

W. H. L. L. L.



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

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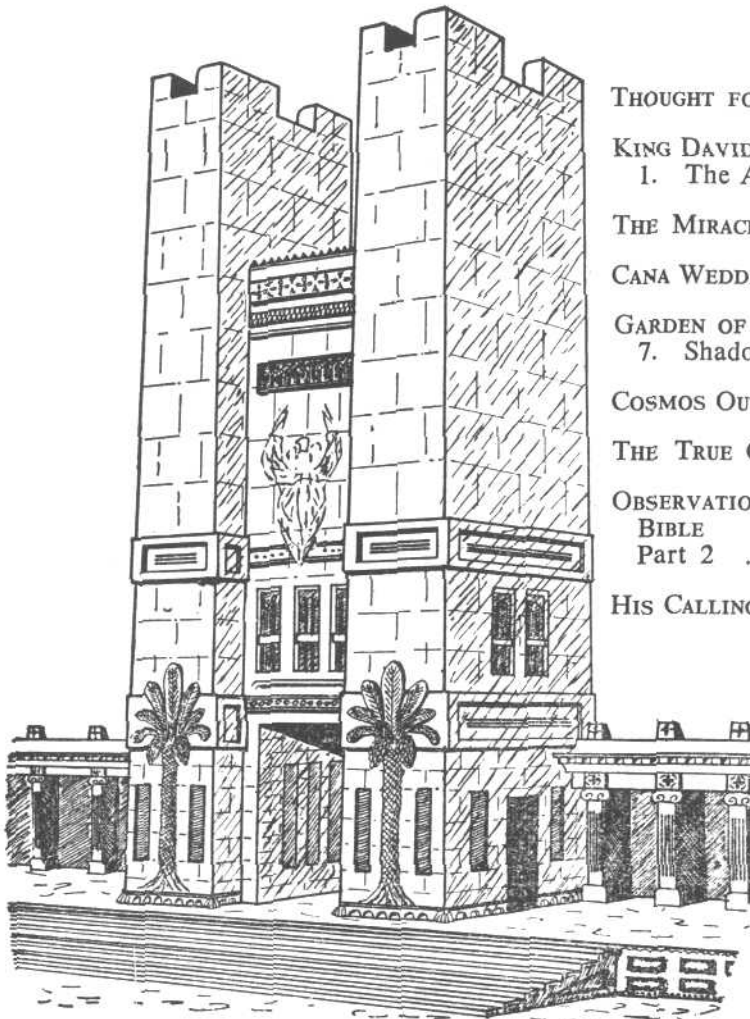
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Psa. 115. 16).

The commencement of the year is perhaps a good time to remember and consider that fact. Men in general assume that the earth "just happens to be there" and can be manipulated, exploited or utilised as they please without regard to its conservation or its preservation, a sort of expendable commodity available for the use of the present and next few generations without heed to what comes after. The reckless manner in which the earth's natural resources are at present being plundered and the progressively accelerating rate of world-wide pollution of the environment which is becoming increasingly obvious highlights the complete indifference of contemporary man to the needs and welfare of the future. All this arises from men's refusal to understand and recognise that they are stewards of earth, holding it in trust for the future as agents of the Creator and morally obligated to maintain the balance of Nature so that it remains as admirably adapted for the sustenance of human life when they yield up their stewardship as it was when they first assumed it.

In a sense this is a repetition of the story of the Garden of Eden. Whatever the precise nature of the transgression which at that time separated man from God and introduced death into the world, it is clear that the man satisfied his own indulgence at the expense of the posterity due to follow him in later time. God gave him the earth, with an admonition as to the use he was to make of it. Adam is pictured as the steward of God's terrestrial creation and Adam's tragedy was that he repudiated the Giver and rendered

his allegiance instead to one who represented the disrupting influences in creation. That is the position to-day. *"Ye shall be as gods"* was the specious promise then. Men aspire to be as gods now, little realising that the hope is as vain now as it was then. It is not for nothing that the main theme of this 115th Psalm is the fallibility of trust in idols, false gods. They have mouths, says the Psalmist, but they speak not; eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; noses, but smell not. So through the whole list to the ironic conclusion *"they that make them are like unto them"*.

Therein resides a fundamental truth. An increasing proportion of mankind is busily engaged in this our day in the attempt to remake God's creation in man's own likeness. Said the Lord on one occasion *"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and they have hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water."* The old Church rubric "we have done those things which we ought not to have done; we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and there is no health in us" is tragically true; well would it be for the world if men would recognise that fact.

Gone from us



Sis. Daisy Cornell (Aldersbrook)
 Sis. Emma Fox (Yeovil)
 Sis. Maud Lang (Londonderry)
 Bro. George Lingley (Sittingbourne)



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

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

1. The Anointing

He first appears in view a fresh, likeable young country lad. Born into a farming family, in the midst of a community of farmers, the youngest of a family of eight sons, it was inevitable that at perhaps sixteen years of age he spent his days shepherding sheep. He probably did not expect to do anything else for the rest of his life. His father's inheritance would have to be divided at death between eight sons so that there was not likely to be much for each; in all probability the prospect was that the farm would continue to be worked in partnership by the eight with himself, the youngest, very much the junior partner. The chances are that he did not worry himself much about that; he found shepherding a congenial occupation giving him abundant time for his three favourite diversions, the playing of music on his little set of pipes, reading the sacred Scriptures of his people—consisting of their stirring history from the beginning—and meditating on the wonders of Nature and the majesty of the Almighty.

He came of a godly family. There can be no doubt about that. He manifests, even in his early youth, a reverence, and a confidence in God which can only have been instilled by his upbringing. His father Jesse must have been one of the faithful in Israel who endeavoured to keep the obligations of the Covenant and due respect for the Lord in the forefront of family life. Nothing more is known about Jesse; he farmed his land as his fathers had done before him and when he died at a noteworthy old age—which in those days may have been up to a hundred and twenty—he left behind him as his only epitaph the fact that he had been responsible for the youthful training and character-development of Israel's greatest king.

David the shepherd boy of Bethlehem was destined to rule Israel and extend its boundaries from the modest little land, conquered by Joshua and his forces four hundred years previously, to the Euphrates on the one hand and the borders of Egypt on the other. Never again was the nation to possess such an acquisition of territory. He was a man of destiny. His name in after days was the symbol of Israel's royalty. He became the visible representative of Israel's God; of him it was said that he sat on the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem. Israel, the theocratic state whose true king was the Lord himself, looked upon David in all his royal glory and saw in him the embodiment of their heavenly king.

He was not the first to rule Israel. Saul had preceded him—Saul, the arrogant leader of men who himself had started life in the fields as did David and was selected by the Lord to fulfil the people's clamour for a king. Saul, the handsome, muscular stripling whose physical appearance so captivated the nation that they clamoured for him and Saul, modest and retiring, hid himself among the baggage. But Saul had proved a failure. His early promise had changed to self-will and self-conceit and he no longer revered the Lord who had called him and raised him to high honour, and so at last the Lord deposed him and sent the prophet Samuel to anoint this other lad to take his place. Sometimes it is asked how it was that the Lord called Saul when so soon he proved himself unworthy; is the Lord so bad a judge of human character? The answer lies in the realm of human free-will and this is a fundamental principle in the Divine scheme of things. Saul had the same opportunity as had David, Saul could have been the first of a line of kings ruling eventually in Jerusalem but he chose otherwise. He rebelled against God who had given him the kingship just as in a much higher sphere Lucifer the apostate archangel rebelled against God who had created him "full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" as Ezekiel has it. So the Lord disowned him and appointed another. In just the same manner Lucifer, the god of this world, must give place to our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who yielded himself willingly to the Divine will and in consequence is exalted above all heavens and will ultimately receive the loyalty and allegiance of all creation. It is not by accident that David becomes the type and prefigure of Christ in his triumphant royalty. Saul and David both had freewill; the one used it to rebel against God, the other to conform himself willingly to the Divine purpose.

Here then, in David, was a man for God's purpose at a time in history when such a man was needed. There had not been many such in Israel's past history who had remained supremely loyal to the end. Joshua at the time of the Entry; "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" was his dying injunction to his people (Josh. 23.14). Caleb his brother-soldier at the same time; Othniel the first to govern and protect Israel after Joshua was dead, but after that, no one during four long centuries who was

faithful to the end of life until Samuel, and Samuel it was who was sent to anoint David the future king. As the young lad stood still while the anointing oil flowed over his head he was enshrining within himself the Divine promise. He was being set aside and consecrated a servant of God, to become not only a king for the present but a type for the future, a type of Christ who should come to reign over Israel and all the world for ever. The promise made to David a little later on in his life was that his throne should endure for ever; that promise will become reality when at the last the powers of this world have given place to *"the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever"* (Rev. 11.15). David had a lot to say about that Messianic kingdom in later times, for he was a prophet as well as a king. He was able to depict its glories in wonderfully eloquent language, for he was a poet, a psalmist, as well as a prophet. *"The sweet singer of Israel"* is a very apt title which has been conferred upon him by later generations; his songs of praise and devotion have enriched, first, the worship of Israel, and second, Christian worship, for thirty centuries, and they will never die.

But there were flaws in the diamond. There were defects in David's character which came out more strongly in later life, when he was established in the glory and power of his kingdom and could command his subjects' compliance with his every whim. It is said that *"all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts utterly"*. That was not fully true in the case of David. He attained what amounted to absolute power in Israel but he was not corrupted utterly. He ended his life in faith and loyalty and continued acceptance with God but in the meantime he had been guilty of serious breaches of the confidence God had placed in him. He ascended into the heights but he also descended to the depths. He won Divine approval in many things, but on occasion he merited — and received — severe Divine condemnation. He established justice and judgment in the land but he was at times guilty of great injustice. He was wholly devoted to God but he also indulged in the sins of the flesh. He was in fact, typical of every man and he became an illustration of what God can do with weak and fallible man, and his great mercy and compassion for men. The story of David is in a very real sense, the story of every man.

* * *

The smoke of the sacrifice curled lazily upward; the air was very still. The circle of venerable men, elders of the village of Bethlehem,

stood silently watching as the prophet, erect before the rough stone altar, raised his hands to Heaven in silent entreaty. A few moments thus, and he turned and made his way to the centre of the circle where Jesse the aged and respected farmer of Bethlehem was standing.

"I would see your eldest son", he said.

A sign from the other, and a tall, vigorous-looking middle-aged man stepped forward and stood before Samuel. He waited quietly.

"This is Eliab, my eldest son", said Jesse.

Samuel's eyes met those of the man before him. He noted the fearless gaze, the strong mouth, the muscular arms. He knew this family to be one that revered God and the Covenant. The Lord had sent him here to find Israel's future king. This man looked like one capable of becoming a leader of men. "Surely the Lord's anointed is before me" he thought to himself. He waited quietly for the inward voice.

It came. "Look not on his countenance or the height of his stature; because I have refused him. The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart".

Samuel sighed and looked across at Jesse, shaking his head, Jesse motioned his son to step aside, and beckoned. Abinadab stepped forward, and took his place. Eyes met, and there was silence a little space. Then Samuel spoke. "Neither hath the Lord chosen this" he said.

Shammah came into the circle and stood expectantly. Again that silence. Samuel had closed his eyes, as if in communion with his God. He opened them and spoke slowly. "Neither hath the Lord chosen this".

Some of the elders looked at each other dubiously. There was a certain amount of head-shaking. Jesse's three eldest sons, the mainstay of his establishment, all rejected. They looked back hopefully as the fourth son came forward. Faces fell as he too was rejected in his turn.

So with the fifth, and the sixth, and finally the seventh. As that seventh son strode across the grass to join his brothers, Samuel waited expectantly. There were no more.

"Are these all thy children?" he asked Jesse.

The other was perplexed. "These are all—at least, there is one more, but he is only a young lad, and he is out tending the sheep. I did not think the Lord would have use for him".

"Send and fetch him" commanded Samuel "we will not sit down to feast until he has come hither".

A brief instruction to a servant, and the man was running across the fields and speedily out of sight. The slow minutes ticked by, every man wrapped in his own thoughts. No one spoke.

A lithe figure in the distance, running with the easy trot of an agile youth. He came nearer, dropping into a rapid walk as he neared the waiting group. The circle of elders parted to give him admittance, and he stood before his father in respectful silence.

"This is David, my youngest son" said Jesse.

Samuel regarded the lad intently. He saw a fresh, guileless boy whom he judged could not be much more than sixteen years of age, glowing with health and vitality, and—yes, something more, enthusiasm for whatever he might undertake. Attractively handsome of features, with promise of development into a virile and strong-minded man. Perhaps a leader of men, Samuel mused, as the lad's frank eyes met and fearlessly held his own. But Saul had been such a one, he thought, and now Saul had proved a failure. He had rather expected that after that failure the Lord would have chosen an older and more mature man for the responsible position of king over Israel. This lad was scarcely out of his boyhood; what possible knowledge could he have of life and how could he be expected to lead the armies of Israel against her enemies. And yet—and yet—there was something appealing in that candid glance, something that had an element of the other world, as though this boy, despite his youth, knew what it was to sense the workings of that same Divine Spirit which had been so potent a factor in Samuel's own life. He suddenly thought of his own boyhood, so long a time ago now, in the Tabernacle at Shiloh with Eli the old High Priest, and he began to feel a kinship with this young lad, so like what he himself had been in those far-off days. His thoughts came back to the present and then he heard, once again, the Voice.

"Arise, anoint him; for this is he!"

Samuel looked across at Jesse and gave him an almost imperceptible nod. Turning back to the altar, he picked up the horn of anointing oil which he had placed there in readiness. Return-

ing, he stationed himself before David, standing there motionless. The eyes of all in the assembly were fixed upon him.

"The Lord has commanded me to anoint thee to the service to which He will call thee in his own due time" he declared. The lad stood rigid, a look of wonder in his eyes.

Samuel raised the horn of oil and allowed its contents to trickle over his head and be absorbed in his flowing locks.

There was a long silence. Every man present knew the implication of the act. That ritual anointing could only be for a priest or a king. David was not of the tribe of Levi; he could never be a priest. Slowly a new light began to dawn in the eyes of the watching elders. They were and had been for a long time under the iron oppression of the Philistines. Several attempts to break the yoke had been unsuccessful. Saul had consistently failed to achieve for them the freedom they had expected when they made him king. Did this mean that the Lord at last was going to provide them the deliverer for which they longed. They thought of Gideon, of Jephthah, of Othniel, who in past days had wrought deliverance for their fathers. Did this visit from Samuel mean that God was now about to visit them with salvation, to give them a king after his own heart, one who would both lead them to victory and to God. It came to each one of them that nothing must be said about this, for Saul was still king, and this anointing was tantamount to treason. What had been done this day and what they had seen must be locked up in their own hearts until the Lord should see fit to bring it into the open. For the present they must go back to their own occupations, taking with them a hope for the future which they had never expected to cherish.

So the elders dispersed to their homes, and David went back to his shepherding, and Samuel the Lord's instrument returned to his residence in Ramah.

To be continued.

The world around us is in dire distress to-day. Its sorrows deepen like a flood. The sluice gates of evil are unlocked. The universal groan goes up from all the earth, louder and deeper each passing day. "Who will break our bonds? Who will smash our chains? Who can set us free?" . . . What child of God can hear this cry and not feel his pulse-beat quicken, or his heart-strings quiver? What "hopeful" saint can see the

"hopeless" mass, and not yearn for its release. When hearts are fraught with pain as humanity mourns, there may rise a prayer for God's Kingdom days to come, without the breathing of a word, and as we pray thus for God's Will to prevail, the depth of sigh or groan will be the measure of our transformation into the Image of God's dear Son.

(Selected)

THE MIRACLE BOOK

*An appreciation of
the Holy Scriptures*

The Holy Scriptures have been described as a miracle of diversity in unity. The Bible is its own great evidence to its Divine origin and authority and we cannot consider these two great facts without being tremendously impressed with its diversity and its unity.

First there is the diversity of language; the Old Testament was written in Hebrew; a portion of it in Chaldean, while the New Testament was written in Greek. There is a diversity of authorship. These Scriptures were neither written by one nor by a company of men collaborating with one another; but men with greatly diversified mental calibre, training and occupation were employed in writing them. Moses was a shepherd, Joshua a soldier, Samuel a seer, David a King, Solomon a philosopher, Amos a herdsman, Daniel a statesman, Ezra a scribe, Matthew a taxgatherer, Luke a doctor, John a fisherman, Paul a scholar. There is a further diversity of place in which these Scriptures were produced; they have come to us from the desert of Sinai, the wilderness of Judea, the banks of Chebar, the city of Zion, the public prison of Rome, and the Isle of Patmos. There is no literary phenomenon in the world to be compared with this book, the Bible. Not only so, but there is diversity of form; in Genesis there are stories, in Leviticus ritual, in Deuteronomy oratory, in Ruth romance, in Samuel and Kings national history, in Job drama; the Psalms are sacred hymns, in Proverbs we have ethics, in Ecclesiastes philosophy, in the Canticles a love song, in Joel and Habakkuk rhapsody, in Isaiah and Jeremiah prophecy, in the Gospels biography, in Acts church history, in the Epistles doctrines, in Revelation the Apocalypse. All these forms of literature make up this great spiritual classic. From the standpoint of diversity of subject matter also, is there any other book in the world to be compared with it? In the Bible we read of God, of men, of angels and demons, of Jews and Gentiles, of Christians and pagans, of saints and sinners, of the church and the world, of peace and war, of friends and foes, of blessings and curses, of holiness and sin, of honour and shame, of faith and unbelief, of time and eternity, of life and death, of love and rage, of Heaven and Hades. These and countless other subjects are brought to our notice within the covers of this extraordinary volume.

We are not impressed, however, with any sense of incongruity; there is an eminent fitness in the

relation of these tremendous themes to one another. Nor were these writings produced at any one time. They do not belong to any one age; they come to us as the growth of many centuries. Is there any other book in the world that can be compared with this as to its diversity? Were the number of subjects treated or their equivalent brought together in any other book no publisher would take the risk of publishing it and no purchaser would ever buy it, and yet the Bible is the most widely circulated book in all the world. Other books have a season, they have a run and then we hear of them no more, but this book lives on through the ages. It out-lives all other literature and is the queen of all literature.

Notwithstanding all this diversity the Bible is nevertheless a sublime unity; every part is essential to the whole, and it all originates in the will and revelation of God. The two Testaments are essential to each other; they brood over the mercy seat as did the cherubim of gold of old, each answering to the other. "The New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New explained." Genesis and Revelation are essential to each other; Genesis is the book of commencement, Revelation the book of consummation; Genesis anticipates Revelation and Revelation consummates Genesis. Each part is related to and corresponds with every other part. Genesis with Matthew, the two great beginnings. The books that introduce the two covenants, Leviticus and Hebrews—Leviticus giving all that is essential to Judaism and Hebrews all that is essential to Christianity; Exodus with Acts—Exodus telling of the nationalisation of the people of God and Acts of the beginning of the Christian Church and the first generation of her history. Joshua with Ephesians, telling of the inheritance of God's people. Daniel, the Old Testament Apocalypse with Revelation the New Testament Apocalypse, pointing beyond the rise and fall of the world's empires to the coming of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

As an illustration of this correspondence, take the first three chapters of Genesis and the last three of Revelation and it will be found that each of these chapters treats of the same subjects but in the reverse order. In Genesis 1 we have the first Heaven and Earth; in Revelation 22 the last Heaven and Earth. In Genesis 2 we have husband and wife. In Revelation 21 the Lamb and the Bride. In Genesis 3 the sentence is pronounced upon Satan, and in Revelation 20

the sentence is executed. It is little wonder that the Devil attempts to have us believe that the one book is all myth and the other is all mystery.

The Word of God is not a dead letter; Hebrews speak of the Word of God as being alive, and Peter speaks of the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. We can no more leave the Bible alone or leave it out of our reckoning than we can leave Christ alone. Christ does not derive his value from the Bible; the Bible derives its value from Christ. Only through the Bible can we get to Christ; our eternal knowledge of Christ comes through the Bible.

The Bible is built up in an extraordinary way, not to be accounted for by accident or chance, and both Testaments we find in sequence. For instance, in the Old Testament from Genesis to Esther we have history and further back we cannot go; but begin that first verse of the first of Genesis, and interest is aroused and we are led on through all the books right to the sublime end in the Apocalypse of John. We are impressed as we read with this amazing diversity, yet it unfolds and presents itself as a sublime story. All these stories are one story, all these revelations are one revelation, and all these records are one record. Across the whole of the Old Testament you may write the word "expectation", and across the whole of the New "realisation". In Genesis there are origins, in Revelation there are issues, and all the way between, from Exodus to Jude, there are processes leading, from those origins to those issues. The revelation of God to man has been made in history and everywhere in Holy Scripture there is historical continuity and sequence. There is historical unity everywhere in Scripture; there is, further, prophetic unity. Here there is opportunity for the wildest confusion and multiplied contradiction, as witness modern prophecies, but, although there was not, and could not have been, any collusion among the writers of Holy Scripture, there is no contradiction. There are four great themes of prophecy—the Messiah, the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church. Some treat of one, some of another and not a few touch upon them all, but there is an amazing harmony everywhere. There is no contradiction among the voices. In the Old Testament there are predictions, and in the New there are fulfilments. In the Old we get types, in the New antitypes. The whole of the Old is leading up to the First Advent and the whole of the New is leading up to the Second Advent. There is prophetic unity as well as structural unity, and historical unity everywhere in Scripture. We also

have here doctrinal unity. Were man left to themselves, how utterly impossible it would be to have harmony of doctrine, but these many writers across the ages were not left to themselves.

Everywhere in Scripture we find God. We are told in some quarters that Jehovah was the tribal Deity of the Hebrews, but this is not so; He is declared the God of all the earth, the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the God of all men, and the New Testament shows that He so loved—not the Hebrews, nor the Church—but the WORLD that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. Everywhere in Scripture man is a sinner. The Old Testament does not present man as half a beast on his way up to morality and the New as a man made like God; both Testaments agree in saying that man has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Both Testaments teach that Christ is the one and only Redeemer and his Cross our only hope. Redemption, in the Old Testament anticipated, is in the New accomplished and it is from the Acts to the Apocalypse applied. It is the one great theme which runs throughout all the Scriptures. It is the note that dominates in this orchestra from start to finish. We also have spiritual unity. Think of the level of thought in the Bible. Think of its range, of its vision, of the sublimity of its themes. Think of the loftiness of its ideals, of the power of its appeals. The horizons of the Bible are infinitudes and immensities. The current coin of this realm is Faith, Love, and Hope. Think what the Bible has done for individuals. Think of the countless numbers who, were they with us still, would say, "this one thing I know—that whereas I was blind now I see." No man ever came to say that by studying philosophy or science, but many have done so through an acquaintance with the Word of God. Think of what the Bible has done for the Church of God and for national life; for where the Word of God is accepted and believed there is emancipation and deliverance from degradation and from cruelty.

It has turned the demons out of cruel hearts and made men sober and kind. If the Bible is to be judged by what it has accomplished, then verily it is the Book of Books and the Word of God. It could have no other origin than God himself. It does not need our apology or our special pleading; give it a chance and it will demonstrate its own character and its own power.

Let us as the lilies of his planting, bloom for the glory of our Heavenly Husbandman.

God is our Father not our slave-driver. It is the Devil who whips us into "flaps."

CANA WEDDING

*A story
of Jesus*

The first public appearance of Jesus after his baptism was at a wedding. He and a small party of disciples were invited guests. Perhaps this introduction to his ministry was intended to show that Jesus did not purpose to be an ascetic as was his predecessor John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness and waiting for the people to come there to hear him. Jesus intended to share the lives, the sorrows, and evidently the joys, of those whom He had come to save. So He started off by going to a wedding.

The story is related in Jno. 2. 1-11. No one knows whose wedding it was. One tradition says that the bridegroom was the Apostle John himself, but that does not seem likely, for his father Zebedee and brother James, with himself, were fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, and Cana was well away from that lake. The part played by the mother of Jesus might seem to indicate that she was connected in some way with the family but in fact nothing is known except that the bridal pair were closely enough connected with the family of Jesus to ensure this invitation. An alternative possibility is that they were members of that little-known body looking for the imminent advent of Messiah who are described in Luke 2.38 as "them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem", for which reason such are sometimes referred to as the "Redemptionists". Joseph and Mary were of these, and if such was the case the presence of Jesus would be an obvious "must".

But although Jesus had consented to grace the occasion with his presence and without doubt entered whole-heartedly into the festivities and merrymaking He did not use it merely as an opportunity for idle diversion. He was no kill-joy, but He did infuse into the proceedings an object lesson bearing a direct relation to his forthcoming ministry. And the occasion was not long in presenting itself.

The wine ran out. This does not mean that the feast had degenerated into a drunken brawl with the guests fast slipping under the table. The "new wine" used for celebratory feasts in those days was not all that potent and it was normally mixed with water anyway, so there was not much likelihood of that. What is more likely is that the master of the feast had under-estimated the quantity required, or perhaps there were more guests present than had been expected. At any rate, as the celebrations proceeded it became evident that there was not going to be enough

to go round, and this induced a state of consternation among the womenfolk who were responsible for keeping up the supply. No greater disgrace could fall upon the bridegroom than for it to become known that he had failed to provide enough wine for his wedding. The urgent question now was; what is to be done?

Mary went straight to Jesus. She could have had no idea what He could or would do to remedy the situation; neither could she at that time have had any knowledge of his supernatural power. It was just that she went to him with the problem. If there was anything that could be done at this late stage, He was the one most likely to think of it.

Many an honest soul has been sorely puzzled at the apparent harshness of his reply. "*Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.*" It was not harsh in reality. The term rendered "woman" is one denoting considerably greater respect than is usually associated with the present usage of "woman" in English—more like the term "lady" although not quite the same. "O woman" is what Jesus said, and in this context He was actually addressing her respectfully as his mother. He used the same expression at the Cross (Jno. 19.26). "*Woman*" ("O woman") "*behold thy son.*" Then there are the succeeding words "*what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.*" The literal Greek is "*what to me and to thee; not yet has come the time of me*" and the meaning in colloquial English would be "you and I need not concern ourselves at the moment; it is not yet necessary for me to interfere". It is evident that his mother "got the message", for she straightway went to the servants and told them to obey implicitly whatever Jesus should tell them to do. The Lord probably then allowed the feast to continue and at the last minute gave instructions to the servants to act.

If that is a fair appraisal there is a moral here for all Christians. Many a time in life there arises a crisis which it would seem can only be dealt with by the overruling power of our Lord, when human help is insufficient. The tendency—a natural one—then is to agonise and pray anxiously for an immediate intervention in the matter without stopping to reflect that if He is going to do anything at all about it He will assuredly do so in adequate time to bring about the desired effect; nothing will go wrong and the problem will be settled quite satisfactorily.

If we take upon ourselves to appeal to our Lord for help we only need put the matter before him in faith, and then like Israel of old in the days of Jehoshaphat, "*stand still and see the salvation of God*".

At the right moment Jesus, from his place at the table, beckoned to one of the servants—whether man or woman we do not know. "Fill those waterpots to the brim" He instructed, indicating six stone jars standing in the entry to the house. The A.V. says they could contain "*two or three firkins apiece*". The firkin is a mediæval English measure equal to about nine gallons; the Greek word is *metretes* which was also equal to about nine gallons so the A.V. translators used an equivalent English measure current in their own day easily understood by 17th century readers; today we would have to substitute "nine gallons" (and before long now convert that into litres for the benefit of the next generation). These jars, holding some twenty gallons each, were used for the very necessary ablutions of hands and feet as guests entered the house, and from time to time as the feast proceeded. The fact that there were six of them, and they were now apparently empty, is a measure of the number of guests present; this was no ordinary wedding. So the servants filled the jars to the brim.

"*Draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast*", commanded Jesus. Here was a test for the servants. To take jugs of plain water to the tables where wine was expected might well have serious consequences for them. And of course they, like Jesus' mother, had no knowledge of his powers or of what was to be the outcome. It says much for the reputation of Jesus that they apparently obeyed without demur. They drew water in their jugs and carried it to the master of ceremonies at the principal table—and when they got there, behold, it was wine!

Their amazement at this inexplicable transformation could only have been equalled by their relief at the unexpected deliverance from their dilemma. They said nothing to the master of the feast—it would have been imprudent to do otherwise—and they watched impassively as in his capacity of chief wine-taster he sampled what had been placed before him and pronounced it excellent; so excellent in fact that he observed to the bridegroom—by now a vastly relieved bridegroom—that he seemed to have reversed the usual procedure of serving the best wine first and keeping the inferior until men were no longer quite sure what they were drinking. "*Thou*" he said "*hast kept the good wine until now.*" The bridegroom, on his part, was probably wondering what good friend had come

to his aid in this time of need, and from whence he had obtained so choice a vintage.

A word about the miracle. Agnostics and rationalists a few generations back used this story, as they did other similar ones, as useful subjects for sarcasm and scorn. Whoever heard of one substance being transformed into another? Not so much of that nature is heard now, when scientific research has made it possible to do such things. Our chemical wizards now turn North Sea gas into cattle food—and good cattle food it is said to be. Water is a chemical combination of two basic elements, hydrogen and oxygen. The fermented juice of the grape adds to this a complex series of starches, sugars and alcohol which have their basis in several other elements such as carbon, nitrogen and sulphur, all of which are present in the atmosphere. It required the exercise of Divine power to infuse those additional elements at the moment of drawing the water to convert it into wine. To One who once brought nearly a hundred different elements together from the dust of the earth to create the marvel of a human body that must have represented quite a minor act.

But why did Jesus do it? Why introduce his ministry, which was to involve so many momentous issues, which was to have such tremendous consequences for the whole world, by an act which might well be interpreted as an exhibition of cheap magic, a kind of clever conjuring trick only notable for the fact that no one knew how it was done? What was Jesus' purpose behind it? The narrative says "*this beginning of miracles did Jesus . . . and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him*". In what way did this incident manifest forth his glory? Let it be noted that very few of those at the feast even knew that the miracle had been performed. The master of ceremonies did not know; the bridegroom did not know, and fairly evidently the guests did not know either. In fact the only ones who did know anything about it would seem to have been the servants who drew the water, Mary, and probably the disciples, who would have been in close touch with her. Human nature being what it is, the servants would without doubt have spread the story afterwards, and perhaps by this means public attention was focussed upon Jesus and men began to pay more attention to his message than they might have done otherwise. They were simple country folk but without doubt well versed in the Scriptures. They all knew the story of how Elijah the prophet had caused a miraculous supply of oil to appear in the Zarephath widow's cruse during two or more years of drought. Elijah had stopped the rain from heaven and caused the

drought; Elijah had brought the rain back again. Might it not be that God was speaking to Israel again as He had done in the days of Elijah, and was this happening at Cana a repetition of what had happened so long ago at Zarephath? So they might have reasoned, and watched with heightened interest to see what Jesus would do next. Moses had brought water out of the rock, and manna from heaven, at a time of Israel's sore need. Moses and Elijah, the two greatest of Israel's deliverers! Was this one to be a third, one who would deliver them and fulfil all the Divine promises? Perhaps, after all, this seemingly pointless miracle was the most effective manner of drawing attention to the One sent of God to redeem them from all their sins and deliver them from all their enemies. Perhaps, in this way, more than in any other, He was able to manifest forth his glory, the glory of One coming from above armed with celestial power to heal the woes of men. At any rate, it is said that, in consequence of this episode, *"his disciples believed on him"*. He had only just chosen

the first half dozen; they hardly knew him as yet: perhaps this miracle was just what was wanted, and all that was wanted, to establish their faith in him not only as a teacher and a prophet sent from God, which is how they probably received him in the first place, but as the very Messiah, the one coming with all power in heaven and earth to fulfil all the glowing predictions of all the ancient prophets. *"We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did speak, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph"* said Philip just before this incident (Jno. 1.45). Andrew, going to Peter, was more emphatic; *"We have found the Messiah"*. After what they had seen and heard at that wedding-feast at Cana they were almost certainly more than ever convinced that He was indeed the Sent of God. Perhaps the miracle of the turning of water into wine was not for the benefit of the wedding-guests at all, but that those few first disciples, newly come to Jesus and necessarily not quite sure of themselves, yet, might see, and understand, *"that this is very Christ"*.

WITH JESUS

"They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus". (Acts 4:12).

*"Jesus, the very thought of thee
With sweetness fills my breast
But sweeter far thy face to see
And in thy presence rest."*

Education and social position make men proud. They feel they have special privileges to teach and preach, denied to those in humbler stations of life who have never learned their lessons inside those temples of learning which award degrees and scholastic honours to their students. The bold, clear oratory of Jesus aroused the envy of the scribes and priests. Where had this man learned wisdom and knowledge, the art of the preacher? Was not this the carpenter's son? When Peter and John held forth before them with the same confidence and fluency they were astonished. These working men had the same manner as their Master!

They had not perceived, as many have not done since, that mere knowledge does not make a man either great or clever. Schools, degrees, books and ability to quote the Bible, do not make a Christian. The Apostles had received power from on high, as Jesus had before them. The mysterious spirit of God had given them illumination, courage, confidence and poise. Where once they had been timid, ignorant and without polish, they now stood boldly before the High Priests telling them plainly a few facts which quelled them into silence. They had put Jesus to death but they dare not touch his

preachers.

So Peter and John were free to teach and preach, to shed their influence upon the lives of others as Jesus had influenced them. Influence is a wonderful and powerful alchemy in life. Everyone is exerting an influence on someone else, for better or worse. The stronger the personality the stronger the influence. These men had lived with Jesus for three years. During that time it is evident they had become changed men, needing only the energising power of the Pentecostal Spirit to kindle a flame in them which could not be put out. The base metal of their nature was by this means transmuted into the gold of indestructible character.

Brave men influence other men to bravery. Great men inspire lesser men to rise a little higher than their humdrum existence. Good people make the not so good conscious that they could do better. Clever people, successful people, creators of beauty, give a needed urge to the indolent to get something done. The influence of evil is all too evident in the disorders of society, but the Christian has a responsibility as long as he is in this world, not only to let his light shine but to be as salt where the weakness of human nature is easily corrupted.

The influence of blameless, bold, truthful men and women who have been with Jesus is always felt. It makes an impact on people hungering for hope and life. The actions we do today, the wise words we spoke yesterday, may be the influence that some one needs to shape their tomorrow.

GARDEN OF EDEN

7. Shadow of Death

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5. 12).

When the Apostle Paul wrote those terrible words, he took his stand definitely and irrevocably for the doctrine of the Fall. His whole argument for the saving grace of God in Christ, set out so lucidly in the fifth chapter of Romans, hinges upon the literal truth of the Genesis story. If there was no one man, back there in the beginning of history, who fell from his sinless state and embraced sin, and suffered death in consequence, then there is no Christ in the latter days by whose righteousness the grace of God operates to the removal of sin and the restoration of all that men lost when Adam sinned. The two facets must stand or fall together. St. Paul is recognised as the predominant authority on Christian belief and doctrine and his insistence upon the inerrancy of the fundamental principles underlying the story of Creation and the Fall must be accepted, by all who "profess and call themselves Christians".

Having received the story as true, it remains to examine the narrative in order to determine, as nearly as possible, just what actually did take place. What precisely was the nature of that sin which had such grievous consequences for the entire human race? What temptation was this which proved so overpoweringly strong that it completely submerged all that man knew of God and felt toward God, and led him into an entirely strange and alien path? How was it that the effect of one single action in the life of the first man reacted physically and mentally on all his descendants to such an extent that none since have been able to resist sin and all have been subject to death? The forbidden fruit must surely have been potent fruit indeed to have produced such far-reaching consequences!

The story relates how God introduced man to the trees in the garden of his creating; first, trees that were good for food, in all their variety; second, the tree of life; thirdly, the tree of "knowledge of good and evil". A prohibition was laid upon him; he was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of good and evil, for the eating of that fruit would result in death. After Eve's creation the serpent assured her that no such consequence would ensue, that in fact she would be greatly enlightened and become like the celestial beings. Both Eve and Adam succumbed to the sugges-

tion and partook, finding too late that the serpent had lied and that in disobeying the Divine injunction they had signed their own death-warrants. There is the story in the simplicity which has made it understandable to men of every level of intelligence and culture in every generation of history and we in this twentieth century have to relate it to our own understanding of God and his ways and ask ourselves if a more detailed picture can be discerned behind this simple outline of one forbidden tree with its tempting fruit.

More than one agnostic has enquired scoffingly why God took so serious a view of a misdemeanour which is perpetrated annually by nearly every small boy when the apples are ripe—not always waiting until they are ripe — and what kind of a God of love can He be to have made this one apparently trivial act the alleged cause of all the fearful horrors which sin and death have inflicted upon the world in all the ages since. Put like that, the critic's query is a reasonable one, and the action of God seems on the surface to be harsh and arbitrary in the extreme. One might make answer that the entire episode is represented as a test of obedience, and that Adam's disobedience in even a minor matter is sufficient to demonstrate the fact that he had disobeyed and therefore stood condemned before God. That argument was fairly conclusive a few generations ago when accepted theology viewed God as a somewhat vengeful Deity intent upon the eternal condemnation of the vast majority of his creatures, most of whom were never in the whole of life's experience to have any opportunity to hear, much less accept, the only Name in which salvation could be attained. It does not ring so convincingly today when it is realised that, so far from seeking the condemnation of men, God made men for life, to fulfil a definite function in the Creation, and that death comes only if man refuses, after full opportunity and knowledge of the issues involved, to fulfil the duty for which he is created. The eating of the forbidden fruit, or whatever was the reality behind that apparently trivial action, was something far more fundamental than an act of petty disobedience; it must have represented a deliberate repudiation and defiance of God. If we can establish a reasonable basis for relating the simple story of the Fall to such a defiance we will go far to appreciating why there were such terrible and far-reaching consequences.

Let the stage be viewed with all its scenery and its characters in position as the drama moves into action. Against the background of the fair garden of God's planting stand the two trees, each laden with fruit, the one giving righteousness and eternal life, the other evil and eternal death. Behind the Tree of Life, but not seen on the stage, is the invisible presence of God, the Creator and giver of all good. Beside the other Tree stands in splendour a celestial being, known and worshipped in later times as the Serpent, one claiming to be the giver of life and happiness to men but in reality bringing only misery and death. Before the two trees stands Eve the first woman; Adam the first man is as yet off the stage. The woman has learned something of the mysteries and duties of life, perhaps directly from God's messenger, certainly at second hand through her husband. This new friend she has never seen before and with womanly curiosity and natural interest she listens to his rather patronising query . . .

"Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Strange that so exalted a being should seem ignorant of the basic instructions of God. Eve hastens to put him right. *"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die"*.

The smiling lips curl scornfully and the piercing eyes look upon the woman with barely veiled amusement. *"Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods (elohim—celestial ones) knowing good and evil"*.

And she believes him! The woman believes her new-found friend rather than God who at this moment seems to be far away. She can taste of the forbidden fruit and yet avoid its effects. Her new friend has told her so and she believes him. The fruit is good for food, and it is attractive to the eyes, and now she knows that it will confer wisdom and knowledge—she hesitates no longer but steps forward, and plucks, and eats. Desirous that her husband shall share with her in this new experience, she goes to him bearing the fruit in her arms, and he, when he sees, takes also of the fruit, and eats.

They look round now towards the tree, but the Serpent has gone. The sunshine has faded, and a chill wind begins to blow down from the mountains . . .

Was it all as starkly simple as that, or was the sin that drove our first parents out of Eden and planted in their bodies the seeds of every ill and

disease which has since afflicted humanity something much more fundamental? Is this part of the story strictly literal or a picturesque metaphor?

It can be strictly literal, and yet the true sin be something much more serious than the touching of a prohibited tree. Many a child's relatively minor act of disobedience is but the outward symptom of an inward state of defiance or insubordination which itself is far more serious than the precise act that furnishes the occasion for punishment, and the parent concerned knows that perfectly well and acts accordingly. So it could well have been with Adam and Eve. The partaking of the forbidden fruit could have been a ritual act expressive of inward rebellion against God in just the same manner as Christians, partaking of the bread and wine in holy communion, memorialising their Lord's death, perform a ritual act expressive of their inward loyalty to, and communion with, their God. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge might well have had a real and objective existence as ritual trees, the first human beings expressing their state of heart toward God according to which tree they chose.

This opens up an interesting train of thought. There has always been a close connection, not only in the Bible stories, but in all human history, between trees and worship. Before men built temples — and in places even now where men do not build temples—they set aside groves of trees, or on occasion single trees, as places where they could come to do homage to their gods. The Old Testament makes frequent reference to the "groves" where Baal and Ashtaroah and other pagan deities were worshipped in Israel. To such an extent is this true that the Hebrew word *"ets"* is used indiscriminately for "tree", "grove", "idol", "image", and several allied words. There were obviously no temples, no man-made sanctuaries, in Eden, yet man must have been created with the instinct to worship, a trait which after millenniums of sin still persists. What more natural than that a special grove of trees ("tree of life" in Genesis might equally accurately be translated "trees" or "grove") should have been set aside by God as the place for his meeting with man and so constitute the first Divine sanctuary on earth ever to exist? Adam and Eve could go into that grove and feel that there in a very special sense they stood, like Jacob later on, at the very gate of God and gate of heaven. They might in ceremonial manner have partaken of the fruit of that grove in symbol of their continued obedience just as we today partake of the bread and wine. That would give a vital meaning to the

expression "Tree of Life". It was not merely a fruit that would of itself confer continuing life upon earth—no earthly fruit could ever do that, for everlasting life can only come through harmony and reconciliation with God and continuance in his ways—it was a fruit which symbolised the eternal life of God given to those who kept themselves within the sustaining power of God. It has to be realised that so long as Adam and Eve remained in harmony with their Creator and the laws of their being, completely obedient and loyal to him, they would never have known physical death; they would have lived forever into all eternity, and so under similar conditions would all their posterity. The Tree of Life could be a source of life to Adam and Eve only whilst they remained righteous before God, because all life comes from, and is sustained by, God. Later in the story, because they had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, they were barred from the Tree of Life. They could not have both.

If then the Tree of Life was in this manner a place of ritual acknowledgment of man's dependence upon, and loyalty to, God, then logically the Tree of Knowledge could well be a similar place of ritual denial of God's claims upon man, and of avowed rebellion and disobedience against God. The expression "knowledge of good and evil" might well indicate man's acquisition of that knowledge on his own initiative and in his own way, rather than by waiting for God's revelation in God's own due time. That, at any rate, is how it has worked out. Man has learned good and evil by bitter experience; God's way would have been less painful.

An archaic Sumerian tablet dating from two centuries before Abraham, discovered a hundred years ago but only deciphered during the present century, enshrines what is apparently a musical composition used in ritual temple worship, recounting the events surrounding the creation of man and his fall into sin. It is evidently a corruption of the much older story preserved in Genesis and handed down through generations of unbelieving sons of Ham just as the Genesis story was handed down through the sons of Shem. After describing the coming, first of the man, then of the woman, and the garden in which they were placed, there comes a mutilated section in which about all that can be made out is that in the garden there were two shrines, the "shrine of the plant of life" and the "shrine of the glorious fruits". The man worshipped at the first, where the god of heaven received his worship—but he then went to the second shrine, out of which came a voice "I will give you the wisdom of a god" and with joy the man went in to worship. (The name "shrine of the glorious

fruits" is reminiscent of the Tree of Knowledge whose fruit was "good for food and pleasant to the eyes".) The immediate sequel is lost in another mutilated section but later on in the composition there is an enumeration of the fruits and plants of which the man might eat, but the man ignored these and ate of one fruit which was not permitted. The earth goddess came down and pronounced sentence "*He shall not see life all his days but shall die*". Notably the woman is not mentioned here; all the blame is laid upon the man, which reminds one of Paul's words in I. Tim. 2.14 "*Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression*". There is enough in this old tradition to show that it had its source in the events which are recorded in the Book of Genesis even though it had afterward become coloured and influenced by Babylonian mythology. And its likening the two trees to two shrines whilst still preserving the eating of forbidden fruit as the occasion of the death sentence is significant.

What then really was the nature of Eve's and Adam's sin? What fundamental transgression did they commit which, culminating in and signalled by, the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, involved the sentence of death which has since rested upon the entire human race? Can any clue be gathered by considering the sins to which mankind has since been prone? Do the expressed laws of God yield any suggestion? The Ten Commandments given to Israel at Sinai enshrined the Divine standards for that nation at that time. It is interesting to notice that of those ten commandments the last six could not be broken by the first human pair for they treat of man's relationship to his fellows and the first pair had no fellows. The only sins they could commit were those against God, refusing to accord him that which is his due. Likewise if we take Jesus' interpretation of the law, only one half could be applicable to Adam and Eve. They could not love their neighbours as their own selves for there were no neighbours. They could only observe, or break, the injunction to love the Lord their God with all their heart. There remains the commission laid upon them by God at the beginning, a three-fold one. They were, first to be fruitful and multiply, using their powers to bring children into the world and populate the earth; second, till the earth and bring it into subjection, this implying that all the earth was not like the Garden but required the expenditure of labour to bring it under control; third, to exercise proper dominion and control over the animals so that all creation followed an orderly and peaceful

course. Failure to execute any of these commissions would involve disobedience and disloyalty to God, the violation of that basic law of later time, to love the Lord their God with all their heart. Such a refusal would surely be the most fundamental transgression of all, for it would profoundly affect the entire Divine purpose for this earth at the outset.

Suppose then that the Devil, appearing to Eve, persuaded her that there was no need to be scrupulous about observing the Divine commands, that idleness in the Garden was much to be preferred to work on the untilled lands, that the tending of the trees and crops inside the Garden was quite unnecessary the while Nature, unaided, produced sufficient for their wants, that the exercise of their powers of control over the animals was quite unnecessary since the animals had always managed tolerably well by themselves? Suppose he thus induced Eve to a renunciation of the purpose for which she had been created, and she in turn persuaded her husband to the same, the pair yielding themselves to allegiance and the guidance of this new friend who had come to them from on high, thus consciously and deliberately disavowing their loyalty to the God they had known before? The alleged benefits for which they were induced thus to deny their Creator must have been of the lowest material kind—the pleasures of idleness and freedom from responsibility, a selfish enjoyment of the good things of the present to utter disregard of the future or the ultimate purpose of God in their creation. After all, that is largely the story of sin through the ages and men in general have shown themselves true sons of Adam in this respect. *"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fulness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."* (Ezek. 16:49). So it was with Eve. She saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and good for food, and to be desired to give wisdom. All these things are appeals to the immediate selfish tastes. And the Tempter, following up his advantage, intimated that by accepting his sovereignty and guidance they would enter into the range of experience and knowledge possessed by the celestial ones of heaven—*"ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"*. He would enrich their lives with things God had withheld.

The terrible decision taken, Adam and Eve could no longer appear before the Tree of Life, there to partake of its fruit in symbol of their dependence upon God for continued life and as an act of worship and token of loyalty. A new master now required another and a distinct symbol of submission. They came now to the

Tree of Knowledge, Eve taking the more active part, and there enacted a solemn covenant, partaking of that fruit in sacramental fashion in pledge of their allegiance and obedience to the Archangel of Evil and their rejection of God who had given them life. It was a fearful moment; surely the angels in heaven veiled their faces and God looked down in pity and sorrow. Creatures of free-will, He had made them, and given them every possible good gift along with the responsibilities He must lay upon them. They had taken the gifts and rejected the responsibilities.

With the eating of that fruit, the ritual act which sealed their decision and made them the servants of the Devil, the link of life which connected them with God snapped. The Devil had persuaded them that their life on earth could continue without God—he probably believed that himself—but he was wrong. The acceptance of sin means separation from God and the cutting off of that power flowing from him by which eternal life is possessed. After that the duration of life is measured only by the extent to which the residual vitality can keep the organism going within the general framework of the processes of Nature. In Adam's case it was nine hundred and thirty years, but death came eventually. And so it has come to all men since, with accelerated pace in proportion as the physical vitality of men has declined.

It is only as men and women come "into Christ" that the processes of eternal life can commence again. *"Ye must be born again"* said Jesus to Nicodemus, and on another occasion *"He that believeth in me hath everlasting life."* The evil wrought in Eden can be nullified in the believer who comes in sincere acceptance of Christ and pledges his allegiance and loyalty to him. *"There is therefore now on condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . . for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."* (Rom. 5:1-2). The broken link is re-established; in a manner too wonderful for our human minds to comprehend, the life from God cut short by Adam's sin commences to flow again, so that it can be truthfully said *"He that hath the Son hath life . . . God hath given to us eternal life"* (1 Jno. 5:11-12). True, only a few, a fraction of earth's millions, do thus enter into life during this present Age; Jesus himself said they would constitute but a "little flock." That is in the Divine purpose, that a trained and qualified people might be prepared for the much more extensive and spectacular work of the next Age, the Messianic Age. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as king over all the earth, together with all who have been his faithful followers now, will conduct

the last and the greatest evangelical work of all time and call all men, without exception, to repudiate sin and the Devil, come to him in repentance and contrition, give themselves in complete dedication and submission, that they too might receive that same gift of life which will make them to all eternity the loyal sons of God. Even though sin's penalty must, at the last, be exacted from those who will not repent, and who wilfully reject Christ, it will be gloriously true that every one who can possibly be reached by the searching and all-pervading love of God through his Son Jesus Christ will have reached the standard which God has set, and will enter into life. For it must yet be that *"in the name of Jesus shall every knee bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Phil. 2. 10-11.) That declaration cannot be true until all who can be reclaimed from sin have been reclaimed, and all who cannot be reclaimed have passed into that death which is the inevitable consequence of sin, so that throughout the whole of God's creation there are none who do not live in him and for him, no conscious mind that is not at all times rendering heartfelt praise and adoration to his holy Name. There will be no Tree of Knowledge then, for there will be neither worshippers at such a Tree nor Devil to accept such worship;

the Devil is at the end cast into the lake of fire which is the Second Death (Rev. 20. 10 and 14.) There will be only the Tree of Life, to which all will come for that enduring life which is the eternal link between God and his creatures. So, in John's vision of the New Jerusalem, thrown open to the nations which are saved but into which nothing can enter which defileth or maketh a lie, there is no sign of the Tree of Knowledge and no Tempter; only the Tree of Life and the glory of God, dwelling with men. (Rev. 21. 23-6 and 22-27; Rev. 21. 1-5.)

But away back there in the days of Eden these wonders of the future were still hidden in the unrevealed counsels of God. The first man and the first woman, standing side by side before the Tree of Knowledge, the taste of its fruit still on their palates, thought of the trust they had betrayed and the God they had disowned. There is no evidence at this moment of remorse or repentance, only of fear and apprehension. They did not seek to find a way back to God; they sought rather to flee from his presence and hide themselves that He might not find them. The story gives no ground for thinking that they were yet ready to repudiate their sin, only that they might escape its consequences. They were afraid, and to escape God they hid themselves among the trees of the garden.

To be continued.

COSMOS OUT OF CHAOS

Confusion, crisis, chaos. These sombre words appear more and more frequently in the news and comments on world affairs.

How does this affect the hopes of those who pray daily "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth"? According to O.T. writings, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth. So the question arises, why does He allow the world to continue to slide down the slippery slope to destruction?

The prophet declares *"The Lord said to me, I will sit still and I will look on from my dwelling place like clear and glowing heat in sunshine, like a fine mist-cloud in the heat of harvest"* (Isa. 18.4 AMP). A traveller in Palestine many years ago, alluding to this statement, said he had witnessed such a mist-cloud in harvest time. The sun rose early and the people of the village, having loaded their donkeys and carts with merchandise for the market, set out for the nearest town. Suddenly a mist descended on the scene and all

was confusion and chaos as the drovers tried to find their way in the low visibility.

Can this picture explain the confusion and chaos which is becoming more and more apparent in world affairs today? "Chaos" is defined as the shape of matter before it was reduced to order, whereas "Cosmos" is defined as a systematic whole, as opposed to chaos. This takes us back to the account of creation in Genesis, chapter one, which states that the earth was without form and void—an empty waste, a formless void, a great deep of primordial matter. The Spirit of God was moving, hovering, brooding over the face of the earth; a great wind swept over the deep. Ancient mythology portrays this creative act as God overcoming the Chaos monster of the deep, a picture which is used in some aspects of God's dealing with men (Psa. 74.14, 89.9-12, 93. 3 and 4, 104.5-9) and Isaiah 51.9-11). The account in Genesis concludes with a description of the creation of man and the instruction that he should fill the earth and subdue it.

How well has man succeeded in carrying out these instructions?

He has indeed filled the earth with millions of people, but one third of these are subsisting at starvation level, and another third at not much higher a level. This is because in his greed and avarice he has exploited the vast resources of this planet but has failed to share them equally. The supply of fossil fuels is fast running out because of his wasteful and profligate use of them; several species of animals and birds are now extinct and many more are in danger of following. The land, the sea and the atmosphere are becoming badly polluted and the "friends of the earth" and other interested bodies appear to be fighting a losing battle.

Why paint such a sombre picture; is there no redeeming feature?

All the Bible prophecies relating to the time of the end, or the Day of God's vindication (not vengeance), point to flaming fire, wild tempest, a swift descending sword, howling and frightened and despairing men as the harvest of the earth is being reaped and the nations are sifted with the sieve of destruction. Passing over the several references to God as coming down as a fire in the O.T., we turn our attention to our Lord's words in Matthew 24, which speak of the heavens and the earth passing away, the stars falling from the sky and the powers of the heavens being shaken, resulting in wars and rumours of wars, famine and earthquakes. All this is described as but the *beginning*—the early pains of the birthpangs—of the intolerable anguish (verse 8 AMP). So violent are these birthpangs that verse 12 declares that the love of the great body of people will grow cold, because of multiplied lawlessness and iniquity. There will be tribulation, affliction, distress and oppression, such has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no and never will be again, and if those days had not been shortened no human being would endure and survive. This is a true picture of this atomic age; it was reported recently that the stock of nuclear weapons held by the great powers is equal to one million times that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. But for the sake of God's chosen (Israel) these days are to be shortened—literal translation reads God *has* shortened the days. (v. 21 and 22).

What is that new birth of which all this is but the beginning of the pangs?

God has declared "*I create new heavens and a*

new earth and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isa. 65.17). A footnote in the Amplified Bible suggests that a new universe is here meant. The Hebrew has no single word to express the thought of "cosmos", so heaven and earth are substituted. It would seem to be reasonable to draw a comparison between the first creation as outlined in Genesis, and this new creation which is to replace the old one which is to be forgotten for ever. References in the Bible to the "Cosmos" which is to be created out of the present "chaos" are too many to mention in detail, but some well-worn ones come to mind. "*He shall judge between many peoples and shall decide for stray nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid*" (Micah. 4.3, 4).

Jeremiah is described as the prophet of doom, but in his prophecy there is a telling contrast between the old and the new. In 25.10, 11, God declares that He will take away the voice of mirth, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstone and the light of the candle—an apt picture of the world today. But a profound change is foretold. There shall be heard again the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing as they bring the sacrifices of thanksgiving into the house of the Lord, give prayer and thanks to the Lord of hosts, "*for the Lord is good, for his mercy and kindness and steadfast love endure forever*" (Jer. 33.11 AMP). This brings to mind the prophecy in the song of songs (2.11-13) "*For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth and ripens her green figs and the vines are in blossom, they give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one and come away*".

When, once again and for the last time, "cosmos" has been created from "chaos," the prophecy of Isa. 14.7 will be fulfilled — *"*THE WHOLE EARTH IS AT REST AND IS QUIET; THEY BREAK FORTH INTO SINGING*".

When the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple expectantly asked alms of Peter and John, how his heart must have sunk within him as he heard the first words of the reply, "Silver and gold have I none". They might be going to

offer him words of comfort and advice, but what he needed was money, the only practical avenue of help he could foresee. Yet the "such as I have" that Peter was able to give far exceeded anything within the hopes and expectations of

this life-stricken cripple, changing his despair and disappointment into abounding joy and praise to God. And all men glorified God for this miracle of healing, for the man was above

forty years old, and had been crippled from birth. God had granted him, not the thing he had asked, but more than he had ever asked or thought. (Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

THE MILLENNIAL VISIONS OF REVELATION

A reader queries the order of the successive visions in Rev. 19-22, viz., the Marriage of the Lamb, The Rider on the White Horse, the Binding of Satan and institution of the Millennium to its end, and then apparently a further Age in which the New Jerusalem descends to earth, seemingly implying that the reconciliation and conversion of mankind continues beyond the Millennium. This interpretation is not infrequently met with and the following note is an attempt at elucidating the apparent paradox.

* * *

In the study of the Book of Revelation it is important to realise that the symbolic visions of the Book do not picture an unbroken chain of successive events following one another in strict chronological order. From time to time the Revelator, having completed a sequence of happenings in one field of the Divine purpose occupying a certain span of time, goes back on his tracks as it were and takes up a parallel theme in another field covering perhaps the same span. A careful scrutiny of the text usually offers clues which reveal the points at which he thus "backtracks" and takes up his new theme.

So it is here. Chapter 19 opens at the point of time in the closing scenes of this present world-age when great spiritual "Babylon" has come under Divine judgment and has been destroyed (chaps. 17-18). The Age has not yet ended; there is more to happen, and the Millennium has not yet commenced, but the anti-Christian power symbolised by Babylon is no more, and there is rejoicing in Heaven on that account. At this point an announcement is made to the effect that "*the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready*" (ch. 19.7). The implication of this is that the Church of this Age is complete and has been changed in its entirety to heavenly conditions and union with the Bridegroom—Christ. The "First Resurrection" has taken place and the Call of the Church in this Age has ended. But still the Millennium has not commenced.

Now there appears a totally different sight. A heavenly Rider on a White Horse appears in the skies, with attendant followers, coming to earth to wage war with the remaining and re-grouped forces of evil, "*the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies*" (ch. 18.11-21). The

Rider is identified as our Lord, appearing now not as a "Man of Sorrows" destined to die on the Cross, but as a triumphant Conqueror, destined to make an end of evil upon earth. His opponents are obviously all the remaining powers and influences and institutions which are set to oppose his incoming Kingdom of righteousness. The issue is never in doubt; every evil opposing system is overthrown and "*cast into the lake of fire*"—in other words, totally destroyed. After many thousands of years in which "this present evil world" has had to submit to the power of evil in the affairs of men, that power is for the first time vanquished and eliminated.

This is the true end of this Age and the commencement of the Millennium. This is the point of time at which the "I come as a thief" aspect of our Lord's Advent gives place to the "they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" aspect. Up to this point in time the fact of his Advent, that the "signs of the times" have marked the "days of the Son of Man" during which He has been actively interposing in earth's affairs to bring into focus all those events which culminate at last in this climax, have been known to and realised only by the Watchers, the Church. Men in general have not heeded or realised the significance of current events. The *Parousia*, the Presence, has been known only to the Church. But now, with the "change" of the Church to the celestial state and the obvious and visible destruction of world evil, this phase comes to its end. All men now know that Christ indeed is king, and his Church with him are ready for the work of world conversion. What is the nature of that outward manifestation we may not know, but that all men will be fully aware of the fact there can be no doubt. The King is present and has taken his power, the Kingdom is established and the Millennium has commenced.

Although in chap. 19 all earthly powers of evil are thus overthrown, the arch-instigator of evil, the Devil, is not mentioned. He is apparently still at large—but not for long. The first event in chap. 20 (chapters are no part of the original text so the narrative runs on from chap. 19) is the apprehension of the Devil by earth's new King, and his restraint and "*casting into the abyss*" for

the duration of the Millennium. "This", says John (ch. 20.5) "*is the First Resurrection*"—the resurrection of the Church. That of the world is to follow. (It must be noted that the first sentence of vs. 5 is an interpolation in the text of about the 4th Century and has no validity, besides rendering the second sentence meaningless—see BSM July and November 1966).

Now there comes a parenthesis, vs. 7-10, intended to explain what happens to the Devil at the end of the thousand years. In vs. 1 he has only been placed under restraint for the duration of the Millennium and his ultimate fate is not stated. Vs. 7-10 in parenthesis fills in the missing details. He is released, stages another rebellion against God, thus indicating his unyielding opposition to God, attempts to deceive the peoples of earth, and with his dupes meets his final end—the lake of fire, destruction. Having explained all that, the Revelator goes back to the vision of the Church reigning with Christ and their work for the world. Thus one should read directly from vs. 6 to vs. 11, passing over the parenthesis. Now John sees a Great White Throne, all the risen dead standing before it, the books opened, and the dead judged from the books. This is the Last Assize, the judgment which takes place during the whole of the Millennium. The great white throne is the ruling authority of that Age, Christ and his Church, conducting that evangelical and rehabilitating work which will have the effect of reconciling "whosoever will" to God and ushering them into the life of eternity. Any whose hearts are so fully set in them to do evil that they are impervious to this, the final Gospel appeal, will have demonstrated their unfitness for continuing life in Divine creation and they too can only then lose life—again the lake of fire symbol is used. This part of the vision runs parallel with the Parable of the Sheep and Goats of Matt. 25.31-46, which pictures the same time and process under a different symbolic framework but ends in the same way.

This is the end of the vision of chaps. 19-20. It opens with the downfall of spiritual Babylon towards the close of the present Age and passes through the final events of the Age into the establishment of the Messianic kingdom and the Divine dealings with mankind during the Millennium until at its end all trace of evil, whether of Devil or in man, has been removed, and all who live have bowed the knee to Jesus and acknowledged him as Lord. At long last evil has been eliminated and mankind have entered the era of everlasting righteousness.

Now chap. 21 starts a new picture. It comes back from the end of the Millennium to the be-

ginning. It is not a story of a succession of historical events as is presented in chaps. 19-20. It is a poetic picture of the Millennium as a whole, showing our Lord and his Church as the ruling power coming down from Heaven and being established on earth, the abolition of sin and sorrow and death, the Divine provision for conversion and everlasting life, the universal appeal of the Gospel, available to all, and the finished work of Christ in the hearts of men. It is a picture which mirrors in reverse the story of the Garden of Eden. There, the Lord created man perfect and placed him in a garden perfect in beauty. Man sinned and marred the garden. Here, in the last two chapters of the Bible, sinful man is shown the lost garden and the way described by which he may regain it. The tree of life from which he was debarred then is open and free to him now, because his sin is being cleansed and he stands before God as did Adam at the first, open and unashamed.

Chap. 21 opens with a new heaven and a new earth because the old ones have passed away. This is the Millennial order of things; the old world of evil has gone and the new heavenly ruling powers are in control of the new earthly order. God declares that henceforth He will dwell with men and there shall be no more death, because the former things are passed away. A wonderful heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, is seen descending from Heaven to settle upon the earth; this, we are told, pictures the Bride of Christ, the Church of this Age, coming to labour amongst men for their conversion. Christ himself is in the city with the Father, for "*the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*". Those of men who are to be saved will walk in the light of that administration but nothing that defiles or savours of sin can stand before it (vs. 24-27). So there the city stands, ready to proclaim the laws of God and the saving power of Christ to all who will enter its ever-open gates.

Chap. 22 enhances the picture. As John looks more closely, he sees a river of life issuing forth from the Divine throne in the midst of the city. He sees also what has not been seen since Eden, the trees of life, affording not only sustenance but also healing to mankind. "*There shall be no curse*" (ch. 22.23); that curse on the earth which was pronounced at the first because of sin is now repealed because the results of sin are in process of being removed and evil shall be no more. The thousands of millions of mankind are standing before the Throne and yielding willing service and worship to their Lord its occupant. "*They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads*" (vs. 4). Just as the Church are to be kings and priests in heaven, reigning with Christ,

so redeemed mankind will be kings over God's earthly creation, having dominion over all things earthly as was bidden man at the first (Gen. 1.28).

This verse 5 in chap. 22 "*and they shall reign for ever and ever*" is really the end of the visions of Revelation and the end of the sad saga of sin and death. Here, at last, sin and evil and death

have been completely and finally banished from all God's creation. From this point and onwards, there stretches an eternity of unalloyed happiness for all of his created sons. Vs. 17 enshrines the invitation, extended as it were to all mankind so soon as the Millennial era is inaugurated "*the Spirit (Christ) and the Bride say, Come. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*".

THE TRUE CHURCH

J. C. Ryle, 1816-1900, Bishop of Liverpool 1880, was leader of the Evangelical party in the Church of England in his day. A man of deep spiritual insight and a prolific writer, this article from his pen on an important subject appears worthy of reproduction and preservation.

* * *

Where is this one true Church? What is this one Church like? What are the marks by which this one true Church is known? You may well ask such questions. The one true Church is composed of all believers in the Lord Jesus. It is made up of all God's elect—of all converted men and women—of all true Christians.

They are born again of the Spirit. They all possess "repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ", and holiness of life and conversation. They all hate sin, and they all love Christ. They worship differently, and after various fashions; some worship with a form of prayer, and some with none; some worship kneeling and some standing; but they all worship with one heart.

They are all led by one Spirit; they all build upon one foundation; they all draw their religion from one single book—that is the Bible. They are all joined to one great centre—that is Jesus Christ. They all, even now, can say with one heart, "Hallelujah"; and they can all respond with one heart and voice; Amen and Amen.

It is a Church which is dependent upon no ministers upon earth, however much it values those who preach the Gospel to its members. The life of its members does not hang upon Church membership and baptism, and the Lord's Supper—although they highly value these things, when they are to be had. But it has only one Great Head—one Shepherd, one chief Bishop—and that is Jesus Christ. He alone, by his Spirit, admits the members of this Church, though ministers may show the door.

Till He opens the door no man on earth can open it—neither bishops, nor presbyters, nor con-

vocations, nor synods. Once let a man repent and believe the Gospel, and that moment he becomes a member of this Church.

Like the penitent thief, he may have no opportunity of being baptised; but he has that which is far better than any water-baptism—the baptism of the Spirit. He may not be able to receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; but he eats Christ's body and drinks Christ's blood by faith, every day he lives, and no minister on earth can prevent him. He may be excommunicated by ordained men, and cut off from the outward ordinances of the professing Church; but all the ordained men in the world cannot shut him out of the true Church.

It is a Church whose existence does not depend on forms, ceremonies, cathedrals, churches, pulpits, fonts, vestments, organs, endowments, money, kings, governments, magistrates, or any act of favour whatsoever from the hand of man. It has often lived on and continued when all these things have been taken from it; it has often been driven into the wilderness, or into dens and caves of the earth, by those who ought to have been its friends. Its existence depends on nothing but the presence of Christ and his Spirit; and they being ever with it, the Church cannot die.

This is the Church to which the Scriptural titles of present honour and privilege, and the promises of future glory, especially belong: this is the body of Christ; this is the Bride; this is the Lamb's Wife; this is the flock of Christ; this is the household of faith and the family of God; this is God's building, God's foundation and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

This is the Church of the First-born, whose names are written in Heaven; this is the royal priesthood, the chosen generation, the peculiar people, the purchased possession, the habitation of God, the light of the world, the salt and the wheat of the earth; this is that Church to which the Lord Jesus promises "the gates of hell shall

not prevail against it" and to which He says, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". (Matt. 16-18; 28.2).

This is the only Church which possesses true unity. Its members are entirely agreed on all the weightier matters of religion for they are all taught by one Spirit. About God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and sin, and their own hearts, and faith, and repentance, and necessity of holiness, and the value of the Bible, and the importance of prayer and the resurrection, and judgment to come—about all these points they are of one mind.

Take three or four of them, strangers to one another, from the remotest corners of the earth, examine them separately on these points; you will find them all of one judgment.

This is the only Church which possesses true sanctity. Its members are all holy. They are not merely holy by profession, holy in name, and holy in the judgment of charity; they are all holy in act, and deed, and reality, and life, and truth. They are all more or less conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. No unholy man belongs to this Church.

This is the only Church which is truly catholic! It is not the Church of any one nation or people; its members are to be found in every part of the world where the Gospel is received and believed. It is not confined within the limits of any one country, or pent up within the pale of any particular forms of outward government. In it there is no difference between Jew and Greek, black man and white, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, but faith in Christ is all. Its members will be gathered from north, and south, and east, and west, in the last day, and will be of every name and tongue—but all one in Jesus Christ.

This is the only Church which is truly apostolic. It is built on the foundation laid by the Apostles, and holds the doctrines which they preached. The two grand objects at which its members aim are apostolic faith and apostolic practice; and they consider the man who talks of following the Apostles without possessing these

two things to be no better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

This is the only Church which is certain to endure unto the end. Nothing can altogether overthrow and destroy. Its members may be persecuted, oppressed, imprisoned, beaten, beheaded, burned; but the true Church is never altogether extinguished; it rises again from its afflictions; it lives on through fire and water. When crushed in one land, it springs up in another.

The Herods, the Neros, have laboured in vain to put down this Church; they slay their thousands, and then pass away and go to their own place. The true Church outlives them all, and sees them buried each in his turn. It is an anvil that has broken many a hammer in this world, and will break many a hammer still; it is a bush which is often burning, and yet is not consumed.

This is the Church which does the work of Christ upon earth. Its members are a little flock, and few in numbers compared with the children of the world, one or two here, and two or three there—a few in this parish and a few in that. But these are they who shake the universe; these are they who are the active workers for spreading the knowledge of pure religion and undefiled; these are the life-blood of a country, the shield, the defence, the stay, and the support of any nation to which they belong.

This is the Church which shall be truly glorious at the end. When all earthly glory is passed away, then shall this Church be presented without spot before the Father's throne. Thrones, principalities, and powers upon earth shall come to nothing, dignities and offices and endowments shall all pass away; but the Church of the First-born shall shine as the stars at the last, and be presented with joy before the Father's throne in the day of Christ's appearing. When the Lord's jewels are made up, and the manifestation of the sons of God take place, episcopacy, and presbyterianism, and congregationalism will not be mentioned; one Church only will be named and that is the Church of the elect.

The fishermen disciples of Jesus must have been startled when their Master said to them *"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"*. They must have suddenly realised that their earlier training had not been in vain. They would be able to make use of their experience as fishers in far different waters. Henceforth they were to catch men. What we are apt to overlook is the fact that before the Master gave them a

promise, He laid down a condition. Before they could be fishers of men, they must be prepared to follow him.

Perhaps this offers an explanation of why we have so often failed in the past. We have been eager to be fishers of men, but we have not paid sufficient attention to the necessity of following Christ, not only wherever He may lead, but in his own life, and in his own methods of work.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

Part 2

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.

Matt. 18. 33-34 "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every man his brother their trespasses" (A.V.).

"And so angry was the master that he condemned the man to torture until he should pay the debt in full. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you, unless you each forgive your brother from your hearts" (N.E.B.).

The word "torture" should not have been used; it by no means conveys the meaning, of the word employed by Matthew, which is *basanistes*, from the noun *basanos*. Now although *basanos* is rendered "torment" in most of its occurrences, the root meaning is that of making trial or test, the idea of torment or torture having been associated, in general thought, because inquisition into crimes in the days of Rome at the First Advent was usually accompanied by torture in order to elicit confessions. But the primary meaning is that of testing or trial. *Basanos* is actually the word for "touchstones", the mineral by which the purity of gold or other precious metals was tested. Hence it came to mean any process of stringent trial or endeavour. In the New Testament the verb of the word, *basanizo*, is rendered "toss" in Matt. 14. 24 "Tossed with winds, for the wind was contrary", "vex" in 2 Pet. 2. 8 "That righteous man vexed his righteous soul", "toil" in Mark 6. 48 "He saw them toiling in rowing" and even in some of the eight occasions where it is rendered "torment" the implication is not physical torture. The sense of the passage in Matt. 18 is that the unforgiving servant was sent to prison, to the custody of the jailers, in order that proper enquiry into the heinousness of his offence might be made, and steps taken to enforce the payment of his debt. And that is the principle, says Jesus, upon which the Heavenly Father works in the case of the unforgiving of mankind; they too will find that "as a man soweth, so shall he reap."

Matt. 24. 34 "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things shall

be fulfilled" (A.V.).

"I tell you this; the present generation will live to see it all" (N.E.B.).

It has been urged that Jesus was unreliable in this statement or mistaken, for that generation *did* pass away without all that is prophesied in the 24th chapter being fulfilled. The N.E.B. missed a golden opportunity to correct a wrong impression of long standing here. The word rendered "fulfilled" has a wide variety of meaning but rarely has so definite an application as would justify the word "fulfilled" in its completed sense. *"This generation shall not pass till all these things begin to be"* would be more correct, and this sets the seal upon the accuracy of Jesus' words. The long catalogue of events and happenings listed in Matt. 24 at the end of which his Second Advent was to take place certainly did have its beginnings with that generation, but its ending has not come even yet. The word "fulfil" in the New Testament is almost always from *pleroo*, to make full or *teleo*, to bring to an end. In this instance only and in Matt. 5. 18 it is *genetai*, a form of *ginomai* which indicates the origin or beginning of a thing or the commencement of a continuing process, used very often in the N.T. for the onset of day or night. It certainly does not involve the idea of completion any more than our expression "dawn of day" involves the entire sweep of daylight ending with evening, and the N.E.B. "will live to see it all" is incorrect and conveys the wrong impression.

An unwarranted concession to popular interpretations is found in Heb. 11.5 where the A.V. "by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death" becomes "... was carried away to another life without passing through death". The idea sometimes met with to the effect that Enoch went to heaven without dying is unscriptural—the Christian faith demands as an essential principle that the life of the future can only be attained by means of a resurrection from the dead, and only through intelligent faith exercised in Christ, in whom alone resides the channel through which that life can come. Neither of these conditions could be met before Christ had come to earth, and died for man, and ascended again upon high. Neither is it possible for flesh and blood, man in his human nature and form, to inherit the heavenly kingdom; St. Paul makes it plain in 1 Cor. 15 that a change of nature is necessary and that only after Christ himself has

risen from the dead and so "become the first fruits of them that slept". The reference in Hebrews says that Enoch was translated, which merely means being taken up from one place and put down in another. That was the Jewish understanding of the reference in Genesis, that he was taken away from the abode of men and set down in another part of the earth where he continued to serve God in isolation until the day of his death. Like all men, Enoch died eventually, even although his death is not recorded as was that of each of his fellows in the Genesis account.

It seems rather disturbing to find in 1 Tim. 5. 17 that the elders who "rule well" are to be accounted worthy, not of double honour as in the A.V., but of double stipend, according to the N.E.B. It is true that the Greek word here, although usually correctly translated "honour" in the A.V., can on occasion have a monetary application, but its basic meaning is that of an assessment of value and it should therefore always be rendered in harmony with its setting and context. Such expressions as "A prophet hath no *honour* in his own country" (Jno. 4. 44) "They who seek for glory, *honour* and immortality" (Rom. 2. 7) "In *honour* preferring one another" (Rom. 12. 10) "He received from God the Father *honour* and glory" (2 Pet. 1. 7) cannot be understood in terms of cash reward. The same consideration ought to apply here. The elders of St. Paul's day were not paid a cash salary for their services; like himself, the most any of them received of material recompense was hospitality and lodging when they proceeded on their journeys. The word stipend, which means simply and solely a salary received for services rendered, particularly ecclesiastical or professional services, is an unfortunate one, for it does not convey Paul's meaning, and it obscures what he did mean, to exhort the holding in great honour of those faithful fathers in God — and there are such in every generation—who labour in the ministry not for material gain but for the sake of the God they serve and the people to whom they are pastors.

In a different sphere altogether a certain lack

of dignity is apparent in a few instances where the endeavour to substitute modern colloquialisms for the traditional expressions may have gone a little too far. To read in Jno. 12. 14 that "*Jesus found a donkey and mounted it*" imputes a touch of the ludicrous in a connection where anything but the most solemn dignity is entirely out of place, even although that sentence is as correct a rendering as the A.V. "*and Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon.*" The Book of Acts appears to be the worst offender in this direction. Cornelius says to Peter in Acts 10. 33 "*Thou hast done well that thou art come*" in the A.V., but in the N.E.B., "*It was kind of you to come*" which is a weak and puerile climax to an important speech on a most momentous occasion. Similarly in Acts 14. 6 Paul and Barnabas, potential victims of a murder plot, "*were ware of it*" (A.V.). According to the N.E.B. "*they got wind of it*"—quite a modern slang expression but somehow not fitting in with the narrative. And when the Roman Procurator of Judea says to his audience of the Jewish monarch, officials and guards, Jewish Rabbis and others, in Acts 25. 24, "*King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present...*" the mental vision almost inevitably transforms that Eastern scene into terms of a company meeting where the Chairman is facing a concourse of dress suits and white shirt-fronts. Perhaps, though, the N.E.B. makes amends for these slips by a masterly expression in 1 Tim. 6. 4, where Paul says (A.V.) regarding the man guilty of unwholesome teaching "*he is proud, knowing nothing*" and the N.E.B. comes out with "*I call him a pompous ignoramus*". That sounds just like St. Paul.

And with that we do well perhaps to pass to some of the points in the N.E.B. which seem worthy of commendation, and which do play some part in leading to a better understanding of the Divine message in the New Testament.

(To be continued)

"The great truths of the Christian faith were first of all proclaimed by the apostles and prophets, and if we think that we hold and understand doctrines that were hidden from Paul and Peter we simply betray our own egotism and spiritual short-sightedness. What we do see is a

greater superstructure built upon the doctrine, because two millenniums separate us from the apostles and prophets and there has been much development. The foundations remain, just as they were set by those faithful "fathers in God" of olden time." (Selected).

HIS CALLING

*An Exhortation from the
Epistle to the Ephesians*

The apostle Paul prays earnestly (Eph. 1. 16-20) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, would bless the Church so bountifully in wisdom, in knowledge and in heart appreciation that they will be able to know the hope of HIS calling. And the word "hope" is used in the best Bible sense of certain prospect and eventually attainment. On no occasion should we suppose the word to mean the hope of the man of to-day, for he in his most ambitious and happiest moments uses the word in the sense of "perhaps" and "I hope so". For the purpose of an interesting and profitable excursus in Scriptural truth let us read as though Paul is emphasising the word "his" in v. 18. Is he not stressing the fact that the invitation emanates from the Father of glory alone; that while the whole plan of the ages is the ordering of the great Creator, this phase of his purpose is particularly HIS? Paul is impressing this upon us that we may the more value it; that our hope in it may increase; that we may gain confidence by it; that the eternal Father has deep interest in this portion of his workmanship; and that He does not dwell alone in inaccessible heavens waiting for his plans to reach their inevitable triumph, but is ever personally attentive to the needs of those who HE HIMSELF has called. According to verses 4/5, this calling was in his mind before the foundation of the world and that He had then predestined the honour to which the called should attain. Truly it is HIS calling. Planned long ago, but at long last at the appointed period the call goes forth, first by our Lord and then through his faithful disciples, particularly the apostle Paul. God had through the prophets of old declared his intention to recover and bless mankind, but his sacred secret was not revealed by them or known to them. It may be that this secret purpose can be deduced by study of incidents in the lives of the early servants of God; but it is true to believe that it was "hidden in God" prior to its appointed time of revelation. And, furthermore, unless the Church truth had been revealed by the operation of the Holy Spirit it would never have been found by diligent students of the Old Testament. Throughout the law and the prophets God is declared as the creator, the lawgiver, the judge and protector—in fact, all that we revere in the word God; but beginning with our Lord, the Holy Spirit reveals him as the heavenly Father. And it is because He is the Father of the Church, and they his sons as

shown in the N.T. that we may know that in the highest sense it is HIS calling. Hence his personal interest in the welfare of his sons. And that is why Paul when planning such words as Romans 8 and the first four chapters of Ephesians speaks in such exultant tones. It was this new aspect of relationship to God in our Lord's words about his Father and our Father that caused Philip to exclaim "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us". The answer to Philip and to us all who make the same request is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church dispensation, and the answer does suffice, does satisfy us that "the Father himself loveth you". Only by the knowledge that it is HIS calling can we fathom and accept the fatherhood and love of God.

But, whereas we assume that Paul emphasises the point that it is HIS calling, when writing to the Corinthian church he says it is YOUR calling. (1 Cor. 1. 26). He changes the word in order to assure these brethren that they, even they, were called. It is probable that were the work of calling deputed to us, we should have passed Corinth by as unsuitable. None knew better than Paul the failings of this ecclesia; he knew that when they considered the breadth, and length, and depth, and the height of the love and also the call of God they would know themselves to be unworthy and might become despondent by introspection. In the context of 1 Cor. 1, Paul has forestalled any plea of unworthiness by describing the ones whom God has honoured with his calling, and the description fits the Corinthian brethren very well. Thus by saying it is the foolish, the weak, the base and the despised which He has called, he is contrasting HIS calling of Eph. 1 with YOUR calling of Cor. 1. Both points of view are true, for it is HIS because it is his purpose and grace and it is YOURS because you are called according to his purpose. Is there not strength and assurance in the belief that we are called, even though we know in ourselves that we often fall short and cannot ever be worthy in ourselves? And, in 1 Cor. 1. 30 Paul adds that by God's provision, Christ "is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and deliverance" and thus we may know that our deficiencies are supplied by his gifts. Let us believe with James that God hath chosen the poor of this world who are rich in faith, for by doing this we shall assure ourselves that it is OUR calling.

When writing to the Hebrews (ch. 3. 1) he describes it as being a HEAVENLY calling. It is heavenly in origin and in prospect. We who once were Gentiles may believe and hold the church promises in this epistle, but should remember that primarily it was written to those who had long been the favoured people of God. As children of Jacob they had promises heavenly in origin but not in prospect. They had blessings of which, like the Church later, they were not worthy. And, they had already been called; called out of Egypt; chosen by the Lord God to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. (Deut. 7. 6-8). On Mount Sinai, Moses, as near to heaven as it was possible for man to be, had received the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and by the giving of the law with its provision of sacrifice and priesthood; and given a fair land in which to dwell, with promises of blessing, in basket and store, they were ranked above the surrounding nations. It was to this favoured people that the HEAVENLY call first is made, being at first thought, the people most likely to accept the new appeal. On the other hand knowing themselves to be the chosen people with ample proof of Divine blessing, they might question any new offer purporting to come from their own God of Israel. And so the writer to the Hebrews emphasises the heavenly prospect of the call as distinct from the best of earthly promises which they had enjoyed. He was offering something far better, something heavenly, based upon a better sacrifice. In the second chapter of Hebrews he expresses this new and heavenly call as bringing many sons to glory, and that the chief Son Who had been made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death was now crowned with glory and honour, which in a later chapter he shows to be at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. And from the words of our Lord himself we know that He has gone to prepare a place for these sons of glory and that on his coming again He would receive them unto himself; that where He was there they would be also.

When Paul writes to the Philippian church he refers to it as a HIGH calling, and again the context tells why in that connection he so speaks. The heavenly calling is of course a high calling as to destination, yet he speaks of the HIGH calling as to rank. Think of the rank to which Paul had been born as a Jew, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law, a Pharisee.

(Phil. 3. 4-5). His standing was so high that he could have boasted that if any man thought he had whereof he could trust in the flesh, he had more. But those things which were gain he counted loss for Christ. His high rank as a Jew he renounced most gladly for the hope of his calling, "the HIGH calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 14). Called in his youth and taught in the perfect manner of the law at the feet of Gamaliel; called while on the Damascus road to be an apostle; there was another call to which all his powers were centred and he was pressing toward the mark for the prize of the HIGH calling. Thus he was able to forget those things which were behind, honourable though they were and reach forth unto those things which were before, knowing that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3. 4).

Writing to Timothy (2 Tim. 1. 9) he speaks of the HOLY calling—a reminder that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12. 14). A call to be like him who issued the invitation. "*As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is written Be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1. 15/16). Here Peter quotes from words addressed to the nation which had been called out of Egypt to be a holy nation unto himself. God's method of forming them into a holy people was to separate them from the surrounding nations and bless them. He blessed them so abundantly that He appealed to them in later times through the prophet Isaiah, saying "*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*" That they failed to be worthy of their status is too well-known to need noting now, providing that those who now are called with the HOLY calling profit by their failings. For again the call is issued to us to be a holy nation, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a purchased people, that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The call of today will also be separate (though not isolated) from the world by the Father's answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17. 15 "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*". The sons of God may confidently know that He Who kept Israel, never slumbering or sleeping, will also keep them; it being understood that the sons will walk worthy of the calling wherewith they are called.

These are hardly the days in which it is safe to say that anything is impossible. We stand on the threshold of unexplored worlds, and if so

much which was incredible has become possible to man, who shall say that anything is impossible to God?
Samuel Chadwick.



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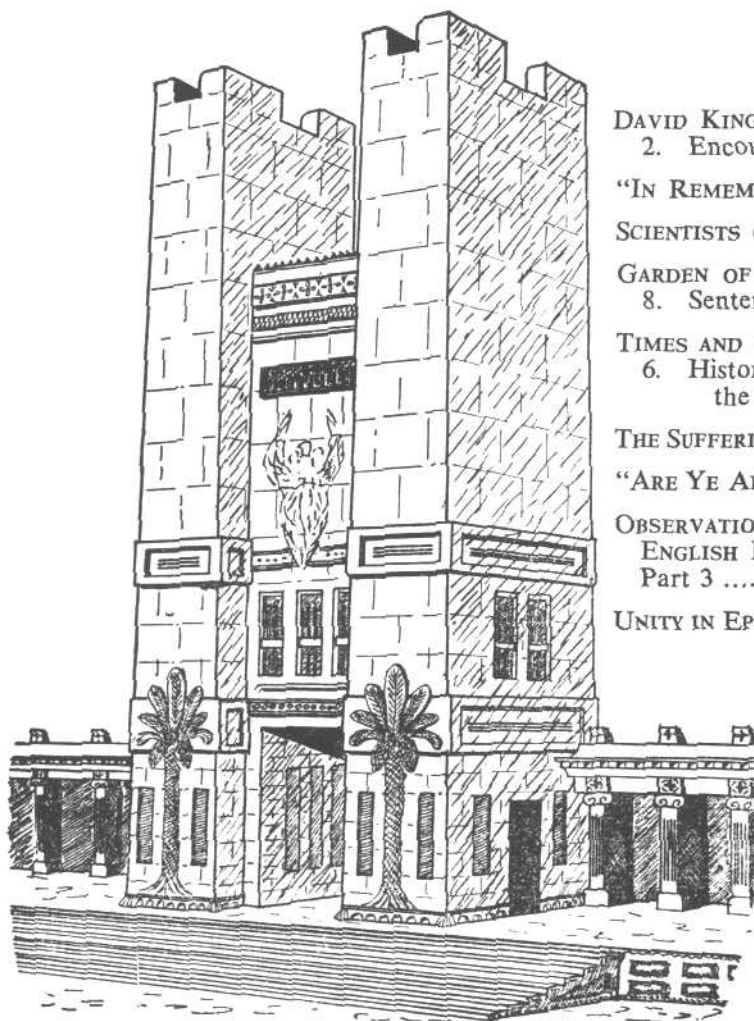
Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

Published March 1st

Next issue May 1st

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

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NOTICES

Renewals. Readers whose address serial numbers fall within the 3000, 7000 and 8000 ranges may find a pink "renewal notice" in this issue. This is normally enclosed when we have received no communication for the past six months or so and its object is to assure us that you still desire to receive the "Monthly". It is important that you return the renewal notice intact without delay, or a letter in lieu thereof: without this intimation we have no assurance that you are in fact still receiving the "Monthly" safely. It has been our custom to continue sending for a considerable time even though the renewal request has not been returned, but with the increasing costs of printing and postage we are being compelled to be a little more severe from now on. IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT YOU RETURN THE RENEWAL NOTICE OR ELSE A LETTER ASKING US TO CONTINUE THE "MONTHLY". Although we are very happy to continue sending whether or not you feel able to contribute to the cost, we definitely do not wish to send where there is little or no interest, and your request is the only means we have of knowing of your interest.

Another point: if someone else entered your name when you first became a reader do not rely on them to remember to do it in subsequent years. Sometimes they do and sometimes not. Return the renewal notice for yourself and so be certain that all will be well.

A further point. We know that some of our readers are aged and sometimes unable to write, although able to read and are sincerely interested and do not want to lose their issues. In such case get someone else to write on your behalf, or else let us know the position and arrange that upon your decease someone advises us of the fact. We can then arrange to send continuously without expecting to hear from you.

In some cases a new reader has been entered by some friend or acquaintance who believes they would be interested but in fact it is not so; in such case we have no wish to send the journal unnecessarily and would greatly appreciate word to that effect from anyone thus placed so that we can discontinue sending without delay.

Readers whose serial numbers do not come within the above ranges, 3000, 7000 and 8000 will NOT find renewal notices in this issue; their turn comes in September.

* * *

The Memorial. For those planning to hold a Memorial Service the appropriate date this year is Tuesday, April 6.

Cost of the "Monthly". As is well known to our readers, the "Monthly" is sent without charge and the voluntary gifts of readers are 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 £3.30 in U.K. and £3.50 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 know that our Lord overrules so that the necessary funds are found.

* * *

12 and 16-page pamphlets. These pamphlets deal with various important aspects of the Christian faith. Copies will be sent willingly upon request, including extra copies for one's friends or for other purposes. They are sent without charge but we do ask for postage, which please include at the rate of 20p. for the first ten copies and 15p. for each ten copies thereafter.

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„ 34 Everlasting Punishment.

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„ 36 The Resurrection of the Dead.

„ 37 The Second Advent—Nature and Purpose.

„ 38 The Call and Destiny of Israel.

„ 39 The Personality of Satan.

„ 40 The Gifts of the Spirit.

„ 41 Man—the Image of God.

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

2. Encounter with Goliath

Several years had probably elapsed since the prophet Samuel had anointed the boy David prospective king of Israel. David had gone back to his shepherding, perhaps ruminating in boyish fashion what the strange interlude in his life could mean. He probably did not seriously think, at this early stage in his young life, that he really would be king one day. The idea would seem too fanciful for credence. He went back to his pipes and his harp, and as the sheep wandered over the grazing land he kept an observant eye upon them while giving vent to his reverential feelings in the words of those pastoral psalms which could only have been composed in this early stage of his life's experience. His arduous life of a few years later, when he was alternately fighting the Philistines for Saul or else on the run from Saul, still less when he had all the cares of kingship upon his shoulders, would have left him little time for such poetic excursions. So it might well have been in this period that he composed such gems as Psalm 23, "*the Lord is my shepherd*" and Psalm 8 "*the heavens declare the glory of God*" and Psalm 24 "*the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*" and others like them. These are the psalms of Nature, where the world of men and the deeds of men have no place. These are words which came unbidden into his mind as he reclined on some grassy bank in the brightness of day, or watched his sleeping flock, sitting beside his camp fire in the darkness of night. This was the time when he learned from Nature herself of the greatness and the power of God, to such good effect that, despite his many failures and transgressions of Divine law, he never lost faith.

But these were peaceful days which came to an end all too soon. They never came back. He was shortly to find himself a member of the royal court and implicated in all the intrigues and jealousies which that involved. One more short interval of shepherding was to be his lot and after that he left his pastoral life and his family for ever. And it was his very skill with, and his love for, harp and song that became the occasion for that change and the means by which he embraced the life that eventually led him to the throne of Israel.

King Saul began to develop fits of intense melancholy. He had been king now for perhaps ten to twenty years — it is impossible to say definitely — and the appearances are that the appealing upstanding youth whom Israel so en-

thusiastically adopted as their first king had become a hasty-tempered and embittered man, increasingly irresolute and uncertain of himself. The reason is not far to seek. At the beginning Saul had followed the Lord's instructions through his mentor Samuel implicitly and faithfully, and had prospered in consequence. His military prowess and leadership had enabled the Israelites to keep their old enemies, the Philistines, at bay. But for some time now he had been increasingly impatient of Samuel's guidance, and more and more disposed to order things in his own fashion and without heed to the word of the Lord. In consequence he began to suffer defeat at the hands of the enemy, and when at last Samuel told him that because of his rebellious attitude the Lord had deposed him from being king and would shortly appoint another "after his own heart", Saul became morose and resentful. The account in 1 Sam. 16, says that "*the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him*". What that means is, not that the Lord deliberately sent an evil spirit to harass him—which is against the ways of the Lord as is well known—but that, according to the beliefs and superstitions of the times, the servants of Saul took his fits of melancholy as Divine retribution for his divergence from God's ways. Since any particular phenomenon was considered the work of either a good spirit or an evil spirit, they naturally and automatically credited this condition as induced by the malevolence of an evil spirit. That they knew the seat of the trouble was in Saul's own mind is evidenced by the remedy they proposed; the acquirement of a skilful musician to soothe and cheer the despondent monarch in his bad moments.

Saul agreed to their proposal that they should "*seek out a man who is a skilful player upon a harp; and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his harp, and thou shalt be well*". One of them was immediately ready with a suggestion. He knew one such, a son of Jesse of Bethlehem, who was not only "skilful in playing", but "*a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him*". It would seem that Saul rather liked the idea of this paragon of virtue and straightway sent a request to Jesse that his son should attend court.

This remark, that David was "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war" implies that he was quite

a bit removed from the sixteen-year-old, or less, whom Samuel had anointed. He could hardly merit this description, or have earned this reputation, at say less than nineteen. He must have waited some three years at least for the call, long enough to test his faith and his assurance that the anointing had not been in vain. Now he came to Saul, knowing not to what kind of life he was being introduced nor to what destiny the Lord was leading him, but like Isaiah in much later days with the ready response in his heart "Here am I; send me".

The experiment succeeded. Saul instantly took to this fresh and vigorous young man—perhaps seeing in him an image of himself as he had been twenty years earlier, full of enthusiasm to fight the Lord's battles. He himself had come from a farming family; perhaps the pastoral songs which David sang and played before him, redolent, not of royal courts and marching armies, but of fields and streams and serene skies, reminded him of long past days when he had led a very similar life. At any rate, the consequence was that when the evil spirit came upon Saul, David played, and "*Saul was refreshed, and the evil spirit departed from him*".

This state of affairs could not have lasted very long. To fit all that is recorded of David's activities in the next ten years of his life it is necessary that each incident follow its predecessor quite closely. It might have been that David was less than six months in the royal court before there came a call to arms. The Philistines were invading Israel again.

The Philistines had always been a thorn in the side of Israel. From the days of the Entry into the land they had been there, occupying the strip of land along the sea-coast more or less in the area that is now known as the Gaza strip. They were an alien race, hailing from the island of Crete, tall, muscular men arrayed in armour and equipped with weapons which the Hebrews could not equal. Saul had already had one encounter with them, in the early part of his reign, in which he gained the victory so that there was a period of peace from their attacks. Unfortunately on that occasion he had exceeded his authority in the matter of offering sacrifice to the Lord and Samuel had strongly reproved him. Then he had what appears to be a second chance when he went out to do battle with the Amalekites from the southern desert. Again he was guilty of flagrant disobedience and it was on this occasion that it is said the Lord formally disowned him. Now he was faced with the Philistine menace again but this time the Lord was not with him—and he knew it. The victory this time, if victory there was to be, must be gained by his own might

and that of his army. It must have been with a heavy heart that Saul prepared for the conflict.

The king and his sons took the field. I. Sam. 17 tells the whole story. David was sent home; for the time being there was no time for music at court (I. Sam. 17.15). In any case he was needed to look after his father's affairs, for the three oldest of Jesse's sons had been drafted into the army and were fighting with Saul's men. Upon their arrival at the scene of operations, however, they found that the Hebrew forces had a problem. The Philistines had a champion warrior, a giant of a man, by name Goliath. This individual was of unusual height, a little under eight feet, broad and powerful in proportion, for his armour weighed five thousand shekels which is equal to ninety-two pounds — quite enough for even a giant to carry into battle. (Most commentators and modern translations exaggerate Goliath's height, giving it as over nine feet, being ignorant of the now established fact that the "cubit" of early Hebrew times, like the Sumerian and Assyrian cubits from which it was derived, was shorter than the later Jewish and Egyptian cubit. This is evidenced by the records of Josephus and the Septuagint, which give his height as four cubits and a span, whereas the A.V. has six. In actual fact Goliath was about seven and a half feet tall, quite enough to render him an awe-inspiring proposition.) This individual had challenged Saul's army to produce a man to meet him in single combat, the side thus losing the contest to submit to the other, without further fighting. The more the Israelites looked at the Philistine champion the less they liked the idea, Ch. 17. shows that in fact they were in a state of complete panic over the issue.

This was the army that, only a few years previously, under the leadership of Saul and in the conviction that the Lord was with them, had decimated the Philistine forces and quelled them into submission. Now they had lost that inspiration, their king was apprehensive and undecided, and they were just about ready to give up. Their old national leader Samuel had retired from public life and was living in obscurity, the king they had chosen to lead them to victory in a battle had failed them and all the high hopes of Israel were laid low. This is the point at which David comes back into the story.

According to Ch. 17 Jesse had instructed David to take some provisions to his three sons fighting at the battle front, with a little present for their company commander, and bring their father word again as to their welfare. It would seem that army discipline was a little more informal in those days. Arrived at the scene, and talking with his brothers, David saw for himself the

Philistine giant advancing towards the Israelites with his repeated challenge to come out and fight. He saw the Israelites scattering and running away from their enemy, and his indignation mounted. "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine" he demanded of those around him "that he should defy the armies of the living God?" That must have brought some of them up with a jerk; it was a long time since they had gone into battle with the high praises of God on their lips and faith in their hearts that He would give the victory. But somehow or other news of this youngster and his words of defiance was taken to Saul, and he, curious perhaps but probably no more, gave orders that David should be brought before him.

It would seem from the closing verses of Ch. 17 that Saul did not recognise David as his erstwhile musician. That is not surprising. There must have been many coming and going in Saul's court and David had not been there very long. The king now faced a sturdy and resolute young man who told him quite plainly that the army need fear no longer; he would go out and fight this Philistine. Saul probably leaned back and laughed scornfully. "You are not able to fight him" he said "you are only a boy, and he a man of war from his youth!" Modestly, and yet resolutely, David responded "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. And I went out after him, and delivered it out of his mouth . . . thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God".

Saul was suddenly serious. He looked again at the fresh-faced youngster before him, he listened to his frank avowal of faith that the Lord would go with him and protect him and give him the victory, and a thought flashed into his mind. He was painfully conscious that he himself was the one who ought long since have armed himself and gone out to meet Goliath in single combat on behalf of all Israel. But the Lord had departed from him and he no longer had faith in himself. He, Saul, king of Israel, was afraid. But might it be that the Lord would indeed honour the faith of this lad who so openly and avowedly relied upon him? Was there a chance, after all, that the Lord could be brought back into the picture and induced to give Israel the victory through the instrumentality of this lad who seemed so sure of his standing with God? It was, at least, worth a try. Saul took a sudden decision. He leaned forward and said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with thee".

With the impetuosity of youth, David turned to go. He was stopped by an imperative gesture

from the king. Taking off his own armour, a replica of that used by the Philistines, he fitted it on David, following on by placing the heavy bronze helmet on his head. Stepping back to judge the effect, he picked up his great sword, and put it in David's hand. "If you are going to fight the Philistine, you must do it on equal terms" he said.

David made as if to walk away, and found his movements impeded by the unfamiliar garb. He looked at the sword in his hand, and with a gesture of contempt threw it on the ground. He took off the armour, piece by piece, and threw them down also. "I cannot go with these" he said "for I have not tried them. The Lord has no need of such weapons". Even as the king opened his mouth to expostulate, David turned his back on him and was walking briskly through the camp in the direction of the Philistine host gathered on the opposite hill half-a-mile away. Saul and his attendants watched him go; the Israelite soldiers, sitting and standing about, wearied at the inaction and lack of leadership from their king, looked at this shepherd lad with increasing interest as he made his way down the hillside, an interest which speedily changed to excitement as they began to perceive his intention. They saw him pause and stoop as he crossed the brook at the bottom of the hill, and pick up several pebbles from the bed of the stream, and then he was climbing the opposite slope, taking his sling out of his scrip as he did so.

The Philistine warriors looked on attentively as David crossed the intervening space, uncertain what this shepherd lad was doing between the armies. It was a little while before they realised that he was there to challenge their champion, and as he took his stance there were shouts for Goliath. Presently the giant appeared, fully appraised in his bronze armour and helmet, carrying sword and spear, looking for his opponent. Realising that this lad was the challenger, he at first looked incredulous then threw back his head in a gust of coarse laughter. "Am I a dog" he demanded, "that you come to beat me with a stick?" He stood and regarded David. "Come you to me, and by all the gods of the Philistines, I swear that I will feed your body to the birds and beasts". He moved forward menacingly.

David's clear voice sounded on the air. His own people, venturing now to approach within earshot, could hear him as plainly as did the watching Philistines. "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I

will smite thee . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel".

The giant's expression changed to one of deep anger and he strode forward with long, quick paces, raising his spear threateningly. David also was advancing, running with lithe, fleet steps, to meet his adversary. As he did so he was putting his hand into the scrip hanging from his shoulder.

No one saw quite clearly what happened; David's action was almost too quick for the eyes of the watchers. He had extracted a pebble from his scrip, fitted it into his sling—a sudden circular movement of his arm; and the Philistine giant reeled back and slowly collapsed in a crumpled heap. David's slingstone had struck him squarely above the eyes on the only unprotected part of his body. A moment's stunned silence on the part of the observers; like lightning David had leaped upon the body of his fallen foe, and taken the great sword out of his nerveless hand. A swift flash in the sunlight, first up, then down—and David was holding aloft the severed head of the Philistine champion for all to see.

There came a great shout from the watching Israelites. In another moment the entire host was advancing across the valley, the noise of the clashing of weapons mingling with cries of exultation. The Philistines, aghast at the sudden and unexpected fate of their champion, took one look and ran in panic. Within a few more minutes the Israelites had passed David in hot pursuit of the fleeing enemy, a pursuit that did not stop until they had reached the gates of their cities Ekron and Gath some twenty miles away. Then the Israelites returned more leisurely and looted the abandoned camp.

Saul with his attendants stood outside his tent, watching this unknown shepherd lad making his way back to the Israelite lines, deep in thought,

carrying the sword of Goliath in one hand and his head in the other. Ch. 17, 54 says that he took the head to Jerusalem but that was much later. Another sixteen years or so were to elapse before Israel gained possession of Jerusalem. It was evident that the head of the Philistine was preserved in some way so that it could be permanently exhibited as a trophy when eventually David ruled in Jerusalem. In the meantime it must have followed David in all the vicissitudes of his adventurous life before becoming king. It was a barbaric act, but he lived in a barbaric age.

There is no evidence that Saul honoured God as a result of this deliverance. This was his third chance to reform and return but he ignored it. He honoured David, but not David's Lord. Nowhere is the irreligiousness of his character more plainly shown than in this incident. The Lord had sent him the instrument whereby He had delivered Israel with a mighty deliverance, but he heeded it not. He was doubtless greatly relieved that the Philistine menace was lifted, at least for a time, but that was all.

He did not let David go again. This time he was attached to Saul's court and given high rank in his army. Saul attached much greater importance to David's physical valour, which he could see, than to his reliance upon God by which victory could be gained, which he could not see. That was his undoing. To the end of his life he relied upon the power of the sword, and at the end he died by the sword. David, despite his mistakes and misdeeds, did rely upon the power of God, and endeavoured to conform his life and his works to what he believed was the will and guidance of God. This was his first great test, and he came through it with flying colours.

To be continued.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

The Christian, as he thinks of the human body, is forced to exclaim with the Psalmist, "*I will praise Thee, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*". Surely no instrument is so wondrous, no other handiwork so Divine!

Here, for example, are a few interesting facts about the average man, about YOURSELF:

- those two hundred bones and five hundred muscles of yours are capable of fourteen thousand different adaptations;
- that heart of yours, so delicate yet so mysterious, contracts no fewer than four thousand times every hour;
- one hundred thousand glands and two million pores assist in the circulation of your blood every minute of the day;

—and your human voice (the greatest marvel of it all) it has been estimated is capable of producing seventeen trillions, five hundred and ninety-two billions, one hundred and eighty-six millions, forty-four thousand, four hundred and fifteen different sounds.

Wondrous mechanism!

Little wonder then that the celebrated anatomist, Galen, was turned from his atheism as he examined the formation of the human body. When he studied the utility of all its members—of every muscle, of every nerve, of every vein—he went down on his knees in wonder and in praise, and composed a hymn in honour of his Creator.

H. H. Martin in "The Happy Life".

"IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"

*Thoughts on the
Last Supper*

How truly wonderful it is to be able to hold things in remembrance, and to live again today with the events of yesterday, partaking once more of the thrills or pathos of that hour which gave those memories birth. All memories do not afford pleasure, for there are some things in every life which we would rather forget. That fall under temptation; that unkind or bitter word; that cold and icy look! How we would prefer to forget it and tear it from memory's page! But that side of memory's store notwithstanding, it is truly a most wonderful boon to be able to call forth from the depths of memory's chambers those episodes of life which reclothe themselves in joy and delight, whensoever time and circumstances carry us back on wings of good desire to the sights and scenes of yesterday.

Do we ever pause to think what life would be without remembrances? How different it would be if each day's experiences were faded or wiped out with every setting sun, and there were no impressions to carry forward to another day. Imagine how barren the daily round would be if there were nothing gained, nothing learned, nothing achieved, nothing experienced save the drab monotony of existence at the low level of a limpet or an oyster! No love of parents or offspring; no appreciation of home or country; no delight of colour or harmony—none of these things to call to mind, to think upon, or to link us with the past.

The chambers of remembrance are the storehouses of all the real riches of life, the treasury of sweet thoughts, ennobling influences and inspiring motives, precious far beyond gold and rubies or wide verdant acres, for thereby we are linked with our God, with Jesus, home, and loved ones, and everything that is worth while.

It is greatly desirable to remember intensively, notwithstanding that the ability to remember intensively is not a self-created acquisition. Some people are blessed with good memories, or, shall we say, with good capacity for remembering. They do not have to develop remembrance by constant repetition of things or facts, nor by any patent rule-of-thumb methods.

Quality and intensity depends primarily upon the natural endowment bestowed by heredity or parentage—that is, upon the density and receptivity of the impression-cells of the brain with which we are born into this world of sensation and experience. Something, too, depends upon the general state of health—a tired, run-down brain

being unable to receive or register adequately the sense-perceptions from external sources. The first of these situations cannot be remedied, if deficient or lacking. Something may be done to correct the second and thus make the best use of Nature's equipment.

There is one factor that compensates, no matter whether we be well- or ill-equipped by natural aptitude. That factor is "interest". Remembrance depends more upon interest than any other single factor in life. When the whole being—heart, mind and soul—is caught up by the written or spoken word so that every pulse and desire is set throbbing and vibrating with warm sympathy and response, the impressions then received register themselves more sharply and deeply on the brain and, thereafter, in proportion to the depth of the registration, so will be the ability to remember and recall at will. Who has not seen and felt the magnetising effect of some wholly-engrossed gifted tongue as the spoken message draws the listener from his comfortable relaxed position till he is sitting forward, eyes and ears and body alert to catch every word, and note unconsciously every ardent expression in the messenger's attitude to his theme. These are the occasions which trace themselves deep on memory's tablet.

What supremely serious things affected the disciples on that tragic night in the upper room to enable them to remember their Lord and Master! Was ever such an occasion as this? Was ever such a speaker as this? Did ever so much depend upon the faithfulness of one Sufferer? What serious things were done! What impressive eyes looked out upon the little band! Think what that little gathering meant. The established religious usages of fifteen centuries were coming to an end, and were to be memorialised for the very last time. They were to be replaced and superseded by the first observance of a new and better memorial arising from the "better" features of God's great Plan. For those few pious souls which God had given into Jesus' keeping the old order was beginning to pass away, and a new order to come in.

This night, as throughout the span of one whole Divinely appointed Age of time, the call to remembrance had carried back the minds of godly men to that dread night in Egypt's oppressive land when the sword of God flashed through palace and hut, leaving its trail of death behind. Thirty to forty generations had lived and died

with that dread memory behind them, but none had dared to interfere or change the order which Moses had caused to be established there. So far as all outside that little room were aware, thirty or forty, or even hundreds more might be expected to pass away, and all may come and go while still calling to remembrance that same dark tragic night in Pharaoh's land. The constitution founded by God, under Moses, in Jewish belief was to be eternal. Established upon the Law of God, they could not rise to the thought that its authority could ever pass away; and they were sure that even the coming of their Messiah would only settle it upon an even surer foundation.

The little band of disciples who had come aside with Jesus into this little room had been cradled and reared to manhood in that belief, and even their learning at Jesus' feet had not eradicated it from their minds.

Now they had come to the conjunction of the Ages, and this little room was to be the sanctum of one of the greatest changes the world was ever to know.

Already they had come to this quiet room with strange thoughts and memories rushing through their minds. On the way up to Jerusalem they had heard Jesus dwell repeatedly upon his coming death, and though they had not comprehended fully what He meant, still they had heard his words. He also had invited them to share with him his Cross, his Cup and his Baptism. They had been with their Master when the hot words of righteous reproof had been administered to self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees—words such as Jesus had never used before. They had seen him drive money-changers and merchants from the Temple Courts, what time He charged them with sacrilege in the House of God. They had heard him say that that Holy House was to be henceforth left to them desolate—the Holy House wherein God had placed the only earthly memorial of his Holier Name, and from which alone in all the whole wide world He had been pleased to accept the incense of worship! Now it was to be left desolate!

Not comprehending the deadly seriousness of what He said, they called his attention to the stately magnificence of its stones, only to be told that a day was approaching when one stone should not be left upon another stone, so utter and complete would its desolation become. Stunned and amazed by their usually compassionate Master's words, some of them broke into his sad reverie as He sat looking from Olivet over the doomed city, to enquire more particularly what his solemn words might mean. Responding to their solicitude, He gathered together the testi-

mony of their holy books, and showed them what God had spoken about the overthrow of Jerusalem. They heard him speak of wars and rumours of war, of famine, pestilence, and persecution. He told of an abomination that would stand in the Holy Place, and of a period of tribulation such as had not been since man lived on the earth. He likened the overthrow to the catastrophe of Noah's day, and to Sodom's fate, and dated it by telling them that that generation would not pass away till all was fulfilled.

What a strange miscellany of sights and sounds the recent days had brought into their lives, and into this night, and into this room! Away from the madding crowd into the quiet seclusion of this upper room Jesus brought his little flock to keep first the memorial of Egypt's tragic night and then to institute an ordinance to be remembered in coming days. A solemn seriousness rested on the Master throughout the night, as He spake quietly and slowly of what was on his heart. Reverently He led their memories in the accustomed way, and then, taking a portion of the remaining bread, He invoked Heaven's blessing thereupon, and passed the bread to them, saying, "This is MY body, take it and eat it". Then He took a cup and, blessing it, said, "This is MY blood of the covenant, take it and drink it". Then they heard him pray—a prayer never yet heard by mortal ears!

How reverently and sacredly impressive this quiet ceremony would be! Those gravely searching eyes; that quietly arresting voice; and the strange newness of what He did! Could they ever forget that little room? Then those words: "This do . . . in remembrance of Me". Throughout the days and years that followed they did remember him. He was to them the Lamb of God; the Prince of Life; the Lord and Master of their lives. They counted not their lives dear unto them so they might lay them down in his service!

And what of these days, and of ourselves in this remembrancing? Only in spirit can we share that experience in the upper room, but it is still true that according to the "interest" that grips our hearts, so will the measure of our "remembrancing" be.

These many years we have come apart into our own upper rooms, and at the appointed time have taken the emblems of his broken body and spilt blood, and "remembered" him! We have shown to each other our "interest" in "the Lord's death". We have accepted the benefit to ourselves of his life and death, and have covenanted also to become "dead with him". Again, the appointed hour draws near — what will it mean to us? Again, a world order is tottering to its doom. Can we go forward into the unknown

future with nothing more than him? Is He of such "interest" to our hearts that we would willingly surrender all for him? Is there one thing else that can share our heart's "interest" with him? Does the torch of remembrance burn fiercely in us for him alone? If so, then the measure of our "interest" will reveal how much we shall desire to remember him! For what have we to remember him? Is it not for everything that is worthwhile in life? Is it not our redemption and

reconciliation, for our safe-keeping day by day; for our comfort and consolation in tribulation; for the hope of attaining to a share in an inheritance in joint-heirship with him; and for the possibility that we may be found acceptable to enjoy his eternal friendship and companionship? Is there not here sufficient cause to awake the interest of the deepest springs of our life, and lead us to remember him for the things of yesterday, to-day, to-morrow, and for evermore?

SCIENTISTS ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

The celebrated astronomer-scientist Fred Hoyle has found God by means of mathematical calculations; at least that is what the daily Press is saying. That may seem to some a strange way to find God, yet in a world of so many kinds of minds must it not be that there are different avenues of approach to the One who is the Creator of that variety? Formerly an agnostic, Mr. Hoyle has now found, by means of elaborate mathematical calculations which very few other men in this country are qualified to undertake, that the probability of life coming into being from non-living matter is so fantastically remote that he has to conclude that life could not possibly have arisen in such fashion, despite so many claims to the contrary by so many scientists for so many years. The only possible alternative, he and his fellow-researcher suggests, is—God. *"Once we see that the probability of life originating at random is so utterly miniscule as to make it absurd"* they say *"it becomes sensible to think that the favourable properties of physics on which life depends, are in every respect deliberate. It is almost inevitable that our own measure of intelligence must reflect higher intelligences, even to the limit of God"*. In other words, the admirable fitness of the earth for human habitation is itself evidence of planning and designing by an intelligent Creator.

This is just what the Bible says *"God formed the earth and made it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited."* *"The heavens are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men"* (Isa. 45:18; Psalms 115, 16). And just to elaborate the joint testimony of Hoyle, Isaiah and David, it may be pertinent to refer back to another well-known astronomer, Isaac Asimov, who drew attention in his book *"Planets for man"* (1965) to this same admirable adaptability. It would appear that human life requires

an average daily temperature not outside the limits of 14 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit; 95% of earth's population live in lands where the average is between 40 and 80 degrees, comfortably inside. The intensity of sunlight which can be tolerated must lie between certain limits; our eyes are exactly attuned to the middle point of that intensity. If our earth was half its present size gravity would be insufficient to prevent bouncing about—as witness the experiences of astronauts on the moon in recent years—but if it was twice its present size we would be too heavy to move about at all. If the earth was as little as 10% nearer to the sun than it is, only one fifth of its surface would be habitable, which would mean mainly Canada and Northern Europe and virtually nothing in the Southern Hemisphere. If on the other hand it was 10% farther away from the sun, only in the tropical and sub-tropical regions could men live.

Way back early in the century, another then well-known astronomer, Sir James Jeans, one-time Astronomer-Royal, had said *"the stream of knowledge is leading towards a non-material reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine"* and upon another occasion *"atoms are thoughts in the mind of God"*. A man more familiar to the present generation, Dr. Einstein, famous for his "Relativity Theory", has said *"the conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the comprehensible universe, forms my idea of God. My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds"*.

A thoughtful comment comes from the pen of Gatland in *"The Inhabited Universe"* (1957) *"The question we must strive to answer is whether the universe is purposive. That is to say,*

has man emerged from the shapeless dust clouds of interstellar space merely as the result of blind throws of chance, or is there some special kind of direction behind? . . . The inevitable question which has dogged us through the last chapter must now be faced 'Is the purposefulness revealed in the universe an attribute of God' . . . What is God? At best, we can only think of an infinite Consciousness which is beyond our powers of understanding . . . We can only interpret the effects of creation; we cannot investigate the Creator".

One often hears of the "conflict between science and religion". It is not always fair comment; in some spheres there is no conflict at all. An increasing number of scientific researchers are coming to the conclusion that the existence of the universe, and of life in the universe, can only be explained by the fact that all was brought into existence by an intelligent Creator. That conclusion does not of itself make the scientist a Christian, neither does it answer all his questions.

But it is at least a start. Later on, perhaps, such an investigator will come a little closer to understanding that "this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17, 3). In the meantime it may be worth reflecting that David of old may well in his youthful shepherding days have come near to God by much the same route, if one of his more famous sayings is anything to go by; "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no sound; there are no words; their voice is not heard, but their measure is gone out through all the earth, and their message to the end of the world" (Psa. 19. 1-3).

Three thousand years ago that simple shepherd boy looked up into the heavens and saw God; is it to be wondered at that in our own day and time some of the much wiser and more intellectual of this world are able to look up and do the same.

Is the Bible Immoral?

A reader of the "Monthly" was recently confronted with a not unusual criticism of the Bible. "The Bible is an immoral book" was the assertion—on account of various narratives which offend against established Christian principles or the accepted moral standards of to-day. (Cynics in another field might well remark that such modern standards are fast tending towards the worst of any such stories that can be found in the good old Book!) When this accusation is made it is generally found that the critic has very little knowledge of the Bible beyond a sketchy outline of the particular stories he or she considers immoral; nevertheless the objection ought to be taken up and rationally answered.

The Bible is largely a book of history. Unlike many histories written by fallible and prejudiced men, it is accurate, factual and unprejudiced. It recounts the vices and base actions of its greatest heroes just as dispassionately as it does their virtues and noble deeds. It does not seek to justify them; in some cases it records the retribution they received. Such narratives should be read as history and if there is a moral to be drawn or a lesson to learn, then that is the justification for their appearance where they are.

There is another class of incident in which the apparently immoral act, when understood against the background of the morality, customs and

laws of the period concerned, stands revealed to have been perfectly in accord with those customs and laws. The Mosaic law allowed an Israelite to take two wives. Jesus superseded this by reversion to the original ideal instituted in Eden. The story of Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar in Gen. 38 (recently appearing in BSM Jan-Feb. 1980; Ed.) is a notable case. Tamar acted in accordance with the spirit of the prevailing law of her day, a law afterwards incorporated in the laws of Moses and exemplified in the later story of Ruth and Boaz—what was then called the Levirate law. Sometimes an apparently reprehensible act is due to a mistranslation of a particular word, as in the story of Elisha and the bears (2 Kin. 2.23-24) or the failure of the reader to understand Hebrew allusions and customs, as in the case of Jephthah's daughter in Jud. 11 (BSM May-June 1968 and Sept.-Oct. 1966 Ed.)

It is necessary always to read and understand any historical incident related in the Bible in the light of the civil law code and social customs of the time in which the incident occurred, and not judge them by those of the present day. When the case is inexcusable, as in the matter of King David and Uriah the Hittite, the Lord is shown as not slow to condemn the offender in no uncertain terms, despite his otherwise acceptable character before him.

GARDEN OF EDEN

8. Sentence on the Serpent

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (ch. 3. 7).

The last act in the drama opens with this verse. Light and darkness, good and evil, truth and falsehood, obedience and rebellion, all have played their part on the stage that is Eden, and now it remains only for sin's penalty, death, to be displayed. There settles over the scene the dark cloud of tragedy, relieved only by the silver gleam of hope that this is not, after all, the end. But it is at the most a gleam, not even sufficient to illumine the bowed figures of the two chief characters as they make their way from the light of Eden into the gloomy obscurity in which all the remaining years of their lives are to be spent. They were never themselves to see that gleam brighten into day; the promise was not to them but to their seed and for a day in the far distant future. For them, there remained only the inevitable consequence of the choice they had deliberately made.

The usual interpretation of this seventh verse is that the eating of the forbidden fruit had the physical effect of rendering Adam and Eve conscious, for the first time, of their own nudity, and they took steps immediately to fabricate a somewhat scanty and impermanent covering from the leaves of the fig tree. It has already been shown that the expression "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" in chap. 2. 25, did not have reference to sexual nakedness, for which a totally different Hebrew word is used in the Bible, but to the fact that they stood open and fully revealed in the sight of God; there was nothing in them that was hidden from him. At that time, before their sin, they were "not confounded", abashed or ashamed, for they had the consciousness of perfect harmony and union with God, and could, so to speak, "look God in the face". Now the case was different. Although they had been persuaded by the serpent into pledging him their allegiance and repudiating God, this sequel to their action was the swift realisation that God knew all about it. Their eyes were suddenly opened to the fact that they still stood plainly revealed in the sight of God, not now as trusting and obedient children, but as rebellious and disobedient sinners. Their condition at that moment is well illustrated by words in the Book of Hebrews "*all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*" (Heb. 4. 13). When, a little later on,

they heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, the aprons they had made yielded no assurance of the protection they needed. They hid themselves among the trees in the vain hope of escaping God. We need therefore to look beyond the surface meaning of the words and consider what more vital significance they may have had.

The word here rendered "aprons" is "*chagorah*" which denotes an article girded around the body, not an apron in the modern English sense of that word. In 2 Kings 3. 21 it is used for "armour" and in numerous instances refers to the girding the body with sackcloth at times of mourning. In general the word applies to the wearing of ceremonial garments having some religious significance, such as the robes of the Aaronic priesthood (Lev. 8. 7-13 and 16. 4), of Samuel the child prophet to indicate his dedication to God (1 Sam. 2. 18), of the symbolic clothing of the Messiah with righteousness and faithfulness (Isa. 11. 5), and so on. The fig-leaf coverings made by Adam and Eve were probably designed to enshroud their bodies in the same manner and we have to ask for what purpose they were made. The action appears to have been taken consequent upon their eyes being opened to a realisation of their position, sinners completely and fully revealed in the sight of God. "*They knew that they were naked.*" Now there is still no evidence that they were in any sense repentant. All the indications point to the opposite. Had they repented, and returned to God at that moment, it is unthinkable that He would not have done something other than condemn them as He did, even although it might well be that the mere fact of sin had already wrought some harm to their physical bodies which needed a fresh exercise of Divine creative power to rectify. But true repentance and reformation always brings at least reconciliation with God and fellowship with him; these two on the contrary passed under Divine condemnation and were banished from fellowship with God. If then there was consciousness of sin but no repentance, for what purpose was the covering of fig-leaves?

The solution may well lie in the following verse. Having made themselves the apron-coverings, they heard the voice of the Lord in the garden. Instead of going to meet him as had apparently been their custom, they hid themselves for fear among the trees, hoping thus to escape observation. It seems fairly clear that God appeared to them in visible form—the "theo-

phany" of the Word of God—and in their immature state of mind they felt they only had to be physically hidden to escape that searching eye. What more natural thing that in order to facilitate their concealment they should adopt this very obvious and familiar means of disguise? Arrayed in complete coverings of leaves they could remain motionless among the trees of the garden and hope to escape detection. These two had not sinned against each other, they had sinned against God. Husband and wife, they had nothing to conceal from each other, but they both had something to conceal from God. And verse 10 sets the seal upon this understanding of the nakedness and the fig-leaves when Adam says "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." It was Adam's nakedness before God that was the subject of his concern and his fear, and for that reason he and his wife clothed themselves with leaves in the vain hope that God would not see them amidst the trees of the garden. He was naked before God in both senses of the word when he was created but there was no fear and no concealment then. He could stand upright before God in perfect confidence. But now sin had entered into his soul and he could not bear the thought of appearing before the visible manifestation of God and meeting that accusing eye. So, with his wife, he went away and hid himself.

But "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." (Prov. 15. 3). "Where art thou" God called to Adam, knowing all the time where he was. Adam could not ignore that commanding voice; he and his wife came forth, trembling, before the Presence, "I heard thy voice in the garden" he said. "and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Came the stern accusation "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree . . . ?" How, indeed, did Adam know that he had no covering in the sight of God and no confidence to stand before God, if it were not for sin? Just as, in Isaiah's day many centuries later, "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you" (Isa. 59. 2) so now the man who heretofore had enjoyed fellowship and union with God in perfect confidence found that fellowship broken and that union severed; he shrank within himself and could no longer look God in the face.

This part of the story shows up in sharp relief some important considerations. First, consciousness of sin is not the same thing as repentance. Adam was clearly conscious of his sin as thus he stood before God but the idea of repentance was still not in his mind. He admitted the fact of his sin, but as yet did not seem conscious that he

ought to do something about it. He contented himself rather by indicating how it came about. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." That excuse did not get him very far. He finished up by being condemned on two counts, one for partaking of the fruit and one for listening to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of God. Merely being conscious of sin and deploring it never saved anyone. The Jews at Pentecost were convicted of sin, "pricked in their hearts," (Acts 2. 37) but when in consequence they asked Peter and the apostles "what shall we do" the answer came, swift and unhesitant "Repent . . ." Adam did not ask God what he should do; he merely attempted to excuse himself without repudiating his action.

So God turned to the woman. "What is this that thou hast done?" This is an expression of great emphasis in the Hebrew, as though laying supreme stress on the serious nature of the matter concerned. Eve, following her husband's example, offered a similar reply, perfectly truthful, a clear statement of fact, but again ignoring her own part in the sin. "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

It is an interesting conjecture as to whether the scene of verse 14, the condemnation of the Serpent, was on earth or in heaven. There is not much doubt that here we have the banishment of Satan from heaven. As "star of the morning" to use Isaiah's poetic description, this radiantly glorious celestial being must long have moved among the citizens of the heavenly realm; perhaps been held in high honour among them. But nothing that is of sin can exist in the presence of God. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil." (Hab. 1. 13) cried the prophet when he thought upon the holiness of God. From the time of the Fall that "star of the morning" must have been forbidden entry to the presence of God; according to every Scripture passage which refers to the subject he was cast out and limited to the material creation which he had sought to gain for himself. "Brought down to sheol (the death state) to the sides of the pit" (the grave) is how Isaiah (14. 15) defines his doom. Says God through the prophet Ezekiel "I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God, and I will destroy thee, O anointed cherub, from the midst of the shining ones . . . I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more." (Ezek. 28. 16-19).

In the more prosaic language of Genesis, against the setting of the earthly garden, the same fate is defined in more down-to-earth terms. "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the

field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (ch. 3.14). This expression does not mean that the Serpent was cursed more than cattle were cursed; the meaning of the Hebrew word is that the Serpent was to be cursed from all cattle, in the same sense that God told Cain in ch. 4.11 "Thou art cursed from the earth which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood". In other words, the Serpent was shunned and separated from the living creatures of Adam's world, rejected and abhorred because of his rebellion and deception and the terrible consequences of death introduced into the world. The key to this rather enigmatic expression lies in the fact that every part of God's handiwork is created for a purpose and with a definite function to perform in the orderly progress of what God's hands have made. The cattle and the wild beasts (beasts of the field) all have their appropriate place in Nature and carry out their designed functions in obedience to their instincts. The Devil ceased to fulfil his allotted place in the Divine scheme and became an anarchist, choosing his own course heedless of its effects upon the orderly development of the Divine plans. The brute beasts were fulfilling the will of God; Satan was not. That is why he is said to be "cursed above all cattle."

The phrase "upon thy belly shalt thou go" used to be held to imply that serpents before the Fall had legs like other animals and were then deprived of them because of this sin. An idea like that should not be taken seriously. The word here used for "belly", "*gachon*", refers only to reptiles and occurs only twice in the Old Testament. The usual anatomical word is "*beten*", occurring nearly eighty times. "*Gachon*" is derived from the verb "to bend", "to bow one's self down", and taken in conjunction with the second part of the phrase implies that the Serpent was condemned to be bowed down to the earth, and, to use a modern expression, to bite the dust. In other words, at this point the Devil was condemned to be banished from the heavenly courts and relegated to the lower depths. This is exactly what is said of him in Isa. 14.15 "*Thou shalt be brought down to sheol (the grave) to the sides of the pit*" and in Ezek. 28.18 "*I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth*". In less colourful language the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the time when our Lord will "*destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Heb. 2.14).

But God had not finished yet. The process by which the end of Satan and his schemes is to be brought about had to be defined. "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" (vs. 15).

History reveals the meaning of this cryptic saying. The seed of the woman is Christ, and by an extension of thought justified by the Apostle's words in Gal. 3. 29, in a secondary sense all who are Christ's. The Serpent has his seed also, those in every age who have given themselves to the active opposing of God and all that is associated with God. The Serpent was to have a seeming but not conclusive victory; "*thou shalt bruise (break or crush) his heel,*" but the seed of the woman is to have the ultimate victory in crushing the head of the Serpent. The visions of Revelation have the final word. "*The Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone... this is the second death,*" (Rev. 20. 10 & 14). The bruising of the heel may very well refer to the suffering inflicted upon loyal servants of God in all ages by the active forces of evil; particularly must it point to the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, and in a lesser sense again to the martyrdom and suffering of Christians throughout this Age until the last of those who are Christ's have been gathered to him in the First Resurrection. There will be no more bruising of the heel after that, for, as Revelation 20 shows so clearly, at the Second Advent the Devil is to be bound and cast into the abyss "*that he should deceive the nations no more*" throughout the duration of the Messianic Age. Perhaps Satan the rebellious archangel, through all the long ages of human history, has never really believed that this could happen. Perhaps the forbearance and wisdom of God, in deferring the execution upon him of the penalty for sin, death, has led him to think that God could not or would not exact that penalty. It is true that sin has a blinding effect which might eventually bring the inveterate sinner to the point where he has destroyed his own capacity for repentance and God can do nothing with him. We do not know; we do know that there will be no Devil when at the last God gathers together the tangled threads of this world's experiences and makes of them the basis of humanity's everlasting inheritance.

So the Serpent was banished for ever from the presence of God. This might well be the occasion to which Jesus referred when He said "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.*" (Luke 10. 18). The word is *astrape*, which denotes, not only lightning, but any dazzling radiance of light, and is so used in various connections in the New Testament. The One who was revealed to men as the Word made flesh, in those few words identified himself with the Word of God which was the manifestation of God to Adam in the far off days of Eden. What more likely thing than that this same Word of God was the agent who pronounced the Divine sentence against the lawless

one? Jesus, talking to disciples flushed with excitement because the very demons were subject to them through his Name, might very well have ranged back in memory to a day long past when He on his Father's authority judged the rebellious archangel and watched his departure from the heavenly courts.

And now the scene changes to the earth again. Confession of guilt has already been extracted

from the two human parties to the rebellion. The prime instigator has been dealt with. Now God, again manifest in the form of the Word, appears to Adam and Eve to tell them their fate. It would almost seem as if they have been kept waiting whilst the Heavenly Assize was being held; now they stand before him in deepest fear and woe to hear what he has to say. (To be continued)

A NOTE ON DEUT. 22.5

"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth to a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for all that do so are an abomination to the Lord" (Deut. 22.5)

The question is asked whether the wearing of "slacks" by women in this modern day contravenes this prohibition, or should changed social customs be considered justification for ignoring it.

One or two relevant factors are brought into focus at the outset. This prohibition was part of the Mosaic Law which was binding upon Israel but never upon any other nation and came to an end at the Cross so that it is certainly not binding upon Christians, as St. Paul has made clear. This however does not dispose of any moral content in the matter. If the practice was abominable in the Lord's sight in Moses' time then it must be equally abominable to-day, Mosaic Law or no Mosaic Law.

If the text is to be taken at its face value then the apparent reason for the prohibition would be the element of deception involved, the implication being that an ulterior and evil motive prompted the practice. Against this must be set the fact that at the time concerned there was very little difference between the outer garments of the two sexes and it is rather difficult to perceive any force in the text.

From a common-sense point of view it is hard to understand why this particular "crime" should be singled out as an abomination to the Lord when many far more heinous sins are left unmentioned. So far as modern customs are concerned it is certain that the Lord is far more concerned with the inward condition of the heart than He is with the particular vagaries of current fashions adopted by the individual.

Looking at the text critically, it is observed that the first clause does not specify a man's gar-

ments, but *"that which pertaineth"* to a man. The Hebrew word is *keli*, which is used many times in the O.T., rendered instrument, armour, vessel, bag, jewel, stuff, weapon, and in general denotes the appendages or ornaments of a man but never a garment. There is hardly room for any kind of deception here. Another material point is that although in the second clause the word for "woman" is the normal, *ishshah*, that for "woman" in the first clause is *ishsheh*, which does not mean a woman. Its significance is a sacrifice or offering made by fire. The word rendered "wear" is the verb "to be", "to exist", and quite different words are used for "wear" in the rest of the O.T. On this basis the verse might well be translated *"A man's vessels (armour, instruments, ornaments, weapons) are not to be put upon a sacrifice, and a man shall not clothe himself in a woman's garment"*. This does not make much sense and it might well be that there is an allusion here to some ancient custom or practice of which the memory has not been preserved. One old commentator remarks that Maimonides, the famous 12th century Jewish scholar, said that the verse referred to certain idolatrous ceremonies practiced by the surrounding peoples and against which Israel was warned. If this be so it would give some meaning to the above translation and render the Divine prohibition more understandable. Any form of idolatry is an abomination to the Lord. And in such case the text clearly has no application to the present day and the Lord's attitude to current feminine fashion remains unexpressed, except perhaps through the words of the Apostle Peter when he pointed out that the "imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit" was of much more importance to God than the particular style of outward adornment.

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 can not escape them. L Trotter.

TIMES AND SEASONS

6. Historical background of the Exodus

The date of the Exodus is stated in I Kings 6.1 as being in the four hundred and eightieth year before the commencement of building Solomon's Temple in the fourth year of his reign, which is sufficient to afford a close approximation to the date but did nevertheless in earlier days provide a subject for dispute and argument on the part of some scholars and commentators. Some disputed the veracity of the text itself whilst others found reasons for avoiding its implication and propounded other dates divergent by several centuries. All of this, in the present century, has been nullified by discoveries at ancient Jericho which indicate beyond doubt exactly when Joshua destroyed that city, and in consequence fixes the date of the Exodus.

The site of Jericho was thoroughly excavated during the 1930s by Prof. John Garstang, who found the remains of the city destroyed by Joshua precisely as described in the Bible. Within its ruins there remained indisputable evidence of the date. In and around what had been the royal palace or the governor's residence, and in the tombs of various notabilities, there were found nearly two hundred scarabs (a kind of medallion) bearing the "cartouches", or royal insignia of the Pharaohs who reigned in Egypt over a period of more than three centuries, covering the time that Egypt wielded political domination over Canaan. These Pharaohs were those of the 14th to 18th dynasties and ended with Pharaoh Amenhotep III, ninth ruler of the 18th. That, together with other evidences, establishes the fact that Jericho fell to Joshua at some time during the reign of that Pharaoh. A little latitude has to be allowed as to the precise commencement of his thirty-six year reign, but even so the event must have happened at some point between 1430 and 1377 B.C.

The building of Solomon's Temple is fairly reliably placed in the springtime of 974 B.C., in the second month. If this was the 480th year as stated in I Kings 6.1 then the Passover of the first month when Joshua invaded the land was that of 1413 B.C. (An authoritative elucidation of this point is to be found in the "*Bible Chronology*" of Dr. Adam Rutherford, the Egyptologist and Pyramidologist.)

There is independent confirmation of this point. In 1884 an Egyptian peasant woman found a buried collection of inscribed tablets which proved to be letters from the petty kings and provincial governors of Canaan to Amenhotep III and his successor Akhenaton, reporting the

invasion of the Israelites under Joshua and pleading for military help to resist the invaders. Canaan was under Egyptian political domination at this time.) There is no indication that help was ever sent; the Egyptians probably remembered the plagues of forty years previously and were in no mood to try issues with the God of Israel again. The letters grow more despairing as time went on and city after city fell to the Israelites. A notable fact is that although many towns of Canaan sent their pleas there are none from Jericho; Joshua had already destroyed that town before the alarm was raised. The course of the invading Israelites past Edom and through Moab is reported, confirmatory of the O.T. account, and Joshua's name mentioned. These tablets constitute reasonable confirmation that the invasion of Canaan occurred in the early part of the reign of Amenhotep III.

If the date of Joshua's invasion is established as 1413 BC, the date of the Exodus, forty years earlier, is 1453 BC. This comes in the middle of the reign of Amenhotep II. It is significant that this very warlike Pharaoh led several military invasions of other lands in the early part of his reign but none at all after his ninth year. It is even more significant that the son who succeeded him, Thutmose IV, was not his eldest son as would normally have been the case, although no explanation of the reason is given in any inscription. The eldest, of course, would be the firstborn who died with all other firstborns on the night of the Exodus.

Eighty years previously Moses was born. The ruling Pharaoh was Thutmose I, about 1540—1520, from his history a very likely Pharaoh to fill the role of Exod. 1.15-22. He boasted that when he invaded the Sudan he left none of their male children alive, which illustrates his similar command in Exod. 1.15. Moses was born 1533 BC, roughly in the middle of his reign.

The only daughter of Thutmose I was the famous Hatshepsut, who afterwards ruled the land for some thirty-five years. She would have been about twenty-one at the time she found the babe Moses at the river side. On the basis of the precise dates above suggested Moses' flight to Midian at forty years of age coincided with her death, and the Pharaoh who "*sought to slay Moses*" on account of the slaying of the Egyptian overseer (Exod. 2.15) was her successor, the redoubtable

warrior Thutmose III. This Pharaoh died about eight years before Moses returned from Midian, which is what is stated in Exod. 2.23. There is no other Pharaoh in Egyptian history of the period which can fit the recorded incidents in the life of Moses; no others reigned or lived long enough.

The "new king that knew not Joseph" of Exod. 1.8 was most likely Aahmes I, founder of the 18th dynasty and the great-grandfather of Princess Hatshepsut who took Moses out of the water. He reigned some thirty years before Moses' birth and from his reign the slavery of Israel most likely began. Aahmes had fought and expelled the Asiatic invaders, the Hyksos, who had occupied and dominated Egypt for over two centuries; the Hyksos were Semitic Bedouin, racially akin to the Israelites, and would have treated them with tolerance. Exod. 1.20 indicates the new Pharaoh's fear that Israel might become a menace to the native Egyptians and must therefore be repressed.

The Bible leaves a gap between the death of Joseph and the emergence of this "new king that knew not Joseph". In the meantime the children of Israel had multiplied so abundantly that Pharaoh became apprehensive that they might become more powerful than his own subjects. During the four hundred years of the sojourn in Egypt the fifty-one grandsons of Jacob, some born in Canaan and some in Egypt, grew into a nation of nearly three million men, women and children. This is deducted from the census figures and other data given in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Numbers. In the normal process of population growth, it is possible that the nation numbered three quarters of a million when the "new king" introduced his measures to limit further growth and considerably more when Moses was born thirty years or so later. The language of Exodus is definite; "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew" (Exod. 1.12). Two and a half centuries elapsed between the death of Joseph seventy years after Jacob came into Egypt (Gen. 50.26) and the birth of Moses (Exod. 2.2). The Israelite community could hardly have exceeded a thousand in number when Joseph died. Soon after his death the friendly Pharaohs of the 12th dynasty who had befriended Joseph and his fellows had given place to the invading Hyksos and nothing whatever is known of Israel's fortunes during this period. When the veil is lifted nearly three hundred years of the four hundred of the Sojourn had passed and the period of the oppression had begun. When that period ended Moses led three million descendants of Jacob towards the Promised Land.

All this implies that Jacob and his sons came into Egypt in 1853 BC during the reign of Senusert III of the 12th dynasty so far as can be determined. Egyptian dates at these remote times become increasingly approximate. It does appear certain, however, that the four hundred year sojourn of Israel in Egypt is well supported by external historical evidence allied with Bible allusions as occupying the period near enough to 1853-1453 BC.

* * *

A word as to the alternative dates propounded on other bases may be appropriate here. Before the Jericho discoveries, archaeologists and historians in general—most of whom have pursued their labours without much consideration of Bible evidences—usually propounded the view that the Exodus took place in the reign of Merneptah of the 19th dynasty, and that his father Rameses II was the Pharaoh of the Oppression, about the year 1350 BC. The principal argument was the statement in Exod. 1.11 that Israel built the cities of Raamses and Pithom and it was usually thought that these were built by Rameses II. In addition stress was laid on Isa. 23.12 which says that Israel in Egypt "lived in the fields of Zoan" which was another name for the Hyksos capital Tanis in Lower Egypt. Tanis was destroyed when the Hyksos were expelled, lay desolate throughout the 18th Dynasty and was rebuilt by Rameses II. The definite statement of I Kings 6.1 was ignored and the fact that Egyptian records of much later times told of Hebrew slaves still in Egypt was taken as evidence that the Exodus had not yet taken place. Later investigators have found that much of these arguments are invalid; Rameses as a place name existed long before there were Pharaohs of that name. According to Gen. 47.11 Joseph installed his father and his brethren in the land of Rameses several centuries before the Oppression. The "field of Zoan" of Isa. 23 was what is now called Lower Egypt, a territory which even to-day is the best agricultural land in the country, as is said in Gen. 47.11, and this was Israel's habitat for the entire four hundred years of their sojourn. It is also an unfounded assumption that there were never any Hebrews in Egypt after the Exodus; there were frequent Egyptian invasions during the course of later history and the taking of Hebrew prisoners to be slaves in Egypt was a frequent occurrence. Because this wide-spread belief that the Exodus took place in the reign of Merneptah a century later has appeared for generations in all the text-books and histories it is still a widely held misconception; but the verdict of modern archaeological research allied with the Bible evidence demonstrates its inaccuracy.

A completely different approach characterised the work of many early Bible chronologists of the early 19th Century and earlier, such as Usher, Clinton and Bowen. Archaeology had not appeared in their day and their method was to add together all the time periods of the Bible in the endeavour to establish the date of the creation of man. The period between the Exodus and David was determined by adding the judgeships and periods of servitude as though they were consecutive, thus giving a span of some 560 years which is nearly a century too long and placing the Exodus at an impossible time in Egyptian history. (They did not realise this since Egyptian history was only sketchily known in their day.) What they did not know was that the judgeships and oppressions were not consecutive; many of them overlapped so that a judge might be ruling in one part of the country while an oppression was in progress in another. (Strangely enough, exactly the same thing happened when records of ancient Sumer and Babylon and Egypt came to light. The recorded reigns of the kings were all strung together and extremely ancient dates for these nations arrived at in consequence. To-day it is known that many of these kings reigned contemporaneously and the time scale of the ancient nations has been drastically deflated and brought much more in line with Bible chronology.) These chronologies giving a date for the Exodus a century too early are therefore now quite out-of-date.

A variant on this hypothesis was introduced in the middle 19th century by Benjamin Wilson, translator of the Greek-English "*Emphatic Diaglott*", who suggested that confusion between the Hebrew letter-numerals *daleth*—4, and *heh*—5, had led to 480th in I Kings 6.1 being corrupted from an original 580th, so bringing that text into line with the arguments for the then received ultra-early date. Unfortunately for Wilson, his Hebrew was not up to his Greek; he did not know that numbers in the O.T. are invariably expressed in words (as in the English versions) so that his suggested corruption would not have been possible. There is therefore to-day, even without

the Jericho evidences, no foundation for any scheme of dating which ignores the accuracy of I Kings 6.1.

A much more modern school of thought as to the fate of Jericho is that propounded by the eminent archaeologist Dame Kathleen Kenyon, who included Jericho in her Palestinian researches in 1952-58. Dame Kenyon held to the view, now being increasingly discredited, that the early historical books of the O.T. are 9th Cent. B.C. compilations of old traditions and folklore, and not to be taken as serious narratives of actual historical events. She did not believe that there was ever a historical Exodus but rather that the story came from several migrations of Israel at different times and in fact one section of Israel never went into Egypt at all. Relying upon the now notoriously unreliable Carbon 14 test for the age of ancient organic substances, and the (currently) fashionable science of dating ancient sites by the apparent age of pottery found there, she draws a picture of a Jericho existing from about 9000 years before Christ and with no clearcut catastrophic end such as is depicted in the Book of Joshua. If the O.T. is to be ignored this may be as good a theory as any, but with the progressive closer correlation of sacred and secular history due to the labours of other serious and qualified archaeologists the destruction of Jericho by Joshua cannot be denied. Although the high reputation of Kathleen Kenyon has exalted her findings to a leading position in purely academic circles it is difficult to dispute that Garstang was correct in his conclusions and the date of Jericho's fall was accurately placed by him against the background of Egyptian history.

These considerations bring the historical time spans from Creation to the Exodus, the earlier periods having been dealt with in a series of five articles in the BSM for 1976. The next period, that of the Judges who ruled between Joshua and David, is one of the most problematical of the Old Testament and the findings of archaeology have been of little help. Consideration of this period will follow.

Note on Mark's Gospel

The Gospel of Mark was the first of the four Gospels to be committed to writing. Recent scholarship points to a date about the year A.D. 65 for its composition—or about 35 years after the crucifixion of Jesus. If, as is generally thought, John Mark was a lad of about 14 at the time of Jesus' ministry he must have been nearly fifty years of age when he wrote his Gospel—and Peter, who is thought to have inspired much of Mark's writing, an old man, perhaps seventy years old. The structure of the language used in this Gospel shows it was written by one who thought and wrote in Aramaic—the common

language of the peasantry of Palestine—and this fact accords with what we know of Mark. It is evident too that Matthew and Luke, who both wrote later, had Mark's gospel before them when they prepared their own. There is something appealing in the thought of this fourteen-year-old boy, probably always on the outskirts of the band of disciples surrounding our Lord, listening to all that went on and in his boyish fashion endeavouring to take it all in, becoming the one who in after years should first give to the Church of Christ a written record of the earthly life of One Who "spoke as never man spake".

THE SUFFERING SERVANT PSALM

A reader has contributed this rendering of Isa. 53 for consideration. By comparing a wide selection of translations, especially with the Septuagint, this version has been produced, worthy of quiet meditation. The italics at the beginning and the end mark direct utterances of the Lord: Yahweh. Attention is drawn to repeated allusions to the Servant's being offered by the Lord, as in a priestly role (vss. 6, 10, 12).

* * *

See My Servant's coming wisdom and consequent prosperity, his coming exaltation and honour and supremacy. Just as many shall be astonished by the extremity of his disfigurement — to less than human form — so shall He (astonish and) cleanse many nations. Kings shall be dumbfounded at him, seeing and hearing things they never heard tell of.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the Arm of YAHWEH been revealed? When He sprouted as a 'runner' before him, (unregarded) like a shoot springing from dry soil: when we saw him, He had no beauty to attract us, no charm to make us choose him. He was despised and shunned by men, a man of sorrows and pains, familiar with grief and sickness; (He hid his face from us) we turned our faces from him, He was not appreciated. He certainly carried our sickness, (grief and distress) and bore our pains (and sorrows). Yet we (ignorantly) considered him smitten by God, punished by disease

and misery but he was pierced for transgressions of ours, in agony for our iniquities, punished for our good; by the weals of his scourging we were made well. On him YAHWEH laid the punishment of us all—all of whom have strayed like sheep, each has turned to his own path. The price was stated and He responded (He was bullied yet He humbled himself) and kept his mouth shut: as a sheep led to slaughter, as a lamb dumb before its shearers, so He opened not his mouth. In his humiliation He suffered injustice — who can describe the wickedness of his generation?— stricken for the transgression of my people, He was cut off from the land of the living.

And I will give the wicked for his burial and the rich for his death, because He did no violence nor was deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of YAHWEH to bruise him, He has made him sick. When Thou makest his soul a guilt offering, He shall see his offspring, He shall prolong his days and the pleasure of YAHWEH shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see (the result of) the travail of his soul and be satisfied with the knowledge. My righteous Servant shall make many righteous, bearing their guilt. Therefore He shall inherit many, divide the spoils of the mighty, because his soul was delivered to death, He was reckoned among the lawless, bore the sins of many and was handed over because of their iniquities.

One fuel of the future

The Weizmann Institute in Israel is producing methanol, a fuel oil in the same general class as petrol and paraffin, from air, water and sunlight—all very common in the world and easily available.

Methanol consists of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, in a certain chemical combination. Hydrogen and oxygen are present in water, and carbon and oxygen in the atmosphere. What is necessary is to re-arrange the atoms in these two agents to form the correct combination, and lo! there is the methanol.

To effect this transformation energy is required, and the energy is found in light. Sunlight, acting upon the air and the water, through the medium of an intervening agent called a catalyst,

—something which promotes chemical change in other substances without itself being affected—transforms the air and the water into methanol.

No mining coal from the bowels of the earth—no extracting oil and gas from the bed of the sea—no nuclear reactors and radio-activity; just the sun, quietly going on doing its work, day by day, and without any moving machinery.

The process is in the research stage but it will certainly be perfected, and that too, in good time for the coming Millennial Age when the forces of Nature will be harnessed to meet the needs of man to the exclusion of all the earth-polluting and soul-destroying methods of obtaining heat and power which man has had to employ during this initial period of his probation.

"ARE YE ABLE?"

A Momentous
Question

Some little while prior to the hour of his death, Jesus left the scenes of his usual activities in Galilee, and took his disciples along into the region of Cæsarea Philippi — a town in the Northern district of Palestine, near the foot of Mount Hermon. In the quietness of this countryside retreat, Jesus, for the first time, began to tell his followers of his approaching death (Matt. 16. 21. Mark 9. 31). During this period of retirement Jesus passed through his wonderful transfiguration experience in the Holy Mount, during which the chosen 'three' disciples saw his glory and heard the other two participants in that glory scene talk with Jesus of the "*decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem*" (Luke 9. 31). Descending from the mountain to the other waiting disciples, Jesus charged the favoured witnesses to tell no man about what they had seen "*till the Son of Man be risen again from the dead*" (Matt. 17. 9).

From that time on, as Jesus returned to Galilee, and then left for the last time those cities wherein his mightiest works had been done to go up to Jerusalem, reference to his approaching death and resurrection fell much more frequently from his lips (Mark 9. 30-32). In spite, however of these repeated assertions, though at times they questioned among themselves what it might portend, the disciples failed entirely to comprehend what He meant. These frequent references by Jesus, however, show us that the purpose for which He had come into the world was beginning to lie heavily upon his own heart and mind. The hour of his life's mission was fast approaching, but, for all the sorrow it might entail, it was in no fearful mood He set out to meet it (Luke 9. 51). A very graphic pen-picture is given by Mark (10. 32) of the bearing and reaction, both of Jesus and his followers, as they set out on the last stage of that fateful journey, to the mighty events that were to befall during the next few eventful days. "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem, and *Jesus went before them . . .* and as they followed they were afraid". Fear made them hesitant, so that they lagged behind their Master—But He, for whom these moments were so fraught with destiny, "set his face to go up" without hesitation to that ungrateful City which realised not that its own fateful hour also was fast approaching.

The shadow of the Cross lay athwart the life of the Man of Sorrows, from that moment of glory on Hermon's slopes, till He hung twixt

heaven and earth outside the gate and gave, meantime, solemn depth to all his words and eager expectation to his consecrated thoughts. Evidently the disciples could feel the force of this deeper solemnity and eager expectation, for Mark says "they were amazed" as Jesus led them in the way.

While in this exalted mood, there came one—a rich young ruler—to ask Jesus by what means he could attain to eternal life. "Cross-bearing" and self-renunciation had been Jesus' constant theme during all this southward journey from Hermon to Judea. Hence, when this young man, so apparently in earnest, asked so direct a question, Jesus gave him no less direct an answer. "Sell all"—and "surrender all", said Jesus, who was now on the threshold of giving his "all" in death, that others might live.

The young man turned sorrowfully away, unable to esteem "treasure in heaven" as riches preferable to his great wealth. Inwardly sighing as the young man went his way, Jesus said "*How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God*"—in other words, How difficult it is for any man to make the best of both worlds!

Hearing this remark, Peter says, in effect, "Lord, how does this statement affect our position? We have not hesitated to leave all, and follow thee—What shall we have therefore, when the Kingdom, which we preach, is established?" To Peter and his brethren, Jesus then makes reply "No man who has left all—father, mother, wife, children, houses and lands, for my sake, shall lose by his sacrifice—he shall get a hundred-fold in return, and such an one shall most certainly inherit eternal life! Moreover ye which have followed me, in that day of regeneration, when I, as the Son of Man, sit on the Throne of my Glory, shall also each sit upon his throne judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, they, who like the young ruler, have been "first" in this present order, if, entering at all, shall be "last" in the honours of my kingdom, and you that have been "last" (and least) shall then be "first".

This word of assurance must have been encouraging and comforting to his little band of followers. Here was something they could readily grasp and understand. It was not enigmatic and baffling, like the references to his death and resurrection had been. And presumably they talked this matter over, both among themselves and also more privately. Most likely it was the

topic of an earnest conversation beneath Zebedee's roof, and as James and John told the story of Jesus and the ruler, a fond and doting mother resolved to ask for her sons a place and position they would scarcely have dared to ask for themselves.

Threading her way, one day, through the little group of disciples, accompanied by her two sons, and with some show of respect and deference, she desired the privilege of speaking with Jesus perhaps more privately. "What is your request" asks Jesus. "*Grant that these my two sons, may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom.*" (Matt. 20. 21).

Taking the question as the agreed utterance of sons as well as mother, Jesus looks them straight in the face, and through that to the heart, and says, "Ye know not what ye ask! You do not know or realise what is implied or involved in this request! You may have followed me about in Galilee, and in Judea; and you may have left your boats and employment for my sake, but following me means more than all this! As I have of recent days been telling you of my death, and that I have come not merely to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, but to die—to suffer at the hands of cruel men; I ask you now, are you prepared to follow me in all this? Are you able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of? Are you able to be baptised with the baptism that I have already been baptised with? Will you follow me through death and humiliation — and rejection, and be cut off from your people and kindred?"

"We will follow you even there—we are able!" they replied, thus expressing a deep fidelity to him, and his mission in life. "Ye shall drink indeed of my Cup—ye shall be baptised with my baptism, but even then, I cannot grant your request to sit one on either side of me—that is not my gift. It is my Father's prerogative to give those positions to those for whom they have been prepared by him" replied Jesus.

"Will you follow me, not knowing what place or position you will get? Will you drink of my Cup, and leave all else to the Father? Can you step out, not minding what your reward will be, only that as you share my Cup of suffering you will also share my Cup of Joy?"

No more penetrating or illuminating words, prior to the moment of this conversation, had anywhere fallen from the lips of Jesus. Up in the vicinity of Cæsarea Philippi, some short time before, after Peter had made his memorable, God-

given confession 'Thou art the Christ' Jesus had gone on to say "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me" implying that every faithful follower should be accorded the privilege of 'cross-bearing', but never before had He linked his followers with himself in quite the same close, intimate way. "Are YE able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of?" Can ye drink, as I am about to drink, of a Cup which my Father shall pour?"

There is no mistaking the implication here. Jesus was reaching the crucial hour, and the accomplishment of the specific purpose for which He had come into this world. At a later time as the weight of tragedy and sorrow pressed more heavily on his sensitive heart, we hear him say, in the very shadows of Gethsemane. . . . "*... the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?*" There is no mistaking what He meant in these decisive words (John 18. 11). Not Peter's sword, nor resistance, nor flight was the way out for him in this hour of darkness. He had come into the world for this hour. He had lived his spotless life, He had faithfully taught the Truth of God and raised the hostility of demons and men—and this was their hour and the power of darkness. But not from them did Jesus accept the issues of that dark hour.

"*The Cup which my Father has given me*"—that was Jesus' view. There were no secondary causes in his life, either in his ingress or egress from this world. And yet again, when the fuller extent of the shame and humiliation that awaited him was opening up before him, in the hour of his sanguinary sweat, we hear the same truth, and the same whole-hearted submission to the overruling hand of a Fatherly providence. "*O Father, if it be possible, let this Cup . . . pass . . . from me, nevertheless . . . not as I will*". Here the bitter cup was at his lips—and He was drinking it to its dregs. This was "*the cup that I shall drink*". Jesus had lived in the shadow of this hour more particularly from his transfiguration onward, and under its solemnising power he had come by stages to Jerusalem and Gethsemane.

Knowing then, in his own mind, the ordeal which awaited him, when his hour should be fully come, we must not fail to note what his question to James and John implies. He had a Cup to drink, which was to be given him by his Father;—and with the deepening sense of all this experience weighing heavier upon him, He asks, "*Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink?*".

All down the ages Satan has striven to rob the man of God of his Sword. The inspiration of the Scriptures is unlimited and eternal. The Word

is the oracle of the Most High. Therefore, it will do all it says, and to believe less is to doubt the veracity of the Almighty. F. J. Perryman.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE

Part 3

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.

* * *

There are quite a few instances where the translators seem to have caught a slant on the meaning of the text which was missed by the A.V., and have enriched the sense in consequence. Quite often this is due to a better grasp of the Greek idioms. For example, in John 13. 1, A.V., the familiar words "*having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*" has always been taken to mean that his love continued until the moment that He died upon the Cross. The N.E.B. has it "*He had always loved his own who were in the world and now he was to show the full extent of his love*". It is usually considered that "*telos*" refers to the completion or limit of an act or condition and not to time; in this instance there is a peculiar fitness in thinking of *telos* as referring to the full limit of the Saviour's love ("*greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*") rather than the mere idea of duration. His love, anyway, has endured beyond the gates of death and will endure everlastingly. The Cross was a demonstration of the full limit of his love and the Johannine narrative is made more appealing by this rendering.

In Acts 3. 21 the N.E.B. has the Lord "*received into heaven until the time of universal restoration comes*" instead of "*times of restitution of all things*" as in the A.V. Much the same expression but a little more suited to the modern ear, provided that it is remembered the original word denotes really the restoration of the *kosmos*, the "new heavens and new earth" of Peter's epistle, the restoration of all that was lost in Adam, but not necessarily that all men are saved willy nilly, ignoring the necessity of conscious and intelligent repentance and individual reconciliation to God on the basis of Jesus' death. The word means restoration to the former or primitive state; so far as man is concerned it can only denote recovery of the position lost in Adam, but just as eternal life in the case of Adam depended upon obedience and allegiance to God, so must it in the case of men in the "times of restitution". Salvation can only be on the basis laid down by

the Apostles; "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

"*The created universe waits with eager expectation for God's sons to be revealed*" (Rom. 8. 19 N.E.B.). This is more intelligible than the A.V. "*The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*". It shows so much more clearly one of the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament, viz., that the Church of Christ, composed of all true believers of this Age, is to be revealed in glory at this Age's end, in association with Christ, for the blessing and salvation of the "remnant of men", of all of humanity who can be reached with the saving power of the Gospel. It might be rather an exaggeration to read modern knowledge of the extent of the universe into the expression here; Paul's word was *ktiseus* which only means the creation generally and in Paul's mind as in those of his readers could hardly have meant more than the human creation which men knew at that time. To speak of "eager expectation" in this setting is logical enough when one recalls Isaiah's words (9. 25) "*It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him and he will save us . . .*" Men do not know they are waiting for that wonderful manifestation of God's love and wisdom which is to come when the Second Advent of the Son of God is revealed to them, but when that day does dawn they will say "this is what we wanted all the time—but we knew it not".

A shaft of light on an obscure rendering is offered in 1 Tim. 5. 24 where the A.V. "*Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after*" is improved to "*While there are people whose offences are so obvious that they run before them into court, there are others whose offences have not yet overtaken them*". That is a piece of plain English which almost anyone could be expected to understand.

In a different sphere and touching upon basic doctrine the translation of 1 Tim. 6. 15-16 is sublime in its dignity. Speaking of the time of the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, Paul says "*That appearance God will bring to pass in his own good time—God who in eternal felicity holds sway. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; he alone possesses immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light. No man has ever seen or ever can see him.*" That single

definite statement alone should be sufficient to discredit the (nowadays) somewhat outworn idea of inherent human immortality, which in past time was held to be an almost essential article of faith. These words to Timothy stand at the head of those few New Testament references to immortality, all of which show that the attainment of what the Pauline epistles mean by the word is by decree and conferment of God and not by reason of anything already inherent in human nature.

Heb. 11. 3 *"By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible"* in the N.E.B. is a great deal more lucid than the rather archaic language of the A.V. and is definitely in line with the pronouncements of modern scientific thought. It is agreed that the atoms which compose the visible universe came into existence from nothing at a time not infinitely remote but no scientific observation can show by what means. Heb. 11. 3 gives the answer to that enigma. The parallel Old Testament text to this trenchant word in Heb. 11. 3 is Isa. 48. 13 *"My hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth*

and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them they stand up together." In both those texts the responsibility of God for all material creation is clearly expressed.

A verse usually difficult of understanding is 1 Pet. 3. 18-19 but in the N.E.B. the meaning seems more definite and understandable. *"In the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life. And in the spirit he went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits"*. The nature of his preaching to the "spirits in prison" to use the A.V. expression, is nowhere else in the New Testament alluded to directly and is therefore necessarily a matter involved in some obscurity; but that his humanity, his flesh, assumed at his birth "for the suffering of death" and given at the Cross "for the life of the world" was left there, and that He rose from the grave in the glory that was his "before the world was", a glory of the Spirit altogether too vast to be comprehended in a body of flesh, is demanded by all Scriptural doctrine and is quite clearly expressed in this N.E.B. rendering.

To be continued.

UNITY IN EPHESIANS

*Important teaching from
an important book*

There are several references to unity in the epistle to the Ephesians, addressed to Christians covering relationship to Christ, to fellow Christians, to family and to the outside world. Never is it implied that the parties will be unified by becoming exact copies of each other; for that, as is well-known, is uniformity rather than unity. For example, in the sixth chapter advice is given to promote unity between masters and servants, yet it is not suggested by Paul that it can be achieved by abolishing the distinctions of master and servant. Some sociologists might reason that unity could be attained by dropping all thought of these differences and all becoming fellow-workers of equal standing, but not so the Bible. And in the heavenly realms unity prevails though the stars differ in glory. Before proceeding any further we do well to remember all the time that Paul is writing to Christians, though all may profit by his advice. SERVANTS (v. 5) are urged to do their part in securing unity by obeying their masters in the flesh in singleness of heart as though they were serving Christ, and at times this admonition will be irksome to Christians whose masters are sharp men of the world. By no means will it be easy at times for the Christian when faced with orders which border on sharp

practice to decide what to do. His duty to God is of course the greater obligation; but he will find that as his master gets to know his principles and practice he will honour him. And it is by doing these "good works" for the master (usually unknown to fellow Christians) that the reputation of the servant is enhanced. If on the other hand the Christian fails in his duty of obedience, the master will be the first to judge his religious pretensions. From Paul's words it is clear that the onus is on the servant faithfully to serve, not with a view to securing favours; and yet he has the satisfaction of knowing that obedience to one's earthly master is noted by his Master in heaven. Paul also advises those who happen to be MASTERS (v. 9), for unity is best attained by both parties contributing to that end. Whereas servants give loyal service, masters must not be overbearing and must remember that like the servant they have a Master in heaven who deals impartially with all. Often in this world the servant will have a master not in the faith and the master have unbelieving servants; yet nothing in Paul's injunctions allow either party to act differently when such is the case. Every now and then master and servant will come face to face with some problem which will test their loyalty to

Christ their Master, and all of us will hesitate to give advice apart from the Word when particular difficulties occur between them, having been tried ourselves. But in passing we must note that these problems in life give the Christian opportunity to let his light shine before men. Such problems almost invariably are met when one is without the help of other members. Hence faithful service and faithful management receives the heavenly Master's approval, and he who seeth in secret will reward openly. And apart from Christian duty all know that in business, in factory and in field, unity and wellbeing increase when employers and employees act in accordance with the Apostle's advice, even though neither may know that he had so written.

Also in Eph. 6 we find the basis of unity between PARENTS and CHILDREN. Here again we find that to achieve unity both parents and children contribute something. All have met those parents who quote "Children, obey your parents" yet do not appear to know the remainder of the sentence or avoid quoting it. Usually it is those parents who have not followed the advice of v. 4. The first step in family unity, as v. 2 says, is that the children honour the parents. All know that where there is little respect for parents, disobedience is rife. Parents will be spared many of these problems if they have "brought them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord". Difficulties increase when either or both the parents are not Christians; or the children, growing up, do not care fully to embrace the faith "and want to live their own lives"; and again all of us will be loth to advise what to do in particular cases. One can but say that Paul's words give the basis upon which we should act, and leave it at that. And all of us thinking over these words of Paul, and reviewing our own lives, will own that we could have done better than we have. Blessed are those parents who having brought up their children in the fear of the Lord, receive the reward of having their children reach manhood and wholeheartedly accepting the faith. Such does not often ensue; and some of the great men of the Bible had sons who did not follow in their footsteps.

In chapter five Paul teaches how unity can be secured between HUSBAND and WIFE, though his teaching is subsidiary to his topic of Christ and the Church. In fact the unity of the one is by him as the picture of the other; and this should always be in mind when we hear the modern world criticising Paul's use of the word "submit" in v. 22. It is usual nowadays to say that his words on family relationships are unsuited to present conditions, though the critics have not propounded a better basis of unity. Even if Paul were only dis-

cussing husband and wife, it would be unfair to him not to remember his words in verses 25 and 33. We must not dilate on his advice to wives without mentioning also his words to the husbands, and if we deal with the subject we shall have to admit that the closing words of the section are most reasonable.

Let us not dismiss these practical precepts from the Bible on the ground that our own master, or children, or wife or husband, furnishes a case not covered by this advice. We are all prone to think that our home or business life is exceptional. And some of us may pass over the sundry obligations of the last three chapters of Ephesians because of our liking for the great church truths of the first three. The advice is given in the latter part, because Paul having declared such glorious things realises that we must in all phases of life walk worthy of our calling. How incongruous it would be for those hoping to be unified with their God and their Saviour for eternity, to fail in their associations with their fellow men and their families! Possibly more to our taste is the unity of Christ and the Church as revealed by his sacrifice for them in giving himself, and that He might continue his work and sanctify them and cleanse them by the Word, and eventually present them to himself a glorious church free of all blemish and wrinkle. That achieved there will indeed be unity. Let it be seen straight away that it will result by what He has done for the church and that they have contributed very little. Throughout the N.T. will be found that He has done all, and we accept. And that truth is at the bottom of the word "submit" in Eph. 5. 22. In the relationships of master and servant, parents and children, etc., unity is formed by each doing something to that end; but in the relationship of Christ and his church the work is predominantly his, and we thankfully submit. Without question, without doubt of mind we accept all that He has done and so we become united to him. Our great sense of debt always remains in our minds and our thanks though inadequate keep us united to him. In the same sense, if husband and wife feel indebtedness to each other, they will be unified.

Still reviewing the Ephesian points of unity in the reverse order to that they were written, we come to the well-known seven parts of unity (making one whole) mentioned in the 4th chapter. In fact the first sixteen verses deal with the subject, concluding with that perfect figure of unity, that of head and body. The first three verses show how the unity which the Holy Spirit has prompted may be maintained; and the words lowliness, meekness and longsuffering show just what was in Paul's mind. These are the virtues which, if unity is existent in the church, will smooth over those

differences of opinion which can so easily disunite any community. All know that the antithesis of these principles make for discord in church and in world. Many of mankind's troubles arise from the lack of forbearance with others. No dictator would ever succeed had he lowliness of mind and meekness, and none will "get on" in the world today whose hearts are thus controlled. But in the church they are a contribution we can all make; and possibly because of that Paul mentioned them before the seven points of unity of verses 4-7. For one of the seven links of unity is the "one faith" and immediately we think of that our definition of the faith may not suit other members' opinions. It may not be well to single out one phase and stress it to the detriment of the other six and it is also inadvisable to say that any of the seven is the most important. All are important and all are links in a chain without a weak link. And that being so, we can dispense with the ancient slogan "*In essentials unity, in doubtful matters liberty and in all things charity*" as being unsuitable for Christian problems. The slogan has, of course, its good points, but the Bible is a better mentor for us all.

The last one the apostle mentions "One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in all" provides us with a great truth towards church unity. And if we can gather all that is meant in the prepositions (above, through and all) we shall see that the other phases of unity, including the one faith, are parts of his purpose. For this God and Father is the one who has formed the one body; from whom the one Spirit emanates; from whom the one hope of our calling has reached our ears; who is the Father of the Lord who died for us; who framed the one true faith, and who has baptised us by the one Spirit into the one body. As we read through Paul's words we begin to see that he is referring to a small and exclusive body within the larger body we loosely speak of as Christendom. And whereas the larger body is not unified (partly because

of its size and certainly because it admits of various faiths and hopes) it is possible for a little flock owning but one Master, animated by one Spirit, and governed by one God and Father to be united even in this world.

In the second chapter Paul writes of a time prior to the First Advent when the favoured people Israel had the promises and blessings of God. During that long period the outside world of Gentiles had no hope in God and were without knowledge of him and his purposes. So dissimilar was the status of the two that he refers to the one as being nigh to God and the other as far off. This enmity has been changed to unity by the cross of Christ reconciling both to God in one body—the body of Ephesians 4. By the death of Christ such of Israel as accept the atoning work of Christ will be nearer to God than ever they were under the law of Moses and the ministry of the prophets, and the Gentiles will be alongside them and as near to God as them because both will be "in" Christ. Thus unity is made not only by the two parties being united to each other, but both are united to God in twain, in one new man, so making peace. In this truth we see once more that the blessedness we now enjoy in Christ is due to that done for us and to which we have not contributed. But the unity thus made for us we maintain by following the instructions of the fourth chapter.

In the first chapter we have revealed that unity which is the purpose of the ages. There we see (v. 10) the Divine purpose is to unite all earthly peoples and worlds beyond our ken (and it is reasonable to think, worlds yet to be inhabited) under one Head. It is difficult to imagine the glorious outcome of this pre-determined plan, but one thing will satisfy the hearts of all Christians—that all things will be united under the Lord Jesus Christ, an honour we all feel is most justly due, for He is before all things and by him all things consist.

Hell gives way to Paradise

The valley of Hinnom just outside Jerusalem was in the time of the Israelite monarchy a place where human sacrifices were offered to the idol god Moloch, and children were burnt alive in his honour. In later times Israel detested the place and it became the city rubbish tip where fires were kept continually burning to consume the refuse, and, it is said, the bodies of criminals who because of their crimes were denied burial. In consequence the valley became a symbol of the eternal destruction of the wicked and its name (Greek *Ge-henna*, translated "Hell" in the N.T.) was the word used to describe their fate.

Today the valley of Hinnom no longer has those dark associations. It has been transformed

into a national park for the relaxation and pleasure of Israelis. It is resplendent with vineyards, olive and pomegranate trees, and a centre for cultural activities. Says the Book of Revelation "*Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire*"; they are to pass out of existence. There shall be no more death and no more hell, for the new Age soon to dawn will replace those dark monstrosities with the life and light of the Millennial world in which all men will live their lives amid the scenic beauties of the renovated earth and serve their God in sincerity and loyalty for ever. That park in Jerusalem is a representation in miniature of the condition of things which will one day be worldwide.



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

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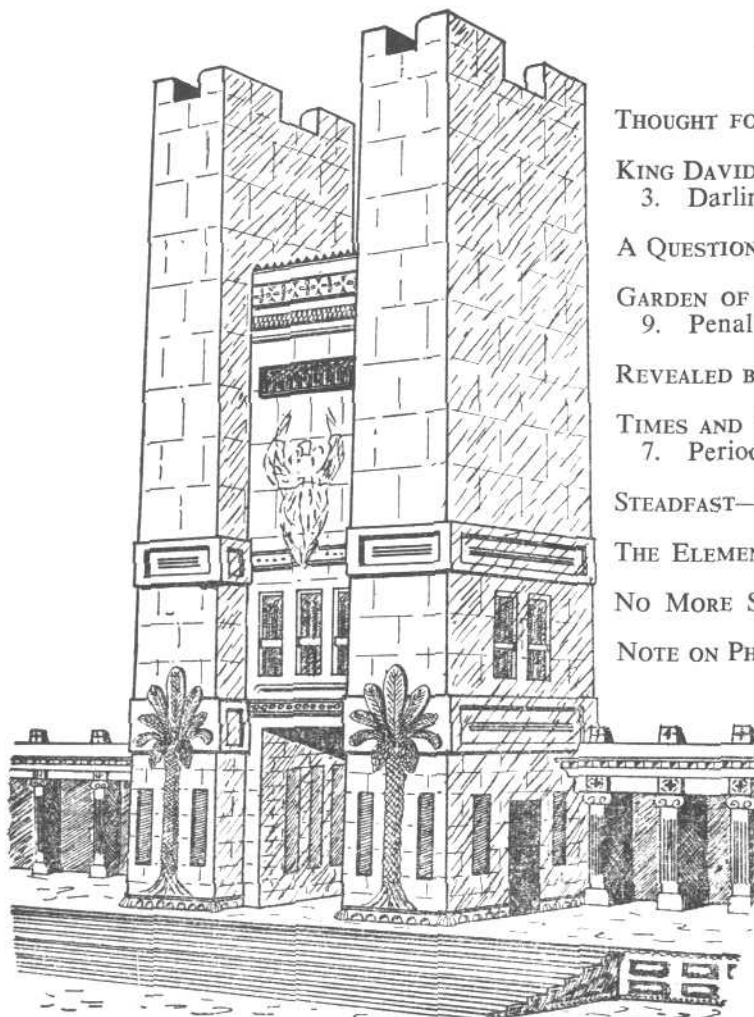
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Thought for the Month

"O how I love thy law; it is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119.27).

One of the outstanding characteristics of the old-time reverential Israelite was his consistent and continuous study of his sacred books, those which we call the Old Testament. "To the Law and to the Prophets"; this was the cry. The whole emphasis was upon the principles of God's plans for Israel and for all men; the history of what He had in the past; the promise of what He will do in the future. As the centuries passed much of the clear outline was overlaid with tradition, legend and Rabbinic mis-interpretation, but the fundamental principle was never lost. The faith of the loyal Israelite remained established upon a firm base of Scripture knowledge.

So should it be with the committed Christian. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" says Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. 2.15). Sincere conversion and dedication of life to the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of justification by faith is the essential basis of Christian life, but upon that must be built the edifice of a sound knowledge of the ways and plans of God, if we are to be servants knowing what our Master doeth. The wise and faithful "scribe instructed in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven" is the one who is "able to bring forth out of his treasury things new and old" (Matt. 13. 52). A simple profession of faith and an empty round of praise to God and devotional exercises may be beneficial to the mind and afford a sense of spiritual peace and well-being but it does little to advance the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world. Only the proclamation of the plans and calling of God can do that. And

to engage in that work requires knowledge, accurate knowledge of the Scriptures, their content, their message, and their power. The rise of the great Bible Societies in the mid-19th century together with the concurrent up-surge of overseas missionary endeavour on the one hand, and imminent Second Advent expectation on the other, inspired the development in the late 19th and early 20th of the very considerable Bible Student movement over (mainly) the English-speaking and European worlds which lifted the level of Christian understanding to a higher level than ever before. The impetus of that movement has died away; its necessity and its importance remains. It is more than ever imperative that our personal devotion to the Lord Christ leads us to emulate our Israelite predecessors and give ourselves to earnest and assiduous investigation of the content of the whole Scriptures, Old as well as New Testaments, that we may be able to give an answer to those who enquire of us, or whom we can possibly interest, as to the purpose and future of the faith that is in us.

NOTICES

Chesham Convention: At the Malt House, Elgiva Lane, Chesham, Bucks, Saturday-Sunday 12-13 June. Details and programmes from Mr. F. Binns, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3ED.

Yeovil Convention: Saturday-Monday 29-31 May in Yeovil. Details and programmes from Mrs. P. Stracy, 3 Hillgrove Avenue, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 2LB.

Yeovil May-day gathering: Sunday 2 May, at Westfield Schools, Yeovil. Details and programmes from Mrs. V. Richards, Caretakers Bungalow, Westfield School, Yeovil, Somerset.

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

3. Darling of the People

The slaying of the Philistine champion Goliath established David at once as the idol of the people, the hero of the army, and the favourite of Saul. David was at once made a permanent member of the king's entourage at his court at Gibeah, and apparently entrusted with various commissions which he executed with such grace and discretion that he quickly became popular among all his fellows at court and in the sight of the people. This also was the period during which he and Saul's son Jonathan formed the close friendship which meant so much to David in the events that were to follow. Jonathan was probably the youngest of Saul's four sons and about the same age as David. The close companionship of these two, apparently so much like each other, continued until Jonathan perished with his father at the battle of Gilboa, which ended Saul's reign as king. But that event was still ten years away; at this moment Saul looked upon David with his military valour as a most welcome addition to his own warlike sons and other valiant men upon whom he relied to keep the Philistines at bay. It is plain to see that Saul had rejected all thought of reliance upon the Lord and was counting on the strength of his warriors to keep his throne. Samuel, the old prophet, had now been retired into obscurity some four or five years and Saul no longer saw him nor sought his counsel. Neither was he at all interested in David's profession of faith in God; it was his military prowess he valued and that to such an extent that according to I Sam. 18.5 he now appointed David supreme commander over all his army. The account reads as if this was directly after the affair of Goliath but this is most unlikely; more probably David "worked his way up" over a period of maybe several years so that the events of this chapter might have their place when he was about twenty-three years of age.

This is when Saul began to wonder whether he had rather over-reached himself in the matter of David. It was one thing to acquire an exceptionally valiant and successful warrior to lead his troops to victory; it was quite another when that warrior was so outstandingly successful that the people began to compare him with Saul himself, to the latter's discredit. Returning from a victorious battle, Saul and David, with their forces, were met by the women of Israel coming out in dances and singing in triumph "*Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands*". That did not set at all well with Saul. "*They*

have ascribed unto David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed but thousands, and what can he have more than the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward" (I Sam. 18.6-9). He suddenly saw in David a possible rival for the kingship, and the jealousy in his nature came to the top.

Saul had originally been made king by command of the Lord, and at first he had accepted that position and ruled as the Lord's anointed. On that basis he had gone forth to war and on that basis he had gained victories. But he then repudiated the Lord's guidance and turned instead to his own military prowess and that of his soldiers. From then his troubles began, until with the incident of Goliath he and his men were completely without strength to resist, and he was only saved by the timely advent of the boy David, who went forth in full faith in God and slew the giant. But Saul had forgotten all that and was still fighting the Philistines in his own strength, and now that that strength was ebbing away and that of David taking its place he was morose and resentful. (Incidentally it should be noted that the death of Goliath did not permanently end the Philistine menace; Saul was fighting them more or less continuously to the day of his death. The account in I Sam. 18 is often read as though it was on the return from the slaying of Goliath that the women danced and sang. This is not so. Ch. 18 vs. 6, which has "Philistine" in the A.V., is in the plural in the Hebrew. Saul and David were returning from a later battle with "the Philistines" when they experienced the singing which aroused Saul's ire.)

Back at court after the victory, Saul's jealousy—and incipient insanity—overcame him again, and David, thinking to appease him, produced his harp and sang again some of the songs of God which had pleased the king in the past. Saul was in no mood to listen to the songs of God; irritated beyond endurance, he picked up a javelin and cast it at David. The latter adroitly avoided it, and the incident passed. But David knew then that Saul had become his enemy.

He realised that even more definitely a little later when Saul demoted him from being Commander-in-Chief of three hundred and thirty thousand men to the captaincy of just one thousand. Many a soldier treated like that has raised the standard of revolt and led his men against the king who had dared to treat him thus; not so David. He continued in the new

sphere to which he had been relegated, and, says the chronicler, "*all Israel and Judah loved David*" (ch. 18.16). If Saul hoped to provoke a retaliation which would enable him to treat David as a rebel he was disappointed. In honour and dishonour, David served his king faithfully, because he was the anointed of God.

So David passed his second test, to treat honour and glory and the plaudits of men on exactly the same terms as disgrace and contumely and insults, all as from the hand of the God he served and in whom he had absolute faith. Saul was afraid that David would try to displace him and set himself up as king; the favour with which the people and the army regarded him would have given such an effort every chance of success and David probably knew that very well. He gave no harbour to any such temptation; when the Lord was ready for him to be king He would arrange matters in his own way. In the meantime David was content to serve in the place to which he was appointed.

Frustrated, Saul then tried another tactic. He would publicly humiliate David in his deepest feelings in the eyes of all the people. The plot was to offer his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage to David, thus allying him with the royal house. No greater honour could be imagined. Then at the last moment Saul would give Merab to somebody else and sit back to observe the effect of his snub. David demurred at first, out of modesty, on the ground of his lowly birth, but, probably after this being brushed aside by Saul, assented. Merab herself would most likely be only too pleased at the prospect of marrying the handsome and valiant idol of Israel. So the match was arranged, and all Israel rejoiced. Then, just as the nuptials were about to be celebrated, the whole thing was off, and the unfortunate Merab married off in haste to a man of Issachar, Adriel, a man so obscure that he never figures again in the history of the times. If Saul expected a violent reaction, he was disappointed again, for David seems to have taken this insult with studied unconcern. It might well be that he was not particularly drawn to Merab and not sorry at the outcome. What did come out of it was the realisation within Saul's household that his younger daughter, Michal, was herself in love with David; it seems too from the account, although not plainly stated, that David on his part was not insensible to her charms, and this set Saul thinking again.

The plot this time was that David could have Michal if he first brought to the king concrete evidence that he had killed a hundred Philistines. Saul doubtless reasoned that this yielded a first-class chance of David getting himself killed in

the process. The more he thought about the scheme the more satisfactory he felt it to be. There was one snag; he felt somewhat diffident about broaching the matter to David himself, after the manner in which he had just treated him over Merab. So he cajoled his household servants into handling the matter for him. They were to enlist David's interest and obtain his consent. David seems to have been much more receptive this time. "*It pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law*" (I Sam. 18.26); he felt perhaps that this proposal, constituting a conditional contract which he considered he could easily fulfil on his side, would ensure the promised outcome without hitch. He set out with some of his men for the land of the Philistines.

It must have been with considerable chagrin that Saul received the announcement from his attendants that David was back, a chagrin that was not improved when his prospective son-in-law produced evidence that he had killed, not merely one hundred, but two hundred Philistines!

Saul probably looked round his circle of attendants but got no looks of sympathy. "They, too, are all on David's side" he must have thought bitterly. With the evidence before them of more of their hated enemies slain they were not likely to do other than applaud the champion. Saul realised he could not afford to lose face. Reluctantly, we may be sure, he gave way and kept his word. And so David was married to Michal.

One wonders if this was the point at which the guileless shepherd lad changed into a hardened and, later, embittered man. For something like four years he had waged war against the Philistines in the defence of Israel and in that time been responsible for the deaths of many men. But in all that he went out in the belief that he was waging the wars of the Lord and what he did was with the power of God behind him. This was different. This time he went deliberately into the enemy land with the avowed purpose of killing two hundred Philistines as the price to be paid to get the woman he wanted. In his Philistine campaigns the previous narrative says that the Lord was with him—in the story of his marriage the Lord has no place and there is no indication that the Lord had anything to do with it. Was this the first time in his colourful and varied career when he embarked upon a major action without first and foremost consulting his Lord?

Be this as it may, it is undeniable that at this point of time David's initial prosperity ended and he entered upon a time of adversity. Saul, of course, did not forgive him. He was resolved more than ever upon the death of David. I Sam. 19 tells how he next consulted with his son

Jonathan and his house servants to encompass his son-in-law's death. He must have been a singularly obtuse man in many ways, or else the intensity of his hatred clouded his judgment. He knew the regard in which his servants held David. He knew that Jonathan looked upon David as his closest friend. What help could he have expected from them in a murder plot? Naturally enough, Jonathan dissuaded his father, reminding him of the great service David had done him in slaying Goliath, and for the time being Saul was reconciled. Then the Philistines staged another invasion, and David again distinguished himself in repulsing them—it is quite a question whether this invasion was in retaliation for David's incursion and slaughter when he married Michal—and once again Saul, in jealousy at David's success, tried unsuccessfully to kill him himself with his javelin. Michal, knowing her father perhaps better than did David, saw that the position was

becoming serious. She urged him to flee for his life, and when Saul's men arrived at her house met them with the bland assurance that David had gone.

So ended David's association with the court of King Saul. After perhaps five years, commencing from the fight with Goliath, married to the king's daughter, held high in honour by all, army and people alike, feared by the Philistines and invincible whenever he led his men against them in combat, he found himself reduced in a moment to the status of a fugitive, without possessions, without friends, without home. He even had to leave his newly-married wife behind. He departed from Gibeah in Benjamin in the darkness of that night, not knowing where to go or what to do next.

What prospects now for David, would-be king of Israel?

To be continued

"GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS"

*"Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with thee,
All I have needed thy hand has provided
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me."*

One of the greatest of human needs is someone on whom to rely, someone on whom to trust in times of stress and weakness, someone from whom to ask advice when problems press and anxieties take away peace of mind. Human nature is fickle, weak, often unwise. Friends betray friends; are found wanting when most needed. Promises are broken, trust turned to treachery, the sheltering arms missing, the heart cold where once love was used to lean.

How lonely then the situation, how dismal the aspect, how hard the conflict if there is no sympathetic affection, no wise counsel, no firm hand-clasp to comfort, guide or encourage through those sorrows, mazes and struggles which come into every human life. If there is nowhere to turn, if there are none to help, what then?

People have called on God in extremity as upon some genie who had the right to succour them. When their trouble was past God was promptly forgotten, as previously He had been scarcely recognised. This is poor treatment of one who never fails in his goodness to send the rain on the just and the unjust, to make his sun to shine, to light the night with moon and stars. His many

coloured bow still spans the rain-washed heavens, the seas keep their appointed places; of his many promises to men, not one has failed.

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

The earth, fertilised by his beautiful hand, yields abundance to satisfy the needs of every living creature. Human greed, selfishness and pride, spoil the good that God does. Man fails but God keeps faith. He will always keep faith. If He must chastise it is that He may make man more worthy of his blessings. He calls, He begs, He invites all people to turn to him, to come with all their load of care and find out rest and peace. *"Turn unto me and live"*, is one of the great invitations of God. He promises, He provides and He gives. Should such faithfulness go unaccepted by the needy, unpraised by those who have found their every need abundantly supplied by his generosity? Nay, before the day begins, turn to him for all its needs.

His faithfulness provides a safe conduct all the way. Purse, provisions, protection, guide, counsel, rest and vigour, all come from the same bounteous source. How often might pilgrims perish without them, but because "his compassions fail not" they run without being weary, they are able to walk without growing faint.

Let us in all our activities and arrangements, our organising and building, ever remember that all these "mighty works", desirable and even necessary as they are today, are not intended to endure for all time, to be jealously guarded and handed down to posterity. They are for the

needs of the moment, for the promulgation of the Word of God and the edifying of the Body of Christ—UNTIL we all come, in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to the measure of the full stature of the Anointed One.

A QUESTION ON THE MILLENNIUM

A reader propounds a query upon the Scriptural declarations regarding the day of the reign of Christ over the earth, the Millennium, the kind of query that occurs to the mind when reading the Scriptures. Although of a nature which forbids a dogmatic answer, some of the considerations involved are presented here in an endeavour to throw some light upon an intriguing subject.

Q. The Millennium is the Day of Judgment, when Christ will rule righteously and judge men equitably. The dead are to be resurrected at the Day of Judgment. All this is good Christian theology. But will there be room on this earth for all the dead of past ages, and for the production of the food they will need?

A. When Martha told Jesus that she knew Lazarus would rise again in the judgment at the Last Day, He did not contradict her and it may be assumed that He assented. He also said that the day cometh when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth, some to a resurrection of life and some to a resurrection of judgment. The fact has to be accepted that it will indeed be so and it follows that God has made the necessary provision.

We do not know how many human beings have lived in past ages so that no one can speak with certainty on this problem. Efforts have been made by various historians, ethnologists and the like, to arrive at an estimate based on such facts as are known, but naturally opinions differ. One clear-cut fact which does emerge is that only during the last couple of centuries has the human population of the earth been at all considerable. It is at present approaching four thousand millions (four billions in the American language; the English and older billion is a million millions but last year the U.K. Government officially superseded this by the American nomenclature) but at the beginning of this century was only about two thousand millions. In the year 1800 it was half that and in 1700 only five hundred millions. Probably the most exhaustive study was made by Putnam some thirty years ago which showed that world population at the time of Christ was about 100 millions and two thousand years before Christ

some 10 millions. It would seem that with all known factors taken into consideration, and accepting the accuracy of the Bible insistence that all men are descended from one single original pair, and on the basis of Bible chronology, the total number who have lived may not have exceeded some twenty-five thousand millions, roughly seven times earth's present population. Remember that the deserts and waste places of the earth are to be rendered fertile and habitable in that blessed day, and that the land surface of the earth (excluding the higher mountainous regions where the rarefied air renders continuous living impracticable) is nearly fifty million square miles, it follows such a host would be spread over the earth at less than the density of population in most European countries.

How about food? It is freely prophesied by some (and denied by others) that the world is fast approaching a state where it will be physically unable to produce enough food for its present inhabitants, let alone any who are resurrected from the dead. Under the present wasteful economic system, maybe; but here again the promise of the future is that man will work happily with man under the benevolent supervision of the Lord Jesus Christ to cause the earth to yield its increase. The wilderness shall blossom as the rose, says the prophet, and streams break forth in the desert. Even now, there is increasing realisation of the enormous potential for food production in the harnessing of solar energy. It is a little known fact that there is enough energy from the sun falling upon one square metre of ground (a little over one square yard) to produce all the food necessary to keep one grown man alive, if it could be all utilised. Even with present methods, food sufficient for a thousand people could be produced from one square mile so that even without the promised Millennial fertility the resurrected hosts could be fed from less than half of the land available.

These figures must not be taken too definitively. The problems involved are too complex for that. But they do demonstrate the reasonableness of the Biblical standpoint; the rash assertion that the earth could not contain the resurrected human race should not be taken seriously.

The date palm thrives in the burning sand of the desert, but only because under the sand there is a hidden spring.

To the natural trees the soil, air and rays of the sun are essential. To the trees of the Lord the soil is the everlasting Truth of God.

GARDEN OF EDEN

9. Penalty of Sin

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

Without excuse, without covering, and at this moment without hope, the unhappy pair stood before the Divine Presence to hear their fate. They knew, now, that they must pay the penalty of their sin. The one who had deceived them and seduced them from their loyalty had himself been sentenced and had disappeared from the scene. They saw him no more. They stood before the One whom they had known in times past only as a Benefactor; now they saw in his face the lineaments of a Judge. The trial had been held; there was no defence; it remained only to await the passing of sentence.

Strangely enough, what has often been called the sentence on the woman savours more of hope than of despair. Against a background of pain and sorrow it promises new life. The human race was not to be suffered to die out; the death sentence was not to be executed immediately. There were to be children born; that promise, when as yet Eve had no child, must of itself have been wonderfully comforting. The situation was dark, but it was not altogether hopeless. Even though they themselves must go into death—and there is no way of discerning to what extent, if any, the idea of a resurrection from the dead had entered their minds—there would be some born of their own bodies, made in their own image and likeness, to carry on the story and perchance see rectified the evil that had been wrought.

So the strange words were spoken *"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"* (vs. 16). The usual meaning attributed to these words is that the onset of sin and evil would result in increased pain and sorrow in child-bearing, which can be accepted as reasonable, and an increase in the frequency of conception of children, but the reason for this latter in such a context is not so easy to follow. In addition this verse is taken as authority for the conclusion that because in the story the woman was the one to yield first to the Tempter, woman is forever to be subservient to man. There is however a certain amount of doubt as to the word here rendered "conception". The Septuagint has the Greek *"stenagmos"*, meaning groanings or sighings, instead of "conception", and this, with other considerations, has led some scholars to consider that the more ancient Hebrew Mss of the centuries before Christ may have had a different word here, one meaning

sorrow or sighing and not conception. This is strengthened by the fact that the Book of Jubilees (c. 150-200 B.C.) which is known to have been based upon older Hebrew Mss, quotes the verse as *"I shall greatly increase thy sorrow and pains"*. A comparison between the relevant words when written in the ancient Hebrew script does show how easily one badly written character could lead to this mistake in the meaning of the word. In addition, the word "desire" in this verse is correctly rendered "to turn toward". The entire verse would thus be better translated *"I will greatly multiply thy sorrows and thy griefs. In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children, but you will turn to your husband and he will be your lord"*. There is perhaps a little more consistency in this rendering; there is no doubt that a man is the natural protector of his wife and in her trouble Eve would naturally turn to her husband for help and comfort. He would be her "lord" in the same sense as Sarah is said to have called Abraham "lord" (I Pet. 3.6). It would not be surprising if Eve, realising the consequence of her act, did turn more whole heartedly to her husband in the life they had now jointly to face.

Whatever the correct interpretation of the verse, there is here a word of hope for the sorrowing woman. The original commission given to Adam and Eve was to multiply and fill the earth; here Eve is given the assurance that the commission was not withdrawn; she with her husband were still to multiply and fill the earth, but with a difference. In that process of multiplying she would bear her sons with sorrow instead of joy. Later on she was to know the bitterness of that destiny. One son murdered, another a murderer, exiled and outcast from his family. For the rest of a long life she was to witness the slow spreading of evil through the multiplying human family and hug to her heart the anguish of knowing that it was by her own act all this had come about. Perhaps in that sad life which was Eve's after the tragedy of Cain and Abel, true repentance did come to her and she rested her trust in the Lord. There is evidence that she did, in after days, have faith in God. At the birth of Seth, apparently the third to be born to them, his mother gave him a name (*Sheth* in the Hebrew, not *Seth* as in the A.V.) which means one raised up or appointed to a place *"for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew"*. It is fairly obvious that Cain and Abel were grown men at the time of Cain's

crime, so that Eve would have had quite a few years in which the lesson of the Fall and its consequences could sink in. The fact that she is thus found, at Seth's birth, in a reverential attitude towards God, and moreover still trusting in the promise of the "seed", casts a bright light over the sombre story. With the birth of Cain she had believed the Lord was fulfilling his promise to undo the work of the serpent; that confidence was shattered by the tragic event which followed, but now at the birth of a third son hope revived and Eve is found believing that God would be faithful, and that is a great thing to know.

Now it was Adam's turn. This time the voice of the Divine Presence did not speak of life, as it did to Eve; it spoke of death. This indeed was the passing of sentence, a sentence which was to involve Eve because she owed her life and form to the man and, although physically separate, was still a part of the man. *"Unto the man he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* (ch. 3, vs. 17-19).

It was a fearful sentence. It must have struck despair into both their hearts. There had been nothing said to Eve about expulsion from the Garden; nothing about toil and weariness and pain in the uncultivated world outside. Even in apprehension of that death penalty which they knew to be the consequences of their sin, they probably expected its execution to be within the confines of the Garden. They may well have reconciled themselves to the idea of death, but they could have had no conception whatever of what life was to involve before death came. Now they heard the dread words. They were to be banished for ever from the Garden, dragging out weary lives darkened by the necessity of constant labour in a land not yet really ready for human habitation, seeking desperately to maintain life, if not for their own sakes, at least for the sakes of their unborn children through whom alone the promise could be fulfilled, ere death should overtake them, and put an end to all further effort.

Was there something in the infinite wisdom of God which saw that only in some such way could fallen man begin to demonstrate the sincerity of his remorse, by his efforts to leave behind him beings in his own image through whom at

length God could work to achieve his purpose? It almost seems so. When at last the sword fell, and the two parents of the human race passed into death, they left behind them children, descendants to, perhaps, the seventh or eighth generation, who had a love for God. True, there were evil men and evil things; but there were also good men and good things. In every generation there were to be found godly men and women who took care to preserve the story of the olden time when God made man upon the earth, and the coming of sin, and death, and the promise that one day sin and death would be overcome and be no more. We are able to read these things in the first four chapters of Genesis today only because Adam and Eve, in sad and humble yet confident faith, instructed their children in that knowledge of God which they themselves possessed, and because some of those children profited by that instruction.

So Adam, with bowed head, listened to the details of his doom. *"Cursed is the ground for thy sake"* (on thy account) *"Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee"*. It has sometimes been thought that God at this time imposed a special curse upon the ground the result of which was the appearance for the first time of thorns and thistles. That cannot be quite right. Thorns and thistles existed long before man and their fossil remains have been found along with those of other plants. There were apparently no thorns and thistles in Eden but there were probably plenty outside. Is it possible that the curse consisted very largely, not in any sudden and miraculous change of the condition of the ground outside Eden, but in the impossibility of one pair doing anything practical toward making so vast a territory of wild uncultivated country sufficiently productive to afford them a reasonably comfortable living. If in fact, as suggested earlier in this treatise, the Garden of Eden extended throughout the extensive valley which is now the Persian Gulf, there would have been room there for many generations of men to find their sustenance, without need to venture into the outside world. When at last increasing numbers rendered migration imperative, the population would have been sufficiently numerous to render the systematic and progressive subjugation of the uncultivated world a practical proposition, involving no hardship to any one individual. But that would be on the assumption that sin had not entered, that all men were perfect and virile and ever-living, as was Adam at his creation. As the matter turned out, Adam and his wife found themselves faced with the problem of gaining a livelihood in an unfriendly and mostly hostile world, without knowledge, without materials, without tools,

without anything with which to set about their task. Small wonder the ground brought forth thorns and thistles; the real wonder is that they did not starve to death in the first few months.

Many centuries later Lamech the father of Noah spoke of *"the ground which the Lord hath cursed"* (Gen. 5. 29). The human race apparently were still finding it a matter of toil and labour to wrest a living out of the ground. And the curse still persists. Forests disappear, lakes and rivers dry up, deserts grow and swallow up productive ground, and man seems unable to do much to stop it. The fear of world famine is abroad in the earth, even though all the wonders of modern discovery are at men's beck and call. And the cause of it all is sin—human sin, selfishness and greed, which prevents men co-operating together and working together as they should for the preservation and the right development of this wonderful planet on which we live. *"Cursed is the ground on thy account"*; surely when God uttered those words He was looking into the future and saw what havoc would be created by fallen man in the fair earth of his creating. One has to remember that when God created the earth He saw that all He had made was "very good". It is man who has despoiled God's handiwork, through the centuries, and that surely is an important factor in the curse which rests upon the ground.

Now comes a more personal word. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the dust, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* Here it is, a clear definition of the nature of death. *"In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"*. Adam, formed of the dust of the ground, vivified by the breath of life from God, became a living, conscious being, a living soul, a personality having his own distinct individual existence and yet utterly dependent upon God for continued life. When, because of sin and in accord with his own decree, God withdrew that vivifying life, when He gathered to himself his Spirit and breath (Job 34. 14) then the physical frame fell apart and returned to its dust, and the man was no more. How could he know conscious life again unless there be a resurrection from the dead, a re-creation of physical frame, a gathering together of the dust of the ground and once again the bestowal by God of the breath of life? Is that why Isaiah, seeing in vision the day of God's rising up to fulfil his promise of deliverance, sang *"Thy dead shall live . . . awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust . . . and the earth shall cast out the dead"* (Isa. 26. 19). If God could once, as He did, create a man in his own image and likeness, it must be a very easy thing

for God to re-create a man in the image and likeness, mental as well as physical, which that man possessed before death claimed him and his body was absorbed again into the dust from which it was made. Logically such a man would take up the thread of conscious existence from the point where he dropped it in death, as a man does upon awaking out of sleep. Be all this as it may, there is no doubt that the Christian faith is built solidly upon two fundamental theses, one, that man is a fallen being, under sentence of death because of sin, and must surely die physically; and two, that the promised future life guaranteed by Christ comes by means of a resurrection from the dead, a reversal of the death state by re-creation and re-vivifying to a new life.

But all of this was hidden from Adam. He saw before him the dreary prospect of a life of toil and hardship, terminated only by death. Such a hope or confidence, if ever he did possess such, must have come later. In the sweat of his face must he eat bread until he returned to the dust from which he was taken.

It is at this point we have a strange little interlude. *"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them"* (vs. 21). For what purpose were these "coats" and what was their nature? Some commentators, looking for a theological symbol in every action of the Eden story, have suggested that by this means God sought to teach Adam that a covering for sin involving the shedding of blood was the only means whereby his guilt could be purged, it being assumed that the Lord God could only obtain the material for the coats by slaying suitable beasts. Thus, it is said, the death of Christ upon the cross was foreshown. It is questionable whether Adam was in a suitable condition of mind to appreciate such a lesson at that moment, even though the fitness of the symbol be admitted. It might well be, though, that there is something in this provision of covering for the exiles which has a closer connection with their immediate problems. The word for "coats" in this verse is not the usual Hebrew word for garments, *"beged,"* which occurs nearly two hundred times, but a much more unusual word, *"kothenoeth"*. This word *kothenoeth* is the name of an inner garment made of woven material and worn next to the skin. And here is an amazing thing. The *kothenoeth* was a garment denoting ceremonial cleanliness, and when used in connection with Divine things, a cleanliness in God's sight. This fact can be easily verified by noting all the uses of *kothenoeth* in the Old Testament.

The first example relates to the linen "coats" of the Aaronic priesthood, denoting their cere-

monial purity in the sight of God. In the case of the High Priest this was covered over by the ornate outer robe. References to the "*kothenoth*" in this connection are in Exod. 28.4, 39, 40; 29.5, 8; 39.27; 40.14; Lev. 8.7, 13; 10.5; 16.4; Ezra 2.69; Neh. 7.70, 72.

Next come the "coat of many colours" which Jacob made for his son Joseph (Gen. 37.3, 23, 32-33) and the "garment of divers colours" worn by Tamar the daughter of King David in token of her virginity and royal station (2 Sam. 13. 18-19). These were both "*kothenoth*". Likewise the virgin girl in the "Song of Solomon", awakened from sleep by her beloved's knocking at the house door, says "I have put off my coat; (*kothenoth*) how shall I put it on?" (Song 5.3).

Finally, the robe which betokened the high position and Divine calling of Eliakim the official appointed of God to administer Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah (Isa. 22.21). Parallel to this is one other example; Job in his discourses refers to his wearing a *kothenoth* (Job. 30.18). As an Arab ruler of high rank he was probably accustomed to wear such a garment just like Eliakim.

If this then is the garment with which the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve a totally new avenue of thought is opened up. The *kothenoth* was never made of animal skins or hides; it was always of woven linen or flax,—and it was usually beautifully decorated, as was Joseph's coat and Tamar's robe. And this is made evident by a closer study of the actual words in Genesis. The A.V., together with most translations, renders "coats of skins", but in actual fact in the Hebrew, while "coats" is plural, "skin" is in the singular. The expression really means "coats-of-the-skin" i.e. coats worn next to the skin, the distinguishing feature of the *kothenoth*. Dr. Moffatt, unusually, seems to be the only translator who has noticed this; he renders "And God the Eternal made skin tunics for the man and his wife, and clothed them".

Why then did God provide these two with woven garments preparatory to expelling them from the Garden. Adam was not, as was Aaron later, holy in the sight of God and dedicated to him in priestly service. Eve was no king's daughter like Tamar, serene and confident in her royal station; no would-be bride like the virgin in the Song of Solomon, waiting and looking for her beloved. These two had deliberately and voluntarily rebelled against God and repudiated him, and had tried to hide from him when He came to find them. Why then, after all that, did He give them the ceremonial garment of honour and privilege?

Can it be, after all that has been said about the gravity of Adamic sin and the stern justice

of offended Deity, the heinousness of eating forbidden fruit and the imperative necessity of immediate condemnation; can it be, despite all this, that in reality the Almighty Father knew perfectly well that this tragic lapse on man's part was not irremediable, that man was not intrinsically evil, that after sin had worked itself out righteousness would come into its own? Was it perhaps that God did not intend to let Adam go into exile completely without hope, that although He must of necessity allow the fruit of sin to be reaped by those who had sown sin, they should not go into the wilderness without some indication that the love of God was going with them? They were to be banished from Eden, separated from the presence of God, but they were to take with them an indication that God still cared, that He would not forget them, and that one day, in some wonderful fashion they could not at present be expected to visualise or comprehend, they would come back to him again and the old relationship be restored. So God gently took away from them the pitiful coverings of fig leaves with which they had thought to hide themselves from his sight, and gave them instead woven garments of glory and beauty, fabricated by the hand of God just so surely as the Law at Sinai was written on the tablets of stone by the finger of God, and so sent them forth.

The question naturally arises, how would Adam understand the significance of the garments. In later days the use of the *kothenoth* was well understood and taken as a matter of course. Tamar wore her robe because she was a king's daughter and it was the privilege of king's daughters. Aaron donned his ceremonial garment because it was so laid down in the ritual and he knew that thus arrayed he was ceremonially clean in the Divine sight. But nothing of this had developed at the time of the Fall. What was there in the bestowal of these woven "coats" to give ground for hope to Adam and Eve?

Perhaps we can find the answer by going back a little. "Ye shall be as gods"—celestial ones—"knowing good and evil" was the alluring temptation which led them into this trouble. But instead of coming thus into closer relationship with the celestials and with the place of God's Throne they were farther away and about to be completely cut off. Instead of becoming more like the glorious beings from another world with whom they had talked they had become more conscious of their own nakedness and weakness. They had received many gifts from God in past time, and because of their own folly and sin had lost them all. Now they found that of themselves they had nothing, nothing wherewith to cover themselves or feed themselves. And at that point

God brought them a gift—the first gift and the only gift they had from him since their rebellion against him.

That in itself must have been a great thing. God was not so angry with them that He would turn his back upon them completely. He was sending them away but He gave them a gift to take with them. And the nature of the gift could well have given Adam and Eve the first dim hope that after all they might one day become like the celestials, knowing good and evil, but this time in God's way. For these garments, unlike their former ones of fig-leaves, had come from God; they were garments as it were of the other world, and with those they were differentiated at once from all other living creatures on the earth. They had a connection with heaven.

The idea of a body covering of any kind was probably quite a new one to Adam and Eve. They had not felt the need of anything of that nature. But they may have been accustomed to some such idea with respect to their celestial visitants. It is probable that the Father talked with Adam before his sin in the person of the Son, appearing in visible form on earth. He may have sent angelic messengers as was certainly the case in later Old Testament days, and without doubt Satan appeared to Eve in visible form. It has already been shown that those appearances probably gave rise to the later beliefs among men of the "seraphim" and Isaiah describes the

seraphim as he saw them in vision. Each one had six wings, he said, using two with which to fly and four with which to cover the body. If this is an accurate picture of early man's recollection of the full story of Eden handed down from generation to generation, we might be justified in thinking of the angelic visitors to Adam and Eve appearing before them as though clothed in their wings. If then, Adam, receiving this garment of beauty at the hand of God, remembered that the angels he had seen were similarly arrayed in a covering of enshrouding wings, he might very well have taken this gift as an indication that God intended him, after all, one day to be, like the citizens of Heaven, restored to favour and fellowship with him.

So they turned their faces toward the unknown outer world, with sorrow and foreboding, but their despair lightening a little as they felt the soft pressure of the unaccustomed garments against their flesh, and reflected that these were God's parting gifts. He was not utterly wroth with them; He had not utterly cast them off; and these garments, the only possession they had to remind them of their lost Eden, would be an ever-present reminder to them that one day they would find the way back, and eventually, like the wing-clad celestials, be clothed with the garments of righteousness in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

(To be concluded)

"IN THAT DAY"

"So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful, and mankind attains to a better and more complete knowledge of the message of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background — never forgotten, always remaining an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin, but with no longer the power to hurt or destroy. The song of the angels, "Peace on earth—goodwill among men" will be an accomplished fact at last. Human beings will be fair of form and virile in body; magnificent examples of the creative power of

God; and with the consciousness of that eternity of supremely happy life which is before them will rise at every dawn to pursue with unflurried minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world's work will go on—men will till the earth and reap the fruits of their labour; they will foregather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal; they will travel and rejoice in the varied glories of Nature and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with each other and with God."

(From "The Golden Future.")

There are eighty-nine direct quotations in Hebrews from the Old Testament, proving that the writer's mind was well saturated with the sacred writings. In John's Gospel there are one hundred and twenty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament. The interrelationship of the Scriptures makes it peculiar.

God knows all about our circumstances. If we need to be transplanted to another place, into a different kind of soul, where our new nature can better thrive and expand, or where our reasonable temporal needs can be obtained, He can arrange for it.

"REVEALED BY FIRE"

"Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. 3. 13)

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," is a saying of the Wise Man (Prov. 23.7). We believe we are right in adapting and construing that to mean "As is the quality of a man's faith, so will his response be in the day of test and trial".

Such a conclusion seems to be warranted by the words of the Apostle in writing to the Corinthians. "Fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is". Some men's works will be destroyed; others' work will abide, when the day comes for the flames of fire to play around their handiwork. The Apostle's words show that a man's characteristics in the day of stress and alarm will reveal and make manifest the constituent elements of that heart and mind. Strain will show of what elements his faith and convictions have been built. In other words, character response showing in word and act will be according to the convictions which have made that character.

Reducing this observation still further we say that "action, under stress of trial, will be according to accepted belief". What a man has believed will determine what he does, in his seasons of test and difficulty. Among Christian people, who all profess to build their faith structure alike (upon the sacrificial work of Jesus) there are great differences in conduct when the day of adversity comes. Fiery trials cause some to shrivel and shrink—pain and anguish of soul displacing and destroying faith and steady trust. Others come through the fire purified and strengthened, not only with a stronger faith, but grateful to God for having permitted the trial.

To the sect-ridden, divided Corinthian Church the Apostle illustrates this principle by the differing work of builders, building upon a common foundation. In some of those ancient Eastern cities, excavators have found several structures built upon one prepared platform, laid at the expense of the owner of the land. One basic foundation was common to them all; the further structures erected thereon being built according to the means or taste of each individual builder. Sometimes the resulting erections presented a most grotesque appearance. Sumptuous edifices of granite and marble, ornamented with gold and silver, on the one hand; and the hovels and

shacks of the poor on the other, with walls of wood, and roofs of thatch, and interstices stuffed with hay and straw. Sometimes these extremes of structure and elegance would be found alternately placed, the shack hard by the palace, presenting at one glance all the extremes of poverty and affluence. Should the hand of some fanatic incendiary, Nero-like, start a conflagration, the shack of the poor peasant would speedily disappear in the flames, leaving nothing but ash to cumber and litter the common foundation. The sumptuous palace, though scorched and blackened by the fire, would still remain undemolished—a tribute to the superior material built into its walls. This tragic experience was a common occurrence in those old-time cosmopolitan cities, and constituted a vivid illustration which would be understood and appreciated by every member of the Corinthian Church.

Now what does the Apostle mean by the use of this illustration? First of all, notice that it is he, who as a wise architect, has laid the common foundation. *"According to the grace of God given unto me, as a wise master-builder I have laid the foundation"* (1 Cor. 3. 10). That common foundation, well and truly laid by the Apostle, was Jesus Christ. Foundation other than He could not be laid by any builder who builded under God's guidance. Let us pause to enquire what the Apostle means by that statement. In what sense did he lay Jesus Christ as the foundation? Did the Apostle claim to have given Jesus his unique place in the purposes of God? Did he cause Jesus Christ to be laid as a foundation for redemption and forgiveness of sins? Assuredly not! none but God could do that. Only by God's invitation and favour could Jesus become the basis for reconciliation. That was God's sole prerogative. In what sense then, had Paul laid Jesus Christ as a foundation? Obviously by being the first to preach to the Corinthians about Jesus, telling them of the Plan of Redemption already centering in him; telling them of the great privilege already offered them of becoming united with him! But on that one solid foundation, how many differing structures they were putting up! How many theories and philosophies were being added to that basic truth! Each sect and party had its theory and its acclaimed leader and exponent. We read of a Paul-ite party; a Cephas-ite party; an Apollos-ite party; a no-resurrection party; a libertine party; and so on—each with its theory and philosophy, or with its negations and

doubts and denials. "Who indeed is Paul"? he asks indignantly—"or Cephas? or Apollos?"—"Mere servants only"—he answers, "through whom God sent his Truth". What if Paul had planted, and Apollos watered; only God could give the increase! How moribund and earth-bound and carnal were these sects and factions therefore, to link themselves to some mere human servant, when the whole vineyard was God's—when the whole structure was God's!

Thus Paul brings home to these carnal Corinthian teachers the folly of their sectarian outlook. Unfortunately for them, the Paul-ite section, while claiming Paul for their leader, were not really following Paul at all—for Paul would have none of their sectarianism. "*Was Paul crucified for you*" he asks. "*Were ye baptised in the name of Paul?*" (I Cor. 1. 13). Why then did they link themselves to the name of Paul? "Oh" they would reply "Only to become a Paul-ite Christian—a follower of Christ through Paul". Thus they were building in the name of Paul a doctrinal structure upon the basic foundation, improperly adding the name of Paul to the honour that was Christ's.

Every section among them was using the common foundation of Jesus Christ, but running up a super-structure, in the name of this or that chosen leader. Thus to the primary "truth" basis—redemption by and acceptance in Christ—they were adding their theories and speculations and vain philosophies. But would these speculative, divided theories stand the test when the day of Christ should come; for indeed that day would test their worth? The saddest feature of all this deplorable state was that their characters—the moral fibre of their hearts—were being developed and moulded by the things they were teaching and believing. A sectarian church would produce divided interests—and divided interests would gender strife and contention, even if not bitterness and hatred. And thus in general experience, as they believed, so were they. Their super-added beliefs were the moulds in which they were being made. If they were building with gold, silver and costly marble, then, when the stress and strain of the evil day should come, their faith structure and their heart qualities would endure; but if their building material was wood, thatch, stubble, then the day of fire would burn up their theories, and strip them of their shelter, and leave them with nothing but their foundation to stand on. No spiritual growth, no New Creature development, no enduring product of grace and experience, to carry forward into the eternal years, but just the bare elementary story concerning a Saviour, and the salvation wrought by him,—this, and this only,

would be left when the fire of trial and the day of visitation had done its work.

Their attachment to and utilisation of the foundation had not brought them an eternal and abiding habitation with Christ. Their years had been wasted, their service mis-directed; and their whole life a failure. Unlike God's faithful ones, they would not emerge from the furnace floor without the smell of fire upon them, but, if delivered at all from their vain philosophies it would be by the fire burning the fetters and shackles of their minds, leaving to them nothing but their simple foundations, as at the beginning.

How great the responsibility, then, that rests upon those who seek to serve their brethren as co-labourers with God. Their mistaken philosophies and doctrinal blunders affect not only themselves and their own characters, but also the understanding and characters of their fellows, to whom they minister. On the other hand, if they build well and provide enduring material, they build for their friends and themselves imperishable structures, to stand the eternal years.

It is a solemn thought to realise that what we believe makes us what we are, and that we may even be building upon the basic facts of Christ's redemption truths and yet find ourselves and our buildings in danger in the day of visitation. Obviously it is not enough merely to hold the truths relative to the foundation only—there must be something built thereon by each believer who accepts that foundation. "Christ and Him crucified" is only the beginning of the Christian experience. Acceptance of those foundation truths only gives us access to the building site. These primary basic truths are given us by Paul in 1 Cor. 15. 1-4. The facts regarding Jesus' death, resurrection and return, constitute the foundation. But an unbuilt-on foundation is a mis-use of that foundation.

Every earnest Christian will be found building his structure of doctrine and character on the portion of the "site" allotted him. Every sincere believer will be seeking to add a deeper understanding of the Word to those foundation truths. It is these additions which will be put to the test in the day of Christ. The foundation truths will remain undamaged through all the day of fire,—but what of our own buildings? Will these additions to our faith stand the day of fire and test? How very serious this thought should make us in reading and teaching! How important it is to take heed what we hear and accept. For after being granted access to the "site"—after being justified by our belief in the redemptive work of Jesus—it is by what we believe that we are being made. If any other material is used in building our faith and character than the gold, silver and

precious stones of Divine promises and facts, then in the day of scrutiny and fire all these philosophies and theories will be consumed.

This situation abounds to-day. Thousands there are whose structures are perishing in the flames of modern difficulties. In some cases the unhoused tenant quits the foundation altogether, and wanders away into the wider world. In many other cases, the destruction of their structures leaves the tenant with nothing more than the simple truths of Redemption,—a bare foundation only—not enough for the day of trial. Happy indeed are those whose building, though put to the test, remains through it all a habitation and a resting-place for faith and trust and peace of heart. We are living in "the day", to-day, when every man's work is being revealed by fiery test. This is "the day which will declare it"—the "day of the presence of him who was foretold to sit as a Refiner of gold and silver. The havoc wrought upon men's faith and character structure throughout the whole Christian world is proof of that refining and of that presence. Decreasing respect for all the old moral religious sanctions and the craze for pleasure are proofs that the fires of this time have been burning up some of the old erections of wood, hay and stubble,

driving the hitherto tenants as wanderers and fugitives abroad on the earth.

Take heed, beloved, how ye hear, and how ye build, for the opportunity of eternal habitation or loss is involved in it all. Pray that ye be not as a brand plucked from the burning; as one "saved as by fire"—stripped of all the labours of by-gone years, with nothing save the foundation left. Contrariwise, do not dismantle and demolish your own structure, throwing away this or that truth, till you have little more than the foundation truths left; for it is on the basis of what has been added thereto, that a well-built faith, and trust, and peace, will furnish a safe abiding-place throughout the day of fire,—and for the eternal years. If the truths which have been learned since coming on to the foundation have provided us a bulwark of safety—a place where our hearts are at rest in peace and quietness—then, hold on to those precious truths to the very end, for in very deed and truth, they are as gold and silver and marble and granite, withstanding the fire; and as our faith structure is an edifice of abiding material, so will our character structure be, and so will our salvation be, when all things are "revealed by fire".

Pitcairn and The Bible

Pitcairn is a tiny island in the Pacific unknown to Europeans until the mutiny of the "Bounty". In 1787 the crew of a British naval ship, the "Bounty", sailing the Pacific, mutinied in protest at their harsh treatment at the hands of their commander and after setting their officers adrift, sailed to Tahiti, where they settled. After three years nine of them with six native men and a number of native women sailed to this unknown island of Pitcairn to escape capture and settled there. There followed clashes and fighting between the men and ten years after the settlement only one man, John Adams, remained alive with several women and nineteen of his half-caste children. No one else knew of their existence and they were completely cut off from the world.

John Adams was a Christian and a far-sighted man for his generation. There were no books and no writing materials; Adams was the only one who could read or write. He possessed one

book only, a Bible.

From that Bible alone, Adam taught the growing children to read and write, the elements of the Christian faith, the principles of ordered society, the reverence and service of God. A number of years afterwards the island was rediscovered by an American vessel and was found to be the home of an orderly and relatively prosperous self-sufficient community. By the early years of the present century the population had risen to some two hundred, all descended from John Adams, maintaining in the main a strong Christian faith (in later years chiefly of the Second Adventist persuasion). Adams himself died in 1829, but the seed he sowed was that of the Word of God, which "liveth and abideth for ever".

This one Book, without any supplementary aids, was sufficient to create a literate and civilised community from primitive, unformed, illiterate and ignorant material.

"Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient. Love never disappears."

1 Cor. 13: 4-8 (Moffat).

If you injure the roots of some trees they will perish, but not so the date palm. Their most vital organs are contained in the plumes at their summits. Cut off the leafy head and the tree will die. How true of us—"We are growing up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ," and if we become disconnected from the Head we will die.

TIMES AND SEASONS

7. The Period of the Judges (Part 1)

The Book of Judges records happenings in Israel during the period between the Entry into the Land under Joshua and the accession of King David. During this time the people were ruled by the "Judges". The English term is something of a misnomer; the Hebrew word really denotes a counsellor, a kind of tribal Elder. It is true that such justice as was done in those turbulent days was usually administered by the current "Judge" but in practice he was as much a military leader as a civil functionary. One very popular misconception is that the Judges ruled in strict succession over the entire country, rather like a dynasty of kings, but research shows that this was not the case. A particular judge's influence usually extended over one part of the land, sometimes in the north, sometimes south, sometimes east, rarely over the whole. Not infrequently more than one judge was functioning at the same time in different areas. These facts make it impossible to assess the length of the period of the Judges by merely adding together the years of their judgeships as was formerly done.

Another common mistake is to assume that the events recorded in the Book of Judges followed each other in the order in which they are written, that it is a strictly chronological history of the times. In fact it is a collection of quite separate stories of happenings in various parts of the country at quite different times and the Book itself offers very little guidance as to the precise order in which they occurred. Some reference framework from outside the Book has to be found against which these stories can be set in their proper positions.

The first element in such a framework is the statement in I Kings 6.1 to the effect that King Solomon founded the Temple at Jerusalem in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Exodus from Egypt. The practice of chronologists of recent centuries to add together the lengths of the periods, which produced a total of nearly six hundred years, led to doubts being cast upon the verity of this statement. This difficulty has been felt throughout the Age, and it has been pointed out that most of the early Christian writers make no mention of it and on this account it has even been suggested that it is a late interpolation. There is no evidence of this, but there is always the possibility.

Fortunately however, there is now no need to rely on the I Kings 6.1 text to establish the length

of this period. One of the older elements of uncertainty was the date of the Exodus, which a century ago was thought most likely to have been at the time of the 19th Egyptian dynasty, in the 13th century B.C., but during this present century the combined results of increasing knowledge of Egyptian history and the excavation of cities destroyed by Joshua have established that it was in fact during the 18th dynasty, and that Amen-hotep II was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, round about 1450 B.C. Since the time of Solomon's accession is also known with only a few years doubt as about 980 B.C. it follows that the 480 years of I Kings 6.1 is satisfactorily verified by independent history.

It remains therefore to test this position by fitting the narrative of the Book of Judges into this framework of 480 years. The only time feature that is given is the statement in Jud. 11. 26 that the conflict between Jephthah and the Ammonites was three hundred years after the entry into the land. But the possible arrangement and permutations of all the other events to fit whatever period is selected as the time of the Judges is almost endless and largely dependent upon personal opinion, in the absence of chronological indications. And in all the various solutions which have been put forth for generations past, one important factor appears to have been overlooked or at least unheeded. This is that the entire history of the period appears to be one of incessant conflict with neighbouring peoples, invading and pillaging the land. One is led to enquire why the nations and tribes of the Middle East should have been in such a constant state of turmoil. The answer is to be found in what might be called the political background of Canaan during these four centuries. A knowledge of that might go far to explain those constant incursions of alien peoples into Israel.

During Moses' early life the lands of Canaan and Syria were under the iron control of Egypt. The warlike Pharaohs of the 18th dynasty maintained Canaan as a buffer state against Asiatic aggression. With the death of Thutmose III, the Pharaoh who "sought Moses' life" and who died eight years or so before Moses returned from Midian, the rising empire of Mitanni on the Upper Euphrates—more or less modern Kurdistan—wrested the power from Egypt and began to control the area. When Joshua's forces crossed Jordan the Mitannians were dominant in the north. But thirty years later they were dispos-

sessed by the Hittites, a rising power emanating from what is now modern Turkey. There always had been Hittite settlements and colonists in Canaan but now they had full political control. This state of affairs continued for a century and then Egypt, perhaps having recovered somewhat from the disastrous consequences of the Exodus, invaded Canaan to do battle with the Hittites. The two armies fought each other to a standstill at the battle of Qadesh and the net result was a treaty of friendship between the contending parties which ensured a measure of peace in the major part of the country for about another century, to the year 1200 B.C. From then on, until the days of David two centuries later, there subsisted throughout the Middle East what has been called "the times of confusion", in which no great power was dominant anywhere and intermittent invasions, wars and transient conquests were common. The effect of this on the national life of Israel is well illustrated by the sad comment of the compiler of "Judges", several times repeated, "*in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes*".

It is only during this present century that detailed knowledge of this empire of Mitanni has been established, but now that it is known, one of the most obscure narratives in the Book of Judges can be explained, and an additional confirmation of the date of the Exodus obtained. The first foreign oppression, following Israel's first apostasy soon after the death of Joshua, was when the Lord "*sold them into the hand of Chushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, and the children of Israel served Chushan-rishathaim eight years*" (Jud. 3.8). No commentator or scholar has ever yet hazarded a guess at the identity of this king with the terrifying name, but the knowledge of the short supremacy of Mitanni over Canaan solves the enigma. "Mesopotamia" is the Greek form of the Hebrew Aram-naharaim, meaning "Aram of the two rivers". This was the ancient name of the territory between the rivers Euphrates and Tigris which at a later date became the empire of Assyria. This was the area occupied by the empire of Mitanni in Joshua's day. This king Chushan-rishathaim was one of the kings of Mitanni who extended his sway over Canaan and was then defeated and pushed back by Othniel, as related in Judges 3. Since Mitannian influence in Canaan endured for only a century, and came to an end thirty-five years or so after Israel entered the land, the date of the Exodus is confirmed within a very few years independent of Bible chronology. The Mitannian king overthrown by the Hittites was Mattiwaza; his predecessor Tushratta could quite

likely be the one referred to in Judges as Chushan-rishathaim, and since the sister of Tushratta was married to Pharaoh Amen-hotep III, who was reigning while Joshua was conquering Canaan, everything seems to fit in.

So Joshua died, probably twenty years or so after the entry, the people forgot God, violated the covenant, and were in consequence allowed to fall under the dominion of the Mitannians for eight years. Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, emerged as a military leader and engaged the enemy in combat. At precisely the same time, so far as ascertained history can show, the Hittites attacked the Mitannians from the north and defeated them. It looks very much as though they were caught between the Hittites in the north and Joshua in the south; at any rate, they were expelled from Canaan and "*the land had rest forty years*".

During this period several notable events occurred. First of all came the interlude of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was the son of Rahab of Jericho and Salmon prince of the tribe of Judah. He must therefore have been born within a few years of the Entry. Elimelech and Naomi, in the story of the Book of Ruth, emigrated at much the same time into Moab because there was famine in Israel. If there was famine in Israel it was because Israel had apostasied and broken the Covenant, otherwise under its terms freedom from famine was guaranteed. This therefore must have been the apostasy following the death of Joshua which led to the eight years' oppression of Chushan-rishathaim; during that time Naomi was in Moab. She came back to Canaan with Ruth because "*she had heard that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread*" (Ruth 1.6), which means that the people had returned to the Lord and were keeping the Covenant—obviously this was the time of "rest" under Othniel. So the story of Ruth and Boaz fits in about forty to fifty years after the Entry during the time of Othniel the first Judge.

Twenty years or so earlier, perhaps just after the death of Joshua, must be placed the story of Micah and his graven image, recorded in Jud. 17 & 18. A certain Ephraimite named Micah had set up an idol in his house and instituted a form of idolatrous worship. To him there came a young Levite from Bethlehem who was engaged as a kind of family priest. In the course of time there passed that way a party of men from the tribe of Dan, whose territory lay in the southwest near the sea. Because the Danites could not effectually dislodge the native inhabitants they were seeking another part of the country in which to dwell. They persuaded the Levite to come with them, complete with idol and all

accessories, to be their own High Priest in their new abode, which came to be in the extreme north of the country. Thus was instituted a centre of idolatry which remained in Israel right up to the time of the captivity. The point of the story is that this Levite was a grandson of Moses. Although in the A.V. of Judges 10.30 he is named as Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, this is because the Jews in later times substituted Manasseh for Moses with a special mark in the Hebrew to indicate that Moses was in the original—this to dissociate the revered name of their founder with the disgraceful conduct of his grandson. So the descendants of Moses were priests of idolatry in Dan until the Captivity seven hundred years later.

At a later time, but still probably before the death of Othniel, came the civil war in which the tribe of Benjamin was all but annihilated. Although no note of time is given in the account in Jud. 19-21 it is evident that it must have been soon after the beginning, since only six hundred men of Benjamin were left after the fighting and no women or children, yet by the time of Solomon the tribe was back to its normal strength. Because of a scandalous proceeding in the Benjamite town of Gibeah, the rest of the tribes made war against them having first asked counsel at the house of God — the Tabernacle where Phineas the grandson of Aaron was High Priest (Jud. 20. 18, 28). In the upshot the slaughter of Benjamin was so extensive that special measures had to be taken to avoid the tribe completely dying out from Israel. All this at a time when "the land had rest" and the nation was professedly obeying the laws of the Lord; the story is a biting commentary on the decline of Israel's high standards inculcated at Sinai little more than a century previously.

There now ensues that dreary repetition of national disasters prefaced each time by the monotonous refrain "*and the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord . . .*" in each case allowed them to become subject to their enemies until they repented and turned to him. Then He raised up a deliverer. Othniel was the first such deliverer and he saved them from the Mitanni king; but Othniel died probably about seventy years after the Entry, at say about 1340 B.C., and Phineas the High Priest, grandson of Aaron, must have died very soon after. Now there was no one left who had participated in the stirring events of the crossing of Jordan and the conquest of the land; the Israelites were intermarrying with the people of the land and serving their gods and all the high ideals of the generation that survived the Exodus were being forgotten. And at this stage the old

enemies, Moab, Ammon and Amalek, staged a concerted attack in the southern part of the country and Israel came under the heel of the Moabites for eighteen years.

Chapter 3 tells the story. Israel repented and cried unto the Lord. God raised them up a champion, Ehud of the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe they had so recently all but annihilated, and he raised a force of men and successfully routed the enemy, so successfully that ch. 3. 30 says the land had rest for eighty years. Although not hinted at in the Bible account, this may very well have been partly because at this period Egypt had embarked upon a determined attempt to overthrow the Hittite power in the north, an attempt in which Egypt was only partially successful, and although the theatre of operations did not involve the southern tribes, it may well be that the peoples to the east who had formerly caused trouble, the Moabites and Ammonites and so on, were keeping themselves quiet and out of the way.

But although there was relative peace in Judah, Benjamin and the tribes to the south, the situation was different in the north, where the inconclusive war between Seti I and Rameses II of Egypt and the kings of the Hittites continued to rage, despite treaties of peace and apparent agreement. The disturbed state of Syria had to be reflected in the fortunes of the northern tribes, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, and this is where the oppression and succeeding defeat of Jabin the King of Canaan is most likely to be placed. Jabin was almost certainly a Hittite vassal king reigning in Hazor; his territory lay in the front line of the Hittite defences. With the Egyptians attacking from the south and Israel in possession in the south he probably recognised little difference between the two peoples. In any case the possession and occupation of the northern tribes' territory gave him at least a useful buffer state between himself and the Egyptians, and thus for twenty years (Jud. 4.3) the hapless Israelites found themselves caught between two fires. This was apparently the worst of all the oppressions; a term is used not employed with any of the others. Jabin "*mightily oppressed the children of Israel*".

Eventually Israel again "*cried unto the Lord*" and there came to the front a man of Naphtali, who together with Deborah the prophetess who, it is said, occupied the position of Judge, at least of the northern tribes, sallied forth with ten thousand men to engage Jabin's general Sisera. Chaps. 4 & 5 tell the story, how Sisera's "nine hundred chariots of iron"—typically Hittite; only the Hittites had iron chariots—were utterly routed, all his forces scattered, and Sisera him-

self ignominiously slain by a woman. The triumphal "taunt song" of Deborah and Barak (Chap. 5) is one of the masterpieces of the Old Testament. What the Egyptians under Rameses II were at the same time failing to achieve. Barak had achieved for them. One is led to wonder if the boastful inscriptions of Rameses II recounting his successes in this campaign do not borrow something from the achievements of Barak, whose defeat of the Canaanite and Hittite forces under Jabin and Sisera must at least have been of considerable help. The fact remains that the treaty of B.C. 1273 which regularised the position left neither Hittite nor Egyptian in a position of dominance and in consequence Israel entered upon a short time of peace—according to ch. 4.31 a period of forty years,—which probably overlapped to some extent the eighty years "rest" of Ehud's deliverance from the Moabites in the south. Rameses II married the daughter of the

Hittite king Hattusilis II as sign of eternal friendship and went back to Egypt with his bride, there at once to start plotting against his new father-in-law, and Israel, perhaps for the first time since Othniel, experienced relative peace throughout the land.

So passed the first two centuries of the period of the Judges. The next two, to the end, were to be much more violent. Israel was to be torn by enemy action and inter-tribal strife almost continuously until at last, in desperation, the people beseeched Samuel to find them a king, one who could make them into a nation like the other nations. None of the Judges ever achieved that.

* * *

The second and final instalment, in the next issue, gives the rest of the story up to the accession of David the king.

Through Fear of Death

"... that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2. 14-15).

The question is asked, who are these thus said to be subject to bondage? Do they constitute some particular section of the redeemed who for some reason are thus singled out?

A phrase such as this should perhaps be looked at from a general point of view. Our Lord died for all, and in so doing He broke the power of the Devil over the human race. That much is fundamental, even although the Devil still operates apparently unrestrained amongst men. That is only because the work of redemption is still going on. The victory of our Lord was assured at the Cross, but it is going to require the completion of his work in the development of the world during the coming Millennial Age following his Second Advent, to complete the programme of reconciling man to God, whosoever wills to be reconciled, before the power of the Devil is no more. But the die was cast at the Cross; the death of our Lord guarantees that the Plan of God will be consummated in that day when all evil and evil-doers will have vanished for ever out of his creation, and "every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2. 10-11).

At this present time all men, except those "born again" in Christ and so reconciled to God,

are in bondage to sin and therefore to the Devil, who is admittedly the "god of this world" (2. Cor. 4.4). The Apostle Paul in Rom. 8.22 tells us that the whole creation is at present in the "bondage of corruption" from which it will eventually be delivered into the "glorious liberty of the children of God". "The earnest expectation of the creation", he says in vs. 19 of the same chapter "waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God". By that he means that the deliverance of the world of men from this bondage in which they are now held will be at that time when the Church, Christ's dedicated followers of this entire present Age from Pentecost onward, is revealed in association with the Lord at his Second Advent for the salvation of all who will listen and accept. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" he says in Rom. 6.9 "death hath no more dominion over him". In like manner death will no longer have dominion over mankind when the Lord has taken his power and his kingdom, put to an end the power of the Devil to seduce and ensnare, and opened the graves that all men experience that resurrection to life of which He speaks in John 5. 28-29.

The answer to the question, then, must surely be that those thus delivered from bondage are all mankind, ushered at last into that righteous and benevolent Millennial world in which the final issue, of conversion and eternal life, or of refusal to convert and consequent loss of eternal life, will be finally decided. But there will be no more bondage; the keynote will be: here is the fountain of life; whosoever will, let him come.

STEADFAST IN SERVICE ABOUNDING

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

These are virtually the closing words to the Corinthians. It is noticeable how frequently Paul refers to them as his brethren; and recalling that he often reproveth them, one may question why he consistently so addressed them.

The early verses of chapter 1 describe their advantages in Christ:—their riches; their security; their prospects in the day of Christ; and to crown all, the faithfulness of that God who called them. There we find that their blessings are the same as Paul's, and this is why they are brethren! But immediately following this introduction comes Paul's correction for their failings. (Verse 10.) It is clear from chapter 3 that Paul wants to speak to them of higher things, but they are not yet in a fitting heart condition, and there are practices in the ecclesia unworthy of their standing in Christ—practices, which, if continued, will prevent them being steadfast and unmoveable.

Another and particular reason why Paul addresses them as brethren is seen in chapter 9, verses 1 and 2. The Corinthian ecclesia was founded as the result of Paul's eighteen months' ministry there. He had just left Athens, and on arriving at Corinth he went—as usual—to the synagogue. A handful of Jews accepted his message, but the synagogue as a whole rejected him, thus incurring his rejection of *them*. Then the Lord spoke to him in a vision and caused him to prolong his stay in Corinth; for the Lord said *"I have much people in this city."* The story of his ministry there is recorded in Acts 18. Note those encouraging words from the Lord in verses 9 and 10! Are they not, in effect, the same as Paul exhorts these brethren in 1 Corinthians 15:58? Thus, the charge from the Lord which prolonged his stay in Corinth, he, in other words, passes on to them!

And there is compensation in all this for Paul. If, by his exhortation, these brethren become steadfast, Paul will know that his labour is not in vain in the Lord; and hearing that his work is prospering, he will himself be impelled to further steadfastness. This is another reason why they are brethren—the loyalty of one is an incentive to the other, for they are all members of one body.

It is in this epistle that Paul gives the figure

of the body, which teaches, among other things, that the Church exists on a mutual basis. Exploring the Corinthian field we might think it unprofitable ground to till and plant; but Paul, encouraged by the vision, puts into effect his own admonition of 1 Cor. 12:22-23 and gives more honour to those members which seem to be more feeble.

Now let us regard the text as an admonition to ourselves to-day. The exhortation may be divided into two parts which seem at variance with each other. The first part urges "immovability", whereas the second urges "activity". Again, the former concerns the work "within", yet the latter speaks of the work "without". Upon which part, if either, do the Scriptures lay most stress? Some seem to halve the text by stressing that portion which they themselves think to be the Divine Will. Some appear steadfast, but they do not serve! Others appear very active, but they are not concerned about their standing. Let us be true to the text by giving equal weight to each portion of the admonition. We can with propriety follow the Apostle himself as an example of steadfastness with activity.

Let us consider how steadfastness arises. Its obvious basis is faith. They are steadfast who are convinced that their standing in Christ is solely of grace. They know themselves to be sons of God, not by acquirement, but by adoption. They believe that they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world (an amazing truth!); and they believe that God has predestined the eventual state of these He foreknew; and that therefore in due time He called and justified them; and they believe that in the day of Christ, God will complete his purpose in them by glorifying them. Thus they see that all things are working together for their good; and resting in their sonship and prospects they become steadfast, unmoveable.

Referring to our text with these thoughts in mind, we see that the first half of the verse speaks of SONSHIP and the other tells of SERVICE. Sons and servants! Let us ask ourselves a few questions to find our true position. To the query—are we sons or servants, some cautiously will answer "both"; so let us ask further. *Do we say—"if I serve well I shall be made a son"?* No amount of service will secure us sonship, for it is a gift, not a reward. *Do we say—"if I serve well I shall prove I am a son"?* This is hardly correct. Faithful service will only prove that we

are good servants—no more. *Do we say*—"I know that I am a son, and therefore I serve"? This is a far better affirmation.

We can now read our text—"Be ye steadfast, unmoveable (because ye are sons), always abounding in the work of the Lord" (as servants).

The Holy Spirit has caused the words to be written in the right order—sonship first, followed by grateful service. They who are steadfast in their sonship make the best servants, because they serve through gratitude for grace received and not for reward for services rendered.

The two parts of our text are to be found coupled together elsewhere. For example—Phil. 1.27. Paul is trusting to hear, of the Philippian brethren, the same two facts—"that they stand" and "that they strive". Here again are these two points of Christian life—fixity, yet activity; the work *within* and the work *without*. And again we may ask ourselves which is the more important—to stand or to strive? All will agree it is imperative that we *stand fast*, but are we equally as ardent in *striving* for the faith of the Gospel? It is so easy nowadays to say that as God will surely accomplish all his purposes very shortly, there is no need to strive for the Gospel. If we think so we are partial and are not giving equal weight to each part of the admonition. It is providential that Paul was set for the defence of the Gospel and actually strove for the faith. If he had failed in this part of his ministry where would have been Philippi or Corinth? To Paul the work of the Lord is the *outside* declaration of the faith; yet while urging it he did not forget the *inside* position of steadfastness. He preached the word and did not make the plausible plea that it would be useless to preach in Corinth because of their Grecian practices. And later he was rewarded

by finding that his labour was not in vain in the Lord.

Also in Phil. 2. 15-16. "*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*" (our standing), "*among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life*" (our service). And then, if this is done, Paul will rejoice in the day of Christ, knowing that he did not run in vain and that his labour was not in vain in the Lord. And so we see in this and other texts that the two points of sonship and service, steadfastness and work, go hand in hand; and that Paul does not emphasise one phase at the expense of the other.

Let us think also of the import of Paul's second letter to Timothy, whom he wishes shall continue the spread of truth now that his departure is at hand. While exhorting Timothy to personal steadfastness he joins with that the exhortation to preach the word. Paul knows that by personal fortitude and steadfastness Timothy will be best equipped for evangelical work; and that by preaching the word he will impress upon his own mind Bible truths and so become more established and unmoveable.

Each half of these is valuable to the other, and it is one of the Christian's requirements to give equal adherence to each part—*sonship* and *service*. Some will contend that the work *within* is the more important; while others will affirm that *outside* work is God's will. We shall not underrate either if we recall that each has its sphere in Christian life and each assists the growth of the other; and that it happens by Divine overruling that outside declaration encourages inward steadfastness, and that true steadfastness in sonship impels service.

The first gush of enthusiasm in the Lord's service, much as we may and do appreciate it, may be but the hasty production of the shallow soil of a heart which immediately receives the truth with gladness but, having no root in itself, endures but for a time, and afterwards, when affliction and persecution arise, immediately is offended. (Mark 4. 16-17). Such characters cannot stand the fiery tests of this "evil day" whereof it is written—"The fire (of that day) shall try every man's work, of what sort it is". (1 Cor. 3. 13).

It behoves every one who aspires to the prize of our high calling to brace himself for the severer conflicts and trials of faith and patience that may suddenly and without a moment's warning be sprung upon him. In the battle of this day, as in all battles, the effort of the Enemy is to surprise and suddenly attack and overwhelm the Lord's people; and the only preparation, therefore, that can be made for such emergencies is constant vigilance and prayer and the putting on of the whole armour of God—the Truth and the spirit of Truth.

If we have the privilege of knowing the Truth it is not for us to hide it under a bushel, but to give it forth that others might be enriched by it; for we might never have known the Truth if it had not been handed on to us.

All things are possible to him who *believes*; they are less difficult to him who *hopes*; they are more easy to him who *loves*, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues.

THE ELEMENTS SHALL MELT

The vivid passage in 2 Peter 3 comparing the watery end of the world that existed before the Flood with the fiery climax to this Age which ushers in the Millennium has often led to the assertion that since it was literal water which ended that world it must be equally literal fire which ends this. The apparent logic of this argument has given rise to an insistence by some that the Second Advent of our Lord at the end of this Age is to be accompanied by the total destruction of this planet and everything on it in a holocaust of fire. The fact that nuclear warfare could very easily produce just that effect has given a kind of boost to this belief in modern times and forms the subject of many a sermon and tract in the endeavour to persuade the unregenerate to flee from the wrath to come. It is usually pointed out that Christians will escape all this, having been taken to Heaven before it happens, which is comforting to the Christians but not to anybody else.

Nevertheless, the passage in Peter stands, and what he really does say needs to be critically examined. It must be remembered that this is the same Peter who thirty years or so previously had spoken of the Age ending by the coming of Christ to inaugurate the Times of Restoration of all things, those times spoken of by all the holy prophets of the past, those times which are generally known as the Millennium, during which Christ will reign over the nations upon earth for the elimination of sin and their eternal blessing. From the practical point of view, if the earth is going to be reduced to a radio-active cinder, destitute of all life, it is going to be many thousands of years before the Lord can commence his Millennial reign. The glowing prophecies of Israel's restoration and deliverance from all enemies, their acceptance of their Divine King and commission to be ambassadors to the nations, all will have no meaning in a world destitute of life. For this reason if for no other, it is necessary to look at Peter's words more closely than is usually done.

This is what Peter says (using the A.V. rendering—other and modern translations differ in some details, but these can be brought into consideration presently) *"By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved*

unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men . . . but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up . . . the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3. 5-13).

The first thing to notice is that in vss. 5-6 when talking about the first world and its ending at the Flood, Peter is quoting history. In vss. 7-13 when talking about the end of the second world and the coming in of the third, he is quoting prophecy. These are two different things. The second thing to do is try to look at the matter through Peter's eyes while he was writing the words. He did not have the benefit of our modern knowledge of the earth and the universe; his theological knowledge was inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit but his scientific knowledge was necessarily limited to that of his own day—as indeed is ours at this present time. In our own century many older astronomical beliefs have been overturned. So Peter's background is that of the best scientists of his own day. It was believed then, as it had been for centuries, that the earth was a land mass surrounded by ocean, the whole forming a sphere floating in water completely enclosed by a solid transparent shell, the heavens, on the surface of which was the abode of the gods, or of God, according to pagan or Jewish theology respectively. In the centre of the earth, below Hades, the grave, there existed a region of fire which the Greeks called Tartarus. Here were imprisoned the sinners who had rebelled against God in former times—this became the source of the fiery Hell of early Christian theology. Peter, like others of his generation, must have accepted this as the general thought of his day and in fact in this same epistle, ch. 2.4 tells us that the rebellious angels of Noah's day are confined in Tartarus ("Hell" in the A.V.) to await judgment. His reference to the earth standing out of the water and in the water is therefore an allusion to this belief. In fact Psalms 24.2. and 136.6. both allude to the same idea.

But Peter does not say that the earth was destroyed. What he does say is that the order of things upon it, the *kosmos*, the world that then existed, was overflowed with water and perished.

What we would call the world of man was swept away by the Flood. All the works of man, all they had done and built up during the antediluvian era, all their attainments and achievements, their entire system and social order, founded as it was upon evil and lawlessness, was blotted out by the Flood. That world came to an end and after it was all over God made a fresh start with what was then a "new heavens and a new earth" and is now "the heavens and earth which now are" (vs. 7) doomed soon to a similar destruction and for the same reason. But the planet itself was not destroyed nor even unduly damaged. When Noah and his sons came out of the Ark after it was all over, they were able to pick up the threads of life and start planting and building. The earth itself remained intact; it was the world of man which passed away and was superseded by a better.

Now Peter turns his attention to prophecy. Just as truly as the old world order was brought to an end by the Flood in history, he says, so will the present world order be brought to an end by the fires of the Day of the Lord and so make way for the new world order of the Millennium. Peter does not say that the earth itself is going to be destroyed by fire; what he does say is that the heavens and the earth, which are now, the existing social order elsewhere called "this present evil world", have been kept in store, reserved for the fires of the Day of the Lord. The "new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" constitute the new social order of the next Age, but still on this literal planet earth. To claim that this destroying fire is literal involves an equivalent claim that the Devil and all not found written in the Book of Life are cast into literal fire (Rev. 20.10 & 15); likewise also the "goats" the incorrigibly wicked, of the parable of the Sheep and Goats (Matt. 25.41), which brings back the mediæval doctrine of Hell torment in all its ugliness.

This leads to the implication of vs. 10 & 12. The "elements shall melt with fervent heat" and "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up". The word "elements" (*stoicheia*) signifies the elements of knowledge, first beginnings, principles, rudiments. In the science of physics it meant to the Greeks the primary constituents of matter and they claimed that the whole of creation was built up from four primary elements—earth, air, fire and water. Of these everything consisted. Now if Peter intended this very literal meaning to his words, he would have been saying that not only the earth, but the sun and moon, planets and stars and heaven itself, the abode of God and the angels, would be dissolved together. In Peter's day it was believed

that heaven was a solid shell enclosing the earth with the heavenly bodies including the stars circling between the two. Peter obviously did not mean this; clearly his use of "heavens" and "earth" in this verse corresponds with that in vs. 7, 10 and 13, in which the heavens denote the higher celestial ruling powers and the earth the terrestrial order of things. In the case of "this present evil world" those higher powers, the heavens, are Satan and his hosts, the "god of this world" of 2 Cor. 4.4, and this affords a clue to Peter's use of the fiery metaphor.

Tartarus, the fiery region below the earth, was the place where all evil and evil-doers were finally to be destroyed. The fires would burn until there was nothing left to burn. So it is with the end of this world-age. The world of man enters into judgment with God, not for their irrevocable doom without opportunity to repent, but for the destruction of the evil of this world so that they do have an opportunity to repent. So Peter pictures the swallowing up of every element of evil in this present world in Tartarus and then the coming of a new heavens and earth—the celestial sovereignty of Christ and his Church and a terrestrial kingdom of righteousness in which the earth itself will become fertile and Edenic and mankind learn of the ways of God with no longer the Devil to deceive and ensnare.

An allusion to this ancient belief in Tartarus is found in Deut. 32.22. where the Lord says, in connection with his coming judgments upon Israel's apostasy "*a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell (the later Greek Tartarus) and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains*". The Lord did not mean that He was going to burn up the literal earth at that time, and neither did Peter later on.

The final clause in vs. 10 "the earth and the works therein shall be burned up" is the subject of a textual corruption which was unknown to the translators of the A.V. Earlier manuscripts not available to them show that the word they rendered "burned up" is one meaning to "lay bare, to discover or uncover, to reveal". Hence most modern translators have one of these words in their renderings. The meaning is clearly that the fires of this end of the Age will reveal the evils of this world and all the works of man, *open to the gaze*. The "hidden works of darkness" will be laid open for all men to see. The Devil will be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more (Rev. 20.3) and the wreckage of this "present evil world" exposed and cleared away ready for the rebuilding and renovating process of the "Times of Restitution" which are to follow.

Thus the inspired Apostle clothed his description of the coming end of this Age in the imagery of the Old Testament, picturing the fires of God's judgments bringing to an end the edifice of evil men have erected during the thousands of years gone past, and clearing the ground for the commencement of Messiah's reign, the Millennial administration of our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ "at his appearing and his Kingdom". The fires of 2 Peter 3 are metaphorical and not literal, and when they have done their work and are over, the earth will still be here with its multitudes waiting to welcome their King. *"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him, and He will save us"*.

NO MORE SEA

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21.1).

More than once has it been asked if this text implies that in the Millennial world of the future, when Christ reigns as king and evil is progressively eliminated from the hearts of men, the seas will disappear and the entire planet become dry land.

A little thought shows that such cannot possibly be John's meaning here. Without the literal sea all life, human, animal and vegetable, would vanish from the earth. No terrestrial life can exist without water. The rain comes down from the clouds, supplies man and beast and plants as it disappears into the ground, runs into streams and rivers which eventually fall into the sea, which is the great reservoir of water, is then evaporated by the heat of the sun and rises to form clouds which are carried by the wind and falls as rain again. This process must go on as long as the earth endures and there will always be sea, and no less in extent than it is at present.

The writer of Ecclesiastes knew this; *"All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from which the rivers came, thither they return again"* (Eccl. 1.7).

The mistake is in supposing that John in Rev. 21 is describing the actual Millennial earth. He is not; he is describing a vision which is a symbolic picture of the Millennium in which each detail has a meaning. He saw a new heaven and a new earth, the old heaven and earth having passed away, and a wonderful city descending out

of that new heaven, to settle on that new earth, made to look like a bride ready for her husband. Such a conception would be a bit difficult to translate into literal reality. What we have here is the fulfilment of God's promise through Isaiah (65.17-25) quoted and confirmed by the Apostle Peter (2 Pet. 3.13) to the effect that the old world order dominated by evil, "this present evil world" as defined by Peter, pictured by the old heavens and earth, is to be superseded by a new world order again as Peter says "a new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness". It is this new world order, this Millennium headed and governed by Christ, which is to have "no more sea". What is the meaning of that allusion?

Peter's expression "wherein dwelleth righteousness" affords the clue. That world is one in which evil is quickly banished and will be no more. The Devil will be "bound" and powerless (Rev. 20) and the evil forces of this present world order overthrown and destroyed (Rev. 19). There is no more any evil force or influence to deceive and injure mankind. Now the ancients from earliest times believed in a monster, the personification of evil, which dwelt in the depths of the sea, and to them the sea became the abode of evil. An allusion to this belief is found in Isa. 27.1. where in the time of judgment the Lord will "slay the dragon which is in the sea". This is what John is thinking of. In that new world which he was seeing in symbolic vision there was no place for the Prince of evil, no sea from which he could rise up to ravage the world and harry mankind. The power of evil will find no place in the new heavens and new earth of the future.

The Divine planter of trees has many wonderful things to tell us of the trees, their branches, leaves and fruit. We are told in Psalm 1.3 that the "righteous shall be like a tree" planted under favourable conditions. Its branches would be spreading over the running stream and drawing moisture from its cool depths by its penetrating roots, affording shelter for all who come beneath its boughs. Its fruit appears at the right season,

showing that nothing is forced or artificial. Its leaves spread out to receive the genial influences of the atmosphere and drink in new life at every pore. It repeats itself in every blossom and multiplies itself in every fruit. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters"

A NOTE ON PHIL. 1.23

"I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1. 23-24). St. Paul was in a quandary, knowing not which of two alternatives he would choose if he had the choice. On the one hand it was desirable for the sake of his converts that he remain in the flesh to give them that instruction which they needed. On the other hand he had an earnest desire to be finished with this earthly life with all its trials and persecutions—and he had plenty—and to attain his promised resurrection inheritance and be with Christ. But there is nothing in the verse to demand that St. Paul expected that promised "being with Christ" to follow immediately upon his death. It was the contrasting appeals of life with the needs of the converts and death with its cessation of labour that stood before his mind. An accusation of inconsistent teaching is sometimes levelled against him, on the assumption that this word "depart" implies an immediate transference to the presence of Christ at death whereas elsewhere, for example in I Thess. 4.16, he pictures the "dead in Christ" awaking from sleep and rising from the dead at the Second Advent, and in 2 Tim. 4.8 his own "crown of righteousness" is "laid up" for him, to be given him "at that day" concurrently with the felicity of all those who at all times throughout the Age have in their turn waited for the same event, Christ's "appearing" at his Advent.

An examination of this word "depart" shows that there is no inconsistency and no contradiction to the belief elsewhere expressed by St. Paul that he was to receive his crown of life at the First Resurrection in company with his fellow-saints of all generations, at the time of his Lord's Second Coming and the Millennial kingdom. "Depart" in this verse is the word "*analuō*" which has the basic meaning "to be unloosed" or "to be set free". In Greek it was used as a nautical term, the loosing of a ship from her moorings, to weigh anchor, preparatory to setting out upon a voyage. It also indicates loosing in the sense of freeing from entanglement or unravelling; in Homer (the Odyssey) it is used of Penelope unravelling her weaving every night. From this it has the thought of the dissolution of the earthly body in death and the return of the spirit to God who gave it (Eccl. 12.7). St. Paul uses the basic word in this sense in 2 Cor. 5.1 "We know that if our earthly house be dissolved" and Peter, speaking of the dissolution of this "present evil world" at the end, says, "see-

ing then that all these things shall be dissolved" (2 Pet. 3.11). Jesus used the word in Luke 13.12 when He said "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity", and John the Baptist when he said he was not worthy to "unloose" the latchet of his Master's shoes.

An interesting usage is in Luke 12.36 where the word is rendered "return" in "When he shall return from the wedding" the sense here evidently being that of being "loosed" or set free from the wedding party. A similar case is found in the Apocrypha, 2 Macc. 8.5, where, speaking of the Jews' pursuit of their enemies, it is said that "lacking time they returned, for it was the day before the sabbath". In that instance the word has the idea of the pursuers being "loosed" or "released" from their pursuit, as though we would say they "let go" or "desisted".

Perhaps 2 Tim. 9.6 gives the clearest light on the Apostle's outlook. "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand . . . henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, . . . and not to me only, but unto all those that love his appearing." Here it is plain that St. Paul believed his "loosing" or "departure" to be separated in point of time from the bestowment of his crown of righteousness. And if this is compared with I Thess. 4.16-17 it seems a logical conclusion that he expected to be among those who "sleep in Jesus" until, at the "voice of the archangel", they rise to join their Lord as He returns to earth for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. In writing to the Philippians he was speaking of his anticipated release from the flesh, from this present life, with the implication that his next conscious experience would be the "being with Christ".

It would appear then that St. Paul's intention in Phil. 1.23 was to define his being "loosed" from the responsibilities, cares and burdens of human life, without any reference to the time of his appearance before his Lord for the reward of the promised crown. To be "loosed" from this earthly life and all its trials and sorrows, and (eventually, at the First Resurrection) to be united with Christ, was that which he desired most, but, says he, "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you". For the sake of those to whom he ministered he was ready to relinquish that which he might naturally have most desired, and continue in their service notwithstanding the life of suffering it would continue to entail.



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

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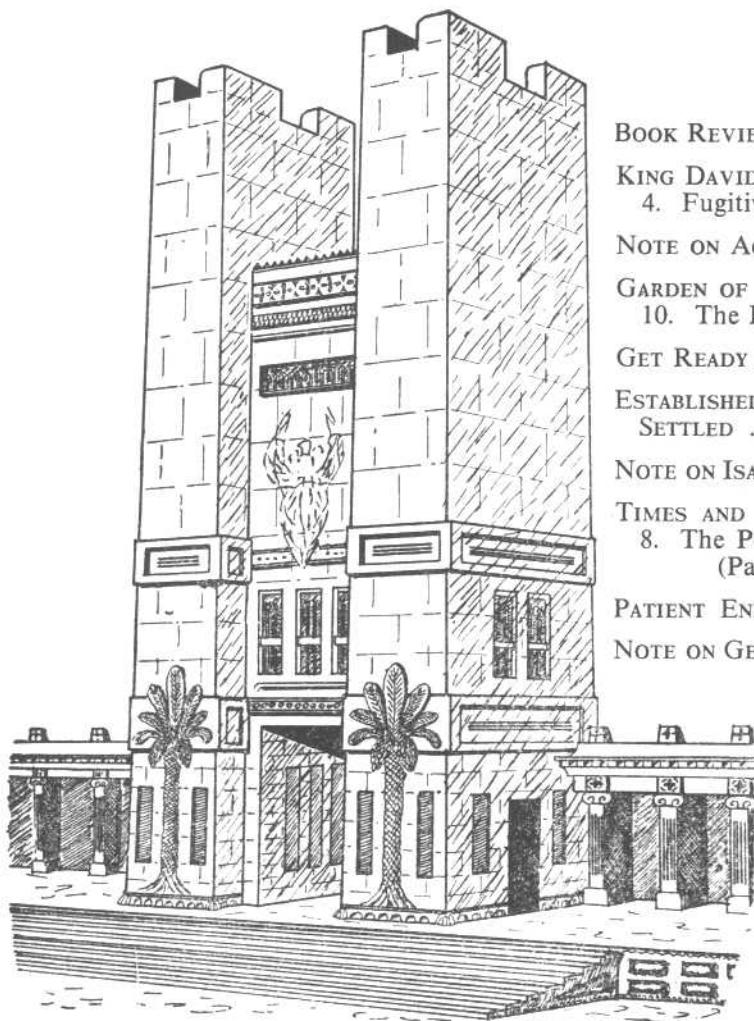
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BOOK REVIEWS

Oxford Bible Atlas. Ed. Hunt, May & Hamilton. 144 pp. qto. Stiff paperback. O.U.P. 1982. £2.95.

This is a revised edition of the Atlas first published in 1962 and reviewed in the BSM at that time. It comprises 50 pages of maps with explanatory text, a 40-page brief resume of the geography and history of Israel, Egypt and Sumer, illustrated with numerous photographs, 20 pages of notes on the connection of archaeology with the Bible, and a 20-page Gazetteer of place names shown on the maps with references to the Bible texts in which these names occur. All this makes it a very useful reference book but the style of writing and presentation gives it an appeal to all classes of readers. A particularly interesting feature is the inclusion of maps showing physical features, distribution of vegetation and rainfall. The maps are of the modern type having place names superimposed upon a "relief" indicating mountains and valleys; they include the entire range from the ancient East before the Exodus to New Testament times. The maps are up-to-date enough to show the recently discovered Aramaic city of Ebla (although, strangely, this name is omitted from the Gazetteer). Altogether a book worth keeping handy.

On the debit side one has to note with some regret that the old idea of the Exodus having taken place under Rameses II of the 19th Egyptian dynasty is still retained, irrespective of the progress of research which has fairly well established the time as under Amen-hotep II of the 18th, a century or so earlier. Likewise, the old assumption that no part of the O.T. existed in written form prior to the days of the Israelite monarchy is retained irrespective of the later evidences which takes the early part of Genesis back into Sumerian times and the later part with successive books into the days of Israel in Egypt, 18th to 15th centuries B.C. These are minor issues and do not detract from the purpose for which the book is intended.

Obtainable from any bookseller but NOT from BFU Hounslow.

NOTICES

Publications

Booklets on matters of Christian doctrine are available on request, on same terms as the "Monthly", viz., voluntary donations towards printing costs as felt appropriate by recipient, although we do ask for postal costs at least, as follows:—

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"The Christian Doctrine of Baptism"	32pp Fcp 8vo	14p
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Overseas readers can send dollar notes at rate of 50p per dollar. Fcp 8vo is 6½" x 4". Cr 8vo is 7½" x 5".

* * *

"Garden of Eden"

With this issue the "Garden of Eden" series, commenced in January 1981, comes to its end. Should any reader who commenced his readership more recently like to have the earlier issues in order to complete the series, please make request to that effect, stating which issues are desired, enclosing 32p for postage, and same will willingly be sent.

Gone from us



Sis. M. Chrimes (Altrincham)
 Bro. H. M. Irwin (Bexhill)
 Bro. H. Seller (Arundel)
 Bro. J. Turner (West Wickham)



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

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

4. Fugitive in the Wilderness

The old man looked up from his writing as a furtive knock sounded on the outer door. His eyes held a question; there should no one be abroad at this late hour of the night. The villagers of Ramah would normally all be asleep and no traveller on lawful business should be out there in the darkness. He listened for a minute; the knock came again.

A movement in the big outer room where Samuel's students, the "sons of the prophets" were lying asleep, and the sound of quiet footsteps going to the door of the house. He heard it being unbarred and opened, and the murmur of voices. Presently his own door opened silently to reveal the form of the young man.

"David is here" he said quietly.

Samuel rose to his feet. Behind the other he perceived the athletic frame of the lad he had once, at the Divine behest, anointed as Israel's future king. That had been seven years ago; he had not seen him since. Here in this quiet retreat, remote from the affairs of the nation since his parting from Saul, contentedly spending his time teaching a small band of young disciples the things of God, he had heard from time to time of the exploits of the son of Jesse. He must have rejoiced when he learned of the victory over Goliath and the discomfiture of the Philistines, just as he must equally have been saddened by news of Saul's continued rejection of God and consequent inability to deliver Israel completely from those same Philistines. Perhaps he wondered at times how the Lord would fulfil his expressed intention to replace Saul by David as king, but if so, his faith would rise to the surface and he would rest the matter entirely with the Lord, and meanwhile continue with the quiet work the Lord had given him to do here in Ramah, a work seemingly so insignificant compared with the mighty deeds of his earlier life when he ruled supreme as Judge over Israel. Now he looked at David, mingled welcome and question showing in his eyes. David came into the room, closing the door noiselessly behind him.

"I am David, son of Jesse, whom you once anointed to be king over Israel" he said simply.

"I know it, my son" came the calm reply. "What brings you here?"

"I flee from the face of Saul. He seeks my life. He uses me to lead his armies to victory against the Philistines, but he cannot bear that I should receive the plaudits of the people when I return in triumph. He fears that I will lead an insur-

rection to usurp his throne and he cannot understand that I am content to wait until the Lord gives it to me in his own time and way. I have lost my wife, my home and my friends, and I am an outcast, destitute and alone. But I am still the anointed of the Lord. I come to you that you may tell me what the Lord would have me do next."

The older man spoke gently. "You will stay here with me, my son" he said "and presently I will tell you where to go and what to do. For the present you will stay with me."

The other dropped into a seat and rested his head in his hands, elbows on knees.

"But Saul will find out that I am here and send men to kill me, and you and yours will be involved on my account. I cannot allow that to happen."

Samuel spoke quietly. "Saul will discover that you have taken refuge here in my *Naioth*, my school of the prophets, and he will send messengers to take you. And when they come into this house, the Spirit of God will take possession of them and they will be unable to do aught but be caught up in a rhapsody of prophesying and so they will return to Saul without having achieved their purpose." His eyes grew sombre. "And then in his anger Saul will come himself with his servants to take you, and when he sets foot in this house the Spirit of God will come upon him also and he will fall down prostrate before me a day and a night and then he will rise up and go his way back to Gibeah not knowing why it is that he cannot take you. And that shall be a sign to you, my son, that the protection of the Lord is over you and that you will surely become king over Israel. Lie down now and sleep, my son, for the way before you is arduous and the trials severe; but if your faith fails not and you endure to the end, you will yet sit on the throne of the Lord and rule the people of the Lord in righteousness and equity. Lie down now and sleep, for the way before you is arduous."

* * *

So David departed from Ramah and went to Nob, five miles away, where the High Priest Ahimelech, great-grandson of Eli, endeavoured to administer the ritual of the Mosaic Law within what was left of the sacred Tabernacle. Its central glory, the Ark of the Covenant, taken in battle by the Philistines at the battle of Aphek more than seventy years previously, was still in

the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim in the south and it is not definitely known what happened to the Tabernacle structure at Shiloh after that disastrous battle. Probably it had been hurriedly dismantled and hidden before the Philistines reached and destroyed Shiloh, and in later years re-erected at Nob. So David came to Ahimelech, tired and hungry after three days probably aimless wandering about the countryside since leaving Samuel, begging food and weapons from the High Priest. The poverty of Ahimelech's establishment is shown by the fact that the only food he could offer David and the young men with him was the cast out hallowed "shewbread" from the sacred table in the Holy of the Tabernacle, bread that having been once consecrated to God should have been destroyed and not profaned by secular use. The measure of David's desperation is revealed in that he took and ate the hallowed bread, a sacrilege he would never have dreamed of doing in normal circumstances. He looked for a sword; the priest produced the sword of Goliath the Philistine giant slain by David, which had evidently been placed in the sanctuary as a memento of that notable occasion. Armed with that, and again alone, he made his way across country some twenty-five miles to the Philistine town of Gath, hoping to find sanctuary with Achish the chieftain of the town. That he should run the risk of joining the enemy he had so consistently fought is a measure of the fear of Saul he had developed. Only in the enemy land would he feel safe. And, of course, in taking himself out of the Lord's protection he was not safe at all. It was not long before some of the Philistines discovered his identity. *"Is not this David the king of the land?"* they said. *"Did they not sing of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"* (I Sam. 21.11). In panic David pretended to be mad, acting like an idiot, until the Philistines turned from him in contempt, and he was able to make his escape and get back into the territory of Judah. So he came into the rocky mountainous country between Jerusalem and Hebron and found a cave near Adullam, far from the haunts of men, and there he sank down, and rested, and pondered.

It is impossible to gauge the state of David's mind at this time. He was to be on the run from Saul for another six years, always on the move from place to place and never knowing where he would fetch up next. The one thing that does stand out in the narrative of I Sam. 20 to 26 is his determination never to take action himself to wrest the kingdom from Saul. He could have done it; there is every evidence that the south country, Judah, was behind him. On two occa-

sions Saul's life was in his hands and he deliberately refrained from taking advantage of the opportunity. He was resolved to wait until the Lord gave him the kingship. There is here the paradox of a man who is possessed of faith on the one hand and consumed by fear of his adversary on the other. Perhaps David was not so unlike the rest of us after all. So often faith and fear, trust and doubt, do co-exist in parallel compartments in our lives and it takes the lessons of bitter experience to enable the one to overcome the other. That at any rate is how it turned out for David.

He must have remained in Adullam for something like two years or more. During that time he collected round himself a band of four hundred men, renegades and outcasts mainly, but all consumed by hatred of Saul and prepared to fight under David's leadership. Such a number could only be sustained under such conditions by the material and moral support of the local populace; there is not much doubt that this was forthcoming. Adullam was in the centre of the territories of the southern tribes, Simeon and Judah, which were traditionally at variance with Saul's tribe, Benjamin, and the tribes of northern Israel. I Sam. 22.6 reveals that Saul at this very time had made his headquarters in his home town of Gibeah in a "grove in a high place" which means an idolatrous sanctuary. This indicates that Saul had finally rejected God and gone over to the gods of Canaan, acceptable to the north but anathema to the south, David's cause must have become identified with the re-establishment of national loyalty to God and his friendship with Samuel and Ahimelech would have buttressed that position. His "guerilla campaign" must have taken on more and more the aspect of a "holy war" to restore the worship of the true God in Israel.

For the next couple of years David was on the move all the time, changing his headquarters from place to place to avoid detection by Saul's men. From Adullam to Hereth, from Hereth to Keilah, from Keilah to Ziph, to Maon, to En-gedi by the Dead Sea, back to Ziph again; all these places were within twenty or thirty miles of each other and it is probable that his followers, now increased to six hundred, were scattered over the whole area and in fact formed a kind of "underground" kingdom within the bounds of Saul's kingdom. And the hearts of the people were steadily turning more and more toward David.

It was at this time that there occurred the strange incident, or incidents, in which David had Saul at his mercy but chivalrously refused to take advantage of the opportunity. One account

is in I Sam. 24 and the other in Chap. 26. In the one account, David and some of his men were in the recesses of a cave when Saul inadvertently entered, not knowing anyone was there. David silently cut off a piece of his outer garment without being noticed and after Saul had left the cave he called out to him to demonstrate how near death he had been. In the other account David with one companion crept into Saul's camp when all there were asleep and got away with Saul's spear and pitcher, forbearing to take his life, and then called to him from the other side of the valley. In both cases Saul expressed his contrition and vowed he would persecute David no more, but went back on his word almost immediately. There is more than a suspicion that both accounts relate to the same incident; there are many similarities alongside the major differences. What does stand out is David's determination not to be responsible for Saul's death. He was still resolved to wait the Lord's time and confident that the Lord would eventually fulfil his word.

But David was increasingly becoming a man of violence. The story of his encounter with Nabal the wealthy farmer in Ch. 25. shows this. Nabal's far-flung lands lay in the area scoured by David's followers. His shepherds enjoyed the protection of David's men from bandits and, probably, marauding Philistines. David sent a message soliciting a little material consideration for services rendered. Nabal refused with scorn and insult. Immediately David set out with four hundred armed men to seek revenge, vowing to kill all of Nabal's household and take all his possessions. Bloodshed was only averted when Nabal's wife, Abigail, went out to meet the avenging horde and interceded with David. David rather shamefacedly admitted that God had kept him from this bloodthirsty vengeance by sending Abigail in this manner, but the fact remains that his character was undergoing a change, and that not for the better. In the upshot Nabal died suddenly and David took Abigail to be his wife and inherited her late husband's not inconsiderable property. This made him a wealthy landowner but still a fugitive with a price on his head. And there was a grievous blow to fall upon him at about this same time; his old friend and mentor, the aged prophet Samuel, died.

Samuel must have been well over a hundred years old at his death. His political power had waned considerably with Saul as king, but his moral influence was still great. All Israel remembered and revered him as the man who in earlier generations had saved them from the Philistines; they could not but be painfully conscious that Saul, with all his warlike prowess, had failed to

maintain that position. But Saul was still in power, and with Samuel now gone, David evidently felt that his personal safety whilst in Saul's dominions was less secure. "*I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul*" he said (I. Sam. 27.1). He took a bold decision. He would take his whole household—he now had two wives in addition to Saul's daughter whom he had left behind when he fled—and his six hundred men, and make alliance with his old enemies the Philistines. He went to the Philistine Achish, chieftain of Gath, and proposed settlement in his territory. That worthy, knowing something of David of old, and eyeing his six hundred stalwart warriors somewhat speculatively, probably reflected that they would form a useful addition to his own forces at the next showdown with Saul, and assigned him the nearby town of Ziklag for his use. What the citizens of Ziklag thought of the arrangement is not stated; they of course were not consulted.

David's occupation of Ziklag lasted sixteen months. He was no longer in fear of Saul and he spent his time now in a systematic ravaging and plundering of the nomadic tribes between Canaan and Egypt. It does not make pretty reading. "*And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish*" (I. Sam. 27.9). It looks as if Achish had a share of the spoils, upon which he probably congratulated himself; at the same time David pretended to him that his forays had been directed against the tribes of Israel, at which Achish must have congratulated himself still more.

And now the sands were running out for Saul. He had long since lost his best military leader in David. He had lost the sobering influence on the nation exerted by Samuel. His subjects were resentful, his warriors demoralised, he himself, at about sixty-five years of age, fearful and panic-stricken at his continuous failures and the ever present Philistine menace. His ill-advised visit to a sorceress at Endor to try and raise Samuel from the nether-world to advise him only brought dark prophecy of doom and death. And now the Philistines, secure in the knowledge that David was no longer a threat, invaded Israel in force. Saul and his men were forced back to the other side of the land, until at last, with virtually the whole of Israel occupied by the enemy, they made a last desperate stand on Mount Gilboa.

That was the end. As the Philistines scoured the deserted battlefield the following morning, they found, lying in the midst of his three dead eldest sons, the body of Saul, king of Israel. The time for the kingship of David had come.

To be continued.

A NOTE ON ACTS 17.28

"In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said 'For we are also his offspring.' Forasmuch then as we are the children of God, we ought not to think that the Deity is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device."

Who were these poets of the Greeks to whom Paul referred, and what was the propriety of his appealing to pagan writers to declare the fact of man being the offspring of God? Paul was an educated man and it was quite natural that he should draw upon his classical knowledge, when talking to educated men of this world, philosophers and the like, to support the truth he was proclaiming to them. In this speech before the Athenians on Mars Hill he gave voice to the most profound of dispensational truths, explaining the whole purpose of God for this Age and the next, and the reason for God's apparent silence in the past. And at the centre of that truth lay the fact that men live, and move, and have their being in God, and cannot live eternally without him, for they are in the last analysis the offspring of God and owe their life to him. In making that statement he drew upon the considered conclusions of the Greek philosophers themselves, and quoted them to support his point. He was not so petty-minded as to ignore the insight of those philosophers because they were pagans and knew not the God of Israel. Even although the very words he quoted *"For we are also his offspring"* had been addressed to Zeus the principal god of the Greeks, and not to Paul's God at all, he gave those men credit for their perception.

There is a lesson here worth taking to heart. We can take the words of these Greek poets, as did Paul, and apply them aright, because their authors had grasped the true principle, that men receive their life from God and owe their being to him, and in the last resort are his children. The Prodigal Son in the parable was still his father's son when away there in an alien land, wasting his substance in riotous living. And in these quotations to which Paul referred we have but to change the name of Zeus and there is not

one word with which we would disagree.

There are two poets, either of whom Paul may have had in mind when he made this remark; perhaps he had both. He says *"certain also of your own poets"* using the plural. One of these was Aratus, a Greek poet and astronomer who was born in Paul's own province of Cilicia about three hundred years before. This Aratus became Court physician to one of the Macedonian kings and his works were esteemed so highly by the Romans in Paul's day that at least three men of letters produced Latin translations of them. The passage in which Paul's quotation occurs is from a kind of technical poem dealing with astronomical matters, called the *"Phenomena"*. It runs:

... With him, with Zeus, are filled
The paths we tread and all the haunts of men.
He fills the sea, and every creek and bay;
And all in all things we need the help of Zeus,
For we too are his offspring."

The other was Cleanthes, who lived at about the same time as Aratus, and who was a leading member of the Stoics at Athens. In his *"Hymns to Zeus"* occur these lines:

"Most glorious of immortals, many named;
Almighty and eternal, thou, O Zeus,
The God of Nature, guiding with thy hand
All things that are, we greet with praise.
'Tis meet that mortals call on thee with one
accord,
For we thine offspring are, and we alone
Of all who live and move upon this earth,
Have had from thee the gift of god-like
speech."

The fact that we can thus identify the poets whom Paul is reported as quoting on that historic occasion, and read for ourselves the very lines he had in mind, is an undesigned confirmation of the accuracy of the *"Acts of the Apostles"*. This apparently quite casual allusion, coming to us down the ages, bears with it this testimony that it was no idle embellishment of a writer of fiction; it was a verbal transcription of words that were actually spoken before that distinguished audience in Athens two thousand years ago.

The trees of the Lord are described also as the goodly cedars, the cedars of God, the tall cedars and the cedars of Lebanon. The trees of the Lord are lovely, clothed with branches of wide spreading sympathy, budding and blossoming with beautiful human affection and adorned

with that love that beareth all things and endureth all things. They offer their shadowy foliage and refreshing fruit to the weary and tired, for they are members of a Royal house and heirs of a Royal Kingdom.

GARDEN OF EDEN

10. The Flaming Sword

*An examination
of the story of
Adam and Eve*

And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Gen. 3. 22-23).

This verse requires very careful examination, for as it stands in the A.V. it tends to convey an entirely wrong impression. The prevailing understanding is that Adam, having now become a sinner, must be expelled from the garden to prevent him having access to the tree of life and in consequence living for ever—even though a sinner. Now it is self-evident that such interpretation cannot possibly be true. The Divine instruction to him in the first place was that the eating of the forbidden fruit would result in death. After the sin Divine judgment was given and the sentence of death re-affirmed. To say that if Adam continued to eat of the tree of life he could escape the death penalty is making a mockery of the whole story. Tree of Life or no Tree of Life, the Divine principle remains that the wages of sin is death. In all of God's creation there is no way by which any of his creatures can escape the operation of that law. In whatever manner we understand this verse, that fact must be realised and upheld.

So the statement needs analysis, and the very first item is this expression "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" as though this was the effect of eating the forbidden fruit. Once again a small incursion into elementary Hebrew grammar is necessary. The word "is become"—"hayah"—is in the preterite tense, and the primary meaning of the preterite is past time. Two examples in the same narrative are Gen. 1. 2 "The earth *was* without form, and void", and Gen. 3. 1 "The serpent *was* more subtil than any beast of the field". In the one case the preterite marks the formless condition of the earth in past time, before God began to fashion terrestrial things; in the other it marks the time of the happenings in Eden relative to that in which the narrator was writing, some thousands of years later. Likewise in this case God is speaking of the past, of the condition of man before sin and sentence entered the picture, before the moment in which He uttered these particular words. The word rendered "to know" means to have knowledge, understanding, wisdom, intelligence. The entire sentence is best translated "The man was

like one of us to understand good and evil". That was God's reflection on man's condition before sin entered. The Devil lied to Eve in suggesting that she would understand good and evil only by partaking of the forbidden fruit; in actual fact man, made in the image and likeness of God, preserving his uprightness and loyalty inviolate, would have come to understand good and evil in God's own way, and much more comfortably. But sin had entered and man was no longer "like one of us".

Now comes the next clause "and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life..." The Hebrew copulative has to be translated "and" or "but" according to the requirements of the context. In this case there is a contrast between the former state of man "one of us" and his present state which because of sin has produced an opposite condition; the copulative should therefore be rendered "but". The man *was* sinless, *but now* the position has changed. This word "now" means literally "now this" or "this being so". It contrasts the past sinless with the present sinful condition of man in explanation of the action that is to follow, his banishment from the tree of life. The next word is "lest", Hebrew "*pen*". This word is translated in a number of different ways in the Old Testament. Its primary meaning is that of prohibition or dissuasion, as in Job. 32. 13 "none of you convinced Job, *lest* ye should say, we have found out wisdom" where the inference is that having failed to convince Job they could not now claim to have found out wisdom. The same word "*pen*" appears when in Gen. 24. 6 Abraham says to Eleazar "Beware *that thou bring not* (*pen*) my son hither again". In the same way "lest" here means that now, this being so, sin having entered, man cannot or shall not put forth his hand and take of the Tree of Life; it is an impossibility. So the entire verse should read something like this "*The man was like one of us to understand good and evil. But now, this (the sin) being so, he shall not put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. So the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken.*" In his originally created state, in the image of God and sinless, man had the capacity to understand good and evil, and had access to the Tree of Life, the power and privilege of communion with God and the deriving of continued everlasting life from God. But now, now

that sin had entered, the whole position was changed. No longer could he enter into that communion with God which is the privilege only of those who stand justified in the sight of God. No longer could he draw supplies of enduring, lasting life from the source of all life, for sin stood between him and God. It was sin, and not an arbitrary fiat of the Almighty, which barred Adam from the Tree of Life, and sin which bars his descendants from the same. Not until sin is eradicated may any return to the Tree of Life. The last Book in the Bible makes that clear. *"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22. 14). There is nothing to bar the converted redeemed from the Tree of Life; that is why Jesus said "Whosoever believeth in me *hath* everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day". Only the minority have such access now, for only the minority have thus accepted Christ. The time has yet to come when *"the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it"* (the Holy City—Rev. 21. 24) and the visions of Revelation 21 and 22 be fulfilled.

"So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (vs. 24).

More than one mediæval painting has depicted the stern-faced guardians at the gate of the garden, wielding the many-pointed sword of fire whereby man was finally debarred from the delights of the garden. Within remained light and happiness; outside all was darkness and despair. But what was really the physical nature of this closing scene in the history of man's fall? The Cherubim; the flaming sword; what was the true nature of the barrier which henceforth separated Adam and his wife from the garden of delight for the rest of their days?

The form of the Cherubim, as understood by Israel in later days, was that of four-headed creatures, four in number; their function was to surround and guard the Throne of God. Ezekiel saw them in vision and, after describing what he saw *"I knew"* he said *"that they were the cherubims"* (Ezek. 10. 20. See ch. 1 and 10). Each cherub (cherubim is the plural form) possessed the heads of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle. Each cherub had four wings and two human arms, but their legs and feet were those of cattle. The winged human-headed lions and bulls of Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture, which used to stand at the entrances to palaces and temples, were of much the same pattern and in the native languages were called by the same name, *kirub*.

It is evident that the origin of the cherubim goes back a long way earlier than the days of Ezekiel, and that their form was already well known. The likenesses of the cherubim were woven on the tapestries of the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the wilderness; it is noteworthy that the Divine instructions did not include a description of the creatures. Here again all Israel evidently knew quite well what they looked like. It is worthy of notice also that the four "beasts"—more accurately "living creatures" in the Throne scene of Revelation 4 are quite evidently Cherubim and that John saw in vision substantially what Ezekiel had seen five centuries previously.

This does not mean that the guardians of Eden were necessarily replicas of the symbolic beings described by Ezekiel and John as attending on the heavenly Throne of God. It is absurd to think that such grotesque creatures really do have an objective existence in the spiritual world; they exist, evidently, only as symbolic descriptions seen in vision and in order to convey certain spiritual truths. The term "cherubim" itself, whether in Hebrew or Assyrian or Babylonian, is synonymous with guardians of Temple portals and it must have been in that sense that the writer of Genesis 3 used the term. God placed—caused to dwell, is the meaning of the Hebrew verb—at the east, or in front (same thing in Hebrew) of the garden, heavenly guardians for the purpose of forbidding passage into the garden. It is reasonable to suppose that there were such visible guards appointed; perhaps they took the form already familiar to Adam and his wife, the form of the seraphim, radiantly glorious wing-clad figures, standing sentinel-like at the boundary which man might not henceforth cross.

There was also the flaming sword, one which turned every way. A sword of flame is fairly easy to visualise and for the artist to draw; one which in addition turned every way has proved quite a problem in religious art. The resultant effort has usually presented the effect either of a bundle of forked lightning darting in all directions from a clenched fist or an apparition something like a gigantic Catherine wheel. But since the effective range of either as a deterrent is necessarily limited, and the Garden of Eden was an extensive place with in all probability means of access at many points it might well be asked whether the "flaming sword which turned every way" might not have been something much more far-reaching, and to test this hypothesis it is necessary to look more closely at the text.

The word for "flaming" is a substantive standing before a noun and it means just what it says—flaming. Whatever the agency used to bar man

from the tree of life its principal characteristic was fire.

"Sword" needs a little more consideration. The word "*cherub*" is not only rendered "sword" but is applied to other cutting instruments as knife, dagger, graving tool, axe; see Josh. 5. 2, Jud. 3. 16, Exod. 20. 25, Ezek. 5. 1 and 26. 9. The idea behind the word is that of a destroying weapon or force, and it comes from a root meaning to desolate or dry up. In this sense it is used nearly fifty times to denote the land being laid waste, as for example:

Isa. 42. 15 "I will *make waste* mountains and hills."

Ezek. 36. 35 "And the *waste* and desolate and ruined."

Lev. 26. 33 "Your land shall be desolate and your cities *waste*."

Ezek. 29. 9 "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and *waste*."

Isa. 34. 10 "From generation to generation it shall lie *waste*."

Other uses of the word illustrate its range of meaning:

Isa. 50. 2 "At my rebuke I *dry up* the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness."

Jer. 25. 11 "This whole land shall be a *desolation*."

Hag. 1. 11 "And I called for a *drought* upon the land."

Isa. 25. 4 "A refuge from the *heat* when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall."

The flaming sword, then, could well be something that caused widespread desolation and destruction, "turning every way". This latter phrase has the meaning of turning aside, turning upside down, overthrowing or overturning. It is only in this text that it is translated "turn every way". Elsewhere it intensifies the idea of destruction, as for example:

Joel 2. 31 "The sun shall be *turned* into darkness."

Isa. 34. 9 "The streams thereof shall be *turned* into pitch."

Psa. 105. 29 "He *turned* the water into blood."

Isa. 29. 16 "Surely your *turning of things upside down* shall be esteemed as the potter's clay."

Job 28. 9 "He *overturneth* the mountains by the roots."

Jon. 3. 4 "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be *overthrown*."

Amos 4. 11 "I have *overthrown* you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."

Gen. 19. 9 "Sent Lot out of the midst of the *overthrow*."

Gen. 19. 25 "Then the Lord *overthrew* those

cities, and all the plain."

Those last three texts are significant. The word used to describe the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah, is the same which in Genesis describes the operation of the flaming sword in Eden. To this day the Arabic name for that district around the Dead Sea where the cities stood is this same word—"the overthrown". And it is when one recalls the physical circumstances which brought about the destruction of those notorious five cities that a possible clue to the meaning of the "flaming sword which turned every way" is found.

"A *flaming destruction, which laid waste and overthrew in every direction*." That is a literal definition of the flaming sword when once the basic meaning of the term has been searched out. That is a good definition also of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Now the destruction of those cities is known to have been due to the release by earthquake or subterranean explosion of long pent-up natural gases and oils which ignited upon reaching the surface and soared flaming into the heavens to return to the earth in a rain of fire; sulphur, bitumen, oil, all descending in a flaming cascade which burned up and desolated the entire region. That was the end of the Cities of the Plain. For four thousand years after that the district lay barren and desolate; only since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is some effort being made to establish a holiday resort on the empty shore.

Is it possible then that the Garden of Eden was not preserved through the centuries, supernaturally inaccessible to human beings until it was destroyed in the Flood, which has been the general assumption of those who believe in the literal truth of the Eden story, but rather that it was on the contrary destroyed by a great natural cataclysm similar to that which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah? All the natural agents necessary were, and still are, there. The area of the Persian Gulf, under whose waters it has already been shown probably lies the site of the lost Garden, is one of the great oil-producing areas of the world. Oil and bitumen exists under the sea-bed as in the surrounding countries. A map of Middle East gas and oil deposits in a recent book, ("*The Rebel Lands*", J. V. Kinneir Wilson, 1979) shows the main band of deposits traversing Iraq and Iran into Arabia crossing the Persian Gulf precisely where Sumerian indications in Genesis shows the Garden of Eden to have been situated according to their histories (see map in Mar/Apr 1981 BSM). The combination of a powerful earthquake, driving deep crevasses into the ground and opening fissures in the rock, with a violent tropical storm of thunder and lightning,

would have been all that was needed to start a conflagration. Kinneir Wilson, in the above book, outlines his conclusions from on-the-spot investigation, in the light of Sumerian legend, that such a conflagration did take place several thousand years before Christ in an area of the Zagros mountains east of Baghdad, desolating sixty-four square miles of the mountains and setting up seven gigantic escapes of natural gas which burned for several centuries, poisoning the air and ground for many miles around, and rendering a large tract of land uninhabitable. If such did happen, it only repeated what well may have been a similar occurrence on the same gas and oil belt four hundred miles farther south in the days of Eden.

Such a catastrophe would produce the same result which Abraham saw on the day that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. *"And Abraham got up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the Lord" (on the mountain top) "and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."* (Gen. 19: 28). Adam and his wife might well have had that same experience and thus known of a surety that Eden was lost to them for ever.

But not really for ever. The flaming destruction may have desolated the fair terrain Adam had known, and blasted the trees beyond recall, but it was a preserving influence as well as a destroying one. It overthrew as it did overthrow, *"to keep the way of the tree of life"*. Those are the concluding words of the story of Eden and they are words of hope. The word "keep" here means to keep safe and to preserve. The "way" is a path leading to a known destination. In the infinite wisdom of God Eden was destroyed that the road to the Tree of Life might be preserved. Man was not yet ready to tread that path, not yet fit to put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eating, live for ever. But man's failure to prove himself fit has not nullified God's purpose. It will yet be true that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess in the name of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father. Yet will be realised the Divine declaration *"As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my*

glory". Eden was destroyed that one day the whole earth shall become as Eden. Adam went into death that one day the whole human race shall enter into life. The Devil was allowed to proceed with the deception of our first parents in order that man may hereafter be proof against deception to all eternity. God suffered, and suffers, disloyalty and disobedience for a time that He might eventually enjoy loyalty and obedience for ever. Here is the whole reason for the permission of evil and the full explanation of God's apparent inactivity in the face of evil through the ages.

The story of Eden has no meaning unless it enshrines three fundamental things—the origin of man upon earth; the reason for his present unhappy and unsatisfactory condition; the nature of the hope and destiny that is before him. A right understanding of these fundamentals is necessary to intelligent Christian faith and the maintenance of that hope in the eventual overthrow of evil and establishment of everlasting righteousness without which the Christian faith would be a hollow mockery.

Like Adam, the human race is still outside Eden, toiling in the sweat of its brow for the bare essentials of existence. The fact that a relatively small proportion of men, chiefly among the white races, enjoys what is called a high standard of living and at least gets enough to eat does not alter the fact that on more than three-quarters of the world's population the curse still rests as heavily as it did in the days of Adam. And the favoured one quarter pays the penalty of its higher living standards in stress and strain, nervous and mental disease, and general dissatisfaction with life. The whole of the human race still need, as desperately as Adam and Eve needed it, the advent of the Messianic Kingdom of prophecy. When it comes under the rulership of the Son of God the world will be led into better ways and the earth itself yield its increase. *"In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth."* *"And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."*

The End.

Not infrequently servants of God 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.

GET READY FOR THE MILLENNIUM

This treatise is from the pen of George Howell, of Frome, leader of a Bible student group in that town at the turn of the century and an active Christian writer. It is typical of the contemporary enthusiastic approach to the signs of the times, indicating the imminent establishment of Christ's Kingdom upon earth, and seems worthy of reproduction in these rather more prosaic days when in many quarters that hope tends to become dim.

* * *

Enlightened Bible students throughout the world recognise the great upheavals in the earth today as those predicted by the Prophets and Apostles and by Jesus Christ, as the great events that would usher in the thousand years of his reign, commonly called the Millennium. Perhaps someone will answer; Yes, I know it is the conviction of quite a number that the Millennium is dawning, but why talk so much about it? Wherein does the interest of such a theme and such a time lie? Let me tell you. It is because of the ten thousand blessings and mercies that are then coming to poor groaning humanity, and because the name of God will then be honoured as never before. One set of Scriptures makes it clear that war, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, and abundant wickedness would mark the Age or period from Christ's First Advent to his Second Coming, and that such Age would close with the greatest war, pestilence, revolution, famine and anarchy in the world's history, or, as Christ predicted it in few words, distress of nations with perplexities, men's hearts failing them for fear etc. (Luke 21.24) just as we see it at the present time.

The well-informed Bible student is enamoured of the Millennium, because he knows that then all will be changed; that then the new Heavens (new ruling powers) and the new earth (new order of society) will be fully ushered in (2 Peter 3. 13, Rev. 21.1). Because then Jesus Christ will take over the control of the earth and begin the long predicted thousand years of his reign (Rev. 20.4). Because then Satan, the great usurper, arch liar, deceiver and murderer, the great enemy of God and man, shall be bound for a thousand years (Rev. 20.2). Because then the nations (peoples) shall be undeceived (Rev. 20.3). Then the blind eyes shall be opened and the deaf ears shall be unstopped (Isa. 35.5). Because then men shall learn that Satan was the Prince of War but Jesus Christ, his great Master, is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9. 6, 7; Matt. 26.52). Then, instead of

beating plough-shares into swords as now (Joel 3.9-16), they shall beat their swords into plough-shares (Isa. 2.4); then the Prince of Peace shall make wars to cease to the ends of the earth (Psa. 46.9), and introduce a peace worthy of the name (Psa. 37.11; 72.7). Yes, then men will begin to learn that God permitted them for six thousand years to try their hand more or less to rule themselves, until having at last brought it all to destruction and anarchy, they should realise their own impotence, and should thus be prepared for one to rule and manage for them; yes, ready for the great millennial King, for the thousand years of Christ's reign. But God was determined to let men quite satisfy themselves of their own impotence first. Then the great King will not only introduce a reign of peace (Psa. 72.7) but a reign of righteousness too (Isa. 32.1).

The enlightened Bible student looks forward to that time, because then the great process of drying all tears and removing all sorrow, pain, death, which cause the tears to flow, will commence (Isa. 25.8; Rev. 21.4). Oh, what a change is soon coming! It has been said that all the tears shed by poor humanity, collected together, would probably be nearly enough to float the British Navy; that all the groans collected into one would be the deepest thunder peal the world has ever known. Yes, he looks forward to it, because then the poor man's day will at last have arrived (Psa. 72.12, 13; James 5.1-8) and the meek (obedient) shall inherit the earth (Psa. 37.11; Matt. 5.5). Because then the nations be blessed by him, and they, out of gratitude to him for good government and mercies received, shall call him blessed (Psa. 72.17). Because then the people will realise that they were under a delusion in supposing that the literal world was coming to an end, and that the literal earth was going to be burnt up, and so coming to an end (Eccles. 1.4; Isa. 45. 17; Psa. 104.5; Psa. 78.69). Then men will understand that God meant what He said in Numbers 14.21 and Psa. 72.19. Then people will realise that Jesus, just as the Apostle Paul says, tasted death for every man—just as much for the forty-eight thousand millions that have never yet heard of his name, as for the two thousand millions that have, and many of them only to hear it woefully misrepresented. But then *all* shall know him (Jer. 31, 34) not only a part as now; all shall come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2.4-6) for then Jesus Christ having been lifted up upon the Cross at his First Advent and up into power and great glory at his Second Advent will begin to draw all

men unto himself (John 12.32).

All that are in their graves will then begin to come forth, among whom will finally appear Father Adam and Mother Eve, for, be it remembered, Christ died for them as much as for you and I. Then people will understand that God gave his Son for the whole world (John 3.16). Then men will realise that the heavenly messenger told the truth when He said "I bring good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all* people (Luke 2.10) though He did not say that all should receive it in one and the same Age. Then men will have their attention drawn to Acts 15.14, which at present many people seem to have entirely overlooked. Then they will realise from reading that, that God at the First Advent did not visit the Gentiles (the nations) to convert and set them right but only to *take out* of them a people for his name—his joint heirs or symbolic Bride class (Matt. 22.2; 2 Cor. 11.2; Rev. 19.7). Then it will be made very clear that Jesus Christ has been engaged in a work which has been a complete success (Isa. 55.11; Rev. 19.7).

Indeed, some the wide world over are learning it now—that it is *Christendom* and *Churchianity* that has failed, not Christ and Christianity. The truly enlightened Bible student looks forward with pleasure, because he knows that then Jesus Christ will take over the task of setting the world right, and that He will make a complete success of it too. *Then men will clearly understand why* Jesus did not pray for the world at his First Advent (John 17.9); they will see it was because then He visited the Gentiles (nations) only to take out a people (Acts 15.14) and to give the nations their chance at his return. Then, too, men shall learn that the *Second Coming of Christ* does not mean the end of the world, our planet, but only the end of the present Satanic economy, the end of Satan's empire, ready for the empire of Satan's great Master, the great Millennial King (Dan. 2.44; Rev. 11.15; Dan. 7. 13, 14).

Christendom has presented such a spectacle to Heathendom that has doubtless made many of them very thankful that they do not worship Christendom's God, lest they, too, had learnt to have murdered each other by the hundreds of millions. The Bible student looks forward, because then Israel will be re-instated in their own land and the Jewish capital shall become the world's metropolis (Isa. 62.7. Isa. 24.23) from which will go forth the word and law of the Lord (Isa. 2.3). Then all nations shall worship before him (Psalm 86.9; Rev. 15.4) and all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (Gen. 28.14; 1 Cor. 15.22); yes, all the families, those who had the fortune or misfortune to be born six thousand years ago, as well as those born since and now.

When the great resurrection shall have taken place, all flesh shall come and worship before him (Isa. 66.23; Psa. 22.27). Such a change will have taken place that not only shall men cease tearing each other to pieces, but the animals also; yes, the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, but not the lamb inside the wolf, as is often the case now (Isa. 11.6). Then, too, men will understand that the Holy Scriptures fully and clearly predicted the great War to commence in 1914 (every time prophecy in the Bible directly and indirectly pointed to that date) (Jer. 25.31, 33; Zeph. 3.8; Isa. 66.16; Isa. 34.1-4; Isa. 13.6-11; Dan. 2.44; Rev. 2.26, 27; Joel 3. 9-14; Rev. 16.16; Matt. 24. 30). They will then learn that a great Peace cry was predicted to follow this war, but which, nevertheless, would be unavailing (1. Thess. 5.3) and that, at the same time, great industrial conflicts would take place (James 5.1-8). Isaiah predicted that the nations and churches, realising their serious position, and with ears that could hear the mutterings of a coming storm, would cry out for federation, which also would be unavailing (Isa. 8.9, 10).

The prophet Ezekiel predicted that at this time God would bring the worst of the heathen (nations), and which today are called anarchists, to gain control (Ezek. 7.24—carefully read the whole chapter for a pen picture of the present time), and then, when they have completed their work of destruction, Daniel says that the God of Heaven will be commencing his everlasting Kingdom (Dan. 2.44); then He who has been the builder of kings will become the King of builders (Acts. 15.16). Remember, not one of those Scriptures predicting the good things to come has ever yet been fulfilled; shall God, then, break his word? No; fire may cease to burn, water may cease to drown, the sun may refuse to shine, the earth may stop swinging round on its axis, but will these Scriptures be broken? No. God himself shall perish first, for if God allowed them to be broken, or go unfulfilled, He would have ceased to be God. Some think that we take these Scriptures too literally, that we are apt to take them to mean what they say. Well, suppose we take the other viewpoint, and take the thousand years of Christ's reign over the earth to mean anything and everything rather than what it states, what do we gain thereby? Again, when the Scriptures say that then Satan shall be bound for a thousand years, suppose we assure ourselves that, whatever else it may mean, it certainly cannot mean that Satan will be bound for that length of time; is that more reasonable? Further, when the Scriptures tell us that then Christ will establish a reign of peace and righteousness, suppose we take it to mean anything—even the very opposite—rather

than take it to mean what it says, is that acting wiser? Once more, when Christ foretold that He would come again the second time, and in the clouds of heaven, supposing we try and persuade ourselves that it cannot mean that, but that it probably means He would come thousands and millions of times to the death chamber, does that sound better?

Finally, suppose we take all of the three hundred Scriptures that say that Christ is coming the second time to rule the earth for a thousand years; supposing we take them to mean not what they state, but what they do not state, For instance, suppose we take them all to mean (as some insist they do) that Christians should sit loose to this world? I am afraid it does not have that effect on those who so interpret them. Do those who will not allow the Scriptures to mean what they state, think that in that way they will put off or prevent the Millennium. What a mistake if they do. Prevent the Millennium indeed, in that or any other way; a hundred times easier would it be for the bit of smoke from their little chimneys to arrest the noon-day sun than for them to delay the Millennium for one day. It would be a thousand times easier for one to lift himself up with his own shoe-strings than to hinder Christ's reign. It would be a million times easier for them to empty the Atlantic ocean with a sieve than to delay the Millennium for one hour.

But why should anyone want to hinder the coming of Jesus Christ even if they could? He is the greatest and best of rulers, the only Saviour, the most unerring Judge, the wisest of teachers, the most clever of all physicians, the most trustworthy Friend, the very Prince of Peace, the greatest of all Prophets, the world's greatest Light, the very Sun of Righteousness, the most reasonable of all masters, the Lord of lords, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, before whom, not only mortal man, but the highest Archangel pales into insignificance.

Reader, I sincerely hope you are not one of those that try to find any and every excuse to put off the Coming of Christ; if you are, permit me to tell you kindly—but also plainly—that it is not Jesus Christ at fault, but you. I call all the heavenly host that have lived with him—and millions more that know him—to bear witness that it is not his character that will not bear inspection, but yours. Get ready then, dear reader; get ready, dear brother; get ready, dear friend, for the Millennium, for the time is drawing very near when a thousand million voices shall fill the earth and rend the vaulted skies with that grand old hymn, "All hail the power

of Jesus Name!" and no sooner shall the last note have died away than a thousand million more shall call for that other immortal hymn, "When I survey the wondrous cross".

Reader, you may perhaps be fighting against him now while Satan is ruling (2 Cor. 4.4; Rev. 20.1-3) but what a sorry little spectacle you would appear, then, should you attempt it. Remember too, that the God of the universe and the God of the Scriptures and of the Millennium is Almighty, and should you refuse to worship him, He will have plenty others that will, and He could easily create more, for there is not a stone in the universe but what, in less than the twinkling of an eye, would turn into a human being at the command of the God who made you and me. (Luke 3.8; Luke 19.40).

I have been assured that many are getting tired of sermonettes, quartettes, threadbare little bazaars, weekly socials—that are very unsociable, and services that bore to tears, and ghastly chants which are described as "choral steeplechases".

Well, that being so, it is a healthy sign. Now is the time to tell them that which will satisfy; tell them what the Millennium will be like; tell them it means a thousand years without the Devil, without his active agents, a thousand years with Jesus and his good government, a thousand years of peace and righteousness and true education, a thousand years of prosperity and blessings, when heads and hearts shall stop aching, a thousand years without the sound of a cannon or bomb, a thousand years of Divine socialism, when the natural sun, which turned pale, sickened and refused for a time to shine when Christ hung upon the Cross, shall shine with beams a thousand times more resplendent than ordinary when He is crowned upon his throne, and a thousand years when all that fight against him—then in the midst of full light, shall be destroyed (Acts 3.23).

Tell it to your relatives, to your friends, to your neighbours, that God is great and good and true, that Christ is King and Conqueror, that Christianity has succeeded in taking out a people (Acts 15.14; Rev. 19.7). Tell them that the Holy Scriptures are true and rapidly fulfilling every day before our eyes; tell them that the Bible-time prophecies have proved to be absolutely correct; tell them that the Gentile times are ended (Luke 21.24) that the Jews are going home as foretold (Jer. 16. 14-15; Ezek. 36.24). Tell them that now the times of Christ are drawing near (1 Tim. 6. 15). Tell them that present kings are falling as predicted (Psalm 72.11), that the present kingdoms are being broken to pieces as foretold (Dan. 2.44). Tell them that they will soon become the

Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ (Rev. 11. 15), that the crowns now being removed from Christendom's potentates, will soon be on the head of the Prince of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1.5), the King of kings (Rev. 19, 12.16). Tell them that the great predicted—but unavailing—peace cry is now going up (1 Thess. 5.2-3), that the contest between Labour and Capital was clearly foretold by the Apostle James (James 5.1-8); Tell them that anarchy is creeping over the earth, as prophesied by Ezekiel (Ezek. 7.24). Tell them that the great Divine King and Builder is soon going to take over the control and set up his kingdom according to promise (Dan. 2.44), that the Millennium is dawning, that Jesus Christ is soon going to fill the earth with his glory (Psalm 72.19) and that shortly He is going to inaugurate a thousand years of peace and righteousness and prosperity, which shall make hundreds of millions of hearts glad and lives happy, even all nations (Psa. 72.17; Isa. 66.18). The Times of Restitution are at hand. Depend upon it, these Scriptures mean what they say, even if they are not brought to the people's notice.

Get ready then, and invite those who have never yet bowed to that holy Name to begin at once. Ringers, get your hands on the bell-ropes, organists, seat yourselves ready, harpers, set your strings to concert pitch; then from a thousand bells, from ten thousand organs and from a million harps, send forth the most mighty chorus

the earth has ever known—roll the music of that high and holy Name round the whole world. Then let the preacher stand up and with a heart full of love to God and man, and with a tongue electrified with power Divine, declare that the Scriptures have proved themselves to be true, and that He who died on Calvary's mountain soon is to reign. Tell them, then, preacher. Tell them the great and holy Bible truths, herein referred to with a thousand similar ones, for if your Bible is the same as mine you will find it all written within its covers. Tell the people of Jesus and his redeeming love. Tell them, too of his majesty, that He is greater than Nebuchadnezzar, more worthy than Cyrus, inspired with a nobler ambition than Alexander the Great, more kind than Herod, with none of the cruelty of Nero, more faithful to God than Charlemagne, a greater Conqueror than Napoleon and much wiser than any present monarchs who may be left among the debris of present kingdoms. Tell the people about him until not only the Marble Arch in London and the arch of Titus at Rome, but every arch in the universe shall ring with the music of his Name. Yes, minister, preacher, tell the people this and get them all ready to sing:—

*"All hail the power of Jesu's name!
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all."*

ESTABLISHED, STRENGTHENED, SETTLED

*a word of
exhortation*

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."—1 Pet. 5. 10.

The above words were penned by the Apostle Peter who, after years of experience in the Master's service and under his discipline, through much tribulation had evidently reached the blessed experience of one established, strengthened and settled in the faith and in the practice of the principles of the gospel. Peter had much to suffer and endure in his continuous effort to overcome. In common with all our Lord's disciples, he had much to bear from without, in the way of reproach, and sometimes of persecution, for the Truth's sake. But he had probably much more to contend against from within. His disposition was naturally impulsive, wavering and difficult to bring under restraint, even when the Truth was clear to his mind and when his affections were fastened upon the Lord.

It should be the aim of every truly consecrated saint to reach this desirable state of strength and settled establishment in the faith. This condition cannot be reached at a single leap; it is gained by a gradual steady growth under the discipline of suffering—as the Apostle says, "after ye have suffered awhile". "Now," as Paul remarks (Heb. 12. 11, 12), "*no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" "Wherefore" with him we would add, "*lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.*"

Are you weary and disheartened in the journey, discouraged at your slow progress, and almost overwhelmed with the cares and various besetments of this life? Is a lethargy and indifference creeping over you, cooling your ardour for the Master's service, relaxing your energies in

that direction, and enlisting your interest more and more in other matters? Then beware! It is high time to wake up. Be sober; be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes he goes about as a roaring lion, and sometimes as a skulking serpent in the grass.

Sometimes, lion-like, when we are off guard he springs upon us unawares, stirs up the devil of the old nature, and unless desperately resisted he will take full control and drive us on to ruin. Or he will endeavour at least to run us off the track of the narrow way. Sometimes, serpent-like (2 Cor. 11.3) he assumes a pleasing and seemingly reasonable aspect, and endeavours to beguile us from the way. If we permit ourselves to be so off guard either by neglect to feed upon the Truth, or by indifference to the reception and cultivation of its spirit, we may be sure that our ever vigilant adversary will gain an advantage over us which we may not be able to resist.

Our only safety, then, is in giving earnest heed to the Apostle's counsel. Be sober, be steadfast in the faith, be vigilant, and resist the adversary. We find foes within as well as foes without which we must not deal too gently. The human nature which we covenanted to crucify must not be too sensitively regarded by ourselves, though we should be careful and thoughtful in our dealings with others. We must let the human nature die, and rejoice to see the new nature triumph over it. We must look our old nature squarely in the face, and thankful for a brother's or sister's kindly showing of the same; and even the heartless rebuke of an enemy, or the impatient criticism of an unwise but well meaning friend, should be soberly considered and profited by, though it may severely wound the sensitive flesh. All this is a part of the crucifying process, a part of the humbling under the mighty hand of God—under the discipline of his truth. If we study it carefully and cultivate its spirit day by day,

seeking constantly to purge out all that is contrary to it, our characters will mature, ripen and grow more and more like the glorious model given for our imitation. Our convictions of the Truth will become more settled and clear; our faith in God and in the power of his love and grace will be more and more established; and our constant effort to learn and to do the will of God will harden into habit, and thus we will grow strong in the Lord and be able to strengthen and confirm the faith of others.

If we have cares, we are invited to cast all our cares upon the Lord, knowing that He careth for us. We have the encouraging assurance in the midst of present trials that we shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away, if in steadfast sobriety and humility we work out our salvation with fear and trembling, having first been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and thus through faith having gained the privilege of working it out. We are comforted in the midst of trials with the blessed assurance that while God resisteth the proud, and they also resist him, He giveth grace to the humble. Let us humble ourselves therefore, fellow members of the called and Anointed Body, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in due time. Let us bear in mind that not all of the suffering and cross-bearing comes from the world's opposition to the truth, but that much of it must necessarily come from our faithfulness, not in excusing and cultivating but in humbling and subduing the propensities of our fallen nature. *"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh unto the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."*—James 1. 23-25.

The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9. 7). Not merely as respects money matters is this true, but in respect of all our little offerings and sacrifices to him and for his cause. If we would be pleasing to the Lord and grow in his favour and in nearness to him, we must bring our hearts more and more into the condition that He approves, that He loves, viz., heartiness, cheerfulness, promptness in every service we may render.

* * *

God's Spirit and power is within us that we might show forth the Truth in our lives.

If Mary had waited one more week she might have used the ointment on herself, but not on the Lord, for in that week He was buried.

* * *

The Old Testament shows man's need, and the New Testament shows God's supply to meet that need.

* * *

God gave life and He is the fountain of life, but death is the wages of sin. There is always light where there is life.

A NOTE ON ISAIAH 61. 4—6

"And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." (Isa. 41. 4-6).

From Isaiah's 40th chapter onward the prophet develops the theme of what has been called the "suffering servant". The whole burden of those magnificent prophecies is that God is developing a people for his purpose of world conversion in the next Age. This people is accepted for its future work because of its utter and complete consecration to God and his service, thus becoming his "servant". It is qualified for that future work by its willing acceptance of hardship and suffering now, thus earning the title "suffering servant" although that precise expression does not occur in Isaiah. What is made very plain as one studies these chapters is that "Israel after the flesh", the natural descendants of Abraham, are to have an important place in this work of administering the new Kingdom and bringing Divine blessings to the nations, so that in some measure they may be regarded as part of the "servant", although in its primary sense the title belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is described from this viewpoint in the celebrated 53rd chapter. The essential principle is that the people described in Isaiah 61 are wholly consecrated to God and qualified by reason of past suffering and hardship endured in his Name to take up the glorious work described in that chapter. That cannot be said either of the nation now gathering into Israel nor yet of any considerable party among them. They do not manifest one single element of the characteristics which must mark out the earthly Seed of Abraham, the holy people of God, in the Last Days. They are organised as one of the "kingdoms of this world", with civil administration, army, navy and air force, and everything else, modelled after the pattern of the world around them. As such, that nation as now organised would share in the ruin that will come upon all the kingdoms of the world when our Lord takes to himself his great power and commences his reign.

The air is a genial influence to the heart overflowing with love to God and man, those quickening rays that come streaming down are from the

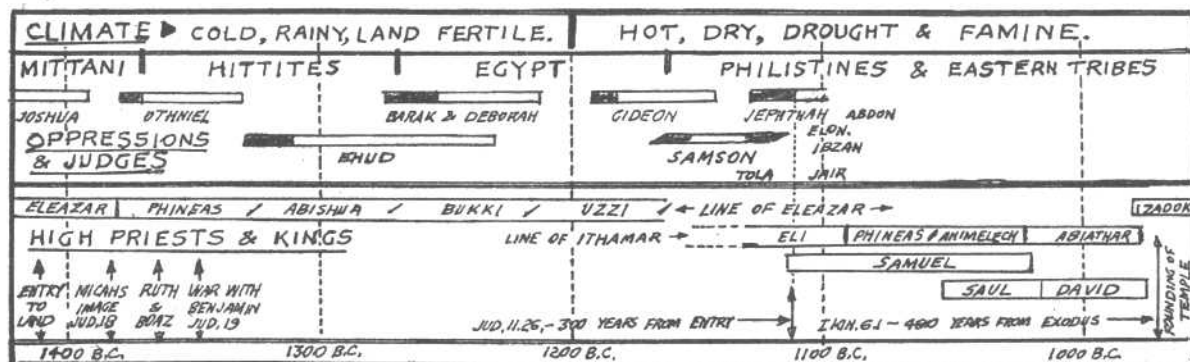
What do present events indicate, then, in prophecy? Certainly they indicate that the land is being prepared in a physical sense for the coming of that people. The foretold prosperity is on the way and the territory is being reclaimed from the grasp of the nations and developed for the habitation of that holy people that shall eventually inherit it. Very possibly many of those now living there will experience a change of heart by reason of some great happening that we cannot as yet foresee, and Israel's blindness begin to be turned away. But the fact must be stressed that the people who will hail the coming of the Kingdom in that land, and who will be in control when the Word of the Lord begins to go forth from Jerusalem, will be composed of individuals prepared beforehand for their mission and will come to the scene ready for the work. Chief among them will be the "Ancient Worthies", the faithful prophets and other mighty men of God of past ages, restored from the grave to take control of affairs in the new world.

The verse *"Ye shall be called the Priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God"* need not be taken in too "theological" a sense. Isaiah was not necessarily thinking either of the Melchisedek or the Aaronic priesthoods when he spoke those words. His point was that the mission of the holy people in the Holy Land in the Millennial Age will be to act as priests to mankind—dispensers of Divine favour. Men will look upon them as their ministers, the ones to explain to them the things of God. The Aaronic Priesthood will have passed away for ever; that priesthood belonged to the Age of Sacrifice and in the Millennium sacrifice of that kind will find no place. The true sacrifice for sin, our Lord's death, will be fully efficacious for "every man that cometh into the world". The figure of the Melchisedek Priesthood is fulfilled in the rulership of Christ and his Church over the world, ruling as kings and priests, like Melchisedek himself in the days of Canaan. There is no Scriptural suggestion that the earthly people in the Holy Land are pictured in the symbol of the Melchisedek priesthood. But so far as mankind in general are concerned, they will be the visible representatives of that priesthood and men will acknowledge them as such.

Sun of Righteousness, and the dew is the influence of heaven ever descending on his little ones.

TIMES AND SEASONS

7. The Period of the Judges (Part 2)



Probable Reconstruction of the Period of the Judges.

The first instalment, last issue, described the first two centuries of the Judges' rule, from the conquest under Joshua to the defeat of the Canaanites by Deborah and Barak, in the time of Rameses II and Merneptah, Pharaohs of Egypt.

* * *

The second half of the times of the Judges opens about the year 1200 BC, nearly two hundred years before David. The political domination of Canaan by the Hittites had long since passed away; the control exercised since then by Egypt had dwindled to a shadow, and Assyria had not yet arisen to threaten Israel. The twelve tribes could now, if they wished, become a powerful State in their own right and their own territory, able to resist all enemies—but it required a David to bring that about and David had not yet come. And Israel was still idolatrous. Some there were who were faithful to God and the Covenant, but the majority served the gods of the land, Baal and Moloch and Dagon. The Tabernacle at Shiloh, centre of national worship and the place of the Day of Atonement sacrifices, was probably at this very time the scene of an unknown disruption which resulted in the legal line of High Priests from Eleazar the son of Aaron being dispossessed in favour of a scion of the junior line of Ithamar. In the far north a rival sanctuary in Dan was served by apostate priests of the descendants of Moses where Jehovah was worshipped in the form of a graven image. All this meant that the penalty of the violated Covenant must again fall upon the people. And to all this has to be added the disastrous effect upon Israel from now on-

ward of another important factor, that unpredictable element, the weather.

It would seem that no researcher, modern or ancient, into the Book of Judges has ever considered the possible relation between the events of those times and the prevailing weather. Not surprising, perhaps, since nothing is said about weather in the Book and in any case until quite recent years nothing was known about weather conditions in the ancient world. Things are different now. The researches of leading climatologists such as Brooks early in this century and Lamb later on have established a fairly detailed picture of what our ancestors experienced in this field. With regard to the period in question, it is now known that about 1400 BC, just when Joshua was entering Canaan, there was a marked world climatic change which introduced a cool and rainy era persisting for two centuries. For naturally dry and hot desert areas such as the Middle East this facilitated generally fertile and productive conditions well suited to the needs of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples such as Israel and her neighbour nations. Agreeably to this, apart from the three relatively short periods of oppression from Chusan, Eglon and Jabin, described in Part I of this treatise, Israel enjoyed relatively long periods of "rest", times in which the national life went on generally unmolested. In fact the general prosperity and productiveness of the land might well have contributed to the decline into idolatry so characteristic of this period. So soon as the champion, Othniel or Ehud or Barak, had delivered them from the oppressor they went back contentedly to their farms and their lives of relative ease.

All this was to change and it was the climate that did it. Round about the year 1200 BC, say the climatologists, there was another sudden and drastic change in world climate. The rainy phase ended and a hot, dry era commenced which continued for another two centuries until the year 1000 BC—the time of David. The second half of the period of the Judges was to be subject to this very different state of the weather.

This warmer and drier climate—which was world-wide—had its effect upon the semi-desert regions of the Middle East, and so upon the dwellers in those regions. Crop-growing became more difficult because of diminished rainfall. Pasture for cattle became more difficult to find. The nomadic desert tribes who depended for their food largely upon Nature's wild-growing profusion found their supplies drying up, increasingly so as year succeeded year and the wilderness increasingly became desert. So they moved into the more settled territories where there were farmers with cultivated crops, and there were conflicts for food. In the first two centuries of Israel's occupancy of Canaan her enemies were the forces of the great military empires; in these later two centuries it is noteworthy that the empires are there no more. The enemies now are raiding parties of miscellaneous tribes, Midianites, Amalekites, Philistines, and their chief purpose is not political control but food and land. The whole picture now is that of tribes and communities on the move, seeking new lands where they can find sustenance for themselves and their flocks. Throughout these two centuries there was no more peace for Israel; almost all the time they were fighting off one or another of the surrounding tribes endeavouring to pillage their land and possessions. The most reasonable explanation for this sudden change in the affairs of Israel is to be found in the effect of this change of climate on their neighbours.

The first impact of this migration of peoples driven by hunger was the mass invasion of the central areas of Ephraim and Manasseh by the Midianites and "children of the east"—general term for the Bedouin Arabs of the eastern regions—in the time of Gideon. The story in Jud. 6. has all the signs of a starving multitude seeking food. They came across Jordan in their thousands, every year as soon as there were growing crops, and they *"destroyed the increase of the earth, and left no sustenance for Israel . . . as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number . . . and Israel was greatly impoverished."* They came with their cattle and tents, and eventually they came to stay. And so it was until the angel of the Lord came to Ophrah and appeared to Gideon.

The story of Gideon is well known, how that with only three hundred hand-picked men he put a hundred and thirty-five thousand Bedouin to flight by means of an artifice and defeated them so thoroughly that they troubled Israel no more—in fact the Midianites never appear again in Old Testament history as an adversary of Israel. For the moment, at any rate, the central tribes were free from food-raiding aliens.

For a God-fearing stalwart like Gideon, there is a sad and somewhat puzzling sequel. He had, before the decisive battle, built an altar to the Lord at Ophrah, at the Lord's behest, upon which he burned as an offering the appendages of Baal worship in his village (Jud. 6.24-31). Now after this signal defeat of the Midianites he collected their gold and raiment and from these fabricated an ephod, the sacred jewelled garment with which the High Priest of Israel communed with God to receive Divine instruction. This looks very much as if Gideon was setting up a centre of worship to rival the only authorised one at Shiloh where the Tabernacle was situated, and the question must immediately arise; why did Gideon, a man of faith and hitherto fully loyal to God, do such a thing. He had only just refused the request of Israel to reign over them as king on the grounds that the Lord was their king and the only one who should reign over them. The narrative says that *"all Israel went a-whoring after it; which became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house"* (Jud. 8.27). One is led to wonder if there is any connection between Gideon's apparently irreligious action and the unknown disruption which took the High Priesthood of Israel away from the legal line of Eleazar and gave it to the unauthorised line of Ithamar. No reason is given in the Old Testament for this transfer and there is not the slightest reference to it. Phinehas the grandson of Aaron is the last of Eleazar's line said to have been a High Priest and he died about a hundred and fifty years before Gideon. The next known High Priest is Eli, of the line of Ithamar, and he could have assumed office during Gideon's latter years. The descendants of Phinehas are recorded in the O.T. but no reference to their High Priesthood is made beyond Phinehas until Zadok in the time of David. Josephus, in his *"Antiquities"* (5. 11.5) does say that after Phinehas, his descendants Abishua, Bukki and Uzzi officiated as High Priests and after that the office passed to Eli; his authority for the statement is unknown. But if in fact the Midianite invasion and its aftermath in the time of Gideon did take place soon after the climatic change that inspired it, say about 1180-50, then Uzzi as an old man and Eli as a young man would fit in very well

and Josephus's assertion look very possible. Is it conceivable then that at this time there had been a kind of "power struggle" within the priesthood which resulted in the legal line vested in Uzzi being ousted and the unauthorised line, represented by Eli, taking his place? If such was the case, was Gideon's action an attempt to set up a separate sanctuary which could be served by the legal High Priest, Zerariah the son of Uzzi? It may have been a commendable idea, if so, but would not have the Lord's approval, for Shiloh was the place of his sanctuary, the Tabernacle, and He could be depended upon to rectify what man had done wrong—as in fact He did do in the days of Samuel. Be all this as it may, it must have been at about this time that the disruption occurred which placed Eli in office as High Priest, leading eventually to the corrupt state of the priesthood when later on Samuel appeared upon the scene.

So Gideon administered justice among the central tribes of Israel from his headquarters in Manasseh whilst either the young Eli or perhaps Eli's father officiated as High Priest at Shiloh. Manasseh and the north had peace for forty years, during which time Gideon died and his son Abimelech took power for three years. But while Manasseh and the northern tribes thus enjoyed a period of relative peace from the Midianites and peoples of the East, things were not so peaceful in the south.

The same climatic change which sent the Midianites scouring for food in central Israel also affected the Philistines in the south. Up to the days of Gideon, Israel had experienced no trouble with the Philistines; they kept themselves more or less to themselves. But about the time of this change, 1200 BC, the Philistines along the sea-coast had been caught up in a great wave of invaders by sea from the direction of Greece, the so-called "sea peoples", who invaded the coastal lands of the Middle East in force, with their possessions, women-folk and children, also searching for somewhere to live and secure food and the necessities of life. This mass movement of strangers reached Egypt and was only stopped by Pharaoh Rameses II in a great sea battle and series of land engagements. The impact of all this sent the Philistines moving in the direction of likely areas of settlement and so they now began to come into conflict with Israel. From this time, about 1180 BC, to the reign of David two centuries later, the Philistines were a constant thorn in the side of Israel. The Old Testament records their conflicts with Samson, Samuel, Saul and David but it does not give the reason for their constant forays—their need for food and land in a time of increasing drought

and famine. This is where Samson comes into the picture.

It is likely that Samson was born roughly soon after Gideon's death, round about 1140 BC. The forty years of Philistine oppression, which affected only the south-western area of Israel where Samson was born, coincided partly with the end of Gideon's forty years peace in central Israel, and partly with the following area of trouble, Gilead and the Ammonites, in which the Gileadite hero Jephthah figured. Eli would be High Priest, but his forty years' judgeship over Israel had not yet commenced. It was said of Samson, not that he would deliver, but that he would "*begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*". (Jud. 13.5) and this came true. Samson harried the Philistines a great deal but Israel suffered under them the whole twenty years of his judgeship. It was David at the end who finally broke the Philistine power.

Nearly a century of the hot dry climate had now elapsed and the effect was beginning to be felt in Israel with enemies pressing on every side. It was the time of almost incessant conflict which was now developing which eventually led up to Israel's demand to Samuel to make them a king. Despite the Covenant made at Sinai which constituted them a nation holy unto God, they were still no more than a loosely knit confederation of tribes, fighting each other as often as they were fighting outsiders. They were beginning to realise that they could only survive as a nation, but would not accept that nationhood in God's way. Most of them were still idolaters, so now, while Samson was alive and operating in the south-west against the Philistines, it seems that other martial figures arose to do battle in other parts, Tola in Ephraim and Jair in Gilead on the east of Jordan, each fighting a different enemy who sought to invade the land (Jud. 10. 1-5). This, it would seem, led up to the last great oppression and victory of Israel before the dawn of the new era associated with the last and greatest of the Judges, Samuel.

According to Jud. Ch. 10 the epoch of Gideon, of Tola and of Jair was followed by a time in which the apostasy of Israel was so great that the Lord "*sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the children of Ammon*" (Jud. 10.6-9). This must of necessity coincide with the Philistine oppression of which Samson was the central character. At the same time, says the narrative, the Ammonites from the east invaded Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Gilead—virtually the whole of central and eastern Israel. The hapless Israelites were caught on both sides and the result appears to have been a national repentance in response to which God

raised up a deliverer in the person of Jephthah the Gileadite (Jud. 11). Jephthah raised a force and carried the initiative into the enemies' land, defeating the Ammonites so decisively that they ceased to be a threat to Israel for nearly a century, until the time of Saul.

This campaign of Jephthah against the Ammonites provides the only definite chronological link afforded by the Book of Judges. It occurred three hundred years after the Entry to the land (Jud. 11.26), and so took place in 1113 BC or thereabouts. In so doing it brings the history into the period of Eli, Samuel and Saul, which have to be dated backwards from the known dates of Solomon and David. It follows that Eli was still High Priest and an old man, and that Jephthah's expedition must have been at about the same time that the child Samuel was brought to the Tabernacle at Shiloh by his mother. After Jephthah came three more local heroes, Ibzan in Bethlehem just after Samson's death, Abdon in Ephraim and Elon in the far north, Zebulun. Each probably fought the local enemies and ruled over local areas for a few years, and then as they passed away Samuel was coming into prominence as the last and the most noteworthy.

With the birth of Samuel the story passes from the Book of Judges to the First Book of Samuel. The time, a little over a century before the accession of King David, and a few years prior to Jephthah's deliverance of Israel from the Ammonites. Samson was just getting into his stride in his incursions against the Philistines but his exploits and influence only affected the south-west of the country and it is unlikely that Eli at Shiloh knew much about what was going on down there. From the First book of Samuel it would seem that there was no trouble from the Philistines until Samuel was at least in his twenties and this would be probably ten years or so after the death of Samson, so this all fits in.

The life of Samuel had three phases. First came his boyhood and attendance upon Eli to the latter's death, about twenty-five years. Next was the period he ruled Israel as its last Judge and turned them from idolatry to allegiance to God, about thirty-five years. Finally came his progressive relinquishing of power to Saul during the latter's reign of forty years. With the death of Samuel the period of the Judges comes to an end, and that of the Kings, in the person of David, commences.

Samuel could well have been brought to Eli by his mother as a six-year-old boy; unlikely any earlier. He was perhaps twelve when the Lord spoke to him in the sanctuary. At the time

alluded to in I Sam. 3. 19-21 when all Israel realised that he was established to be a prophet, and the Lord "*appeared again in Shiloh*" he was probably about twenty years of age. At this time, about 1090 BC, there could have been no interference in the affairs of Israel by other nations. Egypt had sunk into a period of decline under a succession of effeminate Pharaohs, the Ramessides; not until the time of Solomon did they count for anything in international affairs. The Hittites had been extinguished as a military power half a century earlier in the time of Gideon and Israel's northern borders were secure. Assyria, the other great oppressor, was fully occupied resisting the rising power of Babylon and in no mood for adventures in Israel. All this accounts for the fact that the narrative of Samuel's early life contains no hint of foreign invasion or oppression. The first intimation of that is in I Sam. 4.1. when the Philistines launched an invasion which resulted in the Israelites taking the Ark of the Covenant with them into battle and losing it to the enemy. Samuel might have been about twenty-five at that time, and Eli dying, as stated in the narrative, at ninety-eight.

Israel was now back under the dominion of the Philistines. Such deliverance as Samson had given them had not lasted many years. The Ark had been restored by the Philistines because of its disastrous effects upon them (I. Sam. 5 & 6), but it did not go back to Shiloh. It remained in a house at Kirjath-Jearim for the next twenty years (I Sam. 7.2) until under Samuel's leadership the nation came to a state of repentance before the Lord and Samuel called a great conference at Mizpeh to supplicate the Lord for deliverance. The Philistines, scenting sedition, came up against them, and this time the faith of Israel did not fail. This time they eschewed their weapons of war and trusted in the Lord that He would deliver. True to his word, He came out against the Philistines and with the forces of Nature so utterly defeated the invaders that they "*came no more into the coast of Israel*" and "*the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel*" (I. Sam. 7. 10-14). What Samson forty or so years earlier had failed to do by his armed might, Samuel had achieved by the power of faith. For a short space, perhaps fifteen or twenty years, all Israel was at peace with no threat from enemies, and Samuel travelled from place to place in circuit, to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, in turn, to judge and administer the affairs of Israel. He was the undisputed Head of State, and all Israel acknowledged his leadership and followed him in serving the Lord.

But Samuel was now growing old—he would have been about seventy by now—and although he had associated his two sons, Joel and Abiah, with him in the rulership, they did not follow in his ways. Like the renegade sons of Eli his predecessor, they *“turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment”* (1 Sam. 8.3). It is a sad thing to say, but the man who had converted and kept faithful to God a whole nation of several millions completely failed to do the same with his own sons. It happens so often, and the explanation seems so elusive, locked in the inscrutable mysteries of God. But the senior men of Israel were under no illusion. They knew that when their revered leader went the way of all flesh they would be leaderless as they had been before and they began to make plans for their national safety which looked back again to the arm of flesh. *“Behold”* they said to him, *“thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations”* (1 Sam. 8.5).

Samuel was despondent. He sensed the changing mood of the nation. A relatively long period of peace and prosperity was bringing back the old arrogance and they began to forget that their freedom from enemy interference had been due to the intervention of God on their behalf. They began to long for military adventure, to go out and harry other nations as they themselves had been harried. *“Nay”*, they said *“but we will have a king over us, that we may be like the other nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles”* (1 Sam. 8. 19-20). So Samuel went to the Lord with his problem.

The answer was probably unexpected. He was told to accede to the peoples' wish and give them a king. He did not know that in the wisdom and purposes of God the time of the Judges was now to come to an end and be succeeded by a monarchy. Israel was to learn that without loyalty to God the institution of a king would only bring disaster, as in fact it did four hundred years later when the monarchy in its turn came to an end. So Samuel, faithful to his God as ever, did as he was instructed and found a man for the purpose. Saul the son of Kish, a man of Benjamin, became Israel's first king.

Saul proved a failure. His early promise changed to arrogance and self-will, a refusal to heed the word of the Lord or to accept Samuel's still considerable authority in affairs of state. In fact, throughout his forty years' reign, he was

really little more than the leader of the army, spending most of his time fighting enemies who seemed increasingly to come against him the more he departed from the Lord. Amalekites, Ammonites, Philistines, they all rose up against him almost as if they sensed that the Lord's protecting hand was steadily being withdrawn. Sometimes he won the day and sometimes he lost. There is not much doubt that the civil administration of the nation was still largely in the hands of Samuel. And after about twenty-five years of increasingly unsatisfactory kingship Samuel received the Divine commission to seek out and anoint as future king a man whom God had chosen—David the shepherd boy.

With that act Samuel, the last of the Judges, began to sink into obscurity. With his death some ten years later at the advanced age of something like a hundred and five, and Saul's death in battle a couple of years or so afterwards, the period of the Judges came to an end. The acceptance of David as king over Judah at Hebron immediately upon Saul's death commenced the Period of the Kings, the monarchy. From the Entry of Israel into the Promised Land under Joshua to the enthronement of David at Hebron was a period of three hundred and eighty-five years. For something in the region of three-quarters of that time Israel was given over to idolatry, the worship of other gods, and to every possible violation of the Covenant. But there must have been a remnant, a loyal God-fearing residue which kept the faith alive through those dark years. When the light did break through during the forty years reign of the good king David, the Scriptures were still intact, the Books of the Law recording the ways of God from the time of creation up to David's own time, preserved by faithful souls through the years of unbelief for the benefit of generations yet unborn. At no time does God leave himself without a witness, and when the story did come to be read, it revealed faithfully and dispassionately the failures and the shortcomings of the people of God just as it dwelt upon their successes and their virtues.

The time of the Judges was a dark and tragic phase of Israel's history, but it was a necessary one in their development, and with all their later faults and backslidings they never fell quite so low again as they did in the days intervening between Joshua and Samuel.

To be continued

All the writings of the Scriptures centre round two persons—the Almighty Father and his Son, of whom these books are full, unifying and mak-

ing the Bible unique in itself and unequalled in the literature of the world.

PATIENT ENDURANCE

"Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise (Heb. 10.36).

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient. stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5.7-8).

James 5. 1-6 is a summons to the rich on earth to hear their coming judgments from Heaven, a call to halt their selfish aggression against fellow men who have become subordinate to the powers of this world "Go to now" or as the Greek indicates "Come now, listen"! The permission of self-government and selfishness is always limited to Divine Will. God holds the reins of every power in the universe. As He did with Pharaoh, so did He with Israel, the Amalekites and others famed in Old Testament story. But in the New Testament the summons by James definitely marks a time in our day—at the end of this Gospel Age—when a warning comes to the rich and heedless, and with it there comes from the Father a soothing portion for his own. "Be ye patient therefore, brethren: the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The Old Testament has its counterpart to this word of comfort in the exhortation of Psalms 50, "gather my saints together unto Me", immediately following that call to Heaven and earth to witness God's testimony against Israel, the burden of this Psalm. Since the particular details of these evils declared by God through James mark the present time, the parallel exhortation to his people to be patient also relates to the present. Do we not realise this? How often in our reflection of present conditions prevailing do we not cry out in the words of the Prophet "O that thou wouldst rend the Heavens and come down", and when looking upon sorrow and distress, with no power to ease the sad conditions, we use the words of David "has God forgotten to be gracious?". Yet as we turn our thoughts to our all-wise Father, with Abraham we declare in faith "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?". With all these emotions and aspirations comes the great need of possessing our souls in patience; to help us do this James exhorts us to observe in the prophets in past days an example of suffering affliction and of patience (verse 10).

Patience is a grace which adorns every true

Christian and is necessary as an element of character, to constitute us complete in Christ, in readiness for his revealing when He comes "with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15). The world is very impatient, like a raging sea, tossed to and fro. No rest, no content and no resignation to the ruling forces of the world (Luke 25.26). There shall be signs, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and this reveals conditions upon earth today. James 5. 1-4 explains the cause — selfishness, arrogance, pride; whereas the true Church is patient, restful, resigned to God's will and power, and amidst this raging storm is in the condition so beautifully shown by Psalm 46 "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed".

"There is a river." It is the privilege of the Church to dwell by this river—the Word of God. A calm, quiet flowing stream, an emblem of peace and rest, is this stream which makes glad the City of God. The streams or rivulets from this river are the issues of Light and Truth from God's Word; what more satisfying or refreshing thought in relation to present conditions can there be than the knowledge of the offering of Jesus for Adam and his posterity? When we quietly reason out the Plan of Redemption, the restoration of life, health and peace to all mankind, our hearts are comforted. The glorious resurrection, the returning home from the "land of the enemy", the wonderful effect of good it will have on nations and men towards God; how his name and that of our Lord's will be honoured by all who love righteousness! What an incentive to patience for us is that glorious vision of the City of God, the Holy Place of the Tabernacle of the Most High! The church is here represented as in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, in the world but not of it, feasting upon the shew-bread, the Word of God, enjoying the light from the golden candlestick, offering incense upon the golden altar, casting their all, as sweet incense before God, into the golden censer. Surely the fruitage of such a life give peace and rest. God is in the midst of her. Whilst everything that can be shaken will be shaken, the Church with her faith in God, dwelling in the secret place in tranquillity, is patiently awaiting the consummation; and where this is one's experience, patience has a good foundation and enables one to bear affliction and calamity with

calmness of mind, and to be unperturbed in unexpected trials. As in the case of Job, "the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away". "He knoweth the way that I take." Such a restfulness of faith is exhibited, that no experience, however sudden or peculiar, can perturb the heart thus at rest with God. Consider James 3.2. "If any man offend not in word or deed, the same is a perfect man". Surely this is Christ-like, for we read (1 Peter 2.2) that "when He was reviled, He reviled not again" and again, He "endured contradiction of sinners against himself".

The word Patience, as commonly used, merely carries the thought of bearing with, for the time being; as a business man with his customers may be obliging, painstaking, cheerful, and pleasing even to the inconsiderate one. Such a one is termed a patient man. But the Scriptural standard is higher than that. It is cheerfully, constantly enduring. Patience is the power of endurance as was shown by David after being anointed by Samuel, and in his experience with King Saul who sought to slay him. David could have taken Saul's life, but he endured, by self-constraint, withholding his hand, waiting in patience for God's due time. Psa. 40 declares, "I waited patiently; in waiting I waited". He manifested patience in that he endured wrong without rebellion. Let us remember, when in trials, that He will not suffer us to be tempted beyond that we are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10.13).

The promise of Rev. 3.10 is "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee from the hour of trial". The Philippian Church quietly retained their faith in God against a counterfeit representation of the Kingdom of God in the Judaism of their day. They patiently endured the wrong with full submission to the Will of God, who permitted this condition. We too, should endure in hope and patience that all evil systems mis-representing our Father will be destroyed in due time. But why this great need? The position to which we are called demands this. Jesus, our High Priest, was tested, tried, needing patience, that He might be a faithful High Priest. Are not we called to be Priests of God to the world of mankind? The needs of this office require a compassionate, sympathetic helper to the ignorant and those out of the way, hence the need of patience.

God is patient (Rom. 15.5) "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one towards another according to Christ Jesus". It is quite in order that those called to this position should not only manifest their in-harmony with sin, but additionally that their

general disposition should be one of thorough loyalty to the principles of love and patience. The importance of a cheerful, constant endurance in suffering on behalf of right (1 Pet. 2.10) is affirmed by the Apostle in 2 Tim. 3.10 and Titus 2.2.

Patience is a requisite all along our walk of faith. We need it in our earliest trials, and as we proceed it should become stronger and stronger until it becomes a conscious element and possession (Heb. 10.36). "For ye have need of patience that after ye have done the Will of God ye might receive the promise."

How is Patience developed? By the exercise of faith; by trial; by suspense of expected blessings, knowing that the trial of our faith worketh patience. Trials of being unjustly charged and misrepresented will bring to mind the story of Joseph in prison and the circumstances facing him there. No record of sourness or retaliation do we read, but just the reverse; a readiness to serve others and to ease their position. Think of Paul and Silas in prison, their feet in the stocks, their backs bleeding, their hopes dashed: yet at midnight they sang praises to God (Acts. 6.25). The great objective of our calling is character, and the experiences most suited to our temperament are the trials that await us (Rom. 5.3). Therefore patience is a fruitage and a product of trials when trials are rightly appreciated (Heb. 12.11). It is not mere quietism, but a strength in God in adhering to the principles of truth, purity and righteousness. Think of Joseph before Potiphar's wife and his stand; "how can I do this great wickedness and sin against God" (Gen. 39.9). If we could view our actions as for or against God, rather than merely against our neighbour, a stronger hand would check any violation of right and truth. James says "Let patience have her perfect work (come to completion) that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing"; that you may be deficient in nothing; an offering without a blemish, being perfect (in your faith and its fruitage) even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.

Ephesians 5.7 "that He (Jesus our Lord) might present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing". Do not expect this grace to mature quickly. From its very nature it must be of slow growth, but with growth becomes stable, like the oak tree. Joseph manifested patience to a remarkable degree, and waited seventeen years before gratifying his desire to see his father. Not once was self effort made to do that apart from Divine Providence. What a lot of difficulties we find ourselves in through taking our affairs too readily into our

own hands, and in running before the Lord. Through all the vicissitudes of life Joseph maintained his hold upon the promises of God by patiently enduring in cheerful constancy.

The need of Patient Endurance is more necessary now than at any time. Paul exhorts us to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and perfecter of our faith. The powers of evil are still opposed to God, and his purposes for us. The "harvest" still continues. The closing scenes of gleaning, sifting, and storing of the remaining wheat are still before us, and only by possessing patience as an element of our character can we hope to stand, and withstand the evils of our day, and become

fully developed grains of wheat. Peter says (1 Pet. 3.4) "Decorate the hidden man with what is incorruptible, even a meek and quiet spirit (which is composed of great patience) and which is in the sight of God of great price" (*Diaglott*).

Let us then emulate these notable characters and put on patience. In these days of waiting may the "Lord direct your hearts unto the love of God and the patient waiting for Christ" (2 Thess. 3.5) and the words of Heb. 6.11 be fulfilled in each one of us: "*We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end; that ye be not slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises*".

A NOTE ON GENESIS 1.6-8

In the second creative day God made what Genesis 1. 6-8 calls the "firmament" the expanse of air which surrounds the earth. The Hebrew word is *raqia*, which means something stretched and beaten out, as a piece of gold beaten out into a thin wide sheet, or a veil stretched out over an empty place. The A.V. term comes from the Vulgate, and is the Latin "*firamentum*", meaning something solid or firm; this was due to the early belief that the sky was a solid vault in which the sun, moon and stars were fixed and which had portals through which the winds could blow upon the earth. Yet there is wonderful truth in the Genesis record. The firmament or atmosphere was to divide the waters below from the waters above. It is a familiar sight to watch the rain clouds sail by floating upon the upper air like ships on the sea; it is not always so easily recognised what colossal forces are involved. The amount of water vapour carried by the atmosphere over each square mile of the earth's surface amounts to the staggering total of 70,000 tons. If it all came down at once there would be some extensive floods, but no, the air holds it up and allows that which is necessary for the welfare of the world to come down as rain. Truly Job said "*dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge . . . hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, as a molten looking-glass*" (mirror) — Job 37. 16-18. The air we breathe is so familiar a thing that we do not stop to consider how vital it is to life and what evidence there is of Divine planning in its provision. There is just a sufficiently thick belt of it around the earth to suit the needs of man and all animals. Two miles up breathing becomes difficult; at an altitude of six or seven miles

human life is impossible without artificial aids. We must live, and move, and have our being in this close compass. And yet this atmosphere of ours is enough to shield us from so many natural forces which would otherwise harm or destroy us. Cosmic rays, reaching us from outer space, would speedily destroy all life upon earth were it not for the atmosphere which captures and renders them harmless before reaching the ground. Meteors and shooting stars are burned up and disintegrated by the air long before they reach the earth's surface—just as well, for every day some twenty-five million meteors, most tiny ones, enter the earth's atmosphere and unless burned up would finish on the surface of the earth. The air tempers the sun's heat by day and conserves it by night; without it we should be alternately scorched and frozen. It provides oxygen for men and animals to breathe and carbon dioxide for plants to take. It was when air was breathed into Adam's nostrils that his bodily organism went into action and he awoke and became a living soul. It is when a man's breath goeth forth that he returns to his earth and in that very day his thoughts perish (Psa. 146. 4). The air is the vehicle of natural life to man; in just the same way the Holy Spirit is the vehicle of Divinely given life to man. It is not without reason that the Hebrew word *ruach* in the Old Testament and the Greek word *pneuma* in the New Testament mean both breath and spirit. In the minds of the inspired writers there was no real difference. The life that is in man, although outwardly sustained by the air around us, is also sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. In him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28).



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

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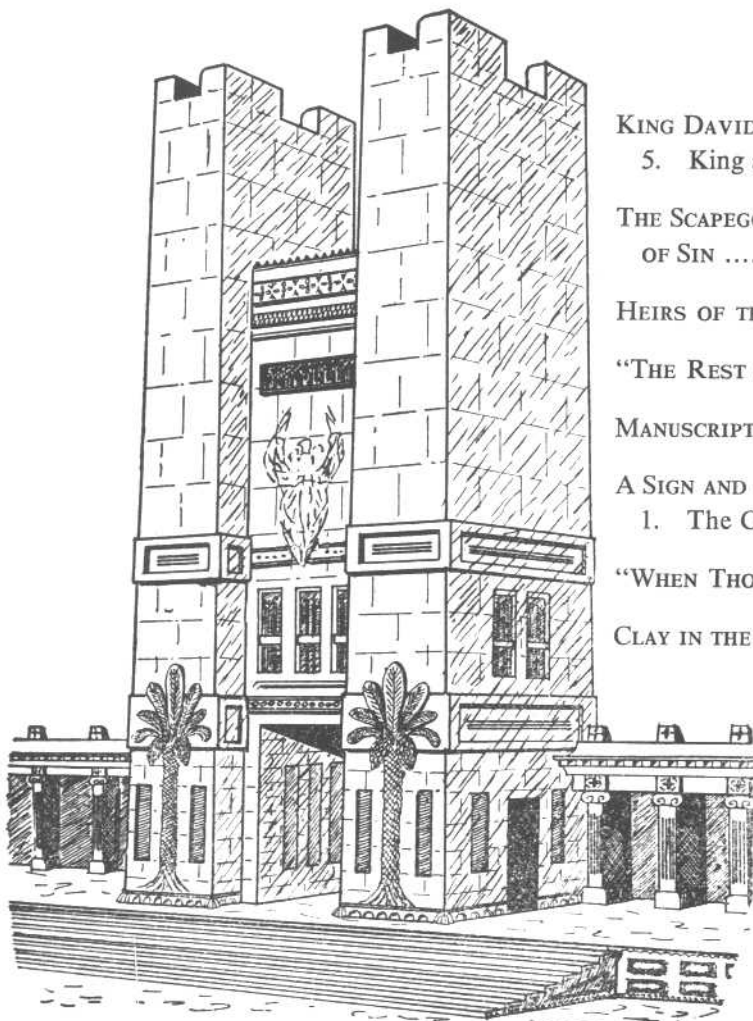
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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JOY IN AFFLICTION

"I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed" (2 Cor. 7.4, RSV).

Paul was a strange man. The world would say, "He was a fool! How can a man have joy in the midst of affliction?" But Paul goes on beyond "joy". He says, "I am overjoyed!" Is this an impossibility? After all, all of us have had trial, afflictions and troubles of all kinds.

But Paul's afflictions were heavy and real! In 2 Cor. 7.5 he writes, *"We were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within."* In 2 Cor. 1.8, 9, Paul felt that death was imminent. But even in the midst of all these difficulties he sees this made him rely upon God and to anticipate deliverance from affliction.

How did this deliverance come? First, by the coming of Titus, his beloved "son in the faith". This young man brightened and lightened the burdens of the aged apostle. Second, Titus, we read (2 Cor. 7.7) brought welcome news of the improvement of the spiritual health of the Corinthian brethren. Now, all of Paul's afflictions and fears suddenly seem to disappear. There was a revival in Corinth! They had cleaned house! Third, in verse 13, Paul had heard of the way Titus had been refreshed while in Corinth. This was the way Paul wanted to be encouraged.

Brethren, let this be a lesson to us, that we may learn to be a source of joy to one another in the Lord, that we may walk obediently before the Lord.
(Berean News)

NOTICES

A request: A reader in the U.S.A. is desirous of obtaining copies of the BSM prior to 1964—long since out of print. If anyone has such copies and is willing to dispose of them will they please communicate with Mr. B. C. Seremak, 4120 Orchard Way, Birmingham, Mich. 48010, U.S.A. Bro. Seremak will be happy to meet postal costs. (Note for British readers: the cheapest way to send packets of BSM to U.S.A. is by Printed Papers Reduced Rate. The parcel must be tied with string easy to untie for postal inspection and marked on the address label "Printed Papers Reduced Rate".)

* * *

Features in this issue. There seems to have been a recrudescence of interest in the "disputed text", Rev. 20.5 ("the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished"). Several requests have been recently received for the treatise published in 1966 on this subject and since that issue is now out of print we are republishing the treatise in this issue for general interest.

The final instalment of "Times and Seasons" has had to be omitted from this issue; it should appear in the next..

Gone from us



Bro. H. Chrimes (*Altrincham*)

Bro. H. Penfold (*Chelmsford*)

Sis. D. Slater (*Windsor*)



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

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

5. King at Hebron

Three days had elapsed since the battle of Gilboa, which had ended the reign and the life of Saul. The Philistines now occupied the northern half of Israel and the people had no king and no military deliverer. David, newly returned to his base at Ziklag from one of his forays into Amalekite territory, was still in ignorance of the turn of events. All that he knew was that his friend Achish, the Philistine chieftain of Gath, had gone with his men to join the Philistine forces at war with Saul, and had not yet returned. The relationship between Judah/Simeon in the south, where David was located, and the northern tribes acknowledging Saul, was so tenuous that those in the south neither knew nor cared what happened in the north. The Philistines were not interested in the barren mountains of the south; their goal was the rich pasture territory of the north, and so Judah was relatively unaffected by the war.

On that third day a stranger appeared in Ziklag, clothes rent and travel-stained, bearing every outward evidence of exhaustion and distress. He was brought before David and asked about his mission and from whence he had come. "*Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped*" he replied, and instantly David's interest was aroused. "*How went the matter? I pray thee, tell me*" was his quick rejoinder. Thus it was that David heard the dread news of the defeat and decimation of the armies of Israel, the flight of the inhabitants and occupation of the land by the invading Philistines, and the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. That must have been a severe blow to David. Jonathan, the one he loved as a brother, the one who had been so faithful a friend during the vicissitudes of his life with Saul, who had so willingly renounced his own claim to the throne in favour of his friend David; Jonathan was dead. Who can doubt that in the anguish of that news David the resolute and hardened warrior turned his face away from his fellows that they might not perceive his grief.

The moment passed. "*How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead?*" he demanded of the man before him. The verity of the news must needs be checked. In return he received a circumstantial account of how the young man had "*happened by chance*" upon Mount Gilboa and came upon Saul wounded to death, and upon Saul's request administered a final stroke to end his life. As evidence of the truth of his story he produced the "crown" and

"bracelet", more properly a kind of chaplet, worn round the head, and an arm-band, denoting Saul's kingship, which he had taken from Saul's body and had brought to David, thinking thus to curry favour with the man whom he knew would now become king of Israel.

He had mistaken his man. David had consistently refused to lift up his own hand against the Lord's anointed, waiting the Lord's own time for removing Saul from the scene. He was certainly not going to endorse what this young man claimed to have done. More, he was going to show his disapproval in the sight of all his followers in the most drastic fashion. Because he had not scrupled to lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed, he should die; David gave the command, and the sentence was executed forthwith.

David's lament over the death of Saul and Jonathan, recorded in 2 Sam. 1, is a masterpiece of heroic poetry. How much of it was a genuine expression of David's own feelings, and how much intended to win over Saul's erstwhile adherents, is rather difficult to say. Some of the sentiments expressed, if genuinely felt, were more than kind to Saul. To say, as vs. 23 does say, that "*Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided*", by no means reflects the animosity Saul did display towards his eldest son. It is also very doubtful if Saul really did treat his people so generously as vs. 24 would imply. Perhaps the fairest appraisal of this eulogy is that David, in the generosity of his heart, closed his eyes to the many faults of Saul and the manner in which he had persecuted David, and extolled his good points. The man was dead now, and in the hands of the Lord, and David was not going to bear him any grudge.

Verse 18 in the A.V. is badly translated. The sense of the verse is that David instructed that all his people should be taught the words of this lament; as a poetic composition it was probably set to music and recited or sung on important occasions. "*Behold, it is written in the Book of Jasher*" remarked the writer of 2 Samuel, indicating that it found a place in the contents of that book. The "Book of Jasher" has not survived; it is mentioned twice in the O.T. and it would appear to have comprised a collection of songs or narratives of notable events in Israel's early history, compiled in the days of David or Solomon, or later. (There is an extant book in English claiming to be the lost "Book of Jasher"

but this is in fact a forgery first published in Bristol in 1751 and republished once or twice since, and has no validity.)

But now it was time for action. There could be no more dallying in Ziklag, no more fraternising with the Philistines. The king of Israel was dead, and many in Israel would be waiting and expecting a move on David's part to take the crown. From various allusions in the books of Samuel and Chronicles it is clear that many in the northern tribes were secretly in sympathy with David though still remaining loyal to Saul; now that Saul was dead they could come out into the open and espouse David's cause. In fact some from the northern tribes had joined the band of desperadoes surrounding David during his years in the wilderness. So now was the time to move.

That move was not to go unchallenged. Saul was survived by one son, Ish-bosheth or Ish-baal—the two names are in fact identical, meaning man of Baal, an indication of Saul's own apostasy—now a little under forty years of age. Abner, cousin to Saul, an astute and resolute man, commander of Saul's army, took Ish-bosheth to Mahanaim, a town on the eastern side of Jordan, where he could be well out of the reach of both David and the Philistine conquerors, and there proclaimed him king over Israel in succession to his father. Ish-bosheth was a weakling, physically and mentally; the real power behind the throne was Abner, but the northern tribes accepted the position and Ish-bosheth began to exercise a shadow of royal power, more in name than in substance, whilst David in the south was actively preparing to win the allegiance of all Israel.

David's first action must obviously be to select for himself a capital from which to rule. (It must be remembered that Jerusalem was not yet in the territory or possession of the Israelites; it was at this time held by a Canaanite tribe, the Jebusites), 2 Sam. 2.1 says that he "*enquired of the Lord*". Abiathar, the then serving High Priest, had been with David for some seven years past, since Saul had annihilated the priesthood, and it would have been through the instrumentality of Abiathar that David made enquiry. Back came the answer from the Lord that he was to go to Hebron, in the centre of the territory of Judah. So to Hebron David went, he and his two wives, his six hundred hardy warriors, and all his property, and there established himself. To David at Hebron came the responsible men of Judah and there they pledged loyalty to David as King.

There were now two kings in Israel, David in the south, recognised as such by the tribes of Judah and Simeon, and Ish-bosheth in the east, accepted by the remaining ten tribes. War was

inevitable, and war was not long in coming.

The first move was made by David. He sent messengers to the men of Jabesh-gilead, notorious fighters and fiercely loyal to Saul, to praise them for their loyal action in penetrating Philistine occupied territory and recovering the publicly exposed bodies of Saul and his sons from the enemy, taking them to Gilead and affording them honourable burial. 2 Sam. 2.5-7 records his words of commendation and his promise that he would hold them in high honour and esteem because of their loyalty to their deceased king. He then went on to indicate, rather artfully it would seem, that the men of Judah had proclaimed him king over Israel in succession to Saul, and left it to be inferred that he hoped and expected to have them render him the allegiance they had formerly given their dead master. The men of Jabesh-gilead were renowned fighters and it is evident that David wanted to get them on his side.

In the meantime Abner was not idle. He crossed the Jordan from Mahanaim with a force of men, mainly of Benjamin, Saul's own tribe, and met David's fighters under Joab, nephew of David, at Gibeon in Benjamin. Joab had therefore already invaded enemy territory. At Abner's suggestion there was a preliminary skirmish between twelve selected men from each side, both sides to accept the outcome as conclusive without further fighting. (2 Sam. 2.14-16). This very gentlemanly arrangement was frustrated by the unexpected fact that all the members of both parties managed to kill each other so that neither side could claim the victory. The issue was then put to the test by more orthodox methods, "*and there was a very sore battle that day*", the consequence of which was that Abner's men were heavily defeated and put to ignominious flight, followed hard by the triumphant men of Judah. The victory was marred by the untimely death of Asahel, younger brother of Joab, at the hands of Abner himself, and this led to later repercussions in the political manoeuvring which eventually left David safely installed as king over all Israel. For the moment, however, the honours went to David with only twenty men dead as against three hundred and sixty of the enemy.

David reigned seven and a half years in Hebron, undisputed king over the southern area of Judah and Simeon. During all that time the war with their northern fellow-Israelites dragged on, with David steadily winning the ascendancy. As is said in 2 Sam. 3.1, "*there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David, but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*". David himself, however, found time in the

intervals between battles to take to himself four more wives and by the end of this period had become the father of six sons. The transformation of guileless shepherd boy to typical Eastern autocrat was already well under way. Later on in his life he added to his harem ten concubines and a few more wives. The prediction made to Samuel by the Lord when Israel first asked for a king, to the effect that a king would please himself what he did with his subjects, proved true not only in the case of Saul but also in that of David—and most of the kings who came after him.

But now disruption arose in the house of Saul. A quarrel broke out between Ish-bosheth and Abner over one of Saul's concubines, Rizpah. Abner manifested great indignation at what he asserted was a false accusation and declared his intention of transferring his allegiance to David. It is probable that he used the incident as an excuse; Abner must have realised that the cause of Saul was doomed and he welcomed the opportunity of changing over to the winning side while yet there was time. He was too astute a politician not to discern which way the wind was blowing. So he went to David with his offer to translate the northern kingdom to David's sovereignty so that David would be king in truth "*from Dan even to Beer-sheba*", the traditional limits of the Promised Land. He had already taken the precaution of consulting the elders of the northern tribes, reminding them, first, that they had in past times commended David and wished for him to become king, and second, that the Lord had promised that by the hand of David He would save his people out of the hand of the Philistines, and from all their enemies (2 Sam. 3.17-18). Since the northern kingdom was still occupied by the Philistines following the death of Saul the arguments of Abner must have carried considerable weight and when to this he was able to secure the assent and support of Saul's—and his—own tribe of Benjamin, which was really the only personal source of backing Saul's son Ish-bosheth could expect, Abner probably felt that he had put together a package which David would find it hard to resist.

He was right. David knew full well that Abner was the only man on the enemy side with any real ability. Moreover he would be a very useful man to have on his own side, not only for his political sagacity and military valour, but as a counter-check to his own chief men, his nephews Joab and Abishai, who were apt to presume upon their relationship to pressure him into enterprises into which he did not wish to enter. So David arranged a conference—and a feast—with Abner at Hebron, conveniently at a time when Joab

was away with the fighting forces—David also was learning the arts of politics himself — at which a mutually satisfactory arrangement was signed, sealed and settled. As proof of good faith, Abner had already, at David's insistence, brought to Hebron David's wife Michal, Saul's daughter, whom he had been compelled to leave behind six years or so earlier when he fled from Saul, so that David was re-united with her at last. What Michal had to say when she found that her husband had acquired six other wives and a family of six sons in the interim the writer of 2 Samuel did not think necessary to record.

David's complacency did not last. Joab came back to Hebron almost immediately after Abner had left and speedily found out what was afoot. He went to David and reproached him bitterly for accepting Abner as an ally. "*Thou knowest Abner, the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee . . . and to know all that thou doest*" he told him heatedly (ch. 3, 25). He may or may not have believed that himself; what he did know was that the advent of Abner posed a threat to his own position as David's chief man, and he was not going to tolerate that at any price. Moreover he had a personal grudge against Abner who had slain his brother Asahel and he sought to avenge Asahel's death. He went out from David's presence without more ado, probably in a towering rage, and sent messengers after Abner to recall him to Hebron on some pretext. Having secured his return, he took him aside quietly in conversation and assassinated him there and then.

The act was a serious breach of hospitality. While Abner was in Hebron, he was, according to the rigid code of the East, under the protection of David. He would not have come otherwise. In ordinary circumstances the assassin would have suffered death immediately. But Joab was David's own nephew. There was, after all, nothing he could do about it. Abner was dead, and any advantage David could have had from the agreement was lost. On the other hand there was now no one on the side of Saul's house who counted for anything and David could rely on a comparatively easy suppression of any further resistance. He contented himself therefore with making it plain that he had had nothing to do with the death of Abner and that he condemned the act. The deceased politician was given a State funeral at Hebron with King David as chief mourner and all the people as spectators. "*All the people and all Israel understood that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner*" (ch. 3.37). "*Know ye not*" said David in his funeral peroration to the people "*that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?*" There could be more than a suspicion that David was trying to

get into the good graces of Abner's own people so soon to be his subjects.

The news of Abner's death created universal consternation in Mahanaim. Both king and people knew that their only champion was gone and they were now entirely at the mercy of David. Ish-bosheth is indicated in ch. 4.1 to have virtually given up the contest and waited for the outcome. Inevitably, there were two more military commanders who concluded it was time to change sides. Baanah and Rechab, men of the tribe of Benjamin, used their privilege of access to go to the house of Ish-bosheth during his midday siesta and callously assassinate him, cutting off his head, escaping unseen, and making their way to Hebron and to David. They came gloating into his presence. "*Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul thine enemy, which sought thy life: and the Lord hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed*" (ch. 4.5).

David was outraged. He rose from his seat in anger. "*As the Lord liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity . . . when wicked men have slain a righteous person upon his bed, shall I not therefore now . . . take you away from the earth?*" So Baanah and Rechab suffered death for their crime, and their bodies were hung up and publicly displayed in Hebron.

It is easy to dismiss these successive acts of David as mere diplomacy aimed at securing the favour of the men of Israel who formerly supported Saul but it is much more likely that there was genuine magnanimity here on the king's part. He had no real need to court the favour of

Israel; he was superior in military force and he knew it, and they knew it. His undisputed acceptance as king by all Israel was now only a matter of time. His past history of sparing Saul's life when he could quite easily have slain him and thus secure the kingship, preferring to wait until the Lord should give it to him, is on a par with his generosity to the survivors of Saul's house and his supporters. David bore no resentment toward his fallen foes and he had no fear of any future danger from them, and that was because he possessed a fixed faith that because God had promised he should have the kingdom there was no power on earth that could frustrate that design. He was prepared to wait.

And he had waited. Probably about sixteen years old when anointed by Samuel as the Lord's choice, nineteen when he slew the giant Goliath and first attracted the notice of Saul, he was now thirty-seven and had reigned as king over two tribes for some seven years. The true fulfilment of the promise, that he should reign over all Israel on the throne of the Lord, was about to be realised. With the deaths of Abner and Ish-bosheth there were no other claimants to the throne and no other leader able to challenge the Philistines, who still held the greater part of the country in thrall. By common consent, all the tribes sent their representatives to Hebron to invite David to be their king, and all the elders made a solemn covenant "*before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel*".

To be continued

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD?

"*Thou crownest the year with thy goodness*" (Psa. 65.11). "*The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*" (Psa. 145.9).

The human mind staggers in its efforts to comprehend the mental resources of a Being who is able to assume and to bear such responsibility. Think for a moment of the memory that never fails; of the judgment that never errs; of the wisdom that plans for eternity without the possibility of failure, and that times that plan with unerring precision for the ages to come; of the power and skill which can harness even every opposing element, animate or inanimate, and make them all work together for the accomplishment of his grand designs; of the tireless vigilance that never ceases, nor seeks relief from the pressing cares of universal dominion, whose eye never sleeps, whose ear is ever open, and who is ever cognisant of all the necessities, and active in all the interest of his broad domains.

Well has the Psalmist said, in consideration of the immensity and minutæ of God's providence over all his works, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain*

unto it" (Psa. 130.6). No, we cannot attain unto it, but oh! what a thrilling of mingled reverence, love and adoration fills the heart, when thus we catch a glimpse of the intellectual and moral glory and majesty of our God! As we thus contemplate him, all Nature becomes eloquent with his praise. "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night sheweth knowledge*" (Psa. 19.1). They tell of the order and harmony of the circling spheres, and the benevolent purposes of their great Creator and Controller, as the changing seasons and the alternating days and nights fill up the copious horn of plenty and refresh and invigorate the animate creation.

His wise purposes shall be accomplished. The ultimate design in all his works is the firm establishment of universal harmony and peace, and the eternal happiness of all his subjects. How great is our God! His goodness toward us is immeasurable. He crowns the year with his goodness. (P.H.)

THE SCAPEGOAT AND THE REMOVAL OF SIN

The ritual of the "scapegoat" in the Day of Atonement sacrifices as laid down in Lev. 16. 5-22 has puzzled theologians and commentators in all ages, principally through an imperfect view of its relation to the Ransom, the act of death upon the Cross of our Lord which redeemed the human race from the effect of primal sin, the death sentence passed upon Adam and consequently his posterity. The philosophy of the Ransom deals with a profound mystery, the reason why our Lord must needs die upon the Cross in order that the death sentence might be removed. In earlier centuries it was held that God had purchased mankind back from the Devil by means of the life of Christ, man, having fallen into sin, being rightfully the property of the Devil. This view, supported by such notable early Christians as Irenæus and Tertullian, was superseded in the Twelfth century by the doctrine of "Divine appeasement", which declared that God, justly incensed against man because of sin, was appeased by the sacrifice of the blood of Christ, and so set me free. Following this came the doctrine that Divine Justice demanded a sacrifice of blood—whose blood did not matter—before it would relinquish its claim upon guilty man. From this later belief was developed the doctrine of substitution which is familiar today; the human life of Christ voluntarily given as an equivalent—a "corresponding price", as I Tim. 2. 5-6 has it—to the human life of Adam, thus freeing Adam and all his posterity condemned in him to the condition of life he possessed before his death, preparatory to the subsequent work of Christ removing the effects of sin and restoring him to a condition of acceptableness with God.

The similarity between these doctrinal views and the blood-sacrifices of the Day of Atonement rendered it inevitable that a connection between the two should be seen by students. Andrew Jukes' *"Law of the Offerings"* (late 19th cent.), is probably the classical work on the subject and in this each successive sacrifice in the ritual of Lev. 16. is presented as a portrayal of the death of Christ. Jukes and his fellows, however, did not realise that the Ransom, as a single act having for its purpose the release of the human race from the death sentence, cannot be properly pre-figured in the Day of Atonement sacrifices, which from their very nature pictures the actual process of removing sin from a guilty people and leaving them clean in the sight of

God. The man, released from death and restored to conscious life by virtue of the Ransom, still needs the conversion and rehabilitation and growth into Christ-likeness which is the object of Christ's Second Coming and his Kingdom before he can enter into full communion and harmony with God. This is the object of the sin-offering.

This may be better appreciated if the purpose of the Levitical ritual is considered. It was to bring the nation of Israel into a state of ceremonial reconciliation with God by formally removing their national sin and declaring them clean. It thus prefigured the process by which sin is actually removed from mankind and the human race constituted perfect and fitted for God's ultimate purpose. The Ransom, given and finished at Calvary, did not do this for man. The reconciliation of man to God is completed by Christ only during his Second Advent and the Millennial Age.

The purpose in the offering of the blood of the sacrifice in all primitive ceremonial, among all races and faiths, deistic or pagan, is that of giving or devoting life to God (*"the blood is the life thereof"* Lev. 17.14. Deut. 12.23) in co-operation with God in his work for man, by giving him vigour or life to use for that purpose, and to strengthen the communion-bond between the offerer and God. This theme runs through all primitive sacrifice, and always the idea is a yielding of life to God that He might use it for the renewed life of mankind. E.O. James has said, in *"Comparative Religion"* (1938) that *"this is the most fundamental principle in the institution of sacrifice through its long and complex history—the giving of life to promote and preserve life and remove impurity. The slaying of the victim is only incidental as a means of liberating the life contained in the blood, and, therefore, the ritual centres not in the killing but in the disposition of the vital essence"*.

This is an important principle and vital to a true conception of the nature and purpose of the Levitical sin-offering. It explains why in the second half of Isaiah and throughout the New Testament there is such insistence upon the voluntary yielding of life to God in order that all men might eventually be blessed. The idea is that there is a force, a power, in that surrendered life which God uses in bringing renewed life to the world. That force is engendered by the

experiences of life of the offerer. In the case of our Lord this was the product of his three and a half years of his ministry, as distinct from the moment of his death, the actual laying down of life, so the writer to the Hebrews explains that it was necessary for Christ to pass through these experiences, "*made like unto his brethren that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest . . . in that he himself having suffered being proved, he is able to succour them that are proved*" (Heb. 2:17-18). The fact that He himself has passed through a life subject to the same woes and troubles as other men yields a power which enables him to become the author of eternal salvation to all who will obey him (Heb. 5:2-10). Hence it was our Lord giving himself in complete devotion to the Father's will that called into being a force that will regenerate the world in the next Age. The physical life came to an end on the Cross and this was the Ransom. The force remained and has its place in the regeneration of the world. So Isaiah says "*he hath poured out his soul (physical life) unto death*"—a gradual process, mark. "*He shall see of the travail*"—another continuous process—"of his soul, and shall be satisfied". It is in this sense that God "*shall make his soul an offering for sin*" (Isa. 53:10-12).

Thus in the ceremonial of Lev. 16 the blood of the bullock was sprinkled upon the Ark of the Covenant in the "Most Holy" in symbol of establishing communion and reconciliation with God and yielding up life to him as a force to be used in his future purposes. This sprinkling pictured, not the death of Christ on the Cross, which was the act of a moment, but the work of his life, the communion and devotion and willing surrender which provided that which was afterwards to be used in the work of reconciliation. The life of Christ as well as his death was necessary to his disciples. From his death and by reason of faith in the efficacy of his death they are released from condemnation and stand justified before God; from his life they draw the instruction, the inspiration, the incentive, the very power which enables them to give themselves in their turn to God for his further purposes. "*We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*" (Rom. 5:10). Even if that be his resurrection life, that is but a continuation and development of the life on earth. From the three and a half years in Galilee and Judea is born all that will eventually come to fruition in both the lives of both the Church and the world.

The ceremonial now passes to the second part of the offering, that of the "Lord's goat". The sacrifice is offered and the blood is sprinkled in

exactly the same fashion as with the bullock. There is a difference, but it is not one of principle but of degree. The goat is of considerably lesser strength and value than the bullock. This repetition suggests a succeeding offerer, one also coming for communion with God and to yield life to God, whose offering is likewise to be utilised in God's future purposes. The similarity of the call and the experiences of Christ's Church to his own in all matters apart from the Ransom of mankind does suggest that in the ritual of the Lord's goat there is pictured the offering of the corporate Church during its two thousand years of history. Just as the consecrated life of our Lord blossomed into a resurrection life which shall ultimately be the means, not of the world's Ransom, which was completed at Calvary, but of the world's reconciliation to God, which will be effected in the coming Millennial Age, so will this consecrated life of the Church blossom into a corporate resurrection life in which all the spiritual vitality which has been engendered as a result of the "Narrow Way" will find full scope for its dynamic power in the missionary work that, under Christ, shall bring about the world's conversion.

The way is thus open for that conversion, but—the world is still in sin. The Ransom has purchased humanity to Christ, and He will have repealed the death sentence passed upon Adam, and they will be returned from the dead, and live, and stand upon their feet, "*an exceeding great army*". The Millennial kingdom will have been established, but—sin will still not yet have been removed. Man will not yet be standing sinless before God.

It is this work of actual removal of sin, the work to which the Millennial Age is devoted, which is pictured in the final ceremony, the ritual of the scapegoat.

Here again we meet with something very fundamental in primitive religion, the loading of the sins of a community on to an animal which is then driven away so that it never finds its way back; thus the sins of the community are in symbol literally taken away. The early Sumerians had a ritual of this nature in which the sins of the people were confessed over the head of a wild goat which was then driven away into the forests. Herodotus describes a similar practice in ancient Egypt where a white bull was similarly treated and then drowned in the Nile. The idea must have been clear to Israel. Communion with God having been established, and the offering of life made in order to effect reconciliation, it remained only to effect sinlessness by carrying all the national sins away to a land where they could be lost and forgotten. "*As far as the east is from the*

west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psa. 103. 12) The scapegoat carried the sins of Israel to a distant land from whence they never came back. Only then was atonement completed.

The relevant passage describing the ritual of the "scapegoat" is contained in Lev. 16.7-10 "And he (Aaron, the High Priest) 'shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord . . . and Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other for azazel . . . but the goat, on which the lot fell for azazel, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go azazel into the wilderness'".

This word *azazel*, occurring here for the only time in the Old Testament, gave the early translators and commentators a great deal of trouble. They took it as a proper name, to balance with the other goat, which was "for the Lord". Late Jewish tradition declared it to be the name of an evil spirit inhabiting the wilderness, whilst the early Christians, led by Origen (2nd cent) held it to be a name of Satan the Devil. In point of fact the word is compounded from "*az*" a goat, and "*azal*" to send away or to separate, and simply means "a goat for sending away" or "the sent-away goat".

At the appropriate time in the ceremony the two goats were brought before the High Priest, one standing on each side. He put both hands into the box and drew out the two lots, one in each hand. The lots were small tabs, one of yellow boxwood, described "for the Name" (i.e. the Lord) and the other of black ebony, inscribed "for the sent-away goat". The lot in his right hand he laid on the head of the goat on his right, the other on that of the other goat, exclaiming as he did so, "to the Lord, a sin-offering".

After the "Lord's goat" had been offered the High Priest pronounced the confession of Israel's sins over the head of the live goat. In so doing he symbolically transferred the entire weight of sin for which atonement had been made to the live goat, that it might carry that sin away into the wilderness and never return. According to the great Twelfth century Jewish scholar Maimonides the confession ran as follows:—

"O Lord, thy people, the house of Israel, have sinned and done iniquity, and trespassed before thee, O Lord, I beseech thee, cover over the sins, the iniquities, and the transgressions that thy people, the house of Israel, have sinned and transgressed against thee, as it is written in the law of Moses thy servant saying, 'that in this day he shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you from all your sins before the Lord; and ye shall be clean'".

All this was in accordance with the instruction given by the Lord to Moses and recorded in Lev. 16. 20-21. "He shall bring the live goat, and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited".

The goat was thus led away to an uninhabited place so remote that it was virtually certain to remain away. If by any chance it did find its way back, it was considered that the sins had come back with it and the nation remained guilty before God—the Day of Atonement offerings had been ineffective. There is at least one occasion on record in Jewish history when the "scapegoat" did so find its way back, and the Day of Atonement ceremonies had to be repeated all over again.

A point worthy of mention here is that there is no reason for thinking that the scapegoat "suffered". The "wilderness" to which it was taken was not a desert in our understanding of the term, but merely an uninhabited district—as indeed Leviticus describes it. The essential point was that the goat should never come back, and since the term "wilderness" (*midbar*) was normally applied to districts quite capable of supporting animal life it was virtually certain that the annual "scapegoats" lived the rest of their days in a state of wild freedom. It is feared that the characteristic beliefs which have grown up around this idea of the scapegoat's "sufferings" owe their initial inspiration to Holman Hunt's famous painting of the scapegoat, showing a forlorn looking animal gazing disconsolately over a dreary landscape the foreground of which is littered with the bones of dead beasts. It will be agreed that theology should not be influenced by the artistic licence which painters allow themselves!

It is important to realise that the Day of Atonement sacrifices in Leviticus do not picture the death of our Lord as mankind's ransom from the power of death and basis of his reconciliation to God. What they do picture is the process of removal of sin. Jesus said (John 5.28-29) "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth" to conscious life; this is by virtue of the Ransom, but although thus freed from the Adamic death sentence it is still necessary that the processes and the effects of sin have to be cleansed out that men may eventually stand pure and undefiled before God. It is this process of

cleansing and elimination of sin that is the purpose of the future Millennial Age; it is at the end of that Age that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). Hence it may well be a simple way of putting the matter to say that the offering of the bullock pictured the earthly life of Jesus, three and a half years

at the close of the Jewish Age, that of the "Lord's goat" the similar consecrated earthly lives of his corporate church during the two thousand years of this present Gospel Age and that of the "scapegoat" the removal of sin forming the work of the coming Millennial Age. So mankind, at last, will enter into their eternal destiny, pure and upright in the sight of God.

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM

In the Old Testament our Heavenly Father has provided many pictures to illustrate truths mentioned in the New; we find the particular truth of James 2:5: "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love him?*" illustrated by the life and experiences of David and his men in the cave of Adullam. When David was forced to leave Saul's house he went into the wilderness and selected a very large cave to dwell in. Then he gathered a faithful company from all the tribes of Israel, who shared his trials and experiences as an outcast, a fugitive while in the cave of Adullam, and later they shared with him his glory when he became king. These experiences of David between his rejection by Saul and the time when he became king lasted seven years, and represent the entire Gospel Age, the period during which our Lord has been gathering out a little band, not only from all the tribes of Israel, but from every kindred, tongue and nation. They are called to follow him through difficult experiences now; and later, when He is the recognised King over all the world, they are promised a place on his throne.

Who were the men who were drawn to David, and what were their characteristics? 1 Sam. 22, 1-2 says that his brethren and all his father's house went thither to him, also every one that was discontented, and he became captain over them. Some were drawn by ties of relationship, others by admiration of David himself and his character, but the majority were drawn by personal trouble. Some were in distress, some in debt, and came to David to escape from their oppressors and creditors. Others came under Saul's wrath, as had David himself, and came to David by way of escape, while some were discontented on account of the tyranny and oppression of Saul, and so came to David. From some viewpoints they were not at all a desirable band. This turns our minds to the company the Lord is selecting and reminds us of the Apostle's words:

"Not many wise, not many noble are called. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" Some have, indeed, been drawn to him because of their great love for him, others by an appreciation of his great sacrifice, but the majority by personal affliction and trouble. Worn out by the trials and troubles of the world, we sought rest; discontented with the oppression and tyranny of the god of this world, we came to the Lord and can now say: "*Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine.*" Perhaps on account of mental difficulties or the loss of loved ones, we sought rest, and were drawn to the Lord.

When these men came to David they found no very hard conditions laid down before they could enter into the company. Any might come to him; he set no age limit, no standard of fitness. Some were indeed strong, mighty men; others were men of weakness, so weak that on some occasions they had to be left behind as unfit to stand the fatigues with the rest of the band. David did not pry into their past life; some had been noble, fine characters, others ignoble, but David was willing to let bygones be bygones; only two simple conditions were laid down, viz.: Do you accept David as your deliverer, do you believe he can deliver you from your oppressors and Saul? Do you accept David as your leader, are you willing to follow just wherever he leads? It will cost you something; you will need to be, as David is, an outcast, a fugitive. You will come under the scorn of Israel. Are you willing to share his outcast experiences? These two conditions were accepted by David's followers, as is shown by their exclamation, "*Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse.*"

During this Age those who would follow the Lord find no hard conditions laid down; He places no age limit. Some come and give their entire life to him in their youth, but others come after having spent the largest portion of their life in the pursuit of worldly hopes, pleasures and aims; yet the Lord accepts both. He also places no standard of fitness. Some have many talents

to bring, while others feel they have nothing whatever. Jesus does not pry into the past life of those who would become his disciples. Some have spent their lives in the service of others, others have been ignoble and selfish, but the Lord is willing to let bygones be bygones, and says "the past is under the blood". There are just two conditions laid down, namely: Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour, do you believe He can deliver you? Do you accept him as your leader; are you willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? Sit down and count the cost, for it will cost you something; it will mean standing for unpopular truth and going unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

When these men came to David they entered into entirely new experiences. Old things passed away and all things became new. All would not run smoothly in the cave; they would have many trials to meet. They had come to David to escape trials, but they found trials right there in the cave. There were men from all the tribes of Israel, varying in habits and temperament. They were all men of grit, or they dare not have joined themselves with David. They were all forced to live together in a cave, and how apparent to each other their weaknesses would become; how often their ideas would clash. There would certainly be many difficulties in that cave; they would often rub one another the wrong way. One thing, however, would tend to bind them together, the desire of their leader that they should live together as one family and gradually that desire of David began to soften their disagreements.

We have similar experiences, for the Lord has drawn his people from every kingdom, nation and tongue. He knew full well that there would be little differences cropping up and we would be inclined to view things from different standpoints, and there would be differences of opinion, but the desire of our Leader is that we should endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It will take some effort, but we remember our Lord's prayer, "*Father, I pray that they whom Thou hast given me may be one as we are one*". We know that our love for the Lord will be measured by our love for the brethren, and we must endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. We cannot countenance revolution in the cave. The Lord will measure our love for him by our desire to live in peace, but what can we do to keep this spirit of peace? When the children of Israel murmured on account of the report brought back by the spies sent to view the land of Canaan, Caleb was able to "*still the people before Moses*" (Num. 13, 30), and the secret of Caleb's power is given in Numbers 14, 24: "*But my servant Caleb, because he*

has another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully". He had the spirit, not of strife, but of peace, and the secret of his great influence lay in the fact that he followed God fully. If we would preserve the spirit of unity we must not have the spirit of strife and agitation, and we must follow God fully.

The experiences of David's followers, however, would not all be trying; they also had blessings. They came under the influence of David's life, and his life was one of devotion. He was a godly man, a man of prayer, very often pouring out his soul in prayer to God; and he was a man of praise. Oft-times he would take up his harp in tuneful praise. How this would soften their harshness. David was so skilful on the harp that when, prior to his Adullam experiences, he played before Saul, the evil spirits that possessed Saul left him. He delighted to meditate on the law given to Israel through Moses, and probably would often call his followers and read to them from the law (see Psalm 34, 11). On two occasions he could have killed Saul, but he refused to lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed, for he had implicit trust in God. His influence must have worked wonders on the hearts of his rough followers, as is shown by the testimony paid them by Nabal's men. They had been tending Nabal's sheep, and the record is: "*The men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything as long as we were conversant with them. They were a wall unto us both by day and by night*" (1 Sam. 25, 15-16). What a splendid tribute to pay to this company, who, before they had come under David's influence, would have robbed and plundered whenever possible.

As with these men, so with the followers of the Lord. We come under entirely new influences, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, under the influence of the mind of the Master. Jesus gathers us to him to instruct us. "*Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.*" The Scripture does not read "*Where two or three are come together,*" but "*are gathered together*"; neither does it read "*there will I come.*" No, Jesus is already there, and we are gathered unto him. We do not come together to learn some new truth, nor to be refreshed by some old truths, nor yet to meet with the brethren, but we meet to hold communion with Jesus.

*Where two or three in sweet accord,
Meet in Thy name, oh blessed Lord,
Meet to recount Thine acts of grace,
Oh, how Thy presence fills the place.*

These men also entered into a new security.

The name Adullam means resting place. The cave was situated six miles south-west of Bethlehem, and to reach it one had to pass along a narrow way along the side of a precipice. On one side was a rocky gorge, and on the other high, towering rocks. Then one entered a crevice leading sheer into the face of the rock which was so low that it was impossible to stand in an upright position; one must enter in a crouched attitude. Against David and his men in the cave Saul was powerless, no matter how large an army he brought against them. They had to pass in single file along the narrow path leading along the mountain side, and enter one at a time what appeared to be a pitch dark hole in the rock; but David and his men had the advantage of looking towards the light and could see each one as he entered. They were quite secure; only in the daytime dare Saul attack them, and at night they went down into the neighbouring villages for supplies.

This represents another blessing in our Adullam life. We have entered into a new security; *"Our life is hid with Christ in God"*, and no power in the universe can hurt the spiritual life of a Christian; none can pluck us out of his hand (1 Pet. 1.13). If our faith were as strong as our security is good we should never be afraid (Psa. 27.1).

Another phase of the life of David and his followers is given in 1 Chron. 11.3. David is now anointed king over Israel, no longer an outcast with but six hundred men, but thousands flock to his side. It is now popular to be one of David's followers (1 Chron. 12. 23 and 40). What now becomes of the faithful six hundred? Are they forgotten now that David has so many? No, the time has now come for them to be specially remembered. They shared in David's trials, now they are to share in his honour. 1 Chron. 11, from verse 11, and chapter 12. 1-24, tell of his faithful Adullam band. We know that we are

about to enter the greatest change the world has ever experienced; soon it is to become popular to be on the Lord's side. All will then want to give themselves in full consecration, but the opportunity of becoming heirs of the Kingdom will be for ever gone. Only those who share with Jesus in his Adullam experiences can hope to have a place on the honours list of the Kingdom. Those who would share with him in his Kingdom must go with him without the camp, bearing his reproach. *"No cross, no crown"* (Matt. 19, 28-29). The honours list is already partially written, and it is interesting to see the names written there, and the great deeds that have won them distinction. There is Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. When his persecutors came against him he said: *"I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God."* He also prayed: *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."* Col. 4 records a number of faithful saints who have found a place on the honours list; verse 12 mentions Epaphras an invalid who laboured *"fervently for you in prayers."* Rom. 16.3 mentions *"Priscilla and Aquila, who have laid down their own necks for my sake"*, and among others mentioned in this chapter is *"Rufus and his mother and mine"*. Rufus' mother had apparently a very warm place in the Apostle's heart, as he referred to her as his own mother. Afterwards this honours list will be published to the world. They will learn that such and such a one is born in Zion, and the Highest himself has established them. Just at the foot of the honours list there are yet some vacant places; will our names be there? Are we following in his Adullam footsteps? If so, the Lord will certainly record our names there. *"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* The matter now rests with ourselves. We must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, remembering that God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the Kingdom, which He hath promised to them that love him.

De Quincey on the Bible

"There is a distinction between a literature of knowledge and a literature of power. The distinction is obvious. A treatise on algebra is literature; but its appeal is almost wholly intellectual. *"A mighty fortress is our God"* is literature; its appeal is almost wholly to the emotions. By the treatise one is informed; by the hymn one is inspired. Under the treatise one might experience a certain complacency at the exactness and assuredness of the outcome; under the hymn one is moved to deep feeling and lofty daring. An appeal to knowledge is influential with the thoughtful and cultivated with whom a *"sweet reasonableness"* is sufficient; an appeal to the emotions is universal in its sweep. One may in-

crease knowledge without any corresponding increase in power; one may increase in moral power and spiritual penetration within a relatively small circle of information.

To expand, therefore, in ways which make for enrichment of life one must have fellowship with the literature of power. And conspicuous in such literature is the Bible. There have been many tributes to the Book on whose teachings the highest civilisation known to man has been reared, and upon whose pages men and women the world over and the ages through have lingered with delight."

Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) born at Manchester, was a brilliant philosophical writer and essayist of the early 19th century.

"THE REST OF THE DEAD"

A consideration of Rev. 20.5

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." (Rev. 20.5).

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

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

This is borne out by numerous Scripture declarations. Our Lord referred to the disciples' role in the "regeneration", time of new life, in Matt. 19.28. The men of Sodom will find that day "more tolerable" than his own generation (Matt. 10.15; 11.24). Caiaphas will be raised from the dead in time to "see" the Lord coming in the glory of his Kingdom. (Matt. 16.64). Sodom is to return to her former estate (Ezek. 16.51-55). This one obscure text in Revelation cannot be allowed to stand against the comprehensive testimony of all doctrinal and prophetic Scripture declaring that the Millennium, from Second Advent to its end, is to see the resurrection of all mankind for the final stage in their opportunity

to receive the Gospel and accept Christ, and so decide their final destiny.

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

No manuscript of the New Testament earlier than the 5th century contains this sentence. That of itself is significant. It was during the 5th century that opposition to the doctrine of the Millennium came to a head. The Sinaitic MS, 4th century, the Vatican MS., 1160, 5th century, and the Syriac Peshitto, 6th century, do not contain the passage. (The date of the Syriac is sometimes given as 2nd century, but the original Peshitto of that date did not contain the Book of Revelation, which was added to it in the 6th century). It is found in the Alexandrian, of the 5th century, and statements are sometimes made that it appears in the Vatican 1209 of the early 5th century, but this is not correct. Vaticanus 1209 ended at Heb. 9. 13 and no later part of the New Testament appeared in the original manuscript. Revelation was added to this MS. in the 15th century to make it complete, and it is this late addition, of no value for the present enquiry, that contains the phrase in question.

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

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

1. *"And I saw thrones, and they (that) sat upon them,
And judgment was given unto them:*
2. *And the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,
And for the word of God:*

3. *And which would not worship the beast,
Neither his image.*
4. *Neither had received his mark upon their
foreheads,
Or in their hands;*
5. *And they lived and reigned with Christ a
thousand years;
This is the First Resurrection.*
6. *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the
First Resurrection;
On such the second death has no power,*
7. *But they shall be priests of God and of Christ,
And shall reign with him a thousand years."*

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

St. Augustine explained the "First Resurrection" as the resurrection of believers in this

life from the death to sin to the life of faith in Christ, and the binding of Satan as the overthrow of his power by reason of the rising power of the Church in the world and the "Christianising" of the nations. The thousand years, he said, was to be taken as a figure of the time between the First and Second Advents, and at the Second Advent would come the Last Judgment and the second resurrection of the dead. Continuing, he says ("*City of God*" 20.7) "*Of these two resurrections John the evangelist, in the book of Revelation, has spoken in such a way that the First Resurrection has been misunderstood by some of our people and turned into fables. Those who, on the strength of his words have surmised that the First Resurrection would be a corporal one have, among other reasons, been mainly moved by the number—a thousand years—as though there were destined to be a Sabbath rest of that duration for the saints, a holy vacation after six thousand years of labour . . . and that the saints are to rise again to keep this Sabbath. Which opinion would be at least tolerable, if it were understood that the saints would enjoy spiritual delights from the presence of the Lord. For we ourselves were formerly of this opinion. But when they say that those who then rise again will spend their time in immoderate carnal feasting . . . such things cannot possibly be believed except by carnal persons.*" From this extract it can be seen how popular belief in the Millennium had degenerated into a hope for "good times for the saints" on a purely material level. The high ideal of service for humanity in that day, the extending to all men of the blessings of knowledge and recovery from sin, had become lost. Augustine poured scorn upon the carnal views of the Millennium that prevailed in his day and proceeded to do away with the doctrine altogether.

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

It was easy for the Church of the 5th century to claim that Christ had indeed come to reign at his First Advent, but that the Church, not Israel, was to be joint ruler with him over the nations. It was not difficult either to find chronological proofs to support this claim. The work called the "*Assumption of Moses*" (written probably during the lifetime of Jesus) says that Divine intervention for the setting up of his Kingdom would come seventeen hundred and fifty years after the death of Moses, which pointed to A.D. 350 as the date. The chronology of the day gave times varying between A.D. 350 and 500 as the end of six thousand years from Adam, and with this material at hand the claim that the Millennium had already begun was easy to promulgate. The symbolic language of Revelation lent itself to the new principle of interpretation, and so the inserted passage became firmly fixed.

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

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

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

Writers earlier than Lactantius do not seem to have any knowledge of this idea of a deferred resurrection. Hippolytus, Bishop of Porto, in A.D. 220 proclaimed that the Millennium would commence in A.D. 500, when Christ would return, destroy Antichrist, the First Resurrection take place, the Kingdom be set up, and the wicked come into judgment. That is a fair summary of the truth as many now would define it—except for the date! Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, in A.D. 116 taught that there would be a thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, when the Kingdom of Christ would be established visibly upon the earth. The unknown writer of

the "Epistle of Barnabas", some time during the 1st century, said "In six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end . . . And when he saith 'He rested the seventh day' he meaneth this, that when his Son shall come and abolish the Wicked One, and shall judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, and moon, and stars, then He shall gloriously rest on that seventh day". These earlier Christians of the first few centuries seem to be quite clear that the Age itself is intended for the judgment of the "ungodly", and when we realise that the term "judgment" includes the whole process of teaching and preparing mankind for the final choice, these beliefs are just what we would expect from men who were not far removed from Apostolic teaching.

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

being. At a time when men had not realised that God plans to give all the dead and all the living a full and fair trial for life and the Millennial Age is the Age for the purpose, and the only Age that could be for that purpose, it all looked very logical and harmonious.

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

Are we willing to lay down our lives for the brethren that the Truth might flow through us? God has delegated the holding forth of the Word of Life to human beings like ourselves.

God is not confined to certain agencies, but works through all those who have given themselves humbly and reverently to him to do his Will and to be used by him.

MANUSCRIPT ANALYSIS OF REV. 20.5

Following the first publication of the foregoing treatise on Rev. 20.5 in 1966, this note on the textual evidence was contributed by J. B. Parkinson of Los Angeles, and although primarily for the research student and not all readers will readily follow the technical nature of the references, it is felt worthy of permanent record in association with the exposition.

* * *

There is a complete catalogue of Greek manuscripts of Revelation, as known by the early 1920s—H. C. Hoskier, *"Concerning the text of the Apocalypse"*, 2 vols, University of Michigan, 1925. Hoskier himself may be a rather caustic individual but his work of a complete collation of approximately 250 manuscripts of Revelation is invaluable to us to-day. Since Hoskier's 1925 compilation only the Chester Beatty papyrus (Rev. 9. 10—17.2) and a few small fragments have contributed much of value, and none of them cover Rev. 20.5.

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

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

To return to Rev. 20. 5, as per Hoskier's work. The disputed passage is omitted by 71 Mss, including the Sinaitic. At least 115 include the passage, but as translated in the Douay—not as in the King James—in 108 of them, including the Alexandrian and the 8th cent. Vatican 2066.

The Douay omits "but" and "again". There are 20 Mss that are absent in the area of the disputed passage. It may possibly be inferred that as many as 52 read with the King James (A.V.). The Syriac translations omit the passage, while the Coptic, Armenian, Latin and Ethiopic appear to include it in one form or the other.

However, the 30% figure for omission all by itself does not tell the whole story. Someone might argue that the scribe's eyes skipped from "chilia etc" (thousand years) in the 7th verse to "chilia etc" in the 5th verse, and therefore the passage has been often omitted by mistake. But another might argue that it is the 11th, 12th and 13th cent. Mss that omit the text (at least half of them do) while it is the 14th, 15th and 10th cent. Mss that include it (perhaps 80% of them do). Historical arguments might be adduced on either side. But there is a decisive aspect of the manuscript testimony. Manuscripts are categorised in families, according to similar readings throughout. There is relatively little randomness as to whether the passage is included or omitted, so there is no evidence that there was any omission through error. Rather the so-called "B-family" omits the passage generally (called "B-family" because of the close relation of these Mss with the Vatican 1209 in other books of the Bible). The Graeco-Latin Mss all uniformly omit. Various sub-groups are on opposite sides (but only a couple of groups are not clearly on one side or the other). The two Aecumenius groups are on opposite sides. The Arethras groups and almost all of the Complutensian groups include the disputed passage. The sum is this: Manuscript groups remote in origin from Asia Minor (Revelation was written at Patmos) by and large include the disputed passage e.g. the European Complutensian Mss and the Sahidic Mss. Manuscripts thought to be more closely related to Asia Minor in origin, but particularly those of earlier (11th-13th cent.) origin, show a definite trend to omit the disputed passage; e.g., B-family, Graeco-Latin, and the best of the Syriac groups.

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

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

A study in
Isaiah 19

Part 1. The casting down of Egypt

The nineteenth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy was spoken in the ears of Israel at a time when Egypt, the great earthly power in which they had trusted for so long, was declining to its fall. It is one of the paradoxes of history that the nation that had held their forefathers in bondage and from which they had been delivered by a signal exercise of Divine power should be the very nation to which they would turn for protection only four centuries later. For something like four more centuries Israel flirted with Egypt, making agreements and alliances and generally looking to Egypt for the help they should have expected from God, and then Egypt and Israel fell together and the people of the Lord found they had been trusting, as Rab-Shakeh the general of Sennacherib's host on one occasion taunted them with trusting, on a broken reed which would pierce the hand of the man who was foolhardy enough to lean upon it.

Isaiah never wearied of warning his fellow-citizens of the weakness of Egypt and the folly of trusting in the Egyptians. His warnings were very generally unheeded and so disaster came upon the nation. The same warning comes to us; we have the same God and He still abides by the same principles. He will still deliver the nation that puts its trust in him, and disaster will still overtake the nation that puts its trust in the arm of the flesh. Egypt in prophecy usually pictures the secular world in contrast to the Christian community which has separated itself from the world and no longer holds to its standards. So often, though, members or sections of that community do leave somewhat of their high ideals and lose something of their high faith, and begin to trust to an extent in the standards and policies and weapons of this world. When they do so, the burning words of Isaiah are to the point and applicable to them. *"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord . . . When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together."* (Isa. 31. 1-3). It is impossible not to notice the military "flavour" of these verses. If there is one particular aspect of this modern world that is represented more than others by Egypt, it is the military aspect, the policies and principles and activities that have to

do with war between nations. Israel looked to Egypt for protection because Egypt was a powerful military nation, and Israel had forgotten that her own mission was to demonstrate the power and efficacy of the rulership of God, a rulership which has no place for armed conflict between men. That is one of the greatest failures of organised Christianity to-day; in the face of the apparently overwhelming nature of those militarised forces which threaten our own orderly way of life they know of no effective defence than resource to the same weapons. It is not surprising therefore if, despite the rightness of the cause, they ultimately find that trust in carnal weapons and the policies of the unregenerate man leads to the same type of disasters in our day, that this same trust brought to Israel in their day.

Isaiah's nineteenth chapter had a message for his own generation and it has a message for us. In both cases the message is prophetic; it spoke, and speaks, of things to come. Like so many of Isaiah's visions, the Holy Spirit showed him, first, a picture of his own day and the consequences that would arise out of the political situation then existing, and then, by a swift transition of scene, took him forward into the world's day of judgment and showed him how the same wrong principles, followed this time by all the world, would bring about even greater trouble, but that behind it all was God, waiting to bless all his creatures when the due time for blessing had come. In this particular chapter the first fifteen verses picture the decline and fall of Egypt, from Isaiah's own day to her utter subjugation by Rome six or seven centuries later, and the last twenty verses picture the Divine restoration of Egypt in the days of the Kingdom—an Egypt that is no longer a symbol of militarism or of the policies of this world, but has become a co-partner with Israel the restored people of God, and is herself also blessed with the honoured title, given her by the Most High himself, of "Egypt my people". It is obvious from what we know of history and of the Divine Plan that this sequel must take us into the Millennial Age for its accomplishment, and it is in the golden days of that blessed Age therefore that the chapter closes.

"The burden of Egypt" (vs. 1). This word "burden" is one that, from a root meaning something carried or lifted up, had come to signify a message delivered, an oracle or a prophecy. We

sometimes use much the same term when we speak of the "burden" of an individual's message. In many cases, but not in all, the message is a condemnatory or warning one; but the idea of the word is really that of the charge laid upon the prophet himself to deliver the message and in this case the theme is a message concerning Egypt which Isaiah is under strong obligation to deliver.

"The Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt." (vs. 1). This is quite a remarkable passage. The next fourteen verses describe the literal ravaging of Egypt by her literal enemies, the Assyrians, but here the Lord himself is pictured as leading the attack and, in his entrance to the land, destroying the idolatry thereof. Now that is just what we must accept, that the Lord God is overseeing and overruling the affairs of the nations in order to bring into full effect the provisions of his great Plan. In another place the Assyrians are called the "rod of God's anger" and even in the narratives of their impact upon the children of Israel it is plain to see that, all unknowingly, they were being used as his instruments in the diverting of human affairs to work out his own ultimate purposes. So here, now that the time had come to show Israel, and us through Israel, the futility of the arm of the flesh, and the sin of ignoring Divine principles, the Lord allowed the Assyrian hosts to achieve successes they had never achieved before. In the spirit of prophecy, and the symbolism of the vision, that fact was shown in symbol by the Lord, the God of Israel, riding upon the heavens in his war-chariot of thunder clouds, advancing upon the proud empire of the Pharaohs with the multitudes of the Assyrian host behind him; and at that sight the gigantic, impassive statues of all the gods of Egypt took fright and fell down prostrate in their places, and the glory that was Egypt passed away for ever.

Just so will it be when the last great conflict of this Day of Trouble comes upon the world. The battle is called the Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty. It is a conflict between contending factions among mankind but it is the overruling power of God that has caused the elements of that conflict so to converge together that the battle takes place when it does. The contestants do not know that; their motives are greed and hate and lust for power, just as were those of the Assyrians advancing to the destruction of Egypt in Isaiah's day; but all unknowingly they will be fulfilling the purposes of God, and when the conflict is ended it will be the voice of God that calls for peace and commands

the allegiance of the shattered remnants of both sides.

Now in verses 2 to 13 Isaiah declares that the Egyptians will fight the Egyptians; there is to be civil war amongst them, and the wisdom and discretion of their governors will vanish. They will seek to idols and wizards and the supernatural forces of evil in their extremity, as did Saul in his, when he visited the witch at En-dor. The people would be given into the hand of a cruel and fierce ruler and the land would languish. The Nile, upon which the prosperity of Egypt depends, would fail to send down sufficient water and there would be consequent famine; the industries of fishing and clothmaking from the native cotton and other textile plants would dwindle and disappear. The princes of Egypt would become as fools and the whole nation as incapable of guiding its own destinies as is a drunken man of walking a straight course. The picture is that of a people, highly organised in science and art and industry, as was Egypt, whose whole economic structure has broken down and which is very near to complete disintegration. It is the picture of a nation having a glorious past, but no future. The melancholy catalogue ends (vs. 15) with *"Neither shall there be any work for Egypt which the head or tail, branch or rush (king and prince, artisan and labourer, the "head" and the "tail" of society) may do"*. For Egypt it is the end.

Ezekiel saw the same thing at a time when the sentence was in process of execution, and he said of Egypt *"It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel ... but they shall know that I am the Lord their God"*. (Ezek. 29. 15-16.) That word stands as condemnation not only of Israel's confidence in Egypt three millenniums ago, but of the spiritual shortsightedness of every Christian in this day who trusts in worldly policies and national armaments to defend God's cause. And it stands as condemnation of every Christian body that trusts in the arm of flesh rather than in the Lord their God.

Historically, events came to pass just as Isaiah had foreseen. At just about the time he uttered the prophecy—certainly not many years later—the military power of Assyria, which had been steadily increasing for several centuries, for the first time came into collision with the military might of Egypt. At this period Egypt was governed by a powerful Ethiopic dynasty (the 25th dynasty of Pharaohs) and the warlike Ethiopians, always superior in military skill and

energy to the more peaceable native Egyptians, formed the mainstay of the Egyptian forces. These Ethiopians were not like the natives of Ethiopia to-day; they were a highly civilised and physically powerful race, and for a long time dominated Egypt in the north and exercised a profound influence upon the history of nations. They were descendants of the sons of Cush who had migrated in ancient times from the Persian Gulf along the coast of Arabia and crossed the Red Sea into Africa. The Ethiopian viceroy in Egypt was Sabaca (called "So" in 2 Kings 17. 4, where he is shown as conspiring with Hoshea King of Israel against Assyria). The failure of that conspiracy and the consequent fall of Samaria and captivity of the "Ten Tribes" laid the way open for the Assyrian advance upon Egypt, and within a few more years Sargon of Assyria was besieging the southern Palestine city of Ashdod preparatory to invading Egypt itself. (Isaiah 20. 1 refers to this event; *"In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against it, and took it"*.) This was the first outward evidence to Israel of the fulfilment of the prophecy of the 19th chapter. Six years later Sargon died and Sennacherib succeeded him; almost at once he was in the field and reduced Egypt to subjection, but suffered his memorable defeat outside Jerusalem when his army was destroyed in a single night by the "angel of the Lord". (Isa. 37). After that for twenty-six years there was a cessation of Assyrian aggression both on Egypt and Judea, which is remarkable when it is realised that this coincides with the latter years of the reign of Hezekiah, and God had promised him, after his miraculous recovery, that there would be peace in his days. (Isa. 39. 8). Sennacherib never tried conclusions with the Lord God of Israel again, but after his death, his son and successor Esar-haddon (Isa. 37. 38) invaded Judah, took Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, then only twenty-three years old and already an idolator, prisoner to Babylon and went on into Egypt. This time the country was devastated. Esar-haddon well fills the role of the "cruel king" prophesied in Isa. 19. 4. The ancient city of Memphis, the capital ("Noph" in Isa. 19. 13) was completely destroyed and all its treasures, dating back for more than two thousand years, taken to Nineveh. Thebes, the second holy city (the "populous No" of Nahum 3. 8) suffered a like fate, and for the second time—the first being the short-lived rule of the "Shepherd Kings"—since the sons of Ham entered the country a few generations after the Flood, Egypt became subject to an Asiatic power.

There were times of rebellion and of tempor-

ary national independence. Native Pharaohs exercised control and held the foreigners at bay for a generation or two, but the doom of Egypt had been pronounced and slowly she sank under the pressure of Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek and finally Roman invasions until all pretence of national sovereignty was completely lost. To this day Egypt, the greatest military empire of the ancient world, remains a "base kingdom", a pawn and a catspaw for the great powers of the earth.

It is just at that point that the vision changes. *"In that day"* cries Isaiah suddenly *"shall Egypt be like unto women, and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt, every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it"*. In one swift flash the Spirit-illuminated mind of the prophet was carried forward from his own day to "that day"—the Millennial Day is always in his mind when he says "in that day"—to a great Egypt which, like its prototype of old, has come to the brink of destruction because of its reliance on the gods of war. But this time there is a difference. This greater Egypt, this military organised warlike world of the Last Day, broken down and at its wits end in consequence of the havoc wrought by its own internecine conflicts and the terrible effectiveness of its engines of war, is in terror of the land of Judah! That is a situation which can only have its application to the greater world, Egypt at the Time of the End, for it has never been true in history previously. From the time that Israel established itself in the land, through all the chequered history of the Judges and the Kings, the Captivity, the days of the Maccabees and then of the Dispersion, there has never been a time when Egypt went in terror of Judah. In terror, successively, of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Islam, yes, but never of despised Judah. It is only now, when Israel is again established as a nation, and a vigorous, and self-asserted nation, that even the modern literal Egypt shows any signs of apprehension. The fulfilment must be a future and not a past event and therefore takes its place as an element in the order of events that characterises the dawning of the Millennium. And the association of the name of the Lord of Hosts with the cause of the "terror" certifies that it is not going to be in consequence of any temporary political or military success the present State of Israel is destined to achieve, for that State is founded, like all the Gentile powers, on that very principle of military force that stands con-

demned in the sight of God, the very principle that in this our day is entering into judgment. It is going to be in consequence of the fact that Judah is backed by the power of God.

The conclusion, therefore, is that this "terror" with which "Egypt" views Judah refers to the same thing that is described in Zech. 12. 6. *"In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place."* The "terror" is due to the fact that a righteous nation, led by the "Ancient Worthies", will be taking up its destined work and impressing the peoples around with a consciousness of the fact that God is working mightily in earth's affairs and that the days of injustice are numbered.

The Authorised Version inserts a paragraph mark at this point, indicating that a new section of the narrative now begins. That is rightly done, for at this point the reconstruction of this world-Egypt, that has seen the sign of the Kingdom in the fact of restored Judah, commences. From now on, the healing and reconciliation of Egypt commences, and this is Millennial work indeed. The language of Egypt becomes the language of holiness; the cities of Egypt are sacred to the Lord; the altar of offering is set up in the midst of the land and the stone of witness at its border. The Saviour appears, and the Egyptians hail him and worship him; there is no more any war or enmity between the nations but all are one in the brotherhood of mankind and all are blessed of God. These are the things that Isaiah saw and recorded in verses 18-25 of this thrilling chapter, things that we shall go on to examine in the detail that they deserve. (To be concluded)

WHEN THOU SHALT BE OLD

These words were spoken by our Lord to Peter on that memorable occasion when Jesus, in a more public manner, reinstated Peter into his Apostleship after his public denial of the Master during the trial before Pilate. Jesus had met Peter privately on the day of his Resurrection (Luke 24. 34) and there can be little doubt that He had spoken words of comfort to his distracted heart. What passed in some quiet spot between the risen Lord and Peter with his overwhelmed contrite heart, we do not know; it is not recorded, and it might be presumption to attempt to reconstruct their conversation at that time. Peter had evidently told his brethren about this interview with the Lord, for when Emmaus brethren returned to Jerusalem with the story of their wonderful experience, the Jerusalem brethren rejoicingly replied, *"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon"*. Peter had thus been reconciled to his Master prior to this public interview, and held in his heart the full assurance he had been forgiven and that the Lord still loved him dearly, his failure notwithstanding.

In the grey dawn of this particular morning Jesus had searched the soul of Peter through and through by His thrice repeated query *"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"* Peter was grieved that the Lord so persistently put his question as to ask it a third time. It seemed as though the Master doubted his word, and was not satisfied with the two assurances already given. But Jesus did not doubt his word, for whatever may have been the purpose in Jesus' mind when asking the question thrice, He immediately proceeded to tell Peter that He

would serve him long and well right on into old age. *"When thou wast young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst whither thou wouldst; when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not"* (John 21.18).

John, who wrote these words, and lived long enough thereafter to see their fulfilment says *"This spake He (Jesus) signifying by what death he (Peter) should glorify God"*.

In the freshness of youth Peter had chosen his own course and acted on his own initiative, but when he should have come to old age his freedom to act should be curtailed. No matter how he still desired to serve and lead the flock of God, hindering circumstances would arise, and prevent the accomplishment of his heart's desire. Though the passing years brought mellowing ripeness to his soul, tempering the impetuous rashness of his early life, making him the more fitted to counsel and guide the pilgrim band, yet the withering frost of age, or the hindering hand of circumstance, would bar and check the work he would always long to do. How would that react upon his mind? How would he stand when, instead of being master of the situation, the situation became master of him, when, instead of serving long and late, his strength was spent before the sun was set—when, wanting to travel far, the journey was too great? Could he resign himself to his state without regrets or fears?

Among the many trials of the Christian life, the trials due to advancing age are not the least. Especially trying will they be when following on an active life. In the full hey-day of life when strength was equal to every opportunity, the

faithful soul found joyous delight in every task. The thrill of contest on many fields, the pleasure of service in many spheres, the power to "do" when duty called, all this had brought delight untold. Life teemed with purpose and accomplishment. Each passing day saw something attempted, something done. It was good to be alive. It was a touch of very heaven, to have a glorious message to tell and hearing ears to proclaim it to. To pass out from the crush of the arena into the quiet hush of the shadows for no reason besides advancing years may be extremely hard to bear. Only when in the earliest of declining years the spirit of sloth and slumber has settled down upon the mind can retirement into the shadows be accepted with total resignation. Only when the drag of inertia and irresolution of the will has made the easy chair more acceptable than the conflict can one regret that the day of opportunity is done. The joy of service is not lightly laid aside by those who drink its cup athirst. Unless dry rot had started ere the day was done the evening twilight hours might chafe. The corrosion of rust would be more feared than all the wear of usefulness where service had been delight.

This pause from labour need not bring regrets nor cause repining if the heart is quietly at rest in God. To grow old gracefully and peacefully is right and blessed in God's sight. It is not that He needed the puny hands to help in his task, even when quick and strong. He could have done it by some other means. It throws no added burden upon his mighty arms when we lay down to rest or cease to toil. Our best endeavours brought no profit or enrichment to him. Our efforts yielded him no wealth. Profitable servants we never were. Like some mere child with small toy spade, hindering perhaps more often than we helped, He watched us dig his plot. He bore our little whims, and over-ruled them all for good. We thought He needed us, or else the work would stop. Had we not swung the sword, we thought, the cause of Truth would fail. Had we not fed the flock, the sheep must famish by the way. What little vain conceits we had! He did not chide nor thwart our little task, but He who made the sun and rules the world; who filled the heaven with stars, pursued his sovereign way, and out from our little effort, made his own pattern come true. Withal we fussed and prated, but He worked deep within, and now his work will stand to crown our closing years. Though memory now may fail us, He set the cast of our mind so that it turns to him as the needle to the pole. Though eyes be dimmed and long-prized books perforce be laid aside, the fibre of the soul is sound, tinged through and through with root principles of Holy

Writ. Though thought be slow and words be few, the sense of rest and peace prevails; the "Peace of God" has taken sentry-duty there. Though strength be scant and feeble, limbs scarce move at will, the faith looks through the thinning veil and soars aloft, beyond earth's sensuous things, to find in contemplation's quiet retreat the presence of him who makes her foundation firm. The law of compensations now works strong within, for when the earth has little else to give the bounteous hand of Heaven gives more, and sublimates each act of life. He eats and drinks of heavenly grace, unhurried, unperturbed. No hectic call of duty nor rush of common round breaks in upon the soul's repose, as in the former years, in its "At Home" with God.

It is not loss, nor theme for vain regrets if Heaven thus loads the moments which Time filches from our scanty store. It is not lazing out life's remnant hours, to dwell alone with God. "Rest" brings no "rust", enfeebled limbs cause no inactivity, when we abide with him. The hands may tremble, and footsteps falter; this is no impotence if we walk with him. This is that fruition and harvest-time for which our earlier sowings have been made. This is maturity, where crudities and greenness disappear in near-finished ripeness and sun-tinting of the fruit. This is the completion of the sketch, the painting-in of the last glowing tints, to balance out the background's sombre hues. It may be sunset-hour, but at "evening it is light"; life's purposes stand out clear. It is a climax but not an end.

Dear child of God, whose steps approach the postern gate, these words are penned for thee. Thou art grown old; perchance circumstances carry thee whither thou wouldst not. Thy race is nearly run. Thy toil is almost done. The trail of life lies stretching back through years of tangled brier, but thou art near the end. The Hand that led thee last will lead thee still; God will not suffer thy faith to fail in thy last days. He has engrained too deep the precepts of his Word for thee to drift away. "Hold fast that which thou hast", and keep to thee the "gold" already bought (Rev. 3. 18). Let none deprive thee of thy peace and rest and trust. God is thy life and light, and will shortly be thy salvation. Fret not thy waning powers, nor pine because thine eye is frail. Thy Father knows all this, and He who marks each sparrow's fall will bear thee on his wings till thou shalt see his face. Perhaps thou canst no longer work for him, mayhap thou canst not even read his book with thine own eyes; but mind it not, it is not what thou hadst to give, but thee, thyself, the Master seeks, and in the quietness of thy evening hours He finds all that He desires. Have patience! and hope on!

From her to end reunited in J. 7 1983 H

CLAY IN THE HANDS OF THE POTTER

A Soliloquy on Psalm 50

"Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice..." So speaks the Eternal, through the Psalmist. The word "saints" is significant. One of the problems perpetually confronting any enlightened and responsible interpreter of Holy Writ is that of determining those utterances which may reasonably be taken as having a spiritual significance and message for the New Creation, the Church of the Firstborn, which is his Body (Eph. 1. 22, 23), and those which are obviously of exclusively literal significance, the meaning of which is plain and clear, and allows of no involved or obscure construction. Here, however, we have a message which is at once both clear and involved, a message which, at the first reading, seems natural and literal; but, at the second reading, conveys a deep and significant 'Alert'—to all who have the hearing ear!

"Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined..." Not literal Zion! When was literal Zion ever "the perfection of beauty..."? But, to those "Washed, cleansed, sanctified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus and the spirit of our God"—He is our righteousness, the "Altogether lovely", in whose perfect merit his people are beheld by the Almighty Father—and accepted. (Eph. 1. 6). To and through these the Father speaks—have they but the ears to hear—and says: "Let my saints be gathered together unto me..." He speaks with a measure of indignation (vss. 3, 4 and 6, Psalm 50). And no wonder! "What could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done unto it?" (Isa. 5. 4). Now He calls, and calls with vigour, to those still precious in his sight.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence... Hear, O my people..." And all still worthy the name, "My people" (1 Pet. 2. 10) will hear. Under the beautiful natural parable of a potter sitting at his wheel, moulding a lump of clay and fashioning it to the beauty of design and workmanship in his mind (Jer. 18. 1-4), Jeremiah was shown a type which applies to both natural and spiritual Israel (1 Cor. 10. 11), the latter being the greater, and therefore the more important, fulfilment. "As... clay in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand..." (Jer. 18. 6); thus speaks the great Creator, God and Father of mankind, to those upon whom He has laid his hand, as chosen vessels unto himself,

sanctified and meet for his use, in the Redeemer. (Ezek. 40. 1; Rev. 1. 17; Acts 9. 15; 2 Tim. 2. 21) God could, had He wished, have chosen clay of finer, nobler substance than they. He could have chosen, even from among fallen men, clay of better composition, of minimum fault or failure, which would have responded utterly and instantly to the great Potter's hand, yielding the immediate fruits of obedience, loyalty and trust. He did not do so—either with natural or with spiritual Israel (Deut. 31. 27; 1 Cor. 1. 26-29). There is hope, then, when the clay is marred in the hand of the great Potter, in that He does not cast it away, and choose another piece, but remakes it, in different mould, "as seemeth good". And now, behold, a wonderful thing. The fact that the clay has failed, and been remade, does not *diminish* its value or usefulness, but rather enhances it! For experience has shown, time and time again, that not the shallow, inexperienced servants are the most useful to the great King: but those who, through failure, trial, suffering, deep—and often bitter—experience, have come to know him as Father of Mercies, God of Love—and his dear Son as the great "High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek," able to bear patiently with their infirmities, and even to recover them when *out* of the way—these are the "vessels of mercy" able, because of a ripe experience of his mercy manifest to and in themselves, to carry the word of forgiveness and salvation to others! (Heb. 5. 1, 2, 5, 6; 7. 25; 1 Tim. 1. 15, 16; 2 Cor. 3. 6; Rom. 9. 23).

It has been mentioned on several occasions before, but will bear of repetition once more, that when a Persian Carpet is being made it sometimes happens that one or more of the apprentices who are allowed to help may make a mistake in weave or colour. When this happens, should the artist be a past master at his craft, he does not undo the mistake! Instead, *he weaves it into the pattern*—achieving new and enhanced heights of design and craftsmanship. To quote again—from another well-known epic—"Can this man—and can God not?" So take heart ye who, as another epic poem has put it, "Kneel, conscious of our failure and our sin, and dare to call his righteousness our own..." God is never impotent amid the wreckage of anyone's hope and expectation. There is no "cul-de-sac" in the Divine purpose.

Abraham, "Father of the faithful," believed God—and it was counted to him for righteousness; being fully persuaded that what He had promised He was abundantly able to perform...! We are *his* workmanship—not our own—and the tremendous faith which shone in the heart and life of Abraham and so pleased his Heavenly Father that he was given the magnificent title of "the friend of God"—that tremendous faith must be ours also as we look up in the Beloved into his dear face and say "Yea, Lord, I believe—help thou mine unbelief! I believe that what thou hast promised thou art abundantly able to perform! That thou, who hast begun a good work in me, wilt perform it! That thou wilt perfect that which concerneth me..." And one day we shall see this apparently ruined, wasted, emaciated, unprofitable life of ours crowned with glory and honour, as the lovely product of his grace! "Keep on believing, there's nothing to fear, keep on believing, Jesus is near; keep on believing, in night as in day; He is still guiding—will guide all the way."

To return to the Psalm. "Those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." Any application to natural Israel must be necessity be more than swallowed up by the aptness of its application to spiritual Israel; those born "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1. 13). It is obvious that, if natural Israel were in "A covenant by sacrifice," spiritual Israel (for whom the Son of God died—Eph. 5. 25) is much more so. For whereas the nation of Israel were involved in that Covenant whether, in a manner of speaking, they liked it or not—they had no choice or option in the matter, for the covenant had already been made with their fathers, and the types had to be

formed and fulfilled—spiritual Israel is in a very different category. Every member of the Church of the Firstborn, the New Creation, Israel after the spirit, is there by specific invitation and acceptance, on the basis of the Sacrifice of God's Son, whose blood was shed for and accepted by each of them, as individuals, on an entirely voluntary basis—and they are thereafter "Members of his Body", the Church of the Living God.

"By sacrifice!" Admittedly, we have offered our puny little all—"All we have, our hearts, we give thee; consecrate them thine alone..."; have presented our bodies as "A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God", our "reasonable service". But far transcending any or all of these is his great and tremendous Sacrifice of his only begotten Son, the dearest treasure of his heart, on our behalf. And thereafter all we can offer that could possibly be acceptable is, as the Apostle so beautifully and simply puts it, the "Sacrifice of praise!" (Heb. 13. 15). And this is itself a most beautiful and spiritualised rendering of the final verse of Psalm 50: "Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me; and prepareth a way, that I may show him the salvation of God." (R.V., margin).

Can we not then, in face and in view of all these wonders, realise the greatness of his love and mercy toward us, the unspeakable gift of the sacrifice of his Son, and, on this basis, "Gather together unto him..."? Forsaking all lesser things, and on the basis of his great sacrifice for us, and full acceptance and belief of that great and vital fact, come together in love and gratitude, and with one mind and one mouth "Glorify him" to whom all Praise belongs; and his Son, who loved us, and gave himself for us.

Jehovah In certain quarters considerable stress is laid upon this word as the proper name by which the Almighty God should be known. It is not generally realised that this word does not date earlier than the sixteenth century, and had its origin in a misunderstanding of Hebrew pronunciation. The ancient Israelites had a reverential objection to uttering the name of God which to them, without its vowels, was represented by the letters Y H V H and if uttered at all would have been pronounced YAHVEH. In order to guard against inadvertent utterance of the sacred name it became usual in writing to substitute the vowels from the word Adonai (Lord). Through

the ages even this vocalisation was lost and it was a sixteenth century scholar, Petrus Galatinus, who in 1518 published a work in which he coined the name Jehovah and applied it for the first time as the name of God. As a word, the term rests on no earlier authority and should not be regarded as anything more than a transliteration into English—and a bad transliteration at that—of the substitute word which the Jews reverentially used in place of the "incommunicable Name", the Name they would neither pronounce nor write down because it was the sacred name of God.



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

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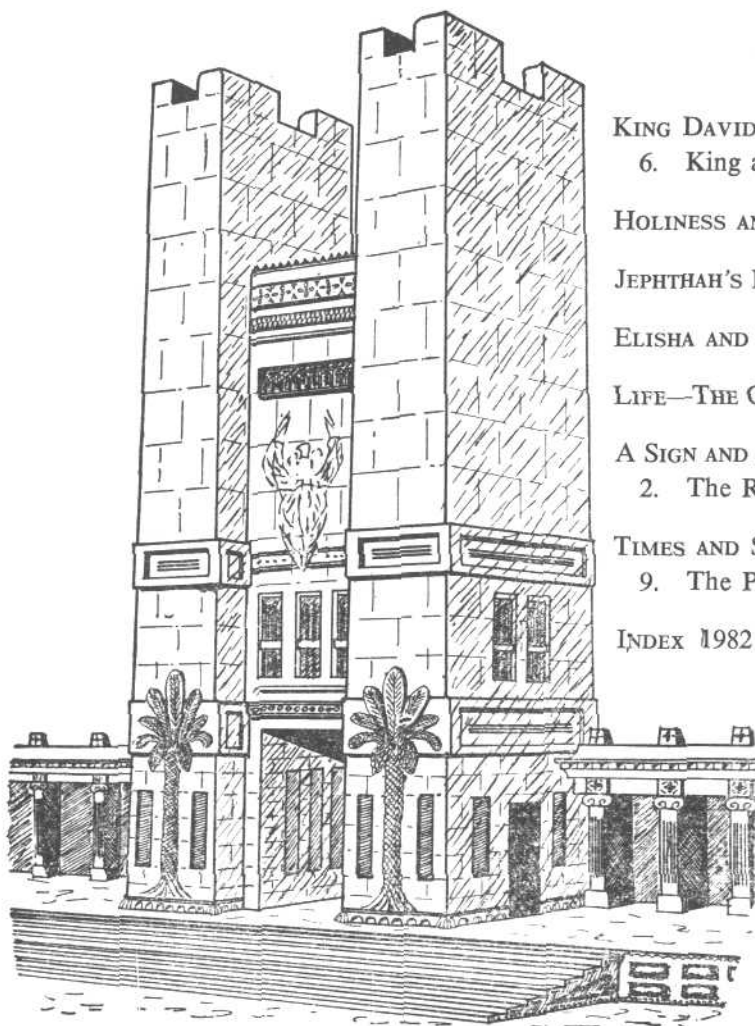
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BOOK REVIEWS

The King James Bible Translators. (O. S. Opfell) 173pp £13.25 McFarland & Co. (U.S.A.) Bailey Bros. & Swinfen (U.K.)

An eminently readable account of the circumstances surrounding the preparation of the Authorised Version, with a deal of well-assembled data concerning the translators. For reference purposes and for research the book is valuable in this field; for the ordinary reader possessing the customary knowledge of the A.V. it is most enlightening. It is interesting to learn that the well-known title "Authorised Version" is really a mis-nomer; the translation was not "authorised", but merely "approved", by King James. It is intriguing to note that the first English Bible to include the Apocrypha between the Testaments was that of Coverdale; from 1535 the Apocrypha was included in all English Bibles until as late as 1826, after which it began to disappear by decision of the B.F.B.S. A telling phrase occurs towards the end of the book, following an account of modern versions; "the King James Bible, however, still holds sovereign place and is printed and circulated more widely than any other version". There is a full bibliography and index.

Handbook for Biblical studies. (Nicholas Turner) 145pp. Paperback £4.50 Library edition £12.00. Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford.

The major portion of this work of reference comprises a glossary of theological and Christian terms which do not appear in the Bible itself and are therefore absent from normal Bible cyclopedias and the like. The terms go back to quite ancient times and constitute a useful reference source in this province. This takes up about 100 pages of the 145. The remainder includes a synopsis of historical dates in Bible history and that of associated ancient nations, with an outline of ancient alphabets and systems of writing, the postulated dates of the writers of the books of the Bible according to modern critical opinions, a list of modern Bible translations and glossaries of the names of ancient and modern theologians and Biblical writers. The list of translations is somewhat marred by the omission of several of the most accurate, such as Rotherham, Dr. Young, (author of Young's Analytical Concordance), usually considered the two most accurate renderings of modern times, and Ferrar Fenton, who for all his pomposity made a characteristic original translation direct from the Hebrew and Greek. The

glossary of ancient names is not very complete; of the second rank little-known names not normally found in standard reference media a "spot check" of ten such names, recalled at random, revealed six not included—not surprising when the tremendous number of such men of early times who spoke and wrote is remembered. Altogether a useful book to have on the shelf.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Edtd. Robin Duckworth) 167pp Paperback £3.25. O.U.P./Bible Reading Fellowship.

The Preface explains that this book is intended for "layfolk who wish to come to a better understanding of the content and message of the passages of Scripture used in the Sunday Lectionary", this being the third part, covering Year C of the three-year period. It comprises pithy background comments on each of the relevant Biblical texts and will be of most value to those who are followers of the Church service but for one reason or another are not closely familiar with Scripture. The appeal would not be so strong to that smaller band of Bible students who are well versed in its content and nature. Chronological tables of O.T. and N.T. history and literature provide a handy means of relating the various passages to one another and appreciating the background.

The above books are obtainable through any bookseller but not from B.F.U. Hounslow.

Gone from us



Sis. C. Brooks (Accrington)
 Sis. A. Crossingham (Sydenham)
 Sis. M. Maddams (Sheringham)
 Bro. E. Parker (Arundel)



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

KING DAVID OF ISRAEL

*The story of Israel's
most famous King*

5. King at Jerusalem

Jerusalem, the city of peace; the city of the great king! Rarely a city of peace during its long and turbulent history, but certainly so in the days of David. David was the man who made Jerusalem the capital of Israel, and laid the foundation of the claim that has endured three thousand years to the present day.

Israel did not possess Jerusalem before the days of David. From at least as far back as the time of Abraham, and probably long before that, Jerusalem was the central fortress of the Jebusites, a powerful Canaanite tribe which most likely occupied the countryside for a considerable distance around. They called the city Jebus, but that was not its original name. In the days of Abraham it was Salim, the name of the Babylonian god of peace. This is why it is known as the city of peace; the bestowment of this name must go back to when Babylonian or Sumerian influence was prominent in Canaan. The later appellation "Jerusalem" is in Hebrew "Uru-salim", "ur" being a Semitic term for "city", hence "city of peace". David reverted to the original Semitic name, by which it has since been known.

Fully aware of its strategic importance, David's first action upon becoming king of the united nation was to dispossess the Jebusites. The city was a small place but strongly fortified. The Jebusites taunted David with his inability to capture it (2 Sam. 5.6-10. I Chron. 11. 4-9). But someone in David's forces knew of a possible means of entrance. David made an announcement coupled with a promise. *"Whoso getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, he shall be chief and captain"* (2 Sam. 5.8) Joab, the nephew of David, a daring and skilful warrior, did so, and won the coveted honour.

The A.V. translators did not understand what was meant by this "getting up to the gutter" (Heb. *sinnor*, meaning a channel or shaft) and the precise means by which David captured Jebus was therefore not known. Then in 1867 an Englishman, Captain Warren, engaged in surveying work in Palestine, was standing at the Virgins Fountain, the spring rising in a cave well below the city walls which feeds the Pool of Siloam, when he noticed a hitherto unknown hole in the roof. His curiosity aroused, he investigated and found what appeared to be a vertical shaft leading upwards. By means of ropes and other appliances he managed to climb this shaft and found that it led into an under-

ground passage cut in the rock. Following the passage he emerged into a kind of vaulted cave into which a chink of daylight penetrated. Wriggling through a gap in the masonry he found himself standing in a street in Jerusalem inside the city walls. He realised at once that he had solved the mystery of the "gutter". This shaft had been made by the Jebusites to enable them to obtain water from the fountain far below in times of siege, and Captain Warren had repeated the feat accomplished by Joab and his men three millenniums earlier. Taken unawares by warriors emerging from this unexpected gap in their defences, the Jebusites were overpowered and the fortress surrendered to David.

The Jebusites remained, side by side with the Israelites. Araunah, who later on sold David the land on which the Temple was to be built, was a Jebusite. Solomon made them bondmen, a kind of second-class citizens, condemned to the menial tasks of the community, and after that they disappeared from history. But David now was king of Israel in Jerusalem.

Nothing succeeds like success. The growing power and influence of this new king of a now united and virile nation soon attracted the notice of the rulers round about. The first to take overt action was Hiram, king of Tyre (2 Sam. 5.11) who sent "messengers", evidently an embassy of congratulation on his success, and to establish friendly relations, with presents consisting of cedars of Lebanon and craftsmen to assist David in his building programme.

Hiram was a king of David's stamp, far-seeing, courageous and a born organiser. His people, the Phoenicians, were the merchants and the traders of the ancient world and Hiram evidently saw in this rising kingdom of Israel a new and profitable market for his wares. He himself was the founder of a dynasty of Phoenician kings which endured for something like two centuries and under whose administration the Phoenicians attained the peak of their power and influence. Under Hiram and his successors Phoenician ships sailed to India, West Africa, Britain and South America—two thousand years before Columbus! Jezebel, the idolatrous wife of King Ahab of Israel in the time of Elijah, was a grand-daughter of Hiram. Phoenician territory and its seaports extended from Tripolis and Byblos in the north, through Sidon and Tyre to Haifa and Joppa in the south, a coastline two hundred miles long—and behind

that coastline lay the new and rapidly expanding nation of Israel, ripe for introduction to the varied products of the wider world which Hiram's merchants would be only too pleased to sell them. No wonder Hiram hastened to make friends with David.

But this thing became a snare to David. Up to now Israel had been a pastoral and agricultural people, living on the produce from their farms and pasturelands, a simple folk relatively untouched by the glittering prizes this world has to offer. All this was to change. They became aware of the many aids to easier living, to the luxuries and means of indulgence and amusement, which the technology of that age could give them. They were shown articles of utility and works of art which came from far distant lands of which they had never before heard. Rare timbers and costly building stone for their houses, elaborate furnishings and utensils, fine raiment and intricate jewellery, all these could be theirs, at a price. By the time of Solomon the masses of the people were working harder than ever before to produce the foodstuffs and farm products which were to pay for all this, and a new class began to emerge in Israel, an "upper class" of aristocrats who enriched themselves with all this trade at the expense of the working classes below them. It is not always realised that the magnificence of the kingdom of David and Solomon, and the kings who came after them, was built upon the toil and sweat of the people.

This brought idolatry—for the Phoenicians were idolators, worshippers of Baal and Ash-toreth and Dagon. The uncompromising loyalty of David kept it at bay during the forty years of his reign, but it gained a foothold in the days of Solomon and after that Israel was rarely free from its influence. David may have received the ambassadors of Hiram with all sincerity and believed he was acting for the good of his people, but it was a dark day for Israel when he entered into alliance with Hiram the idolator and man of the world. In his enthusiasm he quite forgot the Divine injunction given to his forebears in the early days of their nationhood, "*separate yourselves from the people of the land*".

The Apostle Paul must have had something of the same thing in mind when he advised the Corinthians (I Cor. 6.14-17) "*be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial, or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel, and what agreement hath the*

temple of God with idols? . . . wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean; and I will receive you". It is so fatally easy for Christians to become entangled with worldly interests and pursuits inimical to their highest spiritual interests only to find, too late, that it has brought leanness into their souls. The principle enunciated by Jesus "*seek ye first the Kingdom of God*" stands for all time as the ideal of the Christian life. Like Abraham of old, we must needs confess that we are "strangers and pilgrims in the earth", seeking another country, a heavenly, in which when it is attained all our hopes and aspirations will be realised.

The attitude of Hiram king of Tyre was one thing; that of David's old antagonists the Philistines was quite another. Whilst David was king over Judah in Hebron they had left him alone, content with their domination of northern Israel achieved at the death of Saul. Now that David was the acknowledged king over all Israel, north and south, and rapidly organising his entire realm into a powerful federation, they could not afford to ignore the threat. I Chron. 14.8. tells that as soon as the Philistines heard that David had become king over all Israel, they sallied forth and invaded Judah, spreading themselves in the valley of Rephaim to the south-west of Jerusalem in an endeavour to surround and capture the city. This time David was a little more discreet than he had been with Hiram; he went to the Lord with his problem. It is evident that in the face of this threat he was going to trust in the Lord's leading rather than in his own military judgment and skill. "*Go up*", said the Lord "*for I will deliver them into thine hand*". The victory must have been a momentous one, for the name which David gave to the battlefield, Baal-perazim, the "breaking of Baal", was immortalised three centuries later by Isaiah (28.21) when, searching for a simile to describe the rising up of God to bring the powers of evil to an end at the close of this present Age, he declared that the Lord will rise up "as in Mount Perazim and as in the valley of Gibeon" to effect his great work. David followed up the victory by burning the idols of the Philistines which they had left behind in the haste of their retreat, a kind of poetic justice for their capture of the Ark of the Covenant some eighty years or so earlier, and then met a second invasion by pursuing them all the way from the valley of Gibeon to their own capital city of Gaza. That intervention of the Lord virtually ended the Philistine menace for Israel; although David and others did have to ward off occasional attacks in later years, they never

again posed a serious threat to Israel's security. As it had been in the days of Samuel, it was God, and only God, who gave Israel true victory over the Philistines. When they attempted to fight the invaders in their own strength the result was always disaster. Here is a lesson for the Christian in every aspect of his war against sin and evil. "*Stand therefore*" exhorts the Apostle to the Ephesians, "*putting on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day*" (Eph. 6.10-17).

So "*the fame of David went out into all lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations*" (I Chron. 14.17). But these material successes brought their own snares. Secure upon his throne, having the allegiance of all his people; nothing to fear from his enemies; the products and luxuries, the good things, of this world at his beck and call, there was every incentive for David to use his supreme power as king to sit back and take all that life had to offer. He was not the first, and by no means the last, to have been weaned away in measure from his first sincerity and idealism by the lure of sudden riches.

Nowhere is this better shown than in his matrimonial affairs. His original marriage to Saul's daughter Michal, the bride of his youth, was now some twenty years old. She was still with him, but during that twenty years, he had taken six more wives and an unspecified number of concubines. Now that he was settled in Jerusalem he went on taking more wives—probably at least four or five—and more concubines. Not surprisingly, he finished up with nineteen sons and probably as many daughters by his wives and others, unnamed, by his concubines. He reaped the consequences in later life by the jealousies and intrigues, leading to rebellions and murders, which were common to every Eastern potentate who possessed a similar establishment. It was not said of David as it was of Solomon his son, that "his wives turned away his heart"; he did at least maintain his faith in God and his abhorrence of pagan idolatry to the end of his days, and this is certainly a measure of the steadfastness of his character and loyalty in circumstances which would have wrecked the faith of a lesser man. But the more the history of David is studied the more evident it becomes that nearly all the troubles and disasters of his life were the direct consequence of his many marriages; had he kept to the Divine ideal first instituted in the Garden of Eden and remained true to his first love, who stood by him so loyally during the dark days of his flight from Saul, he would perhaps have lived, and died, a happier man.

All these happenings must have occupied three or four years and then David began to think out the details of a plan which probably had been forming in his mind for a considerable time—nothing less than the transfer of the Tabernacle with all its ceremonies to Jerusalem, which would then by virtue of this association become a hallowed city to all Israel. The Ark of the Covenant had been lying in the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim in Judah for nearly a century and the Levitical ceremonies, including the annual sacrifices of the Day of Atonement, had fallen into disarray; without the Ark they could not be performed acceptably to God. I Chron. 13.3 implies that this had been the case. David, with his zeal for God and the full observance of the Mosaic Covenant by Israel, obviously felt that this was a step he must take as soon as he had established peace and security in the land, and this was the time. So he went to his counsellors and captains and to all the people of Israel with his proposal, a proposal that was enthusiastically endorsed. "*The thing was right in the eyes of all the people*" (I Chron. 13.4). A great crowd of delegates or representatives from every part of the empire, from the borders of Egypt to those of Syria, gathered together to accompany the project with all ceremony and rejoicing. And so they went to Kirjath-jearim.

Eighty years earlier, in the days of Eli, the Ark of the Covenant had been captured in battle by the Philistines and the town of Shiloh, where stood the Tabernacle, had been completely destroyed. The magnitude of that destruction is indicated by the Lord's words to Jeremiah five hundred years later. "*Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel*". The Psalmist also referred to this tragic catastrophe in Ps. 78.60 "*He forsook the Tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men, and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand*". The same Psalm declares that it was then that God formally declared Judah the royal tribe—although that had been foreseen and prophesied by Jacob many centuries earlier. Now David was about to crown his royalty by re-establishing the sacred ritual of the covenant.

The Tabernacle had suffered a chequered history since the destruction of Shiloh. It is evident that after the capture of the Ark by the Philistines the remaining Levites had hurriedly dismantled and removed the structure and its furniture before the victors had reached and destroyed the town. It is probable that it was

re erected at Gilgal, where it first stood at the entry to the land, by Samuel, continuing thus during the time of Samuel's supremacy. Later on in Saul's reign it is found at Nob, with Ahimelech the great-grandson of Eli officiating, not as High Priest, but as a kind of Priest-in-charge. Saul in his jealousy of David then had the entire priestly fraternity at Nob murdered, Abiathar son of Ahimelech alone escaping, and apparently removed the Tabernacle to Gibeon, his home town which he evidently wanted to make the capital of his kingdom. Zadok of the legal High Priestly line of Eleazar was appointed by Saul to preside over the Tabernacle, which then remained at Gibeon throughout David's reign and into the reign of Solomon until the Temple had been built. There were thus two centres of worship in Israel during David's reign; the original Tabernacle constructed by Moses, without the Ark but with the altar of sacrifice, at Gibeon presided over by Zadok, and the new "tent" or tabernacle erected by David at Jerusalem as repository for the Ark which he was now about to bring to the city, presided over by Ahimelech.

This was to be the great moment of David's life, the day that he brought the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred symbol of God's abiding presence with his people, back into the sanctuary. Eli had lost the Ark, Saul had chosen to ignore it, and now he, David, was to restore it to its rightful place in the city of God's royalty. But in all his enthusiasm and zeal David quite overlooked some ritual considerations. The tent in which he proposed to place the Ark was not the one made by Moses in which God had placed his name. The great brassen Altar of Moses, on which alone the sin-offerings could be consumed, was away at Gibeon. The priest of David's choosing, Abiathar of the line of Ithamar, was not the legal High Priest. And, perhaps greatest of all, the method chosen by David to transport the sacred object from its abiding-place in Kirjath-jearim, mounted upon an ox cart in full view of the cheering multitude and drawn by men who were not of the tribe of Levi, ran directly against the ritual laid down by the Lord and hallowed in Israel since the days of Moses. Instead of treating this whole operation as a sacred religious festival carried out with due reverence to the Lord, David made of it a political demonstration and a public holiday to enhance his own popularity with the people. Is it at all surprising that the whole thing went terribly wrong?

The procession moved off, the king at its head, surrounded by musicians playing on every kind of instrument, followed by the militia and

the nobility of the land; then representatives of the priestly fraternity and behind them the ox-cart bearing its precious load, led by Ahiah and Uzza, the sons of Abinadab in whose house it had lain for so many years. Finally came the shouting multitude of Israel.

The distance was not far; something like fifteen miles of winding track climbing the rather precipitous ascent of about two thousand feet to the summit of the hills on which Jerusalem is built. The going was sure to be rather rough and the cart probably swayed a little from side to side under its load. Then one of the oxen stumbled.

Instinctively Uzza, who was nearest, put out his hand to steady the Ark, which looked ready to topple over. He touched it, staggered backwards, and fell to the ground, lying motionless. Men rushed to his assistance. He was dead!

The procession halted in confusion. The music stopped. The shouting died down to a deathly silence. David came rushing back, his face ashen. The Levites, from their allotted place farther along the procession, looked at him accusingly. The enormity of what he had done came home to him. He buried his face in his hands and groaned.

They waited in silence. The king lifted his head; his countenance was haggard. He looked round him, he spoke; his voice was low. "Where is there a home of a Levite near this place?" he asked of the watching crowd. A hand pointed. "Obed-edom the Levite lives in yonder house" he was told. The king looked at the watching group of Levites. "The Lord has shown his displeasure with me that I allowed his sacred Ark to be carried on a cart made with men's hands and to be touched by unhallowed men not of Levi. Do you now take up the Ark and carry it into the house of Obed-edom the Levite that it may stay there until the Lord shall reveal to me his good pleasure."

Silently, reverently, they obeyed.

The chronicler of these events, writing many years afterwards, says that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza and he smote him because he put his hand to the Ark; so he died before God. That is how it appeared to the spectators at the time. All men knew that only the Levites were allowed to handle and carry the Ark. A sober appraisal of the incident must lead to the conclusion that the man the Lord was angry with was David, not Uzza. And the Lord is not so petty as to punish with death a man whose only crime was a technical breach of the law necessitated by a perfectly laudable attempt to save the sacred Ark from damage. Whoever loaded the Ark on the cart at the start

must have touched it; they were not struck dead. Had Uzza not acted as he did the Ark would have toppled on to the road and someone then would have had to pick it up. It is possible that Uzza, reacting instinctively to the apparent danger, realised suddenly in the moment his hand touched the Ark that he was committing sacrilege, and in the horror and fear of that moment, his heart stopped, and so he died. In any event, what had been intended and expected to be a joyful and triumphal celebration was turned in an instant to stark tragedy; David realised that he could not touch Divine things in other than the Divine way, and he returned to Jerusalem a dispirited and broken man.

It is not uncommon in this our day to find the things of God and the appurtenances of the Christian faith used as aids to secular or political advancement. The powers of this world are not above enlisting the help and support of the Church when their interests can be served thereby. The history of this Age furnishes abundant evidence of the disastrous results—to the Christian—of complicity in any such partnership. There can be no fellowship between Christ and Belial. The mission of the church lies in a completely separate province from that in which the world operates and in which its standards operate. *"Be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."* In so many spheres today there is the manifest tendency to water down Christian ideals and practices and doctrines to accommodate what is claimed to be the advanced thinking of contemporary generations which themselves are not qualified and in no position to adjudicate or pronounce on Christian ethics but need rather to be instructed in such things. The dividing line between secular and sacred needs to be clearly defined and sharply drawn, a boundary that may not be crossed. One day all men will be on the sacred side of that boundary, but that will only be when the power of the returned and reigning Christ over the earth shall have put down all opposing rule and authority and power, and the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Three months later David was ready for a second attempt. He had probably done some very deep thinking in the interim. Perhaps he had spent some time in quiet communion with God. At any rate, according to the detailed account in 1 Chron. 15 he was meticulously careful that the proceeding was carried out with the utmost propriety and in full accord with the sacred laws. David himself stepped down from the oversight; the direction of affairs was in the

hands of the two chief priests, Zadok and Abiathar, and all the minutæ of the procession was undertaken by the various classes of Levites who were ordained to the relevant services. So the procession moved off as before, with David in the lead, and this time arrived safely in Jerusalem and to the enclosing tent which David had erected for the reception of the Ark.

That was a great day for Israel. Many a devout heart must have swelled with pride in the reflection that the tragedy of the loss of the Ark two generations earlier had been rectified and that the God of Israel might now be truthfully said to be dwelling in the midst of his people. The days of idolatry were in the past and under the influence of a king who, despite his shortcomings in some directions, was nevertheless a man of sterling faith and loyalty to God, there must have been many who felt that the old bad days had gone and the fulfilment of all God's promises to his people Israel was at hand. It was at this time that the 132nd Psalm was composed by David and used in the celebrations, and in addition the 96th and 105th, the latter two being recorded in full in the account in 1 Chron. 16. *"The Lord hath chosen Zion"* sang David exultantly, *"he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it"* (Psa. 132. 12-13). In a sense which perhaps had not been so true since the stirring days of the Covenant at Sinai, Israel was in truth the people of God, and God was dwelling among them.

There was one discordant note. Michal, his wife, daughter of Saul, viewed from her window the triumphal procession entering Jerusalem, and watched David in his wild enthusiasm leaping and dancing among the players in reckless abandon, *"and she despised him in her heart"*. As David returned to his house when the ceremonies were over she came out to meet him and sarcastically taunted him with his demeaning himself among the riff-raff of the people in a manner unbecoming Israel's king. Apparently irritated by her words, the king replied sharply, telling Michal that what he did was for the glory of God, and that if he could give more glory by still further demeaning himself he would do so. *"Therefore"* says the chronicler *"Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death"*. At least, this is what the A.V. translators concluded the chronicler had said, but their rendering is not borne out by the Hebrew text and their use of the word *"therefore"* would appear to imply that David, in his resentment, saw to it that his wife remained childless, a sore grief to any Hebrew woman. In fact the initial

word is the copulative "and"; modern translations and the Septuagint render the phrase "And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child until the day of her death". Michal must have been about forty years of age at the time and had been married to David for something over twenty years. If she had not become a mother during that period it was most unlikely that she would do so now. The most likely explanation of the remark is, not that David was punishing her for her sarcasm and failure to appreciate the significance of the day's events, but that in the

view of the writer of 2 Samuel David's zeal for the Lord compared with Saul's irreligiousness was marked by the fact that of all the sons of David, one of whom must succeed him as king, none would partake in any degree of the ancestry of Saul the rejected. This, in the opinion of the historian, was a good and sufficient reason for Michal's childlessness.

So David settled down to enjoy the fruits of his endeavours in the hope of a long and prosperous reign over the people of the Lord.

To be continued.

HOLINESS AND THE WILL OF GOD

God speaks his holy will in his commands. As that holy will enters man's will, as man's will accepts and unites itself with God's will, he becomes holy.

The will of God, unhesitatingly accepted, is the power of holiness.

There need be no fear that it is not possible to do the will of the Father in everything. The Father will not keep the willing child in ignorance of his will. As the surrender to the spirit of holiness, to Jesus and the dominion of his holy life, becomes more simple, sin and self-will will be discovered, the spiritual understanding will be opened up, and the law written on the inward parts become legible and intelligible.

In the will of God we have the union of his wisdom and power... everything in a life of holiness depends upon our being in the right relation to the will of God. There are many Christians to whom it appears impossible to think of their accepting all the will of God, or of their being one with it... they cannot understand that all the difficulty comes from their not occupying the right standpoint. They are looking at God's will as at variance with their natural will, and they feel that the natural will never delight in all God's will. But they forget that the renewed man has a renewed will. This man will delight in the will of God, because he is born of it. This new will sees the beauty and the glory of God's will, and is in harmony with it. If they are indeed God's children, the very first impulse of the spirit of a child is surely to do the will of the Father in heaven. They have but to yield themselves heartily and wholly to this spirit of sonship, and they need not fear to accept God's will as theirs. Their mistake is a very serious one. Instead of living by faith they judge by feeling, in which the old nature speaks and rules. It tells them that God's will is often a burden too hard to be borne, and they will never have the strength to do it. Faith speaks differently.

It reminds us that God is love, and that his will is nothing but love revealed and that will, as love, will fill our hearts and make us delight in it, and so become the power that enables us to do his will joyfully. In a simple definite transaction with God we can say that we do accept his holy will to be ours. Faith knows that God will not pass such a surrender unnoticed, but accept it.

In Gethsemane the conflict between the human nature and the Divine will reached its height: it manifested itself in language which almost makes us tremble for his sinlessness, as He speaks of his will in antithesis to God's will. But the struggle ends in victory, because in the presence of the clearest consciousness of what it means to have his own will, He gives it up and says "Thy will be done". To enter into the will of God He gives up his very life. In his crucifixion He reveals the law of sanctification. Holiness is the full entrance of our will into God's will. Or rather, holiness is the entrance of God's will to be the death of our will. The only end of our will and deliverance from it, is death to it under the righteous judgment of God.

The way in which Christ walked when He gave his blood, is the very same way in which we must also walk. That way led to the rending of the veil of the flesh, and so through that rent, in to God. And was the veil of Christ's holy flesh rent that the veil of our sinful flesh might be spared? Verily, no. Following Jesus ever means conformity to Jesus.

Begin by doing at once whatever appears right to do. Give up at once whatever conscience tells that you dare not say is according to the will of God. Not only pray for light and strength, but act: do what God says. "He that *doeth* the will of God is my brother", Jesus says. To do the Father's will is the meat and the strength of every son of God. (*Andrew Murray 19th Cent.*)

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

*Light on an
Old Testament story*

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

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

The story is found in the eleventh chapter of Judges. The time, probably in the second half of the period of the Judges, say about 1100 B.C. It was a rude and barbarous age in Israel and the ruthless, warlike Israelites had little to commend them beyond their fierce belief in the God of Israel and—in the main—a regard for the Law of Moses. *"In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* is how a later chronicler describes the times. Before judging them too harshly we have to remember that we, through our forebears, possess a knowledge of Divine laws and standards and the way of life which is right in God's sight which is the accumulation of over three thousand years of Divine revelation. The men of Jephthah's day had only the advantage of two centuries.

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

This is the first factor to consider. Despite his early years spent as leader of a dissident group of "resistance fighters", as we would call them nowadays, with the lawlessness and licence which

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

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

creature to meet him should be ineligible for a burnt-offering. In any case the vow was out of order and entirely unnecessary, for victory depended upon Israel's heart condition before God, and since in chapter 10 the fact of their national repentance is recorded Jephthah should have realised that deliverance was thereby assured.

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

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

His daughter manifests equal nobility of character. Whether at this moment she realised the nature of the vow does not appear. Probably she did not. But without hesitation she put herself

at her father's disposal. *"My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies."* Evidently this was a household where God was known and honoured and worshipped and the daughter, no less than the father, had no other thought than to do what was right in the sight of God, at whatever personal cost.

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

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

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

Jephthah's vow clearly comes within the first category. The offering was to be an acknowledgment to God in gratitude for victory. (The word "burnt-offering" in the A.V. is the rendering of a Hebrew expression meaning literally "that which ascends", primarily referring to the smoke of the sacrifice going up to God but having as its basic idea the presentation of an offer-

ing, the burning being only incidental). The victory had been granted and the vow must be implemented. Under the Law that meant either that Jephthah's daughter must be redeemed with money or else taken into perpetual service in the Sanctuary. It might be that the spirit of Jephthah's undertaking that the one meeting him "shall be the Lord's" precluded him from availing himself of the provision for redemption, or that the magnitude of the victory demanded a positive sacrifice on the part of Jephthah greater than could be made by the mere payment of money. It is evident from the rest of the account that in fact his daughter did enter the service of the Sanctuary thereby remaining unmarried to the end of her days. This is shown by the girl's request that before the irrevocable step was taken she might be allowed to spend two months with her companions to "bemoan her virginity". Besides the customary expectation of marriage and motherhood normal to her sex, every Israelite girl was encouraged to hope that she might become the mother of the "seed of blessing" later on crystallised in the person of the Messiah. To be destined to a life of perpetual virginity was a crushing blow. It was this, and not the prospect of sacrifice, which Jephthah's daughter and her friends lamented those two months. At the end of the time her father "*did with her according to his vow . . . and she knew no man*". That last phrase is mediæval English and it denotes that she remained a virgin, which is consistent with her being "hallowed to the Lord", for the rest of her days.

Verse 40 as it stands in the A.V. conveys a wrong impression when it says that the "*daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah four days in a year*". The margin corrects it by substituting "to talk with". The word really means "to speak praise", and the implication is that once every year the young women of Israel visited her to commend and praise her for the devotion which led her so willingly to accept her fate. The visitors would have to journey to Shiloh, in the territory of the

tribe of Ephraim and the geographical centre of the entire land, for here stood the Sanctuary of God, the Tabernacle which Moses constructed in the Wilderness, and here, where the High Priest of Israel conducted the duties of his exalted office, Jephthah's daughter spent her life in the service of the Sanctuary.

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

Have you not noticed that in the history of this planet God turns a leaf about every two thousand years?

God turned a leaf, and this world was fitted for human residence. About two thousand more years passed along and God turned another leaf, and 't was the Deluge. About two thousand more years passed on and it was the appearance of Christ. Almost two thousand more years have

passed by, and He will probably soon turn another leaf. What it shall be I cannot say. It may be the demolition of all these monstrosities of turpitude, and the establishment of righteousness in all the earth. He can do it, and He will do it. I am as confident as if it were already accomplished.

Dr. De Witt Talmadge.
(late 19th Cent.)

ELISHA AND THE TWO BEARS

An Old Testament
incident

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of Lord." "Turned back" is not shub, "to return", but panah, to face the other party. Elisha stood, and regarded his tormentors. As he stood he spoke, and continued upon his way. There are three principal words rendered "curse" in the Old Testament, alah for an oath, an execration or imprecation, cherem which denotes an object or person which is to be sacrificed to God or to the gods, and galal, to disesteem, despise, or make light of. Galal in its feminine form gelalah means to revile. The word in this narrative is galal, and this can only imply that Elisha treated the insult with contempt or disdain, made light of it, telling the lads that he did so because of the God whom he served, and having said that, passed on. A number of other occurrences of galal in the Old Testament illustrate this meaning; it is translated "lightly esteemed" for example in 1 Sam. 2. 30, "them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed", and "a light thing" in 1 Sam. 18. 23. "... David said, seemeth it a light thing to be a king's son-in-law"; Isa. 49. 6 "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant"; 2 Kings 20. 10.

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

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

The bears "tare forty and two of them". A cursory reading evokes a vision of forty-two mangled bodies lying around, but this is not good enough. No one could expect that number of

healthy boys to stand still whilst just two bears attacked each of them in turn. And if the bulk of the party did not run away and so escape it can only be because they joined together to drive the bears away or kill them. David, at little more than the same age, pursued singlehanded a bear which had snatched a lamb from his flock, took hold of him by his muzzle, rescued the lamb and killed the bear. (1 Sam. 17. 37). The word here rendered "tare" (*baga*) has a wide range of meaning. Basically, it means to divide or to cleave, and from this, to rend or tear, to make a breach or break through. 2 Sam. 23. 16 and 1 Chron. 11. 18 both speak of three mighty warriors who "broke through" an enemy host; other Israelite fighters in 2 Kings 3. 26 tried to "break through" to the King of Edom in battle. Isa. 35. 6 says that in the wilderness shall waters "break out", and in 2 Chron. 21. 17 the invading Philistines came to "break into" Judah. All these use the same word "*baga*" which here is rendered "tare".

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

Why was so apparently trivial a story recorded? Whatever our view of the outlook manifested by the unknown scribe who compiled this part of the Book of Kings it has to be accepted that its inclusion and preservation in what has since become the Word of God is by the overruling power of the Holy Spirit and therefore not without purpose. Is it that men of later generations, reflecting upon the story, may come to realise that the Most High, the Creator of all things and source of life to all living creatures, is by no means the sanguinary, vengeful Deity so

often suggested? The creature is far less tolerant than the Creator when it comes to treatment of the agnostic and the atheist; the disciple much less disposed than his Lord to take the taunting and opposition good-humouredly and without rancour. When the villagers of Samaria closed their doors against the Lord and his little band the disciples excitedly requested that they be given power to call down fire from heaven upon the unbelievers "*as Elijah did*". The sad story of religious intolerance through the ages reveals how necessary it is that examples be preserved in Holy Writ to stress how utterly alien this is to the Divine character. It is true that "*the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth*" (Psa. 34. 16) and no man will escape eventual retribution for the things he has done which deserve retribution. "*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*" (Gal. 6. 7). Evil and sin must and will be banished, and the time will surely come when evildoers will no longer defile God's creation. But this involves the deliberate rejection of God and his principles of goodness and rightdoing in the face of full knowledge and opportunity. The sinner perishes because he is inherently evil and there is no goodness left in him; deliberately and in full knowledge of the consequences he turns away from God, and God has to let him go.

That is Divine judgment, certain and inexorable. But by no stretch of the imagination can the boisterous horseplay of a crowd of healthy youngsters be considered an offence to God meriting punishment. It is hardly likely that the children who gathered round Jesus were all paragons of virtue; He probably had a few unruly ones to deal with, at times. And like Elisha, He knew how much importance to attach to the things they said and did. The ease with which the wrong conclusion can be drawn from the story of this incident in Elisha's life is, perhaps, a measure of the ease with which we can cry for swift judgment upon an apparent dishonour upon the Divine Name or transgression of the Divine Law when all the time God looks down in his wisdom and rightly appraises the matter as a light thing not worthy of notice. Jesus spoke of those who scrupulously tithed mint and anise and cummin, and neglected the weightier matters. There is a strong case for his disciples to learn well the principle He sought then to inculcate, and carefully to discern the difference between those things which are truly an abomination in the sight of God and those which, in his clear sight, can well be "*esteemed as a light thing*".

LIFE — THE GLORY OF CREATION

"Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth." (Psa. 104.30).

The wonderful diversity of God's handiwork is nowhere better exemplified than in the manifestations of life which are apparent on so many different planes of material existence. From the simplest forms of living cell, through every ramification of the two organic worlds—the vegetable and the animal—up to that marvellous organism which is a human being, life displays its many-sided aspects to the serious minded student of Divine creation. The secrets of organic structure of men and mammals, of the growth and development of plants and trees, are understood, but the mystery of life itself, from whence it comes, how it passes through successive generations, is not known at all. It still remains true, as in the days of David, that the spirit and power of life is held by the Almighty (Psalm 104. 29-30)

It is natural, but a mistake, to assume that life can only exist in a material organism—a plant or an animal. Christians at least know well that outside the range of human sense there exists a spiritual world of living personalities who, adapted to that world as human beings are to this, fulfil their appointed place in creation. The Bible stresses the fundamental distinction between the material and the spiritual, the principle of life being that which these two orders of creation have in common.

Life can be manifested through a non-sentient organism (i.e. one not having any consciousness of existence) of which plants and trees, the individual cells which collectively go to make up a human body, and bacilli and bacteria, are examples. All these things come into being, live their life cycle through and die, without having any knowledge or consciousness of the fact.

Life is also manifest through sentient organisms, those having the faculty of being conscious of their own existence. The lowliest of these, insects and shell-fish, commence a scale at the top of which are the more intelligent animals, such as dogs and horses, and at the crown of earthly creation is man. But the story does not end here, for just as man in his powers and capabilities stands immeasurably above the understanding or perception of, say, an earthworm, so there are intelligent beings in the spiritual world—"angels"—who are just as much above man in knowledge and ability.

There are thus three general grades of sentient beings. These are: —

First, the purely physical, uncontrolled by powers of reflection, anticipation or reason. Instinct is the driving force which impels the actions of such creatures, and no kind of moral responsibility can be imposed upon them. The entire brute creation, from the tiniest insect to the most intelligent animal that is known, belongs to this class. Their lives are spent in seeking sustenance for the physical organism and in the perpetuation of their kind, and when at length Nature's purpose is achieved death comes easily and naturally and the dust returns to earth as it was (Eccl. 12.7).

Secondly, and still belonging to this material world, there is that form of life which is called "psychical", a word which denotes union of the purely physical organism with a mind and intellect having powers of thought and reflection, able to appreciate abstract qualities such as love, hate, justice, injustice, etc. Man is the only creature having this power. The mind of man is able to reason concerning unknown things from the basis of things that are known, and alone among the creatures of earth is able to bring its resources and the powers of Nature under control.

Our information upon the third order of sentient life, the spiritual, is derived from the Bible. The testimony of the Bible is to the reality of the spiritual order of creation, and that the powers and potentialities appertaining thereto are immeasurably greater than those which are given to mankind.

Before the material universe came into being, God had already created the spiritual world and its inhabitants. So far from angels or spirit beings being the souls of dead men ascended to the heavens, the Biblical presentation is that the angels were created and existed long before the human race (Job 38.7) and that when in due time God created man (Gen. 2.7) it was an entirely new form of life.

The material creation will always endure; *"the earth abideth for ever"* (Isa. 66.22). It is the Divine Plan that just as the spiritual realm is peopled by a happy and harmonious community living in complete harmony with the Giver of all good, so too will the earth to all eternity be populated by a restored and undying multitude of human beings living in full accord with Divine Law and in harmony with their environment. Death will be a thing of the past, and resurrection will have restored from the grave, the death-state, those who have lived in earth's past ages,

who, by means of their whole-hearted adoption of the principles of righteousness will be accounted worthy of everlasting life upon earth. The perfect balance and interdependence of physical organism with mind and intellect will continue to sustain man in his proud position as the glory of material creation.

To this general plan there is an exception. *The New Testament reveals that in furtherance of certain elements in the Divine purposes, particularly that of the world's reconciliation in the new Age now dawning, an opportunity to become "footstep followers" of the Lord Jesus Christ is extended to believers in him, and as a result of complete and life-long devotion to his message and cause, and desire for association with him in his future work, to become actually and in fact transformed from human conditions to spiritual conditions; to lay down human life in actual death as do all human beings, to be raised in the full glory of spiritual existence in the spiritual world. This is a translation from the psychical form of life to the spiritual form and involves a definite change of nature (Phil. 3. 21).*

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15th chapter makes this distinction very clear, and stresses *the fact of these two worlds being fundamentally distinct, that the passage from one to the other is limited only to the class described above, the*

"Church of Christ", and that it is effected by such a "change". It was thus that the pre-existent Son of God laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and became man, and after thirty-three and a half years upon earth amongst men was "put to death flesh, but made alive spirit", by the power of the Father being raised again to full glory of spiritual life.

This is well supported by the Scriptures, and demonstrates the fact that the popular theory of the evolution of mankind from a lower order of life is untenable when man's psychical nature is remembered. No matter how plausible the arguments for evolution based upon biological similarities, there is no means by which the unreasoning brute is able to develop those subtle *qualities of mind which constitute man peculiar amongst all earthly creatures.* With the creation of man the Almighty introduced something entirely new into his universe (Gen. 1. 26-27).

Life must therefore be manifest through a suitable organism—whether material or spiritual does not affect the fact—and death is the absence of life. The future life promised in God's Plan to "whosoever will" (Rev. 22.17) *comes by means of a resurrection from the dead; and this is the consistent teaching of the New Testament. (Acts 17.31 and 24.15).*

THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN

God uses most for his glory those people and things which are most perfectly broken. The sacrifices He accepts are broken and contrite hearts. It was the thorough breaking down of Jacob's natural strength at Peniel that got him where God could clothe him with spiritual power. It was by breaking the surface of the rock at Horeb by the stroke of Moses' rod, that it let out the cool waters to thirsty people. It was when the three hundred elect soldiers under Gideon broke their pitchers, a type of breaking themselves, *that the hidden lights shone forth to the consternation of their adversaries.* It was when the poor widow broke the seal of the little pot of oil, and poured it forth, that God multiplied it to pay her debts and supply means of support. It was when Esther risked her life and broke through the rigid etiquette of a heathen court that she obtained favour to rescue her people from death. It was when Jesus took the five loaves and broke them that the bread was multiplied in the very act of breaking, sufficient to feed five thousand. It was when Mary broke

her beautiful alabaster box, rendering it henceforth useless, that the pent-up perfume filled the whole house. It was when Jesus allowed his body to be broken to pieces by thorns and nails and spear, that his inner life was poured out, like a crystal ocean for thirsty sinners to drink and live.

It is when a beautiful grain of corn is broken up in the earth by death, that its inner heart sprouts forth and bear hundreds of other grains. And thus on and on, through all history, and all biography, and all vegetation, and all spiritual life, God must have "Broken Things".

Those who are broken in wealth, and broken in self-will, and broken in their ambitions, and broken in their beautiful ideals, and broken in worldly reputation, and broken oft-times in health, and those who are despised and seem utterly helpless and forlorn, the Holy Spirit is seizing upon, and using for God's glory. It is the "lame that take the prey" Isaiah tells us. It is the weak that overcome the Devil. God is waiting to take hold of our failures and nothingness and shine through them. (Selected)

A SIGN AND A WITNESS

A study in
Isaiah 19

Part 2. The raising up of Egypt

"In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called, The city of the sun." (Isa. 19. 18, margin).

Six times in this passage does Isaiah use the expression "in that day". Each time it is used to introduce one of the characteristic features of Egypt's conversion and reconciliation to God, using Egypt as the symbol of the world of mankind "in that day". Particularly does Egypt picture the military and warlike aspect of the world, and hence this reconciliation that is pictured in this nineteenth chapter does show up in brighter relief than other prophetic writings the fact that "in that day" nations will no longer be at enmity but will live amicably and at peace with each other, in the knowledge and reverence of God.

In this 18th verse the stage of "terror" described in the preceding two verses has passed. The world is no longer in fear of this new thing that has come into the earth. They have now become used to the idea of a central world government operating from Jerusalem under the direction of the "Ancient Worthies", and although they do not as yet comprehend a great deal of the law that is going forth from Jerusalem they do, at least in the main, realise and accept the fact that it is going to be for their good. The world will be so sick of war and destruction by that time that it will at any rate be thankful to know that the time for that has passed, and that real security of life and limb and prospect of physical well-being is henceforth its lot. That realisation will undoubtedly sink first into the minds of most men before the deeper implications of this Millennial Day will have impressed themselves, and men appreciate that they are called and required to come to the Lord Jesus in full surrender of heart and life if they are to continue in the enjoyment of these blessings.

Five cities are to speak the language of Canaan. That the world will speak a "new language" is fairly easy to appreciate. Men are to have turned to them a "*pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent*". (Zeph. 3.9). This promise indicates how the law of the Lord and the word of the Lord, going out from Jerusalem, will be understood and re-echoed by the world, and its terms repeated to each other by them, so that no man will need to "*say to his neighbour 'know*

the Lord' for all shall know him, from the least of them unto the greatest". (Jer. 31. 34). But what is the meaning of the somewhat strange expression "five cities" and why is it that one of them is called "The city of the sun"? (The text rendering "city of destruction" is incorrect and has been replaced by "city of the sun" in the margin). It seems a strange limitation; had it been *seven* cities the idea of universal turning to the Lord could well have been attached to it in accordance with normal Scripture symbolism. None of the orthodox commentators has any suggestion to make. But during the preparation of this treatise one interesting fact came to light. In ancient times Egypt was divided for political purposes into forty-two provinces, twenty-two in Upper Egypt and twenty in Lower Egypt, each province having a capital city, sacred to one or another of the Egyptian gods. Of these forty-two provincial capitals, just *five* are mentioned in the Bible, and one of these five is the city of On, which in after days was called Heliopolis, a Greek word which means "city of the sun". The five cities so mentioned are:—

No (Greek *Thebes*) Jer. 46. 25, Ezek. 30. 14, Nah. 3. 8.

Hanes (*Herakleopolis*) Isa. 30. 4.

Noph (*Memphis*) Isa. 19. 13, Jer. 2. 16, 44. 1, 46. 19, Ezek. 30. 13.

On (*Heliopolis*) Gen. 41. 45, 46. 20.

Zoan (*Tanis*) Num. 13. 22, Psal. 78. 12, Isa. 19. 11, 30. 4, Ezek. 30. 14.

These five cities were scattered over the country, one in the Delta, two in Lower Egypt and two in Upper Egypt. Is it possible that we have here an indication that the "cities of Egypt", the nations of mankind in the dawn of the Millennial Age, will only speak the "language of Canaan" *by coming into contact with the Word of God*? Five cities out of forty-two are symbolically to speak the new language. Five cities only of those forty-two are mentioned by name in the Old Testament; none of the others have any contact with its narratives or its prophecies. One of the five, at least, is definitely identified by the Holy Spirit through Isaiah, as Heliopolis, or On, the city of the sun, a city which from ancient times had been sacred to Itum, the god of the setting sun. If this is indeed the intention then we have in this verse a plain intimation that the world's salvation in the Millennial Day will depend upon two things; contact with the holy people of the Holy Land, and

contact with the Word of God which is to be proclaimed from that land. The "five cities" of that future day would then automatically include all of mankind who have come into contact with the means that God has provided for their reconciliation, and those who will not avail themselves of those means and will not "make contact" must perforce remain unreconciled, until and unless the remedial judgments of the Millennial Age effect in them a change of heart.

"In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them" (vs 19-20). Moffat puts the first phrase very clearly "an altar to the Eternal in the heart of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Eternal on the frontier". There are two separate erections indicated here; "altar" is "mizbeach", meaning an altar for sacrifice or offering, and used in the Bible to describe the brasen altar in the Court of the Tabernacle, the incense altar in the Holy, the brasen altars of Solomon's and Ezekiel's Temples, the idolatrous altars of the land, and so on. "Pillar" is "matsteban", a monument or memorial set up to commemorate some event or agreement, such as the pillar set up by Absalom to keep his own memory alive (2 Sam. 18. 18), the pillar set up by Jacob to mark the spot where God had talked with him (Gen. 35. 14) and the pillar he set up to be a witness between himself and Laban (Gen. 31. 45). It is necessary to realise therefore that this verse speaks of an altar of offering being set up in the *centre* of the land of Egypt, and a pillar of witness at the *border* or *frontier* between Egypt and Judah. Like the preceding and succeeding verses of this chapter, this verse is symbolic. "In that day", i.e., in the Millennial Age, there will be the altar of God, the place of approach to God, the place where acceptable offerings may be presented before God, in the very heart of the formerly evil and godless world of mankind. The world will no longer be able to ignore the message; neither will the Lord's messengers be universally despised and rejected. The time will have come when will be fulfilled the words of the Psalmist *"Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar"* (Psa. 51. 19). The coming of perfect men to God in wholehearted consecration of life will be a common-place in that glad day, and this offering of perfect manhood to do the will of God will be

a symbolic "offering of bullocks" upon the Millennial altar. The fact that a few verses farther on the Egyptians are pictured as being converted to the Lord shows that this symbolic altar "in the midst of the land" does denote the avenue of approach to God which will be open to all men during that Age.

The pillar at the border speaks of something different. It is this pillar that is the "sign and witness unto the Lord of Hosts" of vs 20 "for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them". The clue to the meaning of this symbolic "pillar" is probably to be found in the story of Jacob. When parting from Laban his father-in-law he set up a pillar to mark the boundary between their respective domains and to be witness of the covenant they had made between themselves. *"This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham... judge betwixt us."* (Gen. 31. 52-53). That pillar stood as the sign and witness of a covenant of peace between Jacob and Laban, entered into in the name of God and with the blessing of God. So here in Isaiah, the pillar on the border of the land is a sign and a witness to a covenant of peace between Judah and Egypt under the power and protection of God. It is a sign and a witness of an alliance formed between the righteous nation which represents the nucleus of the Kingdom of God upon earth and the unrighteous world which, although it has opposed and fought that righteous nation in the past, is now to be blessed by it and led into the way of the truth. The world of mankind will be crying to the Lord "because of oppressors" and He will send them "a Saviour, and he shall deliver them". That Saviour, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent when He is revealed in glory with all his saints for the salvation of the world. How clear it is, therefore, that, as the next verse tells us (vs 21) *"the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it"*. Thus is pictured the reconciliation of mankind to God and their eager coming to the source of instruction and blessing that they might learn of the laws of God's Kingdom and willingly align themselves with them. It will be a time when, at last, men will perform before God what they have covenanted to do; a time when righteousness prevails and there is the tremendous force of public opinion encouraging men to walk in right ways instead of leading

them to wrong ways as at present.

"And the Lord shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them." (vs 22). This is a further light on the characteristics of the Millennial Day; it is a time of discipline, of "stripes" for the wayward and rebellious, and it is not by any means going to be "roses, roses, all the way" for those whose hearts and minds have been degraded and brutalised by sin. The rule of the Millennial Age will be benevolent and merciful, but it will also be firm and just, and there will be many who will experience chastisement, chastening, "smiting" in the process of their recovery from sin and evil. But the smiting is to heal, according to this verse; it is not punitive but reformatory and we do well to take careful note of the fact for it represents a very important principle in the Divine dealings with mankind. The whole purpose and all the arrangements of the Millennial Age are for one end only, for the reconciliation to God, and the eternal salvation and everlasting life, of "whosoever will", of all who can possibly be persuaded to abandon sin and turn themselves to accept Christ and serve the living God. Speaking of a similar process with the Holy Nation at a slightly earlier date, God says through the prophet Ezekiel *"I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me"* (Ezek. 20. 37-38). In that instance the reference is to the purifying of regathered Israel preparatory to their appointment as the earthly missionary nation that is to take an important part in the conversion of "Egypt", but the principle is the same. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" is going to be as true of Israel and of the world of mankind then as it is of the Church now. And the general result, as predicted by Isaiah, is that "Egypt", mankind as a whole, will return to the Lord, and He will heal them.

"In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt into Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance'" (vs. 23-25).

A wonderful conclusion to the chapter; a picture of universal peace! Throughout Israel's history Assyria and Egypt were alternately at warfare with the nations around Palestine, or

with each other, marching and counter-marching across the fair lands of Judah and Israel and ravaging wherever they went. The picture of a highway between the territories of these two great empires, with the citizens of both passing and repassing upon their lawful business, must have seemed a very unlikely one, especially in the days of Isaiah, when Assyria and Egypt were locked in a death-grip which had to end with the crushing of one. But that is what Isaiah saw, a day when the contending factions of mankind would have resolved all their enmity and jealousy into that calm and quiet fraternity which is to be the hallmark of the next Age. The highways of that day will be the highways of peace, and war and violence will be no more.

Perhaps there is a covert allusion also to the outcome of the conflict that brings about the end of the Gospel Age, and prepares the way for the Millennial Age, the conflict that Daniel describes under the symbol of a battle between the "King of the North" and the "King of the South". Assyria and Egypt, geographically north and south of Palestine, could well fill that role in symbolic imagery. Whoever and whatever are the powers and forces in the end of this Age that are represented in Daniel by those two kings, it is certain that their violence and their warfare will not extend beyond the close of this Age, after Armageddon. "In that day", the Assyrian and the Egyptian will be equally conscious of a great chastening that has taken away from them all desire for further sallies at arms. The highway connecting Assyria with Egypt will be a quiet, a peacable, and a joyous one.

The next verse adds the connecting link that makes this possible. Assyria and Egypt are made one because of Israel between them acting as peacemaker. Thus is symbolised the beneficent work of the Holy Nation, regathered Israel, under the guidance and instruction of the glorified Church, working zealously to weld all men together into a brotherhood that is to endure for all eternity. Israel, says the prophet, is to be the third in this earthly trio, a blessing in the midst of the land. The picture of a nation of peacemakers in the midst of the earth, playing their part in the reconciliation of men to God, is one that is very vividly shown in this verse.

So the Divine blessing comes upon a world made new. The earth has yielded its increase and justified the declaration God made so long ago *"I will make the place of my feet glorious."* *"Blessed be Assyria the work of my hands."* Mankind will have come to perfection and entered into sonship; with sin cast away, and evil a thing of the past, they will have become sons of God on the human plane, and God says of

them "*Blessed be Egypt my people*". Israel, the missionary nation, comes in for the closer and more intimate word. Her work finished, God says "*Blessed be Israel my inheritance*". Perhaps we ought to realise that the earthly nation that has carried out this missionary work on earth is, after all, only working under the control of the Church of Christ, glorified in the heavens, and maybe much of what is credited in this chapter to Israel belongs properly to the spiritual Israel which will be ordering these things from above. At the same time it should be fairly clear that this nineteenth chapter of Isaiah is looking at things practically exclusively from an earthly

point of view and describes the work of God as it will be observed and appreciated by men upon earth. If there were nothing else in all the Scriptures to tell of the hope for mankind that is to be realised in time to come, this glowing passage should be enough to convince us that God has planned for the conversion of symbolic Egypt to himself. He will bring to an end all war and strife and tumult, and all those things that have made the world, in our day, a replica on a greater scale of Egypt as it was in its relation to Judah in the days of Isaiah the prophet. And He will have reconciled "Egypt" and purged it of all its sin. (THE END)

Unsuccessful Workers

Desponding Christians do not make successful workers or valiant soldiers. "Feeble-Hearts" and "Ready-to-Halts" and "Little-Faiths" win no battles, and wear no crowns. They are so occupied with themselves, with their own experiences, their own evidences, their changing moods and feelings, that they have no time for manly, noble service. They are so busy in trying to perform "acts of faith", and having performed them, they are so intent upon analysing them, in order to ascertain whether they be all of the exact quality or quantity which will recommend them to God, that they leave no space for "joy in blessing" and no room for the free large-hearted labour to which such joy cannot fail to lead. Tossed up and down on the waves of unbelief and fear, they have no heart to work. Shutting their eyes against the light, they grope their way uncertainly, and cannot run the race. Afraid to believe, but not afraid to doubt; afraid to trust, but not afraid to distrust; doubting themselves, and making that a reason for doubting God; putting away peace, and giving full scope to gloom; refusing light, but letting darkness reign within them; they are not in a condition to do hard work—nay, to do any work at all. Strength comes from joy, and of that joy they have none. They refuse both food and medicine, and they become lean and sickly. They are fitter for the hospital than the battlefield. They seem, too, to get more and more emaciated, though the food provided is abundant. Labouring under what physicians call atrophy, the more they eat the less they seem to be fed.

Unity and Uniformity

Does oneness mean uniformity? We answer, "No." Variety is the keynote of all we see around us. The botanists have divided the vegetation in the world into families according to their individual characteristics. In the same natural order we may have creeping plants, upright plants, climbers and other varieties. What then is his reason for putting these in one definite order. It may be the shape of the leaf, or the way the leaves may grow on the stem. It may be the shape of the flower or how it grows on the stem. Some plants, though different in flower, may be grouped together according to the veining in the leaf. Nevertheless there is a general principle in all plants which is true of all, but only in this aspect is there a oneness.

Variety also is manifest in all the other beauties of nature which frequently pass unnoticed.

The human family is even more diversified than the vegetable or animal kingdom, yet they have much in common. They all come from our first parents. Whatever the colour of skin or mode of life, they are all subject to the same natural laws. The law of heredity affects the black as well as the white races. They have all one blood (and it is interesting to note that the blood of human beings is different in composition to that of animals). Their organs are the same, their bodies function in the same way, the only difference in their make-up is the question of education, religious belief or the development of mind. (selected)

(*Horatius Bonar, 1800-1889, hymn-writer and minister at Edinburgh*)

TIMES AND SEASONS

9. The Period of the Kings

The period of the Kings of Israel and Judah commences with the accession of David and ends with the dethronement of Zedekiah at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. In some systems of chronology it does include also the forty years' reign of Saul, but Saul's reign, more or less contemporaneous with the era of Samuel the last of the Judges, more properly falls within the Period of the Judges. The accession of David at Hebron following the deaths of Samuel and Saul is therefore taken here as the starting-point.

The apparently obvious method of establishing the length of this period is by adding together the reigns of the kings both of Israel and Judah, all of which are given in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. The many chronologists of the 19th century blithely adopted this practice, and soon ran into trouble. The addition of the reigns of the Kings of Judah produced a total of some nineteen years longer than that indicated by those of the Kings of Israel. In an endeavour to find a reason for this a great deal of time was spent unravelling and elucidating what are called the "synchronisms" of the two Books.

A "synchronism" is a statement that, for example, King A of Israel commenced to reign, or died, in the *n*th year of the reign of King B of Judah—or vice versa. There are a great many such synchronisms and these, if they could be relied upon, would provide a kind of interlocking check on the kings' reigns which should allow the total period to be determined with accuracy. Unfortunately, they do not. It proved impossible to reconcile the statements of the synchronisms with the duration of the successive kings' reigns as recorded in the O.T. The amount of possible variation was anything up to thirty years. Since the prime object of most of the chronologists was to establish a definite date for the Second Advent, this was a serious handicap. In most cases the dilemma was resolved by ignoring the line of the kings of Israel and considering only that of Judah, on the rather precarious basis that since Judah was the less godless of the two nations its records were more likely to be correct. Even so, unanimity could not be attained. The labours of the leading investigators on the subject produced figures ranging from 467 to 484 years, as witness the following examples:—

Usher	467	Cunninghame	483
Clinton	469	Bliss	484
Bowen	473	Hales	484
Russell	473	Jarvis	484

During this present century the position has changed. The work of dispassionate historians and investigators has clarified the issue and revealed in part the causes of the old uncertainties.

The first and principal cause of the apparent discrepancies is that, as might be expected, no king reigned an exact whole number of years, and the sum of the stated years of each king's reign is not therefore a reliable guide to the true total. It has been found during this present century that Israel, like some neighbour nations, had a system whereby the fraction of the last year of a king's reign remaining after his death was counted as the first year of his successor's reign and called his "accession year". Thus this year would be counted twice in a plain summation of the reigns as recorded. The last year of Solomon was also the first year of Rehoboam, and so on. This alone makes a difference of about twenty years.

The second cause, also not suspected a century ago because the Bible only rarely mentions the fact, is that in some cases the heir to the throne acted as regent or co-ruler with his father when the latter was old, and the years of his regency were often counted in with his reign as well as with that of his father. This gives another indeterminate area of anything up to forty years or so.

The third and quite important aspect is that the progress of research into the history of ancient nations, particularly Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, has made such great strides during the past hundred years that the task of fitting the recorded contacts of Israel's kings with these peoples has been considerably facilitated and this acts as a confirmatory check on the Biblical records.

In the light of this new knowledge modern chronologists have found it much easier to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements in the Books of Kings and Chronicles so that it is no longer necessary to rely upon the mechanical addition of the figures given for each king's reign to arrive at an approximation of the period. Present day investigators such as Dougherty, Parker, Dubberstein, Finegan and Rutherford have come to various conclusions all lying be-

tween the quite close limits of 425 to 432 years from David to Zedekiah—appreciably less than the 467 to 484 of the older chronologists.

These more recent findings fit in very well with what is already well established as the times of the beginning and the end of the period of the Kings. The capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the fall of the Jewish monarchy under Zedekiah occurred in 586 B.C. (In some quarters 585 and 588 have been advocated but in the light of all available evidence 586 seems well established.) With the Exodus from Egypt taking place in the 18th Egyptian dynasty and the plain statement of I Kings 6.1. respecting the time elapsing between the Exodus and the founding of Solomon's Temple, it follows that the latter event must be dated at about 974 B.C., the area of doubt about precise dating of the 18th Dynasty accounting for some latitude here. This would imply the accession of David at about 1018 B.C., and a span of 432 years or thereabouts for the period of the Kings.

The data in Kings and Chronicles does not permit any more definite figure for the period; plenty of students have tackled the problem and each one places a different value upon one or another of the apparently contradictory statements and so arrives at a slightly different result. It is left to an entirely different book of the Old Testament to cast what may be a very significant light upon the problem.

Eleven years before the end of the monarchy, under Zedekiah, Ezekiel the priest was taken captive into Babylon with other Jewish captives by Nebuchadnezzar. Five years later he received his commission as prophet to announce unto Israel the Divine reprobation for their apostasies, to call them to repentance and acknowledgment of their transgressions, and to declare to them God's future intentions and purposes.

As prelude to his prophetic ministry (Ezek. Chap. 4) he was to prepare, on a clay tablet in the manner customary in Babylon, a representation of Jerusalem undergoing siege and capture, a picture prophecy which was realised in truth six years later, when the Babylonians captured and destroyed the city and Temple, thus bringing the era of the Kings to an end. Associated with this visible model of the doomed city he was to perform a symbolic action in which, in ritual fashion, he personally assumed the national guilt for the whole period of their transgression.

Three hundred and ninety days for Israel and forty for Judah, each day to be representative of a year, was the Divine edict. No explanation of the significance of these particular numbers is offered, only that they constituted the period

of the nation's culpability leading up to this final judgment in the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the national life.

The passage is worth reading. It is found in Ezek. 4. 4-6. After preparing the clay tablet representing the city, Ezekiel was instructed to *"lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the children of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity . . . three hundred and ninety days; so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days. I have appointed thee each day for a year"*.

The implication is fairly clear. Ezekiel was to take upon himself in a ritual manner the whole burden of the national transgressions throughout the period of the kingship which was now coming to an end, and lie down with them in front of the city which had always been the symbol of that kingship and which was now about to be destroyed. Four hundred and thirty years of apostasy and transgression, divided into two periods of 390 and 40, were to be brought up to a focus in that final judgment on Jerusalem which was now only six years away. During the whole of that time kings of the line of David had ruled in Jerusalem — apart from David's first seven years at Hebron—and for a major part of the time rival kings had also ruled in Ephraim, the north. Now all that was to come to an end. *"Remove the diadem and take off the crown; I will overturn, overturn, overturn it. and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him"* (Ezek. 21. 26-27). That was the Divine sentence upon the unworthy royal line and the equally unworthy people.

If then this span of 430 years is intended to cover the period of Israel's kings, we have here an indication, provided by the Holy Spirit, of the precise duration of the era under review. The rather indeterminate approximation of 432 to 425 years can be replaced by the more definite 430. In such case we have two Divinely provided overall figures to replace the ambiguity of the varied and oft-times confusing calculations of the periods of the Judges and the Kings. The 480 years of I. Kings 6.1. and the 430 of Ezek. 4. 4-6 can eliminate at a stroke all the elaborate fitting together of isolated statements which in the past have characterised efforts to elucidate the chronology of these periods.

The acid test of this application of the passage in Ezekiel is the significance of the two sections

of the period, 390 and 40 years. The left side, 390 years for Israel; the right side, 40 years for Judah. This has to be capable of a fitting explanation.

To the Hebrews, the east was always in front. The left side therefore was to the north, the northern tribes of Israel, headed by Ephraim. The right was to the south, the southern tribes headed by Judah. The complete 430 years finishing in 586 BC must necessarily start in 1016 BC which is the date of the accession of David. The junction between the 390 and 40 years falls on the year 626 BC and the historical significance of this year must be examined.

The instruments of God's judgments on Israel were the twin empires of Assyria and Babylon. During the greater part of the period from David to Zedekiah Assyria was the dominant power and the great scourge of Israel. Sennacherib the Assyrian was named in Isaiah *"the rod of God's anger"* (Isa. 10.5). Although the Assyrians are not mentioned in the O.T. until the time of Ahaz, Assyrian inscriptions back to the revolt of the Ten Tribes mention contacts and conflicts with Israel's kings so that almost from the time of the disruption at the death of Solomon, they were a thorn in Israel's side. Towards the end, however, and after the Ten Tribes had been taken into captivity, the Assyrian empire collapsed before the rising power of Babylon, and a new instrument of judgment, mainly directed against Judah, came upon the scene. The date of this collapse and the accession of Babylon's conquering king, Nabopolassar, father of the famous Nebuchadnezzar, was 626 BC, the end of the 390 years and the beginning of the 40. Jeremiah records this dual infliction of judgment upon the nation, first Assyria and then Babylon, when he says (50.17). *"Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him, and last this Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon hath broken his bones"*.

This same year, 626 BC, also marks the final end of what remained of the Ten-Tribe king-

dom, most of whom had been carried into captivity to Assyria at the fall of Samaria nearly a century earlier, and the consolidation of what was left into the southern kingdom of Judah. The 12th year of the reign of good king Josiah was marked by a zeal for reform in which he purged Judah from idolatry and restored true worship. (2 Kings 22 and 23; 2 Chron. 34. 3-7). This was the year 627 BC. Following his successful operation in Judah, he next went into the northern territory, inhabited now by a smattering of Israelites and some alien peoples, and wiped out every trace of idolatry there, destroying the idol sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan and slaying the apostate priests. It is almost certain that a work of this magnitude would require more than a year for its execution so that an assumption that the significant date 626 BC saw its completion would appear to be amply justified.

Thus seen, Ezekiel's 390 years denoted the period from the accession of David to the complete end of the northern kingdom during which Assyrian power was in the ascendancy as the instrument of judgment, and the 40 years the later period during which Judah represented the entire nation and Babylon was the instrument of judgment. The two periods together give 430 years for the period of the Kings, a figure which reasonably satisfies all relevant data in the O.T., and since it is found in a setting which is not history but revelation it may well be concluded that here is an instance of the Holy Spirit supplying a positive link which can only be approximately estimated by other means.

* * * *

This completes the chain of chronological links furnished by the Bible and commencing with Gen. Chap. 5. After 586 BC. there are no more links; but modern knowledge of ancient history is now so well advanced that an accurate knowledge of chronology since then is well established from sources outside the Scriptures.

KNOWLEDGE

Like John Bunyan's immortal hero, we can withstand the terrors of Apollyon only by making use of the means provided, and to translate Bunyan's symbols and the Apostle Paul's equally martial language into the realities of every day life, means that after having known Christ and entered into the secret place of the Most High we must go forth armed with knowledge—clear, definite, positive knowledge of the devices of the

Adversary and the outworking of the Plan of God. Without it we can wage no efficient warfare. We need not be bigots. We need not be sectarians. We can—nay, we must, be tolerant and understanding toward our fellows. But we must *know*, and in the power of that knowledge press forward to the consummation of our glorious hope.
(selected)

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