clay . . . bring the limbs into existence . . . the earth-goddess will bind upon it the image of the gods . . . It is man!" Another runs "Let the earth-goddess mix clay, that god and man may be thoroughly mixed . . . Let there be a spirit from the god's flesh; Let it proclaim living man as its impress". The earliest versions of these legends which are known are at least seven centuries later than the date of Genesis and they have clearly suffered severe distortion in the meantime, but this independent insistence that man was made from clay by the

gods and vivified by the heavenly breath of life is a striking confirmation of the process described in Genesis. Somewhere behind all these accounts there must lie, unwritten and unrecorded, the full story of that wonderful happening when God came into the world to create man, of the earth, earthy, and yet linked to Heaven by the "breath of life".

What then is the "breath of life" by means of which man "became a living soul"? The latter word is self-explanatory; "*nephesh*", rendered "living soul", denotes any living, breathing creature, whether man or beast, and is variously translated in the A.V. soul, living creature, beast, body, heart, person and many other like words. The expression means that man became a living creature. But the term "breath of life" (*neshamah chayim*) is not applied to the animal creation; it seems to be applied only to man, although another Hebrew word, "*ruach*", breath or spirit, is applied indiscriminately to both. It would appear that "*neshamah*" denotes an inbreathing of the Divine breath or spirit to man in a manner which is not true of the animal creation generally, and if this is so it furnishes an additional evidence that man is a distinct and separate creation. This "breath of life" is the impartation of a God-given life which sets man immediately in a class by himself, above and distinct from other forms of terrestrial living creatures.

This first man is universally known as "Adam". The A.V. gives him this name 21 times in the O.T. and 9 times in the N.T. But the word "*adam*" is actually the Hebrew word for "man" in a generic sense and so appears more than 400 times. (Another word, *Ish*, denotes man as an individual.) This usage stands out more vividly in Gen. 5.2 "*Male and female created he them, and called their name Adam in the day when they were created*". It is sometimes said that the word refers to the red earth from which the man's body was made, derived from the Hebrew "*adam*" (slight difference in pronunciation) which does mean "red" but this is incorrect (in any case there is no mandate for saying that the "dust of the ground" of the story was red in colour). In fact the word "*Adam*" is a Sumerian word meaning "man" in a generic sense precisely as it is used in Hebrew—another pointer to the antiquity of the story. The word has been taken over into the Hebrew language from archaic times. Bible usage has fixed it as the proper name of the first man.

So Adam, the first human living soul, opened his five senses to the reception of impressions from the external world around him, and the history of mankind on earth had begun.

(To be continued)

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

*A collection of
interesting items*

I.H.S.

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

God listens!

In ancient Crete there was the image of a god without ears. It was intended as a reminder to passers-by that the god in question was too busy and too preoccupied to be bothered with the prayers of needy people. How different is the revelation of our God and Father which we find in the pages of Holy Scripture! His ear is ever open unto our cry. He hearkens to the prayers of his people. God is never too busy and never too preoccupied to attend to our beseechings.

Gnats and Camels

Faulty translation is not an uncommon thing in the Authorised Version; misprints, which were common in the earliest editions, are now rare. Some have persisted. One is the expression in Matt. 13. 24 "*Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel*". What Jesus really did say is "*Ye blind guides, which strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel*". The Diaglott corrects the error, and explains that the allusion is to the custom of passing wine through a strainer lest any defiling insect should have got into it. With this correction made, the comparison becomes much more forceful. One is impressed also with the gentle irony in the Lord's words. The idea of swallowing a camel verges on the ludicrous. Extreme and exaggerated figures of speech are common in the East; even so one can imagine the covert smiles on the faces of the bystanders at this biting comment on the punctilious observances of the Pharisees and their blindness to the really vital things.

Patriarchal Longevity

The declared long lives of the patriarchs mentioned in the Book of Genesis have often been doubted, just because no one has lived so long in historic times. There is some evidence in Babylonian inscriptions that others beside the patriarchs lived unusually long lives in times contemporary with them. And in addition, eighty years ago or more, skeletons found in Louisiana (U.S.A.) when examined by anthropologists, were concluded from certain signs—the flattening of shin and leg bones and condition of the teeth—to be those of men who had lived probably for many centuries. One by one, each apparently incredible Biblical statement is being found in this modern day to be not so incredible after all.

More Value than Many Sparrows

The "sparrows" of Israel are very numerous and are caught and destroyed in great numbers as a nuisance. To know this is to better appreciate the assurance that our Heavenly Father, Who takes note of all his creation so that not one sparrow can fall to the ground without his knowledge, will surely take heed to our welfare, who are "of more value than many sparrows". (Matt. 10. 29 and Luke 12. 7).

Prejudice

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

The man referred to in this quotation was Copernicus, one who did much to give to the world a truer and more complete picture of the universe. Since that time many more facts concerning the movements of the heavenly bodies have been discovered. In the light of the present day Luther's words seem more childish than childlike. No doubt he felt strongly on this matter and said what he thought was right, and yet the view that he expressed has been shown to be false.

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

*Lessons from the life of
a stalwart man of God*

1. The King's Cupbearer

This story opens in the imperial palace of Artaxerxes, Persian Emperor in the fifth century B.C. He was a wise and tolerant king, giving his subjects as much freedom as possible. He had inherited the great empire of Babylon together with other conquered lands, hence the land of Israel was included in his vast domain. In his service at Shushan, capital of Persia, was a Jew named Nehemiah. Like many of his fellow nationals, he was part of Israel's exiled nobility. His position in the royal household would carry many privileges, providing him with every comfort and giving little cause for complaint. Yet Nehemiah's heart was in far off Jerusalem and he eagerly sought information from travellers concerning his brethren in Judea. News from his homeland was bad, and the plight of God's people was truly an unhappy one. The stories he heard made him long more than ever to return to the land of "the Promise", to see the rugged hills of Judah and to help to restore to Israel her ancient heritage and national prestige.

The King was an observant man and he readily detected the sorrow reflected in the face of one who served him at table. Enquiry soon revealed the cause of Nehemiah's distress, and permission was given to him to go to Jerusalem as governor of the city. Artaxerxes also supplied military protection for the long and hazardous journey, and requisitions to obtain building materials to restore the walls of Jerusalem, which were in ruins.

Two very important principles emerge from this first episode in the story of Nehemiah. His first reaction was to pray about his great trouble. He had learned to trust the King of Heaven rather than the kings of the earth and thereby God opened the way for Nehemiah's successful audience with the King.

Israel as a nation had sinned, and according to the prophecy of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy 4. 25-31, they had been scattered and exiled by a foreign power. Nehemiah does not blame someone else for this situation but links his own name with those who had sinned. His prayer, found in Nehemiah 1. 4-11, is remarkably like that in Daniel 9. Daniel and Nehemiah exhibit a wonderful spirit of humility and express to God their repentance for sins which they have not committed. Neither of them were responsible for Judah's exile, because the fate of the children of Israel was sealed by their idolatry and general disobedience to their covenant with God, long

before Daniel and Nehemiah were born. It was not their fault that Jerusalem had been sacked and God's holy temple thrown down.

It is an important lesson for us because we so readily blame other people for the distress in the world and for the lack of spirituality in the Church. This was the beginning of Nehemiah's success. He went before Almighty God with a repentant heart and thus the floodgates of God's mercy and mighty power were opened to him. It is to be noticed that this was not the repentance of a flagrant sinner who forsook a wicked life for the first time. This was a fine upright child of Abraham who realised that he constantly fell from grace and was in need of Divine forgiveness. To those who have come into Christ the same principle applies, as in 1 John 1. 7, 8; *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*

Throughout his great work, Nehemiah constantly resorted to prayer, particularly in any special crisis. His prayers were not vague, abstract sermons about the plan of God, but earnest, practical entreaties for help, guidance and strength. Such is the example given by all true servants of God from the time of the Patriarchs until the present day. Like Daniel, Nehemiah probably practised the Jewish custom of special hours of prayer, of which we read in our Lord's day.

Regular, frequent prayer is the solution to many of the difficult problems which beset the Church of God in this twentieth century. The hindrances to our unity and to our preaching of the Word of God to unbelievers would vanish if prayer meetings became a regular feature in the worship of God's people.

We in England, where complete religious freedom has been protected by the government for more than a hundred years, enjoy the same privilege that Nehemiah experienced while living in Persia and Palestine. He was guarded on his journey from Shushan to Jerusalem. He did not obstinately refuse Gentile assistance, but gladly accepted the credentials given to him by Artaxerxes. God does not expect us to make ourselves odious in the sight of the world merely for the sake of it. Godly men have frequently throughout the ages acknowledged and received the help which this world has given to the Divine purpose.

Jesus never showed antagonism towards the civil powers, and Paul solicited the aid of pagan Rome in order that he might further his missionary work. Provided that righteous principles are not jeopardised, we ought to take advantage of civil liberties to advance, not our own interests, but the interests of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Another essential aspect of serving the Lord is to be willing to sacrifice the comfort and security of a fine career in secular life. Nehemiah is a wonderful example of this. We must be ready to give up those things which we hold dear according to the flesh in order that our spiritual life may develop, and make our service more effective. There are many things around us in our everyday lives which hinder our service for God. Our daily occupation, worldly wealth, a comfortable home, entertaining pleasures, the

accumulation of knowledge, all of which might be beneficial and given to us by Divine providence, yet they can, and frequently do, distract God's servants from fulfilling their duty. When the voice of the Lord calls us from the things of this life, let us relinquish our grasp upon them and cling more surely to the unseen, eternal things which will never perish, as mentioned in Hebrews 12. 27-28.

These two principles, a repentant and prayerful heart and a willingness to deny self of earthly comfort and ambition, are essential if we would embark upon any great work for God. We must recognise that we can do nothing alone, but be fully devoted to the will and purpose of God, and live in an attitude of prayer and communion with our Heavenly Father.

To be continued

Mediterranean—Dead Sea Canal

This ambitious Israeli project, which has been talked about for several generations, looks like becoming a reality in the more or less near future. The Canal Project Authority was authorised by the Israeli government in August 1980 and a management team including some highly qualified technical men will now undertake the technical planning which will take at least three years.

The general idea is to construct a 70 mile long channel to connect the Mediterranean Sea with the Dead Sea. Since the latter is a thousand feet below the former the waters of the Mediterranean will flow downwards to the Dead Sea. The surface area of the Dead Sea will increase to a point where increased solar evaporation consequent upon the enlarged surface will balance the quantity of incoming water, at which point it will become static. The downward rushing water will drive turbines which will generate electricity sufficient to meet 15% of Israel's needs, so making a significant contribution to her energy problems. The sea-salts thus carried into the Dead Sea will be extracted, as are the salts at present in that sea, for chemical and fertiliser use. Solar

stills will convert some of the water into fresh water, by the power of the sun alone, for agricultural and national uses.

Once started, the process can go on indefinitely. As a pointer to the mighty reconstruction works which will be a feature of the coming Millennium it is significant. One cannot envisage the world of Christ's kingdom sullied either by coal mines, submarine oil wells, or nuclear reactors, all of which use what are called "fossil fuels", minerals stored in the earth which must eventually become exhausted. Without doubt men will learn to obtain their energy from the sun, the source of all energy to this earth. In this particular case the sun will evaporate the water from the Dead Sea, send it back to the oceans by way of clouds and rain, and thus into the Dead Sea again, and so on for ever. *"All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again"* said the Preacher (Eccl. 1.7). It may well be that the Millennial world will see other examples of the kind of thing the Israelis are devising at this time.

"The sovereignty of man does not depend on a particular view of the exact manner in which the Creator caused the elements of the earth to produce his frame. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;" it is not *how* they so formed him. None has power to affirm or deny how, unless with reverent hands he find it written in the rocks, or woven indelibly with the very structure of man himself. It is because men have interpreted without evidence the

stages of creative action and welded these non-essentials with iron girdles of dogma, that faith has again and again been imperilled.

"The true crown of manhood, the final majesty and exalted mystery of creative power, was not man's *body*, but his soul. "And breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul," is the expression of that which gives his unshared dignity to man."

W. H. Dallinger, (19th Cent.)

MARTHA AND MARY

Martha scurried about with plates and dishes, tut-tutting impatiently as she looked towards the group at the other end of the room. Jesus was sitting there quietly talking. Peter and John and Lazarus, and a few others, were giving close attention. Mary, sitting on the floor at his feet, rapt face lifted to his, listened intently. None of them are taking any notice of me, thought Martha rather bitterly, vigorously stirring her cooking-pot. It is not as though we had only an ordinary visitor. When Jesus is here we ought to provide an extra special meal and the house must be specially cleaned and we all ought to wear our best garments and there isn't time to do all that when He comes in like this at short notice—she picked up a brush and dashed in hurriedly to sweep imaginary dust from the already immaculate table and benches where the meal was presently to be served. A noise of pots boiling over in the outer room sent her rushing to her cooking and at that her nerves finally gave way and she flew back into the other room to that intent group in the corner.

"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me!"

The others swung round, somewhat appalled. Mary flushed crimson and buried her face in her hands. Only Jesus remained unmoved. He lifted his eyes to Martha, eyes of sympathy and understanding. Martha felt all the vexation and frustration ebbing away as she looked at him, and in their place a comforting sense of peace. In an odd sort of way she had an impression that He had known all along how she was feeling and had been quietly waiting for her to come out with it.

"Martha, Martha", His tone was caressingly gentle. She was conscious that He understood; that He always had understood. She had not really been alone; He had noticed and had known. "Thou art anxious and troubled about many things, but only one thing is really important, and Mary has chosen that better thing. It will not be taken away from her".

Martha was silent. The elaborate meal, ready in the other room for bringing to table; it seemed so unimportant now. The house-proud endeavour to re-furbish an already flawless home; how unnecessary for the Man of Nazareth whose penetrating gaze ignored the externals and saw only that which was in the heart. She loved Jesus and loved his words, she knew that; how much better to make the most of his visit sitting

at his feet as had her sister, and learn of him. She caught Mary's glance, directed anxiously toward her, and she smiled.

* * *

So many have found themselves in the same position as Martha. So busy about the material interests of every day that the things of the Spirit recede to the background. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" Jesus said on one occasion, and we all, in life's experience, come each in our turn to a point where we realise the truth of that saying. So many things in life can be counted loss, and well lost, if we may thereby find Christ, and be found in him. The Apostle Paul esteemed all things of this world the most worthless of rubbish if he might thus win Christ. The experience of Martha, and its recorded sequel, stands for the admonition of all who are Christ's throughout the Age.

Martha's reaction to our Lord's reply to her outburst is not recorded, but there is ground for thinking that she accepted the mild rebuke and learned the lesson it enshrined. Only four or five months after this incident which is recorded in Luke 10.38-42, Jesus was guest at another meal in the house of the Bethany family (Luke 12. 1-23). Again the disciples were present—apparently all or at least most of them—and again a supper was prepared. Again Martha was doing the work whilst Mary sat at the feet of Jesus. On this occasion Mary anointed his feet with the precious perfume and wiped them with her hair, an action the story of which Jesus said would be repeated wherever the gospel should be preached for all time to come. And this time there is no record of Martha manifesting the old impatience. Perhaps this time, whilst not unmindful of her duties as a hostess and the comfort of her guests, she did strike a proper balance between attention to her responsibilities and attention to the words of Jesus.

Martha seems to have been a woman strong-minded, practical, much given to organising and administering the affairs of daily life, but not deeply spiritually minded. That she esteemed Jesus as Lord is beyond question; that she had supreme faith in his Divine power is shown by her words to him following the death of her brother Lazarus "*if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*" (John 11.21). She possessed a positive conviction of the basic truths of her Judaistic faith; "*I know that he shall rise*

again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 12.24). She believed with all her heart that Jesus was the promised Messiah. But she does not seem to have been of the serene, contemplative sort who would quietly listen to the message and forget all surrounding outward things and matters while doing so. Even when one foot was planted in heaven the other was firmly planted on the earth.

The Lord has need of such. "If the whole body were an eye", asks St. Paul in I Cor. 12.17, "where were the hearing. If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?". If all were mystics and out of touch with real things the life of the Church might be lived on a wonderfully exalted plane but the practical issues of preaching the Gospel to the unconverted would most assuredly get sadly neglected. Not for nothing was coined the old jibe concerning some who are "so heavenly minded that they are no earthly use". The Lord has need of Marthas as well as Marys in his band of dedicated ones and to think that Jesus in the story was reproving Martha and throwing her zealous service back in her face is to miss the whole point. The word rendered "cumbered" in Luke 10.40 means to be over-busy, over-occupied, distracted with too many cares, and it comes from a root meaning to rush around ineffectively and aimlessly. Martha was doing too much, more than was necessary, and Jesus told her so. He bade her calm down and let some of the household chores go so that she could spend a little time in fellowship with him.

Mary was obviously cast in a different mould. Quiet, thoughtful, sympathetic, and deeply devotional, she was probably completely impractical in respect to mundane things. Had both sisters been of Mary's temperament it is probable that Jesus and his disciples would have got no supper at all. But of all who were gathered together on those two occasions she was the only one who sensed the tragedy that was so soon to befall them. Knowing or not, she did anoint Jesus for

his burial (Mark 14.8). The extent of her devotion is shown by her spontaneous breaking of the alabaster flask of perfume over Jesus' feet. The value of that perfume, as assessed by the jealous Judas at the time at three hundred denari, was equivalent in modern spending power to about four thousand pounds or eight thousand dollars. It would seem that Mary set little store by the value of earthly possessions compared with what we would call heavenly treasures. When their brother Lazarus died and news came that Jesus was approaching the house, Mary sat still inside with her grief; it was Martha who got up and went out to meet the Lord, returning then to tell Mary He was calling for her also—at which Mary in turn bestirred herself to go out and meet him. When, a little later and at the tomb, Jesus commanded the stone to be rolled away, it was Martha, practical as ever and despite her faith that the Lord could raise the dead, who objected that being now four days dead the body would be well on the way to corruption. Mary, perhaps, had never thought of that.

Neither of the sisters appear anywhere else in the Gospel narratives. They are seen only in the house at Bethany and there they take their leave, still together, still believing. In that domestic setting they display the two characteristics which must exist in proper balance in every Christian character, the devotional aspect which is so necessary to all who would grow up into Christ-likeness and bear fruit in the moulding of a Christian character fitted to the future celestial life, and the practical, down-to-earth outlook which gives form and body to the heavenly vision and enables the believer to live "in the world but not of the world", ministering the goodness of God to men in the same manner as did Jesus when He was upon earth, pouring out his life unto death. Both Martha and Mary are needed in the Christian community, and we, each one of us, need, in our own Christian make-up, something of Martha and something of Mary.

It is worthy of notice that the word used for "sleepeth" in the account of Jairus' daughter is one that in the New Testament is never used to indicate death; always to denote natural sleep. It is *katheuso*. The word which is used in the story of Lazarus—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; I go that I may awake him out of sleep" is *koimao*, which is used often as a synonym for death beside its normal meaning of sleep. Thus Acts 13.36 "David fell on sleep"; 1 Cor. 15. 20 "Christ... the first fruits of them that sleep"; 1 Cor. 15. 51 "We shall not all sleep"; 1 Thess. 4. 14 "Them that sleep in Jesus"; are all from

koimao. It is this latter word which passed into Latin as *coemeterium*, from which we get our English word *cemetery*—place of sleep. It would appear that no conclusive evidence exists in the Gospels for the customary impression that Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. He himself said "*the maid is not dead, but sleepeth*". It seems probable that she was in some kind of trance or coma, and that our Lord awakened her from it. The friends and neighbours, convinced that the girl was dead—for they "laughed him to scorn" when He said that she was not—would probably not believe anything else but that He

had in fact raised her from the dead. Hence Jesus cautioned them not to make the incident generally known, a caution they promptly rejected.

This view is supported by the Aramaic words used by the Lord. "*Talitha cumi*" is said to have been the usual greeting by which a mother roused her child in the morning, and means

"Little girl, I say to you, arise". It would seem therefore that whereas in the case of Lazarus our Lord used the word that commonly could mean death, and than "*said plainly unto them, Lazarus is dead*", in the case of the synagogue ruler's daughter, He equally definitely stated that the maid was not dead, only sleeping, and used the word which would normally denote that fact.

INTO THE SANCTUARY OF GOD

*A plea for
beauty in worship*

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

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

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

Then when Israel's first wildness had been tamed, and as a united nation they came to-

gether to worship their God, with what pride must they have viewed the edifice built by Solomon. Not the beauty of simplicity which they had seen in the Tabernacle, but the majesty and dignity of a House which should fitly be for the dwelling of the Most High. "*The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness; but I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever*" (2 Chron. 6. 1).

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

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

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

But Solomon knew that his beautiful Temple was only a shell, a casket, of no value except it

held the precious jewel. That dead building must be the repository of a living faith and a centre of living worship. *"Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built"* (2 Chron. 6. 18). So he prayed that his house might become a house of prayer. How clear it is that he expected his Temple to become an inspiration to sincere prayer and devotion for all Israel. Its gold and silver vessels and furnishings, sculptured palm trees and pomegranates, its tapestries and apartments, its ceremonial and ritual, all meant nothing, and less than nothing, except they were conducive to a deeper and more spiritual understanding of God, and to more reverent and soul-satisfying worship on the part of the people. That was his desire.

That he had interpreted aright the needs of Israel is clear from the songs of David. Yearning after just such a place where God could be worshipped in spirit and in truth, the man after God's own heart had sung: *"I was glad when they said unto me 'Let us go into the house of the Lord'"* (Psa. 122. 1). He was glad! Have you ever felt that quickening of the pulse, that eager anticipation, as you enter the place where your fellows are gathered together to worship the Father in sincerity and reverence? I have sometimes found myself in a strange town where the surroundings seem alien and unfriendly, and have come upon a church, standing silent and serene, and felt a strange little surge of emotion, as though that building were the one place in all that town into which I had a right to enter; for it represented the things of God, and *"this is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven"* (Gen. 28.17). And if perchance one should enter in and become at one with the atmosphere of the place—the quietness, the dignity of ancient things, the soft light stealing through stained glass windows, the great Bible on the reading desk—how easy to come into tune with those fervent words of three thousand years ago: *"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts. My soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God"* (Psa. 84. 1-2). That is the true spirit of worship—the intense, deep longing to be in the House of God and engaged in his business. That is our place, our home, and there it is that we shall find rest to our souls. The more that we can take to ourselves the restful spirit of a place of worship, the more shall we enter into communion with our Father.

Do we not well, therefore, to seek the promotion of this spirit of worship by every means

within our power, and if our surroundings can be made more conducive to satisfying and restful worship, do we not well to use our Divinely given instinct for beauty and dignity to that end? When the inspired writer voiced those beautiful words in which he exhorted his hearers to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness there can be little doubt that the magnificent setting of the Temple was in his mind. *"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name,"* he cries. *"Bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth"* (Psa. 96, 8-9). Behold the stately progression of worship! Acknowledge God first, the One Who is worthy of all praise and worship; then prepare the offering. With that offering in the hand, enter into the House of God, the place that is set apart to him for worship and devotion. In that setting, and in a spirit of reverence, and with a consciousness of sincerity of heart, trusting in the justification which is by faith, rejoicing in hope of his glory; in such holiness, within and around, *"come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker"* (Psa. 95. 6). In that solemn atmosphere we shall hear the voice that speaketh from Heaven as we have never heard it before.

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

The finest example of the value of beauty and dignity in worship and of ritual and ceremonial in preparing the heart for personal communion

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

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

THE LAMB GOES FORTH TO WAR

The fiercest and longest battle recorded in the Bible, the book of many battles, is one between a Lamb and a Lion—and the Lamb is the victor! Apparently the most defenceless, and certainly one of the most harmless, of all creatures, it nevertheless engages in mortal combat the most terrible of the beasts of the earth, and overcomes him. The conflict is long and for the major part of the time it seems as though the Lion is going to triumph, but toward the end he is driven back by the victorious Lamb, compelled to relinquish his prey, and lies prostrate, his might and power laid in the dust.

It is a remarkable thing, to think that a lamb can overcome a lion. No man would have thought of that; no man unenlightened by the Holy Spirit of God would ever have realised that the powers of love, of goodwill, of benevolence, the spirit of service and of doing good, of complete reliance upon the power of God, are forces greater by far than all that the powers of evil can muster. The Lion draws his strength from the things of this earth and expends it in the manufacture and use of material weapons. The Lamb draws his from the things of heaven and expends it in spiritual warfare. That is the difference.

The Lion is called such only as a matter of courtesy. He has undergone a process of degeneration during the course of his career. At the end he is so nondescript, partaking of the evil qualities of all wild beasts and the good qualities of none, that the scribe calls him a wild beast, knowing not how else to describe him. The lion as God made him was a noble animal. In the coming day he is going to lie down with the

lamb, and be altogether lovable. But not the kind of lion that the lamb is going to slay!

The lion in this Age is a carnivorous beast. He devours flesh. The Lion which the Lamb engages in deadly combat has his archetype in the Devil, whom the Apostle Peter calls "*a roaring lion, going about seeking whom he may devour*". (1. Pet. 5. 8). That Lion was defeated in his first endeavour to defy God and frustrate his plans for the human race. True, by virtue of his lie, uttered in the garden, man was enticed into sin, and reaped death, "*and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*". (Rom. 5. 12). But he was defeated, nevertheless, for the fallen pair still believed in God and began to bring their children up in the knowledge and fear of God, and there is no evidence that they ever heeded or had anything to do with the Devil again. Satan had to wait for one or two generations to pass by before he could again make a really effective entry into mankind's thoughts (see Gen. 4).

The fight was not really joined until God's work with the people of Israel began to show definite fruitage. We are accustomed to Israel's apostasy and unfaithfulness and of their going repeatedly into captivity because of their sins. What, it may be, we do not realise so easily is that a solid body of people, the "remnant", was being prepared for God's purposes and laid aside to wait the time when He would need them. The Hebrew prophets rendered yeomen service to the Divine Plan in their day and their work was not wasted, even although they were very generally disesteemed in their own generation and as often as not put to death in vain attempts to stifle

their message and their work. The rejection and martyrdom of the prophets was the first round in the conflict between the Lamb and the Lion and for the time being the Lion seemed to have the advantage.

It was when the work of the prophets began to produce such an understanding of God's plan in the hearts of men that it made some of them ready to receive the Messiah—as it did do some six or seven hundred years later—that the Devil initiated that strategy which has been used to such terrible effect ever since. The people of God began to be menaced by the "wild beasts of the earth"!

There are many powers, forces, institutions in the world that are opposed to the powers and forces and institutions of God and of righteousness. Most of them become, sooner or later, incorporated into the fabric of kingdoms and empires, which then, because of this evil content, become the enemies of God. It is this power of worldly evil in the kingdoms of this world that constitutes the Lion that is eventually slain by the Lamb.

It was in the empire of Babylon that the Lion first became manifest. Daniel in his dream (Dan. 7) saw the thing clearly. A lion with eagle's (vulture's) wings which enabled it to rise up from the earth and soar into the heavens, but the wings thereof were plucked and it fell to the earth, where it must perforce remain. There is something in this that reminds us of the story of the founding of Babylon itself, how they planned to build a Tower whose top should reach into heaven, as though they would storm the heights of the place of God's throne itself; and how their project was defeated and they were cast down to the earth and scattered abroad on the face of the land. In the days of Daniel the lion's wings had been plucked—but it was standing up like a man and a man's heart had been given to it.

A strange expression, that! Does it mean that the lion had his nature softened and transformed so that the lion-like disposition was tamed? Or was it the kind of heart that man has now, deceitful and desperately wicked, as the Preacher puts it? Or is it a matter of contrast, the erstwhile flying creature, aspiring to soar aloft among the angels of heaven, condemned now to be like the sons of men, restricted to the earth as are men on the earth. Looking at the reality in history, it would seem that something of the first and something of the third suppositions are combined. The analogy of Daniel's four beasts with Nebuchadnezzar's great image is too obvious to be ignored. The lion is Babylon, and Babylon, although one of the wild beast powers that

have oppressed God's people through the centuries, was in some important respects more humane than any power that succeeded her. Under Babylonish rule, the Jews, although held in captivity and their land made desolate, were at least free from persecution and could follow their distinctively Jewish way of life, and worship God according to the law of Moses without let or hindrance. That was more than could be said of any of the succeeding wild beast powers, except perhaps the Persians, who followed Babylon and to some degree for a short time imitated Babylonish policy. God's people were in the grip of the lion, true, but it was a lion with a man's heart.

Satanic strategy could not rest at captivity. The lion became transformed into a bear. The man's heart was gone, and in its place the bear appeared with three ribs in its mouth—the last remnants of its victims—and a voice was heard saying to it "Arise, devour much flesh". Although the Jews had welcomed the advent of Persia in the expectation that they would thus gain freedom from the bondage of Babylon, and although at first, under Cyrus and Darius, it seemed that those hopes were being fulfilled, in later years came the time that Judah hailed the Greeks as deliverers from Persia, and led Alexander in triumph to their Temple to show him the prophecy predicting his coming victory and conquest. Jewry had suffered greatly since the prosperous days of Babylon. There were Jews in Judea, in Babylonia and in Egypt, three separate and distinct communities each having its own characteristic traditions and culture, but all owning Israel's God. But they were three ribs in the mouth of the bear, pitiful remnants of what had once been, and when the bear in its turn gave way before the four-headed winged leopard they rejoiced.

The rejoicing was not for long. This third wild beast of Daniel's vision was by far more voracious and menacing than either of its predecessors. Its wings were those of a flying creature or flying insect rather than those of a soaring bird like the eagle. They were for speed in flight rather than power to climb. That was characteristic of Greece, this speed with which its conquests were achieved. The same idea is conveyed in the parallel vision in Dan. 8 where the he-goat, Greece, traverses the ground with such rapidity in his onward rush that "he touched not the ground" as he went. The four kingdoms into which the empire was split almost immediately after its formation, in consequence of the death of Alexander and division of his territory between his four generals, brought all Jews under the jurisdiction of one or another of the "four

heads". It was under the rule of Greece—or of these Greek sub-kingdoms—that the covenant people suffered the miseries and persecutions which ultimately led to the Maccabean revolt and the recovery of some degree of national independence. The lion had become a leopard and Truth lay almost prostrate under his talons; and still the Lamb had not appeared to give battle.

Although there was as yet no outward sign of the Coming One, the arch-enemy of God must have known that the time was not far distant. He must have observed the growing fitness of some in Israel to comprehend him when He came; the steady development of a "people made ready for the Lord", the fact that "all men were in expectation". And so, relentlessly pursuing his plan to exterminate truth and righteousness from the earth, he produced, only half a century before the Lamb did appear, an even more fearsome beast to supersede the leopard.

Judah had gained measurable freedom from the leopard from Greece. The cause of the Lion had received a temporary set-back, and the ground lost had to be regained. The emergence of Rome as the fourth dominating power could only be described by Daniel as a beast dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and having great iron teeth, a power that persecuted and ground down the saints and destroyed them. Here, it must have seemed, was the final stand of truth against the very embodiment of all evil, and the victory of lawlessness and sin over all that is good and pure and holy. Here, surely, the Lion appearing in guise of this terrible beast, would overcome the last feeble resistance and finally and for all time put an end to the dominion of God in the earth.

As if in answer to that threat, there appeared on earth—a Lamb!

John stood, and cried "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". Isaiah, long centuries before, had told of a lamb being led to slaughter in order that he might bear the sin of many. Whatever the spiritual powers of evil might have understood of that at the time, there can be little doubt they had been on the watch for some such development in the Divine Plan. However few there may have been among the people in the days of John's preaching who believed, it is certain that the Devil was one who did believe, and he acted quickly.

The oppressions and cruelties of the wild beast powers before the Lamb stood revealed upon earth were as nothing compared with the cold-blooded ferocity that marked Satan's working through the powers of this world from now on. John, the Revelator, looking back from his standpoint of a century later, saw this opening

phase of the activities of the "dreadful and terrible beast" as a great red dragon, standing expectantly waiting to devour the man-child as soon as it should be born—to slay the Lamb as soon as it should appear on the earth. History records how no time was lost in launching the attack—the story of Herod's massacre of the infants in Bethlehem is witness to that. Without any delay the great red dragon swept into action, and the battle was joined.

The Book of Revelation is the splendid symbolism of that tremendous struggle. Thwarted in his first attempt to destroy the Lamb, the Dragon sought to suppress the further development of God's work in the earth. The man-child had been caught up unto heaven, beyond his reach; but he could attempt to ensure his perpetual banishment from the earth by destroying the remnant of his brethren, those that kept his commandments. By every diabolic device known to demoniac or human ingenuity the Dragon sought to drive back to high heaven those principles of truth and righteousness that with such difficulty had found a lodgment in the earth. He failed; and the rising power of Christianity established itself. So the demon-inspired system of the Dragon gave place to a more subtle creation, another beast also having seven heads and ten horns as did the Dragon, but one owing its origin to earth rather than to heaven; claiming as its authority to rule, not the mandate conferred by pagan gods, demons of the power of the air, but that given by the great and the mighty men, the kings and princes of the earth. To ordinary men and women the result was much the same; they were ruled from above with no say in the choice of their rulers. To the saintly followers of Jesus the result was much the same also; if anything the persecution was intensified. The martyrs began to cry out "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth*" but they were told to wait yet a little season; the time was not ripe.

So the apparently hopeless conflict went on, generation after generation of faithful witnesses for the faith and stalwart soldiers of the faith being laid low in death, waging a good warfare but giving place at last under the well-nigh irresistible savagery of the wild beast. The seven-headed monster exercised power for many weary centuries, but eventually even he became old and no longer so effective. With the rising tide of the power of the people characteristic of these later centuries of the Age there comes a fresh manifestation of the "dreadful and terrible" beast, a manifestation which owes its vitality, not to the energy and dominance of the kings and great

men of the earth, but to the clamour and the surging strength of the masses, of the people. But the same unseen power remains behind the scenes, influencing and adapting this new development to serve his own ends. To this very day the Lion relentlessly pursues his attack on the Lamb and the people of the Lamb.

Now we are entering into the final stage of the conflict. The Lamb is being threatened as never before. Truth is in process of being crushed out of existence. Of all the ages that there have been since Pentecost, there has never been one in which belief in God and knowledge of Christ has had less hold on the masses. Not only do the forces of irreligion gather momentum and extend their scope, but the power of Antichrist steadily rises to its climax. There are men to-day who preach a new religion, the faith for which, they claim, the world is waiting. They speak of what they call "cosmic religion", meaning one that is a philosophy of life having no place for anything supernatural and no place for God. They claim that this "new religion" which is to meet the needs of twentieth century man, is superior to the idea of a God who rewards his favourites with Heaven and punishes his rejected with Hell—as though any intelligent Christian believed in such a travesty of God to-day anyway—and banishes the conception of "sin" as a morbid psychological condition. The nobility of man and the kindness of man and the unselfishness of man are all to be expressed through this new religion, it is said, and no account at all taken of the fact that in all history the rejection of religion has invariably led to the loss of all those virtues. But there again, the Lion has *"blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ . . . should shine unto them"*. (2. Cor. 4. 4).

Let us be under no misapprehension. We are not living in a world which is prepared to tolerate Christians and accept them as rather odd but harmless members of society. We are living in a world which is becoming increasingly intolerant of true Christianity and true Christians. The increasing godlessness and iniquity of this world is showing up in ever clearer relief against the background of Christian standards, and the world hates those standards because its own evil deeds are condemned by them. The imagery of the last assault against the forces of righteousness, given under the symbol of the Beast and his armies gathered to make war against the Rider on the White Horse and those that follow him, is no empty metaphor. It betokens a very real conflict that is yet to take place, and the battlefield is going to be the length and breadth of the whole world.

That is the day of Divine intervention. That is the day when the Beast is captured and cast into the fiery lake and utterly consumed. That is the day when the followers of the Beast are slain by the sword of the Rider on the White Horse—the victorious Lamb. But let no one imagine this militant imagery implies that the Lamb, at the end, lays aside his gospel of peace and takes up the weapons and methods of the Beast; in such case the Beast would have won the final victory after all. The symbol of a fierce and sanguinary conflict in which no quarter is asked or given, culminating in the utter destruction of the defeated enemy, is the only one adequately to express the sweeping, the crushing, the overwhelming nature of the final victory of righteousness over evil. But it must never be forgotten that the victory is only attained because the forces wielded by the victorious Lamb are forces that cannot be touched by material weapons; because in the long run love, and unselfishness, and self-sacrifice are superior to hate and greed and lust. The sin of man, accumulating its evil fruits through the centuries, has undone men at the last and the whole of their world is falling—crashing about their ears by the weight of its own corruption. If in that hour of final disaster they look up into the heavens and see the drawn sword of Divine Truth stretched out over their ruined institutions it will not be surprising if they admit that the Rider on the White Horse has made war on them and has conquered. The Roman emperor Julian the Apostate, who spent his life endeavouring by all possible means to exterminate Christianity from the earth, murmured as he died *"Thou hast conquered, O Galilean"*. So will it be with those who have upheld the systems which in the last days form the final phase of the Beast; when they perceive the armies of heaven advancing to take over the control of this ruined earth they will realise that the Lamb that was slain has received power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. They will witness his receiving dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; and they will speedily know that his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; but because of that and in consequence of that, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. *"He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."* The Lamb will have slain the Lion, and all peoples of the earth shall rejoice.

IN THE LAND OF BEGINNING AGAIN

*Short stories of
the Millennium*

5. Thy Children shall Come again (Jer. 31:17)

"That's a big one!"

The great wave tipped gently over, rolled forward, a smooth cascade of shining green water, and raced foaming up to the feet of the two small boys. They jumped back instinctively.

"Wish Bob was here with us" said the elder one, rubbing his hands down his dripping swimming suit.

"D'you think he's come back yet, Peter?" asked the other, hopping about for sheer exuberance in the brisk wind.

"I asked teacher and he didn't know. But he said he would sure come back sooner or later. *Everybody's* coming back. 'All that are in their graves' Jesus said".

"He was drowned same time as us and he ought to come back same time as us" asserted the other.

"Maybe, but he hadn't got a father or mother to ask God to send him back like we had. He was an orphan, no brothers or sisters or anything".

"Then how will he get back?"

Two youthful minds grappled with the problem, serious faces looking out to sea as though seeking inspiration.

"I don't suppose he's got anyone to remember him now he's dead" hazarded Peter doubtfully.

"Except us".

"That's right".

"But we're only kids, Peter. What can we do?"

"Teacher says that God will always listen to anyone who prays to him. In lessons yesterday we learned about the time when Jesus said 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven'".

"This *is* the Kingdom of Heaven where we're living, isn't it, Peter?"

The elder boy's eyes roamed over the great playground behind the sandy beach, filled with children. The sound of their shouting rose high now and then above the splashing of the waves.

"Sure it is, Fred. This is the Kingdom of God on earth. Teacher calls it the Millennial Age".

"Perhaps God is waiting for *us* to pray for Bob to come back", suggested the other. "After all, he's got no one else to do it, except us".

"Except us". The elder lad was thinking hard. "We'll do it, Fred. God brought us back, and if He thinks we're worth bringing back He must think Bob is, as well".

Two small heads were bent reverently and a faltering voice sounded faintly against the noise of the sea.

"Please God, bring Bob back to us. He was a good pal and didn't get into mischief over much and he would so enjoy this new earth you've made for us. We promise to look after him and tell him all the things he ought to do. For Jesus' sake. Amen".

Two boyish hearts sought relief from the emotion of the moment.

"Race you to that rock out in the water!"

"Right, Fred. I'll give you ten yards start".

The younger, about to plunge into the sea, checked himself suddenly.

"I say, Peter".

"What?"

"Shouldn't we do something to show we believe God will answer our prayer and send Bob back?"

"What shall we do?"

The younger lad pondered. "Suppose we take my other swim suit with us, just to have it ready for Bob, then God will know we really believe he's coming back?"

"That'll do. Bring it along".

Fred ran up the beach, and returned knotting the swimsuit loosely around his left arm. The two lads ran into the water and were soon swimming side by side toward their goal. The wind blew keenly but in their robust health they felt no discomfort, and forged their way easily through the waves.

"There's a big swell coming, Fred. Look at the gulls settling on it!"

"Wonder what they're doing".

The insistent screech of the seabirds was dying down. From a long line riding the oncoming swell they were forming a great circle on the surface of the water, rising and dipping easily as the heaving billows passed under them. The two boys were now within that circle, and it seemed as if the gaze of all the birds was fixed upon them. The big swell was very near.

"Let's dive right under it, Fred".

"Right".

They went down as the great mound of water passed over them. There was a violent tug on Fred's left arm; he grappled strongly to retain his hold of the spare swim-suit, which was slipping from his grasp. He turned towards the surface. The gulls rose into the heavens with a great flapping of wings.

Three heads appeared upon the surface of the water.

"Thought I was a goner that time, lads" came Bob's familiar voice. "Swallowed nearly all the ocean, I should think". He glanced at the athletic forms of his two companions, ploughing through the water, one on each side. "What's the matter with you fellows? You look different, somehow"

They had reached the rock and were drawing themselves on to its shelving sides. "You tell him, Peter" urged the smaller lad.

Peter fumbled for words, the while Bob looked around him with a puzzled air.

"This is a funny go. My swim suit was blue just now. Now it's red. And that cliff over there wasn't there. And the beach wasn't like that with all that sand—and we were caught in the current and the boatman was shouting—and he's gone now... What's happened, kids?". He began to look alarmed.

"There is power in Christ, there is sufficiency in Christ for all He would have us do or be. God knows our hearts, and how soon we begin to depend on our joy, and not on Christ. But Christ is our Object, not the joy. Never be content without being able to walk and talk with Christ as with a dear friend. Be not satisfied with anything short of close intercourse of soul with Him who has loved us, who has given Himself for us, and who is ever present with us."

(J. N. Darby)

For the second time that morning Peter prayed, silently, for heavenly counsel, and inspiration came. "D'you remember Kingsley's story of the water babies, about the little chimney sweep boy who went into the river and drowned and went right down to the bottom and found himself in a new kind of world where he was all clean and white and everything was good?"

"That's kid's stuff, Peter. What's that got to do with it?"

"Well": Peter was choosing his words carefully. "That's what's happened to us. We got really drowned when the tide caught us, and we've come out into a new world".

"You mean I've been dead and come alive again, like they used to tell us in Sunday school?"

"Yes". Three youthful faces took on an expression of awe as they considered the immensity of this tremendous thing.

"And what happens to us now?"

"We shall grow up and learn to serve Jesus and live the way He wants us to."

"I never much liked learning about Jesus".

"You will now. We go to a super school where we learn about Jesus and the good things He is doing for us. When Jesus was on earth He used to gather the children round him and talk to them."

"They never told me that at Sunday school".

"Well, He did. We learn all about that at our school".

"I think I'd like to learn about that kind of Jesus. I think I shall like this new kind of world. Would they take me in your school, d'you think?"

"Come and see", said Peter.

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

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

*A Study in
Divine Purposes*

1. Paul and the Athenians

"Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold or silver or stone, engraved by art or man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked) but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17. 30).

The times of Divine action in the outworking of his plans are several and varied. The Scripture speaks of "Times of Restitution"; in these days we have come to realise the significance of that expression and to look forward to the promised restoration. They speak also of "Times of the Gentiles"; for many years past earnest students of the Holy Word have traced the course of those times through human history, and watched and waited for their end. Now the Apostle Paul, speaking to the wise men of this world, the philosophers and thinkers and debaters of the glory that was Greece, speaks of "times of ignorance". Times of ignorance! Was it a mere figure of speech, a flowery embellishment with which to round off his discourse, a polished antithesis to mark in sharp relief the knowledge that he was bringing them from God, the knowledge of Jesus and the Resurrection? By no means, for these "times of ignorance", says Paul, span a period and are to have an end, an end which is marked by the cessation of God's tolerance of the condition of "no-knowledge", and a universal command to repent, that the light of the knowledge of God's Plan might begin to overspread the earth until it covers the land as the waters cover the great sea. There were definite causes that had produced those "times of ignorance", and they had occupied a definite place in the Divine Plan, but now their end had come and another and totally different work for mankind on the part of the Most High was to take their place.

The unhappy translation "winked at" does not convey a true impression of Paul's exposition here. God did not by any means condone or ignore the conduct of man or the darkness of this world. The Greek word used is one that signifies the looking over and beyond a thing, as though God, surveying these times of ignorance from the standpoint of his great knowledge, looked beyond them to another time when men would hear the call to repent and come to the light that then would be shining, and in coming, find salvation and life. The word does not mean that God "over-looked" in the sense of "letting

bygones be bygones". There is a law of retribution in the Divine dealings with man which will apply to all men everywhere and in all ages. God "looked beyond" the "times of ignorance", and guided the destinies of this world mean-time, not according to man's present deserts, but in the light of his future possibilities.

These few words of Paul, spoken to the intellectual pagans of his own day, throw a flood of light upon this very important aspect of God's dealings with man. It has been the usual custom to ignore the long millenniums that stretched between Creation and Christ as though they had no particular usefulness or importance, except for the relatively short span during which Israel was receiving its national training under the Law. But a close examination of Acts 17 reveals a clear understanding, on Paul's part, of the vital place those ages occupy in the Divine scheme of things. They were years in which man, though ignorant, was making his way more or less blindly towards the light; until he had arrived at a certain stage in that progress the revelation of Christ could not be made to man because none would be found able to understand; but when in the fulness of time some could appreciate him in the way He must come, and accept him and set their lives to carrying on his work, then, and at once, the times of ignorance must come to an end, and God could set in motion the great forces which were destined to complete his plan for humanity. As a first step in that proceeding, He called upon men in a fashion He had not called and could not call before, to repent.

"Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship" said Paul to his listeners, "him declare I unto you". The Greeks had built up a complete pantheon of deities, descriptive of all the attributes of God and all the outward manifestations of his working which they could perceive; but they were not satisfied. There was still something about God that they did not understand, an understanding of his ways to which they had not attained. The elaborate mythologies and philosophical speculations which they had formulated and in which they indulged still failed to satisfy the more reflective among them, and so in blind groping for more light they had erected, among all their shrines and images, this altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD", and trusted that one day He would reveal himself to them.

So they listened as Paul told them how that

far away, in the days of Creation, the Unknown God had made the world, and all that is in it, and placed man upon it, and in consequence of the Fall and all that it entailed of man's ignorance and blindness concerning himself, had ordered the course of the nations in history, and their geographical distribution over the earth (*"hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation"* vs. 26) that they might struggle in their blindness to a position from which some of them at least could receive Christ and become his instruments of blessing to all the rest. *"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from any one of us"* (vs. 27). There is progression here, a progress from utter ignorance to a measure of knowledge, and then, when the call to repent has been sounded, and heard, and heeded, onward still into that full knowledge which is the prized possession of the sons of God.

The "times of this ignorance" of Paul's address, then, commenced at, or soon after, the Fall, and they ended with Christ. It was Paul's object to convince the Greeks of the significance of the times in which they lived. A great step forward in the Plan of God had been taken. Whereas, in the past, men had struggled blindly towards the light, and the highest and best of their conclusions had been enshrined in the Greek philosophies which Paul was now dismissing as ignorance itself, God, having looked beyond man's failure to know and understand him aright, was now revealing a complete and satisfying message of life in the person and work of his Son. The solution of all the questions and speculations, the searching and questionings, of the past, was expressed in the simple exhortation "Repent—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—and thou shalt be saved".

So the Times of Ignorance were brought to an end on the Day of Pentecost by God's command to men to repent. There can be no disputing the meaning of the words. They stand, clear and unmistakable. From the dawn of history God had looked upon his creatures' endeavours to understand the mysteries of life and death, of good and evil, and in the knowledge of his own future plans had allowed their errors and mistakes and wanderings in devious and dark ways. He knew that all this experimental striving, as it were, was necessary to prepare men's minds to receive the great revelation He planned to give them. It would not have done to reveal Christ at the time of Abraham, nor yet at the time of Moses. Human minds were altogether unprepared to receive the truths He must bring, too undeveloped by far to understand the High

Calling and the principles of the Millennial reign. But by the time that Cæsar Augustus ruled the world there were some who could understand and who would respond, and it was at that point that God changed his attitude and his course of dealing, and commanded all men, everywhere, to repent. And that call to repentance is intimately connected, as we know full well, with the onset of world judgment—the judgment and retribution that must come upon the world for its evil—and the further development of God's plans for world conversion during the Messianic Age.

At Pentecost, then, there came a great change in the possibility of men's understanding of God. That change brought with it responsibility. The hearing of the message could no longer be flouted. Men would now be expected to understand and begin to weigh up for themselves the implications of this new word of authority which had come into their lives.

The exhortation to repent was not a request: it was a command. It was a command having the same force as the other command given to man at the time of the first creation. *"Of the tree . . . that is in the midst of the garden, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"*. Failure to heed and obey this command to repent will have the same result: there is for the unrepentant, after full opportunity, only death, the cessation of that existence which God has given but of which the recipient will not make rightful use. Neither was the command addressed to a select few, nor to an arbitrarily chosen small number. It was to all men. "Now commandeth all men everywhere to repent". That fact has to be taken into account in our understanding of the work of the Age that commenced at Pentecost.

Perhaps there has been a tendency to differentiate too sharply between the works of the Christian and Messianic Ages. Often it has been said that God is not dealing with the world at present: He is dealing exclusively with the Church, and the turn of the world will come in the next Age. That is true in measure, but it is not a complete expression of the truth. From the point of view of Paul, speaking at Athens, making a difference between man's helpless striving after the light before Pentecost, and the work of human reconciliation to God which has been progressing since Pentecost and will progress until it is complete in the Millennium, this whole period, from Pentecost to the end of the Messianic Age, is one great span of time during which the work of reconciliation progresses to its logical fulfilment. The command to repent goes out at the beginning of the Age and applies

to all men: all men do not hear the command at first: for many of them the word will not come until after the Kingdom is established. The heralds of the Kingdom, the messengers of God, must first take up the proclamation and bear it through the earth. *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me in Judea, and Jerusalem, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth"*. During the first two thousand years the command is being heard and responded to by a comparatively small number of people; from these are drawn those disciples who by reason of their experiences as "his witnesses" in this life will be equipped and qualified to carry on the work in greater power in the next Age, so that all men, even the resurrected millions who themselves lived during the "Times of Ignorance" may hear the command to repent and, if they will obey.

It is on this basis that missionary zeal must be based. The plain fact is that God at Pentecost, commenced to reconcile the world to himself in Christ. There are two great stages in that work of reconciliation, the first of which is the selection and preparation of the company through whom the major portion of the work is to be done, but it is one great work

as a whole, and it was at Pentecost that the Father looked down upon a blinded and ignorant world and, as it were, said "it is enough: behold the way of salvation: turn and repent, and come to Me". From that time forward it has been the privilege and commission of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus to herald far and wide the cry that must continue yet for another thousand years before it has achieved its full purpose: *"Repent—believe the gospel—and live"*.

That is why the Christian faith is, and always has been, and always will be, a missionary faith. That is why the church or sect or group that loses its missionary zeal and ceases to proclaim abroad the faith that is in it must inevitably perish. With Paul, we must say *"Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel"*. The times of ignorance have ended, and we who are God's ambassadors are sent forth to bear his message, a message that will not cease to be preached until all of earth's millions have heard and made their final decision.

For God now commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent.

(To be continued)

God's thoughts

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55.8).

Sometimes we marvel at the temerity and presumption of those who set themselves up as judges of the Almighty. How little they know of his supreme majesty, perfect in power, in love, in truth and purity, to whom the angels sing continually *Holy! Holy! Holy!* before whose presence they bend with veiled faces. In the Creator's estimation all nations are but a drop in a bucket, the small dust of the balance, yet these morsels of animated dust, whose span of life is so short, whose imperfections are so obvious, dare to reproach God with their complaints, to question the ways of God with man, with the earth, with the universe, believing that they with their limited knowledge can do as good if not better.

To blame, to cross-examine, to ignore, to speak with contempt, to profane the holy name of him whom Isaiah saw, *"sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple,"* is an all too common practice in this world of man's making. The earth was made by God but man has made society. God created the earth but man has made the world. If it is so riddled with wrongs and dissatisfactions after centuries of human rule, so far from right that

it is termed by the Bible *"this present evil world"*, then God's ways and man's ways are certainly at variance.

God offers life, but man rains death upon the nations and calls on God to bless his efforts. God offers pardon for sin, but man says there is no such thing, only sickness for which he thinks he has the cure. God offers abundance, but man creates shortages that he may make more money. God asks man to be clean and wholesome, but man prefers drink, drugs and crime, all those filthy abuses of mind and body which pull him down when God would lift him up. The catalogue of differences is long, the subject stubborn, but the pilgrim walks on in faith, knowing that the time advances when the scales will be removed from the blind eyes, the rebellion taken out of hard hearts and God's ways will prevail with men. In that day they will say *"this is our God, we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation"*.

The longing heart looks to God and learns to think his thoughts after him, to walk in his ways, to find that all his paths are pleasantness and peace.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan his works in vain.

God is his own interpreter, And He will make it plain.

"WHAT DOEST THOU HERE, ELIJAH?"

*Thoughts on
1 Kings 19.9*

The man had completely lost heart. He had just effected a great work for the Lord, nothing less than the conversion of the nation from the idolatrous worship of the Canaanite god Baal to the worship of the true God and reaffirmation of the Mosaic covenant. A work so great that he was always remembered in after days as the greatest prophet in Israel after Moses. By all standards he was the hero of the nation; the priests and prophets of Baal had been slain and the king persuaded, at last, of the mighty power of God. One might have expected him to ride on the crest of that wave of popularity to a position of pre-eminence in the nation as had his predecessor Samuel five hundred years previously. But he had abandoned everything and precipitately fled into the desert and hidden himself at the top of Mount Sinai. The queen, idolatrous and unrepentant still, had sent him a message vowing that in revenge she would have his life within the next twenty-four hours, and at that he lost courage and faith, abandoned his God-given commission as prophet of truth to Israel, and fled for his life.

It was while sitting in that cave at the top of the mountain, wondering miserably and apprehensively what to do next, that he heard the Voice.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?"

King Ahab could not get at him here; Queen Jezebel could not reach him, but God could. And God did!

Weakly, he tried to excuse himself. "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kin. 19:9-15).

The Lord neither commiserated nor commented. He merely told him to get back to his duty in Israel and He gave him three distinct commissions to execute, which from their nature Elijah would quickly have recognised as portending fundamental changes in the political situation of his country; moreover that he was to be at the centre of those changes. Not only so; the Lord also disposed of his complaint by telling him that there were still seven thousand stout-hearted souls in Israel who maintained their allegiance to God and refused to bow the knee to Baal. Elijah was not the only one left. He had taken an unnecessarily gloomy view of the situ-

ation and allowed a momentary panic to destroy his fortitude and send him scurrying away like a frightened rabbit. Now the Lord was telling him to pull himself together, to be a man, and get back to work.

It is to Elijah's credit that he never failed again. For the rest of his life he remained in the public eye, a stern, uncompromising defender of the true faith, reproving kings and priests without fear or favour. He never lost heart again.

So it is with every Christian who has undertaken to serve his Lord. There is no provision for discouragement in the plan of campaign our Master maps out for each of us. He means us to continue in the way He indicates without deciding that the Cause is hopeless and we are ineffective and impotent to be his ambassadors. Whilst Elijah was journeying to Sinai he had wanted to die. "It is enough" he said "now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers". He forgot that it was the Lord's prerogative to decide whether he was or was not better than his fathers and the fact that he had been appointed prophet to Israel was evidence that in the Lord's view he was better than his fathers and capable of discharging the commissions assigned to him. That is the important thing. The Lord entrusts his works only to capable agents and the fact that we stand in a particular position before him is conclusive evidence that we can maintain it. If discouragement comes — and because we are, after all, only human, discouragement will come — then the Lord calls us to maintain our faith in him and continue with good heart.

That was where another hero of olden time failed. Joshua, valiant leader of Israel's armies in the days of the Exodus, failed, like Elijah, just once. One finds it hard to accept this hard-bitten warrior, who led Israel's hosts to victory after victory, losing heart and giving up the fight. For forty long years in the wilderness he defended Israel from their desert enemies and when at last they reached the Promised Land he led them across Jordan and to the crowning victory of Jericho. All along he had stoutly maintained his conviction that because God was with them and had promised them the land there could be no reverse to their onward progress; at last all opposing forces would be defeated and they rest quietly in the land of milk and honey, an everlasting possession. Then came the first set-back. The defenders of Ai killed thirty-six Israelites

and put the rest to flight. Joshua promptly lost heart. He rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord . . . and said "O Lord God, wherefore hast thou brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side Jordan. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" (Josh. 7. 6-12). The Lord's answer was brusque and terse. "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" That must have brought Joshua up with a jerk. He was not getting any sympathy; he was not getting any assurances or promises of help. As with Elijah, he was being told to stand up and be a man, find out why the disaster had happened and do what was necessary to put it right. In the sequel to the story Joshua did do just that and when the matter had been rectified Israel's triumphal progress continued.

Many a time, since, Christians have lost heart in just the same way and gone to the Lord in their distress. Perhaps, like Joshua, they feel they have failed lamentably and the Lord cannot after all fulfil his promises. He is not really unsympathetic for He knows only too well what influences there are tending to discouragement and losing heart—but He wants us to be strong characters, maintaining our faith and our warfare against all enemies. He does not want us crying on the pavement as though all is lost so far as we are concerned, when all the time He knows full well the only trouble is a temporary overcoming of our assurance and conviction by an unusual combination of adverse circumstances. So He says in effect "stand up and face it—and it will go away". There is a lot of truth in the old saying "*Fear knocked at the door; Faith opened it; and no one was there!*"

Neither should the Christian turn away from the calling he feels is the Lord's calling for him, on account of faint-heartedness. We have to remember that our Lord knows us better than we know ourselves and if He calls us to a duty it is because He knows we can discharge it. If He accepts someone as his disciple it is because He knows He can make something out of him no matter how unpromising the subject may appear to be. It is true that one should not attempt to enter fields of service for which it is evident that he is unfitted, whether from physical or psychological reasons or the lack of a sense of vocation. But having once taken up a work for the Lord which one desires ardently to accomplish and in which the Lord has evidently led the way it is a question of realising that the Lord is with us in that work and will give all needed

strength and ability—otherwise He would not have called us to that work in the first place. Moses, too, came a little bit short on that score. At the age of forty he looked on the miseries of his people and ardently desired to deliver them. He translated the thought into action and believed that God by his hand would deliver them. There followed forty years of waiting and training in exile in Midian and then came the word of the Lord that it was time for action. He was to go back to Egypt and deliver his people from Egyptian bondage. For the first time Moses began to demur. Would the people of Israel take any notice of him? Would they believe that he had been sent of God to them? Would Pharaoh listen to his demand? Finally, because he was a man of slow speech, it were much better that the Lord send another, one of fluent tongue and persuasive talk. To all of which the Lord replied with one short question. "Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I the Lord?". In other words, God himself was well able to compensate for his servant's natural handicaps. All Moses had to do was go forward and act as instructed and the Lord would provide the necessary backing. The story of the Ten Plagues, the triumphant Exodus, and the forty years' long sojourn in the wilderness, in all of which Moses proved himself a leader and an organiser of the highest order, was the sequel. Slow speech or no slow speech, Moses achieved the transformation of a rabble of slave tribes in Egypt into a close-knit and organised nation, a nation that has survived all the vicissitudes of history unto this day.

The vital thing is first to be satisfied that the Lord has called us to a particular calling or service. Once thus satisfied we may press forward with diligence to its execution, being full of faith that the Lord will make up for our deficiencies and provide the ability.

This is where the Apostle Paul displayed rare insight when he talked about the "gifts of the Spirit" in I Cor. 12. The "body", which is the Church, is composed of many members and they all have differing functions essential to the well being of the body as a whole. The foot is not less important because it is not the hand; the ear is supreme in its own field as is the eye in another field and no member can perform the duty for which another is designed. It follows that not only has each disciple a specific place and work to occupy and perform, not necessarily the same either in degree or prominence as that of his fellows, but he is fit and able to perform it, else the Lord would not have given it to him. The fact that he himself does not see the immediate fruits of the labour, or that from his own point of view

he is making a lamentable failure of the commission, is quite beside the point. The Lord knows how to assess the effectiveness of the service, and He is in a much better position than any of us to judge. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal" says the Apostle (vs.7) but he adds that the Holy Spirit is the inspiring and energising power giving (dividing) to every man strength and ability as may be necessary (vs. 11). "Certainly I will be with thee" said the Lord to Moses when he sent him to Pharaoh; He is likewise with each one of us when He sends us forth on our commissions.

All this is primarily to effect the growth of the Body. No man liveth unto himself, said Paul in another place, and we are all members of one another, contributing individually to the welfare and the development of our fellows. As is so eloquently expressed in the 4th chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, there is one Body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, and the contribution of each part is effecting the increase and maturity of the Body as a whole. To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Our various gifts and abilities are combined together to effect one glorious

end, "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ" until the whole work is finished and the Body has attained the fulness and stature of Christ.

Speaking to Israel through the prophet Isaiah, God said "I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" (Isa. 51.16). In that expressive phrase the Lord related his great power put into, and operating through, his dedicated people, for the execution of his eternal purpose, the creation of the new heavens and new earth which is to succeed when this present world of sin has passed away. All that we do, puny though our efforts may seem to us, is being woven by our all-powerful Lord into the fabric of that world which is to be.

At the end of his arduous and faithful life, Joshua the valiant warrior, in his parting charge to Israel, said (Josh. 23.14) "not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof". In our own day, and to us, the same God abideth equally faithful.

Holiness and Joy

Then Nehemiah said "This day is holy unto the Lord, neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled the people, saying, "Hold your peace; for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved". "And all the people went their way to make great mirth, because they had understood the words" (Neh. 8.10-12)

Holiness is blessedness. Nothing can darken or interrupt our joy but sin. Whatever be our trial or temptation, it can be more than compensated and outweighed by the joy of Jesus, of which Peter says, "In Whom ye now rejoice with joy unspeakable". If we lose our joy it must be due to sin. It may be an actual transgression, or an unconscious following of self or the world; it may be the stain on conscience of something doubtful, or it may be unbelief that would live by sight, and thinks more of itself and its joy than of the Lord alone. Whatever it be, nothing can take away our joy but sin. If we would live lives of joy, assuring God and men and ourselves that our Lord is everything—O, let us be holy! Let us glory in him who is our holiness for in his presence is fulness of joy. Let us live in the kingdom which is joy in the Holy Spirit. The

Spirit of holiness is the Spirit of joy. If you would be a holy Christian, you must be a happy Christian.

Joy must be cultivated. To rejoice is a command more frequently given than we know. It is part of the obedience of faith to rejoice when we do not feel like doing so. Faith rejoices and sings, because God is holy.

The great hindrance to joy in God is expecting to find something in ourselves to rejoice over. At the commencement of this pursuit of holiness we always expect to see a great change wrought in ourselves. As we are led deeper into what faith and the faith-life is, we understand how, though we do not see the change as we expected, we may yet rejoice with joy unspeakable in what Jesus is. That is the secret of holiness.

We do not approach death from the side from which Christ met it, as an enemy to be conquered; as a suffering to be borne, before the new life can be entered upon. No, the believer who knows what Christ is as the Risen One, approaches death, the crucifixion of self, the flesh and the world, from the resurrection side, the place of victory, in the power of the Living Christ.
(Andrew Murray: 19th Cent.)



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

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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH 74

GARDEN OF EDEN

4. Servant of the Soil 75

NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE GREAT KING 79

"THIS GENERATION" ^{"SYMBOLIC + PROPHETIC"} _{Week 24: 34: E.F.G.} 82

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE 84

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

2. Creation to the Exodus 85

THE THREE-FOLD INJUNCTION 89

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

2. Building the Wall 91

Note on 2 Pet. 1.4 93

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD 94



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

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Thought for the Month

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4.33).

It was because the early Christians in the first flush of their newly-established faith in the resurrected Christ found themselves all with one accord in one place that the power of the Holy Spirit was able to come upon them collectively, and inspire them to go forth with supreme confidence that their message must surely conquer the world. We to-day know of a surety that, although the torch of faith has oft-times flickered uncertainly, and at times all but failed entirely, there has never lacked that nucleus of devoted followers who, as it were again receiving the Spirit from on high, have come forth from the upper room with faces transfigured, even as Moses coming down from the Mount bore on his features the visible reflection of the glory of God. Then why should we hesitate to proclaim and practise the glorious truth that they who, fearing the Lord and speaking oft to one another, may by means of the very strength thus imparted, become an instrument in his hand to effect some further mighty triumph of faith. In our coming together we are forced to recognise that our God has not left himself without witnesses, that there yet remain the seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal. In our communion together the Spirit warms our hearts with that flame of sacred love which urges us with irresistible force to "lay down our lives for the brethren" and count no sacrifice too great if so be we may exemplify the teachings of He who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

"Blessed is the man that heareth me" says Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, "Watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors". Here is the way by which we shall

come forth as a people charged with a message to this generation — the road of day-to-day advancement in understanding of the revelation of God. We who now live need a message that will answer the questions and solve the problems of to-day. That message we have, for the Divine Plan, testified "in due time" even though known and expressed only "in part" is sufficient to satisfy the mind and the heart of every sincere enquirer. But to give it with power and effect, it is necessary that we ourselves should live the message—that as exponents of the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth we should in our own lives and fellowship give evidence of the transforming influence of the things we have heard and the life we have entered upon. To believe is not enough. To hold the true doctrine and to live in constant expectation of the Lord from Heaven will not suffice. To retire into a bigoted self-satisfaction with our own position before him and an indifferent attitude to the interests of the Kingdom *today* will never bring as a result those stirring words "*Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*". Here then is the call—to take our place in this day as men with a Message; up-to-date, all-sufficient, the power of God unto salvation to all those that believe.

Gone from us

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Sis. I. Cawker (Upminster)

Sis. A. Chapman (Yeovil)

Bro. F. C. Fletcher (Northampton)

— ❖ —

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

GARDEN OF EDEN

4. Servant of the Soil

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." (Gen. 2.15).

This is the first record of human activity in the history of mankind. Before his companion had been given to him, while as yet the first man was alone in the earth, he received a commission and a sphere of responsibility, a duty towards God, implying an obligation devolving upon him. He was not left to choose his own way of life; not given freedom to please himself as to how he would spend his time. The world had been created by God and was God's world. The man had been created by God and was God's man. The man was placed in the world and found it an environment which suited his needs in every particular. Man and the earth were perfectly attuned and fitted to each other, and man was capable of maintaining this tune and fitness indefinitely, provided he observed the laws which had been Divinely framed to assure the everlasting continuance of both man and the earth. In the upshot man violated those laws and in consequence the entire creation fell into disorder. Men have not yet learned that order will not be restored until they willingly and voluntarily maintain inviolate those laws of God, and re-establish the three-fold harmony and unity between God, his earth and his men which alone will ensure the orderly continuance of that which his hands have made. We do not yet see that happy state; it can only come about in Christ, and *"we see not yet all things put under him"* (Heb. 2.8). We do see Jesus, in the glory and power of the Father, working towards that desirable end, one which will surely come. In the meantime we look back to Eden as a model in miniature of the blessed state which is yet to be.

Adam should not therefore be thought of as called to live his life in a kind of eternal playtime with nothing more vital to do than satisfy the natural feelings of hunger from the wild-growing trees around him. There is no place for idleness in Divine creation. Every living creature has its function it must discharge, if creation is to continue, and man is no exception to that rule. So the very first injunction laid upon man, the very first purpose to which his dawning intelligence was directed, was expressed in the word *"service"*. Man was put into the garden to serve. The first verbs expressive of human activity to be found in the history of man are the two in

this verse, *"to dress"* and *"to keep"*. The first is *"abad"*, meaning to plant and dress, as in vineyards (see Deut. 28.39), derived from the basic word *"abd"* which signifies to do work, service, labour, especially in the tilling of the soil. From this the Hebrew word for servant is derived. The second is *"shamar"*, to observe or fulfil an obligation, as in the keeping of a covenant or commandment. The whole expression *"to dress it and to keep it"* therefore combines the two principles; man is a servant of God in the care of the earth and his labour on the soil is an obligation which he is bound to discharge. Right at the outset man was made responsible to God for the proper care and development and use of the earth, his home. Men to-day either do not know that or they do not believe it; they are despoiling and destroying the earth with foul inventions, unprincipled wastage of the earth's resources, senseless warfare on the lower creatures, upsetting the balance of Nature with insecticides and pest control and mass breeding and mass production methods, continually making worse what they have already made bad. All the time the Devil looks on and continues to assure them that they shall not surely die, the while the signs of death are gathering and thickening fast. All this is the result of that first departure from the Divine ordinance and way of life which constituted the first man's refusal to fit into the place for which God had created him.

But there, in Adam's day, there was no sign of that. Adam must have taken up his duties with gratitude and happiness as his developing intelligence and perceptive faculties began to show him just what life could mean. The idea of companionship would almost certainly not have crossed his mind in those early days; there was so much to see and do, so many new objects at which to wonder, so many things of interest to explore. The time must have passed very quickly, and the bare idea of even questioning the things God told him could not have entered his mind. We have to remember that Adam of necessity started with a mind as blank as that of a newborn baby and must have assimilated ideas and discovered things in the same fashion as does a baby—largely by investigation and experiment—without the advantage of others of his own kind to teach him.

So his first activity apparently was to set about tilling the ground. Not in the sweat of his brow

as after the Fall, but tilling the ground nevertheless. We may assume that Adam, awaking to consciousness, found food on the trees and drink from the rivers for his immediate needs already awaiting him in his surroundings; it seems however that the continuance of the supply was going to depend upon his own efforts. It was in that early day that the fundamental law was laid down "If a man will not work neither shall he eat".

What was the nature of this garden in which the first man, awaking to consciousness, found himself? The traditionary idea is that it was a relatively small fertile area replete with a variety of trees and flowering plants, adequate to supply man's food requirements without the necessity of labour, surrounded on all sides by wild and inhospitable country. The Hebrew word for garden, here as throughout the Old Testament, is *gan*. *Gan* is a Sumerian word meaning a cultivated field as distinct from *gis-sar*, a garden with trees, or *sar*, an orchard or formal garden, or *kur*, the open mountainous country. The occurrence of so many Sumerian words in early Genesis indicates that the narrative was originally written in that language and the implication is that the Garden in Eden was a tract of country ideally suited for cultivation and already furnished with food-bearing plants and trees, but requiring continued cultivation to maintain it in that condition. Hence the exhortation to Adam to "dress and keep it". Without that the Garden of Eden would soon cease to be a garden.

The bare statement in ch. 2.8 "*the Lord God planted a garden . . . in Eden*" does not give any information as to how the garden came into being. It was ready and waiting for Adam when he was created and that is all that can be inferred. It is possible however that two earlier verses in the chapter, vs. 5 and 6, may contribute some information. As they stand in the A.V. these verses do not make much sense and this is due to inadequate translation. Also the structure of the chapter has to be examined more closely than is usually done.

The first three verses of chapter 2 really belong to chapter 1 and they complete the story of the seven-day creative week. The expression "*these are the generations*" in vs. 4 should be rendered "histories" which is the meaning of "*toledoth*" here rendered "generations". This verse therefore concludes the story of the seven creative days by saying "these are the histories of the heavens and the earth, in their being created in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens". Here the first story ends; verse 5 commences the second story, that of the Garden of Eden and the Fall.

The A.V. translation of verse 5 does not make much sense, and the word "mist" in vs. 6 is inaccurate. A better rendering would be "*Now no bush of the field was yet in the earth, and no green herb (plant, grasses) of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not caused rain upon the earth, and (since Adam had not yet been created) there was no man to till the ground. And a flood went up from the earth and watered all the face of the ground*".

A little reflection will show that this condition must have been one that subsisted long ages before the Garden was brought into being. If there was no rain, there could have been no evaporation, and therefore there would have been no rivers. Hence the "river that watered the garden" had not yet begun to flow. According to Gen. 1 the plants and trees appeared at the end of the third creative day; the condition described in vs. 5 must therefore have obtained before then. Without rain there could be no vegetation; without vegetation no animal creation and no man. The rain must have started therefore at least as far back as the third creative day.

The "mist", to use the A.V. word, came later, after the rain and the rivers had come into being. The Hebrew is *ed*, occurring only once elsewhere, in Job 36.27, where it is translated "vapour", but inaccurately. *Ed* is the Hebrew transliteration of the Sumerian *edu*, meaning a flood. In ancient Sumer, as in the same land to-day, the rivers Tigris and Euphrates flood the entire land every springtime to a depth of several feet, depositing a rich fertilising silt which then produces plenteous crops. The same thing happens with the Nile in Egypt. Here is the beginning of the fertility of the Garden of Eden. Maybe for many years successive floods came to "water the face of the ground" as vs. 6 says, plant and tree growth becoming more and more luxuriant, until, as in southern Iraq in historic times, the deposited land rose above the level of the annual floods and God, looking down, saw that the Garden was ready and so He proceeded to the next stage of his purpose and created man.

Of course the man lived at first by gathering the fruits and products which grew naturally and without some Divine intimation to the contrary might have concluded that this was going to be the normal thing and so the idea of engaging in some activity directed to enhancing or promoting the processes of Nature never entered his mind. He was saved from this by the injunction to till the ground and produce its fruits by his own efforts. Here again there must have been a great deal of experimenting and patient waiting involved. Several seasons must have passed be-

fore the connection between the seeds of one year and the growth of the next could be observed and established in his mind. Several more must have gone by before he began to become proficient in the art of agriculture. It might well have been that it was after his expulsion from the Garden that he really began to see some fruitage of his efforts and it could be that some of the toil and sweat of face in that phase of his life was due to inexperience and insufficient knowledge. It is significant that although when inside the Garden he was able to eat of all the fruit trees with which it was stocked, according to ch. 3.18, after he was expelled from the Garden, he and his wife were compelled to subsist upon the "herb of the field" which means the grasses and root crops growing wild in the undeveloped earth. In a very real sense they had to start again at the bottom.

There is no indication in Genesis that man was created or intended to be flesh-eating. In ch. 1.29 God told man that he was giving every fruit-bearing tree and every seed-bearing plant—grains, legumes and so on—for food. The grasses and root crops—"herbs of the field"—were for the animal creation. In ch. 2.9 and 16 the man while in Eden was given the fruit-bearing trees; after his expulsion he was relegated to the food of the beasts. No mention of meat. Not without interest is the fact that in the prophetic pictures of the future Millennial world, when mankind will live in restored Edenic conditions, the carnivorous animals are said to become herbivorous as Gen. 1 describes them in Adam's day. (This does not ignore the undisputed fact that in distant pre-historic days many animals, mostly now extinct, were undeniably carnivorous.) But all this does provoke the question, so far at least as man is concerned, whether there was some content in the fruits of that Edenic day, some content which is now lacking, which supplied the proteins and so on which nowadays and throughout much of recorded history can only be obtained from a meat diet. Climatic changes may have had something to do with this just as they certainly have had upon the duration of human life through the centuries. The leading 20th century climatologist, E. C. P. Brooks, has shown that there has been a steady deterioration in world climate since the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C., which is about the date of the Deluge. The Genesis story of the Deluge authorises the use of flesh foods (Gen. 9.3) as though it were a new thing; perhaps this was a legitimisation of a practice that had been growing due to man's necessity. If there is any validity in these considerations then it might well be concluded that the natural food of the perfect man is com-

pletely provided from the vegetable world and all that is now needed is the restoration, not only of the Edenic trees and plants, but also the Edenic climate. As St. Peter says, speaking of the future Millennial Age, God will usher in "*the Times of Restitution (or restoration) of all things, spoken of by all his holy prophets since the world began*" (Acts 3.21). Brooks has also said that the world climate subsisting between the 10th and 4th millennia before Christ, which includes the Eden period, must be considered the normal climate for this planet, and that the present degeneration will eventually give way to a restoration of that climate—which is exactly what Scripture foretells regarding the Age of blessing soon to come upon the world.

How did the first man commune, or communicate, with God? How did he receive the messages and instructions which according to Gen. 2 and 3 he undoubtedly did receive? Was there an audible voice on the air, sounding in his ears, in which case he must have been created with the gift of language already bestowed in order to understand the words? Was there a visible appearance, a "theophany" to use the theological term, an appearing in fleshly form of the agent of God to convey the message from on high, in much the same way as the Lord appeared to Abraham or to Moses, or the angel Gabriel to Daniel or to Mary? Or was it the impression of the Divine word upon Adam's mind in such fashion that his brain could understand although no sound vibrated the air and no sight appeared against the background of the landscape? We do not know; we only know that in some fashion Adam did receive the word from God and understood its meaning.

At some time during those early days, whilst as yet Adam was still alone, there came to him the first expression of God's moral law. The question of just what is meant in the story by the two mystic trees, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, is best left for consideration in conjunction with the account of the Temptation and the Fall, later on in the narrative. Suffice at the moment to note that in addition to these two trees there was also "*every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food*" (Gen. 2. 9) and that it was of these latter trees that Adam was told he could freely eat (vs. 16). The tree of knowledge was forbidden and no injunction whatever was given concerning the tree of life.

How would Adam understand the statement "*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die?*" He himself had but recently been awakened to life; he knew nothing of death so far as human beings were concerned for he had

never seen another human being and it might well be at this stage of his development the possibility of there ever being any other human beings like himself had never crossed his mind. The animals he knew, and he might by now have seen death in the lower creation and so been able to understand what it was so far as its outward manifestation was concerned. In any case he could only have visualised death as a cessation of the conscious life given him by God. Death is the withdrawal of that life, and that is how Adam must have understood the pronounced consequence of partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree. That is rather important in considering the nature of the Biblical doctrine of death as the wages of sin.

The only other incident before the coming of Eve that is recorded is the naming of the animals. Although the remark attributed to God in vs. 18 *"It is not good that the man should be alone"* comes before the naming of the animals, in vs. 19-20 the sense of the passage demands that the naming came first and the writer preceded that account with vs. 18 to heighten the contrast—among the animals there was not one suitable to be his companion. This naming of the animals must have been a lengthy process; as Adam explored his home and observed the wealth of animal and bird life and insect life with which it was furnished, he would note the distinctions of types and species and invent characteristic names for them—in his mind probably, for with no one to speak to it is possible that he had not yet mastered the art of spoken words. Only after he had observed the duality of Nature, the companionship of animals and their production of offspring, would he begin to realise that he himself, perfect and well provided for as he was, lacked one thing which the animals around him enjoyed, the society of one of his own kind. From

that moment he must have been conscious of a feeling he had never known before, a feeling of something lacking.

With that realisation the first phase of Adam's experience came to an end. Until then he had been a single unit, living entirely to himself, taking advantage of the earth's resources and, we can have no doubt, becoming more and more accustomed to, and interested in, the tilling of the soil for the production of daily food. But all that he did was for himself; the idea of sharing, of extending his interest to another and putting forth effort on behalf of another, had never occurred to him. Now that he had seen for himself the male creature going forth to forage food for the benefit of the female, lying in the cave or nest caring for her young, a totally new set of ideas must have begun to work in his mind. In a dim, dark sort of way he began to realise something of the truth behind the much later words of St. Paul *"none of us liveth to himself"*. Perhaps then, for the first time, some embryo realisation that he had been brought into existence for a purpose began to enter his mind, that life was not intended merely for eating and sleeping and rejoicing in the sunshine. His eager mind must have often posed the unspoken query *"What?"* as his eyes fell first upon one new sight and then upon another. Now, perhaps for the first time, his mind registered a different kind of query, *"Why?"*.

And at that moment God moved toward the next stage in his unfolding purpose—the bringing into being a second creation, a companion for man, of the man, to be with the man, and with the man to exercise those powers which would eventually lead to the consummation of all God's intentions with regard to his material creation.

(To be continued)

Olive Trees of Gethsemane

It has been claimed for many centuries that some of the olive trees at present growing on the slopes of the Mount of Olives were there at the time of our Lord. One evidence which used often to be quoted (when the land was under the control of Turkey prior to 1914) was that these trees had never paid the tax imposed by the Moslems on all trees planted since their occupation of the land in the 7th century. Now, however, there has been a more scientific approach which supports the claim. Some of the wood from these trees has been subjected to the modern carbon 14 test and found to be indeed at least

2,000 years old—the test showed 2,300 but certain areas of doubt make it necessary to reduce the test figure a little. It does mean however that ten ancient olive trees at present to be seen were certainly seen by Jesus himself when He repaired to the Garden.

It is rather intriguing to think that those ten trees have spanned the entire Gospel Age. They were there when Jesus first set foot in the Garden, there in the time of his final distress the night before his crucifixion, and are still there when He comes again at his Second Advent.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR THE GREAT KING

It has been said that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon in the 6th century B.C., is the most well-known king of antiquity, and this not so much because of what secular history can say about him, but the vivid narratives of the Book of Daniel. It is true though that a great deal is known about him, apart from what Daniel and Jeremiah have recorded, and some knowledge of this does help to fill out the picture which is already familiar to students of these two Biblical books.

The connection of Bible history with this monarch arises from the fact that in the closing years of the Jewish kingdom the last four kings "played power politics", taking sides in the continuing conflicts between Egypt on the one hand and the declining power of Assyria plus the rising power of Babylon on the other. They usually chose Egypt as their ally and protector, and in so doing made a grievous mistake, as Isaiah had predicted more than a century earlier and Jeremiah constantly told them at the time. The climax came when Nebuchadnezzar had made Babylon supreme over all the Middle Eastern nations and brought the political manoeuvres of Judah to an end by overrunning the country and transporting its inhabitants into exile in Babylon, an exile which was only ended when Cyrus the Persian in his turn subjugated Babylon and became the new ruler—but that was long after Nebuchadnezzar's death.

Jeremiah relates the history of those troublous times in detail from the standpoint of a dweller in Judah. Daniel gives the corresponding picture of life at the same time in Babylon, where he had been taken with the exiles and where he spent the rest of his life. To Daniel we are indebted for what we know of the character and actions of this famous king. Nebuchadnezzar's dream image, picture in symbol of successive earthly empires ultimately succeeded by the kingdom of God on earth, the three men in the fiery furnace, his unaccountable period of insanity when he fancied himself to be a wild beast, and his recovery and conviction of the power and supremacy of God; these are among the great epics of the Bible.

Ancient histories outside the Bible, as well as the testimony of his own inscriptions, reveal Nebuchadnezzar in the light of a capable soldier and leader; he has been acclaimed one of the greatest of military conquerors. Only once in the course of his almost constant campaigns extend-

ing over thirty years did his forces fail to achieve victory. He was a great builder; palaces, temples and other imposing edifices in the Babylonian cities owed their existence to his indefatigable energy. He excelled in the arts of peace as he did in the arts of war. Deeply religious and possessed of a spirit of devotion, some of his recorded statements manifest a reverence and humility altogether unique among despotic Eastern kings. His intense devotion to his wife and family led him to conceive and execute a stupendous project which afterwards became included among the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. Because his queen, a princess of the neighbouring country of Media, obliged to live in flat and tree-less Babylonia, pined for the mountains and forests of her native land, Nebuchadnezzar constructed a range of artificial hills and valleys planted with trees and shrubs, supported upon a lofty structure of three lofty brick viaducts built one upon another with streams and brooks fed by a hydraulic machine from the Euphrates far below. Thus built, the hills and trees appeared as though suspended between heaven and earth, whence they became known as the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

A close insight into the character of Nebuchadnezzar is afforded in the Book of Daniel. The Jewish youth, of royal blood but not in line of succession to the throne, was taken to Babylon as hostage, with others, at the beginning of his reign. He advanced rapidly in favour with his royal master on account of his sobriety, integrity and insight, qualities which the king was ready to appreciate. In consequence he became the king's Chief of State and close confidant throughout his reign and was in a position therefore to present the monarch in a true and accurate light.

Energetic, enterprising, far-seeing, and a keen judge of character; this was king Nebuchadnezzar. That last quality is especially noticeable when Daniel and his three companions, all youths, were brought before him after their period of education and training in the wisdom of Babylon. He saw at once that despite their youth they were already superior in wisdom and understanding to the reputed wise men of his court, and he immediately took them in attendance upon his own person. That they were but youths, and of the despised and conquered Jewish race, mattered nothing to him. He took them on sheer merit and nothing else. When, a little later, Daniel interpreted the king's dream,

the dream of the image, having first described it in detail although Nebuchadnezzar had related its nature neither to Daniel or anybody else, he instantly acknowledged the superiority of the God of Daniel and promoted the latter to high office. It is true that allied with these characteristics there was an irascible temper which would brook no opposition and no failure to obey his commands. Because the wise men of his court were unable to interpret the dream he ordered their summary execution and that without appeal or mercy, and only the timely intervention of Daniel saved them. Because Daniel's three companions refused to bow down and worship the idol image he had set up he commanded them to be bound hand and foot and cast into the fiery furnace, despite his previous high opinion of them and the exalted office to which he had raised them. Only when he saw them walking about unharmed in the midst of the fire accompanied by one whom he took to be a messenger from the gods did he as precipitately change his attitude, call to them to come forth, and humbly acknowledge the power of God. He was a ruthless autocrat, but he was an honest man amenable to being shown the error of his ways.

Perhaps the most illuminating sidelight on this man's character is in the realm of religious belief. He was an ardent devotee of the gods of Babylon and a special worshipper of the Babylonian god Marduk (Bel in the O.T.) who was the national god of Babylon as Yahweh was of the Jews. A great deal of his energy and resources were spent in building, restoring and beautifying the temples of the gods and promoting their service. He is reported to have introduced congregational worship among the Babylonians, in which the entire populace joined in praise and prayer to the gods. Constantly, in his inscriptions, does he stress his loyalty to the gods and concern for their service. His success in warfare he always attributed to the power of the gods exerted on his behalf. There is not much doubt that his ready acceptance of Daniel's God stems from these convictions; it was not that he became a convert to the Jewish insistence on only one God and that all the others were idols, rather that he accepted and acknowledged Daniel's God as one among the many gods in whom he believed, and certainly superior in power to most of them. As an example of the depth and passion of his feeling, here is one of his prayers, addressed to Marduk the god of Babylon, on a tablet which has survived to this day.

*"O eternal God, Lord of all being,
As for the king, whom thou lovest,
And whose name thou hast proclaimed as
is 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,
Create in my heart the worship of thy deity,
And grant whatever is pleasing to thee,
Because thou hast fashioned my life."*

Could any Christian monarch pray to God in more fitting terms?

The most notable incident in the life of Nebuchadnezzar so far as the Bible is concerned is, of course, the period during which his mind gave way and he imagined himself to be a wild beast and acted like one. Daniel's 4th chapter tells the whole story. It occurred within a few years of the end of his reign. He had desisted from military campaigning—having conquered every nation there was available to conquer—and was resting in Babylon when he had a strange dream which Daniel interpreted as a warning. He was becoming swollen with pride at his own achievements, both in the military sector and in the magnificence of the city he had built, and Divine judgment was imminent unless he mended his ways. Whilst in the act of boasting of his achievements he was seized with a mental malady which to-day is called lycanthropy, the condition in which a man imagines himself to be a wild animal, usually a wolf (hence the name) and behaves accordingly. Daniel's narrative shows clearly that this is what happened here. For a period the king was unfit to rule, and he roamed the area in which he was evidently secluded for safety, eating grass and sleeping in dens in a completely irrational state, until the judgment was lifted.

Obviously so disgraceful an episode in the monarch's life would not be recorded in the official annals and no independent confirmation of Daniel's narrative has been discovered. But Berossus the Babylonian historian of the 3rd Cent. B.C.—only three hundred years later—does speak of a mystery connected with the end of the king's life, saying that "he fell into a state of mental depression, if not of bodily illness, and died after a reign of forty-three years." The Greek historian Megasthenes, at the same time, says that Nebuchadnezzar, while on the roof of his palace, was possessed by a strange god, after which follows some kind of prophecy put into his mouth concerning the overthrow of Babylon by Persia, and finally an obscure statement about

someone being "cast out to wander . . . a solitary exile among rocks and caverns, where beasts and birds alone abide". Although vague and confused, this extract, which comes from Megasthenes through Abydenus (2nd Cent. B.C.) and Eusebius (3rd Cent. A.D.) has so many points in common with Daniel 4 that it can well be taken as corroborative evidence.

The last recorded military campaign of Nebuchadnezzar was in the 37th year of his reign when he finally subjugated Egypt. There are no inscriptions at all, except this one, for the last nine years of his life. It is likely that the madness came on him in his 38th year and lasted perhaps four years, leaving him a year of life at the end. (The "seven times" of Daniel 4.32 has sometimes been interpreted as indicating seven years' madness but this is not necessarily so. The expression really means a complete or stipulated period of time whatever its true length.) Berossus indicates that during this period Queen Amytis acted as Regent, assisted by her counsellors—of whom Daniel would have been chief. Eventually the king's reason returned and he was restored to his kingdom; he had learned his lesson. His own testimony was "*I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase*". (Dan. 4.37).

"Thou art this head of gold" said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar when he interpreted the dream of the image (Dan. 2.38). That was literally true. Nebuchadnezzar was the man who built up the power of Babylon, by military conquest, during his long reign. After his death the empire progressively disintegrated until only twenty-three years later Cyrus the Persian captured Babylon and the "breast of silver" succeeded the "head of gold". As a young man he was present at the fall of Nineveh when the Medes and Babylonians jointly brought the empire of the Assyrians to an end, and Cyaxares the Median king and Nabopolassar the father of Nebuchadnezzar shared the territory of Assyria between them. The bargain was sealed by the marriage of Amytis the daughter of Cyaxares to Nebuchadnezzar. Seven years later Nabopolassar died and his son became king.

There were at least three children of the marriage. One son, Avil-Marduk (the Evil-Merodach of 2 Kings 25.27 and Jer. 52.31) succeeded as king. Of the two daughters, one became the wife of an army general, Nergal-sharezer, who was present at the siege of Jerusalem (Jer. 39.3) and became king after Avil-Marduk's short reign. He himself died soon after. The other, Nitocris, married another high-ranking official named

Nabonidus who himself eventually became king. Their son was Belshazzar the last ruler; Belshazzar was therefore the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar (as indicated in Dan. 5.11 and 22; the term "son" in the O.T. is used also for our term grandson). The "queen" of Dan. 5.10 was this Nitocris; in actual fact Belshazzar was not the true king, but acting as Regent during the absence of his father in foreign parts so that Nitocris was still Queen of Babylon.

A year after Nebuchadnezzar's accession he invaded Judah and King Jehoiakim of Judah yielded submission (2 Kings 24.1). It was at this time that Daniel and his companions were taken hostage to Babylon together with the treasures of the Temple (Dan. 1.1) but Jerusalem was not harmed and the people generally left in peace. Seven years later he was back again and took King Jehoiachin captive into Babylon with some three thousand men and women of Judah, leaving Zedekiah on the throne as king. This was the time at which the prophet Ezekiel went into captivity (Ezek. 1.2). Eleven years later still, Zedekiah having rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar again laid siege to Jerusalem and this time destroyed the city and the Temple, put Zedekiah to death, and took all but the peasantry into exile in Babylon, leaving the land more or less desolate. Following this he spent thirteen years laying siege to the merchant city of Tyre. The fall of this city meant that an important share of world trade was diverted to Babylon. The incident of the golden image and the fiery furnace probably immediately followed the fall of Tyre, in about the thirty-third year of the king's reign. At the same time Ezekiel was beholding and recording, his vision of the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 40 to 47), which closes his prophecy. Four years later Nebuchadnezzar completed his conquest of Egypt, the last great power to hold out, and it could have been this final victory, making him master of the Middle East world, that induced the inordinate pride leading to his insanity and degradation into the life of an animal. Here must be placed the dream of the tree and Daniel's pleading with the great king to turn away from his megalomania and back to his former life of just and upright dealing, a plea which went unheard. For the next four years or so, while the great king remained in his demented state, it is probable, if Berossus be correct, that Daniel himself, in conjunction with the Queen, ruled and administered the empire of Babylon. Then came the king's recovery and his acknowledgement of the supreme power of the God of heaven, and about a year later, his death. Tradition says he was eighty-four when he died; he was more likely to have been round about seventy which?

Perhaps the most interesting speculation about the complex character of Nebuchadnezzar is the sincerity of his conversion upon his recovery from insanity. The narrative from verses 34 to 37 of Dan. 4 is depicted as being, not only the words of the king, but either written or dictated by him. This short passage is a most interesting document. He unreservedly acknowledges the supremacy of the God of Daniel and calls him "the Most High", "the king of heaven", "he that liveth for ever" "whose dominion is everlasting", "he doeth according to his will", "all whose works are truth". One might feel well justified in assuming from these words that at the end of his life Nebuchadnezzar renounced the gods of Babylon and became a convert to the God of Judah.

There is no evidence one way or the other. Not a single inscription after the time of his madness has been found. That of itself may be significant. Each year of his reign up to the last nine years is profuse with tablets, dated for the particular year, recounting his deeds and achievements, and invariably ending with protestations of loyalty to the god Marduk. Is it possible that there were tablets written during that final year by or at the behest of the repent-

ant king, and that they were carefully collected and destroyed by the all-powerful priests of Marduk after the king was no more? Is there a likelihood that Dan. 4. 34-37 was inscribed upon clay tablets by the king and that one copy, in Daniel's possession, was saved from destruction and preserved for all time in the book Daniel compiled?

One thing is certain. Nebuchadnezzar did not ascribe his affliction and his recovery to his own god Marduk, for Marduk was not the god of heaven. Behind the multitudinous gods and goddesses of Babylon there were three principal deities—Enki, lord of the sea and waters under the earth, Enlil, lord of the earth and air above it, and An, the supreme god, the god of heaven. Marduk was a lesser god, reputedly the son of Enki. In ascribing all power and authority to the God of heaven, the most famous king of Babylon was rightly moved. At the end of a colourful and vigorous life, influenced, it may well be, by the unswerving faith and spiritual counsel of the Hebrew lad who remained his friend and chief counsellor throughout his life, it is very possible that he died "not far from the kingdom of God."

"THIS GENERATION"

"This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. 24.34; Mark 13.30; Luke 21.32).

Jesus uttered those words at the conclusion of his summary of the signs and evidences which were to assure those living at the relevant time that the period of his Second Advent had arrived. The unanimity with which Matthew, Mark and Luke record this saying shows that it was well impressed upon the minds of the hearers and it may therefore be well taken that it has been transmitted correctly. As the English translation stands, however, there is a difficulty.

If by "this generation" Jesus meant the one living in his own day the prediction has been falsified. That generation passed away nearly two thousand years ago and still "all these things" have not been completely fulfilled.

In order to find a way out of this dilemma, some 19th century scholars and commentators came up with the suggestion that the word rendered "generation" can equally well mean "race", and that Jesus really meant that the Jewish race would still be in existence at the time of his Second Advent and inauguration of his earthly

kingdom. The fact that every Jew already knew quite well that this would indeed be the case, that every Hebrew prophet in the past had made this fact perfectly plain, and that no necessity existed for Jesus to attach such an assurance to his description of the end of the Age, did not occur to any of these worthies. The idea provided an explanation of a puzzling passage and that was that.

Sadly, for them, Jesus did not mean the Jewish race. He meant the generation of his own day.

The word rendered "generation" in all three Gospels is *genea* and it means primarily men of the same stock or family living at the same time. It occurs some 39 times in the New Testament and in every instance except five is translated "generation"; in all cases it is clear that it refers to a particular generation and in most cases to the one of which Jesus himself was a part. In no case can the reference be interpreted to mean the Jewish or other race generally.

The word used in the sense of "race" is *ethnos*, which is rendered "nation" 64 times, "Gentiles" 93, "heathen" 5, and "people" 2. Where the Jewish nation or people is referred to in the N.T.

the word is always *ethnos*. As an explanation of Jesus' words in this connection the "Jewish race" suggestion is valueless.

This still leaves the three texts without an explanation and the answer to the problem lies in the words "be fulfilled".

The word concerned is *genetai*, a particular grammatical form of the basic word *ginomai*. This latter word means literally to come into existence, to begin to be, to be born, to become. It is used in Rom. 1.3 "Jesus Christ our Lord which was *made* of the seed of David". The basic sense of the word is that of coming into a condition of being; "to begin to be" is probably the closest approximation in English. Now reference to a good analytical Greek lexicon will show that "*genetai*" is defined as the Second Aorist tense Subjunctive of "*ginomai*". This means that "*genetai*" expresses the form "may begin to be" applied to the time which is the subject of the sentence. The verse is therefore best rendered "this generation shall not pass until all these things may begin to be". It is the idea of beginning and not of ending which is indicated here, the beginning of a process which will proceed through time to its culmination and so final fulfilment.

Jesus was speaking of his own generation. Before that generation, to whom He said "your house is left unto you desolate", had gone into

death, the process of wars, famines, pestilences, persecutions, false Christs, signs in the earth and heavens, signs of the Advent, would have their beginning and progress steadily until towards the end of the Age the signs of the Second Advent would become manifest. Those who heard Jesus relate the long catalogue of events and happenings detailed in Matt. 24 and Mark 13 and Luke 21 would in their lifetimes witness the beginning of those happenings. His prediction was fulfilled thirty-five years after his death when the nation rebelled against Rome and Jerusalem was besieged. Luke 21.20-24 is a vivid description of that tragic end to the Jewish nation and the dispersion of the people into the four quarters of the earth. That was when "these things" Jesus had predicted "began to be". His words found a continuing fulfilment throughout the Age and are coming now to their climax in the specialised signs of his Advent which have been so notable a feature of the late 19th and the whole of the 20th century. It may well be said that the things which "began to be" back in the year A.D. 70 when the generation of Jesus' day suffered the horrors of the Roman conquest are now almost in their final stage, one which will be crowned by the revelation to the world of the Lord from heaven, returning as he promised for the establishment of his earthly kingdom and the salvation of the world.

Holiness

Holiness is a word usually associated with religious life and experience. We have an equivalent in the word "Saintliness." Our modern English word "Holy" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word, "*Hal*". Holiness comes from a kindred word—"*Halig*". In the less-developed language of our forefathers' day these words did not have the almost exclusively religious meaning which the modern word has, but were applied to various physical and mundane things too. We have several kindred words to-day which spring from the same roots. One such is "*hel*"—a word denoting good sound health. Another such is "*heal*"—to make sound or well. Still another is "*whole*" — (or "wholly") meaning "entire," "complete," "nothing lacking".

Our modern word "Saint" comes from the Latin "*Sanctus*"; and means "one set apart"—

i.e., one wholly devoted to a purpose, usually a religious purpose. The words "holy" "Holiness" and "Hallow" (used instead of holify) and "Saintly", "Sanctification" and "Sanctify" are synonyms for each other respectively, and stand, almost without exception, in our English Bible as the equivalents of one Hebrew word (*Qadash* or *Qodesh*) in the Old Testament and one Greek word (*Hagios*) in the New Testament. How accurately the Greek "*Hagios*" corresponds, to the Hebrew "*Qadash*" may be seen by the fact that the Septuagint translation (a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) uses that word exclusively to pass over into the Greek tongue the old Hebrew thought on holiness. This helps to carry forward the Old Testament thought into New Testament days. It affords additional advantage also to have two sets of English words by which to define that ancient Hebrew thought.

Conscience is the voice of the soul, as the passions are the voice of the body. No wonder they often contradict each other.

(Rousseau)

Christ was never in a hurry and if God has given us anything to do for him, He will give us time enough to finish it with a repose like Christ's.
Henry Drummond.

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

On the word 'Elder'

In the Septuagint version the word for Elder is 'presbuteros'—'chief men'; and was differentiated from 'presbutos'—'old men'. We still retain this term in our modern official title 'Alderman', which carries with it a special precedence over other members of our municipal councils. The word 'Elder' does not therefore in itself indicate a 'priestly-prince' but its association with the number 'twenty-four' most certainly does. This official class among the priests is referred to in Isa. 37.2, as Elders of the Priests; and in Jer. 19. 1, as the 'Ancient of the Priests'.

* * *

Living Faith

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

* * *

Scripture Reading

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

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

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

Prophetic Words

"All confirm one conviction, that we are now at the verge of the pouring out of the Seventh Vial. Our children, if not we ourselves, are destined to see events and manifestations which sceptics may sneer at, and even reluctant Christians undervalue; but thereby they only confirm the truth, *'For as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be at the Advent of the Son of Man.'* *'Behold I come as a thief,'* is the watchword of the present hour. God grant 'the Lamb's wife,' may make herself ready."

(Rev. John Cumming, D.D., 1848).

* * *

By the hand

On more than one occasion the biographers of our Lord tell us that He took those who required his aid by the hand. There is an example in the story of the miracle wrought on Peter's mother-in-law. We read that our Lord took her by the hand and lifted her up, with the result that the fever disappeared at once. Later in the chapter, we find again that Jesus put forth his hand and touched the leper so that he was healed of his malady. The touch of the hand may make a world of difference. It does not seem to amount to very much, but it may mean everything to the person who receives it, especially when the hand is that of Jesus.

* * *

On Study

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

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

*A Study in
Divine Purposes*

2. Creation to the Exodus

The times of man's ignorance commenced very shortly after the Fall. The Scriptures are very brief in their account of those early days in human history, but even in their brevity there is a great deal of solid information, and the most important characteristic of that age, man's rapid descent into sin and degradation, is clearly shown. To such an extent had that downward course affected all mankind that by the time of the Flood, something in the region of two thousand years after the Fall, it was recorded that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, continually". The original mental and moral image and likeness of God that had been impressed upon the first human beings at the time of their creation had been almost entirely lost, and with that the knowledge of God had departed. Notwithstanding the near-perfect physique and mighty intellectual powers of the men of the antediluvian age, had God not intervened at the time of the Flood the human race would have very rapidly passed into extinction. What seems at first sight to have been a merciless massacre of helpless creatures and a renunciation of the Divine purpose in creation was in fact the only way by which human life could be preserved on earth. The old wicked generation was removed and a righteous remnant preserved alive whereby a fresh start might be made.

Mankind did not come to this sad pass all at once. The process of degradation and sinking into ignorance was a gradual one. There is evidence in the early part of Genesis that the first few generations after the Fall consisted in the main of godly men and that God was worshipped in sincerity. Whilst the defection of Cain evidently led his posterity into sinful ways more rapidly than was the case with the other sons of Adam, even Cain showed some reverence for God at the time of punishment for his crime. And it is important to notice that upon his banishment Cain "went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt . . . in the east of Eden". (Gen. 4. 16). It would appear that the first human family still dwelt in the "presence" of God, that is to say, with some definite acknowledgment of his rule in their lives; that although sin had entered and begun its defiling and corrupting work in their hearts and minds and bodies, yet, despite the expulsion from Eden and the measure of separation from God that accompanied the Fall, the first human family continued in acknowledgment of God and in a form of wor-

ship before him. So much is implied by the fact that both Cain and Abel brought of the fruit of their labours an offering to the Lord, an acknowledgment that all they had achieved in life was due to him and his bounty. These early progenitors of our race were the ones who preserved and handed down the story of Eden and immediately subsequent events; the faithfulness with which its dark shadows as well as its lighter views have been recorded is evidence that those who passed them on and wrote them down were men who despite their sin-stricken condition had reverence for God and a desire to serve him still. At the birth of Seth—which must have been after Cain's departure—Eve showed by her words her personal faith in God, and still later on, in the time of Enos the son of Seth, "men" says the Chronicler "*began to call themselves by the name of the Lord*" (Gen. 4. 26 margin) as though only then had apostasy from God become sufficiently clearly marked that it became necessary for pious men to proclaim themselves God-worshippers, as distinct from the remaining, godless portion of the human race.

The Cainite Lamech had two wives, an indication that in his day, that of the sixth generation, knowledge of the original principles behind the institution of marriage was being lost and those principles violated. At much about the same time Enoch, of the line of Seth, was especially noted for being a God-fearing man. "*Enoch walked with God . . . and God took him*". At that point the veil drops over the Scripture record and nothing more is revealed about the course of human history until the time of the fallen angels and of the Flood, events which terminated Time One of the "Times of Ignorance".

Scripture gives no indication of the date of this angelic rebellion unless it be the rather vague "hundred and twenty years" of Gen. 6. 3. Jewish tradition placed the event in the days of Jared, which might easily have been a thousand years before the Deluge. It is difficult to believe that the corrupting influence of the rebellious angels upon mankind could have continued so long. Jewish tradition also represents men as crying to heaven for release from the oppression of the angels, and sending to Enoch, in the mountain retreat to which he had been translated by God, imploring him to intercede with God on their behalf. But there can be no certainty as to the length of their disastrous rule.

We leave the first thousand years of human history, then, with the impression that men had retained much of the original knowledge of God imparted to their first parents in the garden, and that despite the entrance of sin and death there was still the endeavour to worship and serve God. Much of this may have been due to the personal influence of the first pair. It is likely that both Adam and Eve retained their faith in God for many centuries at least after the Fall, and in all probability did all they could to implant that faith in their children. There are only two recorded utterances of Eve, but they are both significant. At the birth of Cain, her first-born, she said (Gen. 4. 1) "*I have acquired a man from the Lord*". There was acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God in that word, and, perhaps, an expression of faith in the original promise that God would one day, by means of the seed of the woman, undo the harm that had been caused by her sin. And this conclusion is intensified when, many years later, a hundred and thirty if the Hebrew chronology be followed or two hundred and thirty if the Septuagint, Seth was born and Eve said "*God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew*". (Gen. 4.25). And here is an interesting thing. Seth was born *after* the murder of Abel. But Eve must have had other sons, not named in the Scripture, between Abel and Seth, for Cain's fear was that "every one that findeth me will slay me". There must have been a goodly number born of Adam and Eve and grown to maturity before the birth of Seth. How then did Eve come to know that it was of Seth that the promised seed should come five or six thousand years later, as we know the case proved to be? Is it possible that Eve was in fact the first of the prophets; that she, first of all, prophesied concerning Christ? And if that is so, must she not have been a godly woman, in the midst of her fallen condition looking forward to the day when God should arise to make an end of sin?

But when, a millennium later, the curtain rises on the stage already set for the great Flood, the world presents a very different picture. God could find only one righteous family in all that generation, and all other flesh had corrupted its way upon earth. Men were ten or twenty generations away from Eden and the Fall; Adam and Eve had been dead more than a thousand years; and the story of Enoch, the righteous man who disappeared from amongst men because God had taken him, was already seven hundred years old. To the men of the Deluge generation, Adam was as far back as would be, to us, our own legendary King Arthur with his knights of the Round

Table; Enoch as remote as William the Conqueror, and the stories of those early days as we now have them in Genesis, and the knowledge and worship of God, was preserved only in the family of Noah. Ignorance had come to the full, men had built up a world replete with all that life could offer in the way of indulgence and self-gratification — we have no means of knowing to what high degree of civilisation they had attained but with their powerful physique and mighty intellects, not so impaired by millenniums of progressive degeneration as are ours, it must have been considerable—and God was ruled out of all their thoughts and all their actions. It was a time of steady descent into every kind of sin with no sign of release, and, because even the very idea of repentance had not appeared, no possibility of release. Peter tells us (2 Pet. 2. 5) that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness"; it is evident that his preaching was unheeded. The Flood came and took them all away, without knowledge, without hope, steeped in their sins, lost for ever . . . unless God had devised a way of reclamation in some coming day. It is in confidence that God has in fact devised such a Plan that we see a world of meaning in Paul's words to the men of Athens.

It was after the Flood that men began to reason in their minds, as Paul did before Felix, of "*righteousness, temperance and judgment to come*" (Acts 24.25) but their reasoning was crude and immature. There was still no idea of the nature of sin, and no understanding of repentance. Men were making efforts to regulate their lives in an orderly fashion and to establish some standard of justice and right dealing—that much is evident from the records and laws that have come down to us from their times—but there was no realisation at all, outside the very narrow circle of those who did know and worship God, that only by means of a full knowledge of God and a full acceptance of his ways would their problems be solved and their hopes fulfilled. It is not surprising; even in our own day, five thousand years later, the majority of men have made little progress in that direction.

From the time of God's covenant with Noah, immediately after the Flood, to the call of Abraham, a thousand years after, there is no record of the Divine dealings with man, no indication that any man, even of the line of the chosen "seed" through Shem, was specially notable for his faith and piety. The only occurrences that are noted in all that period are the building of the Tower of Babel and the city building exploits of Nimrod (Gen. 11 and Gen. 10). *There is nothing here to afford any idea of the extent to which men had progressed in their*

knowledge of God. The story of the great Tower certainly indicates a degeneration in the other direction. And the statement of Joshua in his parting charge to the children of Israel (Josh. 24.2) is significant. He declares that Abraham's ancestors, down to Terah his father, served *other gods*. Laban, grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor, possessed and worshipped teraphim—images of household deities—so that very evidently the uprightness of Noah and his sons had been lost in the intervening generations and perhaps was only recovered in Abraham.

Although the Bible says very little about this period there is a tremendous store of written records now in the world's museums which were made during this time and from these it is possible to form a very fair idea of the state of men's minds in those days. So far as the ancestors of Abraham, and their fellows, in Ur of the Chaldees and the neighbouring cities in the south country were concerned, the records show them to have been a deeply religious people, but their devotion was not inspired by love or by reverence; it was inspired by fear. Their mythology embraced a great number of gods and goddesses but the incentive to sacrifice and worship was the propitiation of those deities that their anger and wrath might be averted. It was almost as if men realised instinctively that they were in a condition of enmity with God and must find some way of reconciliation with him, but did not know the way. Dim recollections of a happier past lie embedded in the Chaldeans' religion and in their folklore and poetry. They wrote and sang of a time when there was no evil on earth and all men dwelt in happiness. They spoke of a Tree of Life and of Water of Life, and in one of their oldest poems, the "*Epic of Gilgamesh*", the hero goes through many harrowing adventures in order to find the Plant of Life, only to have it dashed from his fingers by a serpent in the moment of success. The laws of Hammurabi, a king who lived round about the time of Abraham, give evidence of a sincere attempt to administer the realm along lines of justice and right doing, so much so that his "Code" is studied and quoted by men of law even to-day. The people told each other of Oannes, the mysterious being who had come up out of the sea to teach them all the arts of civilisation and the ways of life—a very evident tradition of Noah, who was in fact the author of all that they had and knew. But there was a glimmering of light in those dark minds; some of the hymns to the gods breathe the spirit of repentance and supplication, and in the Gilgamesh Epic the hero is told by the immortal being who had, long

before, escaped the Great Flood (Noah) that "so long as brethren quarrel and so long as there is hatred in the land, so long will death come to every man". There was at least that realisation in the minds of a people who had nothing but a few dim and distorted recollections of a nobler past to guide them in such search for truth as they were disposed to undertake.

In the land of Canaan, a thousand miles from Ur of the Chaldees, there lingered in the days of Abraham another worship, that of *El Elyon*, the "Most High God". That worship continued until the days of Joshua and the entrance of Israel into the land, but by then, judging from the written records that have been discovered, it had become hopelessly corrupt. Perhaps in earlier days, long before Abraham, it did represent a tolerably pure and true remembrance of the faith that was in Noah. There was no doubt that the "Most High God" was the same as the God of Shem and of Noah and of Enoch. The Scriptures give one significant glimpse of this worship that was general throughout Canaan for many centuries. When Abraham returned from the defeat of the invading Chedorlaomer and his army (Gen. 14) there met him outside Salem (Jerusalem) Melchizedek, the "Priest of the Most High God". Abraham bowed down before him, acknowledging his authority, and gave him tithes of the spoils. Would Abraham, the father of the faithful, the friend of God, thus do obeisance before this man unless he recognised him to be a servant of the true God, of his own God? Assuredly not. It is clear that Abraham knew the "Most High God" of Canaan to be the same who had called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and promised him this land as an inheritance.

Melchizedek was a Priest-king, a King of the land as well as its Priest. That is not only declared in both the Old and the New Testaments, it is also confirmed by records discovered by archaeologists. Documentary tablets now exist showing that a line of Priest-kings calling themselves "Priests of the Most High God" and claiming to hold their position by decree of the Most High God and to be independent of any earthly rulers, ruled in Jerusalem for many centuries right up to the time that the Israelites crossed Jordan. The last of those Priest-kings was Adonizadek, who was slain by Joshua (Josh. 10). By that time the system of worship of which he was the head had become corrupt and idolatrous; there was no true knowledge of God in Canaan. The Priestkings had long since given a form of allegiance to Egypt, and the life of the Canaanites was such that God, in his wisdom, decreed that they be blotted out from under heaven. Once again had

the light failed; once again had it been abundantly demonstrated that man, even with the advantage of a reasonably clear knowledge of God and his ways at the start, is unable by his own unaided strength in his fallen and sinful condition to maintain that standing before God. The men of Canaan, in those early days when they worshipped the Most High God, failed and fell because they needed a Redeemer, and the due time for the Redeemer was not yet come, and without that Redeemer their knowledge and their piety availed them nothing. Abraham in his day may have found—must have found—much in their worship and much in the ministry of their priest-king Melchizedek with which to sympathise. Joshua, six centuries later, found nothing, nothing but a system of superstition and idolatry with which the worship of Israel's God had nothing in common, and he swept it all away.

But God had called Abraham. Despite the prevailing ignorance and darkness there was a new light in the world. For the first time in human history there was definite outward evidence that God was moving to the fulfilment of his promise and the execution of his purposes. God had called Abraham, and the world now saw a new thing, a fully consecrated man, his life devoted to the Divine service, being led and used as the first of many instruments and agents in the work that is to culminate, at last, in the overthrow of sin and the reconciliation of "who-soever will" to God.

There is no hint in the Bible of any such thing as consecration or dedication to God's purpose and service before Abraham. He was the first, but after him there has never been a time when God has been without his consecrated servants in the earth. The work begun in Abraham has progressed ever since without remission or interruption. And with every fresh development in the outworking plan of God the light of knowledge and understanding grew brighter. In Abraham the downward course of ignorance was checked. From then, although men were still in the Times of Ignorance, they had at least begun the long upward climb which led to Pentecost.

Abraham was an educated citizen of Ur, a city-state which occupied a high place in the scale of world civilisation. Obedient to the Divine call, he went to Canaan, a land whose cities were as elaborate and whose peoples were as civilised as those of the land from which he had come. Scorning the life of a town-dweller, he

adopted the simple pastoral mode of living, that he might the better follow God. He knew God as *El Shaddai*—God the Almighty—and that simple fact shows that he was already in advance of the Canaanites, who in their worship of *El Elyon*—the Most High God—did not realise the all-power of God as did Abraham. Perhaps this was the starting place of Abraham's faith, that God is not only the Most High, remote, detached from the affairs of ordinary men, but is also All-Powerful, his might stretching unto and bending toward earth that He might do all his good pleasure. The Sumerians and the Canaanites limited the power of God; to them He, like themselves, had often to suffer the onslaughts of evil forces without being able effectively to repulse or destroy them. Abraham knew better; God was all-powerful and had the whole fate and destiny of all mankind at his own pleasure. Whatever He purposed, that He could most surely perform, for He was *El Shaddai*—God Almighty. Abraham's faith was built on that understanding.

Thus it came about that at the end of the times of the patriarchs, when Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, had been laid to rest, the world was ready for the next great revelation of God's character and Plan. The great power of God was now understood, the inflexibility of his purpose and the inviolability of his oath. A dim outline of things to come could begin to be discerned; a future day when the faithful would inherit the land and God's favour be with them for evermore. How it could come about did not as yet appear; the consciousness of sin and the necessity for a Redeemer from sin had hardly as yet dawned; but there was at least a hope in God of a resurrection from the dead and a means to regain, at the last, the happy state that had been lost so many long ages ago in Adam.

At the time of the Fall knowledge of God was confined to one pair. At the Flood it was preserved in a family. Now at the time of Israel's bondage and coming deliverance it was spread amongst a nation. At the next great stage it was destined to be proclaimed abroad among all nations. Now, God looked down from heaven, and God heard the groaning of his people in Egypt and knew that it was time to act. So God called Moses.

(To be continued)

Christianity is a religion of Victory. Its teachings are all based upon the victory over death effected by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Its future is all bright with the assurance

that the Lord, who has already so notably conquered man's physical mortality, is also going to be victorious over every hostile power.

Dr. J. Russell Howden.

THE THREEFOLD INJUNCTION

An exhortation
from Thessalonians

"Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks!" (I Thess. 5. 16-18.)

The difficulty in these three injunctions is their absoluteness. It is easy to rejoice on occasion, but to rejoice evermore is a different proposition. To pray at times, and regularly, is common, but to pray without ceasing is another matter. It is a pleasant thing to the thankful in spirit to give thanks for benefits received, but to give thanks for everything—is that not expecting just too much?

In this chapter the Apostle Paul gives us twelve brief and pointed rules for Christian conduct. Nine of these have to do with our relations with others. The three just quoted refer to our relations with God. Since our relationship with God is that of children to a Father, these are statements of what He expects of us as his children. Viewed in this light they may be seen to be not only possible, but reasonable and necessary. They represent characteristics pertaining to the home, both natural and spiritual. Let us examine them from this point of view. Stated in terms of the home life, they represent the three common qualities of happiness, fellowship and gratitude.

"Rejoice evermore." Every parent wants his child to be happy, so much so that the father cannot be happy if the child is miserable. But it is impossible to be happy to order. Joy can only come as a result of circumstances making for happiness. These may be intermittent and brief, or deep and abiding. Only if they are deep and abiding is happiness possible. All young life is naturally joyful through the exuberance of animal spirits. Add to this a child has special occasions for joy: birthdays, Christmas time, holidays, etc. None of these sources of joy is permanent. They all pass away. In the proper home, however, the child has a deep and abiding source of happiness. This is found in his faith and hope centred in his parents and the assurance of their love. To realise how supremely important these are, think of what it would mean to him to be suddenly bereft of his parents' fond love and care and sent to be brought up in an institution for orphans!

In like manner God wants his children to be happy and is affected by their joy. On one occasion we are told that when the disciples were overjoyed at some experience, Jesus exulted in spirit. This message "rejoice evermore" is a personal one from God to every one of his children. He gives us many special occasions for joy in the

natural blessings with which our cup runs over. Like the natural child, however, the deep and abiding source of our joy is in Him, in our faith and hope in God, and the realisation of his love. Permanent joy can only spring from permanent sources and the three principles which abide, Paul tells us, are faith, hope and love.

The joy of Jesus consisted in the fact that He was so supremely "God conscious." This world was to him no alien place but a mansion in His Father's house. It was the Father that caused the sun to shine and sent the rain; made the lilies grow and noted the sparrow's fall. How much more then would the Father look after his own children. Enough to them to know "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." Like Jesus we too may joy in God; joy because of our faith in him He will not give us, for bread, a stone; for a fish, a serpent; for an egg, a scorpion. He knows and loves and cares; nothing this truth can dim. We joy in God also because of our hope in him. Having called us, He will qualify us and perfect that which concerneth us. Under training and discipline now we eagerly anticipate the time of our adoption, our coming of age, when we shall enter fully into our glorious inheritance. But above all we rejoice evermore in the everlasting love of God. *"He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up to death for us all, how shall He not with him freely give us all things?"* We rejoice evermore in the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, saying with Paul, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Pray without ceasing." The idea is that of fellowship. This is characteristic of the natural home. The parents want their child's confidence and the child instinctively goes to them with all its joys and sorrows, doubts and fears, plans and perplexities, receiving in return instruction, advice and encouragement. This sense of being in fellowship is continuous, unless there should occur some estrangement which, so long as it lasts, produces a cloud over the lives of both parties. These principles operate in the spiritual life. God wants his children's confidences. Nothing is too small or trivial to take to him. *"The prayer of the upright is his delight."* We cannot go too often to our Heavenly Father, or tarry too long in his presence. But there is also in addi-

tion to these specific times of communion a continual sense of being in fellowship with God provided that no estrangement arises to interrupt it. When the conscious mind is occupied by life's necessary duties, the vast region of the subconscious can be tuned in to the wave length of the Father's love, and spirit with spirit can meet.

If we would enjoy a sense of continuous fellowship with the Lord, it is important that we have daily, definite times for direct communion. The mid-week prayer meeting has proved to many of the very greatest help to their prayer life. Both with regard to this meeting and also our daily private devotions, the Word of God should be taken as a basis. Just as we meet in fellowship on the basis of the Divine Word when we gather together as a company of the Lord's people, so when we meet with the Lord in private, or in united seasons of prayer, the Word of God should be basic and central. Samuel Chadwick in his book on *"The path of prayer"* speaks thus of his own experience. *"I read through the portion in a prayer spirit again and again, then go over it clause by clause on my knees, turning its statements into prayer and thanksgiving. Before I found this method I used to try to work myself into a praying mood but I lacked resourcefulness, and praying became 'prayers' again, and listening a void. Prayer has been an experience of thrilling wonder creative meditation and real fellowship since it has been instituted, quickened and inspired by the Word of God."*

"In everything give thanks." There is progression in these three qualities. Joy leads on to fellowship and fellowship to thankfulness for everything. The child, early in life, learns that though it is his father's desire that he should be happy and that his own happiness is bound up with the happiness of the child, this does not mean that everything is ordered with a view to the child's immediate pleasure. The boy might much prefer play to school, holidays to lessons, idleness to industry, but the discharge of his parental duties makes it necessary for the father to insist on training and discipline. Many things not in themselves easy or pleasant must be experienced and it is a special joy to the parents when the child understands and appreciates the situation, and accepts it, not in a negative spirit of mere resignation, but in a positive spirit of thankfulness.

So it is with God and his children. This quality of thankfulness is underlined. After saying *"In everything give thanks"* Paul adds *"for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"*. It is God's special message conveyed to us by the

life and teaching of our Lord. It is his special message because it is so difficult and because the possession of this grace implies a very close walk with God and maturity in fellowship with him. It is easy and delightful to give thanks for many, many things. *"When all thy mercies, oh my God, my rising soul surveys; transported with the view, I'm lost in wonder, love and praise."* For all things beautiful we thank him, for days of sunshine bright with praise, when all our life is set fair. But when life's sky becomes clouded and the surges rise and rest delays to come; when youth has gone and health and strength begin to fail; when loved ones are removed and we are left lonely; it is not easy then to give thanks for everything.

Sometimes some of God's people are called upon to experience specially trying conditions. Like Job they are outstanding examples of suffering but, thank God, like Job they can also be outstanding examples of the power and grace of God. *Job was a spectacle to angels, as we are,* and by his unswerving loyalty and love vindicated God's glory and discredited the Adversary. This too is our great mission, to make God's victory over the Devil moral before it is physical, when the Lord shall take hold of him and bind him. Job's sufferings have been an inspiration to countless numbers of the Lord's people because of his patient endurance. He stands among the great cloud of witnesses urging us forward. *So it may be with us if we are called upon to suffer in a special way. Our example may encourage others to take up and bear more bravely the lighter loads that they are carrying and fainting under.* As Job because of his special trials got a special vision of God, seeing him whereas before he had only heard him, so it will be with us. Paul stands before us as one supremely tried and yet so supremely blessed with the abundance of the revelations that he expresses himself thus *"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"*.

"In everything give thanks", for all things work together for good to those who love God. This may not be apparent to us now but sometime we will understand. We are like the tapestry weaver of old with the pattern to work from hung over his head, and working away with the reverse side of the cloth to him. Blindly he works the shuttle back and forth with the varying colours, dark and bright, unaware of how beautiful is the work he is doing as seen from the other side. So with us. Until our weaving is finished and we get to the other side *we shall not see the glorious outcome nor understand the meaning of the many things which perplex us now.* How

grand the assurance that working to his pattern the Lord will be able by and by to present us faultless in the presence of his glory with exceed-

ing joy. Let us then rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, for as his dear children, God expects this from us.

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

*Lessons from the life of
a stalwart man of God*

2. Building the Wall

When Nehemiah reached God's ancient and holy city, he immediately commenced to prepare for the practical restoration of the worship of God. In the state in which he found it, the city with its walls in ruins was the laughing stock of the neighbouring peoples. So he set out by night to examine the walls and discover personally how great the task was that lay before him. Afterwards he spoke frankly to his fellow Jews and invited their co-operation. The walls of Jerusalem could never have been built in fifty-two days without comradeship and determination. It needed undaunted courage and willingness to serve the Lord shoulder to shoulder.

The men whom he approached to help him were equally sensible in their reply to Nehemiah. They might have been jealous of this outsider who had so recently arrived from an alien country. He had come under the protection and with the authority of the monarch who oppressed Israel. They could have felt insulted by his suggestion to restore the city walls, which was a work which they should have already done. They might have doubted the integrity of Nehemiah's intentions and believed his motives to be false. Instead they recognised that the good hand of God was upon this new governor of Jerusalem and they rose up willingly to support him. They realised that their national destiny was at stake, and if the glories of Israel's former days were to be restored, here at last was the opportunity for which they had been looking. They accepted Nehemiah on trust, submitted to his plan for rebuilding the walls and followed him as their leader.

These memoirs of a great statesman give to us some very useful lessons for the Christian life. We too must face the fact that spiritual Zion is not all that it should be. During the past ninety years, materialism, social revolution, the increase of natural pleasure and material advantages for everyone, have tended to make life easier for the Christian Church. We become apathetic in days of comparative peace and security. We must make a genuine examination of that part of the wall of the New Jerusalem that has been entrusted to our care to see if there is not a great deal of repair work needed to strengthen the bulwarks of our faith. Have we over the past years been doing all we can in the

Lord's service? Are we content with the progress we have made? Much of the walls of the Holy City are like they were when Nehemiah first arrived from Shushan... in utter ruins.

The sense of oneness exhibited by the Jews in our story sets twentieth century Christians a lesson worthy of imitation. It is essential to our service for the Lord that we should willingly co-operate with our fellows in the Christian way. Firstly there are those in our own fellowship. Our natural differences and fleshly impediments are likely to hinder our unity in serving the Lord. The Devil is quick to notice this and to magnify it out of all proportion.

There is opportunity for all true servants of God in this work, just as there was in Nehemiah's day, the elder, the scribe, the rich and the poor, the old and the young, the ruler and the artisan. They all found a place along the walls, doing their share of the work, faithfully endeavouring to do that which had been put into their hands by the Lord. This does not mean that the baker, the perfumer, the ruler of the city all suddenly became professional bricklayers. Nor did they all build the same piece of wall, in fact many of them built that portion which was just outside their own house.

So it is with Christians today. All, whatever their religious affiliation, in whatever church or group God has pleased to call them, if accepting Jesus as their Saviour may share the great work of building Zion. It is up to us all to extend the willing and loving hand of fellowship and comradeship, for all are one in Christ Jesus. This will not cause every child of God to flock into the same church or other place of worship. But there is a common union in Christ which will give us the desire to work together rather than work against other Christian people. May we say with God's people of old... *"Let us rise up and build"*.

But Nehemiah's difficulties and troubles were not over when once the great work had begun. In fact that is just where the problems seem to have commenced. Had he not been possessed of a very wonderful faith and been a man who constantly resorted to prayer, there can be no doubt that this remarkable task would never have been completed. Human strength and ingenuity alone would have been quite inadequate to withstand

the opposition of the Adversary of God.

At first their enemies laughed contemptuously and ridiculed the effort which the Jews made to rebuild their city. They received the firm rebuke from the faithful Nehemiah in these words . . . *"The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem"*. (Nehemiah 2. 19. 20.) So the wall was built in spite of the sneers of Sanballat and Tobiah, and in answer to further gibes and sarcasm Nehemiah besought the Lord in prayer and the builders worked so much the harder. The Samaritans and Ammonites were very angry and dismayed by this effect of their unkind remarks and determined to spoil the work by other means.

The first move by the enemies of Israel to frustrate the great work which Nehemiah and his countrymen were doing was a subtle infiltration of armed men into the ranks of the Jews. Nehemiah prayed and then encouraged the people to remember the Lord and not to be afraid. They set a watch against spies and enemy soldiers. Plans were made to help each other if an attack was made against one particular section of the new wall.

In the midst of all the troubles from without came internal disorder which also threatened to stop the work of the Lord.

The nobility of Jerusalem had so badly treated their fellow Jews that many of the people lived in poverty and slavery. The equity of Israel's laws, given through Moses, should have prevented just those conditions developing. There was no excuse for the Jewish aristocrats and Nehemiah acted promptly. He told the nobles plainly that they lacked in righteousness before the Lord and that their treatment of fellow Jews was a reproach to their nation. The governor's rebuke was accepted and acted upon, perhaps the more so because of Nehemiah's own upright life. The leaders repented of their oppression and readily promised to deal more justly in future.

Meanwhile, the allied opposition, headed by Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, were consulting together how they might best overthrow Jerusalem. They tried enticing the governor from his stewardship in order to do him "some mischief". They tried to frighten him with false accusations of treason. They threatened his life. But each effort was frustrated in the same manner, for Nehemiah besought the Lord in prayer for strength and guidance. The source of his power and ability lay in his contact with heaven and found comfort and peace in his friendship with God.

What an inspiration to us! Does the Devil meet with such formidable opposition today? Is there such unshakeable trust in the Lord and such unrebukeable zeal in his service? Wherefore all the hindrances to the work in spiritual Zion? When the world laughs and jeers at our efforts to serve our King are we able to stand firm, confident that our labours of love are not in vain? Our unbelieving neighbours are quick to cast doubts upon our faith and to tell us that our hopes will come to nothing, just as the Samaritans did to the Jews. We may be able to refute the scoffers' arguments or to withstand persecution, but to be laughed at is sometimes more difficult to endure and we are likely to become very discouraged. May Nehemiah's example of unflinching courage and constancy in prayer urge us to seek God's help more readily that we may not fear what men may try to do to frustrate the work of God.

As in every age, the Devil will appear in a number of guises. Sometimes his agents are openly the enemies of God and brazenly seek to render ineffective the work of his people. Frequently however the approach is more subtle and the sabotage is done in secret ways. There are many exhortations in the New Testament to watch. Often these are accepted as a reference to our observation of the political drama in the world around us. They would serve their purpose more effectively if the application was made by an internal examination of the heart by each believer upon himself. It was our Master who said *"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation"* (Matt. 26.41), and years later, writing to the Colossians, Paul admonished *"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."* Peter exhorted the brethren to *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour."* (1 Peter 5.8). Each of these texts might have been the words of our Old Testament hero urging his faithful band of workers to greater building efforts. But they are in fact the words of Jesus and of two of the foundation members of the New Jerusalem. God's purposes move on from one era to the next but the great fight between good and evil remains the same in form and principle. By devious means Satan has blinded the eyes of God's people to the great "building project" which our Heavenly Father has in hand. To some he has said that this is a work which embraces all the world and hence their labours have sometimes been dissipated in places where they were not required. To others he has insinuated that the work is completed and so they have ceased

from their tasks before they were done. Upon others he has poured his scorn and contempt until they have given up in despair. Let us each one examine our own lives, not daring to "pluck the splinter from our brother's eye lest we are blinded by the log in our own."

Just as the work upon the rebuilding of Jerusalem suffered because of internal disquiet, so the Christian Church has been hindered by discord and strife throughout its long and chequered history. Human ambitions and selfishness have frustrated the efforts of those who have toiled for spiritual Zion. Immediately prior to the Lord's death his closest followers were quarrelling about who should be greatest among them. To-day, in many quarters the same lesson has still not been properly learned.

Our message for the world is peace and good

will whatever aspect of truth we emphasise. Whether we preach repentance and consecration in this life, or Christ's kingdom for all men in the age to come, the underlying spirit is the same—that of reconciliation to God. But the power of our message is lost if there is not genuine brotherly affection among ourselves. Instead, as Nehemiah said of his fellows, we are a reproach to the people of God.

In spite of the troubles from without and troubles within, the New Jerusalem will be finished and it will be God's hand through his servants which will accomplish it. Let us see to it that we work for him and not against him. But the work does not stop there, merely to be an object of beautiful craftsmanship. Cities are not an end in themselves but are built for a purpose. *(To be continued.)*

A Note on 2 Peter 1.4—"Divine Nature"

The expression "Divine nature" is used only by Peter in the New Testament and the significance of the term has to be deduced from this one occurrence. In fact the word "Divine" is derived from the Latin "*divus*" which in turn is from the Greek "*theios*" which means "god-like". It was in this sense that the Greeks used the word in respect to their own pagan gods. Peter tells his readers that Divine power has given them all things relevant to life and godliness, and that by means of God's promises they might become partakers of Divine nature; by our transformation into his likeness we have become godlike. One other instance of *theios* occurs in Acts 17.29 "as we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Godhead (*theios*) is like unto gold, or silver . . .". In this case "Godhead", which is a bad translation, is better rendered "Divinity". Paul is saying here that we must not think of Divine things, of the things relating to God, in the way we do material things as gold and silver and so on. A parallel word "*theiotes*" occurs twice, in Rom. 1.20 and Col. 2.9, "*his eternal power and Godhead*" and "*in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" and this word is better rendered "Deity", this being the best approach to the meaning of "*theiotes*". Apart from these instances the word "divine" does not appear in the New Testament, with the exception of Heb. 9.1 "*ordinances of divine service*" but here the word is *dikaionomata* which means public worship or ritual and has nothing to do with the Divinity of God.

When used as a noun the word refers to God, as the Deity; when an adjective, it denotes an attribute of God which may then be reflected in his creatures to the extent that they do become transformed into his likeness. The "Divine power" of 2 Pet. 1.3 is the personal power of God. The "Divine nature" of vs. 4 denotes the nature of God as contrasted with that of fallen man. In the same sense that we shall be "like him", our Lord, in the resurrection, as declared in 1 John 3.2. so we, in our new nature, purged from the imperfections of this world and no longer human, will be "*changed into his image, from glory to glory*" (2 Cor. 3.18) "*conformed to the image of his Son*" (Rom. 8.29).

The word "divination" found once in the N.T. and between twenty and thirty times in the O.T., has nothing to do with the words "divine" or "divinity". "Divination" means to glean information from the evil spirits and the like, by means of witchcraft or soothsaying, to hold converse with the spirits of the dead, and so on. The one instance in the N.T. is in Acts 16.16, where Paul met the slave-girl possessed of a "*spirit of divination*"—in the Greek, "*pythōnos*", a spirit of Python, an oracle-demon. None of the Hebrew words rendered "divination" in the O.T. have anything to do with "divine" as applied to God.

In modern speech the verb "to divine" is sometimes used to describe a surmise or conjecture based up a hidden or unreal or supernatural source of information and is derived from the O.T. usage as outlined above.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

It was near the beginning of the great age of Hebrew prophecy that "light" became generally symbolic of knowledge and understanding. Allusions to blindness and darkness were made much earlier than that, by Moses in his last discourses to Israel, recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy. In the Psalms there is a rich profusion of praises like "The Lord is my light and my salvation". The same theme recurs in the colourful language of Isaiah who saw so clearly the conflict between good and evil and contrasted it in the analogy of light and darkness. He readily understood the condition of his own people Israel and how blind they were to the goodness and truth of Almighty God. He realised how depraved they had become and that they stood in need of the light of God's Word to reveal their sin. Isaiah was given wonderful visions of a brighter day when Israel's eyes would be opened to the splendour of their God; when they would live in the light of his perfect law. More than this, the prophet visualised the great missionary work which Israel as a nation would do in taking the Word of God to the Gentile nations. Upon them the light of truth had never dawned; to them the revelation of God had been limited to a hazy knowledge of the material creation around them. For long centuries they had stumbled along, one here and one there yearning for enlightenment and searching for truth. It is equally clear from the records of Israel's prophets that the "chosen people" were for the most part as blind as their heathen neighbours. They did not realise that traditions and customs of long past ages were inadequate to solve the problems of their own day. They failed to appreciate the increasing light reflected in the message of their lonely seers.

Isaiah saw the broader vision of the Messiah's work in that he would reveal God to all peoples. This is shown in chapters 42 and 49 when the prophet wrote those memorable words "*I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*" Israel never attempted in any degree to fulfil that prophecy. After the return of the exiles from Babylon and Persia there came the development of Judaism, and the associated hatred of all foreigners. So intense was this hatred in the days of the Early Church that when Paul was addressing his fellow countrymen in Jerusalem (Acts 22) the mere mention of the word "nations" kindled an uproar among the

crowd. Because he declared that the Lord had sent him to preach to the Gentiles, they sought Paul's immediate death. They were spiritually blind to the purpose of God and therefore knew nothing of his great love for all mankind.

When Jesus was taken as a baby into the Temple to be presented to God according to the Law, the old prophet Simeon took the child in his arms and quoted from Isaiah "*For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel.*" Simeon had been like a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem, waiting for the first gleams of the "Sun of righteousness". Now he had seen and proclaimed and his task was done. He was happy to depart and await the glorious shining forth of the Messiah in his Kingdom when darkness will be dispelled for ever.

Quite early in his ministry, Jesus preached in his home town of Nazareth and He read from the words of the prophet Isaiah, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*" As Jesus sat down He informed his audience that the prophecy He had just read was now being fulfilled. Then He went on to remind them that when the prophet Elijah needed lodging, he did not find refuge in Israel but went to a widow in Sidon. Likewise, Elisha could have healed many lepers in Israel, but instead he healed Naaman from Syria. With but a few words Jesus swept away the racial and social barriers of his day and showed that God was interested in men and women of all nations. This was manifest in Jesus' attitude to the various people He met during his public ministry. His interview with the woman at the well, near Sychar in Samaria, is a very remarkable example of this fact, that he, a prophet, of the select Jewish race; and the woman, a foreigner with a bad reputation, was sufficient to keep them on opposing sides of the road. Yet He talked with her and she became an evangelist on his behalf, taking the "Good News" to her own people (John 4.39). Jesus also readily agreed to heal the centurion's servant and commended the Roman officer for his great faith, the quality of which, he said, he had not found among the people of Israel. (Luke 7.9). Towards the end of his life,

Jesus went to the borders of Phoenicia. While there a Gentile woman pleaded with the Lord to heal her daughter. Jesus' answer implied that his healing power was reserved for his own people. Yet it is clear from his final words to the woman that He was really interested in a demonstration of her faith. The response to that faith, irrespective of race or colour, was his compassion. Incidents like these laid the foundation of the missionary work after Pentecost by the early Church. It is not true that Christ's message was originally confined to Israel, and that the broader evangel was an after thought conceived by the Apostle Paul. The directive for the witness of the early Church is to be found in the Gospels by our Lord himself, and confirmed by him just before his ascension. (Acts 1.8). When preaching his last sermon upon the "end of the age" Jesus made it clear that *"This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations"* (Matt. 24. 14). This statement was enlarged upon in post-resurrection talks to the disciples, recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke, each account emphasising the instructions that the first disciples were to go to preach and teach all nations, making new disciples and witnessing to everyone. Of this they could have had no doubt for He had set them the example, and if they were to follow in his steps they must likewise spare no effort to broadcast the message of salvation.

On several recorded occasions Jesus described himself or was described as the "light of the world". Thus John opens his gospel (John 1.4) *"In him was life and the life was the light of men,"* and a little later *"That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* Towards the end of his ministry Jesus said publicly *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8.12) and again *"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness."* (John 12.46). Such words angered the Pharisees and religious leaders of the Jews, for they looked upon themselves as the only source of enlightenment concerning the Word of God. Yet their teachings offered no solutions to the problems which worried ordinary people. The teachers and lawyers were more interested in disputes about words and abstract ideas which were only remotely connected with a true understanding of God and his purpose. Consequently authoritative statements of Jesus, and the stories which He used to illustrate his points, came as a great flood of light on the experiences and difficulties which men and women encountered in their daily routine.

Through the ages God had sent prophets who were each permitted to reveal a little more of the purpose of God. They lighted lamps which burned through the centuries, lighting the path of men. They were beacons guiding men to the "glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ." His light uncovered the hidden mysteries of men's own sinful hearts. His light revealed the love in the heart of the Creator. His light shone down the ages, pointing men to a day when the glory of God should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. He used language which the common people understood. His message was simple and clear, impressed upon their minds by pictures from Nature with which they were familiar. His sermons were full of life and movement, yet his manner was gentle and peaceable. This was not the oratory of Cicero, nor the philosophy of Aristotle, for Jesus never had the formal education of the learned doctors of his day. Yet the power of his Word was such that it turned the tide of evil of the first century A.D. But for the spread of the Gospel the condition of that society might have brought a calamity that would have destroyed the human race as it had done in the days of Noah. More than that, the sayings of Jesus were the source of inspiration to the Apostles and early Fathers; from him sprang all that is noble and great in this world.

Just as Jesus was the reflection of his Father, so his disciples have reflected him. They too have become the "light of the world" being shed forth, as He said, first in Judea and Samaria, then to Syria, Asia Minor and Rome. The light beamed forth eastward to the ancient civilisations of India and China, northwards to Russia, southward to Africa, westward to Britain. As Paul proceeded in the earliest of these movements from Jerusalem, he stood one day in a synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia and quoted again the words of Isaiah which the aged Simeon had said when Jesus was taken as a baby into the Temple. *"For so hath the Lord commanded us saying 'I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the end of the earth.'"* (Acts 13.47).

In his second letter to the Corinthians (chap. 3) Paul tells his Gentile readers of the story of Moses when he went up the mountain to meet the Lord. Not only was there a wonderful revelation of the law and purpose of God to the great leader of Israel, but his actual physical face caught some of the effulgence of light which came from the presence of the Lord. His face so shone that the people of Israel could not bear to look upon him. The Apostle uses the story as an illustration of how the glory of God is reflected

from the true believer. He concludes with these words, as translated by Phillips, "*We are transfigured in ever-increasing splendour into his own image, and the transformation comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*"

The Christians at Ephesus, prior to their conversion, had lived in depravity such as is only known in heathen lands. In chapter 5 of his letter to them Paul reminds these believers of their earlier lives and then, again quoting from Phillip's translation, goes on in verse 8 "*Live then as children of the light. The light produces in men quite the opposite of sins like these—everything that is wholesome and good and true. Let your lives be living proofs of the things which please God. Steer clear of the activities of darkness; let your lives show by contrast how dreary and futile these things are . . . It is even possible (after all, it happened to you!) for the light to turn the thing it shines upon into light also.*"

Those who have really caught the vision of the crucified Saviour, and who live daily in the presence of God, cannot help being radiant Christians. Many unbelievers will be like the Israelites of old who could not endure the brightness of Moses' face. They will make any excuse to turn away from the light of the knowledge of Jesus because, as Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 4. 4, "*the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not*". The conflict between light and darkness has continued through every age. Some, like Paul on the Damascus road, have seen the light and been temporarily blinded. The purity and power of that light has convicted them of their sin, and they have been led to ask the question "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And in turn, those so converted have gone forth to spread the light until it has found its way into every corner of the earth.

The gospel of Jesus has stopped at no human barriers, and has been the means of bringing together true believers of every social and racial group. Rich and poor, old and young, irrespective of colour, class and national roots, have been bound as Christian brethren together in one family, showing up the darkness which is in the world. But the Church has often withdrawn into the shadows, and the light of truth has been interrupted. To off-set this there have been those radiant souls, empowered by the Holy Spirit, who have spread the light wherever they have gone.

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

By their self denial and courageous testimony they have dispelled the darkness of sin and given new life and hope to those who were blinded by Satan. Much darkness yet remains in the world as selfishness and strife bear witness every day. No one tries longer to hide the awful fact that men cannot live alongside each other in peace and contentment. Compassion and humility are as disdained to-day as they were in every generation before. But these conditions which prevail now are not a signal for gloom and despondency among the Lord's people. The prevalence of sin and darkness is an indication that the first rays of sunshine cannot be long delayed over the hill-top. This is but the intense darkness before the dawning of a bright and happy day, when men and women will be awakened from their long sleep in the darkness of the ground and come forth to the call of the Saviour of the world. Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah "*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising,*" (Isa. 60. 1-3). There is a reference back to this prophecy of Isaiah by John in the Revelation when in chap. 21. 23-24 he writes "*And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.*" These words have yet to be fulfilled. God's ancient people Israel have never enjoyed the full light of the glory of God. The remainder of the nations of the earth have remained, for the most part, in darkness since the days of the Flood. But God has provided, the means whereby all peoples of every tongue shall have a full and fair opportunity to rejoice in the light of his Word. In that day there will never again be those things which must be done in secret, matters of shame in darkness. When the "Sun of righteousness" shall reign over the earth, light and joy shall flood every heart, and every body that is broken shall be made whole. All men everywhere shall gladly give allegiance to the King of love and light.

God knows what weight you can carry and what discipline you need. You will find at last that He makes no mistakes and that even the buffeting of Satan is to be counted among your "means of grace." *Dr. A. B. Simpson.*



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

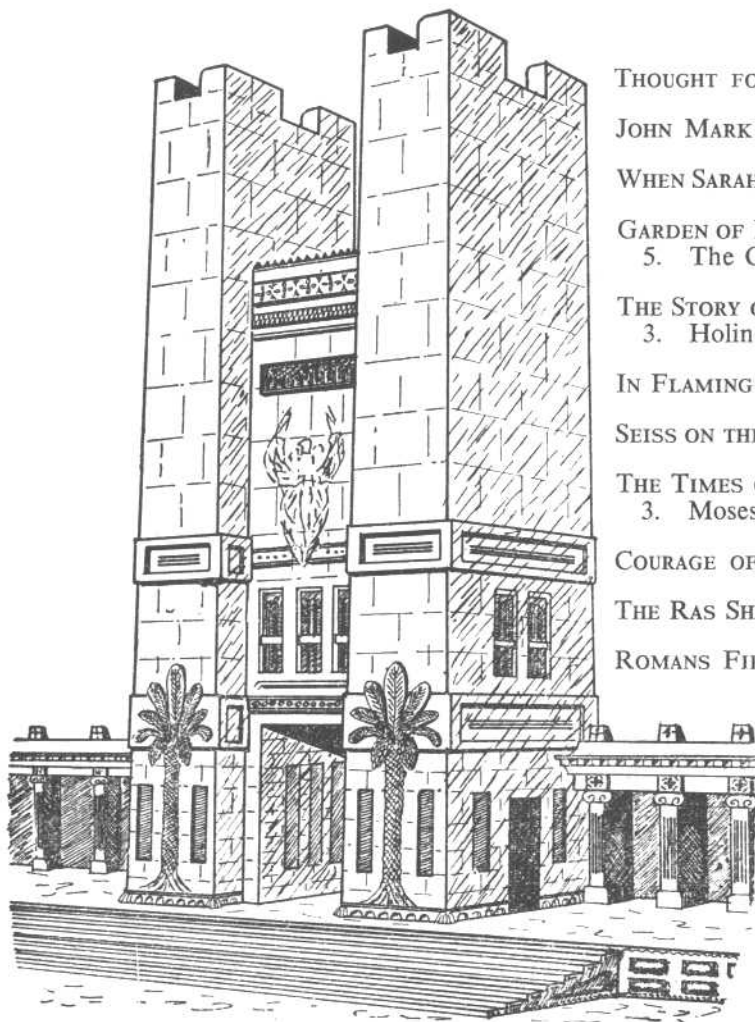
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CONTENTS

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH	98
JOHN MARK	99
WHEN SARAH LAUGHED	102
GARDEN OF EDEN	
5. The Coming of Eve	103
THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH	
3. Holiness unto the Lord	106
IN FLAMING FIRE	107
SEISS ON THE END OF THE WORLD ...	109
THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE	
3. Moses to Christ	111
COURAGE OF CONVICTION	114
THE RAS SHAMRA TABLETS	115
ROMANS FIFTEEN FOUR	117



*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 chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways; they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings." (Nah. 2. 4).

There is a curiously modern ring about the burning words of Nahum the Elkoshite as he stood and surveyed that frantic haste in the streets of ancient Nineveh. Our cities to-day display much the same phenomenon as was seen in the capital of Assyria just before its fall—bigger and better buildings, soaring up into the sky; a turmoil of haste and speed, a frantic race to achieve all that life held out and acquire all the material wealth that offered itself in that marvellous era of world history. Historians have remarked that the period of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. was one in which it appeared as though the human spirit was about to break through the trammels Nature had imposed and men at last rise to undreamed-of heights of discovery and invention. But they did not attain their goal; their busy streets became deserted and silent, their buildings thrown to the ground and burned with fire, their arts and inventions lost and forgotten, and Nineveh the proud city which would dominate the world become so utterly lost that only two centuries later Xenophon the Greek marched his army across its site without knowing that the legendary city of the ancients lay buried in the sand beneath his feet.

The same doom awaits this modern world of ours and for the same reason. The Assyrians deliberately rejected the higher things of life and lived only for self and the present. Of all ancient peoples they were the most fiendishly cruel and the most materialistic. The Babylonians and the Egyptians, despite their paganism, cherished a belief in higher things and to some extent infused thoughts of the spiritual into affairs of daily life. Not so their northern neighbour. Asshur the national deity was as much the embodiment of greed, selfishness and inconsiderateness of the rights and welfare of others as are the inter-

national gods of to-day. To quote the trenchant words with which the great Assyriologist, Zenaide Ragozin, concluded his history of Assyria many years ago *"And thus, with his own weight, with his own wickedness and folly, Asshur fell. It was a grievous fall, and an utter fall."* That can be a fitting epitaph too when the same fate overtakes this corrupt civilisation of ours which displays so much of the same characteristics. For there is no hope that man will ever come to his senses before he has utterly wrecked all that his hands have built just as the Assyrians wrecked theirs.

It will be then, when the streets are silent and the buildings have crashed, that a new sound will be heard in the world amongst men. Nahum called attention to it in his day and instructed Christians ought to call attention to it in our day. *"Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace."* He looked down upon the streets with their frantically speeding chariots and rushing crowds, his eye followed the outlines of the buildings so soon to fall, and then he turned and pointed to the distant mountains upon the tops of which he saw by the eye of faith the heralds of a new era, a new world, a new King. That is the mission of Christians to-day. It is a creditable thing for well-meaning but unregenerate men to bolster up this collapsing world order; they know no better. But it displays lack of spiritual insight when Christians try to do so, for God has provided something better, and they of all people should be aware of the fact.

Gone from us

— ❖ —

Sis. E. Hill (Newcastle-u-Lyme)

Sis. H. McCorkindale (Moreton Wirral)

— ❖ —

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

JOHN MARK

So very little said about him, and yet an important part of the New Testament came from his hand. So obscure, the details of his life and ministry, yet he exercised a momentous influence on the early days of the primitive Church. Younger than any of the twelve apostles, yet in his devotion to the Lord Jesus and his maturity of character not one whit behind them. John Mark, author of the Second Gospel, is one of the outstanding figures of the Apostolic Church.

The fact that he does not appear in the history of those early days until about ten years after the Crucifixion, and then is presented under the Latin name of Mark or Marcus, has led to the surmise in some quarters that he was either a Jew of the Dispersion, perhaps from Rome, or a full-blooded Gentile who had become converted to Christianity and was in fellowship with the Jerusalem Church at the time Barnabas and Paul were there in connection with the money gifts contributed by the Gentile churches to the suffering native Church as recorded in Acts 11 and 12. This theory ignores many significant facts and is now quite out-dated. Mark was the son of Mary, one of the "devout women" disciples who "ministered unto Jesus of their substance". Mary had a house in Jerusalem, frequently used as a place of resort for the disciples and other believers, and in the light of this fact was probably well off. Her brother Barnabas was also comfortably off; he was the one who possessed and sold land in order to give the proceeds to the Apostles for the relief of the poor. Barnabas was of the tribe of Levi, and it would appear therefore that Mark was in fact a Jew of Jerusalem.

Another consideration is the vivid and life-like style of his Gospel. For many years past it used to be argued that Mark wrote his Gospel at the dictation of Peter so that it is really the Gospel of Peter. One cannot help thinking that the motive behind this oft-repeated hypothesis is the desire to have one Gospel representing Peter's recollections of the Lord's life to stand alongside that of John. It is only a hypothesis; there is no evidence. And the style of Mark's Gospel is so vivid and life-like that it is clearly the work of an eye-witness. There is a crispness and an enthusiasm about the composition which speaks of an alert and intelligent — and quite youthful — observer. And he must have been quite young at the time. The expression used in Acts 13.5 "they had John to their minister" means that he

acted as general assistant and handyman to the two evangelists, and this in turn implies that he would not at that time—about A.D. 46—be more than in his mid-twenties. It follows that during the lifetime of Jesus he would have been about fourteen years of age. That conclusion is supported by another significant feature of his Gospel. Unlike all the others, there is a noticeable absence of references to the Old Testament prophecies. Naturally, as a lad, he would not have been so familiar with them as were the older men. In compensation for this, there is a much more full and detailed account of the things which Jesus said and did. In this latter field he repeats many Aramaic words as uttered by Jesus which again testifies to the fact that he was there and heard him speak; although all the Gospels were written in Greek it is clear that Jesus usually spoke in Aramaic, the language of the people.

It is true that there are many words of Latin origin in his Gospel. The tradition that he wrote it at Rome could well be true in which case he would have been at least forty years of age with a varied and travelled life behind him in the course of which, with the agile and perceptive mind of which he gives so much evidence, he must have acquired a reasonably substantial education.

If then Mark was a young man at the time of Jesus and devoted to the Master there is a logical explanation of one of the New Testament enigmas—the identity of the young man clad only in a linen cloth who was seized by the guards at the time of Jesus' arrest in Gethsemane. The incident is related only by Mark (ch. 14. 51-52). Logical; it happened after all the disciples had fled and they knew nothing about it. Only Jesus was there, being led away. The "young man" (*neanias*—any age between 14 and 25) had followed the captured Jesus "having a linen cloth cast about his naked body". When seized by the soldiery, he wriggled out of their grasp and fled, leaving the robe in their hands. One might ask, what was this young man doing out there in Gethsemane, in the freezing April night-time—always bitterly cold in Judea at night even though the day be hot—clad only thus? The disciples had fled, but he followed—discreetly at a distance, probably, but to see what was going to happen to the Master. A little thought suggests a solution to the enigma. The lad was Mark, the only one who knew of the incident. The Last Supper had been

held in the Upper Room at his mother's house; that much is known. Mark knew all about it; he knew, perhaps by words overheard, perhaps by the demeanour of the twelve as they set out for Gethsemane with Jesus, that there was going to be a crisis that night. He must have known of the enmity of the priests and he knew their methods. He intended to be there to see what happened but he did not intend to be caught; he, at any rate, would escape to take the news back to the women and others. So he adopted a well-known ruse. He smothered his naked body with grease or oil, enshrouded himself in a single sheet of cloth which would readily slip off, and set off for Gethsemane. When apprehended by the captors of Jesus he wriggled out of the sheet and his captors were unable to hold his well-greased body; he slithered out of their grasp and was gone. Thus was the news brought to the women whilst the disciples were in hiding.

So Mark would have grown up in the faith during those early years following the Resurrection and eventually be received into full fellowship in the community, so that when some ten years or so later Paul came to Jerusalem he found him ready for Christian service and took him back with him to Antioch. There he laboured, probably in a minor capacity, for two or three years and then set out with Paul and Barnabas on what is known as Paul's first missionary journey. He did not get far; after a short progress through Cyprus, evangelising and perhaps establishing one or two little Christian communities, they crossed the sea to the Asiatic mainland and here Mark left the other two and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13.13). The cause of his defection is not stated and is not known. The most likely surmise is that the increasing troubles in Judea and rising persecution of the Christians there led him to return to protect his mother. He must have left her again and gone back to Antioch within a year or so for when Paul and Barnabas planned their second missionary journey in A.D. 50 a dispute arose as to whether Mark should or should not accompany them. The upshot of that was that the two evangelists separated and Mark went to Cyprus again with his uncle Barnabas.

Of this evangelistic effort nothing is known. After their arrival in Cyprus in or about the year 50, when Mark was about thirty years of age, the curtain drops and does not rise for another ten years, by which time, according to Col. 4.10, he was with Paul at Rome during the latter's two years' detention awaiting his first trial. That would be between the years 60 and 62. Of Barnabas nothing more is known and tradition has it that he was martyred in Cyprus soon after his

arrival; if this was in fact the case Mark would obviously have returned to his headquarters at Antioch. The early historians are emphatic and unanimous in saying that Mark was the founder, and first elder, or bishop, of the Christian Church at Alexandria in Egypt, and Eusebius (4th century) says that the second bishop, Annianus, succeeded Mark in A.D. 61. It might therefore be concluded that from Antioch Mark went to Egypt and stayed there perhaps eight or nine years by which time the church he founded had become numerous and influential? (In later years Alexandria ranked with Antioch and Rome as one of the three most powerful churches of the Christian society and was a serious contender with Rome for the primacy of Christendom.) If Annianus did succeed him in A.D. 61 that is fairly obviously because Mark, learning that Paul had been taken to Rome to await trial, wanted to be with him in his hour of adversity. At forty-two years of age he was too young to think of retiring, whether from a bishopric or any other kind of service. So he went to Rome, which is where we find him in Col. 4.10 and again in Philemon 24. The epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon were both written during A.D. 60-62 and Mark was with Paul when they were despatched.

Two or three years later he is in Rome again, this time with Peter. Paul was gone, on those travels which occupied the time between his first and second trials and which are not recorded in the Book of Acts. Whether he stayed in Rome after Paul left until Peter arrived, or went back to Antioch in the meantime, is not known but almost certainly it was the latter. After Paul and Aristarchus sailed for Spain there were none of the Asiatic evangelists left in Rome; the Church in Rome had its own leaders in Clement and Linus (both mentioned in the N.T.), and Anencletus, and Mark was not really needed. The obvious conclusion is that he returned to Antioch where his friend Peter was now the leading elder, and wait for his next commission of service.

That commission came in about A.D. 65 when Peter decided to go to Rome. The Great Fire of Rome and the consequent persecution of the Christians there, blamed for the catastrophe by the mad Emperor Nero, was over, and the decimated church there stood in dire need of help. Peter, Silas and Mark set sail for Rome and laboured with the Church there for some two or three years before Peter's martyrdom. It was quite likely during this sojourn that Mark wrote his Gospel, unless, which is possible, he did so during the five years or so immediately preceding, whilst at Antioch. The accounts of

several Second and Third century Church historians regarding Mark were formerly held to infer that he wrote his Gospel at the dictation of Peter so that it was properly the Gospel of Peter. More sober examination of these old histories tends rather to indicate that Mark acted as a kind of secretary to Peter, writing down his oral teachings for the benefit of the believers, not that his own Gospel was dictated by Peter. In practice there is little doubt that Mark drew some of his material from Peter but the style and contents of his Gospel both point to a writer who himself witnessed most of the events which he records, himself heard and remembered the actual words spoken by Jesus, and himself possessed a freshness of enthusiasm and outlook, and a naivete, pointing to a much younger man than Peter. The life of Jesus as related in the Gospel of Mark is that life as seen through the eyes of a teenage lad rather than that of a grown man.

Perhaps the most convincing argument in this connection is offered by the First Epistle of Peter. That Epistle was written in Rome by Peter, at about the same time as the Gospel of Mark. The total difference in style and in the usage of words between the two compositions renders it inconceivable that both stemmed from the same mind.

Within about another two years Peter had gone to his reward, martyred for his faith. Silas must have left Rome only a few months before, carrying Peter's First Epistle to the brethren of Roman Asia. Mark would have left Rome also, directly after Peter's death, having no further object in remaining. He could not have known that Paul had just been arrested at Troas and was now en route for Rome again, to his second trial and this time to execution. The two ships carrying them probably passed each other somewhere in the Mediterranean, for Mark is next found at Ephesus. It is likely that he took with him Peter's Second Epistle—the one that is sometimes said to be of doubtful authenticity because of its style, ignoring the fact that an Epistle written in the shadow of an imminent martyr's death is almost

certain to reflect the writer's state of mind. And so Mark came to Ephesus, where Timothy had been serving for the past six years, since he left Rome after Paul's first trial, and probably worked harmoniously with Timothy and the Apostle John whom he had known so well in his boyhood days.

Six months later, Paul, back in Rome, in prison, facing trial for being the ringleader of what was now an illegal and proscribed religion, wrote to his beloved co-labourer Timothy asking him to come to Rome, and to bring Mark with him (2 Tim. 4.11). Only Luke had remained with him, he said, and he wanted to see the others again for what would perhaps be the last time. "*Do thy diligence to come before winter*" he said (vs. 21). It was not to be. He wrote to Timothy early in A.D. 68. His final trial and execution could not have been later than April or May, for he was condemned during the reign of Nero, and Nero himself died during June of that year. Before Timothy even received the letter the great Apostle to the Gentiles had finished his course and passed into his Master's safe keeping.

So, in the year 68, thirty-five years after he had crouched behind that tree in Gethsemane watching his Master being taken, the curtain falls on John Mark, still serving that Master, in the Asiatic city of Ephesus. He was barely fifty years of age, probably the youngest survivor of those who had seen and heard Jesus in the flesh. He was still capable of work for the Master. Whether he stayed at Ephesus, or went back to Antioch or even to Jerusalem, or to some other quite new field of endeavour, no one knows. He is not likely to have returned to the Church he founded at Alexandria. After his successor Annianus came Arilius, and after him Cerdo, and then Primus. It is apparent that Mark did not take up the oversight of the churches in Egypt again. Like so many of God's heroes in the Bible, there was no departing in a blaze of glory. He just slips out quietly and is seen no more.

The people who work the hardest and accomplish the most are not those who complain of lack of time. Those who constantly put their time to good use do not excuse themselves from duty on the plea of lack of time. The people who have the most irons in the fire are those most ready to receive and forge another. Goethe, one of the busiest men that ever lived, has said, "Time is endlessly long, and every day is a vessel into

which much may be poured, if one will readily fill it up." And, again, "One has always time enough, if he will improve it well." But we are also to remember what another wise German has said: "To-day is the opportunity for enjoyment and work. Knowest thou where thou wilt be on the morrow?" A greater spirit than either has said: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?"

WHEN SARAH LAUGHED

One of the apparent inconsistencies of Scripture appears between the statement of Heb. 11.11 *"In faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised"* and the historical narrative of Gen. 18.12-15 on which it is based, in which Sarah, overhearing the angelic intimation that she was to become the mother of Isaac, is said to have "laughed", as if in incredulity. *"After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"* she is recorded as having said. When taxed by the angel with having thus apparently doubted his statement, she denied having laughed, *"for she was afraid. And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh"*. The surface reading of the A.V. seems to indicate a lack of faith on Sarah's part; the New Testament passage implies that she did exercise faith.

The writer of "Hebrews" must have been in no doubt that Sarah was a woman of faith or he would not have included her in his 11th chapter which is given over entirely to examples of sterling faith from the past. With this as a starting point the O.T. story as it appears in the A.V. presents itself for re-examination.

The essential factor in the story is the word "laugh". Here is an instance of the genius of the Hebrew language for impressing various shades of meaning into one word which cannot easily be expressed in English without somewhat cumbersome qualification. When used in one grammatical case the word means to laugh in happiness or with pleasure and this is the sense in which the word appears in this passage and in Gen. 21.6 where Sarah says, upon the birth of Isaac, *"God hath made me to laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me"*, and again of Abraham in Gen. 17.17 *"Then Abraham . . . laughed, and said in his heart, shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old?"*. In another grammatical form the same word means to laugh scornfully or derisively. Instances

of this are Ps. 2.4 *"The Lord shall have them in derision"* and Isa. 37.22, speaking to Sennacherib, *"the daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn"*. The only way to translate this grammatical difference is to render "laugh happily" or "laugh scornfully" respectively. In Sarah's case it was the former.

If this be the position, and both Abraham and Sarah "laughed happily" and with pleasure at the prospect of becoming the parents of Isaac, why does the story go on to say that Sarah denied having done so, *"for she was afraid"*. Why be afraid of the angel having overheard her expression of pleasure?

The answer to this lies in the customs of the times. Women were not admitted to the counsels of the men; they were rigorously excluded as an inferior class. Peter makes use of this fact in I Pet. 3.5-6 *"holy women . . . in subjection to their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."* "Where is Sarah thy wife?" asked the angels before imparting their message to Abraham. "Behold, in the tent" he replied (Gen. 18.9). In other words, she was safely out of the way and out of earshot. But Sarah's womanly curiosity overcame her; she wanted to know these strangers' business with her husband and so she indulged in a little eavesdropping behind the entrance covering (verse 10). Verse 12 says she "laughed within herself", i.e. not audibly. Yet the angel knew her inner feelings and taxed her with it. She had been caught out in a serious breach of etiquette and custom. No wonder she was afraid; it is very probable that her husband had something to say about it after his visitors had gone. Sarah denied, not realising perhaps that the strangers had more than human powers and could see into the heart and mind.

Thus seen, both Abraham and Sarah had full faith in the Divine promise that they would have a son and both reacted with pleasure to the intimation that the time had come for the promise to be fulfilled.

Nothing more stabilises faith than the discovery that God is working to a plan. While the individual Christian is responsible for doing his utmost to extend the knowledge of the Gospel, he is not responsible for the results. After all the activity of man, God unerringly pursues the fulfilment of his eternal purpose.

T. C. Hammond.

Upon us rests the responsibility of giving such interpretation of Christ to the world, that men shall be compelled to consider him, to draw near to him, to revere him and, ultimately—through the ministry of our lives—to trust and serve him.

Dr. J. Stuart Holden.

GARDEN OF EDEN

5. The coming of Eve

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

The coming into existence of the first woman is more difficult to comprehend than any other part of the Eden story. The first man was made of the dust of the ground; God breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living being. That is easy to visualise. With Eve it was different. About the only clear and easily understood element in the story is that she was made of Adam's own flesh—"bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" "she was taken out of man". Those were Adam's own words, and however the process of Eve's creation be viewed the conclusions reached may not do violence to the principle underlying those words. Adam's body was constructed from the elements of the earth around him and infused with the spirit of life by God; Eve's body came from Adam and it is not said, as it is said of Adam, that God breathed into Eve's inanimate form the breath of life and awakened her to conscious existence in the manner that Adam was awakened.

It was after the animals had been named and Adam began to perceive the processes of Nature at work in the lower creation that God expressed what were probably Adam's own feelings by the declaration "It is not good that the man should be alone" (ch. 2. vs. 18). Adam himself was by now probably feeling need of a companion, one with whom he could share his thoughts and his experiences. To what extent he may have visualised the possibility of a society of creatures like himself, living and working together in harmony, engaging together in the pursuit of objects of common interest, it is impossible to say. Probably his mind had gone no farther as yet than to dream of just one other human being corresponding in all material respects to himself. Perhaps he did, perhaps he did not, hear the avowed intention of the Lord, "I will make him an help meet for him" but even if he did he could have had no conception of the wonder that was soon to happen.

This word "help meet" has suffered from improper confusion with the English word "help-mate" and has been made to appear as if God was proposing a wife for Adam. Although, of course, the one so soon to come into existence was destined to become Adam's wife, this is not the meaning of the word. "Help meet" is the Hebrew "ezer-ki-neged" which means, literally, an opposite counterpart, as in a mirror reflection. "One like himself standing opposite him" is an equivalent rendering. Adam had seen all the

animals and found none there like himself, none having properties either of body or mind with which he could find something in common. There was no other living creature like Adam in the whole wide world; he was unique. God proposed to alter that situation by bringing him face to face with another like himself with whom he could hold communion and who could share with him the interests of his life.

The popular idea that Eve was created from one of Adam's ribs which was taken from his body for the purpose while asleep has to be mentioned because it is the popular idea and because it appears like that in the Authorised Version narrative. Obviously there is much more behind the story than this; the account warrants closer examination.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." (ch. 2. vs. 21-22).

The word translated "deep sleep" does not refer to ordinary sleep but indicates a trance, being in a senseless or stupefied condition, as in the case, in modern days, of a patient being under an anaesthetic preparatory to a surgical operation. How long this trance lasted we do not know, but it was during its course that Adam passed through the experience which resulted in the coming of Eve. The word "rib" should not have appeared in the A.V. "*Tsela*", here rendered "rib", means the side of the subject referred to, and in the A.V. is used more than thirty times to denote the side chambers or side walls of both Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples and Moses' Tabernacle, and sometimes the side of a hill. The Hebrew for "rib" is *ala*, occurring only once in the O.T., (Dan. 7.5). The Greek Septuagint, translated from the Hebrew text about 250 B.C., has "*pleuron*" but in Greek this means both "rib" and "side" so is not much help. But in considering this verse in Genesis the idea of a rib has to be abandoned as not justified by the Hebrew text and that of Adam's "side" substituted. Conscious of this fact, Jewish tradition declared that Adam was created a kind of dual being, Eve being united to him at his side, the trance-like period of insensibility becoming the occasion of the separation; this typically Rabbinic interpretation is so remote from the sense of the passage that it merits nothing more than passing

mention. It remains to consider what is signified by Eve being made, or taken, from Adam's "side".

Of that which was taken from Adam, God "made" a woman. This word "made" is not that used of the creation of Adam, "yatsar", which means to form, fashion, shape, or construct. It is "banah" which means to build, and is used with this meaning everywhere in the Old Testament—over 300 times—when the building of a thing is referred to. The woman's body was not formed in the same manner as that of the man. His was fashioned from earthly material by the hand of God; hers was built up by a process of growth, and that which eventually blossomed into the perfection of full womanhood had its origin in the body of the man.

This fact is stressed by Adam's words when he received his destined companion. *"This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* In Semitic dialects "bone" is often used as a synonym for "self" and Adam's exclamation might well have inferred "This is self of myself and flesh of my flesh". It is clear that Adam was perfectly well aware that the woman had not been created independently, as he himself had been, and then brought to him; she derived her form and her life from his own self, under the provision of God.

The whole passage, vs. 21-23, merits consideration. First of all, the word "echad", rendered "one", in "one of his ribs", has a wide variety of meanings, including "first" (36 times), "another" (31 times), "a portion" (11 times), "a certain part", and the indefinite article "a" or "an" (56 times). Likewise the preposition "min" here rendered "of" is correctly "from" or "out of". The A.V. translators are inconsistent here. "Min" appears again in vs. 22 as "from" and vs. 23 as "out of", all referring to that which God took from Adam. The sentence "took one of his ribs" might therefore be better rendered "took a part out of his sides". The entire passage could then very well read *"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept, and he took a part out of his sides and closed up the flesh in its place. And the Lord God built up the side which he had taken into a woman, and he brought her unto the man. And the man said, This, this time, is self out of my self and flesh out of my flesh. This shall be named woman because out of man was she taken"*.

The expression "he brought her unto the man" has a significance which is not easily discerned in English. Among other usages, the Hebrew expression is used of a bride being brought to her future husband by her father or other male rela-

tive, much as in modern times she is "given away" in the marriage ceremony by her father. An example occurs in Josh. 15:18. Here in Genesis the sense is that when the Lord had "built" the woman, brought her to the perfection of maturity, He gave her to Adam to be his wife. This must have been the moment when Adam, in the rapture of the meeting, exclaimed "This, this time, is self of myself . . . (not "this now" as in the A.V.); he realised that at last he had a companion equal to himself in every respect with whom he was hereafter to share his life.

Does all this mean that Adam did not at the beginning find Eve a fully grown mature woman but that he had first to watch a process of development through childhood into womanhood? Did Adam awake from his short period of unconsciousness to find himself the custodian of a new young life which until that time had been part of his own self? He must have seen the same kind of thing happening among the lower animals and his mind would quickly grasp the situation. Such a supposition would account for the use of the expression "built" he a woman" instead of "fashioned" as in the creation of the man, and would give full meaning to Adam's exclamation "This is self out of myself and flesh out of my flesh". In such case it would have been a number of years before his charge could become his wife; he must first guide her through the experiences of early childhood and maidenhood, observing her development until at last she attained relative equality with him both mentally and physically.

Cases have been known in this modern world where male and female characteristics are combined in one individual, one or the other usually obtaining the ascendancy eventually. Remembering the Scriptural insistence that all men owe their life and their form to Adam, all die "in Adam" and indirectly in consequence of his sin, it is perhaps not unreasonable to think of the first man Adam as created with all the powers and vehicles of life built into his own organism, retaining only the predominantly manlike characteristics when he had passed life and form with all womanly attributes to the one who was of him and one with him, yet separate from him.

In some such manner may be understood how Eve was taken from Adam's side and the flesh closed up to leave him whole and entire, fitted to fulfil his destiny as the father of the human race. That all this had been intended and planned from the beginning, that Adam at his creation already bore within his body the beginnings of the one who was afterwards to attain separate existence as his companion and wife, may be in-

ferred from the parallel accounts in chapters 1 and 5. "So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them." (ch. 1. 27). "In the day that God created man . . . male and female created he them; and blessed them and called their name Adam." (ch. 5. 1-2).

The declaration which forms verse 24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" is no part of Adam's speech. The compiler of the story added this as his comment. Adam knew nothing of fathers and mothers and it was Eve who was brought to Adam, not vice versa. The writer of the story, correctly perceiving that the whole basis of the marriage relation was established by God in the union of these two, laid down this basic principle which stands for all time. Some have used this text as support for the claim that the primitive state of human society was matriarchal, i.e., that the woman was the head of the family and the man was received at marriage into the tribe of his wife and remained the subordinate member. This is sometimes the case even to-day among certain primitive peoples but the Bible is consistently emphatic that "the husband is the head of the wife". (Eph. 5. 23) and the whole setting of the Eden story is clear that God held the man to be the responsible partner of the two. The verse can be very well understood as referring to the clearly implied truth that in the Divine order a man, on taking to himself a wife, forms a new unit in society, leaving the parental roof and establishing a new home over which his wife presides and in the shelter of which his children are born and reared. Although that ideal is violated in many ways by both primitive and civilised man, in ages past and present, it is never violated without contributing to the further degeneracy of the human race. Only the Divine ideal and the Divine arrangement can endure and produce eventually what God determined when at the beginning "male and female created he them".

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (vs. 25). This verse is usually completely misunderstood. So far as physical nudity is concerned, the two concerned had never known any other state since their creation and it must therefore have seemed the most natural condition of things to them. No other human beings as yet existed. The imposition of modern standards of taste and propriety

upon these two at that time is therefore quite improper, especially since although such standards are those of western civilisation at this present time, they are not universally applicable throughout the world. There are, even now, some tribes in tropical regions where it is considered highly improper for unmarried persons to appear in anything other than a state of nudity; the briefest of coverings is only worn after marriage. We have therefore to look for something more fundamental in this remark that, although naked, they were not ashamed.

The Hebrew word "*erom*" translated "naked" is derived from the idea of being elevated or raised up so as to be plainly in view. There is nothing concealed or hidden. Perhaps the best O.T. text to illustrate the basic meaning of the word is Job 26. 6 "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." Adam and Eve were open and uncovered, upright and guileless, in the sight of God, who was the only One who at that time had anything to do with them. They could, to use a modern expression, "look God in the face" without shame or fear; complete frankness and sincerity characterised their communion and relations with God. This was the state of complete innocence, not of physical knowledge in which their intelligent, perceptive minds must already have made considerable progress, but of mind. Physically and mentally perfectly mature, they were as little children, living in the Kingdom of Heaven. No shadow of sin, no thought of disobedience, had as yet entered their minds. In perfect trust and union with their Creator, they stood upright and open before him and were not ashamed.

How long this happy state endured we have no means of determining. There is no time indication in the story of Eden. The first recorded event is the birth of Cain; whether he was born before or after the Fall is not stated, but the philosophy of the Divine Plan, which demands that all men everywhere are involved in the consequences of the sin of Adam, seems to demand that his birth was afterwards. Their time of unalloyed happiness in the Garden may have been relatively short after all. We do not know; we only know that as they stood there before God, radiant in their happiness and full of promise for the future, the archangel of all evil was moving in quickly to sow the seeds from which men have reaped so bitter a harvest. *To be continued*

Nothing would turn the nation back to God so surely and so quickly as a church that prayed and prevailed. The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no supernatural power.

Samuel Chadwick.

God's comfort is a deposit—a trust. Your only power of comforting others is that you were brought into some deep place and God met you. Afflictions are qualifying you for ministry.

A. Daintree.

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

3. Holiness unto the Lord

*Lessons from the life of
a stalwart man of God*

In fifty-two days the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt because "the people had a mind to work". How much can be accomplished when those who labour do so willingly, joyfully and purposely. It must have been a wonderful moment when the last brick was laid, the doors were all hung and the city could once more resume its function as the centre of national life. Good though it was for God's people to dwell in safety within the city wall, and delightful as that wall was to look upon, Nehemiah's great work did not stop at that point. It now remained to be seen whether the zeal and co-operation engendered by patriotism for their national heritage could be carried over into everyday life.

Jerusalem was the city of worship, and its restoration meant that the voice of prayer and praise could once again be heard in the holy place. The greater work of restoring the ancient faith of their fathers now began. Israel had to be reconciled to the Lord if they were to enjoy his blessing under their covenant with him. They had to understand and keep his law if they wished to have his care and protection. So Nehemiah, having completed the first phase of his work, called upon his colleague, Ezra the scribe, to read and teach the Jews from their holy Scriptures. The Levitical priesthood was reinstated amongst the people, their method of worship as instructed by Moses was again operative and the Hebrew way of life was re-established in the city of peace. Thus prosperity began to return to this God-fearing remnant in Israel.

Not infrequently servants of God in our own day become so engrossed in the service of God that the vital need for prayer and the reading of his Word is forgotten. No great work can be accomplished for our Heavenly Father unless we are in close touch with him. Whatever outward success there may be in our labours of love, the deeper issues of our faith must be kept well to the forefront. Serving the Lord and knowing about his purposes are valuable assets in the Christian life but they can never become substitutes for prayer and worship. We shall in fact be quite unprepared spiritually for our tasks for the Lord unless we spend much time at the Throne of Grace. Natural talent cannot make up for genuine spiritual power received at God's own hand. Nehemiah accomplished his great work because the driving force of his life was derived from communion with God and not from self gratification. It was quite natural for him to turn

to religious reform after the outward material essentials had been restored.

Nehemiah's cleansing of the priesthood and people from the surrounding nations is not to be interpreted as an act of snobbery. The interlopers in the recently built city and reconstituted nation were not the friends of Israel nor lovers of her God. They had for the most part been the very ones who had tried to hinder the rebuilding scheme and had sought to bring disgrace upon Nehemiah. Having failed in one direction they now planned to wreck God's people by mixing their own heathen blood with that of Judah. There was only one way into the nation of Israel by Gentiles—and that had been specifically laid down in their law. Haphazard inter-breeding on the part of the Hebrews would have quickly reduced them as a nation to the depravity of other nations. Rigid separation from the language, customs and worship of their national neighbours was the only solution to their strength and holiness before the Lord.

Once again the parallel between Israel and the Christian Church reflects how the same conditions have brought subsequently spiritual prosperity or bankruptcy. Thus we must turn the light of God's Word upon our own consciences to see if in truth we too have "separated ourselves from the people of the land". This in no way signifies a "holier than thou" attitude, into which Judaism finally developed, nor does it prevent us being sufficiently in the world to let our light shine. On the contrary, God's commission to Israel is to be found in the words of the prophet Isaiah "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. 49. 6). Israel failed in her day of opportunity and the light of ancient Jerusalem was snuffed out by ritualism and base gain.

Paul therefore declares to the people of Antioch in Pisidia that this privilege of bearing witness to the light of God's truth had fallen to the followers of Jesus (Acts 13. 7). Darkness yet abounds in the world. Without compromising with that darkness let us shine forth as the children of our Heavenly Father, in preparation for the day when the New Jerusalem shall descend from Heaven as a bride prepared for her husband.

May God help us to bestir ourselves and continue the work of past ages and generations. It

is no use sitting down and expecting miracles to happen to fulfil God's work. Nehemiah when assured of his work undertook it in a spirit of zeal and perseverance which shows up in marked contrast to the inertia of the twentieth century Christian Church. God awaits our co-operation and is ready to place within our hands the credentials of service such as we frail mortals can do, but only in his strength, and by his Spirit.

"Without God, we cannot: without us, God will not." So ends a remarkable book by Mildred Cable, who did so much for spiritual Zion in central Asia.

"Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen and Amen."
The End.

IN FLAMING FIRE

*A Second
Advent theme*

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

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

Now right at the outset let it be noted that St. Paul's main subject in this chapter is to encourage the Thessalonian Christians in their persecutions and trials of faith by his assurance that God will one day, as the N.E.B. has it, "balance the account" by ushering them into the destiny of glory for which those same sufferings have fitted them, and allow retributive justice to overtake those who have been the malicious cause of their sufferings. This balancing of the account is to take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, and this is where the allusion which is now under consideration finds its place. Verse 4 of the chapter records St. Paul's own joy for the Thessalonians' patience and faith, verse 5 that they are thereby counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, verses 6-9 a reminder of the basic principle "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap" so that the believers reap the reward of their faith, and the unbelievers reap retribution and destruction, verse 10 that this climax is to be when the Lord returns for the dual purpose of taking to himself his saints and bringing to an end all evil. So St. Paul winds up his discourse in verses 11-12 with a fer-

vent prayer that all those to whom he is writing may be found worthy of the Divine calling and all things redound to the glory of God.

An essential part of this very desirable climax is the triumph of right and the final defeat of wrong and evil. This implies that those who now suffer for righteousness' sake must one day be delivered from those sufferings, and receive that on account of which they willingly suffered. It also implies that retribution must overtake those who, of malicious intent or because of hostility to God and the principles of righteousness, caused those sufferings. There is nothing vindictive about this, neither is it a case of God seeking revenge upon those who have flouted him. This somewhat colourful passage—colourful because its imagery is taken from the poetic background of Old Testament prophecy—expresses the basic principle underlying Divine creation of intelligent creatures in his own image, that the gift of life can only be enjoyed and exercised in harmony with Divine purpose and law. Failing acceptance of that, the Divine gift is withdrawn, and death ensues. St. Paul in this chapter relates that principle to the particular case of the persecutions suffered by the Christians of Thessalonica and the inevitable outcome.

"It is surely just that God would balance the account by sending trouble to those that trouble you, and relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well, when our Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven..." (vs. 6-7 N.E.B.). This translation conveys the sense rather better than does the A.V., although the use of "recompence" in verse 6 by the A.V. is ethically the more correct. The tribulation or trouble which comes upon the persecutors is a just retribution and in fact is brought upon them by their own actions. This is a point which often escapes notice. Evil doing can only be productive of evil, and all evil is the product of evil doing. The evil doer therefore inevitably lays up a store of evil which, if it returns upon his own head, is a perfectly just

retribution and there can be no accusation of vindictiveness or revenge on the part of the One who has required rightdoing of his own creation. From the beginning of the world men have cried out their indignation that the innocent suffer, and expressed satisfaction when the guilty receives the reward of his deeds; all this is an acknowledgement, whether conscious or sub-conscious, that the ways of God are right and that justice must eventually be done. Likewise the afflicted ones experience rest or relief from their afflictions—the word used means to loosen or slacken the tension as of a bowstring—so that they enter into a more tolerable condition. But this is to be at a certain definite time in human history, *“when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven . . .”* This clearly is at the Second Advent of our Lord, the time when He returns as He promised to gather his Church to himself, bring to an end the evil institutions of man, and establish his Messianic Kingdom upon the earth. This is the revealing spoken of so often in the New Testament, the one of which Jesus told Caiaphas he would see the Son of Man at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26. 64), and to which St. Peter referred as the immediate precursor of the Times of Restitution of all things. (Acts 3. 19-21).

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

Verses 8-10 allude to three distinct purposes associated with the Second Advent. First, Christ comes to “dispense retributive justice” as Wilson's *“Emphatic Diaglott”* translation has it, to those who know not and obey not God; second to associate his Church with himself and be manifested resplendently with them—this is sometimes called the “rapture of the saints”—and third, to be adored by all who will believe “in that day”. The saints have believed before that day and this last aspect points to others than the

Christian Church of this present Age who will come to the feet of the Saviour. Now the determining factor in all this is the time feature. Everything in verses 8-10 is governed by the one word “when” in verse 10. Just as the rest and relief of the Church from affliction is to come “when” the Lord Jesus is revealed at his Advent, in verse 7, so the taking vengeance in flaming fire on the unbelievers is to be “when” He, with his saints, is adored by all who will believe “in that day”, the day of the Second Advent or Second Presence, the Messianic Age, in verse 10. It should therefore be seen that both processes, the receiving the adoration of those who will believe, and the infliction of “everlasting destruction” upon those who will not believe, takes place during the passage of that Age.

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

Now about the “everlasting destruction” of verse 9. The word destruction itself needs no qualification; that which is destroyed can never exist as such again. The word “ever-lasting” here

is *aionian*; although often rendered everlasting, eternal and the like, the word is not confined to the meaning we normally attach to such terms. It does not necessarily mean endless in respect of time; it rather has the quality of permanence in respect to the Age or period visualised. Thus the term "the destruction pertaining to the age" would be a better presentation, even although the effective result is the same, for destruction is inherently final and therefore everlasting. The importance of the qualification "*aionian*" in this verse, though, is that it defines the destruction of the unbelievers as a function of the Age which is itself the earthly expression of the Second Advent. The *parousia* or presence of the Lord Jesus will continue throughout the entire duration of the Messianic or Millennial Age—not until its close does He "*deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . that God may be all in all*" (1 Cor. 15. 23-28), and the Divine judgment spoken of in verses 8-9 will therefore come

into operation during that Age and be completed before its end.

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

SEISS ON THE END OF THE WORLD

The following extract from "Lectures on the Book of Revelation" by Dr. J. A. Seiss, noted Lutheran minister of Philadelphia a century ago, seems worthy of reproduction for its clarity of view respecting the meaning of those Scriptures which speak of the dissolution of this world at the inception of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

* * * *

"There is a notion, bred from the morbid imagination of the Middle Ages, which has much influenced the translators of our English Bible, unduly tainted religious oratory, song, and even sober theology, and still lingers in the popular mind as if it were an article of the settled Christian creed, that the time is coming when everything that is, except spiritual natures, shall utterly cease to be, the earth consume and disappear, the whole solar and sidereal system collapse, and the entire physical universe vanish into nothingness. How this can be, how it is to be harmonised with the promises and revealed purposes of God, there is not the least effort to show. The thing is asserted, and that is quite enough for some people's faith, though sense, reason, and revelation be alike outraged.

"There is indeed to be an 'end of the world'. The Bible often refers to it but men mistake when they suppose the world spoken of in such passages to be the earth as a planet. Three different words have our translators rendered

"world": *ge*, which means the earth proper, the ground, this material orb which we inhabit; *cosmos*, which means what constitutes the inhabitableness, the ornamentation, beauty, cultivation, external order, fashion of the world, but not the substance of the earth as a terraqueous globe; and *aion*, which is used more than one hundred times in the New Testament, but always with reference to time, duration, eras, dispensations,—a stage or state marking any particular period, long or short, past, present, or future,—the course of things in any given instance, rather than the earth or any theatre on which it is realised. It may be earth or heaven, time or eternity, a material or an immaterial world, it is all the same as to the meaning of the word *aion*, which denotes simply the time-measure and characteristics of that particular period or state to which it is applied. And this is the word used in all those passages which speak of 'the end of the world'. It is not the end of the earth, but the end of a particular time, age, condition, or order of things, with the underlying thought of other orders of things, and perpetual continuity in other forms and ages. Aeons end, times change, the fashion of the world passeth away, but there is no instance in all the Book of God which assigns an absolute termination to the existence of the earth as one of the planets, or any other of the great sisterhood of material orbs.

"So in those passages which speak of the passing away of the earth and heavens (See Matt. 5. 18-35; Mark 13. 30-31; Luke 16. 17-33; 2 Pet. 3. 10; Rev. 21. 1), the original word is never one which signifies termination of existence, but *parerchomia*, which is a verb of very wide and general meaning, such as to go or come to a person, place, or point; to pass, as a man through a bath, or a ship through the sea; to pass from one place or condition to another, to arrive at, to go through; to go into, to come forward as if to speak or serve. As to time, it means going into the past, as events or a state of things once present giving place to other events and another state of things. That it implies great changes when applied to the earth and heavens is very evident; but that it ever means annihilation, or the passing of things out of being, there is no clear instance either in the Scriptures or in classic Greek to prove. The main idea is transition, not extinction.

"Some texts, particularly as they appear in our English Bible, express this change very strongly, as where the earth and heavens are spoken of as perishing, being dissolved, flying away (Isa. 34.4; 54. 10; Rev. 6. 14; 20. 10); but the connections show that the meaning is not cessation of being, but simply the termination or dissolution of the present condition of them to give place to a new and better condition. At least one such perishing of the earth has already occurred. Peter, speaking of the earth and heavens of Noah's time, says: "The world that then was being overflowed with water, PERISHED" (2 Pet. 3. 5, 6.). But what was it that perished? Not the earth as a planet, certainly; simply the mass of the people, and the condition of things which then existed, whilst the earth and race continued and have continued till now. Equally strong expressions are used with regard to the destruction or passing away of the old in the case of one born again to newness of life in Christ Jesus; but no one there-

fore supposes that the bringing of a man from Satan to God is the annihilation of him. It is simply the change of his condition and relations. And so in the case of the earth and heavens; for the same word which describes the change in the individual man is used to describe the change to be wrought in the material world. It is regeneration—*paliggenesia*—in both instances (Matt. 29. 28; Tit. 3.5), and therefore not the putting out of existence in either case. The dissolving of which Peter is made to speak is really a deliverance rather than a destruction. The word he uses is the same which the Saviour employs when he says of the colt, 'Loose him', and of Lazarus when he came forth with his death-wrappings, 'Loose him, and let him go', and of the four angels bound at the Euphrates, 'Loose them', and of the Devil, 'He must be loosed a little season'. It is the same word which John the Baptist used when he spoke of his unworthiness to unloose the Saviour's shoe strings, and which Paul used when he spoke of being 'loosed from a wife'. It is absurd to attempt to build a doctrine of annihilation on a word which admits of such applications. The teaching of the Scriptures is that the creation is at present in a state of captivity, tied down, bound, 'not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope'; the dissolving of all these things, of which Peter speaks, is not the destruction of them, but the breaking of their bonds, the loosing of them, the setting of them free again to become what they were originally meant to be, their deliverance (Compare Romans 8. 19-23). And as to the flying or passing away, of which John speaks, a total disappearance of all the material worlds from the universe is not at all the idea; for he tells us that he afterwards saw 'the sea' giving up its dead, the New Jerusalem coming down 'out of the heaven', the Tabernacle of God established among men, and 'nations' still living and being healed by the leaves of the Tree of Life."

"What is the source from which we must get the oil for the light, the virtue for the salt, the power to raise that city to its elevation on the hill? Here, at the foot of the Cross, where repentance and determination, contrition and hope, renunciation and consecration, go hand in hand. Not in the emotionless formalism of the detached acceptance of a cold invitation "if ye do *this* . . . I will give you *that*" but in the spontaneous, eager realisation of tender, compassionate tones "My son, give me thine

heart . . . who will go for us?", lies the power that will make us to "shine forth as the sun" here and now in the sight of all men. In that experience, and that alone, shall we realise what was in the mind of Luke, when he beheld the fellowship of the Early Church and wrote of them, "*praising God, and having favour with all the people: and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*". Is it any accident that that last phrase is associated with its predecessor?"

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

*A Study in
Divine Purposes*

3. Moses to Christ

"The Lord your God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me. Unto him shall ye hearken: and it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." (Deut. 18. 15. Acts 3. 23).

That is one of the most significant utterances of the Scriptures. It tells more of God's purposes than did all that had been revealed to man in all the ages before Moses. For the first time in history the Divine intentions and promises became centred in the person of an individual—"He that shall come"—and for ever afterwards the constant theme of all who thought and spoke and wrote of the ways of God was the "Coming One". In him would all the fair promises of God for human welfare be fulfilled!

Small wonder that Isaiah should speak so rapturously of the King who one day would rule in righteousness, of the Shepherd who would feed his flock, of the Conqueror who would destroy all evil in the winepress of God's wrath. Small wonder that Malachi should speak of the Herald who would announce his advent, and the blessings that would attend the completion of his work. Small wonder, indeed, that the common people, waiting and longing for the promise, should ask John the Baptist, hopefully, "Art thou 'that prophet'?" They had been waiting so long and by then they realised how much they needed his coming and his ministration.

But, of course, back in the days of Moses the people had by no means come to this stage of development. They as yet hardly realised their undone state before God. True, they knew that they were in misery and suffering. Their cry in Egypt had gone up to God in heaven, and He had heard, and had reached down from heaven to deliver them, "with an high hand, and an outstretched arm" (Deut. 26. 9), but once the immediate stress was over and they were safely on the other side of the Red Sea they quickly forgot the Lord their deliverer. It was not until their enthusiasm was engendered by the making of their Covenant at Sinai in the mediation of Moses that their faith returned and they shouted "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exod. 24. 7).

The making of that covenant was a great event in the history of the Times of Ignorance. Here was God undertaking to teach this whole nation the things concerning himself and his Plan. For that Covenant was much more than a mere

understanding "If you do *this*, you shall live; if you do *that*, you will die." It was not framed merely to inaugurate and perpetuate a series of rites and ceremonies that might become the ritual form of the nation's worship. It was essentially a covenant of knowledge, a means by which Israel—and others, too, in after days—might be taught the elements of God's Plan and the laws of his universe. We, today, many thousands of years later, still gain valuable instruction in the Divine Plan by consideration of things that the Law Covenant contained, its precepts and principles, its warnings and promises, its types and shadows. The Covenant became to Israel a teacher, a teacher that was intended to lead the sincerely reflective among them to a higher plane in the knowledge and understanding of God—and ultimately to the Saviour. "The law" says Paul "was our *pedagogue* (tutor) to lead us to Christ" (Gal. 23. 24).

The making of the Law Covenant with Israel, then, was by far the greatest advance in the dispelling of man's ignorance of God that had been made since Creation. The standards of God's holiness were now made known in the world, not as reasoned out by man on the basis of things that are seen, but revealed by God from things that are unseen. A new voice was in the world, speaking with authority, the voice of God himself; when God said at Sinai "*Thou shalt not . . . thou shalt . . .*" there were none that could gainsay.

It has been asserted by scholars anxious to discredit the Divine authority of the Scriptures and the supernatural element in the Exodus story, that the Laws of Moses bear so striking a similarity to the Code of Hammurabi the Sumerian monarch of six hundred years before, that Moses must have taken his commandments from the earlier laws. That there is a great similarity is true, and since the rules of right-doing and justice are based on the same fundamental principles in all ages it is not surprising that such a similarity does exist. Hammurabi did the best he could with the same motive at heart as had Moses; but when God spoke to Moses He revealed depths of understanding in the regulation of the conduct of fallen man which the Sumerian ruler never plumbed. It is the law of Moses which has survived almost intact to our own day and not the Code of Hammurabi, and the reason is because the work of Moses was directly of God; that of Hammurabi only in-

directly, through generations of fallible and imperfect men.

So Israel pursued her notable career through the centuries, despite many failures and shortcomings continually advancing in the knowledge of God and presenting to the world a constantly deepening and widening view of the principles of his government and his Plan. Men, as a whole, were no more disposed to believe than they had been in the earliest stages of world history, but the opportunities for acquiring knowledge of the way of salvation, and the bases of faith, were *much more extensive, and that is an important consideration when the question of responsibility comes to be discussed.* Our Lord indicated that much when he spoke of the men of Sodom and Nineveh rising in the judgment with the men of his own generation (Matt. 12: 41). Greater knowledge, greater light, brings greater responsibility and therefore liability to a greater judgment. The Israelites had light a hundred-fold, a thousand-fold, more than had the antediluvians.

Perhaps in no way is this increase of light on God's character and Plan more strikingly shown than in the Lord's own words to Moses "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the name of *El Shaddai*—God Almighty but by my name *Yahweh*—the all-embracing One—was I not known to them" (Gen. 6: 3). What profound truth is hidden in those few words! The patriarchs, knowing God as the Almighty, All powerful One, had advanced tremendously from the position of their ancestors who knew him only as the Most High; so did Moses and his generation take another great stride forward into the light and come to know God, not merely as the Almighty, One who had all power, but as the Eternal, omniscient both in power and being, the source of all things and the sustainer of all things. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" said Paul to the men of Athens. That is what the name *Yahweh* implies. He embraces all things, and in him all things consist. There was only one greater height of understanding to be attained, and to reach that highest level of all, men must needs wait for the Coming of One who had dwelt in the bosom of the Father and could therefore in due time interpret him to man, not as the Most High, not as the Almighty, not even as the All-embracing One, but as—the Father! But men were by no means ready for that in the time of Moses.

The history of Israel was not one of uninterrupted advance in the knowledge of God. There were periods of retrogression. Such an one was the latter part of the period of the Judges, a time when idolatry was rampant and the people were

falling away fast from their covenant. The work of Samuel did much to bring them back to God and the terms of their national standing before him. Then in the days of the later kings the ugly head of apostasy reared itself again, and this time the people went away into captivity, a captivity in which they learned another and an entirely distinct set of lessons, which brought them back, in the days of Cyrus, a very different nation to that which had gone away under Shalmaneser and Nebuchadnezzar. In the interim the prophets of Israel had arisen with their several messages, so that when there were barely four centuries left to go for the Times of Ignorance to have run their full course there were many in Israel able to look forward with considerable clarity of vision to the God-promised prospect of a world in which sin and death were banished and all men would live in the light of God's countenance and find at his right hand pleasures forevermore.

It was during this period that the *benevolent aspects of the Divine dealings with man became clearly understood*, as they had never been understood before. The old mechanical, ritualistic idea of God, eternally demanding appeasement by blood sacrifices, requiring unyielding obedience to a meaningless jumble of precepts, began to give place to an appreciation of the principles which lay behind those outward forms and ceremonies. "*Hath the Lord as great delight*" cried Samuel to Saul "*in sacrifice and offering as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*" (1 Sam. 15: 22). It was Jonah, one of the earliest prophets, who was taught, and taught in his turn, the great lesson of the mercy of God. "*Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?*" (Jon. 4: 11). Times of Ignorance indeed! The entire population of what was at that time the world's capital city was incapable of the most elementary discernment and God would save them, that an opportunity be granted them to repent, and so come to a knowledge of him that their ignorance might be swept away. The Gentiles, sunk much more in unbelief than was Israel, were nevertheless just as much objects of Divine care, and although they had been left to make their own way through the fogs of ignorance there were among them from time to time men who showed that the spirit of enquiry and of investigation was not dead. And oft-times there were those who, like the discreet lawyer of the Gospel story, were "not far from the Kingdom of God".

Such an one was Akhnaton, the Egyptian Pharaoh, who not long after the time of Moses sought to wean Egypt away from her many gods and return to the purity of her ancient worship, that of One God. Akhnaton has been called "the world's greatest dreamer", "the world's first pacifist", and kindred names. He drew all Egypt away from the worship of many gods and set up the worship of one god, restoring Egypt's original monotheism. He could compel respect to his wishes, for he was Pharaoh. He closed the old idolatrous temples and built himself a new capital city, sacred to the cause to which he had devoted his life. That he was a great man and a profound thinker there is admittedly no doubt—but he was no sooner dead than all his reforms were abandoned, his memory vilified, and Egypt went back to her old ways. The monotheism of Moses has borne lasting fruit in the world and given us Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three great monotheistic faiths; the monotheism of Akhnaton failed to survive his own generation. Moses was led by the Holy Spirit; the Egyptian Pharaoh was not; that is the difference.

So it was with the great philosophers who came in the later centuries, a few hundreds of years before Jesus was born at Bethlehem. The world was growing rapidly in knowledge and experience; explorers were pushing to the ends of the earth and astronomers were scanning the heavens. At the time that Sennacherib took the Ten Tribes captive to Assyria, Zarathrusta, the Persian philosopher, was laying the foundations of a great religion upon his thesis of an eternal conflict between the powers of light and darkness, of good and evil. He had not attained to the truth as it was shortly to be revealed, but he had taken a great step forward. While Nebuchadnezzar was ruling in Babylon and Daniel was his Prime Minister, Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, was teaching men on the other side of the world that human nature is essentially and inherently good; it only requires development to attain to righteousness and perfection. He was right—and yet how short he came of the truth, that only by means of a Redeemer shall man complete that development which alone can result in righteousness and perfection. Whilst

Malachi the Hebrew prophet was declaring in impassioned tones that a day must come when God will burn as in an oven all that is evil and corrupt, that the true and good might emerge purified as gold and silver, the Grecian philosopher Socrates—between his cups—was extolling the inherent goodness and rightness of knowledge as all that is necessary to open to man a pathway to the stars; but man had sought for knowledge at the very beginning, had attained knowledge, and it had brought only suffering and death. All that Socrates had to say concerning the virtue and the necessity of knowledge was true, but knowledge of itself cannot save, and that is where the Socratean philosophy fell short and failed. These philosophers, and many like them, were searching for the truth, and each of them uncovered some fundamental principle that has its place in the great plan whereby men will come into harmony with God and remain in harmony with him, but they all, without exception, failed to give real illumination to men because they did not know Christ, and had not heard, and failed to realise, that in addition to all that man can find out for himself and all that he can do for himself, he needs the saving power of God, in Christ, as expressed in the knowledge of the Gospel. Without that, and without faith in the only name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, there is no salvation.

So, at last, and in the fulness of time, Paul the Apostle stood upon Mars Hill at Athens and announced, in a tone of authority never before voiced either by prophet or philosopher, and with a knowledge transcending the loftiest heights to which either had in time past attained, that the world's ignorance was now to be dispelled by a plain and authoritative statement of the Divine Plan; the beclouded minds of men were to be illumined by a proclamation and a calling as clear and definite as it was commanding and obligatory. The Times of Ignorance God had "seen beyond"; now that which He had foreseen had come to pass and in the light of the triumphant life and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ He called upon all men to forsake their former ignorance, to heed his words, and repent.

(To be concluded)

The close study of the Word of God may require all our highest powers and tax all our energies but the consolation of that study no tongue of men or angels can fully tell. While we are so engaged light breaks around our path, hopes burn brighter and love waxes warmer.

Bishop Ellicott.

Take the hardest thing in your life; the place of difficulty, and expect God to triumph gloriously in that very spot. There is no place without its difficulties; by removing you may change them—it may be you will increase them! But you cannot escape them.

L. Trotter.

COURAGE OF CONVICTION

"We, having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I believed, therefore have I spoken', we also believe and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4.13).

Faith is a mighty, moving force, a maker of worlds and a changer of circumstances. In action it has worked wonders. The golden threads of its deeds are woven into the multi-coloured tapestry of man's history. But faith is not a dumb force. It speaks in words of conviction and assurance, sometimes in halting phrases and with stammering tongue, sometimes eloquently in words of flame or in tones of thunder. Often it chooses the still small voice of some gentle saint to suddenly stab awake the dormant conscience of a self-willed ego. Whatever its tones or wherever it speaks, its words spring like water from the rock foundation of its belief.

"I believed, so I have spoken." The original words were said by David, King of Israel. He had cried to God for help when in deep trouble and he had been helped. His distressed mind found rest. In his relief and sense of revival he publicly expressed his gratitude to the Lord who had answered him with swift and generous assistance. Faith proclaimed its secret trust in the almighty invisible arm of power and its open reward. It declared its plain testimony before others, that the others might see and know and understand the benefits of believing.

The life that is lived by faith, the steps that are walked in faith, have different experiences leading to different destinations other than those resulting from purely human choice, or the uncertain chances of life. Actions speak louder than words and the old heroes of faith were doers. Following in their energetic wake have come the preachers and the teachers, proclaiming in tones of living fire the great gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The glorious theme of salvation needed tongues of pentecostal fire that its speech might be heard through all the earth. Its greatest Apostle, carrying its torch of liberty and truth into the misty philosophy of the western world, had exclaimed, *"How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"*. Again, *"If our gospel is hid it is hid to them that are lost"*.

A blind, confused, wandering world of men and women running hither and thither in all directions, tossed about on every wind of doc-

trine, alternately angry or distressed like lost children, needed a clear, reasoning voice to give them direction, to turn their feet into the right path. Unless someone who knew the way was willing to become their voice, how could they get out of the dismal wilderness?

Faith stepped into the office of preacher. Because men and women believed in God and in Jesus Christ as "the way, the truth and the life", they went out into all nations, into the highways and byways of the earth, and they preached. Faith spoke out of the fulness of their belief. *"The Lord gave the word: great was the army that published it"*.

The harsh clamour of the modern world almost drowns the still small voice of faith. Vanity Fair competes brashly with the voice of the preacher. A jaunty indifference plugs its ears to the words of life, but so long as faith remains in a human heart its voice will be heard proclaiming the glad tidings of good things. No word of God fails of its errand. Into some mind a spark enters, a taper of hope, a flicker of interest, a stirring of longing, to blaze at last into that abundant life which is the gift of God.

Because we believe we speak. We can do no other.

*O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise;
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of his grace.*

To the last conscious day of his life the Christian must have the courage of his convictions. Believing, he must speak of the hope which lights his life, of the Kingdom of God to which he steers his frail craft, piloted through the shoals and storms of this world by the Hand of universal power. The praises of God will always be on his tongue and the love of God never far from his thoughts, the whole tenor and essence of his life expressing the depths and the strength of his convictions.

Who knows what dying embers may be fanned to brighter flames or what questing heart may seize on such blessed assurance and follow on to join in the triumphs of the true and faithful. The words are God's words but it is the privilege of instructed men and women to speak them that other men and women may listen and learn and live.

THE RAS SHAMRA TABLETS

*Excursion into
Archeology*

During the year 1929, very nearly an exact century since Henry Rawlinson started the fascinating series of discoveries which have continuously added to Biblical understanding, two French archaeologists, Professors Schaeffer and Chenet, were carrying out investigations at a place on the coast of Syria called Ras Shamra, near Cape Fennel and a few miles north of the modern sea-port of Latakia. They had found the buried remains of an ancient temple; upon uncovering the room which had evidently been the temple library, there was revealed a considerable number of baked clay tablets inscribed in what afterwards proved to be eight different languages of antiquity. Even after so many "finds" extending over the past hundred years and spread over all the lands of the Middle East, it was speedily recognised that this was one of supreme importance, and when scholars had given these first tablets some examination a more thoroughgoing expedition was arranged. Throughout the period between 1930 and 1932 a considerable amount of work was done at Ras Shamra and in addition to many more tablets there were brought to light weapons and implements of bronze, jewellery, pottery and other articles in great abundance. Satisfactory evidence in the form of seals and other emblems bearing the names of certain Egyptian Pharaohs established the date when these relics were buried beneath the ruins of the temple, not to see the light of day again until discovered in our own century, as about 1400 to 1350 B.C., just after the time when Joshua and the Israelites entered Canaan and were engaged in gaining possession of the land. It was therefore seen at once that these written tablets would most likely prove to be of considerable interest to Bible scholars and probably throw some light on certain Bible narratives, particularly those relating to the time of the Exodus.

Three of the languages in which these tablets are written are still undeciphered. The remainder include Egyptian, Cretan, Babylonian and, most interesting of all, archaic Hebrew written in Babylonian cuneiform characters. The nature of the tablets shows the temple to have been the centre of a kind of theological college and many of them record various kinds of ritual observances and instructions which bear a striking resemblance to much of the Tabernacle ceremonial given to Moses at Sinai and which became the worship of Israel for many centuries thereafter. Now this is a most important as well

as most interesting discovery. For two generations prior to 1930 the "modern scholarship" school of Biblical thought had assiduously promulgated conclusions to the effect that much of the ceremonial in Exodus and Leviticus was invented by priests at much later times—in the days of the Kings—and accredited to Moses to give it authority in the eyes of the people. The general position of Old Testament "criticism" was that the books of Moses were not to be taken as strictly historical and that even if Moses had in fact lived, much of what is credited to him in the books bearing his name must be assigned to a considerably later date. These discoveries at Ras Shamra therefore have come as a most welcome independent testimony to the strictly historical character of the books of Moses, for they show that sacrificial rituals very much like those described in the Book of Leviticus were evidently quite well known in Canaan at the very time that Moses was alive.

The type of religious faith that is revealed by the tablets is polytheistic—it has to do with the worship of many gods and goddesses. At the same time there is frequent mention of the god *Elyon*, which is the Hebrew name for the "Most High God". Those who are familiar with the book of Genesis will recall the fact that the first name by which God was known—or at least the earliest name which is recorded—before He was known as *Yahweh*, the Eternal (to Moses), or *El Shaddai*, the Almighty (to Abraham), is this very name—*El Elyon*, the Most High God. Genesis 14 tells of Melchisedek the Priest-king of Jerusalem in the days of Abraham, that he was "the priest of the Most High God". Abraham paid him tribute, thereby acknowledging his recognition that Melchisedek's God was the same as his own. There are other indications in Scripture to the effect that God was known by this name in the earliest ages of earth's history. It seems probable that those in Canaan who, though not of the line of Jacob, which for several centuries had been absent in Egypt, had nevertheless continued worshippers of the God of Abraham and Jacob, knew him still by this name. The worship of the "Most High God" which Scripture indicates prevailed in Canaan in Abraham's time, is shown by the evidence of the Ras Shamra tablets to have survived, probably in an increasingly corrupted form, until Joshua arrived from Egypt six centuries later.

These tablets betray some acquaintance, on the part of the writers, with the ceremonial of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, or else with some common source which forms the basis of both. Much the same terms are used to describe much the same things. Thus there are references to the peace offering, the trespass offering, the tribute offering, the wave offering, the burnt offering, the first fruits, beside allusions to sacred furniture such as that in use in the Tabernacle, and to the Most Holy, the Court, and so on. Now we do not, of course, know just what inspired the detail of the elaborate Tabernacle design and its attendant ceremonies. The entire pattern was shown to Moses by God, we are told, in the Mount. (Exod. 25. 40). It would seem that the venerable leader of Israel saw these things, this Tabernacle and all its ceremonies, as in a kind of vision, during the time he was alone on Sinai as recorded in Exod. 24. It is a fact that much of the physical structure of the Tabernacle bore a distinct resemblance to Egyptian temple architecture and some of the furniture can be shown to have had likenesses in common with Babylonian temple furniture of many centuries previously. On this account it has been suggested that Moses adapted ideas from older faiths to build a religious ceremonial of his own. What is more in keeping with the Scripture record is to accept the account in Exodus to mean exactly what it says, that Moses was caused by the power of the Holy Spirit to see in vision an exact replica of the Tabernacle as God required it to be made. If, in designing that pattern, the Most High made use of ideas that men had already developed in their past attempts to worship him, that is entirely within the exercise of his discretion as the Lord of all created things. We do not know in fact just what origin, in the mists of antediluvian time, some of these emblems of worship may have had when men did worship God in the measurable purity of the days immediately after the Fall.

It is probably reasonable therefore to conclude that the ceremonials described in the Ras Shamra tablets have some connection with, or were in part derived from, the instructions which God gave to Moses in the wilderness. Their existence in these tablets does at least prove quite definitely that such ideas were abroad at that time, and to that extent gives evidence of the

historical accuracy of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy.

One other point of interest remains to touch upon. Who were these people who administered this temple and lived in the surrounding countryside?

The remains at Ras Shamra show that the city and its people existed there from at least two centuries before Abraham entered Canaan, until about two hundred years after the Exodus—say about the middle of the time of the Judges, some little while before Samuel came to Eli at Shiloh. During this long period of about a thousand years all kinds of races and types made their homes in that district. Some of the later tablets have to do with seafaring expeditions; there are registers of ocean-going ships using the port. Remembering that in after days this very country became the home of the Phœnicians, that renowned seagoing merchant people of old time, it may well be that their progenitors were here taking root in the soil. Another class of tablets incorporates legends regarding Terah, a military conqueror under the protection of the Moon-god, who invaded the country with his hosts. One is reminded immediately of Terah, the father of Abraham, who left his native city Ur of the Chaldees, the holy city of the Moon-god, to come to Canaan, and how at a later date Abraham with all his "trained servants" (mercenary or "hired" soldiers) defeated and put to flight the Babylonian and Elamite armies in this very land. (See Gen. 14). It would not be profitable to dwell upon or spend time examining the mass of such legend that appears in the tablets but allusions such as these do go to show that what we now read as history in the early chapters of Genesis was so well known in the days of these tablets that much of it, distorted and intermixed, had already passed into the realm of popular legend.

The true value of Ras Shamra, therefore, is its testimony to the facts that, first, the Bible is true history of the periods with which it deals, and, second, that this Bible history is still the fullest and most complete account of those times, revealing a more detailed and accurate picture of the progress of events in the world's oldest civilisations than any tablets or other records which the researches of men in these last days have brought to light.

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.

God is looking, not for the man of ability but for the man of faith; the man who refuses to doubt; the man who believes that God is sufficient. He is looking for the man who believes not only that God can, but is fully persuaded that God will.

D. R. Shepson.

ROMANS FIFTEEN FOUR

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

The apostle Paul usually wrote his epistles to Christians with whom he was already acquainted, and that knowledge aided him when he wrote to them and heard of their difficulties, their failings, their gains and their hopes. The position was different when he wrote to the church at Rome, for though he may have personally met one or two, he had not met them as a community and had to rely on reports he had heard of them. He had heard well of them, for their faith was spoken of throughout the world (Rom. 1. 8), and it may have been that having heard of their faith he wished to meet them face to face. Being a Roman it was to be expected that Paul desired to visit the metropolis of the world, but that was not the reason why he wanted to *"preach the gospel to you that are at Rome"* (Rom. 1. 15). A close bond of unity tied Paul to the Roman church even before they had met, so that he longed to see them (Rom. 1. 11). We can readily imagine how this unity had been made. Some strangers of Rome had been present on that memorable day of Pentecost (Acts 2. 10) and would return to their home city with the truly wonderful news. Later they would hear of the great persecution against the church at Jerusalem with which Saul was actively connected (Acts 8. 1). Then they would hear of Paul preaching the faith which once he destroyed. And later, Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome (Acts 18. 2), and that decree "worked together for good" for it resulted in the meeting of Paul with Aquila who would no doubt tell Paul about the brethren at Rome. At times it seemed unlikely that Paul would ever reach Rome; but a greater power than civil Rome or Satanic opponents of Christianity was at work. On his journey to Jerusalem for the last time, Paul called at Ephesus and told the church there that he went *"bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there."* On arrival he was gladly received by the church, but was promptly apprehended by the Jews. Yet, while they were conspiring his death, the Lord told Paul that he would bear witness at Rome. So, throughout the protracted proceedings at Jerusalem and Caesarea he knew that he would surely see the church at Rome before he had finished his mission, and that may have been

in his mind when he ended his examination before Festus by appealing to Caesar. Festus unwittingly furthered the cause of Christianity by answering *"Unto Caesar shalt thou go"* (Acts 21. 12).

We may assume that the letter which Paul wrote to them at Rome contained many things which he hoped later to be able to deliver in person, and naturally he hopes that the epistle will stir up their minds and give encouragement in the meantime. In all probability the ecclesia at Rome comprised both Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles predominating due to the edict of Claudius. With that in mind it may appear that the words of the heading *"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* is far too sweeping an assertion, for many Christians have been taught that the Old Testament is mainly for the children of Israel and that only fragments of prophecy and the Psalms should be held as applicable to the Christian church. At least these words of Paul have disposed for all time of that notion. But even allowing that there is much more for Christians in the Old Testament than was at first supposed, can it be that *"whatsoever written aforetime"* is for us? Yes, it is even so; and Paul gives an example of this in 1 Cor. 9. 9/10 where he reasons that an item of the Mosaic law relative to the care of lower animals was in fact full of teaching for us and that the law concerning animals is secondary to its Gospel age application! In this Roman letter Paul is as good as his word, for when writing this letter he makes copious reference to the Old Testament, with the object that we who were Gentiles might obtain HOPE. True, not all quotations speak of hope, (some, indeed, tell of condemnation) but all are made so that the cumulative teaching removes all uncertainty of mind and gives eternal hope and comfort, being built upon that solid rock of truth, the Word of God. We who are not of Jacob may well be astonished that the law, the prophets, and the psalms, written by holy men of God and guarded so jealously through the centuries by the Jews find their primary fulfilment in promoting hope within us who once were aliens from the covenants of promise. And yet it is not so surprising, if we recall that to those very prophetic writers was revealed that they were ministering those things to us (1 Pet. 1. 12); and that when such faithful

men as Daniel asked for further enlightenment upon the visions they were recording, it was said to them that the vision was for an appointed time and that at the end it would speak; that it was sealed till the time of the end. In agreement with this our Lord said to the disciples that many prophets and righteous men had desired to see the things which the disciples saw and had not seen them (Matt. 13. 16/17). Blessed were the eyes which saw at and since the First Advent; blessed because the One in whom so much prophecy centred had come; blessed because further additions to the Word of God confirming and amplifying the old writings were to be made; and blessed because the opening up of the prophetic word would give hope and joy to many hearts. Our Lord began his earthly ministry by quoting some words of Isaiah and adding *"this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"*. Further prophecies were fulfilled during his life and by his death; and thus He laid the foundation for Paul later to say that *"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we . . . might have hope"*.

With this introduction in mind, let us proceed, not in detail, through the Roman epistle noting how by Paul's references to supposedly Jewish Scriptures, the Gentiles as well as Israel obtain enduring hope, remembering that other words of Paul (Eph. 2. 12) mention that the Gentiles were void of hope in the days when Israel had the promises and blessings of God. To us, void of hope, Paul reveals a prospect beyond our dreams; and to those Jews who also accept Messiah he gives a far better hope than was generally held by that nation. By his quotation of and reasoning upon the Old Testament he gave to us the comfort of the Scriptures—an essential ingredient of hope—and to Jewish believers he gave proof that what they might have thought was new and doubtful had in fact ample support in their own prophecies. Thus what Jew would ever be able to say that the Christian doctrines are man-made if they prove themselves to be of God by quotation from the Old Testament?

The early chapters of Romans are not so full as the later in quotation from the Old Testament and such as are made do not in themselves give ground for hope, for after the customary Pauline introduction he gives a deplorable picture of Gentile degradation and surety of coming judgment. But one verse from the prophet Habakkuk gives a ray of encouragement and is a foundation of Paul's gospel. The words *"the just shall live by faith"* which when made by the prophet were proleptic, find their best application in the Christian age, and whilst not in themselves conducive of hope suggest to us that there is, in spite

of the depravity to which man has fallen, a path along which we may all travel to life, and thus faith becomes the basis of things hoped for. (Heb. 11. 1). The words of condemnation in the section of the epistle ending at ch. 2. 16 are mainly descriptive of those outside Israel and on the whole the Jewish reader would agree with the apostle's observations; but, proceeding further we note that the section which seems to end at ch. 3. 20 is largely condemnatory of the Jew. We see even that the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through the Jew (which Paul proves by words from the prophet), and the section reaches its culmination in words from the Psalms that *"there is none righteous, no not one"* and that all the world has become guilty before God. And so Paul answers his own question *"Are we better than they?"* by showing all, whether Jew or Gentile, to be under sin and therefore under condemnation. And in all this reasoning the Jew who boasts himself in his law and the prophets cannot raise remonstrance because Paul confirms his thoughts by quotations from their own writings! We might think from the apostle's letter so far, that very little has been said that gives either Jew or Gentile the hope they need. However the epistle does not end there, nor do the quotations; but Paul has certainly relieved us of any hope we had in ourselves. And thus having no standing before God we must perforce look to him, trusting that in mercy He will provide the way of escape. Now *"that every mouth is stopped"* we can the better listen, and providing that we do listen to the words of the apostle and the supporting words from the prophets we shall find our God willing to give the ground for the hope that we need. Paul then introduces a new factor in his train of thought—the righteousness of God; and upon it rest the hopes of all creatures to his mercy. All no doubt realise that God was by no means obligated to grant benefits to a world which his own justice had condemned because of its sin; but providentially for us all He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth but is anxious that they should turn from their wickedness and live; and being true his mercy can intervene when his law condemns. This may be seen in the section of the epistle beginning at ch. 3. 21, where the righteousness of God without (or apart from) the law is manifest, and (as we expect to find in this epistle) is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Yes, mercy has provided the way of escape. He has declared his own righteousness in mercy without abrogating or circumventing his own law, by regarding as justified the sinner who has faith in Jesus. The having of faith is not a ground of claim to justification—it is simply

that it pleases him to justify him who believes. And this, says Rom. 3. 21, exhibits the righteousness of God—his own eternal righteousness and goodness in providing this grace for believers; and that righteousness which is ours in justification. And Paul attests that this is witnessed by the law and the prophets. Is justification, then, to be found in the Old Testament? It most certainly is—let it never be said that it was first revealed by Paul! In the chapter which follows, Paul refers to two great men of the past, Abraham and David; dissimilar but both men of faith. Before the enactment of the Mosaic law, it was said that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness (Gen. 15. 6). If it be suggested that Abraham lived a pastoral life miles apart from the turmoil of life and was always near to God and that therefore his case is not a suitable example to those of active life living among men of the world, Paul gives another example of justification in David whose life was fraught with all the dangers and snares of life. Many times had David fallen; just as many had he risen again with regrets for his failings. Thus he knew the gracious gift of God in a different way to that of Abraham. We should hardly expect Abraham to say, but it rings Davidic, that *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"*. (Rom. 4. 7, cited from Psalm 32). Not all Christians will readily follow Paul's reasoning in the fourth chapter of Romans, but they will note that though the early chapters speak of condemnation, it holds out a prospect of release through the righteousness of God. All may know the blessedness of sins forgiven, for so is the grace of God; and that blessed knowledge will prompt hope within. And thus Paul is working towards one of the objects of his letter to those he had not met; and already can be surmised the questions he will meet when at last he reaches Rome; Possibly he is anticipating the points that could arise in their discussions when he pens the succeeding chapters.

The next four chapters contain but few quotations from the Old Testament, but are the steps we tread in pursuing the apostolic argument towards full hope in Christ. Within the fifth chapter is the fundamental truth that all descendants of Adam were condemned in him and all are covered by the death of Christ, and that when we were without strength and unable to help ourselves God commended his love towards us in that Christ died for us. And from this gift will be seen that the love of God encompasses all, and so we who have obtained hope for ourselves ensuing on justification will note with

gratitude that there is hope also for all mankind in that Divine provision. Much of the sixth chapter is in the form of question and answer—just the sort of question the Roman church will ask among themselves when they read the early chapters. The freedom from condemnation which we Christians enjoy does not give liberty to live unrestrained, and Paul finds great cause for thankfulness in that, free from Adamic condemnation we became servants of righteousness; thus concluding within ourselves that because God has graciously justified us, the least we can do is to become his servants. Still further reasons for hope and joy are found, in that becoming servants of righteousness we find that it leads unto holiness, and that the outcome of righteousness is everlasting life. Thus the righteousness imputed to us, is not only a starting point but also a goal; and all due to the grace of God. This gives hope indeed—what else can result from such cogent reason of the great apostle! But another query will be made by the Jewish Christians in Rome and Paul must dispose of that—how could they be free from the condemnation of the Mosaic law under which as Jews they were bound. Paul himself had been, as touching the law, a Pharisee; and he answers the question by supposing his own struggles to keep the law and his failure in spite of all. He proves the law to be good, but himself and therefore others to be sold (just like a slave) under sin. If there were no conclusive answer to his question in ch. 7. 24 there would be no hope even for the best of striving men; but the answer of v. 25 completely disposes of the question and leads to further hope and exultation in the eighth chapter. This chapter, though giving few confirmatory words from the Old Testament is full of hope—the new hope, the complete hope of the gospel church. In previous chapters Paul has said very little about the work of the Holy Spirit within the church, but having answered problems of law and sin, and established the righteousness of God, he can proclaim those church truths he revels in. When at long last he meets the church at Rome he will declare to them their standing in Christ, their sonship, their election and their hope; and this chapter is a foretaste of what he will then proclaim more fully. What discussion this chapter will have among them! What hope and joy and confidence will be theirs in the meantime, and what points he will have to amplify when he comes! Most Christians are acquainted with the closing verses of chapter eight, though they may not comprehend the fulness of the unanswered questions—*"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? Who shall separate us from the*

love of Christ?" until they understand and value the earlier verses concerning sonship.

This transcendent chapter ended, Paul reverts to thoughts of his own nation—he has great heaviness of heart because they do not appreciate these glorious hopes. Much of the chapter is in question and answer form—just the sort of questions a critical Jew would ask about election and the entry of the Gentiles into the special purpose of God. To deal with such Paul makes abundant reference to Hebrew scriptures, and he knows no Jew can gainsay them. Israel's faltering is still before him in chapters ten and eleven, and again he quotes from their own writings. The crux of Israel's backwardness may well be expressed in the words of Rom. 10. 3, and is related to the righteousness of God which Paul had mentioned earlier. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God, and were occupied in the hopeless task of establishing their own righteousness. Had they but received the truth of Rom. 10. 4, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, their useless struggles would have ended and they would have fully enjoyed the hopes and promises of chapter eight. Paul revealed to them the greatest of hopes, but they seem unable to yield their old standing in Jacob, their legal standing in Moses and the belief (true in time past) that they were the only chosen people of God. Paul ends his appeal to his own nation in the eleventh chapter by an ascription of praise to that God who in wisdom and love had devised all this wonderful purpose embracing all Jews and all others; and then further appeals to all to surrender (Rom. 12. 1/2) whatever advantages they have for the new prospects in Christ. It was far easier for the Gentile to yield to this appeal, for he had so little in which he could glory; but the Jew was in a great predicament, for he was called upon to surrender his hold on the favours of God in Jacob and Moses, for the favour of God in Christ.

The apostle, having almost finished his doctrinal teaching, in the closing chapters adds

sundry admonitions whereby all, now that they have a new hope, may know how to live within and without the church. None of these commandments will be found to be grievous; many of them seem to be rules of conduct restated from the Mosaic law and therefore will be approved by the Jewish members of the church. But noticeable in the fourteenth chapter is the care with which the Christian must consider the weakness of fellow-members even in small things and even when he knows that his own position is correct and theirs weak. Thus the new relationship in one body is emphasised by the members having the same care one for the other. All have the one great hope in Christ—God has received the weak as well as the strong. The strong cannot forge ahead without the weak; and he himself lags behind if he thinks he can. In fact, the strong must bear the infirmities of the weak, not pleasing themselves, (Rom. 15. 1); thus proving themselves to be joint holders of the hope. Then follows the one example of him who pleased not himself, which introduces us to the words with which we began and on to further quotations from the Old Testament to repeat that all Gentiles, though they may not be embraced in the special purpose of God, will nevertheless join in praise to God, and under the reign of the root of Jesse return to peace with God in the earthly kingdom. So within this message to the Roman brethren Paul has completely revealed that the plans of God cover all mankind and that there was ample proof of this in the old writings which the Jew had treasured. Thus does he commend the new Christian message to all in Rome whom as yet he had not seen. And until he reaches Rome, he urges that the God of hope will fill them with all joy and peace in believing, that they abound in hope. (Rom. 15. 13). This epistle, complete in itself, gave to the Roman friends a grand foretaste of what they will hear, when in the words of v. 29 *"I come to you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ"*.

It is a great moral truth, attested on all hands alike by experience and observation, that any covert alliance with sin makes a man not more, but less lenient to his fellow-sinners, and that if we desire to have a keener sensibility and a stronger sympathy for the sorrows which men by sin have brought upon themselves, the only way to approximate to this end is by separating ourselves more completely from the sin that is in and around us, and cultivating, under God's hand, a higher standard of moral purity.

Worry is an insult to Jesus Christ. It is not only wrong to worry, it is infidelity, because my worry means that I do not think God can look after the practical details of my life.

Oswald Chambers.

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

Mylicman



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

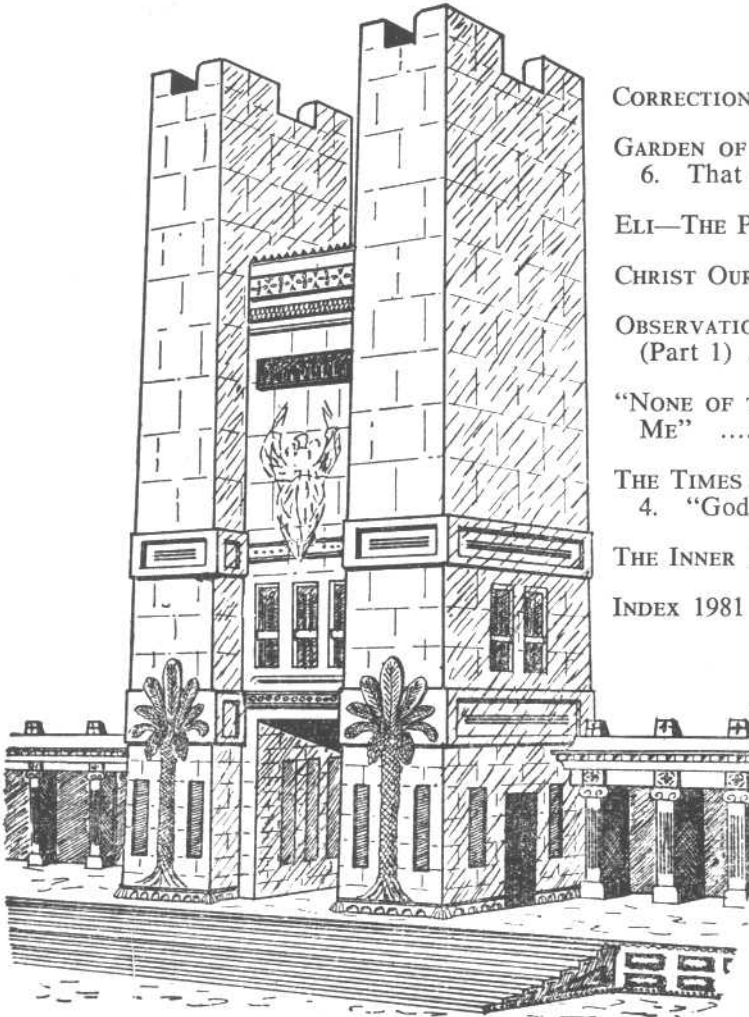
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CONTENTS

CORRECTION WITH JUDGMENT	123
GARDEN OF EDEN	
6. That old Serpent the Devil ...	125
ELI—THE PRIEST WHO FAILED	129
CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION	134
OBSERVATIONS ON THE N.E.B. (Part 1)	135
"NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME"	137
THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE	
4. "God now Commandeth..."	139
THE INNER HOLINESS	142
INDEX 1981	144



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

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Acknowledgments. Having regard to constantly increasing postal costs we feel that all our friends will understand the position when we say that it seems the wisest use of their monetary gifts only to send an acknowledgment of such gifts when they amount to £2 (five dollars) or over. The continued receipt of the "Monthly" will always be an indication of receipt and if by any chance the "Monthly" fails to arrive please do advise us at once and the matter will be speedily rectified.

* * *

An appreciation. With the close of the year it is meet to express our sincere appreciation of the many gifts which have made possible the continuance of the "Monthly". At a time when almost all Christian journals published on a commercial basis have been compelled to close down on account of unmanageably rising costs it is a matter of real thanksgiving to our Lord that He has inspired the hearts of so many to maintain this relatively small and uninfluential avenue of service. Whilst its principal circulation is in the U.K. and U.S.A., the "Monthly" does penetrate in lesser degree to most parts of the globe—more than one hard-working missionary in a remote corner of the "third world" writes to speak of the encouragement and uplift he receives from its pages. "So mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed!"

"He has chosen us to be his ambassadors in the world, invested with power to speak and act for him, and to draw upon all his resources. An ambassador is one of the most important officers of the Crown. To be successful he must be able to let his own personality and his own thoughts and opinions sink into the background, so that he may be open-minded, able to place himself in another's position and see things through his eyes. His first concern must be to know his King, so that he may get a clear conception of his mind, the direction of his thoughts and desires, so that he can identify himself with his royal master; because in the capacity of his representative at the foreign court, his sovereign will be identified with him. The power of the King, the resources of the King are behind him, as long as he faithfully represents him. And he must have complete faith in the King and also in his resources. Doubt anywhere would hinder, perhaps ruin his chances of success, for if he doubted he would not be able to speak with that assurance which creates confidence."

(Dr. F. B. Meyer in "Evidences of things not seen")

Gone from us



Bro. W. Ashton (Ashton-u-Lyme)
 Sis. J. Bartley (Enniskillen)
 Sis. H. Burbidge (Stockport)
 Sis. E. Fairburn (Bournemouth)



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

CORRECTION WITH JUDGMENT

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." (Jer. 10. 23-24).

Wonderful words, to come from the lips of a man who lived six centuries before the Lord Jesus Christ came to open the "new and living way." We tend sometimes to regard the whole thought of men in Old Testament times as hopelessly enmeshed in the mechanical framework of the Mosaic Law. "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient" the people had cried exultingly when Moses gave them the Divine Covenant, and although none of them ever succeeded in fully meeting the requirements of that covenant by works, very few of them ever realised why. They thought they could do it; the Ten Commandments must have seemed a very simple set of regulations by which to govern their lives; it must have come as a shock to many of them to find that, after all, they had not gained the everlasting life of promise. The rich young ruler who came to Jesus was one such. *"All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?"* There must have been a constant voicing of that question all the way from Moses to John the Baptist. Not many discovered the reason why. Jeremiah was one of the few who did. The way of man is not in himself. He has not the power rightly to direct his steps. So Jeremiah prayed to God that because of man's inability, God would not be harsh with man. Send correction, yes, by all means, for man sorely needs correction. Jeremiah knew that. But let it be with discretion, with judgment; not with severity or harshness, or man would speedily be reduced to nothing. And Jeremiah knew that God did not desire that. He knew that God had made man for a purpose and he prayed that the purpose might be achieved.

Man needs a shepherd, here and now in this life. We get so accustomed to thinking of the future Day of Judgment, the Millennial Age, when God will set himself to teach all men the principles of his laws, that we do perhaps forget the fact that to-day also is a time of man's experience. True, the coming Age is set aside for man's instruction in the effects of righteousness under a righteous government, but the present has been set aside just as certainly for man's instruction in the results of evil when sin is permitted to flourish unchecked. It is in this time of man's

liberty to sin that Divine shepherd-care is needed. We do not well to think of the Father-Creator as bringing the earth to Edenic perfection and then washing his hands of the human race completely at the very time they need him most. He has permitted man to go his own way and has allowed men to ignore the fact of his existence; nevertheless He has always held the controls in his own strong hands and intervened whenever it has been necessary to save men from themselves. The Flood was a supreme example; other lesser examples are known to us from the sacred records and there must be many more unwritten and unknown except to those directly affected. Even although Satan has arrogated to himself the title of "god of this world", he has not been allowed to have everything his own way. The same Power that brought into being all the mighty works of creation and evolved life on this planet in all its myriad forms has never ceased to watch over the interests of the helpless creature, man, who has it not in him to direct his own steps.

As natural men and women, even when born into one of the so-called enlightened and civilised nations, we know very little of our surroundings, of our past, of our future. Confined as we are to this one little planet, we know next to nothing of the remainder of creation. Until three hundred years ago even the whole of this earth had not been explored by man. Only in the last few generations have the jungles of Africa, the deserts of Australia, and the wastes of Antarctica given up their last secrets. Our geologists look back over the vast space of time—calculated at three thousand millions of years—which separates us from the coming into being of this earth, and can tell us absolutely nothing of what went on during over two-thirds of that period. Definite knowledge covers only the veriest fraction of that enormous time-span; we are so recently arrived on this our home. If the period that has elapsed since God said "Let there be light" is likened to the length of one week, then the animal creation has been on earth for about twelve hours and man only three seconds! The last three seconds at the end of a week! That is man's experience of his earthly home. He has hardly had time to learn much about it. If man then is so recent a creation of God, we would hardly expect God to get impatient yet. Long though the dark reign of sin and death appears to us, to God it has lasted only three seconds out of his creative

week. Jeremiah's confidence was surely rightly placed when he besought God to administer his correction, not with anger, but with judgment; *not to destroy, but to save.*

That is the principle behind the Divine scheme of redemption. It is not for nothing that we have dismissed the Hell-torment Deity of the Dark Ages as a figment of theological imagination. It is not for nothing that we insist on the Scriptural truth that not until a man has had every possible opportunity to learn of God, and in full knowledge and recognition of all that is involved does deliberately reject God, can he be eternally lost. Some there are who slightly speak of such a conviction as the "gospel of the second chance". They speak truly; it is the gospel of One Who spake the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the prodigal son most assuredly did have a second chance. When Jesus told Peter to forgive his erring but repentant brother seventy-seven times *we can hardly believe that He would refuse any man one more chance to make amends, if hope there be that this time the man would see the light.* Many Christians have never put to themselves the question of God's response to one who has passed through the gates of death and then, standing before the Throne, at last sees the light and repents. Would the Most High condemn such an one out of hand because it took the supreme experience of death and resurrection to effect the conversion? It is because our God knows the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man unaided to direct his steps, that He waits and watches in full confidence that, for the vast majority of men at any rate, the lesson will one day be learned and his ultimate purpose achieved.

So the Divine Plan is not one of harsh anger, of a jealous, wrathful God bent on displaying his omnipotence by the condemnation of those who are slow to understand and do his will, or rash enough and short-sighted enough and ignorant enough to set themselves against him. But neither is the Divine attitude towards men and God's treatment of men correctly described by the common phrase "justice tempered with mercy". Divine justice is not modified or qualified in any way. *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* There can be no qualification of that which is right. The weakness of man calls for strength, and strength will be given. The ignorance of man calls for knowledge, and knowledge will be imparted. The sin of man calls for retribution, and retribution will be inflicted. *But all these things come for the furtherance of the Divine ideal in man and not for his destruction.* That is why Jeremiah prayed for the correction which he knew had to come but prayed

that it might be in judgment and not in anger.

To-day we know that his prayer is being fulfilled. Peter at Jerusalem and Paul at Athens ushered in the new order of things in which God both commands all men everywhere to repent and invites those who will, to give themselves in sincere consecration of heart and life to be dead with Christ. For these two thousand years of this Gospel Age that latter work has predominated and the Church of Christ has been gathered out of the nations "a people for God's name". The other work has not been neglected. The Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached in all the world and in conformity with the injunction first voiced on Mars Hill there are many who have repented and experienced justification by faith in Jesus Christ without necessarily going on to consecration of life and entrance into the High Calling. The Lord knows what use He can make of such when the Millennial Age opens and God's final time of "correction with judgment" runs its course in the presence of all mankind.

The "Shekinah glory", that God-given supernatural light which dwelt in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was a source of confidence and life to all Israel. It held no terrors, but only joy and peace, for the High Priest when he entered with the offering that spelt Israel's deliverance from condemnation for another year. It was a pillar of fire by night to lead them in their desert wanderings and it went before the host to guide them safely into their Promised Land. But it was also a flaming fire to defend them from their enemies and it was a blazing radiance that swept out from the Tabernacle to execute the Divine decree when some of Israel had sinned. So it is with Divine judgment. It is remedial and educative to the one who is capable of reformation, leading such an one back into full reconciliation with God; it is consuming, and a destroyer, to the one who is determined to resist every inducement and every persuasion put forth for his reclamation. The Lord is a Shepherd to all who can be persuaded to accept *willingly and sincerely of the green pastures and still waters of his providing; it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God when there is nothing in the heart but black sin to confront his white-hot purity. It is and must always be true that the incorrigible sinner will be consumed by the Divine wrath when all possibility of conversion has gone.* There is a profound and fundamental truth, descriptive of the Divine dealings both with those who attain everlasting life and those who shall not see life, in Jeremiah's heartfelt entreaty: *"correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing."*

GARDEN OF EDEN

6. That old Serpent, the Devil

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

With the opening of chapter 23 of Genesis, a new character appears on the stage, and with his coming the idyll merges into tragedy. In chapter 2 there is in all the world nothing but innocence and sincerity, and all creation is at peace and unashamed in the sight of God. Chapter 3 introduces something else, craftiness, deceit, lying and sin, bitter seeds whose harvests have never since ceased from the earth, and will not, until the Divine rule of the Messianic Age shall have undone all that the Tempter wrought in Eden, and raised mankind to that sinless condition which was the Divine intention at the beginning.

The religious plays of the Middle Ages depicted this archangel of all evil, upon whom is laid the blame for the seduction of our first parents, as a hideous monster having long horns, cloven feet, forked tail, and eyes and mouth breathing out fire and smoke. The idea was to strike healthy terror into the hearts of the beholders, for this was the Prince of Hell, and Hell was preached as a place of grievous torments in which all who did not observe the precepts of true religion, or at least did not obey the mandates of the priests, would spend eternity. Instructed Christians know better than to believe such crudities nowadays, but it is fact that there does exist a powerful celestial being, in a continuing state of rebellion against God, who first introduced sin and death to humanity and has actively promoted the same ever since. Through the ages men have pictured that malevolent being in various ways and under different guises but until modern times have not doubted his dread reality. Here in Genesis the writer of the account faithfully reflected the spirit and outlook of his own day when he described him under the figure of a serpent.

Long and protracted, earnest and sometimes acrimonious have been discussions on the manner in which an ordinary snake—any one of the two thousand varieties known to exist—could have been used to tempt Mother Eve in the matter of the forbidden fruit. No one doubted, of course, that the Devil was behind the whole thing, but the emphasis was always upon the reference to him as a "serpent". Opinions have varied as to whether the Devil himself "materialised" in the form of a serpent or made use of a conveniently handy reptile through whom to talk and act. The Naturalist has to point out that snakes have no sense of taste, no ear-openings,

are quite deaf, and lack ability to make audible sounds except the well-known hissing which is effected by the rapid expulsion of air from the lungs (exceptions are the rattlesnake which produces its rattle by rubbing its scales together, and the bull snake which bellows like a bull). It is necessary therefore either to conclude that the serpent of Eden was a very special kind of serpent, perhaps deliberately created for the purpose, or else to examine the text much more closely than is usually done.

The Hebrew word for serpent is "*nachash*", a word which has two basic meanings. In the first place it means to hiss or whisper, especially the whisperings or mutterings of soothsayers, from which usage it also denotes the practising of enchantment or sorcery. Examples are the "enchantments" of Balaam in Num. 24, the "divining" of Joseph in Gen. 44, and the sorcery practised by Israel in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Kings 17. 17 and 21. 6). From this usage of the word the serpent became known as the "*nachash*" because of its characteristic hissing. The other meaning is that of brightly shining from which the word for copper, "*nechushah*", is derived. The fact that two such dissimilar ideas as enchantment and bright shining have their origin in the same word points to something which connected the two in the early days of language making.

A clue to this connection is found in the fact that, as shown earlier in this treatise, when the Genesis account of creation was first written in its present form in Abraham's native land, the writer used phrases and allusions familiar to his immediate readers. When he said "the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made", he meant them to understand that he was about to introduce the character by whom evil came into the world, a character already thoroughly familiar to them, back there in the 25th century B.C. That character was the "serpent", the *mushrushu* of the Sumerians and *sirussu* of the later Semites (sons of Ham and sons of Shem). They looked upon that serpent as the symbol of life and made it a life-giving power and object of worship. In their sculptures it was given a dragon-like form and endowed with wings to denote its heavenly origin. (This same creature survived as the dragon of mediæval English literature and art, and was known by the name of "serpent" even then.) Eight such winged dragons stood guard at

the four gates of the Temple of Babylon in Daniel's day, and those mythological figures were of highly burnished copper, the "brightly shining" "serpent" or dragon. In the far-off days when the story of Eden was put into writing, the serpent was identified in men's minds, theologically and mythologically with a brilliant supernatural being depicted as a winged man-like creature claiming to be the bringer of life to men and demanding their worship. Later on this being was identified with Marduk (Bel), the deity of Babylon. In the 2nd millennium B.C. (time of Abraham), Marduk was viewed by the Babylonians as their own special god and as the son of the Sumerian god Enki, the god who came out of the sea to establish civilisation. Marduk, Son of God, his visible emblem the sun, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the firstborn from the dead, the agent of the gods in all the work of creation and in the creation of man, the protector of mankind and the source of their life—yes, the Devil has arrogated to himself, thousands of years in advance, all the titles which belong of right to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and has drawn to himself the worship of all the world throughout all the ages. And the tablets and sculptures show this Marduk as the ancients conceived him to be—noble of feature, aggressive and terrible of mien, sturdy feet that he might stand on the earth and six-winged that he might fly from the heavens, strong hands grasping the lightnings and thunderbolts whereby he might deal destruction to all enemies. This was the glorious radiant one to whom the Babylonians sang praises, he who deceived the whole world in appearing to them as an angel of light.

But from whence did the ancients draw their inspiration for this terrible and glorious appearance? Might it not be a lingering recollection, handed down through the generations, of one who once was seen by the first mother of all, and whose form, because of the tragic consequences, was indelibly impressed upon her memory and described to her children, generation after generation? It might well have been so, for the sculptured form of Marduk, preserved through generations of idolators, bears some resemblance to those angelic beings, the "seraphim", whom Isaiah the prophet saw in vision standing around the throne of God. The seraphim of Isaiah 6 also had six wings, and so glorious was the sight of them that the prophet covered his eyes and cried out that he was undone. He saw them as celestial beings in attendance on the throne of God, and one of them flew down to him as the Divine messenger. The manner in which Isaiah refers to the seraphim

shows that he expected his readers to be just as familiar with them as he was. The significance of the word in Hebrew is fiery ones or burning ones—"saraph" is the verb for burning—evidently in allusion to their dazzling and perhaps fiery appearance. The word is the Hebrew equivalent of the Semitic—Babylonian *sirussu*. The "fiery flying serpents" of Isa. 12.29 and 30.6 are *saraphim* and so, too, was the fiery "serpent" which in Num. 21.6-9 Moses was told to construct of copper and erect on a pole so that the serpent-bitten Israelites in the desert might look upon it and live. In this latter passage the serpents are described as *ha-nechushim ha-saraphim*—"the serpents the seraphim"—thus stressing the identity of the two words. Thus the seraphim of Isaiah is a recollection of the same visible manifestation of a celestial being as is preserved in the *sirussu*, the winged serpent of Babylonian idolatry. In the one case Isaiah sees the seraphim as in constant attendance upon the throne of God, crying his praises, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts"; in the other case the idolaters bowed down before distorted images of the one who once appeared to Mother Eve, and saw in them the guardians of their temples and the preservers of their own lives.

In further support of the conclusion that the visible form of the serpent of Eden is the origin of the serpent-god of Babylon and is similar to the seraphim of Isaiah we have a graphic description by the prophet Ezekiel of the heavenly being who was once in Eden the garden of God but because of rebellion was condemned. In his 28th chapter the prophet, after denouncing the sins of the prince of Tyre, takes up a more intense and obviously metaphorical denunciation of one whom he terms the "king of Tyre" but clearly is not an earthly being at all. The covert reference evidently is to the fallen archangel who rebelled against God. This one is said to have been full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, in appearance as though clad in dazzling jewels, and to have been in Eden the garden of God. Adopting Leeser's rendering, which translates a number of obscure words a little more accurately than does the A.V., "*thou wast a cherub with outspread wings and I had set thee upon the holy mountain of God as thou wast. Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones*". The likeness of this to the company of the *seraphim*, the "fiery" or "burning" ones of Isaiah 6 is too striking to be ignored. Here, surely, is a vivid description of the happy state of that celestial being of high rank who once moved among the holy attendants of God and eventually became a visitor to the garden which God had planted on earth, and

there, because of rebellion in his heart, seduced the first human pair from their allegiance to God and from that moment became "*the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan*" (Rev. 20.2). "*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in these . . .*" So the prophet proceeds with his denunciation, ending with "*I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more*" (Ezek. 28. 12-19).

It is not suggested that these wondrous beings who thus attend in the Heavenly courts do in their normal state bear such strange forms as the Scriptures above describe. We have the authority of St. Paul for knowing that the celestial world is so utterly unlike this terrestrial one that no image conceivable by the human mind can possibly depict the nature and the form, so to speak, of its citizens. It is when such a messenger comes to earth to hold converse with man that a form which is perceptible to the human senses is required. It is logical to expect the instantaneous creation of such a form, as must have been the case repeatedly in Old Testament times when a visitant from above came to man, to Abraham, to Moses, to Daniel, to the father of John the Baptist and Mary the mother of Jesus. His mission accomplished, the ambassador would return to the celestial realm in the glory of a nature more greatly excelling that of man than the nature of man excels the humblest form of plant life on this planet, a glory having nothing in common with the shapes and forms of this world. But in the meantime, and considering the immaturity of our first parents, it is perhaps the most logical mode of appearance for such a visitant to present himself arrayed in feathered wings, some to cover his body and others wherewith to fly, just as Isaiah describes. He could not appear in the guise of a man clothed like a traveller as those who came to Abraham, for there were no other men and as yet there were no such things as clothes.

Jewish tradition at the time of Christ must have had some such conception of the serpent of Eden. The apocryphal work "*The Apocalypse of Abraham*" (ch. 23) narrating the story of Eden, says that "*behind the tree there was standing as it were a serpent in form, having hands and feet like a man's, and wings on its shoulders*". This work is dated only as late as the First century A.D. but it does reflect the traditions and so pictures how the ancients might have visualised the serpent.

There is a further point of interest. Prior to the invention of writing—or of the earliest writing that is known—the thoughts and records of men were expressed by means of simplified

pictures. This is called pictographic script. Examples of this going back to perhaps the 23rd century before Christ have been found and although the material is still very sparse much of it has been deciphered. It is significant that the pictographic symbol for the *mushrushu* or *sirussu*, the serpent, is that of a human prince or great man furnished with wings reaching above his head. Is this the earliest representation of the serpent of Genesis which antiquity has so far given us?

Now as to the subtlety of the serpent: The word "subtil" in Gen. 3. 1 is "*arum*" which means to be crafty or cunning. It is rendered "devices of the crafty" in Job 5. 12, "tongue of the crafty" in Job 15. 5, "taking crafty counsel" in Psa. 83. 3 and "dealeth very subtilly" in I Sam. 23. 22. When St. Paul quotes the Eden story in 2 Cor. 11. 3 "as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty" he uses the equivalent Greek word "*panourgia*" which is rendered "*cunning craftiness* whereby they lie in wait to deceive" in Eph. 4. 14, "he (Jesus) perceived their craftiness" in Luke 20. 13, and "not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully" in I Cor. 3. 19, which is a direct quotation from Job 5. 13 where "*craftiness*" is again "*arum*". The subtlety of the serpent, then, is not wisdom in an intellectual sense, but cunning, deceitfulness, in an immoral sense, and this explains the reference to the beasts of the field. The writer of Genesis 2 was fully aware of the cunning displayed by wild beasts—the Hebrew word is one denoting wild beasts as distinct from cattle and domestic animals—as they hunted their prey, but the serpent, he said, was more cunning than any of them. It is apparent therefore that the serpent he is talking about is not one of the literal serpents which may have existed in Eden, for they were "beasts of the field" like other animals. This serpent was a creature apart; It was *the* serpent whom the Sumerians of his own day worshipped, "*Hanachash*", the serpent, just as in the preceding chapter we have *Ha-adam*, the man, the particular man Adam.

Who or what, then, spoke to Eve as she walked in the garden, in words of human speech which she could hear and understand? Remember that up to this time the only spoken speech she had heard had been from the lips of her husband, apart from the possibility that if in fact God's communications to them both were made by the agency of the Word of God appearing in visible form and speaking in audible words, she might also have listened to speech from that source. Eve knew that the lower animals were all inferior and subservient to Adam and herself,

and that none of them had the gift of speech. Is it likely that she would have accepted a talking snake as a reliable guide in preference to those words of authority to which she may have been accustomed from a much more impressive and dignified source? Eve must have known that the snakes were created beings like herself; she must have known they were liable to death like all other animals, perhaps had even seen them die. How could she be deceived by such a creature's claim to know the secrets of godlike wisdom and of eternal life? She would have possessed a reasonable understanding of the facts of her own creation and that of Adam and of the earth on which she lived, and realised something of the difference between this earth and the celestial world in which dwelt their Creator, the One to whom they were indebted for all their knowledge and understanding. It is surely inconceivable that Eve would have listened to, or been persuaded by, any message unless it seemed to come from that same celestial world from which all they already knew had emanated.

If then in fact Eve did find herself confronted by a gloriously radiant heavenly being, majestic and awe-inspiring in his splendour, her acceptance of his deception is much easier to understand. His use of spoken words would excite no astonishment or doubt; his professed knowledge of the ways of God would seem perfectly logical; and his insinuation that he was in a position to

reveal knowledge formerly withheld by God would appear a fairly reasonable proposition. He had come from there, and he should know. Somehow such an interview sounds a much more natural occurrence than a conversation between a gullible woman and a six foot snake standing erect on the tip of its tail.

So it might well have been that Eve, wandering alone one day in the sunny glades of Eden, pondering over the ever widening vista of experience which life was opening before her, came face to face with a dignified, commanding figure strangely similar in form to her husband and herself and yet in many respects dissimilar. The burning glory which surrounded him and the voice of authority with which he spoke told her at once that here was a visitor from that unseen world from which God had so often spoken, maybe had before this sent a visible messenger bringing guidance and instruction. But this was a different visitor; perchance he also came with a message, possibly something new which she had never heard before. There could have been no suspicion in her mind, for the very idea of an intelligent creature from heaven being disloyal to God who had made them all could never have crossed her mind. It must have been with the most intense interest and curiosity that Eve gave all her attention to the stranger as he began to speak.

(To be continued)

Blind leaders of the blind (Matt. 15. 14-15)

The force of our Lord's words "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" is better appreciated when it is explained that this expression "blind leaders of the blind" was an everyday catchword in Israel. The Pharisees and Rabbis were often referred to—quite respectfully—as "leaders of the blind" in recognition of their reputed ability for leadership in things of God. The fact that these dignitaries had moved largely out of touch with the common people and their problems resulted in their being often referred to in popular conver-

sation as "blind leaders of the blind" and Jesus quoted this everyday proverb in his teaching, adding thereto his own telling comment "*And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*". Elsewhere (Matt. 23) He calls them "blind guides" and it would almost seem from the words in John 9. 40 that the Pharisees, knowing of this customary saying aimed against them, asked Jesus if He supported the proverb or not. It is certainly clear that Paul in Rom. 2. 19 makes allusion to the same proverb which he, as a Pharisee, must have had good reason to remember.

Avoid the spirit of fault-finding, criticism, uncharitableness, and anything inconsistent with his perfect love. God where He is most likely to be found, either where two or three of his children are gathered, or where the lost sheep is straying. Ask him to wake you morning by morning for communion and Bible-study. Make other times in the day when you shall get alone with him, telling him all things, and reviewing the past under the gentle light that streams from his eyes.

I wonder if the lack of growth in our lives of the love of God has been due to neglect? Oh, the wonder of that blessed intimacy of heart and mind and thought, that unveiling of the innermost secrets of the soul to the one who loves in return. "*He that loveth Me,*" says Christ. "*I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him*"—I will unveil to him My very heart. And in our fellowship with the Master our love will grow; the river will deepen.

ELI—THE PRIEST WHO FAILED

Weak, indolent, half-blind, almost senile, altogether unfit to administer the important duties of a High Priest of Israel; such was Eli, occupant of the sacred office during the latter part of Israel's stormiest time, the period of the Judges. Old Testament students know him chiefly as a rather shadowy background to the stirring epic of the life of Samuel, the celebrated leader who rescued the nation from a practically continuous two centuries of apostasy and godlessness, restored it to the worship of the true God, and guided it into the more orderly and settled, although in the outcome just as disastrous, era of the monarchy.

Eli was about seventy-eight when the child Samuel was placed under his tutelage and ninety-eight when his slothfulness and heedlessness brought about the greatest calamity of Israel's history, the capture of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. Taken into battle as a kind of magic talisman to ensure victory, the warriors were stunned when God allowed the sacred emblem to pass into uncircumcised hands. That was the virtual end of the Tabernacle and its ritual. For many years afterwards, almost until the days of Solomon, there could be no annual Day of Atonement observance and the provisions of the Mosaic Covenant were perforce fallen into abeyance.

When the priesthood was established in the days of Moses, Aaron, brother of Moses, of the Tribe of Levi, became the first High Priest. The line of succession was ordained to pass through his oldest surviving son, Eleazar, who thus became the first High Priest to officiate in the Promised Land. He was succeeded by his son, Phinehas. But Eli was not of the line of Eleazar; he traced descent from Ithamar, youngest son of Aaron. Why and when the High Priesthood passed from the senior to the junior line, sometime during the two centuries intervening between Phinehas and Eli, is not known, as the Scriptures are silent. It is not that the senior line died out, for the descendants of Phinehas are known, although none of them are recorded as having exercised the High Priestly function until Zadok, in the time of David and Solomon. In him the duty passed again to the line of Eleazar. The last mention of Phinehas is in Jud. 20. 28 at a time which could hardly have been more than fifty years after the Entry to the land. When next we hear of a High Priest it is Eli of the line of Ithamar some two centuries later. Who

exercised and in what fashion was exercised the duties of High Priest in Israel, the principal of which was the annual ritual of the Day of Atonement sacrifices, during the meantime, is not known. None of Eli's forebears are named, only that he was descended from Ithamar. He had been in office for at least twenty years before Samuel came to him but of the details of his administration nothing is known either. Faced with this conspiracy of silence, it is usually stated that nothing can be suggested on the subject.

The writer of these notes feels that a possible hypothesis can be framed by looking at the conditions in Israel at and immediately before the time of Eli and hazarding an appraisal of the political situation. The connection of Eli with Samuel, and of Samuel with Saul and David, requires that he died only about forty years before the commencement of David's kingship. It is said that he "judged Israel forty years" (1 Sam. 4, 18). This implies that for the last forty years of his life he was the political ruler of Israel in addition to being the High Priest. The "judges" of this period were leaders arising from among the people to bring some semblance of order into what was a very disorganised and lawless state of society, to restore the worship of God and in that strength to deliver Israel from her enemies. Not all the judges ruled the whole country; some of them ruled only in specific parts of Israel. Eli, ruling from Shiloh in the centre of the land, would probably have been universally accepted.

The chronology of the period of the Judges is very difficult to rationalise, but the consensus of research does seem to favour the conclusion that Eli could have attained his High Priesthood at the normal age of thirty, not too far removed from the time of Gideon, the hero who decimated thousands of Midianites with only three hundred men. One of the enigmas of Old Testament history is the story of Gideon, the God-fearing man of faith in the midst of an idolatrous people, who went out in the strength of God to overcome the enemies of Israel and to vindicate the name of God in the land, and after his famous victory took of the spoils of war to set up a shrine to the Lord in his native town of Ophrah to rival the official Tabernacle at Shiloh at which the lawful High Priest officiated. The riddle is even more inexplicable when it is remembered that in the same breath Gideon had refused the peoples' request that he and his sons after him should reign as their king, saying, "I

will not rule over you . . . the Lord shall rule over you" (Jud. 8, 23). It seems illogical to think that after such a victory, which he acknowledged to be of the Lord, and while uttering such sentiments of loyalty to the Lord, Gideon should at the same time be turning to idolatry.

Could Gideon's action at Ophrah have some connection with the unknown disruption which unseated the lawful line of High Priests and replaced them by the unlawful line at Shiloh, not very far away, at much the same time? Shiloh was situated in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, the most turbulent and powerful of the tribes of Israel. Gideon was of Manasseh, and there was always rivalry between these tribes, stemming from the fact that Jacob had conferred the Divine birthright on Ephraim the younger son of Joseph to the exclusion of Manasseh the firstborn. But Ephraim in the time of the Judges was a violent and idolatrous tribe; the narratives of that book show how they were at war with their own brother-tribes as often as they were with outsiders. Was there, perhaps, at this time a "power struggle" within the family of Aaron in which the Ephraimites ousted the legal line of Eleazar from officiating at Shiloh and substituted the junior line by force and illegally, in the person of Eli? The reputation of Ephraim generally and the character of the inhabitants of its chief towns, Shechem, Bethel, Shiloh and so on, was such that almost any kind of roguery could take place. Although Shiloh was the place where the Tabernacle stood for nearly four hundred years the Lord bitterly reproached the people there for their iniquity and predicted that his judgment would come upon it—as it did in the days of Samuel. *"But go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh"* he said to Jeremiah *"and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people"* (Jer. 7, 12). It was in fact the iniquity of the people and priesthood there in Ephraim that caused the Lord to take away the birthright which in Jacob's day had been given to Joseph and his son Ephraim, and to award it to Judah, so that Judah became the royal tribe. *"He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men . . . he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and rejected the tribe of Ephraim, and chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved . . . he chose David also his servant"* (Psa. 78. 59-71). What great crime was this which took place in the very heart of God's sanctuary; what depth of iniquity was there in the lives of those people and priests in Ephraim which drew forth such condemnation from the Most High? The behaviour of Eli's sons during the boyhood of Samuel (I Sam. 2. 22), of Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Jud.

9), of Micah and his graven images in the very vicinity of Shiloh (Jud. 17), are only three incidents which show just how far gone in the ways of evil were these professed men of God.

It might have been therefore that Shiloh had fallen into the hands of a faction which made Eli, or perhaps his father, High Priest in defiance of the legal rights of the Eleazar line and that the true High Priest—whether Bukki, Uzzi or Zerariah, all recorded in I Chron. 6 as the legal line from Eleazar although not said to have been High Priests (Josephus says Bukki and Uzzi were so in fact; *Ant.* 5.11.5) was compelled to flee into exile. In such case he would most likely cross the border into Manasseh; the enmity between that tribe and Ephraim would assure him of protection and the Manassites would certainly recognise him as the legal High Priest. Did Gideon then, in the flush of victory, and in his enthusiasm for the abolition of Baal worship, dream of a restored High Priest of the line of Eleazar, functioning not at Shiloh in Ephraim but at Ophrah in Manasseh, and is this why he made his ephod and built his shrine?

At all events *"all Israel went thither a-whoring after it; which became a snare to Gideon and to his house"*. That expression means that unlawful worship and ceremonial was carried on at Ophrah and the fact that the Deity worshipped was the Ever-Living and not Baal did nothing to mitigate the fact. The Scripture makes no mention of whatever ceremonies were conducted there and no names of its priests; the endeavour was in no manner recognised by God. The rightful line of Eleazar was eventually restored but it was in the person of Zadok in the days of King Solomon, when the Temple was built.

The most therefore that can be deduced about the life of Eli before he comes on to the Scripture stage is that he had probably been High Priest for thirty or forty years before the birth of Samuel and Judge of the nation for twenty years. His earlier years might well have coincided with the judgeship of Samson. Neither man brought any peace to Israel and the shadow of the Philistine menace hung over the land throughout both their careers. The fact that Eli was accorded the position of Judge—perhaps at Samson's death—suggests a stronger and more forceful personality than is suggested by the Scripture pictures but by the time he figures in Scripture he was an old man and verging into senility. In his younger days he may well have been the kind of leader Israel looked for—as a Judge he must at least have led Israel's forces against the enemy at times. If there was the kind of power struggle going on as has been above suggested, Eli at the centre of it must have been

a strong and vigorous character. We have then to think of a man mingling military prowess with religious zeal, ruthlessly trampling down his opponents, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and emerging as a leader whom both God-fearing and idolatrous Israelites were equally prepared to follow. But when we see him in the Book of Samuel we see a weak and tired old man, bereft of his fire and passion, unable to control even his own sons, sitting on a seat outside the curtains of the Tabernacle entrance, left alone to his thoughts. And Israel, leaderless, knowing not whether she was worshipping Jehovah or Baal.

It is at this point the story of Eli, so far as the Bible is concerned, really begins. Hannah, the pious wife of a godly Levite, had accompanied her husband on his annual pilgrimage to the Tabernacle at Shiloh—probably on the occasion of the Feast of Pentecost. There is this evidence that the Levitical ritual was still being observed but from I Sam. 2. 12-17 it is evident that there were grave abuses being committed by the renegade priests, the sons of Eli. Elkanah the Levite was probably only one of many who deplored these things but earnestly hoped that one day God would send a reformer to put matters right. He little thought that his own son was to be that reformer, to transform Israel into a free and worshipping people. At this moment Hannah was pouring out her heart to the Lord in prayer for just such a son, and Eli, perceiving her, concluded that she was intoxicated and reproved her. A High Priest devoted to his calling and thoroughly familiar with the sorrows and tribulations of his people would not have mistaken the outward signs of inward emotion and supplication for those of drunkenness; by this initial reaction this man showed himself insensitive to the essence of his commission. Said the writer to the Hebrews *"We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"* (Heb. 4.15) but Eli was not that kind of a High Priest. Upon being apprised of his mistake he merely replied more or less indifferently *"Go in peace; and the God of Israel grant thy petition that thou hast asked of him"* without even asking what it was.

Eventually Hannah appeared before the High Priest again, this time with her small son, the fruit of her prayer. Nothing had changed; she had to explain to Eli who she was and remind him of their former meeting. Now, in fulfilment of her vow, she had brought her son to be dedicated to the service of the Lord in the Sanctuary. As the son of a Levite and therefore a Levite himself he had the right to serve in the sacred things and henceforth he would be under the tutelage of Eli and grow up to engage in the

service of the Tabernacle. Eli seemed to accept the arrangement without comment; he had now got a young personal assistant who would become increasingly useful as he grew up and with that he was content. So Samuel remained with Eli.

One wonders what Hannah really felt about the moral atmosphere of the environment in which she had thus placed her innocent little son. The situation was notorious in Israel. Eli had long since ceased to exercise his priestly functions himself; he had delegated them to his two sons (I Sam. 1.3). They themselves were notorious profligates. They diverted the people's sacrifices intended for the Lord to their own use; they made use of the girl servants of the Tabernacle, with or without their consent—these servants were dedicated to the service just as was Samuel and not free to leave so they had no escape. (Jephthah's daughter in the story of Jud. 11 was one such devotee in her own day). The net result was that *"men abhorred the offering of the Lord"* (I Sam. 2.17). The sacred festivals fell into disrepute and the people began to forsake them. The loyalty of Israel to the God whose centre was at Shiloh began to wane and be transferred to the idol gods of Canaan. But Hannah had no misgivings, if the sentiments of her song of triumph (I Sam. 2) are noted. She was quite sure that the hand of the Lord was in this thing and that He was about to do great things for his people. *"He will keep the feet of his holy ones and the wicked shall be silent in darkness"* she sang. Surely she was thinking of her little Samuel when she uttered these words. She left her son with Eli and returned home in full confidence that he was under Divine protection and would come to no harm.

So Eli remained sitting on his seat in the sun *"by a post of the temple of the Lord"* (I Sam. 1. 9) until, one day, a stranger approached him, a prophet of the Lord. That seat by a post of the temple, where at the first Hannah had talked with him, yields a sidelight upon the corruption that had enveloped the Tabernacle, for that post was one of those which guarded the entrance to the Holy apartment of the Tabernacle so that the seat was inside the Court wherein according to the commandment only Levites and priests might enter. Apparently anyone of Israel could enter in the days of Eli. Now he found himself confronted by this prophet who solemnly recited to him how God at the first had promised Aaron his ancestor that his sons would be priests contingent upon their loyalty and faithfulness. And now God demanded to know why Eli had forsworn that covenant and despised his sacred office, sharing in the illicit gains of his priestly

sons and honouring them more than he honoured God. So the stranger pronounced the Divine sentence; his succession would be cut off and the priestly line of Ithamar descending through him would come to an end and be replaced by a faithful priest who would do according to the Divine will. The sentence was one of excommunication; had Eli taken serious heed and repented and amended his ways perhaps the outcome would have been different, for it is never too late for repentance. With our God the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour still leaves time for deliverance and the lifting of judgment if sincere repentance is there. But half a dozen years or so later, when the young boy Samuel heard the voice of the Lord in the Sanctuary, the position was unchanged. The sons of Eli were still pursuing their evil ways and he himself was still indifferent, and so judgment became certain.

The occasion when the boy Samuel heard the Lord's voice and was used to convey the final decision to Eli is probably the best known incident in the lives of Eli and of Samuel. The lad would be about twelve years of age and Eli about eighty-five. It was at night, when both were asleep, and "*ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord*" (I Sam. 3.3). That casual mention indicates the laxity of the priests. The light from the seven-branched lampstand in the Holy place was to be kept perpetually burning; it was never to be allowed to go out. It seems that the light now habitually went out at night and the oil was only renewed next morning, another example of the priests' disregard of the Divine order. Now, in the darkness, the Lord spoke to the lad and imparted to him the shattering realisation that his teacher and guide had failed in his duty and was to be deposed and rejected. Samuel was still too young to understand much of the corruption and iniquity that was going on around him and probably looked upon the older man with respect and affection. Now he had to convey to him the news of his coming rejection and the extinction of his house.

Eli insisted on being told everything. Whether there was any last-minute realisation of his failure does not appear. He did not dispute the sentence; he did not attempt to defend himself. He merely said "*It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good*". No endeavour to bestir himself, to try the making of some amends even at this late hour. He just accepted the position passively.

From this time Samuel came increasingly into the public eye. By the time he was twenty "*all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the*

Lord; and the Lord appeared again in Shiloh" (I Sam. 23. 19-20). For something like three centuries, from the time of Othniel and Phinehas, there had not been a ruler wholeheartedly solid to the end of life for God and his laws. Now all of Israel were being taught the right way as they had never been taught before and with every advance made by this new enthusiast for righteousness the old days of idolatry and godlessness began to slip away into the background.

But Israel was not yet converted. A few more years, and Israel found itself embroiled with the Philistines again. Battle was joined at Aphek, thirty miles from Shiloh. The first engagement was disastrous for Israel; they lost four thousand men. The situation was ominous; the elders of Israel took a dramatic decision. They resolved to send to Shiloh and take the Ark of the Covenant out of its place in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and bear it before them as they advanced to battle. They reasoned that God would not allow the sacred emblem to fall into the hands of their enemies, and so under its protection and by means of its magic power they would defeat the Philistines.

Such sacrilege had never before been known in Israel. The Ark of the Covenant, symbol of the abiding presence of God, was not allowed even to be seen, much less handled, by anyone except the High Priest. When on journeys from one place to another during the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness, it was carefully shrouded in blue coverings to conceal it from sight. Any High Priest who permitted such removal thereby manifested his total unfitness for office. Yet Eli concurred and his two renegade sons accompanied the Ark to the scene of the battle.

The effect was the opposite of that intended. "*Woe unto us*" cried the Philistines when they found out what was happening, "*these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines*". The plagues in Egypt were four centuries in the past; it is remarkable that the terror of them was remembered still by the Philistines. They fought now with renewed desperation because of the very presence of the Ark, and the result was that thirty thousand Israelites were slain, including the two sons of Eli, and the Ark of God was captured.

Late that same day a runner appeared in Shiloh, clothes dishevelled, hot and dusty, bearing the news of the disaster. Eli was sitting upon his seat, anxiously awaiting assurance of the Ark's safe return. He knew he had done wrong,

that he had perpetrated the greatest of all outrages against the Divine sanctuary. All he wanted now was to know that the Ark was safely back in its place and then he could sink again into his normal state of apathy. "What is there done, my son?" he asked. "Israel is fled before the Philistines" came the reply "and there hath been a great slaughter among the people". Eli took that with equanimity. "And thy two sons are also slain". That also passed without visible reaction. "And the Ark of God is taken". At those fateful words, as the chronicler has it, "when he made mention of the Ark of God", Eli collapsed, rolled off his seat on to the ground, broke his neck, and died. The shock of the realisation, at last, that he had betrayed God killed him.

The Philistines would be hard on the heels of the runner, and Shiloh was completely destroyed. It never rose again. Shiloh had been the national centre of worship and place of meeting with God for four hundred years; it came to its end through the indolence and faithlessness of its last High Priest, and of a people who took the name of God upon their lips but were far from him in their hearts.

For the Christian, the lesson of Eli's life is the futility of backing away from evil, of ignoring it and pretending that it does not exist. Evil will not go away of itself; it is always there, seeking to make inroads and extend its power. Evil has to be actively resisted. "Put on the whole

armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" says Paul. "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . . and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6. 11 17). It is a biting commentary on the indecision of Eli and the faithlessness of his people on that historic occasion that the very expression used by their Philistine enemies when confronted by what they thought was a well-nigh irresistible opponent, "Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines" (I Sam. 4.9), became Paul's inspiration for his famous injunction to all Christians in I Cor. 16. 13. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." The older man, with all his years of experience and authority, all his admitted power and influence as ruler of Israel in both the religious and the political spheres, had allowed himself to be overcome by the idolatry and irreligiousness of his environment. The young lad, having nothing but faith and zeal, challenged those same evil forces and put them to flight. Samuel found Israel an anarchistic and idolatrous rabble, a miserable caricature of the host which entered Canaan under Joshua. He left it an orderly and law-abiding nation, conducting its national life in harmony with the Mosaic Covenant and in the true worship of God. In aftertimes Israel classed Samuel with Moses; of Eli they had nothing to say.

A NOTE ON LUKE 17. 20-21

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Several attempts to avoid the plain meaning of this text have been made. In the first place the word "observation" and the A.V. margin alternative "outward show" are inadequate. The Greek word, used only in this instance, means simply and solely an event happening of such a character that it can be viewed or seen literally with the naked eye. Jesus makes clear in this text that the Kingdom which He was preaching was not one the coming of which would be an outward literal spectacle, whatever the after effects of its establishment may be. "The Kingdom of God" He said, "is within you." It commences as a spiritual rulership in the hearts of those who give themselves to the Lord. The Diaglott diverts the issue by rendering this part of the text "God's Royal Majesty is among you", meaning Jesus himself, but this will not do. "Entos" means

within or inside and Jesus meant that the coming of the Kingdom starts first in the hearts of men. Likewise is the establishment of what must eventually be the world-wide Kingdom of our Lord upon earth during the Millennium. The coming of that Kingdom as involved in the beginning of the Second Advent is not itself an occurrence witnessed by human eye-sight. The rest of the chapter makes that clear. The Advent is likened to the "astrape", (a dazzling radiance), the heavenly radiance of the sun (translated "lightning" in this particular verse) which rises in the east and progressively suffuses the earth with light as it reaches the zenith and then to the west, (see Matt. 24-27), a gradual increase of perception and realisation amongst men that the Age is drawing near its end and the time of the Messianic Kingdom is imminent. As in the days of Noah and of Lot, the world goes on its way without any outward sign of the approaching crisis but the powers of heaven are already there bringing the factors of that crisis together until, at the ordained moment, it comes upon the world and then all men do see and realise the significance of events. And by that time the ones

in whose hearts the Kingdom of God had taken root in the sense intended by Jesus' words here will be out of the world, in the Ark or on the mountain in the analogies of Noah and Lot,

associated with Christ in the heavenly control which is bringing about the transfer of earthly rule from the "kingdoms of this world" to that of the Lord Christ.

CHRIST OUR PROPITIATION

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

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

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

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

to an animal that is covered with a shaggy fur, or of the obliteration of writing by drawing the writing instrument completely over the characters. Here are some examples of its use:—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"There is a tendency to behold with such whole-hearted regard the spectacle of the dying Christ on the Cross as to forget the value of his life. While we must hold to the Scriptural truth that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures" and that only through faith in the saving power of his death can anyone attain re-

conciliation with God, still does it remain true that unless we give due heed to the lessons of his life and learn to walk as He walked, we shall never progress beyond the immature stage of personal adoration which was all that the three Wise Men achieved."

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

Part 1

This short series appeared in these columns at the time of the original publication of the NEB/NT in 1961. Twenty years later, and a new generation of young Christians growing up, it may be a timely repetition of the rather important considerations therein expressed.

* * *

The majority of Christian periodicals have given space to comments on the accuracy and usefulness of the New English Bible. It is hardly to be expected that a production of such a nature could escape comment; the effect of inbred tradition is such that the extent to which the new version departs from the Authorised is more or less a measure of the criticism and objection brought to bear against it. But criticism need not be destructive. It is not to be expected that the committee responsible for the production could bring out a work framed to meet with unanimous approval. It is not even to be expected that the members of such a committee, with the best will in the world, could altogether avoid the effect of their own personal theological beliefs and convictions. There can be no reason for surprise, therefore, if a few accusations of biased or inaccurate treatment can, with justice, be levelled against the translation; the remarkable thing would be were it otherwise. And those critics or periodicals whose own outlook or understanding of the Scriptures differs in some respects from that of the translators are perhaps in the best position to detect and draw attention to such unwarranted concessions to popular theology as have been made at the expense of accurate rendering of the text. It is with such sentiments in mind that this short series, in addition to some words of commendation, draws attention to a few elements in the New English Bible which appear to fall below the normal standard of the production.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is the attitude to the Last Judgment and the word Hell. It is disturbing to find that in a work, one of the avowed objects of which is to make the New Testament more intelligible to the present generation, the method of translating the 'hell' passages, in Matthew's Gospel particularly, reads almost like a reversion to the crude literalism of the Middle Ages. What impression is likely to be made upon the mind of an enquiring teenager, for example, to be told that Jesus said

(Matt. 5. 22) "*if he sneers at his brother he will have to answer for it in the fires of Hell*"? There is no warrant in the Greek for the rendering; *Enokes* means to be liable to, or perhaps, as the Authorised Version has it, to be in danger of, but certainly not 'to have to answer for it'. And no Bible intended for the present generation—or any other—should present "hell" at this point without a footnote explaining that the Greek word is '*Gehenna*' and refers to the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where the city's refuse,—and, it is said, the bodies of criminals,—was tipped and destroyed by fires kept perpetually burning. The warning of Jesus in this passage is against the "anger, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness" in a man's character which, if persisted in, will ultimately ruin that character so that at the end the man is fit for nothing but that everlasting destruction which awaits the wastage of God's creation and is effectively symbolised by the valley of Gehenna at Jerusalem.

In similar fashion the fate of the tares in the parable of Matt. 13. 42 is expressed in terms which seem unnecessarily vindictive; "*these will be thrown into the blazing furnace*", where the A.V. has it "shall cast them into a furnace of fire", which is, after all, the natural fate of the waste from the harvest field. The close juxtaposition in the N.E.B. of this fiery destiny of the wicked with that of the righteous, who are said "then" to shine as brightly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, is reminiscent of Tertullian, who went on record as saying how he would admire, laugh, rejoice and exult to see the pagan philosophers of his own day consigned to the flames of Hell, while the saints rejoiced in Heaven. That sentiment is not likely to appeal to any reasonable modern man, who knows perfectly well that many of those same philosophers were noble and upright men, using their talents for the uplift of their fellows, and, with all their paganism, certainly not deserving the fate to which they were so cheerfully consigned by the African prelate. It is disturbing to find that the healthy introduction of "*Gehenna*" as a footnote in the Revised Version of 1881 and the Revised Standard Version of 1946/52, where this word was rendered "hell" in the A.V., has been abandoned in the N.E.B.

Closely allied with this is the subject of judgment. In one of the most famous passages of the New Testament, Jesus declared that a time is to

come when at his command the dead will rise from their graves, "*they that have done good*" He says "*unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" (Jno. 5. 29 A.V.). The Revised Version rendered this latter phrase more accurately "*unto the resurrection of judgment*", and so did the Revised Standard Version, both in recognition of the fact that *kriseus* covers the whole process of judgment, the presentation and consideration of the evidence, the separation of the evil from the good, of that which is to be condemned from that which is to be preserved. The resurrection of judgment brings the accused before the Last Assize, but it does not necessarily end in his condemnation. And in any case, the rendering "*will rise to hear their doom*" is completely indefensible as a translation of *eis anastasin kriseus*; it is not even a paraphrase. It is a totally unjustified theological interpretation, having no connection whatever with the Greek text.

A hint of this same passion for condemnation of the unrighteous is given in the renderings of the passages in Matt. 12 regarding the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South at the Last Judgment. The A.V., supported by the R.V. and the R.S.V. record Jesus as saying that the men of Nineveh, and the Queen of the South, will stand in the Judgment together with Jesus' own generation and will condemn that generation for its unbelief. This, of course, is obviously not the Divine judicial condemnation of the lost; it is the condemnation of Jews by Ninevites, and by the Arabian Queen, for their refusal to listen to their own Messiah, when Nineveh did at least listen to Jonah the Hebrew prophet, and the Queen of Sheba did at least listen to the Israelite King Solomon. *Katakrino* is defined by Bagster "to place in a guilty light by contrast", and this definition well explains the words of Jesus as they appear in the A.V. The N.E.B., however, renders "*the men of Nineveh will appear against it*" (this generation) "*and ensure its condemnation,*" which alters the sense to make it appear as though it is the final Divine condemnation which is referred to, and that the testimony of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will be the deciding factor in consigning the generation of Jesus' day to eternal perdition. The logical inference of this rendering implies a new departure in Christian theology; it has not previously been suggested that the Most High is going to take evidence from other earthly beings, Assyrians and Arabians of the ninth B.C. century or any

others, to help him make up his mind when the time comes to decide the eternal destinies of the righteous and wicked. And since common justice would, in such case, demand that the Jews had an equal opportunity of testifying against their ancient enemies, the men of Nineveh, in the attempt in turn to "ensure *their* condemnation", the ultimate issue might be equally unsatisfactory for both.

The point to note here is that in fact this "judgment" in which both the Jews and the men of Nineveh will stand is more than an act of judicial sentence. Like the resurrection spoken of in Jno. 5. 29, it is a process, a process which might conceivably result in some of its subjects gaining a sentence of life rather than a sentence of death. Upon another occasion Jesus referred again to the men of Nineveh and to the men of Sodom, and said it would be "more tolerable" for them in the judgment than for the cities of his own country, Chorazin and Bethsaida. "Tolerable" here is a word which means "endurable" and this is a plain indication that the judgment which Jesus preached is one in which a process of some sort is to be carried out, and from that it is not difficult to see something here in the Divine Plan analogous to the separating work of the sheep and goats in the parable of Matt. 25, which again is referred to the same time, "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory".

Perhaps the lesson to be learned from all this is that it is not well to be over-zealous for the speedy elimination of those who do not at the first yield so readily as professed Christians may have done to the challenge of Christ. God's ways are not as men's ways, and He may well have other weapons in his armoury wherewith to persuade the unregenerate of the un wisdom of their ways and bring some of them at least into the Holy City. Particularly it is important to give the "man in the street" as correct an impression as possible of the nature of the Last Judgment: popular theology on this subject throughout the centuries has been characterised neither by accuracy nor commonsense, and the need to-day is for a vision and definition of the purpose for man, and the means by which that purpose is being and will be fulfilled, that will put the eternal contrast between "the righteous" and "the wicked" into correct perspective. To that end scrupulously careful translation of the Scriptures is essential.

(Further comments next issue)

Worry is an insult to Jesus Christ. It is not only wrong to worry, it is infidelity, because my

worry means that I do not think God can look after the practical details of my life.

Oswald Chambers.

"NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME"

*A reflection on
Acts 20, 22-24*

These wonderful words fell from the lips of the unconquerable Apostle as he bade his Ephesian brethren the last goodbye! All the way along on his journey to Jerusalem, brethren testified that bonds and imprisonment awaited him when he arrived in that heart-hardened city. Brethren who loved him with all the warmth of their passionate hearts pleaded and begged of him not to proceed further on his journey,—knowing full well that he did so at peril of his life. Possibly they pressed him to realise how necessary it was for the "works" sake, and the "brethren's" sake, that he should not unduly jeopardise his life too much, for should he fall there was none to replace him in the whole world. Or they may have tried to assure him that it was not cowardice to keep away from that city of peril, but the very essence of wisdom. Neither entreaty nor persuasion could produce effect on his indomitable soul. What if bonds did await him—or scourgings; or persecution? He had faced all this before. Long before this hour of his life, he had been scourged five times by the Jews, with the utmost rigour of the law—forty stripes save one—thrice he had been beaten by Roman rods; once he had been stoned and left for dead; and yet in it all, the Lord had never forsaken nor forgotten him! How very truly he had lived to realise and experience the truth of those vivid words spoken concerning him by Jesus to Ananias while Paul lay in his darkened room at Damascus "*I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*" (Acts 9. 16).

And he had suffered, without murmuring or complaining; without losing one jot of his resolute tenacity, or unwavering determination. Search the records of the New Testament, or of the early Church, or of the Church from beginning to end, and no more thrilling and inspiring catalogue of willingly-borne suffering is found anywhere to excel the record he sets out when writing the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter eleven. And this terrible list had befallen him already prior to this journey to Jerusalem, on which he was now bent. To this list must be added those afflictions that came to him in Jerusalem, in Cæsarea and in Rome for some ten years more.

The Lord Jesus knew his man; He told Ananias "*... he is a chosen vessel unto me*". He was a man of granite, unyielding as a granite bastion against which the waves of persecution could make no impression. In like manner as it was

said of Moses "*he endured as seeing him who is invisible*" so Paul always had the clear perception of his Master's unseen presence, and in this he rested, and was strong.

Hence, when the testimony was several times repeated that bonds and imprisonment awaited him, and when to the repeated prediction there was added the ardent tearbedewed entreaties of his dearest friends, it was no easy matter to keep his face "set like a flint" to go forward to Jerusalem. Almost to the gates of Jerusalem this foretelling of bonds and imprisonment awaited him; for arriving at last at Cæsarea, again a certain prophet, Agabus, gave a dramatic emphasis to it by binding himself with Paul's girdles. "*So shall they do to its owner at Jerusalem.*" And then the whole assembly, with tears and fervent solicitations, besought him not to proceed further on the fateful journey.

"*What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?*" asks Paul. Man of granite though he was, there was a heart beneath that inflexible exterior as tender as a child's! Their tears touched him to his depths, and for their tears, he too could return tears of affection, but . . .

He had undertaken this mission—bound in the spirit—feeling it to be the Will of God; and that being so, neither the ferocious hatred of his enemies nor the ardent love of his friends could swerve him from his predetermined course. "I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." "*I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Spirit witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me there. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus . . .*" (Acts 20. 22-24).

Strange enigma! Wonderful paradox! Bonds, afflictions, tribulations, imprisonment, — sufferings of all kinds—and even death—yet he looked forward to it all with "Joy". What an inexplicable intoxication it is to have the love of Christ in the heart at a white-hot glow! How irrational it all seems when judged by ordinary standards. Seeking suffering and courting execration, and finding "Joy" in it!

That is just what comes of having in the heart that living vitalised faith in the power and presence of Christ! It was no mere theoretical

acknowledgment of Christ Jesus that led to that pain-hunger! It was not just the admission of the historic fact that Jesus of Nazareth had lived and died in Jerusalem that steeled the heart to all that fearful outlook and yet gilded the darkness ahead with cloud-fringes of joy and exultation. No mere academic recollection that that same Jesus had even been raised from the dead, to procure our justification, would have kindled a consuming fire within the soul, which no torrents of persecution or pain could extinguish! It was only the inwrought assurance that on every step of the journey, from Corinth to Philippi—from Philippi to Cæsarea, from Cæsarea into that howling den of fanaticism which was Jerusalem—an unseen, but ever-present companion; closer than a brother, warmer than a lover, more tender than a mother, stronger than an army; entering into every experience of every moment of every step of the way. Never a thought, but it was permeated with Christ; never a word, but it was saturated with the power of his Lord,—never a longing, but that it reached up to the Jesus who had redeemed and rescued him.

Conviction, assurance, persuasion; that was the material out of which the chain was made that linked him to a living, loving Christ. And with Christ in his life, no enemy or persecutor mattered!

All the long years of his Apostleship had led up to this. The fruits of all those years had been gathered, and he had grown strong thereon. A hundred times he had faced death; but with Christ at hand he had smiled at the dread monster. His faith and assurance and conviction fed itself on the threats of enemies, and the intimidations of his foes!

Happy indeed the man who has reached this stage of growth in the stature of Christ! "My peace I give unto you" said Jesus. Paul had it. His own lips later came to say "the peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts". And it kept Paul. Rest, peace, joy, exultation, within; bonds, tribulations, prison-cells, death, without; yet the power that worked within, made him more than conqueror over all that opposed without.

It is not given to all to climb the heights, nor to plumb the depths of rest and peace and joy

which the Apostle knew. We are not all made by nature as he was. We could not fight single-handed so often as he did; yet thanks be to God, we have the same Lord and Master just as embracingly near and as tenderly interested as Paul had. He is the same loving Jesus to us to-day as to his "Chosen Vessel" long ago. We have the same truths, and the same High Calling to thrill our hearts which carried that unfaltering Witness over all his stormy way. We have the same "grace to help" in every time of need. God has not changed, and He is not one whit less heedful of us than of Paul. Christ has not altered, and he is never farther from us than from his great Apostle. Remember these things to-day when this thing or that comes in to assail our faith. When subtle suggestions or clever deductions come along, and call in question the facts and experiences upon which our convictions have been built, let us say "None of these things shall move me"! When attempts are made to prove our foundations wrong, and to unsettle our assurance in the things we have learned, let us "stand fast in the faith" unmoved and unmovable, knowing of whom we have learned. It is not the physical sufferings—the bonds and imprisonment—which menace our well-being and salvation to-day. Our danger arises in being moved away from the assurances to which our faith has been moored these many years. Growth and development from the old truths are to be expected, but when it comes to casting this and that of our earlier assurances overboard, there is risk and danger to us. Unloading the cargo which has given ballast to our boats is a perilous thing. Thousands there are in the world to-day who threw their rubbish overboard, as they thought, and have found to their sorrow that they had nothing left. Let us hold fast that which we have, and determine that none of these things shall move us from our conviction and rest of peace in the heart, determined that nothing will intervene to deprive us of the comfort and companionship of Paul's Lord and Master, who is our Lord and Master too. It is still conviction, assurance, and persuasion that is the material out of which salvation is made, and he or she who retains these will never falter or fall by the way.

The "Talents" are meted out by One who knows the character and abilities of his children; One who is too wise to err; too loving to give less than we can use. He has placed us where we can serve him best, and given us all that He sees we can, with advantage, use.

Bishop F. J. Chavasse.

The strength of the vessel can be demonstrated only by the hurricane, and the power of the Gospel can be fully shown only when the Christian is subjected to some fiery trial. If God would make manifest the fact that "He giveth songs in the night" He must first make it night.

William Taylor.

THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE

*A Study in
Divine Purposes*

4. "God Now Commandeth..."

The hour had struck! God, during the slow progression of many centuries of human history, had waited, inscrutable in his wisdom, long-suffering in his patience, for this hour. Men had gone headlong down the steep slope of ignorance and degradation into hopelessness; the judgments of God had come upon them, time after time, to cause their heedless minds to reflect. At definite points in the chain of years He had intervened in some marked manner—at the Flood, the call of Abraham, the Exodus, the Babylonian captivity — that men might have opportunity to realise both his almighty power and his overruling providence. Great lights had flared up in the darkness of those slow years, lights that showed how the spirit of man, as yet without God and without hope in the world, was endeavouring to free itself from the encircling shackles of sin and death. Hammurabi in Babylon, Melchisedek in Canaan, Akhnaton in Egypt, stand out in the earlier years as men who knew not the God we know but sought for something better than they had. Zarathrusta and Buddha and Confucius and Socrates, great philosophers all, made contribution, each to his own age, but despite their greatness, ignorance remained. They lived before Christ came and they knew not God. Abraham and Moses and Daniel and a long line of worthy men in Israel had greater influence in the preparation of men's minds for the revelation that was to come because they were men of God and their lives were knowingly devoted wholly to his service. The nation of Israel, a royal priesthood, a separated people, became an example to the world of what God's Kingdom would be when in the fulness of days the Times of Ignorance were past. In spite of stubbornness and unbelief and hardness of heart, Israel was a flaming beacon in the darkness that preceded the dawn, a witness to men that God was not unmindful of their plight, that He was actively planning for their future good and would, in due time, reveal himself to them.

So, at last, when all men, not only in Israel but in all the Roman world, were in expectation, realising, by what means they knew not, that a great awakening was soon to come, there came the herald, the long-awaited messenger, stirring the hearts and minds of men with his thrilling cry.

"Repent; Believe the Gospel; The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!"

The advent of John the Baptist was the signal that the Times of Ignorance had ended; the Light was about to break in upon the world of men. John was not that Light, but he was sent to bear witness of that Light, the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. What glorious hope for all mankind is enshrined in that burning cry! Every man that cometh into the world! Not just those who happen to be born after the advent of Christ. Not only those who may happen to hear the message of Christ in this Age, those who are reached by the missionary zeal of Christ's disciples, a tiny fraction of all earth's millions despite the intensity of that zeal. *Every man that cometh into the world!* From the first unnamed and unknown children of Adam, back there many thousands of years ago, to the last heathen savage who is born in some impenetrable jungle and lives his life and dies there without anyone coming to him with the story of the saving power of Jesus. Every man is to be brought to the light, in the day which God has ordained shall follow the Times of Ignorance, the day in which God shall judge the world in righteousness by that one whom He hath ordained, Jesus Christ the Saviour of men.

So it was that "in the fulness of time" (Gal. 4. 4), when at last men, or at least a "remnant" of men, were ready for the message, Christ came. He came to bring "life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1. 10). He came that the people who walked in darkness might see a great light and that upon those who dwelt in the darkness of the shadow of death the light might shine (Isa. 9. 2). He came to reveal God's Plan in all its fulness, to clear away the mystery and doubt and perplexity that had so long assailed the minds of men, and to point them to the way which God would have them take, the way that leads unto life.

Jesus came to reconcile men to God. There was no possibility of reconciliation before He came, for there was no basis upon which true reconciliation could be made. Man, imperfect, fallen, sinful, could not so much as stand in the presence of One who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, so the "*way into the Holiest of all was not manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.*" (Heb. 9. 8). Jesus came to open that way. It involved his own death, a willing sacrifice, the "*just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*" (1 Pet. 3. 18), but that death did open the way for all of earth's mil-

lions, "whosoever will", to enter, in due time, into the eternal inheritance God has prepared for them (Matt. 25. 34). The coming of Christ and the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ was for all men, and upon the day that He ascended triumphantly on high, having led captivity captive (Eph. 4. 18), He began to set in motion the mighty forces which are destined to have spread their energy over the long span of three thousand years before they will have completed the achievement of the Divine purpose, the reconciliation to God of all who will, and the subjection of all things to Christ, that at his Name shall every knee bow, whether of things in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth (Phil. 2. 10).

It was Peter who saw so clearly that the keynote of the new dispensation was repentance. Gone for ever were the old archaic ideas that God could be propitiated by sacrifice, or bribed by means of ritualistic observance. God was not a Deity delighting in the suffering and misery of his creatures, neither was He a tyrant demanding abject and grovelling obeisance. He desires not sacrifice and burnt-offering but rather the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving.... "*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*" (Psa. 51. 17). Therefore Peter placed, as the first requisite for those who would come to God, repentance. Time after time he hammered out this theme. "Men and brethren, what shall we do? *Repent, and be baptised*" (Acts 2. 37-38). "*Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*" (Acts 3. 19). Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16. 15). Peter interpreted that injunction in terms of repentance. The Light had come, the Times of Ignorance were past; all men could now rejoice in the knowledge of the glory of God, if they would. But entrance into that privilege could be gained only in one way—the way of repentance. And so Paul, years later, speaking to the men of Athens, telling them of the passing of those Times of Ignorance, could do naught else but confirm Peter's gospel. "*God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*"

This did not mean that God was calling all men at that time into the fellowship of the Church. True, the invitation was extended to all, and all who would exercise the faith and devotion necessary to present themselves in whole hearted consecration to God would have been accepted, as indeed some three thousand were accepted in the very first day (Acts 2. 41). But God knew and had provided that for the first two thousand years only a few, relatively

speaking, would in fact come to him and become his; for the many the more intense work of the third thousand years, the Millennium, would be necessary. That does not affect the fact that on the Day of Pentecost the active work of reconciliation of man to God was begun, that it has progressed without intermission ever since, and that it will progress without break or interruption until all mankind save the incorrigible have accepted the Divine standards and come into harmony with God. The transition from the Gospel Age to the Messianic Age, the onset of the great time of Trouble, the ending of the "Call of the Church" and the going forth of the Law of the Lord from Jerusalem to all people in the world will make no difference to *that*.

The responsibility and obligation laid on all men, therefore, in these days of the Gospel, is to heed the words of his witnesses and to repent. That is the message that has been going out since Peter stood up with the eleven; it has never changed and it has never been abrogated. And it will not change, and will not cease until the end of the Messianic Age. In our day we are privileged to announce, with that message, the glorious news of the imminence of the Messianic Kingdom. We are also obligated to make known the fact of Divine judgment coming upon the world for its evil, the "day of vengeance of our God" (Isa. 61. 2), the bitter harvest of his own sowing which man must reap. But nothing in this changes the original message. In answer to the oft-repeated question "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" we can only say, as did Peter, "*Repent!*"

In this there is guidance for us in our Christian activity. The suggestion that a time comes in the end of the Age when it becomes contrary to the Master's will to proclaim his message far and wide, wherever opportunity offers, is not only quite unscriptural but the very negation of the Christian position. The very purpose of our existence is to preach the Gospel. The very object of our earthly lives is to be instructed and trained for a future work of service in which the preaching of the Gospel will play a very important part. God has been working through the ages to develop in man a closer and increasingly accurate knowledge of himself and his plans. How short-sighted, therefore, to hold that in this crucial time, when one mighty Age is merging into another mighty Age; when the climax of all human history is about to be reached; when God is preparing to take over the sovereignty of the world and put into operation the final stage of his great Plan, the work of witness should be stopped. Shall no voice speak about the wonders that now are so imminent, no warning be given

of the stupendous changes so soon to take place, no injunction to repentance be uttered in face of the momentous nature of the times and the swift entrance of the world into judgment? Has God ever left the world without an opportunity for repentance in the face of disaster before? Never! Has He ever been without his witnesses, his messengers, his ambassadors, in this world in bygone times? Never! Then why should we think He will change his methods now, when all the world is crying out its need of the message that those who know his plan alone are able to give!

Our mission, then, like that of Paul and Peter, is to preach Christ and him crucified. God will give the increase; it is ours to plant and water. We are, as were the Apostles and as have been all Christians since, ministers of reconciliation, (2 Cor. 5. 18) beseeching men in Christ's stead "*be ye reconciled to God*". Neither is this ministry for our own edification or instruction solely. Too often is it suggested that the preaching of the Gospel is not for the sakes of those who may hear, but for the sake of those who preach, that they may be the more qualified for the future day of world conversion. The work of witness that is going on to-day and has been going on throughout the Age has a definite place in the Divine Plan—it is the voice of God sounding through all the world his command to repent. The fruitage of that message will be manifest in the next Age when some will be found ready to co-operate in restoring order and peace upon earth, because they heard something of these things in this Age, and although not called into the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus, did nevertheless apply their minds to these things, and believed them, and waited in faith and hope for the coming of the promised Day.

Is this, then, a sowing for the next Age? In a very real sense our preaching must be a sowing

for the next Age. It is impossible to give expression to the faith that is in us without sowing for the next Age. That is not at all the same thing as trying to convert all the world in this Age to the exclusion of the next — the mistake into which so many Christians have fallen. "*Go ye, teach all nations*" said Jesus. That teaching must have its effects upon men in the next Age just as it has its effect upon those who through that teaching become footstep followers of the Lord Jesus during this Age and are ultimately glorified to reign together with him. So our work for the Lord is definitely a preparation for the future. We shall take up our activities on the other side of the Veil just where we leave them on this side, but, thank God, shorn of the weakness and the toil, and continued then in that wondrous power which is to be the eternal possession of the glorified saints.

God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness. The whole of our message hinges around that one inescapable fact. The long story of sin and death, the misery of man in his darkness and ignorance, the revelation of Divine oversight, first at Sinai, then at Calvary, finally at Armageddon, all goes to show that God has been steadily working towards that great Day. And we stand in the dawn of that Day. The time of its full manifestation cannot be long delayed. The goal toward which we have been pressing is almost immediately before us. Let us, then, with more zeal and more certainty than ever, proclaim with all our heart and all our soul and all our strength the message which has been the Divine call to mankind for nearly twenty centuries, and remains the Divine call still.

"The time is fulfilled—repent ye, and believe the gospel."
THE END.

CONFUCIUS ON THE FUTURE

"When the Great Way prevails, the world is one Great Commonwealth. The virtuous and able are selected for office, good faith is cultivated, and harmony prevails. People regard not only their own parents as parents, and not only their own children as children. The old are able to enjoy their old age; the young are able to employ their talents; the adolescents are free to grow; helpless widows and widowers, lonely orphans, and the crippled and deformed are provided for. Men have occupations and women have homes. Wealth is not to be thrown away, nor is it to be kept as personal possession. Labour is not to be wasted, nor is it to be em-

ployed for private gain. Selfish schemes cease to exist, and banditry and rebellion do not rise. All doors are open. This is the age of the Great Commonwealth."

These are the words of Confucius (551-478 B.C.), the Chinese philosopher whose teachings are professed as a religion by one-fifth of earth's population. They reveal his appreciation of the principles of the Millennial Kingdom and although, living before Christ, he never knew of God's provision for man, he will one day return to life, see his ideals in practice, and probably quickly pledge himself to Christ's service and become again a teacher of men.

THE INNER HOLINESS

Goodness, innocence, purity, freedom from sin, is not holiness... even unfallen nature was not holy. Goodness is an attribute of Nature, as God creates it: holiness is something infinitely higher. Holiness is a moral attribute; in short, it is what a free will chooses and determines for itself. The human nature which God created and gave is only naturally good, but what man wills to have of God and of his will, and really appropriates, that has moral worth and leads to holiness.

We speak of the Holiness of God as his infinite moral perfection; man's moral perfection can only come in the use of his will, consenting fully and abiding in the will of God. Thus alone can he become holy. To be holy is to be Godlike; to have a disposition, a will, a character, like God. Holiness is not something we do or achieve: it is the communication of the Divine life. Where God is, there is holiness. It is the presence of God which makes holy.

Note how it was that the nearer the Presence, the greater the degree of holiness. Because God dwelt among Israel, the camp was holy; all uncleanness was to be removed from it. But the holiness of the Court of the Tabernacle was greater: uncleanness which did not exclude from the camp would not be tolerated there. Then the Holy Place was still holier, because still nearer to God, and the inner Sanctuary where the Presence dwelt on the Mercy-Seat, was the holiest of all, was most holy. And the same principle still holds good: holiness is measured by nearness to God.

There are Christians who dwell in the camp, but know little of drawing nigh to the Holy One. Then you have outer court Christians: they long for pardon and peace, and they come ever again to the altar of atonement; but they know little of true nearness of holiness, of their privilege as priests to enter the Holy Place. Others there are who have learned that this is their calling, and long to enter in, and yet hardly understand the boldness they have to enter into the holiest of all, and to dwell there. Blessed are those to whom this secret of the Lord has been revealed. They know what the rent veil means and the access into the immediate Presence. The veil has been taken away from their hearts, and they have found the secret of true holiness in the indwelling of the Holy One, the God Who is holy and makes holy.

Separation is not holiness, but is the way to it. Though there can be no holiness without separation, there can be separation that does not lead to holiness. The Hebrew word for holiness possibly comes from a root that means to separate. But where we have in our translation "separate" or "sever" or "set apart" they are translations of quite different Hebrew words. The Hebrew word translated "holy" is used exclusively to express that special idea.

Separation is only the setting apart and taking possession of the vessel to be cleansed and used: it is the filling of it with the precious contents we entrust to it that gives it its real value. Holiness is the Divine filling, without which the separation leaves us empty. Separation itself is not holiness. The Nazarite was a type of separation: the separation consisted specially in three things—temperance (in abstinence from the fruit of the vine); humiliation (in not cutting or shaving the hair—"it is a shame for a man if he have long hair"); self-sacrifice (in not defiling himself for even father or mother or their death). What we must specially note is that the separation was not from things unlawful, but from things lawful... it is in giving up, not what can be proved to be sin, but all that may hinder the full intensity of our surrender into God's hands to make us holy, that the spirit of separation is manifested. Our holiness will consist not in a human separation in which we attempt to imitate God's—no, but in entering into his separateness; belonging entirely to him—set apart by him and for himself.

We must know the *need* for separation. It is no arbitrary demand of God, but has its ground in the very nature of things. To separate a thing is to set it free for one special use or purpose, that it may, with undivided power, fulfil the will of him who chose it, and so realise its destiny. It is the principle that lies at the root of all division of labour; complete separation to one branch of study or labour is the way to success and perfection. God wants us all to himself, that He may give all of himself to us. God separates us from all that does not lead us into his holiness and fellowship.

The separating power of the Presence of God, this is what we need to know. "*Wherein now shall it be known that I have found grace in thy sight, I and thy people*" said Moses, "*Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separ-*

ated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth". It is the consciousness of God's Presence, making and keeping us his very own, that works the true separation from the world and its spirit, from ourselves and our own will. And it is as this separation is accepted and prized and persevered by us, that the holiness of God will enter in and take possession. He separates us for himself and sanctifies us to be his dwelling. He comes himself to take personal possession by the indwelling of Christ in the heart. Not what I am, or do, or give, is holiness, but what God is, and gives, and does to me.

Holiness is not something we bring to God or do for him. Holiness is what there is of God in us . . . our power to become holy is to be found in the call of God; the Holy One calls us to himself that He may make us holy in possessing himself. *"I am the Lord who makes holy"*.

If we gather up the lessons we have found in the Word from Paradise downward, we see that the elements of holiness in us correspond to some special aspect of God's holiness, namely, deep restfulness, humble reverence, entire surrender, joyful adoration, simple obedience. They all prepare for the Divine indwelling, and this again we have through the abiding Jesus with the Crown of Holiness on his head. In the holiness of Jesus we see what ours must be; righteousness that hates sin and gives everything to have it destroyed; love that seeks the sinner and gives everything to have him saved. *"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother"*.

It is a solemn thought that we may be studying earnestly to know what holiness is and yet have little of it because we have little of Jesus. It is a blessed thought that a man may be directly little occupied with the thought of holiness, and yet have much of it because he is full of Jesus. There is first what we might call "word truth" in which a man may have the correct form of words while he does not really apprehend the truth they contain. Then there is "thought truth": that is a clear intellectual apprehension of a truth without the experience of its power. The Bible speaks of truth as a living reality—this is the "life truth" in which the very spirit of the truth we profess has entered and possessed our inner being.

The chief means of sanctification that God uses is his Word, but it is not the Word that sanctifies; it is God alone who can sanctify. Nor is it simply through the Word that God does it, but through the truth that is in the Word. As a

means the Word is of no value if God does not use it. Let us strive to connect God's holy Word with the Holy God himself. God sanctifies in the truth through his Word.

Many Christians have no conception of the danger and deceitfulness of a "thought" religion, with sweet and precious thoughts coming to us in books and preaching, and with little power. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is in the heart first; man's teaching in the mind. Let all our thinking ever lead us to cease from thought, and to open the heart and will to the Spirit.

We are called to be prepared for a heavenly life. If we are to live throughout Eternity with him who is holy, we too must be holy, for without being holy we cannot share his life of holiness. We are on our way to see God. We have been invited to meet the Holy One face to face, and all our schooling here in the life of holiness is simply the preparation for that meeting, and that vision.

"He hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy" (Eph. 1.4) . . . a calling before and above everything, to Holiness. *"Be ye holy, for I am holy"*. It is as if God said, holiness is My blessedness and My Glory: without this you cannot, in the very nature of things, see Me or enjoy Me. Holiness is My blessedness and My glory. I invite you to share it with Me. Does it not move and draw you mightily, the hope of being with Me, partakers of my holiness? I have nothing better to offer—I offer you myself: *"Be ye holy, for I am holy"*. The separating word in human language is MINE . . . It is the great word love uses . . . God himself knows no mightier argument, can put forth no more powerful attraction than this, *"that ye should be MINE"*.

That holiness is more than cleansing, and must be preceded by it, is taught us in more than one passage of the New Testament. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, *having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word*". The cleansing is a negative side—the being separate and not touching the unclean thing; the sanctifying, is the positive union and fellowship with God.

As soon as the people had been redeemed from Egypt, God's very first word to them was *"Sanctify—make holy unto me all the first-born: it is mine"* (Exod. 13.2). The word reveals how proprietorship is one of the central thoughts both in redemption and in sanctification, the link that binds them together.

(Andrew Murray, 19th Cent.)

INDEX 1981

EXPOSITORY

Almighty, the Eternal, The	
4. Above all heavens	7
Apollos	17
Christ our Propitiation	134
Divine Nature, Note on	93
Eli—the Priest who failed	129
Garden of Eden	
1. Did it really happen?	3
2. God planted a Garden	31
3. Creation of Adam	51
4. Servant of the Soil	75
5. The Coming of Eve	103
6. That old serpent the Devil	125
In flaming Fire	107
In the Land of Beginning Again	
3. Resurrection by Judgment	10
4. Rule of the shepherding rod	37
5. Thy children shall come again	65
Isaiah of the Golden Tongue	43
John Mark	99
Martha and Mary	57
Nebuchadnezzar the Great King	79
Nehemiah, The story of	
1. The King's Cupbearer	55
2. Building the wall	91
3. Holiness unto the Lord	106
New Covenant, The	40
New English Bible, Observations on	135
Out of the Storehouse	16, 30, 54, 84
Passover must be killed, The	38
Question Box, The	46
Ras Shamra Tablets, The	115
Revelation and its Sequel	
7. The Davidic Throne	21
8. Conclusion	47
Sarah laughed, When	102
"This Generation"	82
Times of this Ignorance, The	
1. Paul and the Athenians	67
2. Creation to Exodus	85
3. Moses to Christ	111
4. God now commandeth	139

HORTATORY

Correction with Judgment	123
Courage of conviction	114
End of the World, Seiss on	109
God's Comprehensive Law	36
Heralds of the Kingdom	11
Inner Holiness, The	142
Into the sanctuary of God	59
Lamb goes forth to War, The	61
Light of the World, The	94
"None of these things move me"	137
Road to Emmaus	12
Romans Fifteen Four	117
Spiritual Manhood	23
Spiritual Strength	20
Tarrying vision, The	27
Thought for the Month	2, 26, 50, 74, 98
Three-fold Injunction, The	89
"What doest thou here, Elijah?"	70

MINOR ITEMS

Agar and Lemuel	30
Angel of light, Satan as	6
Bell Dawson on primitive man	30
Brightness of his glory	6
Confucius on the future age	141
Coverdale on Scripture reading	84
Eden, map of	33
Elder, the word	84
Eternal punishment of wicked	46
God's thoughts	69
Holiness	83
Holiness and Joy	72
Ideal climate, An	48
I.H.S., Meaning of	54
Many sparrows	54
Medical remedies, pre-Flood	16
Mediterranean—Dead Sea canal	56
Meyer on ambassadors	122
Moslem's faith, A	30
Noah's workmen	2
Observation, Kingdom not with	133
Olive trees of Gethsemane	78
Only-begotten Son, The	30
Patriarchal longevity	54
Poison Wind, The	29
Prejudice, Luther on	54
Sarah Covenant, allegory	46
Strabo on Moses	30
Zorobabel on Wisdom	30

TEXTS EXPOUNDED

Gen. 1. 26-27	51	Luke 10.48-52	57
" 2. 8-17	3, 31, 51	" 17.20-21	133
" 2. 18-24	75, 103	" 21.32	82
" 3. 1	125	" 24.26	12
" 18. 12-15	102	John 5.20	10
Deut. 18. 15	111	" 5.29	136
I Sam. 1.5	129	Acts 3.23	111
I. Kin. 19.9	70	" 4.33	74
Neh. 1 & 2	55	" 17.30	67
" 3 & 4	91	" 17.32	11
" 5 & 13	106	" 20.22-24	137
Psa. 78.59-71	130	Rom. 3.35	134
Prov. 30.1	30	" 15.4	117
" 31.1	30	1 Cor. 13.11	23
Isa. 26.19	16	" 15.27-28	9
" 33.6	26	2 Cor. 3.6	41
" 55.8	69	" 4.13	114
Jer. 7.12	130	" 11.12	6
" 10.23-24	123	" 12.1-9	21, 47
" 31.17	65	Eph. 2.7	9
" 31.31-34	40	" 4.10	7
Nah. 2.4	98	Phil. 2.9	8
Hab. 2.3	27	Col. 1.9	8
Mal. 3.1	40	" 2.9	8
Matt. 5.22	135	1 Thess. 5.16-18	89
" 12.41-42	136	2 Thess. 1.7-8	107
" 13.24	54	1 Tim. 5.5-9	50
" 13.42	135	Heb. 1.3	6
" 24.34	82	" 9.15	41
" 26.26	41	" 11.11	102
Mark 13.30	82	2 Pet. 1.4	93