



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

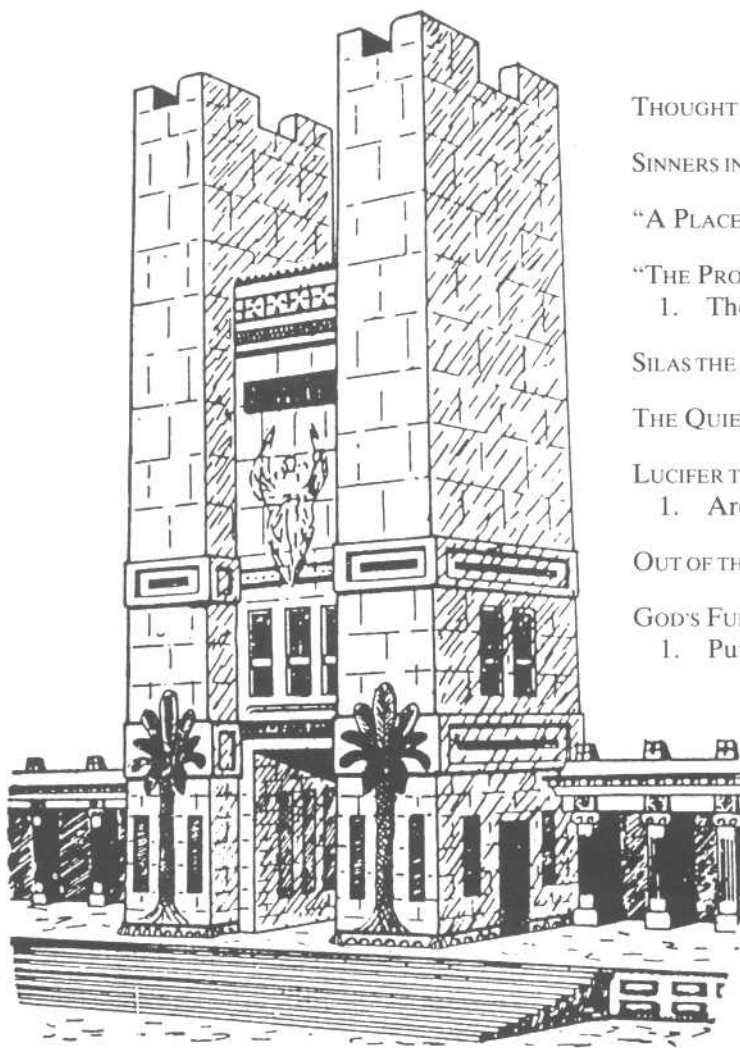
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

A momentous year lies before us. Momentous it must ever be to the Christian, for those who acknowledge that the Kingdom to which they look is not of this "*cosmos*" must to-day view with ever quickening expectation the spectacle of earth's empires being shaken to pieces. We who look for a city which hath foundations, a city whose builder and maker is God, can view, with an equanimity denied to many of the world's greatest men, the failure of mankind's attempts at self-government, knowing as we do that the glorious reign of the Prince of Peace is at hand. The New Jerusalem is on its descent from heaven to earth, and soon—very soon—the nations will walk in its light.

But what of ourselves? We who know this great thing; we who have been enabled to believe and see the evidence of God's work among the nations and who maintain and teach that nothing but Messiah's Kingdom can save the world; we who declare that our own standing before him is that of sons? How shall we face the unknown experiences of this coming year unless we have reiterated to ourselves our inflexible resolve to stand firmly for the maintenance of that standard of Christian living which is proclaimed by word of mouth so often amongst us, but which, alas, is only too frequently "*a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and that can play well upon an instrument.*" Remorselessly, insistently, the words of the Lord to Ezekiel echo down the corridors of time to our own day, "*For they hear thy words, but they do them not.*" Let our first New Year resolve be this: that the days to come shall witness to a tenfold deeper and more sincere endeavour to put into daily practice the principles of the Sermon on the Mount.

The challenge to Christianity will become more articulate in this year upon which we enter. More than one great Power has declared war upon the

message of Jesus Christ. Not because they understand it—it must be admitted that the only Christianity they know has been, after all, but a pitiable travesty of the real thing; but the fiat has gone forth. "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed*" little reckoning that in thus ranging themselves against the Infinite they are attacking a Rock upon which Caiaphas, Nero, Domitian, Attila—all hurled themselves and were broken. The faith great conquerors sought to exterminate still illumines this dark earth with its bright star of hope, and it is because the standards of Matthew 5 are being exemplified to-day that the eventual overthrow of evil is assured. "*Watchman, what of the night?*" Clear as a bell rings the answer "*The morning cometh, although it is yet dark!*"

NOTICES

Overseas readers' renewals. If you have renewed your request for the "Monthly" for 1991, please ignore any pink renewal or yellow reminder slips you may find in this or next issue. Although you do not receive this issue until about the end of February it is actually posted at the beginning of January and it always happens that some send in their renewal requests during that intervening two months. In any event we do not drop anyone from the list until we have made sure they do not wish to renew.

Gone from us

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Bro. George Engels (Windsor)

-- ❖ --

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

SINNERS IN ZION

"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath overtaken the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isa. 33.14).

There are indications in some parts of the prophetic Word which seem to foresee a time at the end of the Age when Israel is regathered awaiting its predicted final deliverance, and the hearts of some thus regathered will fail them, and they will abandon the Land of Promise and revert to the outer world from which they came for fear of the enemy threat. It is fundamental that the Lord can only deliver when there is faith; in Old Testament days when the people had apostasised it was always the position *"so he brought down their hearts with labour and there was none to help; THEN they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he heard, and delivered them out of their distresses"* (Psa. 107.12). So at the end; only those who manifest utter faith in the power of God to deliver, in the face of their enemies, will experience the spectacular deliverance which marks the outward and visible establishment of the Millennial kingdom upon earth. The remainder will take their place with mankind in general as those to whom the law of the Lord goes forth, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2.3), at an immediately succeeding time.

Here in Isa. 33 the immediate threat was that of Sennacherib the Assyrian, threatening Jerusalem with his forces. The story is recounted in Isa. 36 and 37 as well as in 2 Kings 18. The Assyrian king boasted that the God of Israel was powerless to deliver his people. The besieged ones in the city, inspired by both Isaiah the prophet and Hezekiah the king, *"answered him not a word"*. In full faith they waited quietly for the Lord to deliver, and He did deliver. *"And when men arose in the morning",* to look upon the besieging host, says the chronicler exultantly, *"behold, they were all dead corpses"*. Faith had won its victory.

But some there were who did not participate in the deliverance. Sennacherib himself has left behind his own account of this same campaign, inscribed upon tablets which still exist and can be read. And he records a feature of the affair which the Biblical writer omitted to mention, that some in the city, not so sure that the Lord was able or intended to deliver, endeavoured to escape from the city by night, hoping to evade the besieging army and get away, *"and"* says Sennacherib, *"all*

they that came out of the city by night I captured and sent to Nineveh". They did not really escape after all, and they missed the glory of the deliverance.

Is this event in past history intended to foreshadow a similar position on a greater scale at the end of the Age when the forces of Gog and Magog come against the regathered nation? It would seem that Zechariah, the prophet of the Restoration two centuries later, thought so, for he cast his vision of that final conflict against the background of Sennacherib's invasion. *"Behold, I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle"* he says in Zech. 14.2, *"and the city shall be taken"* (encompassed as a bird or an animal in a snare) *"and the houses shall be rifled, and the women ravished. And half"* (a portion, not meaning just one half) *"of the city shall go forth into captivity, but the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. THEN shall the Lord go forth . . ."* This is just what happened in the days of Hezekiah. A brief account appears in 2 Kings 18.13-16 but a more detailed one in Sennacherib's own description, in which he says that in his preliminary campaign he took from Hezekiah all the treasures of the palace and the Temple, and of the wealthy men, the king's wives and daughters and women of the Court, and carried them away to Nineveh. This, with the defection of those who lost faith, is just what Zechariah describes in his chapter 14. It is noteworthy that it is only AFTER all this has happened that it is said *"THEN shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations"*.

This perhaps is what the prophet Zephaniah saw in vision when he in his turn spoke of Israel's coming deliverance. *"Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, . . . for all the earth shall be consumed with my fiery zeal . . . then will I take away them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt be no more haughty. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord"* (Zeph. 3.8-12). The pride and arrogance of present-day Israel is proverbial, justifiably so from the point of view of this world's standards, when one considers her strength and achievements, but these are values of this world and not the values of God. Suppose by some unexpected turn of events in the political world the strength and power of Israel proves inadequate against those elements hostile to her.

Suppose that there is a reversal of the present situation so that those who trust in the arm of flesh depart in fear and are replaced by a directing power much more like those "governors of Judah" in Zech. 12:5 who say "*the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of Hosts their God*"? When such a revolution of thought and action takes place in the Holy Land it might well be that the introduction of the Kingdom of Heaven is breaking forth upon the world.

Ezekiel also seems to have a word about this. Talking, in his 20th chapter, about the Lord's intention to regather and establish his people in their own ancient land, he records the Lord's words "*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. I WILL BRING THEM FORTH OUT OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THEY SOJOURN, AND THEY SHALL NOT ENTER INTO THE LAND OF ISRAEL. And ye shall know that I am the Lord*" (Ezek. 20:37-38). This word "enter into" is quite significant. It has the meaning of entering into a

close relationship, of a close connection; in this context it quite well indicates that these "rebels", though physically in the land, are not spiritually wedded to it. They are not really part of the new nation and the new land because on account of lack of faith they are alien from God, and so He describes them as "sojourners", not really citizens of the land, and He purges them from the land.

It has to be remembered that in the classic description of the great deliverance in Ezek. 38 and 39 the nation of Israel is depicted as completely defenceless, dwelling in "the land of unwallled villages", and yet in complete peace and confidence, which can only mean that the nation, as in the days of Hezekiah, reposes utter faith in the saving power of the Lord. And that confidence is not misplaced; in the outcome the Lord does deliver. That can only mean that all unbelievers and those who lack faith, together with all whose trust is in earthly weapons and the arm of flesh, will have departed for fear of Israel's apparently hopeless position.

THEN shall the Lord go forth!

A glance at Jonah

Jonah the son of Amittai was in many respects the most remarkable of the Hebrew prophets. He was noteworthy, in that his mission was to a people outside the commonwealth of Israel, in that his preaching was outstandingly successful, and in that he discharged his commission, not with the burning ardour of his fellow-seers, but reluctantly and without enthusiasm. His achievement was great, and yet alone among the prophets he dared to question the wisdom of God. Alone among the prophets, too, he became a prophetic type of Christ, in his willing death that his fellows might be saved, his three days' entombment and subsequent deliverance, and in the salvation he brought to men otherwise destined for judgment. Sacrifice, death, resurrection and conversion; these are the salient features of this historical drama. Jesus likened his own imminent three days in the grave and resurrection to the story of Jonah's sojourn inside the sea-monster; that, said He, was a sign to

his own generation, a sign which that generation utterly failed to understand. The men of Nineveh are to rise in the judgment and condemn that generation, for they did at least repent at the preaching of Jonah; the Jews of the First Advent rejected Jesus. No matter how we may explain or understand the things that seem strange or incredible, the fact remains that throughout this book, more so perhaps than in any other book of the Old Testament, there is an atmosphere of the Divine presence, closely controlling the action and inter-action of events. We view this book aright when we see in it an acted prophecy, in which the actors, unknown to themselves, were the instruments of the Holy Spirit, players in a drama the significance of which they themselves never understood, a drama which, recorded in a setting of unequalled vivacity and beauty, has honoured Jonah for all time by making him peculiarly the prophet of the Resurrection.

Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold

them because they do not suffer themselves to think.

J. S. Mill.

“A PLACE WHERE TWO SEAS MET”

Twelve months ago, in No. 19 of the series recounting the life of St. Paul, (reprinted from twenty-five years earlier) the story of the celebrated shipwreck on Malta was examined. Latterly there has appeared in one section of the Christian Press a claim that the site of the story was not Malta at all, but an island on the west coast of Greece halfway up the Adriatic Sea, implying that the vessel had drifted north rather than west before coming to grief. An impressive array of arguments is mounted to support the thesis, presented as a discovery resulting from recent research. In point of fact, however, the idea is not new. It first appeared some two hundred years ago in the late eighteenth century, when several treatises making the claim appeared in Italy. Early in the 19th century it reappeared, being advanced by a number of well-known men including the philosopher Coleridge. Investigations in the later 19th century, including the results of official sea-bed surveys then conducted and comparison of those results with the narrative in Acts, more definitely established the site of the shipwreck as Malta. Most of the arguments now being advanced in favour of the new theory appear to have come from the original thesis of two hundred years ago.

The 1st century name of Malta was Melita, and this is the name given by Luke. There was also another Melita in the Gulf of Venice off the coast of ancient Dalmatia in the Adriatic Sea (known as Meleda in the 19th century and as Mijet to-day). It was the claim that St. Luke referred to this Melita. The modern version of the suggestion has fixed on another island off the Greek coast, 350 miles south of the Adriatic Melita, called Cephallenia (modern name Kefallinia). It is not explained how St. Luke, with his usual flair for accuracy, came to get the name wrong. The reasons now given in favour of this island of Kefallinia are those advanced two centuries ago in favour of the Adriatic Melita.

These reasons are, briefly, that the term “Adria” in Acts 27.27 could only refer to the present Adriatic Sea. This is incorrect. Publius Ovid and Horatius Horace, Latin writers of the early 1st century, both use the term in their writings to define a wide area of the Mediterranean, and the 2nd century geographer Claudius Ptolemy distinguishes the Gulf of Adria, (the present Adriatic) from the *Sea of Adria*, bounded by Sicily, Italy and Crete. The ship, “*driven up and down in Adria*” (Acts 27.27), was at the mercy of

the north-easterly gale, being driven in a line five hundred miles from Crete to Malta, roughly in a westerly direction and certainly not north towards Venice. Next, it was argued that the term “barbarians” in Acts 28.2 could not refer to Maltese who were under Roman control. In fact the term “barbarian” did not imply a condition of savagery as in its common use to-day. The word actually meant “men of a country”, usually “of alien speech”, and indicated, to the Romans, any man not of Roman or Greek nationality. Malta was first settled by Phoenicians and later by Carthaginians before coming under the sway of Rome and the island population, of mixed alien races, would naturally have come under St. Luke’s definition of “barbarians”. A further point was that the reference to “viper” in Acts 28.3 proves that Malta could not have been meant since at the present time there are no vipers on Malta. This is a bit weak; the story relates to Malta as it was two thousand years ago. There are no vipers at present in Ireland, but if it is true that St. Patrick had a hand in ridding the Emerald Isle of vipers there must have been some in his day. The Scottish island of Arran had vipers once but with land clearance and increasing presence of man they are no more.

But the most telling argument is the incontrovertible fact that the storm-wind which drove the vessel to its doom was the “Levanter”, (“Euroclydon” in Acts 27.14, meaning “north-easter”) which was, and is, a north-easter blowing from the Asian mainland; the ship could not possibly have proceeded north into the Adriatic; it had to go south-west or west and this is confirmed by the fear of the crew that they were in danger of falling into the “quicksands” (Acts 27.17); these are on the North African coast and known as the Greater Syrtis. There are no quicksands in the Adriatic. The sea depths around the Adriatic islands do not correspond with St. Luke’s figures whereas those at St. Pauls Bay at Malta do, so exactly in fact that the ship’s course can be plotted; see the accompanying map.

In the year 1810 a British naval vessel engaged in surveying the sea-bed around Malta was caught by this same type of north-easterly gale and wrecked during the night only a mile from the point where St. Paul’s ship came to grief. At the subsequent court martial it was revealed that at a quarter-mile distance the cliffs could not be seen but the white

surf was discernible on the shore. The sea depths taken by that vessel are shown on the map and, such is the accuracy of St. Luke, it is possible to perceive the actual course of the ship as it approached the shore, and, too, to see the position of the mud-bank where the ship finally came to rest and from which the mariners escaped to land *"some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship"*. Of all the confirmations of Biblical verity which are constantly being discerned, this story of the shipwreck must certainly take a forward position.

In order to assist in the comparison of the story as it appears in the Book of Acts with the physical features of the place in question there is appended here an extract from the article *"Voyage to Rome"* in the Jan./Feb. 1990 issue of this journal; it is this close correspondence which would appear to establish quite definitely the identity of St. Paul's Bay in Malta with the scene of St. Paul's shipwreck.

"Without warning, a raging hurricane, the dreaded *"Levanter"*, as it is called nowadays, swept down from the mountains of Syria and whipped the sea into fury. The *Levanter* is a wind of gale force originating over Syria and blowing westwards across the sea; when such a gale meets the south wind from the African coast the result is a cyclonic storm, a typhoon. (The word itself is derived from *"Typhon"*, the storm-demon of Greek mythology. *"Tempestuous"* in vs. 14 is *"typhoon"* in the Greek). Caught in the grip of this storm the mariners were helpless. To make Phenice was out of the question; the gale was driving the ship in a south-westerly direction away from all land and there was little or nothing they could do about it. Their entire attention had to be given to keeping the ship afloat and in front of the wind to avoid the danger of capsizing.

"Twenty-three miles from the mainland of Crete lies the rocky islet of Gozzo, known in ancient times as *Clauda*. The account says *"when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive; and running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much ado to come by the boat, which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven"*. All of which is quite unintelligible until the nautical expressions are sorted out and the map consulted. The storm struck the ship somewhere between Fair Havens and Phenice. For twenty-three miles she pounded along with her huge mainsail bellied out to full capacity by the

raging wind, her mainmast straining and threatening to snap under the tremendous pressure, the ship's timbers creaking and groaning as if to give way. Her south-westerly course, dictated by the wind, brought them within a few hours and by good fortune within sight of the little islet, and by what was probably a bit of good seamanship the ship was brought round to the *"lee"* side of the island, protected by its shelter from the full force of the gale. This is what Luke means by *"running under a certain island . . ."* With this temporary respite they first took in the boat. Ancient ships always had in tow behind them a small boat; in a storm there was danger that it might be swept away and so they took it up on board and made it secure. Next *"they used helps, undergirding the ship"*, an ancient practice known as *"frapping"*, consisting of passing strong ropes completely round the hull to hold the timbers together against the hammering action of the heavy seas. The quicksands here mentioned are those known as the Greater Syrtis, off the North African coast near Cyrenaica, some two hundred miles southwest of Crete. The sailors knew that with the wind in its present quarter they stood in grave danger of being blown directly on the sands, so they *"strake sail"*, a term implying that they lowered the mainsail and set the smaller stormsails in such fashion that the vessel no longer ran directly before the wind; by allowing her to drift westerly several points out of the wind they hoped to pass well to the north of the quicksands and so avoid the danger.

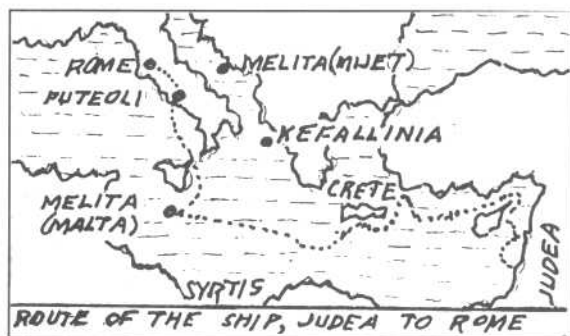
"The policy was one of despair, for they were thereby committed to drifting, at the mercy of the elements, without any guarantee of reaching land before the vessel succumbed to the battering of the waves and foundered with all on board. The storm continued and now black despair did settle on the ship's company. *"When neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay upon us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away"* (vs. 20). The compass was unknown in those days; ancient ships set their course by the sun in the daytime and the stars at night. The sky was obscured by heavy clouds and the mariners had no idea where they were. They might be hundreds of miles from land in the open sea; they might be dangerously close to unknown reefs or rocks. Their vessel was waterlogged and liable to go to pieces at any moment; they gave up hope and waited for the end

"At midnight on the fourteenth day since leaving Crete, there was a sudden excitement on deck. The lookout believed he had sighted land! Perhaps

a light, perhaps the darker outline of a mountainous mass silhouetted against the darkness of the night sky with its storm clouds. Eager to clutch at any straw, the sailors dropped their sounding line and found the sea-bottom at twenty fathoms—a hundred and twenty feet (*orguias*—practically the same as the English fathom—). That at least confirmed they were not far from land. The vessel drifted a little farther and they tried again; this time the depth was only fifteen fathoms, ninety feet. They were evidently approaching a shore, but on what coast and of what nature they had no idea. “Fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks” they dropped four anchors to hold the ship stationary “and” says Luke rather quaintly “wished for the day”

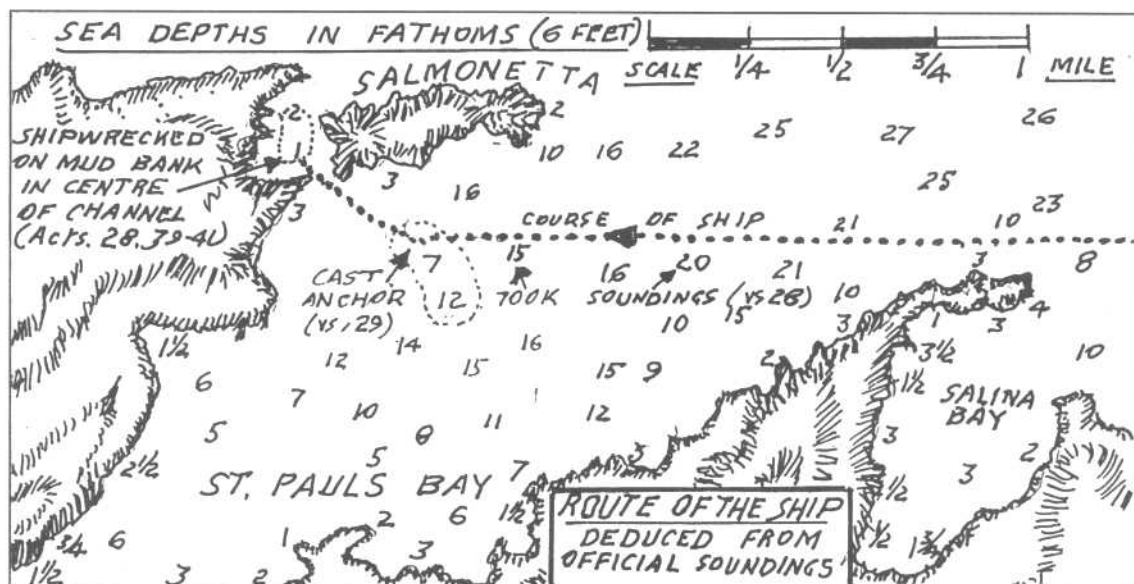
“The storm continued; the ship was still taking in water and in danger of foundering even as she rode at anchor, so that after the meal *“they lightened the ship and cast the wheat into the sea”* (vs. 38). This wheat was, of course, the cargo. There must have been at least a thousand tons of grain in the vessel. It is not necessary to suppose that all of it was jettisoned, but a considerable quantity, enough to remove the immediate danger, went overboard, and by that time it was daylight and the most experienced among the crew began to scan the coastline in an endeavour to judge where they were.

“No one recognised the land. As they looked across the heaving waters they did see what appeared to be a wide creek with a flat beach and the possibility of running head-on into that beach



and so getting to land became the focal point of discussion. The wind would be behind them and if the mainsail could be raised a bit and the vessel get some way on her the manouvre might succeed.

Unknown to them at the time, they were at the north-eastern tip of Malta, having drifted nearly five hundred miles during those fourteen days. Luke's description of the place is so precise that the exact spot has been identified and is now known as St. Paul's Bay, seven miles from the Maltese capital, Valetta. The “certain creek” which the sailors perceived, although it looked like a creek from the position of their vessel, is not really a creek at all. A small island now called Salmonetta is separated from the mainland by a channel only a hundred yards wide; strong currents enter this channel from both sides of Salmonetta and meet in the middle, creating a tumultuous mass of rough water. This is the place described in vs. 41 as “a place where two seas met”, a fine example of St. Luke's accuracy of description.



Confident that their plan was workable, the crew cut loose the anchors and "loosed the rudder bands" (vs. 40). During the long period of drifting the two steering paddles had been lifted out of the sea and lashed to the deck for safety. They were needed now for this operation and consequently were unloosed and lowered into the sea, with strong men ready to manipulate them as necessary. The great mainsail was slowly hoisted, and as the still fierce wind filled it the ship began to move forward towards the shore.

Too late, the steersmen, bearing heavily upon their paddles, realised the true nature of what they had taken for an inland creek. The other end of the channel came into view, and beyond it, the open sea on the other side of Salmonetta. Before anything could be done they were in the middle of the maelstrom formed by the opposing currents meeting head-on. Beneath this meeting-point of the waters there is an extensive mud-bank, where the

water is only six feet deep. Luke says that "the ship ran aground, and the forepart stuck fast and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves" (vs. 41). It was this mud-bank in the middle of the channel upon which the ship had stranded; the bows were held firm but the stern, still floating, began to be battered to pieces. A vessel three hundred feet long could easily break in two in such circumstances and that is what appears to have happened in this case.

"They were only fifty yards from land. The water was rough but the distance not great. Those who could swim threw themselves into the sea and got to the muddy shelving beach without mishap. The remainder followed them, riding over the breakers on planks or anything that would carry them. "And so it came to pass" the narrative concludes, that, just as Paul had foretold, "they all escaped safe to land".

The Needle's Eye

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God". (Matt. 19.24).

It is stated by some, and by others denied, that our Lord's words allude to a small door fixed in the gates of cities in ancient times whereby late travellers could enter when the great gates were closed. Confirmation of the allusion comes from Samuel Schor (died 1933) who was born in Jerusalem and spent his life in Jewish mission work: he actually witnessed a camel thus going through the "needles eye" after being unloaded of its goods. He says in "Palestine and the Bible" that in his day camels still came into the city laden with sacks of goods projecting three or four feet on either side of their bodies. So loaded, the animal could only pass through a wide gate, never through the needle's eye. "Its only chance of entering would be to remove the burden first." Our Lord indicated by this allusion, not that a rich man could never become his disciple, but that he could do so only by divesting himself of his earthly interests and achievements, and possessions, coming to Jesus in full personal surrender. And the rich young ruler

found this too hard "for he was very rich."

On one occasion, when a boy, Mr. Schor continues, desiring to pass out of the city (Jerusalem) he reached the gate too late; it had just been closed. "Someone outside knocked and demanded admission. The sentinel, after several questions, opened the "needle's eye" to admit him. He proved to be an officer and he entered, leading his horse. While the soldier stood at attention and saluted, a "fellah" suddenly slipped in from without. He had a rope in his hand, and before long there appeared the head and neck of a camel he was leading. With his head, long neck and two of his legs in, the camel refused to go back, and there ensued a great struggle, causing much mirth. Men outside tried to force the camel by pushing and beating; the soldier tried with the butt end of his gun to force the camel and man back again. But the crowds were on the side of the man, with the result that after a great deal of struggling and groaning on the part of the camel, his hind legs and body at last passed through the small gate, amid the cheers and laughter of the crowd. The camel was carrying no burden."

"At length by the mercy of God I observed the connection of the words that therein is the righteousness of God revealed. Then I began to understand the justice of God to be that by which the just man lives by the gift of God, namely by faith, and

that the meaning was, that the Gospel reveals that justice of God by which He justifies us as beggars through faith. Here I felt myself absolutely born again. (Luther).

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

*A treatise on
the Second Advent*

1. The Glory of the Celestial

A party of men stood gazing into the sky. Overhead, the Syrian sun blazed in a vault of blue. In the distance a patch of cloud drifted lazily away. And that solitary group on the eastern slopes of Olivet stood looking still, faces radiant with sudden understanding. Their Master and daily companion had just ascended into Heaven before their very eyes, and still in each mind echoed the words spoken by strange visitors only a few minutes before, "*This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1. 11).

From earliest times men and nations have dreamed of and looked for the "Coming One." Nearly every race under heaven has amongst its most cherished traditions the story of One who came from above to do good, and departed with a promise that upon his return the utmost desire of every man would be fulfilled and the woes of humanity should be no more. There has always been a deep longing in men's hearts for that Deliverer who shall come to save them from themselves. Behind the traditions there is a common origin, the story of how to man, fallen from perfection, a wilful violator of Divine Law, and consequently condemned to reap the penalty of that violation—death—came a ray of hope in the promise of God that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3. 15). God is one day to undo the effects of that evil which man had brought upon himself, and as men multiplied and spread abroad over the face of the earth that promise was carried with them and evolved into a thousand fantastic mythologies all having the same basis of fact. One day "He that shall come" shall descend from the heavens to the salvation of man.

Small wonder then that it is recorded of the day of Jesus Christ's first Advent that "*all people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not.*" (Luke 3. 15). Little cause for surprise that they asked him "*Art thou that prophet?*" (John 1. 21, Deut. 18. 13, Acts 3. 22). Greater cause for wonder perhaps that being thus in expectation they failed to realise in the person of Jesus Christ the Deliverer for whom they looked. Blinded by an incorrect conception of the manner as well as the object of his appearing, they knew not the time of their visitation and lost an opportunity which can never be regained.

Now in our own day history is repeated. For nearly two thousand years disciples of Christ have

followed in the footsteps of those first eleven men, looking for and expecting the Lord from Heaven. Nevertheless, until the general enlightenment of these past two centuries there has never been that marked advance in the understanding of this age-old hope, which enabled disciples to view in clear and accurate perspective the teaching of Christ and the apostles regarding his promised return. The materialism of orthodox theology through the centuries has reflected itself in current expectation regarding the Second Advent, and not until the Bible began to be widely studied and discussed a hundred and fifty years ago did the doctrine of his coming begin to take great strides forward out of the gross literalism with which its ablest exponents had invested it.

Now we live in a time when the literal fires of Hell, the golden floors and pearly gates of Heaven, the falling mountains and the strident trumpets of the Day of Judgment, are all recognised to be material symbols of spiritual truths. In many quarters among Christian people the call of the Church, and God's provision for the world which is outside the Church, are beginning to be seen as two phases of a beneficent Plan intended to bring "whosoever will" into full harmony with righteousness. Election and Free Grace are no longer considered irreconcilable doctrines involving the spilling of much theological ink. Death as the logical and inevitable wages of sin, rather than a method of revenge adopted by an offended Deity, is seen to be the law of God's creation; and everlasting life, on either spiritual or human plane of being, to be the glorious prospect held out to those who willingly align themselves with the principles of righteousness.

Therefore it should be considered a reasonable proposition that, recognising this marked advance in the spiritual perception of Scriptural teaching, the sublime theme upon which preachers and students alike have dwelt for centuries should share in such progressive development. The material trappings surrounding every man's conception of that day when the "*Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout*" can be very reasonably expected to wax old and vanish away when progress in Christian thought renders it possible for a clearer and more lucid vision to be received and understood by the "Watchers".

It is then with a sober recognition of the value of past expositions and an intelligent expectation of

progressive revelation in the understanding of this theme that the subject is approached. To reject the present plane of belief and to go back to the ideas held two centuries ago is out of the question. To imagine that there is nothing further to be known regarding the subject is nonsense. Increasing knowledge of the physical universe and a deeper understanding of the nature of that spiritual world which is beyond the reach of human sense, will prepare the mind for a more definite revelation than has been possible before. It is possible to attain to a clearer knowledge of the transcendent truth implied by that most startling of all the statements of Jesus, "*If I go away, I will come again*".

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

An outstanding achievement in Christian thought during the last hundred years has been a deeper understanding of the spiritual world and the difference between human and spirit nature. In past ages, when men were groping their way to an understanding of the higher things of life, it was to be expected that even the deepest of thinkers could only visualise that spiritual world as a replica, although a less tangible replica, of this material one; its inhabitants as glorified human beings with *more or less substantial bodies*. Even to-day the same view is held by many. Since Scriptural teaching concerning the Second Advent is so closely knit with a true appreciation of the nature of that spiritual realm which has as its centre the throne of God himself, it becomes necessary to have a clear understanding of the distinction between human and spiritual beings.

In the text quoted above, and throughout a large part of the Fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul draws a clear distinction between the natural and the spiritual (using the term "*natural*" in its primary sense of *material*, tangible to the five senses) and makes it plain that the spiritual nature is of a different order not discernible by those five senses. Although a real and continuing state of existence, its inhabitants acknowledging their Creator and fulfilling their ordained place in creation, it remains a world not perceived or visualised by the mind of man. The analogies of human experience are inadequate to describe the nature or the glory of that order which is so far above the human. Hence Paul, who was "*conveyed away to the third heaven*", and heard "*indescribable things, which it is not possible for a man to relate*" (II Cor. 12. 2-4 Diaglott), gaining just one glimpse of the glories of that world, found human words and

earthly analogies insufficient to convey to other men the impression produced upon his own mind and memory. Likewise upon the occasion when Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (I Cor. 15.8) he received an impression of the resurrected Christ which could not be detected by the natural eyesight, and under any other circumstances could not have been appreciated by Paul until he in his turn had been born into the spiritual world, in the First Resurrection. Hence his exclamation: "*He was seen of me also, AS OF ONE BORN OUT OF DUE TIME.*"

Now it is "*this same Jesus*," the resurrected Lord, in all the glory and with all the attributes of his spiritual nature, who returns to this earth at the time appointed. If the "*Watchers*" are not to be taken unawares at the time of his coming—and the Scripture assures us that they will not—it is essential that there be a clear appreciation of the principles which will govern the manner of his return. The example of two thousand years ago, when He came to his own, and his own received him not, because they KNEW NOT the time of their visitation, stands ever before us—a warning.

That our Lord Jesus Christ, before the days of his flesh, laid aside the glory which He had with the Father before this material order of things existed (John 17. 5) and became MAN, "*for the suffering of death*" (Heb. 2. 9) is an integral feature of the Christian faith. That upon the third day in that tomb in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, He rose again "*in the power of an endless life*" to the full glory of spiritual being having no part nor lot further in the flesh which He had given for the life of the world is the basis upon which the doctrine of the "*Ransom for All*" (I Tim. 2. 5-6) is built. It is clear therefore, that our Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth, not as a man as in the days of his flesh but as a spiritual being. The question is then immediately suggested "*What is a spirit?*"

Paul's hypothetical disputant comes to mind at once "*How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?*" (I Cor. 15. 35). A glance back along the centuries will suffice to show how inextricably mixed are man's ideas concerning bodies of flesh and spiritual bodies. It is only to be expected that in the early days of mankind when the worship of "*gods many and lords many*", of sticks and stones and idols of gold and silver, was the accepted thing, man's conception of a spiritual being was almost completely anthropomorphic (pictured in the form of human beings and material things). The dead were buried with food and drink and implements beside them, for their use in the

other world. The Sumerians in the days of Abraham sent numbers of slaves to their doom upon the death of the reigning monarch to serve him in the after life. The Egyptians embalmed their dead so that the body was available for use again on the day of resurrection. Even Moses, conversing with God upon the mount, pleaded that he might for one moment gaze upon the face of the Almighty.

This primitive inability to visualise the world of the spirit without such material appendages finds its counterpart to-day in the belief that the "rapture of the saints" will comprise a glorifying of the human body with the eternal retention of what is in all its essentials the present physical frame. Similarly the returning Lord is looked for in purely material guise, the body laid in the tomb outside Jerusalem enduring to all eternity as the "Lord from heaven", Who is now and for all time the Head over all things both in heaven and on earth.

Our Lord's own words to Nicodemus convey a depth of meaning to the observant which, rightly received, banish for ever all such crudities of thought. *"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."* (Jno. 3.8).

Those who are accounted worthy to attain "that world, and that resurrection from the dead" are like the wind, which is invisible, powerful, but comprehended only by the effects of its presence, and this understanding receives startling confirmation when the lesson of our Lord's conversations with his disciples after his resurrection is considered.

His recorded "appearances" number about eleven, but in only one instance, that of the manifestation to Thomas, did He appear in his pre-Crucifixion likeness. Mary, at the tomb, saw a gardener. The disciples, on the way to Emmaus, saw a stranger. On the shore of the sea of Galilee they failed to recognise the unknown friend until the miraculous draught of fishes was taken. This One who appeared and disappeared at will, assumed various forms and features, found locked and bolted doors no hindrance to his passing, was very evidently not the MAN Christ Jesus they had known.

What then is more reasonable to expect than that He who, in the days of his flesh and by Divine power, manipulated the constituents of matter to produce wine where formerly there had been water, or by its exercise so controlled the forces of Nature that the storm on the lake ceased at his

Word, should not, after being "clothed upon" with his spiritual body, call on the same power to create upon each occasion a form of human lineaments which should be the medium of his communication with those whose senses could only be receptive to material things. The one satisfactory explanation, not only of Christ's appearances after his resurrection, but of all the recorded appearances of celestial visitants throughout Old Testament history, is that the gap between spiritual communication and human reception was bridged by this quasimaterial expedient; a necessity because it is not possible for spiritual beings to be perceived or comprehended by human senses.

After Pentecost there came a change. No longer do messengers from above appear to men in human garb as the three men sought Abraham. The coming of the Holy Spirit, which at Pentecost introduced a new influence bearing the Divine Revelation to men upon earth, rendered the older methods of communication unnecessary and superfluous.

To those who have come "into Christ", by complete self-surrender and consecration to him, the power of the Holy Spirit conveys an understanding of spiritual truth and through that an appreciation of the spiritual world which can be given in no other way. No longer can such appearances convey real assurance in a day when modern science and magic is well able to reproduce similar phenomena. The deeper knowledge that comes from constant spiritual communion with God by prayer and Divine guidance overshadows by far those material aids to faith which were given to the disciples in the time of their need. The physical appearing of Christ as a human being—as even the noblest and most imposing of human beings—would surely constitute a very poor anti-climax to the stirring events which in all the world around us have been heralds of his coming.

Logically, then, the whole conception of Christ's Second Advent is changed. The sign of his presence is no longer a visible appearance in the skies with attendant angels and the sound of trumpets. The watchfulness inculcated upon those disciples who would be witnesses of his return is not a physical watchfulness which keeps the eye upon the clouds and the ear strained to catch the voice heard from Heaven. The whole technique of "watching" is revolutionised. Not now does the instructed Christian expect to see his Lord by physical sight, but in a deeper and truer manner he will realise the fact of his presence by a spiritual insight and understanding of the Scriptural evidences

relating to the time and circumstances of his coming. He will "see" him through the obvious fulfilment of the Scriptures in relation to contemporary events and the motion of forces which result in the destruction of this present order of things and the establishment of God's Kingdom in its place.

This realisation implies a diligent study of Bible prophecy in the light of current events. It implies a clear understanding of the purpose as well as the nature of his coming before any attempt to recognise the time can be made. It implies a deep spiritual watchfulness if the full meaning of our Master's own words "*Watch, for ye know neither the day nor the hour*" is to be appreciated. But once there is a firm grasp of this essential truth that Christ at his Second Advent must of necessity be invisible and uncomprehended by mortal eyes, the way is paved for full acceptance of the New Testament teaching that Christ's Advent is to cover that whole period of time which in the Divine Plan has been set apart for the recovery of mankind from sin and death. He comes, not to pass sentence upon a multitude of trembling sinners and carry a few elect ones away to heavenly glory, but to wind up the very unsatisfactory state of affairs now existing in what Paul calls "this present evil world"; to establish upon its ruins a new and better order of things "wherein dwelleth righteousness" and so to deal with all mankind, the risen dead as well as the contemporary living, by wise and merciful administration, that all men may come to know God as they have never known him before.

It is to this unostentatious aspect of Christ's return that the angels made reference when they said "*This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*" (Acts 1.11).

Away from the haunts of men, invisible to the busy life of the city, upon the eastern slopes of

Bethany it was that the Son of Man took his leave of earth. None perceived his going, save the faithful few who watched. Similarly none perceive his return save the few Christian disciples whose spiritual senses are continually exercised to discern the evidence of his unseen presence. He went away a glorious spiritual being, for his humanity had been given at Calvary for the life of the world. The physical form which the disciples' eyes followed until a cloud received it out of their sight was but a materialised body which manifested "*the Lord—that Spirit*" to men whose natural eyes were unable to perceive the presence of a heavenly being. When He appeared in the presence of God for us his manhood was left behind for ever—and He was in very truth glorified with the Father with that glory which He had with him before the world was. (John 17.5). Likewise He who returns is the Lord from Heaven, the spiritual being, a man no longer.

It was afterwards that the masses knew of his resurrection and ascension—proclaimed in the streets and squares of the city by men upon whom rested the power of the Holy Spirit. So will it be again. It is after the first consciousness of his Second Presence has dawned upon those who are watching, that the realisation of this stupendous event and all that it implies will come to mankind at large.

That material form ascended before the disciples' eyes visibly for a thousand or so feet at most, and it was when it disappeared into the cloud and the disciples could see no more, that Jesus Christ, who for thirty-three years had dwelt among men in the flesh, partaking in every respect of the nature of this material world, passed out of this realm of time and space into that eternity which knows not either, "*from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*"

To be continued

It is a paradox of our Christian experience that familiarity with Scriptural truth, instead of increasing our sense of wonder at the Divine grace, tends rather to dull our spiritual apprehension. We sometimes wish, indeed, that we could again hear the glad tidings for the first time, that we might experience anew the overwhelming joy of the dawning realisation of the glorious fact. But, familiar as it is, the Easter message never fails to stir to the depths the truly thankful, worshipful heart.

Full surrender is not passivity; it is the deliberate, volitional act of the regenerated Christian giving the Lord Jesus Christ the place of Lordship. This Lordship becomes meaningful by the diligent study of God's Word; by earnest importunate prayer; by the exercise of wholehearted faith, and by unquestioning and absolute obedience. For such there is Divine help, and that help is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—for He is our victory.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

SILAS THE GOOD COMPANION

Silas is known chiefly by the incident at Philippi during Paul's second missionary journey, when they were both involved in a riot which led to their incarceration in a prison cell where they sang praises to God and converted the jailer. He appears but briefly in the records but from what little is said something of a picture emerges.

Silas first comes into view as a "chief man" among the brethren at Jerusalem ten years or so after the Crucifixion. The expression means a leader or overseer and it may therefore be taken that Silas was an elder of the church and might well have been a believer during the Lord's life upon earth. Now he had been selected, in company with his fellow-elder Judas Barsabas, to accompany the emissaries of the Antioch church, Barnabas and Saul, to Antioch, bearing to that church from the Jerusalem brethren the letter which adjudicated on the questions which had been at issue between them. The whole story appears in Acts 15 and it is in that chapter that we have our first glimpse of Silas.

He was a man who had "*hazarded his life for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 15.26); evidently he had remained in Jerusalem during the persecution which followed the martyrdom of Stephen and been a pillar of strength to the newly-formed Church. Like James, the principal elder of that Church, he must have had a clear understanding of the relative places of Jew and Gentile in the Divine Plan and the manner in which the Divine call was now being extended to the Gentiles, to have been chosen as one able to present the judgment of the Jerusalem Church on the matter. This points to a mature man of sound judgment and wide vision, fully consecrated to the Lord. The Apostle Paul's choice of him, later on, to accompany him on his second missionary journey, is therefore quite understandable.

The Church at Antioch in Syria was less than ten years old. Originally founded by several missionaries including Barnabas of Cyprus, it had the distinction of being the first Gentile Church, in that both Jews and Gentiles constituted its membership. Antioch itself, more than three hundred miles from Jerusalem, was the third largest city in the world; only Rome and Alexandria exceeded it in size. Its main street, running straight from one side of the city to the other, was four and a half miles long; miles of other streets were paved with marble and adorned with temples, public buildings, market places, fountains and statues, all

redolent of Greek civilisation. At night the streets were brilliantly lit and the business and pleasures of the inhabitants went on by night and day as in any modern city. The Jewish colony was one of the most prosperous in the ancient world. This was the city to which Paul was brought by Barnabas and in which he commenced his life's work; Silas in those early days was one of his co-labourers.

According to Acts 15 Silas and Judas, after delivering their letter to the brethren of Antioch, "*being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them*". It would appear that Silas had marked ability as a preacher and the opportunity of ministry during his stay. All of this must have endeared him the more to these believers so that, when Judas returned to Jerusalem, Silas chose to stay at Antioch. (There is a little doubt about this, for Acts 15.34 "*Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still*" is only a late interpolation and does not appear in the older manuscripts; it is thought that it was inserted to account for the fact that soon afterwards he was chosen to accompany Paul). If he did thus stay it can only be because he saw a need for his services or opportunity for greater missionary outreach than was afforded by the community at Jerusalem. The indications are that, like Paul, his mind was reaching out toward the evangelising of the Gentile world and here at Antioch he found himself at the centre of missionary endeavour to that end. And Paul, planning his second missionary journey not long afterwards, chose Silas to be his travelling companion and co-worker. So they departed from Antioch, "*being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God*" (Acts 15.41).

Silas was a Roman citizen, like Paul, and this rather unusual honour for a Jew did constitute a definite advantage when travelling in the Roman world. It is not known how he obtained this citizenship, but probably it was, again like Paul, by right of birth. Later on in life he seems to have adopted the Latin form of his name, Silvanus, by which he is mentioned in 1 Thess. 1.1, 2 Cor. 1.19 and 1 Pet. 5.12, for the same reason that Paul used his Latin name "Paulus" in preference to the Hebrew "Saul" when moving about in the Roman world.

So these two set off, visiting the Christian communities Paul and Barnabas had established a few years earlier in Syria and Cilicia, Phrygia and Galatia, provinces of Roman Asia, in what is now modern Syria and Western Turkey. At Lystra they

encountered the young man Timotheus (Timothy) *"well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium,"* (Acts 16.2). Inspired by his zeal for the work, Timothy accepted the invitation to join them and finally they came to Troas, on the Aegean Sea opposite Macedonia in Greece. Here they met Luke the physician and here, so far as can be discerned, began a friendship between physician and Apostle which was to last the rest of Paul's life and produce the two notable histories, the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, both of which have been of such inestimable value to Christians in all times. Here, at Troas, Paul had the famous dream in which he saw a Macedonian man beseeching him to *"come over into Macedonia and help us"* (16.9) in consequence of which the four men took ship and crossed the sea to Greece, eventually finding themselves in the Macedonian capital city of Philippi. Silas must have been reflecting by now that the work of the Lord was taking him a long way from his home church of Jerusalem. It is highly probable though that he was conscious of an extreme satisfaction of heart that in a very real sense he was engaged in the duty laid upon all believers by the Lord at the time of His ascension, to be His witnesses *"to the uttermost parts of the earth"*.

Certain business men of Philippi (perhaps they would be better described by the more modern term "racketeers") however, did not see the matter in this light. They were the owners of a slave-girl the victim of demon obsession; the public exploitation of her frenzied utterances brought them in a very comfortable income. Paul, pitying the girl, exorcised the demon and restored her *distraught mind to normal, thus destroying what had been a very profitable racket.* The two evangelists found themselves arraigned before the magistrates, subjected to a merciless scourging, and thrown into the city jail with their feet made fast in the stocks. In what must have been a condition of acute physical pain they spent the night singing praises to God with such verve that the other prisoners in the jail could do naught else but listen. Then came the earthquake which disrupted the prison walls and set them free, the conversion and baptism of the jailer, the morning visit of the magistrates, now in a state of sheer panic upon learning that they had unwittingly scourged uncondemned Roman citizens thus laying themselves open to the severest of penalties, and finally the meeting with the brethren of the newly-formed Philippi church in which they exhorted them to steadfast endurance, and so departed. A crucial

and gruelling experience, but one that proved Silas a worthy companion of the stout-hearted Paul and a fitting representative of the One who said *"ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 24.9, 13).

Still the pilgrims plodded on, first to Thessalonica, where they founded the Thessalonian church but not without active opposition from the Jewish community, then to Berea, where they received a welcome and an acceptance of their message which warmed their hearts. Here were some true Bible students, who *"received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17, 11). Paul went on to Athens; Luke had stayed behind at Philippi, but Silas and Timothy remained for a while at Berea establishing the brethren in the faith. Then came a message from Paul; he had reached Corinth, the most dissolute city in Greece, and here, against all apparent likelihood, there was prospect of a great work for Christ. They were to come to him with all speed.

Silas laboured with Paul at Corinth for something like two years. It must have been a good training-ground. The Jews of the city were mainly hard-hearted and hostile and in the end there had to be an open rupture between Paul and the orthodox synagogue, although a substantial number of them, including Crispus the presiding minister, took their stand with Paul. The Gentile converts came from all walks of life but in the main from the dregs of society, for Corinth was a city where everything that was corrupt and depraved and immoral tended to congregate, so much so that in those days the expression *"Corinthian"* denoted the extreme degree of all that was foul and unclean and degenerate. And yet the Lord had said to Paul something that He said of no other place: *"I have much people in this city"* (Acts 18.10). Paul had just come from Athens, the pinnacle of the country's culture and civilisation, where he found but a poor response to his preaching. At Corinth, the haunt of every kind of wickedness known to man, he found *"much people"*. The Epistles to the Corinthians show what struggles those believers had to rise out of their native environment to the purity and the holiness of the glory of God.

It was during these two years at Corinth that the two Epistles to the Thessalonians were written and despatched. In both of them Silas, under his Roman name-form Silvanus, joins his greetings with those of Paul and Timothy. He evidently remained with Paul during the whole of the latter's

sojourn at Corinth.

Paul went from Corinth to Ephesus, taking with him Aquila and Priscilla. Timothy went too, but there is no mention of Silas or evidence that he accompanied Paul to Ephesus. Several years later, when Paul was again at Ephesus, he wrote the two Epistles to the Corinthians but there were no greetings from Silas as might be expected if he was there too, only one reference (2 Cor. 1.19) to the work of Silas at Corinth in the days of the founding of the church. It is clear he was not with Paul then. Neither did he accompany Paul on his third missionary journey as did Timothy and Luke, at least in part.

Did Silas stay to minister to the church at Corinth? It is not likely, or Paul when writing to the Corinthians later on would almost certainly have sent greetings to his old colleague. It is more probable that there came a call for his services either at the home Church at Antioch or his original one at Jerusalem. With his missionary experience among the Gentiles it is perhaps more to be expected that it was to Antioch he returned. It tends to be forgotten that these missionary journeys of Paul and his colleagues were inspired and endorsed by the Antioch church, which was the leading centre for missionary outreach in those early days. The prominence of Paul's journeyings in our minds is due to the fact that Luke the historian was his constant companion and fellow-traveller; Peter and others had equally full lives and the stories of their travels and achievements would have been just as absorbing and instructive had the Holy Spirit seen fit to appoint historians for them as was done for Paul.

A very slight clue to what might have been the later work of Silas is afforded by the First Epistle of Peter. There is ground for thinking that Peter himself spent some time with the Antioch church and served them as leader round about fifteen years after the Crucifixion. The first "bishop", or leading elder, of Antioch recorded by Eusebius is Evodius, who held office during the period just preceding the Jewish rebellion and destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. Evodius declares that he assumed office in direct succession from Peter. The next

"bishop" was the famous Ignatius, who served for nearly forty years and was martyred at Rome in A.D.107. Now if Silas did in fact return to Antioch from Corinth round about A.D.52 he might well have found Peter there and worked with him and earned that Apostle's regard. About a decade later we find Peter writing his First Epistle from Rome (the expression "*church that is at Babylon saluteth you*" in 1 Pet. 5.13 is almost certainly his guarded reference to Rome at the time of Nero's persecution although some do contend that Peter was writing from Babylon on the Euphrates or even from the Roman garrison of the same name in Egypt) and sending it to the Christians of the Greek provinces, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, by the hand of Silas (1 Pet. 5.12). So at this time Silas was in Rome with Peter (and, incidentally, with John Mark). Paul, following his acquittal, had already left Rome; this would be during the several years' gap between his first and second trials when no one knows where he really went. Spain, Britain, Greece, Asia, all have been suggested. Luke also was absent from Rome. Silas therefore was commissioned to take Peter's Epistle to all the churches of Roman Asia, many of them the ones he and Paul had visited some twenty years earlier. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Silas did undertake at this time a kind of final missionary journey over these lands, perhaps, for all we know, finishing at Antioch and there spending the final years of his life. He would by then be at least in his late sixties and perhaps more.

So, at last, this valiant soldier of the Cross must have come to the end of the way, convinced, like the one who at the first introduced him to missionary service, that he had fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished the course in glorious confidence that the crown of life was laid up for him "in that day". A young man when Jesus moved and talked in Judea and Galilee, he may have seen and heard Him and given his heart and life; in later years that gift was utilised to the full, as this erstwhile "chief man" of the church at Jerusalem travelled the length and breadth of the known world, even at last to Rome itself, fulfilling his mission as a herald of salvation.

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

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

THE QUIET TIME

Deliverance

Sir Francis Drake, being in a dangerous storm in the Thames, was heard to say, "Must I, who have escaped the rage of the ocean, be drowned in a ditch!" Will you, experienced saints, who have passed through a world of tribulation, lie down and die of despair, or give up your profession because you are at the present moment passing through some light affliction? Let your past preservation inspire you with courage and constrain you to brave all storms for Jesus' sake.

* * *

Coinage of a new word

After describing the degenerate conditions in Antioch, Dean Farrar writes, "It is the darkest just before the dawn. When mankind has sunk into hopeless scepticism, the help of God is often very nigh at hand. Bitter with weariness and sick with sin, there were many at any rate, even among the giddy and voluptuous Antiochenes, who, in despair of all sweetness and nobleness, were ready to hail with rapture the preaching of a new faith which promised forgiveness for the past, and brought ennoblement to the present. (Acts 13: 38). The work grew and prospered, and for a whole year the Apostles laboured in brotherly union and amid constant encouragement. The success of their labours was most decisively marked by the coinage of a new word, destined to a glorious immortality:—the disciples were first called CHRISTIANS at Antioch."

* * *

God turns a leaf

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 it 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.

(Talmadge.)

Faith

Faith is the most potent force in the realm of thought.

Faith is the spiritual eye that, piercing the clouds, can see God in the dark.

If a man maintains his faith in an unerring God, all the grinding poverty that ever crowded a man into a garret cannot keep him from the mansion prepared for him.

Faith must rest on evidence—the evidence—the evidence of God's Word.

* * *

He that serveth

The natural man lives to be ministered unto—he lays his imposts upon others. He buys slaves that they may fan him to sleep, bring him the jewelled cup, dance before him, and die in the arena for his sport. Into such a world there came a King, "*not to be ministered unto, but to minister.*" The rough winds fanned his sleep; He drank of the mountain brook and made not the water wine for himself; would not use his power to stay his own hunger, but had compassion on the multitude. He called them He had bought with a great price no more servants but friends. He entered the arena alone, and, dying, broke all chains and brought life and immortality to light.

* * *

Rest

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Do not make the mistake of expecting him to give you the desires of your heart at the very instant of your request, to make your path peaceful, easy and pleasant as soon as you commit your way to him, and at once to bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noon-day. He has not promised to do that. *TIME* is necessary for the working out of his kind providences in our individual affairs; for God works on philosophical principles and for lasting and blessed results. So—

*"If not to-day, be thou content, poor heart!
God's plans, like lilies pure and white, unfold;
We must not tear the close-shut leaves apart;
TIME will reveal the calyxes of gold."*

LUCIFER, THE PRINCE OF EVIL

A study in the personality of the Devil

1. Archangel of Evil

"The whole world lieth in the wicked one" says the beloved John (1 Jno. 5.19) and the bitter truth of this observation is daily manifest. The reign of sin and death has borne fruit in the existence of a "groaning creation" (Rom. 8.22) which looks and longs hopelessly for deliverance. The Scriptures confirm quite clearly that Satan is the prince or god of this order of things (Jno. 14. 30, Cor. 4. 4) and our Lord himself did not dispute the fact (Luke 4.6). The contrast between the fair beauty of Eden and those scenes of misery and degradation which now mar the earth would be not only saddening in the extreme but productive of hopeless despair were it not for the Divine promise that the power of evil shall one day be overthrown and Eden will bloom again.

Despite the evidence of Satan's rule, so manifest in the world and on the pages of history, there is very little direct reference to his personality and activities in the Old Testament. The existence of evil was plain to all men; many were the speculations as to why evil was permitted and many there were who endeavoured to overcome the power of evil. Enoch and Noah stand out as early examples of great men leading righteous lives in an environment which was rapidly becoming more and more godless (Gen. 6.5). Abraham and Job appear as men of faith who were esteemed and respected by their contemporaries. The children of Israel at Sinai recognised the existence of evil and entered into a covenant with God by the provisions of which they formally renounced evil and pledged themselves to absolute holiness of life, but that "covenant they brake" (Jer. 31. 32). There was in ancient days no lack of appreciation that mankind was in a fallen state and in the grip of evil. It is apparent, though, that intelligent belief in a presiding genius in the realms of evil, a master mind who directed the forces of evil, was not so widespread. Men and women groaned and suffered under the tyranny of sin without realising just how it came about that they found themselves in this hopeless state. It was left to the seers and pastors of the people of Israel to discern the relation of these things to the story of that happening in Eden so long before; and it is these men who have recorded sufficient of the visions they saw and the revelations they received to constitute a tolerably clear outline of Old Testament teaching regarding the personality and work of the Devil.

From the days of the early Christian Church it has been customary to regard Satan as a powerful spiritual being who is in a state of rebellion against God, one who is the embodiment of all wickedness and whose whole intellectual and moral nature has become subordinated to evil. But the word "Satan" was not originally the name of a personality, it is a Hebrew word meaning an adversary, an enemy, or an opposing one. In this sense the word appears fourteen times in the Old Testament, translated "adversary" or "to resist" and in these instances it is clear that the reference is not to the arch-enemy of God and man, but to opponents of lesser power and fame. Psalms 38. 20; 109. 4; 20, 29, and 71. 13, are cases in point. In Numbers 22. 22, the angel of the Lord is said to be a "Satan"—an adversary. In 1 Kings 11. 14, 23, 25, an earthly "satan" was said to be "stirred up" by God. It should not be thought, however, that this usage of the word means that there is no personal devil—although some Christians do maintain that understanding, that the Scriptures, in speaking of the Devil or of "Satan," refer to the principle of evil in active operation, and that the idea of a personal devil is an out-worn relic of mediaeval theology. It would appear that this viewpoint overlooks certain important Scriptural considerations. The principle of evil has always existed and will always exist, although the Bible makes it plain that evil will not continue in active operation forever. A day will come when the whole of Divine creation will be fully in harmony with the laws of God, and evil will not again darken that vast realm; but the Bible declares plainly that evil was introduced into this world by an external agent, that mankind was drawn into evil under circumstances which showed that at least part of the guilt lay at the door of another than man (Gen. 3. 14), and that during the whole course of human history that other agent has constantly warred against God, tempting and seducing men and angels. Moreover, the Book depicts in no uncertain terms the rectification of all the evil that was introduced by him. To accept all this as picturing the principle of evil in active operation does not do the record justice, for these stories are clearly intended to explain by whom the operation of evil in this world was set in motion. The plain indications in Genesis, in Job, in Isaiah and Ezekiel, and throughout the New Testament, are that there exists a being who, originally created

perfect and sinless, harboured thoughts of disloyalty and rebellion which led to open disobedience and culminated in the terrible scenes on this earth which are associated with the reign of sin and death.

Thus it becomes the natural thing for the Hebrew word "Satan"—an opposer—to become the proper name by which this being has been known throughout the Christian era. The popular idea of a grim-visaged demon with horns and hoofs, a kind of presiding deity of Hell, is borrowed from pagan mythology and has no relation at all to the truth. Satan is a spiritual being, his habitation is the spiritual world, he has all the powers and faculties which belong to that order of existence; but he is one whose moral nature is inflexibly set in the things of evil.

There are references throughout the New Testament which indicate that Jesus and the Apostles believed in the existence of Satan. The story of our Lord's temptation at the beginning of his ministry is meaningless unless it is accepted that He actually did become the recipient of suggestions from the Devil. It may have been true that He was not literally taken up and set on a pinnacle of the Temple, just as it must have been true that with the natural eyesight He could not have literally beheld all the kingdoms of the earth from his vantage point at Jerusalem; but the essence of the story is that Jesus was exhorted, not to fall down and worship an abstract principle of evil, but to definitely acknowledge as his liege lord one who at that time was admittedly the "prince of this world". Doubtless the proposal was to the effect that He could then undertake his work of healing and blessing mankind without going through the experiences ordained for him by his Father, experiences which must inevitably culminate in the tragedy of Calvary. The Tempter definitely declared that all things in this world, the kingdoms and all their glory, had been "committed" unto him as lord; and this claim, which is supported by many Bible statements, was not denied by Jesus (Luke 4.6).

Words attributed to Jesus such as that in Matt. 12.26. "*If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself*" can only be understood by realising that Satan was already known to be the author of evil works but not of good. The idea of this prince of evil lending his power to the execution of good works, as suggested by the Pharisees, would be an indication that his power to maintain his kingdom by the practice of evil was already tottering. Such language could hardly be applied to an abstract "principle of evil."

The association of the "Devil and his angels" in Matt. 25. 41, and in certain other Scriptures, indicates a leading personality among all those spiritual beings who are known to be in active rebellion against God.

Paul's terrible words in Ephesians 6. 12, in which he speaks of the unseen enemies of the Church, imply evil intelligences in the spiritual world, set in battle array against all that is good and pure upon earth and in heaven. Such a picture illuminates the Biblical presentation of one among them, their leader and instigator, who fulfils the description given in the Old Testament.

Moral responsibility cannot be imputed to an abstract principle; and the Scripture very clearly imputes moral responsibility to that agent by which, as it says, the first human beings were induced to swerve from righteousness and so introduce the reign of sin and death. Onward through the centuries the story is the same—behind all the misery and suffering, the hate and greed which characterises the rule of man in the world, there stands a shadowy figure upon whom is laid the ultimate responsibility—and the inevitability of a personal retribution in due time is as clearly indicated. It was Tertullian who said that although God punished Adam and Eve for their transgression, He did not curse them as He did the serpent, because they were candidates for restoration and the serpent was not. Whether this is a correct conclusion or not, a striking contrast is evident in Scripture when it is seen how throughout the sacred record there runs a golden thread of promise speaking of the ultimate undoing of all the serpent's work, and visualising the reconciliation of "whosoever will" to God; but declaring in no unmeasured terms the finality of that judgment which was passed upon the serpent at the beginning.

The prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel between them contribute a detailed exposition of the sin and the fall of Lucifer. It remains to three other men of God,—Moses, Job and Zechariah—to complete the picture by describing, in allegory and symbol, the three great phases of Satan's activities on the earth. Moses records the story of his successful attempt to introduce evil into this world and its terrible result in the fall of man. The writer of the book of Job pictures in eloquent language Satan's continued sway as the "god of this world," and shows forth in revealing language the inherent baseness of the Satanic character: "*Doth Job fear God for nought?*" (Job. 1. 2), whilst Zechariah in poetic imagery speaks of Satan as the inveterate

enemy of the Church. Apart from these five accounts the Old Testament is destitute of direct reference to the "prince of this world". Other nations feared and worshipped him; many of the pagan mythologies had their god of evil, to be propitiated and revered; but the Hebrews in their sturdy belief in Jehovah, even at those times when their faith sank to the lowest of ebbs and they turned aside after Baal and Moloch—false conceptions of the once universally worshipped true God—never betrayed their national faith to the extent of deliberately worshipping the prince of evil.

In thus taking a stand for implicit belief in the personality of the Devil, the way is laid open for examination of the two descriptions of his creation and fall which are found in the Old Testament. One is recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of Ezekiel and the other in the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah. In both cases a characteristic feature of Hebrew prophecy is revealed, one that should be kept in mind when studying the Scriptures. In speaking of events or matters remote from their own day, the prophets were accustomed to preface their words with some allusion to contemporary affairs which would be easily understandable to their hearers, and with this "background" in mind

gave the deeper message in such a manner that in future times the earnest student would realise its true application even although it did have a surface application to the days in which it was written. The Revelation given to John in much later times was written in the same style—the background being that of the Roman Empire and events of his own day, but the realities of his vision reaching forth into the distant future.

In these two passages therefore the prophets first addressed their words to the then King of Babylon and the King of Tyre, but as they develop their themes the language becomes more and more inappropriate to an earthly potentate and much more applicable to the powerful spiritual being who in a long past day renounced his loyalty and obedience to God.

The burning words of these two inspired prophets echo down the ages with all their primal intensity of feeling. "*Thou shalt be as though thou hast not been: and never shalt thou be any more.*" So will the last shadow of sin vanish from earth and the rebellion which has taken its toll of mankind be a thing of the past—only the memory of the days of evil remaining as an ever abiding and never-to-be-forgotten lesson to the sons of men.

To be continued

Word to the wise

It sometimes becomes necessary for the Christian to sever his connection with some particular organisation which for a term, maybe of years, has nurtured his spiritual growth. The causes of the severance may be various—disagreement with doctrine or with conduct, or a realisation that the particular organisation can no longer afford that which alone can satisfy. The voice of the bridegroom is heard no more; the light of the candle is not seen. The parting causes pain, and mayhap not a little perplexity. It is sometimes accompanied with hard words from those who have been one's companions in the faith; or there may be much misunderstanding which cannot easily be put right.

None of these things should be taken as though some strange thing happened unto us. This is but another stage in that spiritual development which demands continuous progress until "that which is perfect is come." It may be that the Good

Shepherd has called his child out of one environment because there is nothing more there for that child to learn; fresh experiences and surroundings are necessary to the onward progress of the soul which is seeking oneness with Christ. Like Abraham, let us go out, not knowing whither we go.

But guard against one thing—that unhealthy watching of the former communion with the object of disparaging whatever it is doing. You have left it—then leave it alone. To their own Master let them stand or fall. Their beliefs, their activities, their declarations, are of moment to you no longer. Your future is bound up with other interests—then go forward, seeing only the guiding cloud which is to lead you onward to the Promised Land, and let your references to your former fellowship be characterised by that courtesy and charity which is the hall-mark of the sincere Christian.

In proportion as we become imbued with the sympathetic, compassionate spirit of Jesus, to that

same extent are we impelled to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with the sad-hearted.

OUT OF THE IVORY PALACES

The Kingdom to Be

*There's a grand new day a-dawning
And the morning is in sight,
For beyond the eastern mountains
Rise the golden shafts of light.
Soon the long, dark night of weeping
And of sorrow will be past;
For the storm clouds are receding
And the Day Star shines at last.
Turn aside from scenes of turmoil,
And your tear dimmed eyes will see.
'Tis the glory of the dawning
Of the Kingdom that shall be.*

*Long by sage and seer predicted,
Promised by the Son of God,
Is the Golden Age, the era
When He'll rule with righteous rod.
Laying Justice to the plummet,
Straight and true will be the line;
Even when the clouds are thickest—
Bright His promises do shine.
Now upon receding storm clouds
The great Bow of Hope we see;
'Tis the promise of the dawning
Of the Kingdom that shall be.*

*O my heart leaps up in rapture,
And my spirit thrills with hope,
For upon the wind-torn storm clouds
With which men could never cope
I can see the glorious presence
Of the Son of God—our King
And my soul has found sweet refuge
'Neath the shadow of His wing.
He has come, as He had promised,
And above the hills I see
The bright glory of the dawning
Of the Kingdom that shall be.*

*Never more will sin and evil
Rule the wayward hearts of men.
He has promised that oppression
Shall not come to life again.
He will bring in health and healing;
Pain and poverty will cease;
Every man will love his neighbour
And extend the reign of Peace,
And his knowledge shall be widespread
Over earth to distant sea,
And all men will share the glory
Of the Kingdom that shall be.*

Laura Kathleen Poole.

Afterward

*"God's ways are equal: storm or calm,
Seasons of peril and of rest,
The hurting dart, the healing balm,
Are all apportioned as is best.
In judgments oft misunderstood,
In ways mysterious and obscure,
He brings from evil lasting good,
And makes the final gladness sure.
While Justice takes its course with strength,
Love bids our faith and hope increase:
He'll give the chastened world at length
His afterward of peace.*

*"When the dread forces of the gale
His sterner purposes perform,
And human skill can naught avail
Against the fury of the storm,
Let loving hearts trust in him still,
Through all the dark and devious way;
For who would thwart his blessed will,
Which leads through night to joyous day?
Be still beneath his tender care;
For He will make the tempest cease,
And bring from out the anguish here,
An afterward of peace.*

*"Look up, O Earth; no storm can last
Beyond the limits God hath set.
When its appointed work is past,
In joy thou shalt thy grief forget.
Where sorrow's ploughshare hath swept through,
Thy fairest flowers of life shall spring,
For God shall grant thee life anew,
And all thy wastes shall laugh and sing.
Hope thou in him: His plan for thee
Shall end in triumph and release.
Fear not, for thou shalt surely see
His afterward of peace."*

Faith's Priceless Dower

*Ye that have faith to look with fearless eyes
Beyond the tragedy of a world of strife,
And know that out of death and might shall rise
The dawn of ampler life;
Rejoice, whatever anguish rend the heart,
That God has given you a priceless dower.
To live in these great times and have a part
In Freedom's crowning hour,
That ye may tell your sons who see the light
High in the heavens—their heritage to take—
"I saw the powers of Darkness put to flight,
I saw the Morning break".*

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

*An outline of
the Divine Plan*

1. Purpose of the Ages

One of the greatest discoveries of the nineteenth century has been the fact that God is working to a plan. We call the realisation of that outstanding truth a discovery because that is precisely what it is. In a century which opened an era of invention and knowledge such as the world had never previously known, that stands out as a most important achievement, full of tremendous meaning for the future of mankind. Christianity has been left with a sad legacy of inadequate understanding of God from the time of intellectual decline that we call the Dark Ages. During the slow progress of nearly a thousand years the clear faith and fervent hope that had inspired the Apostles and the early Church became obscured, and in large measure was lost in the chaos and confusion that followed the break-up of Roman civilisation in Europe. The rise of Latin institutional Christianity, adulterated as it was with the ritual and the doctrines of the pagan religions it superseded, did little to preserve the plain and simple faith of Jesus, but much to darken his teachings and those of the prophets his predecessors. The hosts of the Moslem world, sweeping across Europe in the eighth century; the Asiatic hordes that succeeded them, and the feudal serfdom into which all of Europe was plunged, during those dark times, all but blotted out from the minds of men any real understanding of Christianity, despite the persistence of religious observances and church worship. Only in a few monasteries and abbeys—such as that at Jarrow, in this country, for a great time the leading centre of knowledge in the land—did any kind of learning survive. A few saintly men of God in such institutions endeavoured to preserve the sacred books, which they realised contained the word of life; a few equally understanding individuals among the people outside passed down from father to son stories of Jesus and of his life; but for the most part Christianity and superstition were inextricably mingled and anything like an orderly conception of God's ways was unknown. At a time when nearly every monastery or other centre of ordered life was subject to raids and despoliation by robber barons and unscrupulous kings it is not surprising that the emphasis fell upon spiritual contemplation of the next world in the endeavour to escape from the wickedness in this. We ought not to be surprised that those times fostered the idea which has wrought such havoc in the Christian Church, that the only aim and purpose of the Christian life is to

gain ultimate entrance to heaven and inherit the white garments and golden harps, and witness the burning up and utter destruction of this world as a thing too wicked to endure.

All this is now out of date. God's whole scheme is one of purpose; God is ceaselessly working and creating. We inhabit a world that is made for a purpose; we ourselves are creatures of purpose. That purpose is yet unfulfilled, but God is working towards its achievement and it will be consummated at length. The increasing light which has illumined the Word of God in the Bible in these latter days enables us to see more and more clearly where we as individuals fit into that purpose, what place God has for us, and what He means us to do. The greatest of all things in this life is to find one's place in the present purposes of God, for then we are co-workers with him in the things He is doing and are ourselves assisting in the accomplishment of Divine purposes. There can be no higher level of public service than that!

Now the modern understanding of God's fulfilling purpose has come only within the last four centuries, since the time of the Protestant Reformation, and it has come in stages, each one a foundation and preparation for the next. The first work of this time of increasing enlightenment was the restoration and illumination of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, the principles governing the Divine relationship to man, the fact of man's fallen sinful condition, the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ, and a personal holiness and dedication of life to God's service. That was the work of two centuries following the Reformation, say, roughly, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of our era. This was the period of Bible translation and of the publication of the Authorised Version, with all that was thus entailed in the opening of the Scriptures to ordinary people; the time of men, Christian thinkers and leaders, like John Bunyan and George Fox, whose influence has been so profound from their own day to ours.

The second phase was that of the great increase of scientific knowledge which had its start at about the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the work of pioneers like Sir Isaac Newton and William Whiston, a knowledge which led directly to a more accurate understanding of the facts behind Scripture history. Stories such as that of the

Creation began to be examined in a new light and understood much more clearly. The relation of the Scriptural narratives, dealing mainly with the nation of Israel, to the secular records of other nations was established, and a much more definite view of God's actions on the stage of history was the result. A great deal of superstitious belief was expunged from the faith as the result of this work and men's minds were prepared for the realisation that the Divine purpose includes all of mankind and that all recorded history shows evidence of his overruling power. This second phase, covering the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminated in a flood of archaeological investigation which, commencing with the work of Layard, Rawlinson and Oppert in the early part of the nineteenth century at Nineveh and elsewhere, still continues, and to an ever increasing degree illustrates and confirms the accuracy of the Bible. It is not only that the ethics of the Bible have been clarified and proved unassailable; its historical narratives have had their veracity demonstrated. In all these things the conclusion has been driven home that not only is the Bible a Book upon which one may absolutely rely; it is also a Book with a message which at this present time is of supreme importance.

The third phase of Christian understanding came with the rise of the Bible Societies at the commencement of the nineteenth century and the tremendous impetus given to Christian thought by reason of the very general expectation, characteristic of that century, of the imminent Second Coming of Christ. There was much intensive study of the Scriptures and almost every theologian had his contribution or suggestion to make regarding the manner, or the time, or the purpose, of that great event. Evangelists like Dwight Moody found ready audiences waiting upon their words; Christian writers and commentators found an eager demand for their books. It was an age of open enquiry and increasing enlightenment. On the crest of this wave rode the realisation that God has a Plan, that history as we know it is but the operation of this Plan in the past, and prophecy as we have it is the operation of that Plan in the future. The Bible was explored and studied from a new viewpoint and in consequence yielded hitherto unsuspected secrets, opening a prospect almost undreamed of since the days of the Apostles. God has a Plan! We now have a tolerably detailed map of the entire scheme, with comparatively few gaps, and even these are being closed as our studies continue and our perception brightens.

In this present dark day when there is so much to

discourage and induce apprehension, when the world we know is falling to pieces and all the endeavours of the best of men are insufficient to restore it, and the prospect before mankind is one of unrelieved gloom and despair, this knowledge of God's fulfilling purpose shines like a beacon light in the heavens, a golden star of hope whose radiance leads us onward, like the three Wise Men of old, toward the fulfilment of that which God has promised. God grant that it lead all of us, as it did those same three Wise Men, to the feet of the Saviour himself, for there indeed shall we find that evidence of coming peace and goodwill to all men for which serious thinking people are longing.

The evidence for God's fulfilling purpose is strong to-day, adequate for all who will examine it with impartial mind, but that evidence cannot be appreciated nor the outcome to which it points be accepted as logical and one to be expected until we have commenced where the Bible commences, and traced its outworking step by step as the Bible does. Neither may we expect fully to understand it unless we first master the principles of Divine government, those laws that define God's relationship to man, and man's relationship to his environment, the earth. If we are to appreciate the nature of mankind's everlasting destiny we must become familiar with the laws by which that destiny is to be achieved. So we must go right back to the story of Creation in the Book of Genesis.

This is not the place in which to discuss the theories of evolution and their connection with the origin of the earth and of mankind. Suffice it now to say that the Bible need not be thought to dispute the findings of scientists respecting the immense age of the earth, the slow development of this ordered planet from primeval chaos, and the emergence upon this planet of life. The Divine principle is, as expressed in the Gospel of Mark, "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear". The principle is well exemplified in the formation and consolidation of the materials which compose the earth's structure from the first primitive elements; it is well exemplified in the wealth of trees, plants, grasses and seaweeds which have sprung from the first few varieties of plant life traceable in the fossil remains; it is well exemplified in the marvellous variety of animal, bird, fish and insect life which again appears to have had its origin in a few well-defined typical forms which appear at certain periods in the history of the rocks. But when we come to consider man we have to realise that here is another case where God made a fresh start. Just as there are

factors in the living thing which mark it as separate and distinct from the non-living mineral with a boundary line that cannot be crossed; just as the same separateness distinguishes non-sentient vegetable from sentient animal, so there is a gulf between animal and man which has never been and can never be bridged. Man possesses certain qualities and potentialities which make him a fitting candidate for everlasting life; he has powers inbreathed by God which are shared with no other terrestrial creature. When God made man an expression is used which is used in no other connection "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". (Gen. 1. 26). In this creation God made something new; once again there is an instance of direct Divine intervention in the course of the world's development and the commencement of a new order in creation which in its turn is to progress and develop through the "blade", the "ear", and "full corn in the ear", stages. (See Mark 4. 28).

Man started off therefore complete and perfect in his own sphere, admirably fitted to his environment, not emerging or developing from the brute beasts but on the contrary being placed among them as the lord and head of all things terrestrial. The animal creation was part of man's environment, made to occupy its own place in the Divine scheme of things, but constituted inferior to man and in no sense progenitor of man.

Man as originally created was physically and mentally perfect, in possession of the ability to live continuously and for ever the while he remained in harmony with Nature's laws, which are also the laws of God. But he was not yet ready for God's ultimate purpose. Those splendid beings who first opened wondering eyes upon the fair garden of God's planting represented the beginning and not the end of God's work with man. A long period of growth and development lies between that beginning and the ultimate goal of God's purpose. Neither had the earth as yet progressed to the point at which it could be said, as it will one day be said "I will make the place of my feet (the earth) glorious". That is the inner meaning of the story of Eden. The earth must be adequately populated and brought into subjection to man. Man must be educated and trained and qualified, not only by reception of theory but in the hard school of practice and experience to know how he must live his life and administer his inheritance. And that involves a thorough and adequate knowledge of the difference between good and evil.

The mystery of the permission of evil is still a mystery. All of our explanations are inadequate;

they all leave something unexplained. But that the permission of evil is for a wise purpose and has been foreseen and provided for in the Plan of God no one can gainsay. It is no mystery that the endurance of suffering and experience of evil has beneficial results in the long run. It is a true saying that is found in the New Testament "now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby". (Heb. 12. 11.) Of Jesus himself it is said that He was made perfect through suffering (Heb. 5) and again, that He became a merciful and sympathetic High Priest by reason of the things which He suffered. There is evidently something in the endurance of suffering and evil which has a direct effect on the development of man in the direction of the Divine ideal. It must be accepted that suffering is the result of sin, and that sin came into the world, not by any action of God, but by the deliberate choice of man; at the same time we have to admit that in some wonderful manner which we do not at present understand God is using this suffering in the accomplishment of his purposes.

It is here that we must enter upon the subject of human free will. It is essential that man enjoy the exercise of free will if he is to be a responsible unit in God's creation. This is one of the respects in which man differs from the animals. They have their own orbit in which they live and move and have their being, an orbit out of which they cannot move, circumscribed as they are by the limitations imposed upon them by their instinct. They have no option but to obey the rules of their own life cycle and no one would dream of imputing any kind of moral responsibility to an animal for its actions. With man it is different; he has the ability, within certain limits, to please himself whether he will follow laws of righteousness or laws of evil, and he can intelligently and knowingly co-operate with God, or fight against God, as he will. God made the first man with that ability to choose between good and evil in order that he might be in fact the lord of all earthly creation, living in harmony with the laws of God and discharging his obligations as a citizen of earth not blindly nor of constraint, but willingly and because of full sympathy with, and endorsement of, God's laws of righteousness. So man embarked on his new life of experience, having the power to choose between good and evil. He chose evil, and fell.

We need not be dogmatic as to the precise nature of man's first lapse into sin. In the story of Eden it is represented as the eating of forbidden

fruit, the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We may be tolerably sure that the story at least intends us to know that man committed a fundamental breach of Divine Law. The action, whatever its nature, involved violation of the very law of his being, and the result of his act was that death entered into his physical and mental structure. Because his posterity were as yet unborn the same processes of death passed upon them. Thus, says Paul, death passed upon all men, for that all were sinners.

Humanity was thus committed to sin and consequent suffering the while it multiplied and spread over the face of the earth. Sin was destined progressively to devitalise the human race and obliterate the knowledge of God from men's minds. But always there remained the inherent goodness of human character, implanted in man at creation, urging to better things. It was in this soil, after the first shock of the Fall had passed, that the search for the way back to God could take root and discover real values.

Here came the first lesson for human learning. Man cannot exist without God. "In him we live, and move, and have out being" said Paul to the

Athenians. That may be much more literally true than our finite human minds are capable of comprehending just yet. But a truth that men must learn is that life everlasting and life in perfection can only be attained and enjoyed when the life is brought closely in tune with God and lived in conformity with God's law. "He that believeth on Me" said Jesus "hath everlasting life." (John 6. 47.) During the first few millenniums after the Fall the opposite was true; the practice and power of sin increased, the span of human life shortened, the physical vitality of man decreased, and his mental powers and intelligence declined. To this period belongs the degeneration of human types, from the splendid physique of the first men, to those miserable, almost sub-human creatures, remains of which have been found by scientists in various parts of the earth. Among the groups that did not descend to savagery but retained some semblance of culture and civilisation there arose mythological religions to supersede what was left of true knowledge of God. By the time of Abraham, two thousand years before Christ, there was very little real understanding of God and his ways in the world.

To be continued

The new relationship

It is well for those who have entered into the new relationship of spiritual sons of God to consider carefully and frequently the changed relationship into which it has brought us. Our most intimate relationships are no longer those of earthly origin. Our interests, hopes, and aims are now bound up with those of the heavenly family; and as we come to realise this more fully, our affections reach out after the family of God and our communion one with another should be such as to deepen and broaden that love one for another.

The words of our Lord showed how he regarded the heavenly relationship. When one said unto him: "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee," he answered, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my

mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother." (Matt. 12. 47-50).

We are sons of God, soon to be joined in heirship with his Son; we are the espoused virgin who, forsaking all earthly ties, is to be joined in marriage to her Heavenly Bridegroom, and we are now making all possible preparation for the great event. When this new condition is fully entered upon, we shall be "kings and priests unto God," prepared to bless all the families of the earth, every member of which will then be as dear to us as to God. Our love to our former dear ones will be no less than now. Our love will be greatly intensified, though not bounded by the former narrow limits of blood relationship.

"Seeing that we are all ordained to be citizens of the one Everlasting City, let us begin to enter into

that way here already by mutual love."—*Old Elizabethan prayer.*



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
(Amos. 3, 3).

Efforts for organic denominational union are still in the forefront. Since in such schemes there is always a dissident minority which secedes to form an independent body the net result of a successful merger appears generally to be one "official" denomination plus two seceding ones, so that where two formerly existed there now are three. Not quite what the sponsors of unity intended! But what else can be expected? In every Christian group there are those who hold the principles upon which the group was founded as vital to their faith and fellowship and will not accept the compromising of those principles for the sake of an enlarged communion. Throughout the centuries the Christian community has divided and sub-divided into more and more sections and although on the one hand such schisms are to be deplored, yet on the other hand it is doubtful if the progress that has been made in the development and understanding of the Christian faith would have been made had those sections never existed. Every secession and every reformation has had the effect of illuminating more brightly some one or other aspect of the Faith and has led to greater spirituality and awareness of God. The error into which so many fall is that of supposing that the organic unity of the visible Church under the aegis of some great controlling synod is synonymous with that unity of the Spirit between Christians which is the hall-mark of the members of Christ's Church, when in fact it is nothing of the kind. The New Testament tells us very plainly that the names of those who are Christ's are written in heaven, not on the member-

ship roll of a denomination; that the Head of the Church is Christ, not an impressive array of dignitaries sitting in session in some imposing building. True, order in the Church is necessary, and St. Paul, again, tells us that God has set apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, in the Church, for the work of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we come, in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity in Christ. There is plenty therefore for these dignitaries to do but it does not necessarily have to be done under the banner of what the world, looking on, sees as something suspiciously like the mergers and take-over operations so familiar in the commercial world of to-day. Many of the most momentous happenings, the greatest and most far-reaching movements, in Christian history have been initiated and led by humble and obscure men, working on a shoe-string as the saying goes, but inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. And it is always true that *"except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it"*.

The only unity worth striving for is that which our Lord had in mind when He prayed *"that they may be one, as we are"*. That unity has always existed between all who are indeed Christ's irrespective of denominational affiliation; these alone will be recognised when He gathers his own.

NOTICES

The Memorial. For the benefit of those who hold a Memorial service on the anniversary of our Lord's death, it may be noted that this will be on Thursday 28 March after 6.0 p.m. into Friday.

THE ETERNITY OF GOD

"I existed before Time itself . . . saith the Lord". That rather breath-taking rendering of Isa. 43.13 is due to Ferrar Fenton in his modern English version. This expression is certainly the meaning intended to be conveyed by the statement even although the literal Hebrew *"before day was"* does not normally embrace so wide a sweep of thought, but that was because the idea of a condition independent of Time had not then entered the minds of men—it has hardly done so yet. The nearest the ancients got to it was expressed by the author of Psalm 90 who said *"even from everlasting to everlasting"*—from infinity to infinity—*"thou art God"* (Psa. 90. 2). Isaiah did catch a glimpse of the truth when he penned the striking phrase *"the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity"* (Isa. 57. 15), and in all these utterances it seems clear that the writers intended to avow that the Deity is independent of Time. Ferrar Fenton's characteristic flair for sensing the underlying idea behind ordinary words used to define unusual themes is nowhere shown to better advantage than in this revelation that God existed before Time.

It is fundamental that all things that exist have been created by a pre-existing supreme Intelligence which we call God. It is arguable that until the act of creation there could be no such thing as Time, for just as Space has to be defined by objects separated by measurable distances so Time is defined by events separated by measurable periods. In that sense Time and Space began when God began to create, but of necessity God was already there. So it is said that God never had a beginning and that is a situation our human brains are quite incapable of understanding or conceiving and we have got to accept it as fact. But that is what the Lord meant when He said that He inhabits eternity. He is outside that which He created. He is independent of it, but He is intimately concerned with it, and He had a purpose in creating it.

Beyond the confines of this creation, independent of Space and Time as we understand those terms, independent of all things, pre-existing all things, then, there exists that from which all life and energy proceeds and is sustained. That Power alone makes it possible for sentient beings such as men to exist, to know that they exist, to think and reason intelligently, and make use of their environment to continue their conscious existence. That Power is God. Because that Power is the source of all life and intelligence wherever found, its life

must be infinitely more vital than the sum total of all life of which we know, its intelligence infinitely superior to the highest level of intelligence to which man or any created being will ever attain. Because that Power is supremely intelligent we cannot apply the impersonal pronoun "It"; we must use the personal pronoun "He". And He has always been there, and always will be.

Something of all this was perceived by the ancients; *"Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard"* cries Isaiah (40.28) *"that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding"*. To this the Psalmist adds *"Great is the Lord . . . his greatness is unsearchable"* (Psa. 145.3). Going back to earlier times, the Arabian philosopher Job says *"Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out"* (Job 36. 26). And after recounting some of the wonderful works of God exemplified in creation, *"Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him"* (Job 26. 14). These men were the inheritors of a tradition which went back many years to the time before polytheism supplanted the original monotheism, twenty-five centuries before Christ, when the ancestors of Abraham worshipped the "Most High God" and that worship of the one true God began to be superseded by the worship of "gods many and lords many", to use St. Paul's phrase. When at last Abraham left the idolatry of his native land of Sumer to go to a land which God would show him, he found the worship of the Most High God still continued in that land to which he came. Later, to the Hebrew patriarchs, God became known as El Shaddai, the Almighty, and after that, to Moses and the newly emergent nation of Israel, as Yahweh, the Self-existing One. But always there remained in some dim fashion the realisation of One Who dwelt in eternity. Always, from times of pre-history, men and nations have felt that outside of the world we know there exists that mighty super-human power to which they owe their being. It is only during the last few centuries that some among men, esteeming themselves wiser and more knowledgeable than all those who have gone before, have presumed to doubt his existence.

One aspect of the matter has to be viewed seriously in relation to normal Christian theology. It is sometimes suggested that it was God, the Father,

the Creator, who came down and was incarnate in Jesus the Christ, for man's salvation. That, as an expression of doctrine, put like that, creates an anomaly. The Father, the Deity, is of necessity ever-living, eternal, cannot die. As the originator and sustainer of all that is He is the power in which all things consist and around which all things revolve. To speak of the death of God is unthinkable. But the Son, revealed visibly to man in the Person of Jesus Christ on earth, did die, and was dead for three days, and was raised from the dead to eternity of life on the third day. "*Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him*" (Rom. 6. 5). That Christ the Son, the Sent of God, did literally die and was buried and lay in the grave for three days and was resurrected on the third day by the mighty power of the Father (Eph. 1. 19-22) is an essential feature of the Christian faith and may not be denied. Paul's long argument in I Cor. 15 is enough by itself to establish that fact. "*Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the scriptures*" (I Cor. 15. 3-4). And if further illumination is necessary, our Lord's own prayer to the Father prior to his arrest and death as recorded in John 17 affords it. "*I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do . . . now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own glory which I had with thee*

before the world was . . . now I am no more in the world, . . . and I come to thee" (Jno. 17. 4-11). And at the end He committed his spirit into his Father's hands. There is in all this a distinction of personality combined with a oneness which is nowhere better expressed than in verse 21 of this same chapter. "*That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*". The oft-quoted words of John 3. 16 "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,*" must be interpreted to mean exactly what they say. For the short space of thirty-three years the Father, dwelling in that eternity which is outside the space and time of this creation, was separated from the Son, upon the earth and inside this creation. Jesus himself said "*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father*" (Jno. 16. 28) and at that his disciples said to him "*Lo, thou speakest now plainly, and speakest no proverb*" (figuretively). "*Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see*" (2 Tim. 6.16) and yet "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (Jno. 14. 8-9). We cannot visualise the nature of God the Father; we can to some extent visualise Christ the Son. Perhaps, after all, it is only in the Son that we can see God.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE

"*The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'*" (Rev. 22.17).

This is the momentous invitation to the whole of mankind, at the dawn of the Millennial Age, to come into harmony and reconciliation with God and so inherit everlasting life. This is heaven in its real sense to the sons of men. Life in its fulness, death a thing of the past. These words, standing at the end of the Word of God, betoken the triumphant completion of the Divine Plan for the human race.

But why the "Spirit and the Bride"? Would it not seem more appropriate for the Son and his Bride to issue the invitation? The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of that Age, and the Bride is associated with him as joint-heir in the Kingdom! Why then is it the Spirit that in the Book of Revelation is associated with the invitation to life?

No word of Scripture was put in its place lightly. The expression has been framed in that way because the truth of the matter is best expressed

that way; such is the logical conclusion. Knowing the perfect unity and harmony of purpose existing between the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both, we can be sure that there is no disharmony here with the understanding that our Lord is the "Everlasting Father" of the Millennial Age (Isa. 9. 6). The Holy Spirit is as it were the vehicle of the King's invitation to accept life and the only question is why the Spirit is said to issue the invitation rather than the Lord.

Maybe the answer is related to the fact that this verse deals with the creating of new life. Those who hear and accept the call to the waters of life do thereby have planted within them a new life. The old Adamic life was lost at death. The awaking to conscious existence at the commencement of the Millennium is not really the enduring life that God has promised to all who come into harmony with him. The awakened ones are under the protection and care of the Mediator; their life depends entirely upon him for they are still unable to keep

the Divine Law in its fulness. They have been awarded conscious existence for a period—the thousand years—the while they have the opportunity to become reconciled to God and accept whole-heartedly the conditions of eternal life. Only after they have been awakened can they hear the invitation and commence to take the living waters. The work of the Spirit therefore comes after the first work of the Mediator in raising men from the dead.

The imparting or creating of new life is pictured as being the work of the Holy Spirit. In the very first chapter of the Bible, and the very first activity of recorded history, the agency which is at work is the Holy Spirit. *"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said 'Let there be light' and there was light"* (Gen. 1. 2-3). It is fairly plain that one is expected to read the whole of the ensuing account of creation as though God was represented on the primitive earth by his Holy Spirit, executing all the works that had to be done in accordance with his Divine command. The important factor in this view is that the creation story is the story of newly created life. Of the history of life and living beings before this earth came into existence before Genesis 1, little is known only that there were angels, spiritual beings, dwelling in the presence of God, but nothing else. Genesis 1 introduces the creation of life on this material earth—first vegetable, then animal, finally man. And all this was the work of the Spirit. It has long been a puzzle to scientists how life originated upon earth. They have hazarded various guesses, some thinking that there are "spores" of life floating through space which settled upon earth and took root—and evolution did the rest. Others think that some accidental combination of chemical substances produced a reaction which became living—and again evolution did the rest. But all of this is guesswork and none of them claim really to know. The truth, of course, is that life on this earth was introduced by the Holy Spirit of God, and its onward progress and differentiation into all its myriads of forms has been guided and controlled by that Spirit. The first living creatures of recognisable form to appear upon earth, as far as can be ascertained from the fossil remains, were little swimming things something like wood lice, called trilobites. But queer as they were, even repulsive as they would appear to many people if met with today, they were the work of the Holy Spirit, an earnest of a future time when the earth shall be full of happy human sons of God rejoicing

in all that Divine Wisdom and Love has provided for them.

That brief glimpse of the Holy Spirit at work, then, shows a world on which new life had been created. From thence onward, through immeasurably long ages, that life developed and multiplied along what are called natural lines, generation succeeding generation, individuals born according to the natural laws God instituted for the purpose, until in the fulness of time the Holy Spirit introduced another new life into the world, a life owing nothing of its vitality to the life that already existed in the world even although it was clothed upon with a form that was of this earth.

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee", said the heavenly messenger to Mary, *"and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy one that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1. 35).

The Son existed with the Father from before the world was (Prov. 8. 23). Now He was to lay aside that glory which He had, that He might be made man, for the suffering of death, that fallen man might be redeemed from death. No power other than the power of his Father could effect that transfer of his conscious life from heavenly conditions and a spiritual body to earthly conditions and a material body. The words of the angel reveal how the incomprehensible power of God, his Holy Spirit, came upon the handmaid of the Lord and effected his purpose. The "Word" had been made flesh (John 1. 14) and in due time men saw his glory, the glory as of the Son of God revealed to the sight of men.

It was not long afterwards that new life of another kind came to be conferred upon men. The Day of Pentecost had dawned and a company of earnest followers of the Master were gathered in an upper room. The story is very familiar to all, but it is not the outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit's coming, nor yet the miraculous gifts that were bestowed, which is significant at this time. These things were important and had their place in the later experiences and work of those believers. But a more vital thing took place at that same time, not outwardly manifest as were the tongues of fire and the supernatural gifts, but something of supreme importance. They all, at that moment, were "born again". Jesus had told Nicodemus about the necessity of being born again in order to inherit the Kingdom of God and Nicodemus had completely failed to understand him. For the first time in the history of the world, here in this upper room on

this Day of Pentecost, human beings were "born again". By the operation of the Holy Spirit there had been an infusion of new life not derived from human life that already existed. These believers experienced the implanting within them of a new and spiritual life which would ultimately attain its full development in a spiritual body in the "First Resurrection". The relation of this new life to the old Adamic Life—which was imperfect and doomed to extinction anyway—is not something that can be defined with certainty. As human beings we go on living after our "new birth" much as we did before. The same life processes continue to function, the same consciousness of existence and the same identity. But there is something new. "If any man be in Christ" says Paul in 2 Cor. 5. 17 "there is a new creation"—a newly created thing. There has to be borne in mind the New Testament insistence that he who believes on the Son *hath*—present tense—eternal (*aionian*) life, and although at times some try to minimise the direct nature of those words and make it a prospective eternal life only, there can be little doubt that Jesus did mean his disciples to understand that in some very real sense they would become possessed of a new life quality on that day when the Holy Spirit entered into them. Probably it is best not to define terms too dogmatically but to accept quite literally the Scripture statements. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead as to sin, but the Spirit is life as to righteousness. If the Spirit (of God) . . . dwell in you. He . . . shall also quicken (give new life to) your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8. 10-11). In some wonderful way that we cannot at present understand and therefore must not be too dogmatic about, the Holy Spirit is operating in our bodies and lives to give us a life force and a power which enables us to see things and do things that as natural men, having only the powers of life inherited from father Adam, we could never hope to do.

Once more in the world's history the Spirit

comes to bring new life. The scene is this earth; the time the Millennial Age. Once more Adamic life has proved insufficient. Once more there must come life from above to constitute ransomed men and women sons of God. Here is where an old question comes to the front again. Do humanity in that Age receive their life from the Lord Christ or from the Father; are they children of Christ or children of God? The Scriptures certainly speak of it both ways. Jesus spoke of men who "eat his flesh" in order to obtain life; without that, He said, they could have no life in them. (Jno. 6. 53). "*Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children*" says the Psalmist in Psa. 45, addressing the King and the Bride. Yet Rev. 21. 7 declares that overcomers of the Millennial Age will be sons of God, and Rom. 8. 21 assumes the same position. Perhaps the answer to the apparent disharmony is that which answers so many questions touching the relationship between the Father and the Son, that they are so absolute a unity in all that concerns all creation that what is true of one is also true of the other. The Holy Spirit is the vehicle of all that proceeds from the Father and the Son and whether life is pictured as coming from the Father or from the Son, it must of necessity be by the Holy Spirit. In such case the phrase in Rev. 22. 17 becomes not only understandable, but the best that could possibly be chosen. The Bride is associated not only with Jesus the Christ, but also with God the Father, in sending out the invitation to all men to come and receive of the life that is offered. With perfect propriety, therefore, it is the Holy Spirit and the Bride who are the agencies, or instruments, of that life which, issuing from Father and Son, will quicken the human bodies of all who accept and obey the laws of the Kingdom. Sustained into all eternity by the life which thus comes from God, they will receive and enjoy the inheritance which God prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

King Asa's disease

King Asa of Judah was diseased in his feet, "*yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians*". (2 Chron. 16. 12). This is not to say that Divine displeasure is upon those who seek to obtain relief from sickness and physical ailments by means of the skill of the medical profession. In Asa's day the only physicians were the priests of idolatrous faiths and their "cures" were invariably

mixed up with the worship they professed. Asa preferred to become contaminated with such rather than go to his God for instruction. It may be remembered that good King Hezekiah, in like case, went to the prophet Isaiah, and he, although not a physician, was evidently guided by the Holy Spirit in the selection of a remedy that proved effective. (See Isa. 38. 1 and 21.)

ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH

Four long centuries had measured out their length since the voice of Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, had been stilled in death, and now it was time for the first of the New Testament prophets to become conscious of the Divine fervour being kindled within him. In a very real sense the story of the New Testament began when Zacharias the aged priest saw the angel in the Temple. Fifteen months later and Jesus the Messiah, long expected by Israel, was to be born at Bethlehem. But Zacharias had no idea or thought of that in his mind on the day that he went into the Temple as usual to carry out his customary duty of offering incense at the Golden Altar during public prayers. Zacharias was an old man, somewhere between eighty and ninety years of age, and he had served God very faithfully in his appointed sphere, admittedly a humble sphere, for very many years. He was of the priestly line from Aaron and from the age of thirty had served as such; for over half a century he had filled a minor role in the priests' office and never dreamed that in the evening of his days he was to play a major part in the greatest event of all time, a part that would lift him up and set him apart from his fellow-priests for ever.

Luke says that he was "*of the course of Abia*" (Hebrew *Abijah*). A thousand years before this time King David had divided the priests of Aaron's line, grown to a considerable number, into twenty-four divisions or "courses", each to take turn in discharging the ceremonial duties of the Temple which he purposed to build. Of these "courses" the eighth was that of Abijah (1 Chron. 29. 10). Sixteen courses were of the lineage of Eleazar and eight of Ithamar, sons of Aaron; there is no way of determining to which lineage Zacharias belonged, except that the probability is two to one in favour of Eleazar. By the time of the First Advent the Temple ceremonial had become greatly modified and changed from that instituted by Moses in the days of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, but it is clear that Zacharias, as a priest, by blood descent one of the sons of Aaron, had the right of entry into the Holy Place in front of the Vail that shrouded the Most Holy, there to perform his allotted share of the ceremonial. Twice in the year he took his turn in the service for a week, and alone in the Holy Place he offered incense.

Much had happened in Israel during the course of his long life. He was born, in all probability, during the time of the Maccabean priest-kings who

ruled the independent Jewish state before the Romans came. Judea was, for a short period, a kind of theocracy; the sons of Aaron, represented by the Maccabean dynasty, combined within themselves the religious office of High Priest and the secular one of King. In all likelihood the reigning priest-king at Zacharias' birth was Alexander Janneus, proud of his descent from Aaron through the Davidic "course" of Jehoiarib, but equally proud of the fact that Judea, as a sovereign state, was in treaty relationship with the Roman empire as an equal. Under Alexander Janneus the frontiers of the State were extended to include Samaria, Edom, Trans-Jordan and half-way across Sinai to what is now El-Arish. The kingdom almost attained the extent it had enjoyed in the days of David and Solomon, and many believed that the time of Israel's prophesied supremacy over the nations had come and nothing now intervened before the coming of Messiah.

But before the lad Zacharias had outgrown his teens the Romans had torn up the treaty, Pompey had invaded Judea, attacked the Temple, committed the unforgiveable sacrilege of forcing his way into the Most Holy, and the bright vision faded. The brief period of independence, lasting only about a century, ended, and Judea became subject to Rome. At thirty years of age Zacharias assumed his duties as an Aaronic priest and commenced his ministry in the Temple, only to see it pillaged of all its wealth by Crassus the Roman general. Fifteen years later he experienced the terrors of war when the Parthians captured and plundered Jerusalem; within a few more years Herod the Edomite was laying siege to the Holy City. When Zacharias was about fifty an earthquake shook the country and thirty thousand perished; two years later came the horrors of pestilence. Another fifteen years, and he heard the news that Herod, now well established as Rome's puppet ruler of the land, was going to pull down the Temple, built by Nehemiah five hundred years earlier at the return of the Captivity, and erect a more magnificent one in its place. And now for nearly two decades he had been offering incense in Herod's new building; the glories of his youth had passed away, his nation was subject to an alien power, and still Messiah had not come. But with quiet faith he continued his allotted task in the daily ritual, doing that which lay to his hand to do and leaving the greater issues to God—until the day he saw the angel.

The wife of Zacharias was Elisabeth, also of the lineage of Aaron. *"They were both righteous before God"* says Luke (1.6) *"walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"*. Those two words indicate the moral and the ceremonial aspects of the law respectively. In every respect this aged couple were fit vessels ready to the Lord's hand for his use—yet He waited until the near end of their lives before He used them. But Elisabeth had no child, none whom they could train up in the nurture and reverence of the Lord and send out into the world to crown their life-long service with his own. Even their names testified to *reverence and respect for the faithful of their own tribe of ancient times*, for "Zacharias" is the Hebrew *Zechariah*, the name of the High Priest murdered in the Temple in the days of King Joash, and "Elisabeth" is the Hebrew *Elisheba*, the name of the sister of Aaron. There is not much doubt that these two were convinced of the imminence of Messiah's Advent, and numbered among the little band of Messianic believers who at that time *"looked for deliverance in Jerusalem"*. (Luke 2. 33).

But above all things it is evident that Zacharias possessed the prophetic power; his life was lived so much in tune with God that he could hear things and see things that other men could not hear or see. The voice of the prophets had been silent for four hundred years and perhaps men in Israel had ceased to expect that it would ever be heard again. In Zacharias it was heard again. The time had come when a messenger was to be sent to Israel and a message given, a herald of the fulfilment of so much that the earlier prophets had predicted, and as a first step to the raising up of that messenger the Lord sought for a clean vessel, a righteous environment in which the messenger would be born and spend his formative years, before the time came for *"his shewing unto Israel"* (Luke 1.80). He found a man for his purpose, not among the decadent and corrupt relics of the Aaronic line manifested in the descendants of the Maccabean priest-kings, soiled and polluted by their contact with and involvements in the political manoeuvres and alliances of the day, but in the person of this humble and faithful man who had served so faithfully in his obscure position, but always close to God, always attending on the altar. So the angel was sent to Zacharias.

It was a thrilling message he brought. The boy that was to be born to them was destined to be *"great in the eyes of the Lord."* He was to stand

before God in the spirit and power of Elijah, the rugged old prophet who once converted the whole nation from Baalworship in a single day; he was to turn many of the people to the Lord their God, and he was to herald the coming of Messiah and prepare the people for his Advent. Wonderful news indeed; so wonderful that it is perhaps understandable that Zacharias, in mingled wonder and incredulity, asked for a sign to establish the angel's authority and convince him that he was not in fact the victim of a hallucination. It was not that he had no faith; he knew God could do this thing, but in asking for some material evidence that would *linger with him after the messenger had departed* he was but following the example of earlier worthies faced with similar situations. He got the sign he wanted, but it was accompanied by a reproof. The measure of doubt implied by his request was not justified after the lifetime he had spent in the service of God. As a man possessed of the prophetic spirit and living his life "in tune" with God his spiritual discernment should have been sufficiently clear to perceive the authority in the angel's words and accept them without question. There is a difference between Zacharias' question *"How shall I know this, for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years"* and the quiet rejoinder of Mary to the same angel six months later, *"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"* Zacharias wanted proof of the angel's veracity; Mary accepted his word without question and only asked how the wonder was to come about.

Zacharias was to be dumb until the birth of his son. That was a sign to the people as well as himself. Upon his emergence from the Temple they saw that some great thing had happened to him, alone in there. *"They perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple"*. Not until his son was born was his speech restored and he could tell to the full what had taken place that eventful day.

This is the point at which Zacharias takes his place among the prophets. The glowing rhapsody of Luke 1. 68-79 is not only a song of praise; it is also a prediction of things to come. Right at the outset he declared that God had *"raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David"*. The obvious reference is to Messiah, but Jesus had not yet been born; how then did Zacharias know anything about it? The obvious answer is given in verse 67; he was inspired by the Holy Spirit and empowered to see things that were yet to come. He saw the Advent of the Deliverer; he saw Israel saved from her enemies and the fulfil-

ment of the Divine promise to Abraham; he saw Israel exalted in prosperity and he saw the coming of the light to the whole world that was sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. And then, turning towards his new born son, he predicted that he should be the Prophet of the Highest, to herald the Messiah and prepare the nation for his coming, to turn the people from the bondage of sin to serve the living God. A wonderful day was that and a wonderful prophecy. Thirty long years were to pass before it could begin to be fulfilled and many of those who heard it were destined to finish their lives and rest in death before that fulfilment commenced, but who can doubt that the story was handed down from father to son and from mother to daughter in those families that "*looked for deliverance in Jerusalem*" so that when one day, a young man startled the nation with his clarion cry "*Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,*" there were those who at once were ready to listen and to follow him.

By that time Zacharias and Elisabeth were probably dead. Luke 1, 80 tells us that "*the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*" That does not sound as though he had known a settled home life in one of the towns of Judah. Quite possibly he was an orphan from his teens. He might well have been a member of the community of Essenes at Masada, made so famous in recent years by the discovery of the "Dead Sea Scrolls". That would account very well for his characteristic outlook and ministry, and would well explain the expression "in the deserts". Like Elijah his prototype, he was a son of the mountainous and desert places, having no place in the cities and haunts of men—and all Israel went out into the desert to hear him.

John the Baptist was the last of the prophets and it is customary to say that he was the successor of

Malachi. That is not strictly true, for Zacharias and Elisabeth came in between and they also were of the prophets. Elisabeth had the same spirit of prediction as her husband; when Mary, immediately after the Annunciation, journeyed into Judea to visit her aunt, the older woman knew at once that the mother of the Messiah had come to her (Luke 1.43) and invoked the blessing of the Lord upon Mary. She, too, must have known, by the Holy Spirit indwelling in her, that her son was to be the herald foreseen by Malachi four hundred years earlier when he declaimed "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall presently come to his temple*" (Mal. 3.1). John was both "Elijah that should come" and the "herald to prepare the way of Messiah" and he fulfilled both offices faithfully as was ordained.

John is the last of the sons of Aaron recorded in Scripture. Of his precise relation to the High Priestly line nothing is known. The true succession was lost a hundred or more years before John was born and the last officiating High Priest of Aaronic descent was Aristobulus in 35 B.C. For all that is known to the contrary it might well be that John's pedigree was nearer the legal line of High Priests than that of the Maccabean priest-kings who held the office for the last century or so. We do not know; it would be very appropriate, though, if it was the rightful High Priest after the order of Aaron in the days of the First Advent who announced to Israel the coming of the Lord. Only God knows; whether of High Priestly lineage or not, these three, Zacharias, Elisabeth and John, priests and prophets, were faithful to their calling and in that faithfulness brought the Old Dispensation to a close and prepared the way for the New, the Dispensation of the Gospel.

A lump of sugar is pure carbon and a diamond is pure carbon, yet there is a difference between them which consists mainly in the fact that the diamond has been crystallised to an extreme degree of hardness, firmness, solidity. So there is a difference between the states and conditions of believers in Christ. At one time we are mere "babes in Christ", but if faithful through patient endurance and the Lord's instructions and discip-

lines of providence we are to become strong in the Lord and in the power of his might—the "babe in Christ" corresponds then to the pure carbon in the form of sugar, while the mature Christian, developed in the furnace of affliction, etc., corresponds to the diamond. We remember in this connection the Lord's assurance that at the close of our trial time in the end of the Age, at his second coming, He will make up his "jewels".

BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE MILLENNIUM

An intriguing prospect for the future is opened by the discovery twenty-five years ago of a means whereby an electric current can be obtained from vegetable products. A research organisation found that certain bacteria, when allowed to feed on cocoanut juice, multiply exceedingly, transforming the cocoanut juice into formic acid and in the process produce a current of electricity which, in the experimental model, was sufficient to operate a radio set. It was found later that the same effect can be obtained by the use of sugar-cane, fruits, and even leaves and grass. The device is now used on space satellites. The current produced is small—an average cocoanut will provide enough juice to make sufficient current to light the sitting-room for two hours or operate the radio for ten hours. This is not likely to be economic in countries where electricity is available from the mains but could be a different thing in the jungle where no mains exist and cocoanuts are plentiful. Robinson Crusoe would have been glad to know of the device.

Electrical research men have long known that there is a common basic principle underlying the operation of modern electronic equipment and the normal processes of Nature. Wilfred Branfield pointed out in his book *"Continuous Creation"* (1960) that in the living state a continuous movement of what the technicians call "charged electrons" is taking place in the leaves and fruits of plants so that the whole process of growth is an electrical one powered by the energy of sunlight falling upon the plant. The same kind of movement goes on in the modern "solar cell" which generates electricity from sunlight, so that the inventive genius of man is merely reproducing something that has been going on in the world of Nature for untold ages. In other words, and for all the proud boasts of human achievement, "God thought of it first". The busily working bacteria in the new invention are taking the plant product into which has been built energy from the sun, and converting that energy into electrical power on the same principle as the solar cells in a photographer's exposure meter transforms the light shining upon it into an electrical impulse which moves the indicator over the dial to show the photographer how much exposure he needs.

The importance of all this to the Millennial Age

is immense. Men will always need heat, light and power in order to live the full and useful life which God intends for them. Since the days of man much of the light, the greater part of the heat, and practically all of the power has been obtained from what are called "fossil fuels"—coal, oil, natural gas, and latterly, uranium the raw material of nuclear power. But the supply is limited; one day all the obtainable deposits will be exhausted, and for coal and oil and gas at the currently increasing rate of consumption that day is near. Nuclear power requires elaborate and potentially dangerous mechanical plant for its production. Quite obviously, the continuance of terrestrial creation will have to depend upon the direct utilisation of energy reaching earth from outside—from the sun, which is the ultimate source of all terrestrial power. By means of Nature's myriad agents of labour, it may well be, in that blessed era of the Kingdom of God upon earth, when nuclear power has become as obsolete as the flint axes of the Stone Age are to us today, men will gather power from the growing things of the earth just as they gather their crops. The prophet says *"they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them"; "they shall sit every man under his vine and his fig-tree"* (Isa. 65. 21; Micah 4. 4). He might have added that the same vines and fig-trees could by virtue of the wonderful works of God become the means of providing light in their dwellings and even of talking with their neighbours far away. It is not so fantastic an idea as may seem at first sight. The energy inherent in natural phenomena exceeds by many times over the greatest amount of power men can ever require for all their manifold enterprises, and in this age of scientific enquiry and rapid achievement, wherein the miraculous of one day becomes the commonplace of the next, it is not surprising that men are beginning to learn how to obtain that power direct from Nature without the cumbersome machines, massive buildings and engineering works which are at best but a crude and inefficient means of achieving what Nature does habitually on a far greater scale through the simple media of sunlight, growing plants and actively busy living creatures. The Millennium may yet prove to be a great day for bacteria!

IN THE GARDEN

*A New Testament
mystery*

On a fateful night nearly two thousand years ago, an observer in the valley of the Kidron might have seen a little procession making its way by the fitful light of lanterns down the rocky descent to the stream, then up the other side toward the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. Between that Mount and the city there lay a grove of olive trees, the Garden of Gethsemane, and before very long the handful of men which had set out from the upper room was winding its way between the trees to the Master's favourite spot.

The highlights of the story are familiar to all, but there are shadows in the background which have not featured so much, and it may well be at this time to dwell awhile upon some of these fleeting figures shrouded by the darkness which lay over that garden that night. The behaviour of the disciples has often engrossed attention. What about the other more shadowy figures who were there?

Perhaps the most interesting of these is that of the young man, having a linen cloth cast about his body, who, when seized by the rabble, left his linen cloth in their hands and fled naked. Who was he? What was he doing there? Why is the story recorded in the Gospel of Mark, and in that Gospel alone?

He was not one of the disciples. That is clear from the account in Mark 14. 50-52. *"They all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him; and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked"*. The disciples, all of them, had left their Master before this incident occurred, so he could not have been one of them. And at this point another question may well come to mind. Who heard and recorded the Master's fervent prayers? Not the disciples, for they were all fast asleep. Three times did He pray, and three times find them asleep, a sleep from which they were apparently awakened only by the advent of the armed host which had come to take Jesus prisoner. The conclusion seems irresistible that someone else was in the garden that night, someone inspired by a love and devotion for Jesus of an order that led him to take a precaution that not one of the Lord's disciples had thought of taking.

In the Holy Land, as in most tropical countries, although the days are hot, the nights are bitterly

cold—often approaching freezing point. No man would go abroad at night clad solely in a linen cloth without some very good reason. And the reason is an obvious one. That young man entered Gethsemane that night expecting to be in danger of capture and determined to avoid capture. He adopted a ruse which is an old one in many parts of the world. He greased his body all over, and then enveloped himself in an easily shed garment—the "linen cloth" mentioned was the burial garment or "winding sheet" in which bodies were laid in the grave—so that when grasped by hostile hands he could easily wriggle out of the garment and, the hands of his would-be captors being quite unable to hold fast his well-greased body, be able to make his escape.

Who then, outside the circle of the twelve, could have foreseen the coming tragedy? Even the disciples only half believed the Master's words about the imminence of his arrest and death. They would certainly have never slept had they had any idea of the events which were about to take place. It seems, then, that this "young man" might well have been one who, not belonging to the twelve, and therefore not at the Last Supper, followed the little band at a distance, and hiding in the trees, all eyes and all ears, alone heard those never-to-be-forgotten words. *"Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee . . . Nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt"* (Mark 14. 36).

The word rendered "young man" in this verse is one which is best rendered by our colloquial "boy" or "lad". It almost certainly denotes a youth in his teens. Was there such a youth in the following of the Master?

If tradition be true, Jesus had only just come from the house where lived such an one. Early Christian testimony says that the "upper room" in which the Last Supper was held was in the house of a certain Mary, the same house which afterwards became the centre of the first Jerusalem Christian Church, and where many were gathered together in prayer when Peter had been thrown into prison by Herod (Acts 12. 12). This Mary had a son, John Mark, who at the time of the Lord's ministry was about fourteen years of age. In after years he accompanied Barnabas and Paul on their missionary journeys as a personal attendant, and later became profitable to Paul for the work of the

ministry (2 Tim. 4. 11, Phil. 24). He worked with Barnabas, who was his uncle, and eventually was privileged to write the first of the four Gospels to see the light of day—the Gospel according to Mark. Early Christian historians say that he introduced Christianity into Egypt, founded the Church of Alexandria, and ended his life as a martyr three years after Paul had sealed his own testimony with his blood on the Appian Way outside Rome.

There is more than one hint in the Gospel stories of a lad who hovered on the fringe of the crowd surrounding the Master, drinking in all that his hero said, watching with adoring eyes all that He did, storing up with the receptive memory of youth the vivid detail that emerges so freshly and clearly in the second Gospel. It is a solemn thing to realise that perhaps, under the providence of the Holy Spirit, we owe our knowledge of that sublime scene in the garden, with all that it has meant to us in understanding of the reality of our Lord's sacrifice, to the quick-witted devotion of a fourteen-year-old boy. Realising that something terrible was going to occur, perhaps boyishly contemptuous of the older men's failure to realise the danger threatening their Master, he waited his time and left his home in the wake of that mournful little party. Then, when the worst had happened and the Master, alone, was being taken to the High Priest, the boy would be running hard down the valley and across the River Kidron to his home, there to tell his tragic news to the little knot of faithful women.

Luke tells the story of the angel who came from heaven to strengthen the Master in his hour of trial. It is a strange little interlude. "*And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him*" (Luke 22. 43). Luke does not say that anyone apart from Jesus saw the angel; the words rather denote that no one else did see him. Several of the best manuscripts omit this and the following verse; nevertheless, there are reasons for thinking that both verses form a genuine part of Luke's gospel. The 44th verse reads: "*And being in*

an agony he prayed the more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground". This verse contains four words such as a medical man would be likely to use, and there is presumptive evidence that the verses were actually written by Luke.

Did an angel really come from heaven to comfort and sustain our Lord? And if He alone saw the angel how could anyone else ever know about it, except the fact were revealed by Divine inspiration.

It is perhaps likely that the lone watcher in the trees, gazing intently at our Lord's countenance in his hour of distress, saw the intense agony of mind displayed upon those loved features give place to a wondrous calm, a look of steadfast peace. That change must have taken place in the outward appearance of Jesus as his communion with his Father brought the rest and confidence of faith which his soul sought. The inward conflict was over, and He knew that He could go through the ordeal to the end in the knowledge of his Father's care and strength. To the watching one that wonderful change in the Lord's outward demeanour could mean only one thing; an angel from heaven, invisible to other sight, had appeared to him for strength and encouragement.

Who shall say that the expression is not a true one? Surely the Holy Spirit of God was sent to that garden that night, bearing anew the strength-inspiring message, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". Surely God's messenger did come to Jesus and in the strength of that revelation He went forth calmly to suffering and to death.

Luke was not a disciple at that time. He gained all his knowledge of Jesus' life from others—much of it from the women. The disciples, asleep in the garden, could not have told him of this incident. He probably had it from the women; and they, in turn, from the young watcher who, having seen and heard all, left his garment in the hands of the guard and fled naked.

"Some small trifle of daily routine; a crossing of personal preference in very little things, accumulation of duties, unexpected interruption, unwelcome distraction. Yesterday these things merely fretted you and, internally at least, 'upset' you. Today, on the contrary, you take them up, stretch your hands out upon them, and let them be occasions of new disgrace and deeper death for that old self-spirit. You carry them to their Calvary in thankful submission. And tomorrow you will do the same."

The motto of Spurgeon's College shows a hand holding a cross. "Teneo et teneor": "I both hold and am held". It is fine to hold the cross; it is far finer to be held by it. Jude's word "keep" (v. 21) is a necessary injunction, but Peter's word "kept" reveals the grace which makes the other possible.

We hold the cross, but we are held by the cross. We keep ourselves in the love of God, but we are kept by the power of God.

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

*A treatise on
the Second Advent*

Chapter 2. "Dawn"

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. 24. 27).

Few texts have been more discussed than this when the Second Advent is being considered, and there are few which are more generally misunderstood. A brilliant comparison drawn by our Lord has been in large measure miscomprehended by reason of an all too common failing, that of taking an isolated text of Scripture and endeavouring to interpret it without any reference to its immediate context. As soon as the connection of these words with those uttered by Jesus in the same breath is appreciated the force and meaning of this passage becomes luminous.

This twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is historic. It records the detailed reply given by Jesus to his disciples in response to their earnest question as to when the Kingdom should come and by what sign they would discern the fact of his return to earth and the imminent end of the Age. To explain such all-important matters, closely interwoven as they were with a spiritual world of which those disciples knew nothing, was no easy task, and it became necessary for our Lord to select carefully chosen material analogies to make his meaning plain.

Passing over the long catalogue of intervening events, "wars and rumours of wars," "the abomination of desolation," "this gospel, preached for a witness" and so on, the twenty-sixth verse arrests the inquirer with a rather abrupt transition of thought.

"Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. FOR AS the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, SO shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

Language could not be more definite. Two possible manifestations of his coming are rejected as inaccurate conceptions. The true manner of that event is pictured in the form of a third and totally dissimilar metaphor. The symbol of the desert is a false one. The symbol of the secret chambers is likewise defective. That of the lightning is a true illustration; and here is the sign for which the disciples asked.

A careful examination of this passage then should reveal the foundation upon which every Christian's expectation should be based. What

spiritual truth lies behind the symbols of the desert, the secret chamber, and the lightning?

"Behold, he is in the desert." Those words must have fallen with a familiar ring upon the disciples' ears. Not so many years previously some of them had themselves been followers of John the Baptist, a prophet preaching in the desert: one of whom it was said "There went out to him (to the wilderness) Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region about Jordan." (Matt. 3. 3-5). Not for John the busy life of the city, where his lone figure might easily be lost in the heedless crowds. Not for him a ministry in some quiet village, where a few immediate neighbours alone would listen to his impassioned words. John spent his life in a desert place but amidst a blaze of publicity enhanced all the more by the fact that men streamed from all quarters to hear and see this singular and never-to-be-forgotten figure.

So was it with the seers of Israel. Elijah, who gripped the nation's imagination when he destroyed the priests of Baal; Moses, than whom there arose not a greater in Israel, (Deut. 34. 10); others who, rising early and calling betimes, voices crying in the wilderness (Isa. 40. 3) becoming influential figures in the national life, were prophets of the desert, known of all men, seen of all men, their very presence so obvious a fact that whether the people would hear or whether they would forbear, they could never blind themselves to the truth that a prophet stood before them.

"Behold, he is in the secret chambers." A weak translation is responsible for hiding, at first, the allusion made here. The Greek word *tamieion* rendered "secret chambers" describes an inner room or storehouse which in every Eastern dwelling held the family treasures as well as stores and provisions. It became therefore a synonym for a private place, the place exclusive and secret to the family of the house, into which strangers could never intrude. The same word is used for "storehouse" and "closet" in the following scriptures:

Matt. 6. 6. *"When thou prayest, enter into thy CLOSET."*

Luke 12. 3. *"That which ye have spoken . . . in CLOSETS shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops."*

Luke 12. 24. *"Consider the ravens. . . which have neither STOREHOUSE nor barn"*.

Upon comparing this statement with the preced-

ing one, our Lord's meaning is clear. In the understanding that his coming was not to be a publicly advertised and appreciated spectacle ("in the desert") the disciples were not to react to the opposite extreme and look for nothing more than a private revelation to a favoured few in the secrecy of the family circle. For many centuries had Israel held to their claim of being the one nation selected and set apart for God's blessings, and not even the Samaritans were admitted into the fellowship of the chosen people. (John 4. 9). They claimed Messiah was to be for the Jew, and the Jew alone, and all without were treated as outsiders. The tremendous struggle which took place in the minds of Apostles as well as other believers before they could accept the transcendent truth that "*God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him*" (Acts 10. 34-35) is well known to all readers of the New Testament.

The majority of Christians have progressed very little along this line. Even to-day there lingers in many quarters the idea that Jesus will appear for his own, but for nobody else. The conception of his coming, not only to take his Church to himself, but also—in due time after that great event—to reveal himself to all the world for their blessing and salvation, has not taken hold of many minds. The narrow-minded bigotry which has so well expressed itself in the old doggerel

*"God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four and no more."*

lingers still and blinds the minds of some to a full conception of the immortal truth that is enshrined in the succeeding verse.

His coming is not in the open place of public view and universal knowledge, neither is it in the inner sanctuary of a chosen family, where no one outside will ever know anything about it. That event is to be discerned in a manner combining in a truly marvellous way the "coming as a thief" to his own and yet in such a fashion that "every eye shall see him" when the time of his full manifestation shall have come; for

"As the 'Astrape' emerges from the east and shines to the west; so will be the presence of the Son of Man." (Matt. 24. 27 Diaglott).

The most soul-stirring conception of his Second Advent which Christ could possibly have given his disciples is that which is pictured in this metaphor of the radiance of dawn emerging from the east and flooding the world with light. Dawn in Israel is not the same thing as dawn in European countries and

it is obvious that our Lord's allusion was based upon the reality with which his disciples were familiar. The ability to visualise an Eastern dawn is necessary if the full force of these words is to be appreciated.

The sun comes up suddenly, and a few minutes suffices to transform the velvety blackness of tropical night into the full brilliance of Syrian day. It is for this reason that very few inhabitants of the land actually witnessed the sun's rising, for their sleep was broken only by its dazzling beams as they encircle the earth. There is no long and gradual dawn as in more temperate countries. The first sign of approaching day is a greyness in the eastern sky, a greyness for which—in Jerusalem at least—both city watchmen and the priests in the Temple were duly waiting and watching—the watchmen, because it indicated the end of their period of service; and the priests, because as soon as light had flooded the land it was their duty to offer the morning sacrifice. Hence the constant Scriptural association of the coming of day with the "watchers," and the meaning of that cryptic message, "*Watchman, what of the night? . . . The morning cometh, BUT IT IS YET DARK*" (Isa. 21. 11-12, French version). Within a few minutes the greyness is streaked with shafts of pink, and, so rapidly as almost to bewilder the unaccustomed observer, a glorious effulgence of golden light spreads fan-wise from the east and moves visibly across the sky, turning the clouds in its path to pink and white and bathing the entire land in a wonderful rosy glow. It was at this time that the watching priest, stationed in a pinhole in the Temple, cried out in a loud voice that the light was come and had overspread the land, and his companions below immediately commenced the time-honoured ritual of the morning sacrifice. Within a few more minutes the full blaze of day is pouring down upon a people quickly arising from sleep and betaking themselves to their accustomed tasks.

It is this emergence of light from the east, followed quickly by the sun itself, to which reference is made in Malachi 4. 2 where the promise is that the "*Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings*"—the great fan of glory spreading over the sky as the sun rises being not inaptly likened to the pinions of some great celestial creature. And our Lord's own allusion to the "*astrape*" emerging from the east and sweeping the sky to the west is undoubtedly a reference to that same phenomenon which his disciples, early risers as they must always have been and accustomed to remaining awake all night, were thoroughly accustomed to

witness.

In this connection it has to be realised that the Greek *astrape*, rendered "lightning" in this verse; and its derivatives, refers to any form of brilliant light or radiance. Thus we have:—

Luke 24. 4. "Two men stood by them in SHINING garments."

Luke 11. 36. "As when the BRIGHT SHINING of a candle doth give thee light."

Luke 9. 29. "His raiment was white and GLISTERING."

Matt. 28. 3. "His countenance was like LIGHTNING."

Luke 19. 18. "I beheld Satan as LIGHTNING fall."

Acts 9. 3. "There SHINED ROUND ABOUT him a light from heaven."

Acts 22. 6. "There SHONE from heaven a great light round about me."

Other occurrences in which the word is associated with thunder and can properly be applied to the vivid glare of lightning are found in Rev. 4, 5, 8; 5, 11, 19, and 16, 18.

It is from the parallel account in Luke's gospel that the full implication of this as a time when the fact of Christ's presence is to dawn upon the minds of men is found.

"For AS the lightning, (ASTRAPE) that lighteneth (illuminates) out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; SO shall also the Son of Man be IN HIS DAY." (Luke 17. 24).

Here then is a plain intimation that this metaphor predicates a period of time—the day of the Son of Man—likened to a natural day in so far as the analogy of dawn, meridian, and sunset, are concerned. It becomes easy to appreciate why the translators of the Revised Version, as well as such students as Robert Young, Joseph Bryant Rotherham, Dr. Wilson in the "Emphatic Diaglott," and more recently the translators of the "Concordant" version, all concur in rendering the Greek word "*parousia*," which is translated "coming" in the Authorised Version, by the English word "presence." It is the use of the word "coming" which has beclouded thought on the subject. Whilst men held the conception of a catastrophic arrival of the Lord Jesus Christ which would be the signal for a twenty-four hour day of judgment and the dissolution of all things terrestrial, there could be no other meaning than the traditional one applied to the word "*parousia*." When the real object of our Lord's return is seen, and the necessity for a comparatively lengthy period of time for the accomplishment of the things associated with

his return is appreciated, the true meaning can be applied to the word with a full understanding of its significance. In this connection the following abbreviated extract from the appendix to J. B. Rotherham's translation of the New Testament will be read with interest.

"In this edition the word 'parousia' is uniformly rendered 'presence.' The difficulty expressed in the notes to the second edition of this N. T. in the way of so yielding to this weight of evidence as to render 'Parousia' always by presence lay in the seeming incongruity of regarding 'presence' as an event which would happen at a particular time and which would fall into rank as one of a series of events. The translator still feels the force of this objection, but is withdrawn from taking his stand upon it any longer by the reflection that after all, the difficulty may be imaginary. The parousia . . . may, in fine, be both a PERIOD, more or less extended, during which certain things shall happen; and an EVENT coming on and passing away as one of a series of Divine interpositions. Christ is raised as a first fruit—that is one event. He returns and vouchsafes his 'presence,' during which he raises his own—that is another event, however large and prolonged; and finally comes another cluster of events constituting the end. Hence, after all, 'presence' may be the most widely and permanently satisfying translation of the looked-for 'parousia' of the Son of Man.

The commencement of his presence, then, the earliest time at which it can be said that the long-promised Second Advent has become an accomplished fact, is to be discerned by the dawning of a spiritual illumination in the minds of the "Watchers"—the early-risers—an appreciation, not only of the object and manner of the Second Advent, but also of the outward signs, in the affairs both of the Church and the world, which betoken that the "DAY of the Son of Man" has actually begun.

As if to stress this truth, Jesus ended this remarkable statement with a fourth metaphor, equally arresting in its strangeness.

"For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." (Matt. 24. 28).

Travellers in Israel have often remarked on the keenness of sight which characterises the several species of eagle and vulture which formerly abounded, and are still to be found, in the country. Vivid descriptions have been written of occasions when a beast of burden has fallen by the wayside, and although a second previously the sky has been clear in every direction, the animal has hardly become still when far in the heavens appears a black speck—then another, and another—birds of

prey travelling with incredible speed to the victim their marvellous power of vision has revealed to them. Thus in drawing attention to that predominant characteristic of the eagle which stamped it out above all other denizens of the air, our Lord inculcated a lesson which must be indelibly impressed upon the mind if Christ's presence in its early stages is to be discerned.

"WATCH therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matt. 24. 42).

As the eagles can see, as it were by supernatural sight, their prey afar off and come, first in ones and twos, and then in greater numbers to the centre of attraction, so must the disciples of Christ, watching for his coming, expect to see the evidences with a sight which is superior to the natural, and come quickly in concert with others who also have seen. Hence the constant exhortation to watchfulness—not a continual gazing into the physical heavens and an anxious scanning of every cloud that drifts across the sky, lest it be the one which shall cleave asunder to reveal the returning Lord with his attendant angels. Nothing so material as that. The call is to spiritual watchfulness, that a clear understanding of the manner of Christ's manifestation may pave the way to a full and complete acceptance of the reality of his presence when that fact is revealed.

That many are to be oblivious to his presence is clearly indicated in the likening of the day of the Son of Man to the day of Noah and the day of Lot. In each case the similarity lay in the ignorance of mankind at large to the fact that there stands one among them whom they know not.

"For, just as the days of Noah, SO will be the presence of the Son of Man; For as they were in those days that were before the flood, feeding and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage, until the day Noah entered into the Ark; and they observed not, until the flood came and took away all together, so will be the presence of the Son of Man." (Matt. 24. 37-39—Rotherham).

With each of these comparisons there is repeated the exhortation to WATCH. The allusion is taken from the function of watchmen upon the city walls, alert to report every new and unusual occurrence before the city dwellers could possibly have become aware of such. The watchmen first saw the dawn, they hailed the approach of deliverers when the city was besieged, they became in every respect the symbol of the nation's watching and waiting on the things of God and communion with Heaven. Hence we have in the glowing words of Isaiah:

"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O

Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night." (Isaiah 62. 6).

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him (the watchman) that . . . sayeth unto Zion 'Thy God reigneth.'" (Isaiah 52. 7).

"Thy watchmen . . . shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion." (Isaiah 52. 8 Margolis).

The Second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested, then, as the dawn; a realisation of the fact of his presence discerned at first only by those who are spiritually minded and able to appreciate fully the outward evidences which witness to this truth. That appreciation grows stronger until a time comes when, as in a moment, the realisation of his presence penetrates to a sleeping world and awakens all men to *"look upon him whom they have pierced,"* and to *"mourn for him"* (Zech. 12; 10) as the sunlight of his presence floods the world. But that belongs to the time of meridian day, and not to early dawn.

As the light thus sweeps over the world and men realise and accept the fact that a new power has taken control of earth's affairs, resplendent in the heavens will be seen that *"Sun of righteousness"* which brings life and healing to the nations. *"For he must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet."* *"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."* (1. Cor. 15. 25, 26.) It is then that Christ the King presents the restored and perfected human race, in possession of a reconstructed and beautified earth, to the Eternal Father, that God may be all in all. (1. Cor. 15. 28).

The Messianic reign runs its allotted course and comes to its close like the sun, which, setting in a blaze of glory over the western sea is so startlingly reminiscent of those prophetic words of old *"The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."* (Hab. 2. 14.) The key to this whole sublime picture lies in the word *"presence."* The coming of the Lord, no longer a momentary nor even a twenty-four hour event, but a period during which all the varied phases of his Second Advent find their place and reach their consummation, will conclude with a very real fulfilment of the words spoken to Zechariah *"At evening time it shall be light."* (Zech. 14. 7).

The metaphor is a true one. The radiance which emerges from the east is to shine even unto the west before it has fitly completed its picture of the day of Christ. And in that glorious sunset of the end of Christ's *parousia* restored humanity will enter upon an eternity of *"ages of glory"* spent in exploring to the farthest limit the wonderful potentialities of sinless manhood. *To be continued*

THE LAND OF HAVILAH

"A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it was parted, and became unto four heads. The name of the first is Pison; that is it which encompasses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone" (Gen. 2: 10-12).

Success in establishing the site of this apparently ancient land provides the first clue to the location where the historian, in his narrative of creation, placed the celebrated Garden of Eden. That garden, according to Genesis, was situated an undefined distance below the confluence of four rivers, the firstnamed of which surrounded this land of Havilah. The fact that one of the other rivers, Euphrates, has borne, and still bears, the same name throughout recorded history, indicates the territory to which the story relates. That territory was the land which in ancient times was known as Sumer, and today, the lower portion of Iraq. Identification of the claimed land of Havilah can give additional evidence of the veracity of the story.

The first point to observe is that the writer, at whatever time in history he lived, must have employed the place names in use in his own day. Eden, Havilah, Cush, Nod, Assyria—these were territorial names in use at the time he wrote. The earliest known tablets and inscriptions from Sumer contain all these names, except Havilah. That name must have passed out of use before the earliest examples of inscribed tablets which are known. That puts the existence of Havilah as a territorial name to at least twenty-six centuries before Christ.

Most early territories were named after the men who founded them; this fact is abundantly demonstrated in the Old Testament. There were two men named Havilah (the Hebrew is properly Khavilah) one the son of Cush, therefore grandson of Ham, two generations after the Flood (Gen. 10: 7; 1 Chron. 1: 9). The other was a son of Joktan, five generations after the Flood (Gen. 10: 29; 1 Chron. 1: 23; Gen. 25: 18; 1 Sam. 15: 7). This Havilah (in northern Arabia) as a territorial name could not have come into use for four or five centuries after Gen. 2 was written and must be excluded. An early date, approximately equal to the original writer of the Genesis story is necessary, and this could not have been later than the 25th century BC at about the time of Abraham's

ancestor Peleg (Gen. 11). Havilah of the line of Cush is therefore the only possible candidate.

Identification of the locality is not difficult. Genesis 2 declares that its products were gold, bdellium and onyx. This denotes a mountainous area where minerals can be found. Such an area lies to the east of the Iraq plain, in the Zagros mountains of north-western Iran. The dwellers in the plain depended on the mountains for supplies of precious metals, precious stones, building stone, and in the early days, cedar wood, none of which were available in the plain, hence the narrator's special mention. Says the historian *"the gold of that land is good"*; this expression probably indicates that it was found in nuggets or quartz form in contrast to the more arduous production of gold in dust form obtained from riverbeds. The Hebrew word translated "onyx" is *shoham*, which is derived from the Sumerian *"samtu"*, a blue-green precious mineral nowadays called lapis-lazuli, abundant in those mountains and much in demand by the ancients. Bdellium (Hebrew *"bedolach"*) is often suggested to indicate pearls because the word indicates a small round thing—but pearls are found in the sea, not on mountains. It is much more likely to refer to tin (Hebrew *bedil*, derived from the Semitic—Akkadian *"bedel"* and this would be specially notable since tin was in great demand for hardening copper into bronze—and most things were made of copper in those days. Nineteenth century investigators in these mountains have found deposits of gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other precious stones (William Loftus *"Travels and Researches in Chaldea and Susiana"* 1857; Sir William Ouseley *"Travels in Persia"* 1823; J. B. Isabella Bishop *"Travels in Persia and Kurdistan"* 1891; J. L. McQueen *"Babylon"* 1964). The latter writer quotes ancient epics describing how caravans laden with wheat and barley left Sumer in the plain for the "mountain land" and returned with gold, silver, tin, lead, lapis, building stone, cedar wood and all manner of valuable materials. The evidence that this area is the site of the ancient land of Khavilah of Gen. 2 is reasonably conclusive.

The river Pison of the story must in that case have been the modern Kherkhah, which rises in the Zagros mountains and winds a tortuous course until it reaches the plain below. Its waters at present reach the sea through the marshes of Southern Iraq; in the days of the first writer of

chapters 1 to 5 of Genesis, which must have been prior to the Flood, there were no marshes and it must have joined the other three rivers of Eden and flowed as a united stream southward to the Indian Ocean.

A noteworthy fact is that the name "Khavilah" has survived almost until our own day in the area south-west of the Caspian Sea. The present name of that Sea, Caspian, (Russian Kaspi), is derived from the peoples of Trans-Caucasia, the Kaspi. During the late Middle ages it was the Sea of the Khazars, a hybrid Jewish-Scythian people which established an empire in the 10th century in the Ukraine and Caucasus. Prior to the 10th century it was known as the Khavilinsky, the Sea of Khavilah (*vide Encycl. Britt.*). But when the earliest known records of those lands were being written, the Sumerian histories and epics, about 2000 BC, the whole of that mountain land had become the powerful city-state of Arattu, (unknown to moderns until forty years ago) and the old name, perhaps by then confined to the shores of the Caspian Sea, has not been found in any of the tablets that have been discovered. Only in Gen. 2, on that showing a much older composition than any

of the Sumerian epics, does it remain, a forgotten land of the ancient days soon after the Flood, remembered only by the unknown scribe who edited what was perhaps the pre-Flood account of the Garden of Eden, some twenty-six centuries before Christ.



It is the Teacher who is to be the decider of what lessons we need, what experiences, what trials, what difficulties, what encouragements, what assistance are necessary to us. The promise is that no good thing will He withhold. He will give the warnings, the corrections, the encouragements, the blessings and the promises, according as we need them and are in a condition to make profit-

able use of them. Not everyone who starts to be a disciple will win the prize as a graduate from the school of Christ into the Kingdom of glory and joint-heirship with the Master; but he who faithfully and patiently continues in discipleship—continues to learn the lessons which the Master teaches, until he shall have finished his course, will surely receive his crown at the hands of the Lord.

Joseph in Egypt

"Only in the throne will I be greater than thou" (Gen. 41. 40). The description of Joseph's exaltation to power at the right hand of Pharaoh is well illustrated by tomb paintings found in Egypt. Joseph had been raised to the position of "Prime Minister", and in the short passage from verse 40 to 45 of Gen. 41 we have a vivid description of an induction into office which was repeated with every successive Grand Vizier or "Prime Minister" in the land of Egypt. The ring upon Joseph's hand and the placing of the gold chain around his neck was the repetition of an ancient ceremony which betokened the highest possible honour which could be conferred

upon the recipient. This ceremony was practised 300 years before the time of Abraham, and Joseph became one of a long line of men who were thus raised to the most exalted position Egypt could offer. His marriage to Asenath, daughter of the High Priest of Heliopolis, brought him into intimate relationship with the priestly caste, and thus, like Daniel in a much later day, the simple shepherd boy from Judea became the virtual leader of a great nation, and discharged the responsibilities of his office with that integrity and diligence which should characterise every true believer in God.

LUCIFER THE PRINCE OF EVIL

*A study in the
personality of the Devil*

2. Rebellion against Heaven

How was it that the name "Lucifer" became the name by which the Evil One is known? It is a long story.

The name "Lucifer" occurs once in the Bible. The 14th chapter of Isaiah in the Authorised Version uses the name to denote one who aspired to be equal with God and rise to the utmost heights, and in consequence was cast down to the lowest depths. From the 17th century onwards that passage has been applied to the Evil One because of its aptness. Perhaps it is best to look at the account.

Chapters 13 and part of 14 in Isaiah's prophecy consists of a message of condemnation which is headed "the burden (or judgment) of Babylon", the city and people held in opprobrium by Israel because of their godlessness. The first point of notice is that this expression of Divine intervention was uttered at a time when Babylon was subject to Assyria and its rise to universal power, subjection of Israel, and final overthrow by Persia, were still future events. The destruction of Babylon described in Chap. 13 did not see fulfilment for some four centuries after Isaiah wrote the burning words of the chapter. It describes events having their fulfilment over the period 500-300 B.C. By the latter date the condition described in verses 19-22 had come to pass, and the great city has remained desolate ever since.

The 14th chapter then tells of the time when the Israel nation has been completely restored, in faith and allegiance, to their own land, and in that happy state declares aloud the doom of one, described as the "King of Babylon", who aspired to rebel against God, was overthrown, and brought down to *sheol*, the grave. Since this condition of things belongs to the time of Israel's victory and the Kingdom of God upon earth, the Messianic Age, it is obvious that a literal king is not indicated—there have been no kings of Babylon for twenty-five hundred years past. The personality indicated must be a pseudonym for some greater power in history which is represented by the expression "kings of Babylon".

Allusions in the passage in question reveal that no earthly king of Babylon can be intended; the entire description is that of a superhuman being, one who can be no other than Satan, describing the nature of his sin. It is cast in the form of what is called a Hebrew "taunt-song", a kind of anthem of

triumph over the judgment inflicted upon an enemy of God and of Israel. "*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. How art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations. For thou has said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of assembly, on the flanks of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High*" (Isa. 14, 12-14). No denizen of earth, king or no king, could use language like that. This Lucifer aspired to be equal with God. No king of Babylon ever did this. Most ancient nations, such as Greece and Rome, deified their kings at death, counting them as gods. Pharaohs of Egypt, as often as not, claimed to be gods or at least the sons of gods. A peculiarity of the kings of Babylon, however, was that they never did this; always they proclaimed themselves to be the servants of their gods. No king of Babylon in all history ever made the claims related in this passage.

The reference to the Mount of Assembly on the flanks of the north referred to the ancient Sumerian "Mount of the East" which was the centre of the world, its peaks the pivot on which heaven revolved, and where the gods met in council—inaccessible to humans. In older times they worshipped one God only, whom they termed the "Most High God", and it was the "Most High" whom this Lucifer aspired to equal. (A relic of this worship of the Most High God is found in the story of Melchisedek of Salem in Gen. 14, who at a later date was "Priest of the Most High God"). Genesis retains one mention of the Mount of the East and it is alluded to in the Book of Enoch and the Book of Jubilees.

This then is the one who in the AV is alluded to as Lucifer. But there is no justification for the name. The Hebrew word rendered "Lucifer" in vs. 12 is *helel*, which is a masculine singular noun derived from the verb "to shine" and is best rendered "the shining one"; the word is probably derived from the Sumerian *lu-sir*, man of light or shining man. The significance of this will become clearer when the serpent of Eden is discussed in this treatise. At this point the expression "the shining one", "son of the dawn", is descriptive of a radiantly glorious being appearing at the dawn, the beginning, of creation. The translators of the Greek Septuagint, shortly before the time of

Christ, however, interpreted the expression "son of the dawn" as a reference to the planet Venus, the "morning star". They therefore used the Greek term for Venus, *Phosphoros*, in this text. Later on, when the Greek text was translated into Latin, the Roman equivalent for Venus, *Lucifer*, (Venus as the morning star; as the evening star it is *Hesperus*) was employed. The AV translators adopted the Latin word and so Lucifer became the name. It is now so firmly established that it would be pointless to question it.

Ancient tradition depicted the serpent as the Evil One, as a gloriously radiant, shining, creature with hands, feet and wings. The allusion of St. Paul in 2 Cor. 11. 14 to "Satan appearing as an angel of light" is believed to refer to a passage in the apocryphal "Book of Adam and Eve" of about the 1st century, in which the Evil One is described as visiting Eve again after the Fall. "*Satan . . . transformed himself into the brightness of angels, and went away to Eve and found her weeping, and the Devil himself pretended to grieve with her*". (ch. 9. 1).

This, then, was the sin of Satan; ambitious, aspiring to be equal with God. He would "*exalt my throne above the stars of God*"; the stars of God are the angels, citizens of that world which lies beyond the bounds of human perception. He would sit upon the Mount of Assembly—take part in the inner counsels of the rulership of God. He would be like "*the Most High*", equal in position and power to the Creator of all things, ignoring the fact that it was to that Creator he owed his life and form and all that he had and was. There is a vivid contrast here between this overwhelming pride and ambition, and the attitude of One "*who being in the form of God, thought not by usurpation to be equal with God, but divested himself, taking a bondman's form, having been made in the likeness of men, . . . becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and therefore God supremely exalted him . . .*" (Phil. 2. 6-9 *Diaglott*). It is

impossible not to think that St. Paul had Isa. 14 in mind when he penned those words.

"Yet" goes on the prophet in the taunt-song "*thou shalt be brought down to sheol*," (the grave) "*to the flanks of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, saying, is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof, that opened not the house of his prisoners?*". He proceeds to describe the contrast between the ceremonious burial of the great kings of the earth, each in his own splendid tomb, and the fate of this one upon whom judgment has come "*as a carcase trodden under foot*" (Isa. 14. 15-19).

Thus is indicated, in picturesque language the story of a mighty heavenly being, created, as were all his fellows, perfect and upright in the sight of God, who allowed ambition and disregard for the equity of Divine creation to seduce him from loyalty to his Creator, to an attempt to challenge that Creator on the throne of his holiness, and the prediction that he will fail. Be it noted that the story of the rebellion is in the past tense "*thou hast said*" (vs. 13) whereas the sequel and sentence is in the future tense "*thou shalt be brought down*" (vs. 15). The rebellion was in the distant past, but the sequel is yet to come. A day is depicted in the Book of Revelation, in symbol, when a mighty angel descends from heaven with a great chain in his hand, binds the Devil and casts him into the abyss "*that he should deceive the nations no more* (Rev. 20. 1-3). That will be the day of Christ's reign of the Millennial Age when evil will be progressively eliminated, death become a thing of the past, all peoples of the earth come to fulness of life in Christ, the works of the Devil undone for ever. The story of Isa. 14 is the story of the victory of humility over ambition, of service over self-seeking, of righteousness over evil. "*The seed of evil-doers*" said Isaiah in conclusion "*shall never be renowned*".

To be continued

The world is preparing day by day for the millennium, but you do not see it. Every season forms itself a year in advance. The coming summer lays out her work during the autumn, and buds and roots are forspoken. Ten million roots are pumping outside; do you hear them? Ten million buds

are forming in the exils of the leaves; do you hear the sound of the saw or hammer? All next summer is at work in the world, but it is unseen by us, and so "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation".

H. W. Beecher

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

*An outline of
the Divine Plan*

2. The Call of Abraham

It was with Abraham that the first indication of a change became apparent. Abraham comes just within the historical period of man's history. Back to Abraham our knowledge of world history is fairly complete and detailed; prior to his day we pass into the mythical period, the age of tradition and legend. All that we really know of the world before Abraham is summed up in the burning words of Genesis "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually". (Gen. 6. 5.) But it must not be thought that there were none who strove for better things, nor that none of Adam's race had inherited sufficient of the primal uprightness to seek better knowledge of God. Some of the old Sumerian penitential psalms, going back half a millennium before Abraham, breathe a fervent longing for reconciliation with God, for a way whereby the consciousness of sin might be erased and the sinner given peace of mind and rest of body. It was crude, but it was there, and no doubt can exist that when at last God spoke to Abraham and revealed that the tide of affairs was about to turn it was more than an arbitrary decision on his part that He would now do something for mankind. Much more apparent it is that men were about ready for the first step in the Divine scheme of salvation, and God responded by calling the man best fitted for his immediate purpose.

Now here is something that appears for the first time in the written records of human history—the story of a man who is utterly and continuously devoted to the service of God. It is related of the famous revivalist Dwight L. Moody that upon one occasion, in his youth, he sat in a meeting and heard the preacher say "the world has yet to see what God can do in, and through, and by, a man who is utterly consecrated to him and his service". "God helping me" said Moody to himself "I will be that man." The achievements of his later life showed how thoroughly he fulfilled that resolve. But he was not the first. Here in the story of Abraham we have a similar record, and after reading this story it is easy to see why in after days the famous patriarch and progenitor of the children of Israel was called "the father of the faithful".

It was to this man, citizen of the oldest and in many respects the finest civilisation of the ancient world, that of Sumer, that the next fundamental principle of the Divine Plan was revealed and

through whom it was exemplified. The first, demonstrated in Eden, was "the wages of sin is death" (see Rom. 6. 23) and for several millenniums that principle had been quite evidently in operation amongst mankind. Now came its complement "the gift of God is eternal life". Abraham stood and heard the Divine promise that in him and in his seed all families of the earth were ultimately to be blessed. (Gen. 12. 3 and 22. 18.) There was no intimation, at the time, how it was to be done; but there was the assurance that a future of happiness was planned for all men and that Abraham and his descendants were to be the Divine instruments in that purpose. Such a promise could only be realised if sin and evil were at the same time abolished, for while these scourges persist happiness can be neither complete nor lasting; hence this promise, made to Abraham four thousand years ago, is the first clear intimation in history that God does plan to abolish sin and evil.

From this point, almost half-way through the span of human history as we know it, the apparently hopeless course of humanity was checked and an upward trend, the infusion of some hope of better things, is discernible. It is true that the evil propensities of the human character still had free range, and in many respects the wickedness and cruelty of men continued to increase, but there was a new spirit and a new incentive in the hearts of some, even though only a few, a spirit that was destined to extend its influence and capture the hearts and inspire the lives of an increasing number as the years passed by. For a long time, so far as one can gather from the Bible record, which is the only detailed history of those days extant, this consistent seeking for the knowledge of God's plans and this intelligent giving of the heart and the life to God in full consecration of purpose and endeavour, which had been so characteristic of Abraham, was limited principally to his own direct line of descendants—and not all of them. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brethren, were men of faith, but their faith was a simple one, their lives built around little more than a complete and unreserved acceptance of the absolute supremacy of God in the world and affairs of men. But that was an important advance, a very necessary foundation for the more detailed knowledge of God and of his plans that was soon to follow.

It was when the descendants of Jacob after four

centuries, grown to a community of several millions of people, were ready to be welded into a nation that the next phase of the Divine plan was revealed. Moses led, from Egypt to Sinai, a mixed collection of tribes having little sense of unity and none of purpose, and only a very dubious belief in God. They had been born in Egypt, their fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers had been born in Egypt, and they knew of no other condition of life than that which was traditional to them in Egypt. They came out with Moses, not because they perceived a Divine leading and a Divine purpose in their coming out, but because life in Egypt had become intolerable and the opportunity of flight under Moses' leadership offered a prospect of release. But away there in the desert of Sinai something happened! Moses led, from the historic mountain and toward the Promised Land, a people, a nation, welded together by the bond of a common ideal, a common purpose. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant" the Voice had said out of the darkness that covered the mountain then ye shall be a chosen treasure unto me—for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation". (Exod. 19, 5-6.) To that the people had enthusiastically responded "all that the Lord hath spoken we will do". The nation of Israel never really forgot that momentous beginning to their nationhood. They never really repudiated the contract, although they violated its provisions scores of times. To this day the lineal descendants of the hosts that once surrounded Sinai, the Jews, in their saner moments claim the ancient privileges and proclaim themselves the "people of the Book"—a phrase invented by Mahomet, the prophet of Islam, in the seventh century A.D.—and look forward to the day when God will fulfil his word and make use of them to be a light to the nations, to declare his salvation to the ends of the earth.

The period between Moses and Christ was a training time having that end in view. It was necessary that some clear-cut definition of God's law be given to the world but at that comparatively early time in human history it was not possible to reveal that law in its entirety; none would have been able to comprehend it. Even to-day after two thousand years of Christianity, comparatively few really do understand it. The Divine method, therefore, was to select one nation—Israel—already measurably prepared for God's use, and by imposing upon that nation a code of laws and a rule of life based upon strict adherence to certain well-defined principles, to begin to accustom men's minds to the main out-

lines of that world which is yet to be when God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. The nation of Israel, with all its affairs, was intended to illustrate, as far as imperfect men could illustrate, the Kingdom of God which will eventually be set up on earth to consummate the Divine Plan for mankind. There was one salient difference. The Kingdom of the future is to be a world of free men, serving God and living the life that has his approval willingly, voluntarily, in the light of a full understanding of his laws and a full acquiescence therewith. That aspect of the future state could not be exemplified in Israel because they were by no means wholly converted to God, and the processes of sin working in their members rendered it quite impossible for them to keep the Law in its entirety even if they had perfectly sincere intentions; and for the most part they had not. It follows therefore that the most pronounced feature of Israel's national life was its obligation to a law principally expressed in the negative, the prohibitory, sense; "Thou shalt not". In their then state of development that was the only way in which the laws of God could be understood or appreciated by them.

At the same time this same law did accustom them to the idea that they had become a separated people unto God, called out from the world in general to occupy a special place of responsibility toward him and to assume particular obligations with respect to his work amongst mankind. They regarded themselves as the peculiar instruments of God's purposes in a much more intense sense than did the nations around them with respect to their gods. That made them a better and a nobler people than their neighbours, even although it also bred in them an egotism and self-complacency, a spirit of haughtiness and exclusiveness, which the later prophets never wearied in denouncing.

Viewed against the wider canvas of God's all-comprehensive Plan, this period of the life of Israel shows up many grave defects. There was here no general appreciation that God is love; the Hebrew deity was one of stern, unbending justice, demanding an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and exact retribution for every wrong committed. "He that despiseth Moses' law, that man shall die", was the epitome of the theology of the day, and any idea that God had created man for a purpose, and was steadily working out the details of that purpose, was still very far away. To this period belong the Old Testament stories of the "wars of the Lord", of the pitiless slaughter and destruction of the "Lord's enemies", of swift and unmerciful judgment upon apparently trivial acts of transgression.

It is easy to see that the histories, written by men who, however sincere and God-fearing, were nevertheless men of their times, reflect very faithfully the spirit and temper of their Age. The day was still far distant when a sublimely authoritative voice was to say "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . hate; . . . but I say unto you . . . love! . . ." (Matt. 5. 21, 43). Jesus reproved his own disciples for manifesting the spirit of men who in an earlier age were but acting up to the limit of the light they had and in fact were already far in advance of those who had been before them.

Another fundamental principle which emerged from the semi-light of this Israelitish Age was the great truth that the supreme purpose of human life is to serve God, that human beings have been called into existence by the will and power of God that they might occupy a definite place in his scheme of creation, and fulfil the destiny that He has planned for them, in full and comprehensive acknowledgment of his omnipotent power. It was not until after Christ that the details of that future destiny were made plain, but the effect of the Law of Sinai was certainly to clarify the question of man's intended relationship to God. God is the centre of all life and He colours every affair of life. To the extent that any man leaves God out of his life, to that extent he is deficient in purpose and vitality in life and must one day be brought face to face with the alternative of accepting continued life on the basis of this principle, or losing what he has of life altogether. Israel never lost that understanding, once they had attained it. They always built their national policy around the consciousness and realisation of their special responsibility towards God. Even in this present materialist phase of modern civilisation, the chiefly agnostic and unbelieving immigrants who are building the new land of Israel have a nucleus, a core, which is calling attention to the old standards of Israel.

Halfway through this period which had its beginning in Moses and its ending in Christ there came into prominence a development that was to be of the utmost importance in the outworking Plan of God. That development was the emergence and the work of the body of men known as the Hebrew prophets. Over a period of some four hundred years, from the ninth to the fifth centuries B.C., a succession of stalwart and fearless men arose characterised by a strong and inflexible faith in God and a most remarkable insight into his purposes. The New Testament declares (2 Pet. 1. 21) that these men were influenced by, and owed their enlightenment to, the power of the Holy Spirit,

and there can be no dispute that this statement is literally true. It has become the fashion in certain scholastic Christian circles to-day to picture these prophets as visionary ecstasies, wandering the countryside in an excess of fanatical zeal and pouring out torrents of pious invective or apocalyptic imagination which the people received as the veritable words of God. Nothing can be farther from the truth. These men were serious minded, deep thinking students of the ways of God and the ways of man, and what they had to say was the combined result of their own experience and observation and their inward illumination of mind consequent upon their possession of the Holy Spirit, which in turn was theirs because they were men in whom God could put his spirit. Not all men, and not many men, are like that. The fact that some of them, like Elijah and John the Baptist, habitually attired themselves in the most primitive of animal-skin garments and lived on simple and frugal fare no more denotes an unbalanced mind or sub-normal mentality than it did in the case of one of the greatest men of the twentieth century, the Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi, who ordered the outward trappings of his life in much the same fashion. And the contribution these prophets have made to human progress and to religious thought is incalculable. Judaism found its culminating point in their work. Christianity is founded and rooted in it. The whole Plan of God is revealed in it, and a complete picture of the coming Age when God's purposes will converge at last in the complete happiness of all creation is forthshown in it. The Hebrew prophets took the legal, formalistic conception of God and his ways which the Israelites had learned from Sinai and clothed it with the dignified and graceful outlines of a Plan which reveals the love and wisdom of a beneficent Creator.

Here, more than anywhere else, is to be seen the beginning of preparation for the coming of Christ. The Law of Sinai had given Israel a consciousness of ritualistic guilt which could be expiated by animal sacrifice. Year by year continually the smoke of burning beasts went up from the Temple altar and all Israelites went home satisfied that God had accepted the offerings and they were free from sin. Now the prophets gave them a consciousness and realisation of sin which only a greater sacrifice could blot out. They began to perceive and to tell the people that God has no pleasure in the offering of slain beasts, but looks rather for obedience and devotion. "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" (1. Sam. 15. 22). "Thou

desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering . . . the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." (Psa. 51. 16-17.) "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6. 8.) This was strong meat indeed to a nation whose whole tradition was one of ritual observance, and it is not surprising that as a nation they never did reach up to the heights scaled by their prophets. The important thing is that these prophets were speaking and writing, not only for their own people among whom they lived and to whom they ministered, but also for the Christians of two thousand years of Christianity later on, and it is that ministry of theirs which has had the more far-reaching results.

The work of the prophets reached its culminating point in Isaiah, who is the prophet par excellence of Christ. Whilst he did, in common with the others and to a greater extent than most of them, describe the inevitable judgment that must one day come upon the world in consequence of its godless course, and the Age of righteousness and sinless life that will follow the judgment, he also brought to light a new and totally unexpected truth that, had it been rightly understood by men at the time, would have furnished the complete explanation of the manner in which the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and the reason for his seemingly strange life and death, and enable many to accept him who did, in fact, reject him. That revelation was Isaiah's proclamation of the theme of the "suffering servant".

Throughout a great portion of his written work Isaiah insists that the redemption of mankind from the sin and suffering in which it lies can only be by means of one who is himself both able and willing to suffer in like manner. This one, insists Isaiah, must himself be innocent and yet willingly take upon himself the burden and the suffering of the guilty. He must be greater than man and in every respect superior to and infinitely above man, and yet prepared to lay all that on one side and become like as man that he might in every respect appreciate man's fallen condition. He must have all power so that he need not be hurt of any enemies, and yet refuse to exert that power even though those enemies work their will upon him, nor use that power in self-defence nor until he can

use it for their good. He must be altogether and completely devoted to the service and redemption of his fellows so that by means of his suffering they may ultimately be released from theirs. And the object of the whole of this is that those for whom the "suffering servant" thus gives himself even unto death may eventually renounce their own condition of alienation from God and come willingly into full harmony with him. So will evil and sin and suffering be finally and permanently overcome.

Isaiah was perfectly clear about all this. He knew that such an one would come and he saw him in vision as clearly as though he actually stood before him. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities." (Isa. 53. 7-11) Isaiah's great achievement was this realisation that the Redeemer's unjust death was not the end; there would be a resurrection from the dead and the One who had allowed himself to be put to the extreme of suffering and death upon man's behalf would come again with all power in heaven and earth to lead those same men to the heights of his salvation. The latter part of Isaiah's work is a vivid pen-picture of the Messianic reign, when the One he had first beheld in the guise of an unresisting lamb is seen again as an all-powerful King. The glory of the vision is that this King, alone of all men who have ever lived, has given practical proof that He is of all men the One to be trusted with full power over mankind. He refused to use that power for himself; He is therefore to be trusted to use it wisely and well for the happiness of others.

That Messiah whom Isaiah saw in vision is, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ. Seven hundred years were yet to elapse before the reality came, and for three hundred years after Isaiah's own death the Hebrew prophets were to continue the work of "making ready a people prepared for the Lord". They finished their work, the task for which God had called them in the development of his fulfilling purpose. The prophets came to a nation believing only in a God of justice. They left as their legacy to the future a nucleus of people who believed in a God of Love. It was to that nucleus that Christ came and was received, and out of that nucleus that Christianity was born.

To be continued



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

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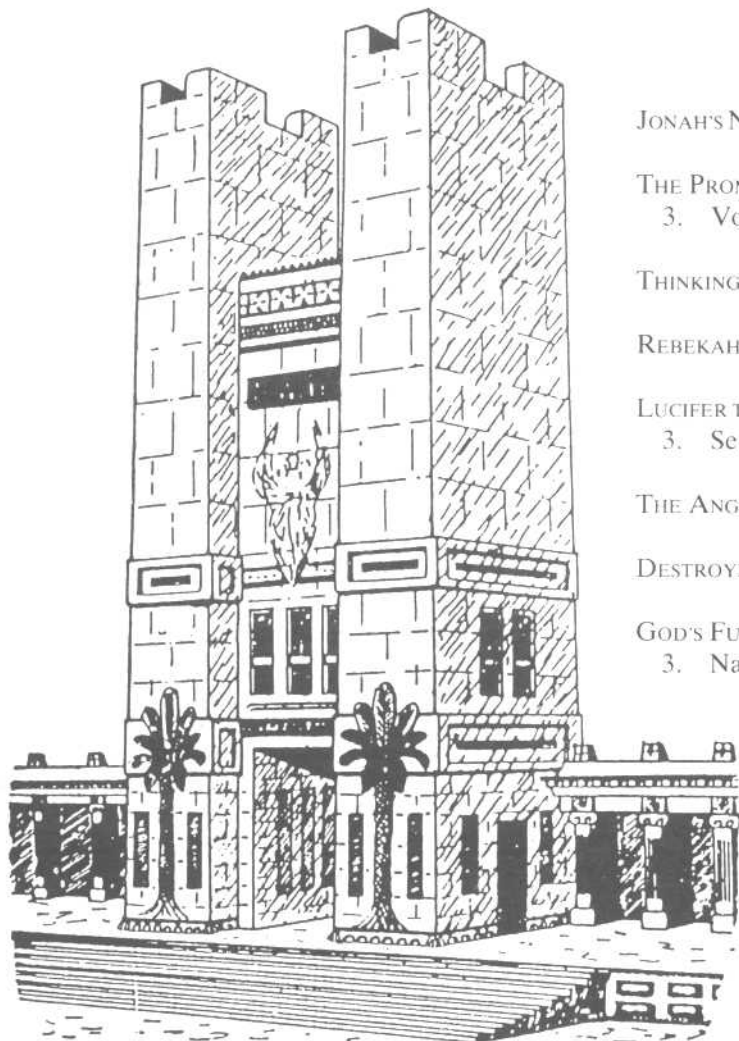
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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NOTICES

Literature disposal

On account of space limitations it has become necessary to reduce the amount of booklets held in our stockrooms, and to this end we are preparing packets of literature each comprising 15 assorted booklets and 20 assorted pamphlets, (our assortment), including at least one or more of each title listed below, which will gladly be sent free and post free to anyone requesting same and can make use of them. Overseas readers are reminded that sea mail takes about six weeks to U.S.A. and Canada, and longer to Australia and the Far East, but all applications will be dealt with as expeditiously as possible. Please ask for "special packet". Readers having use for more than one packet may have several, up to four such packets. The list follows:—

Booklets

The Tragedy of Samson. 52pp.
The Mission of Jonah. 78pp.
Samuel. Greatest of the Judges. 38pp.
The Spirit of Prophecy. 52pp.
God of all Space. 48pp.
The Virgin Birth of Christ. 24pp.
The Millennial Gospel of Jesus. 32pp.
The Cup of the Lord. 16pp.

12 & 16pp Pamphlets

No. 32 World Conversion—When?
33 The Divine Permission of Evil.
35 Conversion in the After-life.
36 The Resurrection of the Dead.
37 The Second Advent, its Nature and Purpose.
38 The Call and Destiny of Israel.
40 The Gifts of the Spirit.
41 Man—the image of God.
41 The Call and Purpose of the Church.

The standard packet will be sent as above, but additional copies of any particular title will be sent at any time upon request, free and post free. All titles will continue to be available in small quantities only after this offer is exhausted.

Conventions

Chesham. Sunday 9 June, at the Malt House, Elgiva Lane, Chesham, Bucks. Programmes and details from F. Binns, 102 Broad Street, Chesham, Bucks, HP5 3ED.

Hoddesdon. Conference, 12-18 August inclusive, at High Leigh Conference Centre, High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Herts. Application forms, costs, programmes and details from Mrs. A. Wood, 26 Duffy Place, Hillmorton, Rugby, Warks., CV21 4EF.

NOTE: The BFU has no responsibility for either of these functions. All relevant correspondence should be addressed as above.

"Future Probation in Christian Belief"

This 88-page review of the subject, published a few years ago, is still available in stock and a copy will be sent to any interested upon request.

Renewals

UK readers in the 3000 series are reminded that this is the time to signify desire to continue readership if they have not already done so for 1991, and a pink renewal form is enclosed in this issue for this purpose in such cases. Likewise overseas readers in the 7000 series will find a yellow "reminder" in this issue if we have not received their wishes up to mid-February last. If they have sent since that date the yellow reminder can be ignored.

Gone from us

— ❖ —

Bro. Chris. Ward (*Kettering*)

— ❖ —

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

JONAH'S NINEVEH

Jonah is chiefly renowned for his encounter with the great fish; his subsequent achievement in the city of Nineveh is not dwelt upon so much, yet that achievement was of greater consequence, and has much more to say concerning the attitude of the Lord to evil-doers. That of itself is important.

The tiny book which bears Jonah's name does not do justice to his position as a prophet in Israel. He lived round about the beginning of the 8th century BC, in the northern kingdom of Jeroboam, King of Israel at about the beginning of the reign of Uzziah of Judah. He therefore came just between Elijah and Elisha before him and Isaiah after him. There is some ground for thinking that he was a man about Court or at least not unknown in royal circles. 2 Kings 14, 25, the only other mention of him in the Old Testament, says that he predicted to Jeroboam "by the word of the Lord" that Jeroboam would recover Israel's lost territories and enlarge the borders of the nation. Jeroboam reigned forty-one years and did in fact extend his domains more than did any other king of the ten-tribe nation, finally ruling over an area almost as great as King David had done before him. It is possible, therefore, that Jonah stood in much the same relation to Jeroboam II as Elisha before him did to Ahab and Joash, and Isaiah after him did to Uzziah and Hezekiah. He might well have been the King's adviser, as those prophets had been in their times.

Gath-hepher, the home of Jonah, was in the territory of the tribe of Zebulun, and he was probably a member of that tribe. The people had not been long enough in the land for there to be much tribal intermingling. That may account for his prompt going to Joppa to find an ocean-going vessel to take him to the other side of the world away from the presence of God, for the three northernmost tribes, Asher, Zebulun and Issachar, adjacent to the merchant Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon, were familiar with the sea and many of them were themselves seafarers. Jacob, dying, predicted that Zebulun would eventually have a maritime connection (Gen. 49, 13). At any rate, Jonah was evidently a prophet of the northern kingdom, the "Ten Tribes". And these considerations make it plain that he was definitely a historical character, that he did live at the time indicated, and was remembered by the historian for the fulfilment of his prediction of the king's military successes. That goes far to establish the literal veracity of the book that bears his name.

The incident of the voyage and the great fish was over, and Jonah was back in Gath-hepher, a chastened and a wiser man. He may have learned two great lessons from the experience. One, that it is impossible to get away from God. He must have forgotten the words of David when he went to Joppa to get a ship to Tarshish, at the end of the then known world, "*whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol (the grave) behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me*" (Psa. 139, 7-10). Two, that God is abundantly able to protect and deliver from danger or disaster in even the most unlikely situation, as in his experience of the storm and the great fish. As a prophet and servant of the Lord it was his obligation to obey the Lord's call without question and leave the consequences with him. And so he went back to Gath-hepher and waited for the voice of the Lord.

"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee".

This time there was no hesitation. He arose and went.

It was a long journey. From his village of Gath-hepher he would have to go a few miles to the sea coast, to the trade route which ran from Egypt to Assyria. There he would find a caravan of merchants bound for Nineveh with their goods and would be able to travel with them. Such a caravan, goods loaded on camels or mules and the men riding on mules, could comprise as many as two hundred beasts of burden and perhaps forty men, armed to repel bandits by the way. Lone travellers could join without hindrance. Progress was slow, about fifteen miles a day; at night the convoy would gather round a great fire and sleep in the open air with a few men on watch. The distance was seven hundred miles and Jonah would be about two months on the journey. At first the caravan would make its way over the mountains to Damascus in Syria, where it would stop for a few days' trading. Then something like a hundred and twenty miles across a tree-clad mountainous region, arduous and difficult to traverse, alternately climbing and descending, but at least, to some extent, sheltered from the tropical sun. So they eventually descended the other side of the

mountains and arrived at the desert town of Tadmor in the wilderness (now Palmyra) to which Solomon had in past times extended the kingdom of Israel and which he had either built or considerably extended (I Kings 9.18). Here, another few days' rest before embarking on the hundred and twenty miles of the great Syrian desert, where the sun scorched by day and the frost chilled by night, an endless trail over flat sandy wastes uninhabited by man or beast, where dried-up stream beds led to patches of marsh where alone water and rest could be had, day after weary day, until, at last, the trail led downwards to a valley wherein flowed the great river, the river Euphrates, a river of which Jonah had often heard, but until this day had never seen, a river beyond which lay the goal of his journey, Nineveh, that great city.

So the cortege wound its way into the little river-side settlement of Dura (now Deir-el-Zor) where alone the great river might be crossed, and again the caravan remained a few days before embarking upon the final stage of the journey. Perhaps it was now that Jonah began to think seriously of the message he was so soon to proclaim in the great city: *"yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"*. Once across the river he would be inside the territory of the Assyrians, whose capital city was Nineveh. What would be his reception, he might have wondered. The ruthlessness and savagery of that nation was well known to the prophet, even although as yet they had done little more than invade the land of Israel from time to time and exact massive tributes of gold and silver, valuable treasures, flocks and herds, and retire with their booty to their own land. But he was full of fears about their future intentions and under no illusions as to the terrors they would bring his people and that was why at the beginning he had refused to take the call to repentance to Nineveh and tried to run away to Tarshish. If he did not go to Nineveh, he reasoned, the message would not be given. If the message was not given, the Ninevites would not have the opportunity to repent. If they did not repent, God would not deliver. So he had run away, in the opposite direction, and God had brought him back. But now he was here, resolved to obey the Divine call come what may. The issue he must leave with God. So he took his place in the convoy as it entered the waters of the only ford where Euphrates could be crossed.

Now he was in a different environment, a gently undulating terrain with trees and grass and rippling streams, as yet only sparsely inhabited but afford-

ing welcome relief to the travellers after the rigours of the earlier part of the journey. As Jonah travelled the way he did not know that less than a century later this same region was to be the home of many of his own people, taken captive by the Assyrians and brought here from their own land in what has been called the Captivity of the Ten Tribes. They, like him, were to undergo the arduous journey he had just experienced, for although his mission was destined to be successful and the Ninevites repent and be saved, it was not a repentance that lasted and eventually all of Israel was to be taken captive and led along this road, never to return. Scattered all over this area there are still low hills, "mounds" seven or eight miles apart, each one covering the ruins of ancient villages, villages built by those captive Israelites in which they and their children lived in their successive generations. Whether Jonah's prophetic instinct enabled him to foresee anything of this it is not possible to say; all that is certain is that he continued his journey with the fixed resolve to carry out his mission and leave the consequences to the Lord.

So, at last, Jonah reached his destination. As the caravan passed over the stone bridge which spanned the wide river Hiddekel (in later times, and now, the Tigris), and through the "Gate of the Plains", giving entrance through the high walls, his heart must have beat faster. He could not have seen such lofty and magnificent buildings before; neither was he accustomed to the sight of the many statues to the gods, the winged dragons and other fantastic stone creatures which adorned the streets, the evidences of wealth and luxury so manifest on every hand. To his left, as he entered, on the hill now known as Koyunjik, he looked upon the imposing Temple of Nabu, the messenger of the gods, and behind that the lofty staged temple-tower, characteristic of all Assyrian and Sumerian cities, sacred to all the gods. Here, too, stood the Temple of Asshur, the national god of the Assyrians, and a little farther on, the Temple of Ishtar, daughter of the Moon-god, a great goddess indeed here in Nineveh, for she, under her other name of Ninua, goddess of the waters, had given her name to Nineveh. Somewhere too, he would have seen a Temple to Dagon, the god with the head of a fish, for he was the god of the sea, revered by Phoenicians and Assyrians alike, especially when they ventured out in ships on the great deep. And then, crowning the hill, his gaze fell upon the king's palace, a magnificent building five hundred feet long by four hundred wide—today there is nothing

left of it but the foundations to show where it once stood. As Jonah looked upon all these evidences of an idolatry which must have been quite unfamiliar to him he must have wondered what hope he had of turning these people from all this to serve the living God.

Somewhere in the midst of this great city was the central market-place and here the caravan of traders with their wares came to rest. It would be here that Jonah parted company from them and went on alone, wondering just how to initiate his work. The account says he went into the city "*a day's journey*" and then commenced. The narrative had already said that Nineveh was "*an exceeding great city of three days' journey*" and different explanations have been given as to the meaning of the phrase. The probably true explanation is that three days was required to walk all round the city, sprawled along the River Tigris for a distance of some twenty miles from the present ruins of Nineveh in the north to those now known as Nimroud in the south. Nimroud is the "Calah" of Gen. 10. 10-12 where the historian declares that Asshur the son of Shem built Nineveh, Calah, "Rehoboth-ir", (the "walls of the streets") and "Resen", (the "fountains of waters"). The entire complex apparently consisted of the two built-up walled centres with what is now called "Garden city suburbs" between and around. Jonah and his caravan had to penetrate some fifteen miles into this complex of gardens, dwellings and so on before reaching the centre of the walled city itself. Says one Anglican clergyman who ministered in the district for the major part of his life during the last years of the 19th century, Rev. E. Wigram "*we have many a mile to travel before we are really clear of the site of ancient Nineveh, for the space comprised within its walls was only its inner nucleus; and without was a great garden city of mansions and parks and orchards. Greater Nineveh may well have embraced the outlying palaces of Khorsabad and the temples of Nimroud and this would easily account for the 'great city of three days' journey', (i.e. of about sixty miles in circumference) of which the prophet speaks.*" And this was the great city to whose people Jonah preached repentance.

And the people believed! This is the great wonder of the story. The Assyrians were the most ruthless and cruel of all the peoples with which Israel ever had to deal. They inflicted indescribable barbarities on the populations of the countries they invaded and subdued. They were universally hated and feared. Yet one prophet of the despised

people of Israel went alone into their capital city and preached God's righteousness and called upon them to repent in the face of imminent judgment, and they believed, and repented. A hundred and twenty thousand people "*believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them*" (Jon. 3.5).

What was the underlying cause of this sudden and wholesale conversion? It has been suggested that the story of Jonah's escape from the great fish could have influenced the Ninevites to take notice of this man and his message. They, like the Phoenician sailors who threw him overboard in the first place, were worshippers of Dagon the sea-god. The story of the incident would certainly have preceded him to Nineveh for news travelled fast on the trading routes. The only "great fish" in the Mediterranean is the whale, and since whales only swim at four miles an hour and as he was back in Joppa in three days it is obvious the incident took place before the ship had proceeded very far. And the known fact that Marcus Scaurus, Aedile of Rome in the year 58 BC, found in a temple at Joppa and took to Rome for exhibition the skeleton of a forty-foot Mediterranean whale, lying there for unknown ages to memorialise some long-forgotten event, does point to some noteworthy happening in previous times connected with a whale. In the case of the modern authenticated case of whaler sailor James Bartley, who was swallowed by a whale in the South Atlantic in 1896, and rescued twenty-four hours later to live another thirty years, his skin was permanently bleached to a ghastly white by the whales's gastric juices. If Jonah appeared in Nineveh in some such state, and it became known that this was the man of the story the inevitable conclusion must have been that Dagon, the god of the sea, had personally interfered to rescue him. He must be a favourite of Dagon and had better be heeded. The doubters who had scoffed at the story would have had to lie low in the face of this evidence, much as modern doubters have had to do on account of the 1896 evidence.

But the narrative does say that the people "*believed God*" and so did the king of Nineveh a little later on, and it is certain that when Jonah used the term he did not mean Dagon. The people of Nineveh knew that whatever part Dagon may have played in the matter, Jonah's God was supreme over all gods and so they prostrated themselves before him and craved mercy. Behind all

this is the fact that never, through all the history of idolatry, has the true God been entirely forgotten. Their gods were admittedly subordinate deities; behind them all, supreme above all, was Anu, the Most High God, ruler of all things, worshipped by *their ancestors back in the days long before Abraham* when there were no subordinate deities, only the Most High whom all men honoured and served, as had Noah and his sons when they came out of the Ark.

So the city went into mourning and word came to the king in his magnificent palace on the hill. The king of Assyria at the time of Jonah's visit was probably Shamsi-Adad V, a mild-mannered man not addicted to warfare as were most of Assyria's kings. Between his grand-father, the warlike Ashur-nasir-pal, sixty years earlier, and the equally war-like Tiglath-Pileser III in the days of Isaiah eighty years later, the Assyrian kings were a fairly peaceable lot, and Jonah's position in time with respect to his own king Jeroboam II rather points to this Shamsi-Adad V as the king concerned. He seems to have acted quickly and resolutely. He published a decree confirming the spontaneous action his people had already taken and commanded a national period of repentance. "*Cry mightily unto God; yea, let them turn every man from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*" (Jon. 4. 7-9). Considering that Israel, in alliance with all the other nations of the west,

had for years been forming military conditions to resist by armed force the invasions of the Assyrians—and dismally failed each time—this national embracing of the arts of peace consequent upon a few days preaching by one unarmed man is a signal example of the power of God when He does see fit to intervene in human affairs.

And the Lord relented. That is the most amazing part of the entire story. The indescribable atrocities inflicted upon all the adjacent nations by the Assyrians would seem to justify their condemnation as a people unfit to live. But they repented, and God reprieved them. "*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not*". What political power, what nation, in such circumstances and having the ability to pass judgment—and exact penalty,—would act thus? The most important lesson which the Book of Jonah has for the Christian is declared by Ezekiel. "*As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?*" (Ezek. 33.11). Objection is sometimes raised to what in some quarters is called the "gospel of the second chance". God gave the Ninevites a second chance.

* * *

The sequel to Jonah's achievement will be narrated in the next issue.

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

and that civilised man has been civilised from the outset?"

Dr. R. Bell Dawson, F.R.S.

* * *

It is not often that worldly success comes to a Christian without degrading his high standard of character. David was "a man after God's own heart", but that was when he was a shepherd, sincere in his simple faith. In the later years of his life, when great sins made possible only by his exalted position had left their mark on his character, God told him he was a "man of blood", and for that reason, despite his service of the past, he was unfit to build the Temple of God. With all David's fame and achievements he failed to accomplish the dearest object of his life, and it was the corrupting influences of riches and power upon an originally noble character that caused his failure.

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

3. Voice of the Archangel

"The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (I Thess. 4.16).

The New Testament speaks of three distinct aspects of the Second Coming. Each aspect presents a section of the work which our Lord is to accomplish at his Advent and each employs a different set of symbols to describe the characteristics of that aspect of the work. Each phase is worked out on this earth as the stage, not necessarily simultaneously although to some extent they do overlap. Taken together as a whole, they constitute the events of the Day of his Presence, the period which He himself described as "the days of the Son of Man".

A brief survey of the position shows that Christ returns first to reveal himself to his own, who have been intelligently watching and waiting for his Advent, to resurrect the "dead in Christ" of past ages who have been laid aside waiting for this moment, and to "change" the living ones who experience the time of the Advent from earthly to heavenly conditions. This is associated with what, in the parable of the Wheat and Tares, and in the vision of Rev. 14, is called the "Harvest of the Age" in which the prime purpose of the period between the First and Second Advents, the development and gathering to heavenly conditions of the Christian Church, is accomplished.

The second is that which pictures the Lord as coming to bring man's admittedly unsatisfactory domination of earthly affairs to an end and establish his own righteous and beneficent administration, the long-promised Millennial kingdom of peace and prosperity, in its place. This, described in somewhat sombre symbols such as the downfall of "great Babylon" and the end of the "kingdoms of the earth", covers the period in which the returned Lord, unseen to mortal eyes, is so manipulating and overruling the schemes and actions of men that, at the last, when the world is in its extremity, men are ready to accept his oversight and abandon all further attempts to govern a world whose problems have grown too great for them to solve.

The third aspect is of brighter hue and speaks of the Lord's open manifestation to all mankind when all opposition to his Advent has ceased and men are ready to listen to the "voice that speaketh from Heaven". This is a later stage of the Advent,

and becomes true only when the gathering of the Church is an accomplished fact and the evident failure of men to control the disruptive forces which are increasingly threatening ordered society on the earth has caused them to cry out, in the words of Isaiah, *"this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation"*.

The first subject to examine, therefore, is that which most closely concerns the Church of Christ. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonian Christians, left on record for all time a vivid description of the manner in which our Lord at his return would be manifested to "them that look for him" (Heb. 9.28).

"The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout." This clearly speaks of the actual point of time at which our Lord's Presence becomes an accomplished fact. It is to be signalled by a "shout." The Greek word is an unusual one, "*Keleusma*," used nowhere else in the New Testament and evidently deliberately selected by Paul to convey a meaning which could not be conveyed in any other way. In New Testament days sea-going vessels (galleys) were propelled by rowers, sometimes as many as three or four hundred men being thus employed in a single ship; and to ensure that these men pulled in unison, an overseer known as the "*Keleustes*" stood in a commanding position on the ship and gave at regular intervals, in unison with the rowing, a cry which was called the "*keleusma*." This call urged the men to sustained effort, directed their work, and so became a shout of combined authority, direction and encouragement. This is what is in the mind of St. Paul. He describes the descent of Christ to direct and supervise a work, to take authority over that work, and to encourage to great effort. To use a more modern illustration, He takes up his position as the captain on the bridge, and proceeds to direct the first great work of his Presence.

What that work involves may be discerned from an examination of related Scripture. Rev. 14. 14-16 speaks of one like unto the Son of Man coming to earth upon a white cloud, crowned with a golden crown and wielding a sharp sickle. A cry is made that the harvest of the earth is ripe and ready to be reaped. Scriptural analogy points unerringly to the parable of the wheat field in Matt. 13. 24-30. The inspired explanation of that parable given by Jesus in verses 37-43 of the same chapter states that the field is the world, the good seed are the children of

the Kingdom, and the tares are the children of the Evil One. Both are to grow together until the harvest. When the harvest is come, the Chief Reaper will say to his servants *"Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn"*. There is to be no attempt at separation until the Lord of the harvest is present, with his sickle, and gives the word. The harvest is definitely stated in the same parable to be the "end of the Age"—the same period for which the disciples in Matthew Twenty-four desired to know the signs.

The harvest, then, takes its place as one of the events comprising the end of the Age, and requiring a definite span of time for its accomplishment. It is clear also that the harvest commences with the presence of the Chief Reaper. He, as it were, leading by cutting the first ripe wheat. Much in this reminds one of the solitary phrase in I Thessalonians, *"And the dead in Christ shall rise first."* The in-gathering of the children of the Kingdom pictured by ripened wheat will surely commence with those who have already *"rested from their labours."*

This *"keleusma"* will obviously not be a literal shout heard by the literal ears. It is spiritually discerned, and its evidence will be the manifest fact that a work is proceeding in the Christian world which corresponds to the parable of the harvest of wheat and tares, supported by such evidence of the declining power of the *"kingdoms of this world"* as to justify the assumption that the end of the Age is at hand. It will be of such a nature as to induce great encouragement to the "Watchers" and an incentive to great activity on behalf of the *"gospel of the Kingdom."* (Matt. 24, 14). It must definitely imply direction and oversight of a work in Christendom which has not been done previously, and it must be closely associated with all that the Scriptures reveal concerning the condition of the Church of Christ upon earth—to whom alone the "shout" can be audible—in the closing years of their experience.

The "shout," therefore, should be understood as indicating that the time of our Lord's return is marked by a recognition that the Harvest of the Age is commencing and that the final separation between wheat and tares is in progress. As a positive "sign" to the Watchers who are living during that period this "shout" is one of conviction as well as encouragement, and constitutes one very definite outward evidence of the *"parousia"*.

The second allusion describing this eventful time is Paul's reference to *"the voice of the archangel."*

Judaistic tradition knew seven archangels: Uriel, Raphael, Raquel, Michael, Saraquel, Gabriel, and Remiel. They were considered to be the special commissioners of God to watch over his creation and to each was allotted a specific duty. The archangel to whom was entrusted the protection and defence of the people of Israel was Michael, and here the Scripture becomes luminous when the various references to Michael, the only archangel mentioned in the Bible as such, are remembered. In the book of Daniel Michael is the spiritual prince of Israel. In Revelation he is shown in symbol as leading the forces of Heaven, while Jude mentions an occasion upon which he contended with the devil over the body of Moses. To Paul's readers, then, the expression in Thessalonians could bear one meaning only—the voice of the archangel indicated that the prince of Israel, the protector of God's people, the One who should *"stand up"* at the Time of the End (Dan. 12, 1) was in the act of arriving. The traditionary conception of Michael the archangel as the prince of Israel finds its reality in Christ, the great protector who comes to save his own.

The voice of the archangel is thus not a literal voice sounding upon the air and perceived by the natural ears; it follows that, like the "shout," the discernment of this voice is a spiritual matter. Those who by an understanding of the "signs of the times" perceive that the call has gone forth to engage in the reaping work of this Gospel Age harvest are the ones who hear the voice of the archangel.

The third signal given by Paul in his metaphor is the "trump of God". This idea of a mighty trumpet heralding the wonderful events which close this Age and usher in the future day of blessing is very prominent in the New Testament. To a people such as the Jews, familiarised in their ancient history with the use of the trumpet to announce a going forth to war; to herald the feast days; and the year of Jubilee, when the land had rest and all men were restored to their inheritance, this must have been a very apt symbol. The last trumpet, the one which announces and declares Christ the coming King, which informs all men of the greater Jubilee, *"Times of Restitution . . . spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"* (Acts 3, 21), and sounds the signal for the Battle of the great day of God Almighty (Rev. 16, 14) is indeed a momentous one. Like the other symbols, it is not a literal trumpet blast such as Israel heard at Sinai (Heb. 12, 19) but its spiritual counterpart; a clear and definite proclamation making known through-

out the world that the Time of the End has come, that the Lord has descended from Heaven to set up his Kingdom, and that the good tidings for all people are about to be declared in very truth. The fulfilment of this symbol must certainly be looked for in such a world-wide proclamation, commencing with the realisation and declaration that the Harvest of the Age has commenced and continuing with increasing enlightenment and diligence in testifying to the Kingdom on the part of those who have themselves heard this trumpet. The revelation of Truth concerning Christ's mission and the Divine Plan, once commenced in this fashion, will continue and extend until in the full glory of the Millennial Kingdom it shall become true that *"all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them."* (Jer. 31. 34). Hence the trump of God commences to sound at the time of the Lord's descent from Heaven, and continues so to sound until all men have heard its message. During the whole period of the *parousia* its notes will penetrate to the minds of men with "good tidings of good". (Isa. 52. 7-8).

Now it should be noted that with the sounding of this trumpet certain events are associated. Paul in I Cor. 15. 52 declares that *"the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"*. Again in I Thess. 4. 16-17 he says *"the Lord shall descend from heaven . . . with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"*. Taken together, these Scriptures indicate that while the "last trump" is sounding, there will be a resurrection of the dead in Christ and a change from earthly to spiritual conditions for those who, being Christ's, are still "alive and remain" at the time of his Presence.

The close association of these words with the act of descending from Heaven might well justify the view that the dead in Christ, or, as they are sometimes termed, the "sleeping saints," are resurrected as the first work carried out by our returned Lord. This resurrection is not to human form and environment, but to spiritual nature and into the spiritual world, a clothing upon with *"our house which is from heaven"* (II Cor. 5. 2). That those thus raised are brought into personal association with the Lord Christ is evident; it is thus that Paul's own wish *"for the returning and being with Christ"* (Phil. 1. 23 *Diaglott*) becomes reality. There is no assumption that those thus raised commence their reign with Christ until He himself has established his Kingdom and begun to reign, it being already

admitted that Christ returns to earth for the purpose of *"taking his great power"* (Rev. 11. 17) that He may "in due time" commence his reign. It is sufficient, therefore, at the moment to appreciate that the "risen saints" will from the time of their resurrection "be with Christ".

Were the Second Advent but the work of a moment, this primary raising of the sleeping ones would involve an immediate and simultaneous "change" of all the remaining members of Christ's church on earth, and the instant cessation of his work among the saints of this Age. This is the belief held by many Christians, especially by those accepting the twenty-four hour catastrophic view of the ending of this world, and within these limits is perfectly logical. It fails, however, to take into proper account the Gospel Age harvest and the three-fold character of the Second Advent previously referred to. Once it is appreciated that the "Presence" occupies a certain period of time during which various events occur relative to the winding up of earth's affairs and the introduction of the new Kingdom, it is easier to understand that a possibility exists for some of the "saints" to continue living during this period of time whilst the events of the presence of Christ are proceeding. This gives a wider and a more significant meaning to Paul's words *"We which are alive and remain"*. The dead in Christ are to rise first. *Then* we which are alive and remain are to be changed. There is no necessity for that change to be simultaneous—provided that all who become Christ's do in fact experience their change before the day comes when, resplendent in heavenly glory *"the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father"* (Matt. 13. 43).

These statements in Thessalonians, then, should be interpreted as symbols expressive of that spiritual discernment upon the part of Christ's disciples which enables them at the time of his Advent to realise the fact. He comes to encourage, to direct his work, to proclaim his coming Kingdom, and to gather into their spiritual home all who have become members of his Body—the "Bride of Christ". By the close of this "Harvest" period the *"General Assembly and Church of the First-born"* (Heb. 12. 23) will have become a reality, and with the cessation of overt resistance to the incoming era of peace and justice the stage will be set for that stupendous scene when *"then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"* (Matt. 24. 30).

To be continued.

THINKING POINT ON INTELLIGENCE

*We are getting less brainy
—Or so the doctors think.*

The "*British Medical Journal*" twenty-five years ago published a thesis the substance of which was that a decline in the level of intelligence is taking place. Observation and tests, it claimed, gave evidence that the mental powers of men and women, compared with previous generations, are deteriorating.

In an age when the researches of scientists and the skill of industrial workers are producing increasingly marvellous triumphs of invention this seems a strange statement to make. One might say, hastily, that every evidence points to constantly increasing intelligence. What is not so readily realised is the fact that these victories of science are due to a very small number of exceptionally brilliant men, and the *British Medical Journal* is taking account of the masses—ordinary men and women who make up the bulk of our nation.

It is suggested by some observers that the widespread inducements to "putting one's thinking out" constitute one cause of such decline in individual intelligence. Organised entertainment—the cinema, the football pools and "the dogs"; radio with its "Brains Trusts" and "Quizzes", its mock discussions in which millions of listeners are skilfully guided toward the conclusion desired by the originators; the use of propaganda and its incitement to "mass thinking"; all this induces a condition of mind in which the individual becomes less and less able to think for himself, more and more susceptible to blind and unreasoning following of any commanding voice that is raised, and in these circumstances fails increasingly in the exercise of his own reasoning powers.

There is another and a more profound reason; the decline in Christian faith and belief—and consequently, of practice. The foundation of all right thinking and the exercise of man's powers for good is in the Bible. Human beings are so constituted that they can only attain their full potentialities by living their lives in God's way, and to the extent that God's way is ignored or defied life is deficient and imperfect, and must eventually come to an end. That is why God says "*The soul that sinneth it shall die*" (Exek. 18. 4) for death, the cessation of life, is the inevitable consequence of refusal to follow the Divine way of life, the current

tremendous increase in crime and violence, in cruelty and immorality, in all the ills from which the world of this generation is suffering, is due in large measure to the failure of parents in the last few generations to follow the Christian way themselves and to train up their children in that way. And the result of that failure is now seen, not only in the widespread increase of evil things in the world, not only in the moral and physical degeneracy of man, but in mental degeneration also. The human race is committing slow suicide.

What is the remedy? There is only one reply, and unwelcome as it may be to many, the reply will cost something. The great cry to-day is "something for nothing". More wages, less working hours; more amusement, less responsibility; more self-indulgence, less disinterested service for others—these are the things which men demand. And religion—Christianity—will have none of this. It calls to a pathway of serious, continued endeavour in the spirit of unselfishness and service for others. Jesus "went about doing good". He told his followers to give their lives for their fellows, working always for the establishment of those principles which alone can bring happiness to men. And only when men in the mass accept this way of life and endeavour honestly to put it into practice will the decay be arrested and the level of intelligence begin to rise.

That is the purpose of the coming reign of Christ over the earth—to teach men how so to conduct their lives as to grow up in the Divine likeness and become free from sin. It has been observed by leading archaeologists that all the evidence shows primitive man to have exceeded modern man in intelligence. That is because they lived so much nearer the time when sin first entered and the human race began its downward course into sin and degradation; they had not lost so much of the primeval physical and mental powers as have men to-day. The theory of evolution is belied by the evidence of man's increasing imperfection as we have it before us in our own day and generation. Christ's Kingdom will restore man to the primeval perfection and, with the eradication of sin and sinful tendencies, lift men's minds to a higher degree of intelligence than has ever been known before; and it will bring man into full reconciliation with God and everlasting life.

REBEKAH — BRIDE OF ISAAC

She could hardly have been more than sixteen at the time, this young girl, verging upon womanhood, whom Ferrar Fenton, with his passion for the English vernacular, describes as "*very beautiful to look upon, a maiden who had no sweetheart*" which in any case is exactly what the Hebrew of Gen. 24.16 implies. Eliezer, steward to Abraham, the wealthiest man in faraway Canaan, followed her lithe walk with his eyes as she moved gracefully towards the well beside which he was standing, her water-jar upon her shoulder. His men, waiting beside their laden camels, watched him as he cogitated within himself whether the Lord was about to make his mission prosperous. He had come four hundred miles into Aram-Naharaim, the Land of the Two Rivers, to find a bride for his master's son Isaac, but his instructions were that the woman chosen must be of Abraham's own relatives, settled here in the land which Abraham had left many years ago, in response to the Divine call, to go to Canaan. Within the next few minutes he was to find that he had been led unerringly directly to the object of his quest.

Rebekah was the grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's older brother. From Gen. 22. 20-24 it would appear that only within the immediate past had Abraham known anything of his brother's family. Evidently travellers from the old homeland had brought news that Nahor had fathered a family of twelve sons of whom one, Bethuel, was the father of Rebekah. Since Abraham knew none of these children when he left Haran it must be that the daughter of Bethuel was very young when Eliezer met her. Now as he looked upon her he was reminded again of the importance of his choice. Isaac was the covenant child, the promised "seed" of Abraham from whom was to spring the dedicated nation destined to preserve the knowledge and revelation of God in history, prepare for the coming of Christ, and ultimately become a light to the nations when at last God should turn to evangelise the world in the days of Christ's kingdom. No wonder the steward was cautious as he began to converse with this fresh young girl who might conceivably become involved in so great a destiny.

Rebekah, of course, could have had no such thoughts. Born and brought up in a pastoral community where life was probably remote from the political upheavals that were always in progress,

with little thought of the future save that involved in the growing of crops and the maintenance of flocks and herds, she probably had no knowledge at all of the wider world outside her father's lands. The story of her great-uncle's migration into distant Canaan in obedience to a Divine mandate might well have been known to her but any thought of her own eventual involvement in that same Divine purpose could not have crossed her mind. The enthusiasm with which she received the stranger was prompted purely by the instinct of hospitality which was so deeply engrained a characteristic of Eastern peoples. It was with wonder and possibly a little apprehension therefore that she received Eliezer's gifts. A gold "ear-ring"—more properly, a ring to wear in the nose, a customary feminine adornment in those days—of half a shekel weight, equal to a British gold sovereign, and two bracelets of gold, each containing ten shekels, as much metal as twenty gold sovereigns. Their effective value was much greater than would appear, however, for in that day and land the wages of an ordinary labourer or shepherd amounted only to six shekels a year and a large house could be purchased for seven or eight shekels. No wonder Rebekah ran quickly to her home to tell her family of the intriguing visitor and of what he had said to her.

This is where the story begins to have significance for the Christian. At many times, in many places, by word and by pen, Eliezer's mission and the subsequent marriage of Isaac and Rebekah has been used as an illustration or symbol of the call of the Church and her union with Christ the heavenly Bridegroom. Perhaps former generations derived a greater measure of spiritual satisfaction from this kind of symbolism than does our modern down-to-earth age, but the picture is compelling none the less. Here is Eliezer, the messenger of Abraham, being received into the house of Bethuel the father of Rebekah as a welcome visitor. "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?*" was her brother Laban's welcome. This is the commencement of the Christian call. The Holy Spirit of God goes abroad in the earth seeking "a people for God's name" (Acts. 15.14). Where there is a receptive heart, even although that heart is as yet ignorant of the implications involved in the calling, there the Spirit enters with its gracious invitation: "My son, give me thine heart". Know-

ing, as we do, that God is working all the time to bring his erring children back to himself, one can sense a world of meaning in the attitude of Eliezer as he looked upon Rebekah; "*and the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not*" (Gen. 24.21). Will there be a willing response to the Gospel invitation or is the seed destined to fall upon stony ground? Surely God waits, as did that faithful steward of old, to see if the appeal is to be prosperous or not!

In the case of Rebekah, it did prosper. Eliezer told his story to the assembled family, enlarging upon the wealth and prosperity of their kinsman Abraham, and his desire that Isaac his heir should be united with a woman of his own family rather than the more or less idolatrous people of Canaan. He told how God had guided him straight to the household he sought and how therefore he desired to take Rebekah back with him to be Isaac's bride. Having said all, he awaited their decision.

It is here we have evidence that the God whom Abraham served was equally acknowledged in the family of his brother Nahor. "*The thing proceedeth from the Lord; we cannot speak unto thee either bad or good*" said both Bethuel and Laban. "*Behold, Rebekah is before thee; take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Lord hath spoken*" (Gen. 24. 50-51). Here, in this house, the leading and the overruling providence of God was recognised and obeyed. They had never seen this man before; they had to accept his word that he was in fact who he said he was. He arrived out of the blue with a cool request that he be allowed to take their young daughter to a land four hundred miles away to marry a man none of them had ever seen and of whose very existence they had until then been ignorant. The name of Abraham they knew as that of Laban's grandfather's brother, but he had gone off into the wilds of Canaan some seventy years previously before any of them were born and they could have been excused if they had demanded some proof that he was in fact still alive. Nevertheless they displayed what can only be accepted as an acute perception of the hand of God in this thing; "*the thing proceedeth from the Lord . . . take her, and go*".

And Rebekah herself; what of her? To show friendship to a stranger and accept his presents and introduce him into her family was one thing; to trust herself to a stranger and go with him into the trackless wilderness under promise of marriage to a man she had never seen, knowing that she was

leaving her own people for ever, was quite another. Not unnaturally her family wanted her to remain with them a year, or at least ten months (the literal meaning of Gen. 24.55) before leaving for good, but at Eliezer's insistence that he must return with her at once or not at all they referred the matter to Rebekah herself. "*We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth . . . Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go*" (vs. 58). That prompt decision speaks volumes for the character and the faith of this youngster. She evidently shared the conviction of her elders, she too believed that the hand of God was outstretched to lead her into a life of new experiences involving the Divine purpose, and like her illustrious kinsman nearly a century before her own time, she "went out, not knowing whither she went" (Heb. 11.8). Abraham had been called out of Haran to Canaan in just the same fashion, knowing nothing of what awaited him; now his grand-niece received the same call and answered it in the same certainty of faith. So the sixteen-year-old Rebekah, and her chaperon Deborah, and her attendant maids, and Eliezer with his men, and his train of ten camels, set out from Haran to go to Canaan where Abraham and Isaac were waiting.

A wonderful picture of the response to the Call, the act of consecration of life, and all that life holds, to God! "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him" (Psa. 45. 10-11). Thus does the Psalmist extol the coming of the Bride to the Heavenly Bridegroom, the union of Christ and his Church. He may well have had Rebekah in mind when he penned the words. No one, taking the decision to serve Christ and to belong to Christ, to yield life and powers to his service and to be his unto death, has any idea where or to what that decision is going to lead. Like Rebekah, they go forward in implicit faith, knowing only that God leads.

Nothing is said of the journey. Verse 61 tells of the departure from Haran and vs. 62 records the arrival in Canaan. Of that four hundred miles trek, over difficult mountain terrain for the most part, no account is given. It could not have been easy. The first part, after crossing the Euphrates, lay through the flat fertile lands of Northern Syria but the travellers would soon find themselves traversing the mountains of Lebanon, bleak and cold. Next came the semi-desert of the Hauran, where

the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky and dust storms were frequent. Then down into the humid sweltering heat of the Jordan valley and the crossing of that river by one of its numerous fords, and the slow and painful climb up the ravines of the Canaanitish highlands which were afterwards to become Samaria and Judea. Finally the little caravan made its way into the south country, the Negev, not so desert and waterless as it is today; more of a productive pastureland; and there Isaac was waiting for his bride.

Nothing is said of that journey. It could not but be arduous and trying in the extreme for this young girl and her companions, accustomed as they were to the genial landscape and climate of their homeland. Day after day, for probably four or five weeks, they endured the heat by day and the frost by night, the hazards of brigands and wild animals, the difficulties of travel; but Rebekah, like her descendant Moses, "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11.27). The depth of her devotion and sincerity of her purpose and fixity of her faith carried her through all the difficulties and oppositions of the way and when at last she reached the goal of her hopes it was to her as the hymn has it "the trials of the road will seem nothing, when we come to the end of the way".

Is that why nothing is said in Genesis about the journey? Is it a hint to us that in the triumph of attainment the difficulties of reaching it are nothing to be regarded, not worth mentioning? Says the Apostle "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" and again "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (2 Cor. 4.17; Rom. 8.18). The experiences of life, oftentimes hard, wearisome and even bitter, must of necessity occupy the span of our pilgrim journey between our consecration to God and our attainment of its object in the glory of the "First Resurrection", our ultimate union with Christ, but in the realisation of that consummation all the difficulties of the "way thither" will pass from the mind and be forgotten. So nothing need be said about the journey.

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her" (vs. 67). This is the end of the story in so far as it can be used to picture the progress of the Church in the flesh from the initial Call to the final union which in the Book of Revelation is called the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev.

19.9). In Rebekah's case there would of course have followed the usual wedding feast, in which all of Abraham's considerable establishment of servants, shepherds, herdsmen and land workers would participate. Abraham's farming interests covered an area of Canaan some forty by thirty miles and he must have employed several hundred workers. Rebekah's wedding was probably an event to be long remembered.

Of the events of her married life there is not much recorded save for one major incident. Twenty years later she gave birth to twin sons, Esau and Jacob, Esau being the eldest by a few minutes and therefore in the ordinary way the heir of Isaac and custodian of the Divine birthright. Through Esau it could have been that the promised "seed of blessing" should come. But at the birth it was Divinely revealed to Rebekah that the younger, Jacob, would inherit the birthright and she never forgot that. As the years passed Esau developed into what nowadays would be called an "earthly" character and had no concern for, or faith in, the validity of his birthright. Quite light-heartedly he traded it with Jacob in exchange for a savoury meal of the latter's preparation which took his fancy. Jacob would appear to have been the more reverently minded of the two and in all probability had already been told of the Divine intimation by his mother; nevertheless it seems he took advantage of this opportunity in order to establish his claim to the birthright. The significant, and perhaps rather strange, element in the situation is that whereas Rebekah loved Jacob best, Isaac's preference was for Esau. One would think that Isaac, the child of promise and indoctrinated from birth in the intentions of God regarding the succession of the "seed", would have faced up to the fact that Esau was not the type of man suited to that succession and Jacob would much more likely be the Lord's choice, but he did not do so. Isaac doted on Esau, and because of that fact Rebekah, remembering the Lord's word that Jacob was to be the heir, began to plot and scheme a means whereby he might be formally invested with the birthright. The story is well known, how that at her instigation Jacob impersonated Esau before the near-blind Isaac and so obtained the patriarchal blessing which, once bestowed and because it was uttered in the hearing of God, could not be revoked.

Rebekah has been blamed too severely for her part in the transaction. From her point of view she was acting to prevent Isaac going against the will

of God; he too must have known of the revelation made to her at the children's birth. The end justified the means, in her view; even this blatant deception of Isaac could be excused on the ground that only thus could the will of the Lord be accomplished. And in all this Rebekah quite failed to realise that the Lord is perfectly capable of carrying out his own designs and needs not the use of questionable artifices by well-meaning assistants in the same. It does seem as if the unquestioning faith which did characterise the youthful Rebekah when first she received the call to leave her own land for a strange new life had lost something of its intensity and now as a mature woman of round about ninety she was not so certain that the Lord could effect his intentions without a little human scheming to help them along.

Rebekah was, after all, like so many of us, prone to plan and scheme to ensure the welfare or the continuance of the Lord's work when all the time all He wants us to do is diligently to prosecute the interests of that which He has placed in our hands to do, leaving the further development of his work to him. He has powers at his disposal that we wot not of, and the problems which may seem insoluble to us unless we instil into their solution a certain amount of human scheming or effort can be handled by him in the twinkling of an eye and far more effectively than we with our limited insight and even more limited powers could ever hope to do.

The unfortunate Rebekah paid the penalty, for she never saw her much-loved son again. In the face of Esau's justifiable resentment at the decep-

tion, and his threats against Jacob's life, she counselled her son to take himself off to her brother's home in Haran for a while until the trouble blew over. "*Flee thou*" she said "*to Laban my brother to Haran and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away . . . then will I send, and fetch thee from thence*" (Gen. 27.43-45). The "few days" probably meant a short space, a year or two maybe; in any case Esau's resentment was short-lived and he soon forgot all about it; he was not really concerned about the birthright and not the sort to bear a grudge. Whether Rebekah ever did send to tell Jacob it was safe to return we do not know, but in any case her message would have been of no avail, for Jacob himself had been manoeuvred into a contract with Laban which bound him to Haran for many years, and by the time he did get back to Canaan his mother was dead. It was a rather sad ending to a life that opened so full of promise but at any rate Rebekah did play a very important part in the outworking of the Divine plan and if for seventy years or so she did manifest the degree of faith which is required of all who would be not only called and chosen, but also faithful, we can well imagine that the All-Merciful would be likely to forgive that last lapse, undertaken as it was in the best of intentions. At any rate Rebekah is always remembered and best remembered as the young girl who unhesitatingly accepted the call to become the bride of Isaac and in so doing provided the Christian story with one of its choicest illustrations.

Tatian on the Scriptures

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

Thus wrote Tatian, an Assyrian, and one of the most brilliant pagans of the second century, speaking of his conversion to Christianity. It is worthy of note that, coming to the Old Testament (the writings to which he refers above) and the teachings of

the Christian church, he realised how different were these principles from the Greek philosophy which held premier place in the world of that day, and, too, that acceptance of this new way of life brings freedom from the bondage which is upon men. Said Jesus: "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free;*" and again "*If the Son shall make you free, then shall ye be free indeed.*" There was not much liberty in the Roman world, and that freedom in Christ which is the portion of all who become his by full surrender to his way of life stood out in sharp contrast to the condition of those who still sat "*in darkness and the shadow of death*".

LUCIFER THE PRINCE OF EVIL

3. Sentence of banishment

The 28th chapter of Ezekiel has long been a conundrum to commentators and students. Ostensibly enshrining a denunciation of the king of the Phoenician merchant city of Tyre in the days of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, the description is far too exaggerated to apply to any man, no matter how exalted. Although disputed by some, others insist that it can only fit the story of the original sinless state of Satan, his rebellion and sin, and his ultimate end.

The Tyrian's principal stronghold was a rocky islet just off the coast, encircled by a high defensive wall which rendered them more or less immune from attack. More than one ancient conqueror essayed to capture the city without success; Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to it for thirteen years and gave up; Alexander the Great finally achieved the victory by building a mole from the mainland across the intervening water, which mole still remains. That was the end of Tyre, the greatest merchant city and seafaring people of ancient times. In the days of King David Tyrian merchant vessels went to West Africa, Spain, Britain, and the West Indies and South America more than two thousand years before Columbus. Not so many years ago a cache of 800 BC Phoenician coins was found in Venezuela; some unlucky Tyrian captain either had to leave in a hurry or met his end without revealing the whereabouts of his trading capital.

Israel always got on well with Tyre. Hiram, king of Tyre was *"ever a lover of David"* (I Kings 5.1). He could well afford to be; both David and Solomon were good customers. Hiram supplied the timber and stone for the Temple at Jerusalem (I Kings 6.10) and probably a great deal of other material besides. Ithobal I of Tyre was the father of the notorious Jezebel wife of Ahab, and Ahab enriched his palace at Samaria with much of the luxury goods supplied by Tyre. And now here was Ithobal II ruling in Tyre with Ezekiel in Babylonia and Nebuchadnezzar hammering at the gates of the city.

The first ten verses of this 20th chapter comprise a message delivered against one termed *"the prince"* (properly "ruler") *"of Tyrus"*. Tyre was a merchant city rather than a nation, part of the land generally known as Phoenicia, a Canaanite people of mixed Semitic and Hamitic race. It wielded no political power and paid tribute to any great power

which could back its demands by force, in the meantime waxing extremely rich by its world-wide trading interests. This is indicated in this passage; this ruler of Tyre, (in history Ithobal II), arrogant in his riches and world-wide influence, is pictured as saying *"I am a god"* ("el", mighty one, without claiming to be *the* God) wiser than Daniel, (who at this time was in Babylon, high in state office and enjoying a reputation which was certainly known throughout the Middle East) and particularly because of the wisdom and understanding (28.4-5) exemplified in the world trade responsible for the very considerable wealth of the Tyrian people. Because of his arrogance, said the Lord through the prophet, he would be brought to the dust and his people beggared and dispersed. He was, after all, no god; he was only a man.

History records the fulfilment of the prediction. The 27th chapter describes it in full. Within three centuries Tyre was no more and the commercial supremacy of the world passed to the Greeks.

At this point the prophet passes from history to poetry, poetry which is based partly on the story of creation and partly on the philosophy of sin. Says the Lord to Ezekiel (vs. 12) *"take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus"*. This word "lamentation" stamps the succeeding account as poetry, prophetic poetry, for "lamentation" here means a "mournful song" and its connection with the literal Tyre rests upon an analogy which is not immediately apparent at first sight—the meaning of the Hebrew word for "merchant" which (probably because of its trading and commercial implications) came to enshrine the combined ideas of one who goes about, goes to and fro, and one who bargains, misrepresents and slanders. In a rather clever manner Ezekiel pictures the one who, as St. Paul says in I Peter 5.8, *"goes about seeking who he may devour"*, and Jesus, *"was a liar and a deceiver from the beginning"* in the guise of a Tyrian merchant king, whose people likewise misrepresent and deceive in their commercial dealings.

On this basis, and through the medium of a splendid piece of poetic symbolism, the prophet is used to present the full story of Satan's original creation as a perfect and sinless celestial being, his declension into sin, a sin which involved the entire human race, and his destiny. A mournful song it is in truth.

"Thou sealest up the sum" says the prophet *"full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty"*. The A.V. puts a

verb whereas it should be a noun, as Margolis has it; "thou seal most accurate, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty". The "seal" here refers to the circular seals originating centuries earlier, and still in use in Ezekiel's time, for authorising official writing. In a day when such records were inscribed on tablets of baked clay, a small roller shaped piece of baked clay on which had been embossed a particular design or legend, identifying the owner was rolled over the tablet before baking, as a signature. Thus the "seal" became identified with the owner. Not so many years ago one such seal was discovered in Jerusalem dating from the time of Ezekiel and bearing the name of an official of King Jehoiakim. Just as in the story of man's creation in Genesis it is said that man was made "*in the image and likeness of God*", so here, the glorious celestial being who is being addressed is likened to an "accurate seal", a faithful image of his Creator, and endowed with the wisdom and beauty appertaining to his celestial being.

"*In Eden the garden of God didst thou abide*". Ezekiel here goes back to the beginning of things in the history of man. Geikie in the 19th century remarked that of all the prophets Ezekiel had the most profound knowledge of Genesis and he may have had access to a more complete version of that period than the present Hebrew Bible has preserved—several lines of evidence point to the existence of such more comprehensive texts in pre-Christian times. And, apart from the Lord, the only other personality in the story, apart from the first man, is the Prince of Evil himself. So the identification here is positive. This "King of Tyre" is an allusion to Satan.

"*Every precious stone was thy covering . . . the workmanship of thy tabrets and thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day thou wast created*". "Covering" has the meaning of an overshadowing in the sense of a tent or pavilion. St. Paul in 2 Cor. 5. refers to the body, whether earthly or heavenly, as a "tent" or "tabernacle" which enshrines the identity, and it would appear that Ezekiel uses the same metaphor here. The concept of adornment with precious stones, jewels, as a reflection of Divine or celestial glory, appears several times in Scripture, as, for example, the twelve jewels in the High Priest's breastplate in the old Levitical ceremonies (Exod. 39. 10-14), the external of Solomon's Temple (2. Chron. 3.6) the walls of the New Jerusalem in Rev. 21. 19-20. The "tabrets" ("drums or timbrels" and "pipes") of the A.V. are

hezels in which the gems are set—both Hebrew words have this dual meaning and the whole idea is to depict the celestial glory of this perfect and sinless being as he came from the creative power of God.

"*Thou art the anointed overshadowing cherub, and I have set thee so. Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones*" (vs.14). The word "cherub" (Heb. *kirub*) is actually a Sumerian word of extremely ancient origin derived from the verb "to worship". The cherubim in the Old Testament are always depicted as attendants upon the Deity and guardians of his throne. The adjectives "anointed" and "overshadowing" (covereth in A.V.) and expression "I have set thee so" appears to indicate high office in the celestial hierarchy for this highly stationed individual, as is also the expression "walked up and down in the midst of the bright shining ones", i.e. the angelic denizens of the celestial world. The "holy mountain of God" is, of course, the Divine realm in heaven, where the Most High reigns supreme. The ancients pictured God—in the later days of idolatry the gods—as dwelling at the top of a mountain, higher than all mountains and inaccessible to mortal man, which they called the "mountain of the world" or the "Mount of the East" (alluded to in Gen. 10.30)—where was the land of the angels. Here is a tantalising glimpse of the society of Heaven in days long before man was created upon earth.

"*Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee. By the abundance of thy slander thou wast filled to thy centre with violence, and thou didst sin*" (vs. 15-16 Leeser). This would appear to be the point at which sin entered into Divine creation, the first occasion when a created being was guilty of disloyalty to, and rebellion against, the Creator who had given him life. This is where the word "*rekullah*" rendered "merchandise", indicating the act of a trader or merchant in travelling to and fro in the execution of his work, is so apt. Three different Hebrew words define the status of a merchant. "*Macra*" is the merchant in his capacity of one who barter or bargains, "*sachar*" in his capacity of one who gets gain or makes a profit, and this one, "*rekullah*", indicating one who goes to and fro, up and down, from one place to another, also means a tale-bearer or slanderer. So here may be indicated the slander of the Divine character and the gross deception practised upon the first human pair by this one in Eden. "*Hath God said? . . . God*

doth know . . . ye shall not surely die".

Did this apostasy from Lucifer's original high and holy estate occur at some indeterminate time before man's creation, or was it the sight of this new terrestrial world with its promise of a race of new, terrestrial beings, human beings, with all their possibilities, lead him to imagine himself as lord and god of this new element in the purposes of the Most High, if so be he could win them to his side. No one knows; perhaps the second alternative is the more likely. The final clause of v.16 would appear to tend this way with its similarity to the sentence on the serpent in the Eden story; "therefore will I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God, and I will destroy thee, (a word meaning to lose or lay waste), overshadowing cherub, from the midst of the bright shining ones".

From that time forward, banished from the society of the angelic host in the celestial world and forbidden access to the courts of Heaven, is this what Jesus was recalling when He told his disciples on one occasion "I beheld Satan as lightning fall

from Heaven" (Luke 10.18)?

So is enunciated the only possible ending to this story, the fundamental truth that sin contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction. "Therefore will I bring forth fire from the midst of thee; it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished" (be silent, struck dumb) "at thee. Thou shalt be a terror" (laid waste, extinguished) "and never shalt thou be any more". The fire of his own sin, proceeding from within himself, has severed him from the presence and fellowship of God and of the celestial world in the first place; in the second, when the Divine Plan for mankind is complete, from that of mankind and his world. There is nothing left. The edifice of disloyalty, disobedience, deceit, leading to all the sin, misery and death which man has suffered from the beginning, will have crumbled away and be as though it had never been.

To be continued.

THE ANGEL OF THE PRESENCE

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." (Exod. 33. 14).

These lovely words, so full of encouragement and promise, were spoken to Moses whilst he was bringing the children of God through the "terrible wilderness" of temptation and trial, to the Promised Land. They also, surely, apply to all who today are seeking the "secret place" of the Lord's overshadowing wings in this present "wilderness" of doubt and confusion—this transition period, which is, praise God, drawing near to its end, and bringing us to the crossing of Jordan, and the Land of Canaan.

How well Moses understood the promise is clear to see by the fact that he looked to the Lord continually on every occasion of strife, difficulty or doubt. That the Lord's Presence was known to be with him was likewise clear by the Lord's response to his appeals in the sight of the people.

In the words with which Moses answered the Lord, there is a wonderful view of the at-one-ness of Moses with God. Ponder carefully these revealing words in these days of darkness and doubt.

"Wherein shall it be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the earth." (v. 16).

It is by the Lord's Presence with us, then, that we know that we have found grace in his sight. Jesus made the same promise to his disciples, saying to them "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (or age). St. John, in his epistles, shows how we know that the Presence of God is with us; "And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John 3. 24.) If we have the Holy Spirit as our Guide and Comforter, we are safely led through all doubt and confusion and conflicting voices, by the indwelling Spirit of Jesus Christ, and we are enabled to discern the true mouthpieces of God, those who have his Spirit, and those who have not: "for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God".

Another gracious promise is given to those who are guided by the Spirit of God, for St. John says: "the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you". How difficult some find this promise to accept and to make their own, and rely upon the guidance of the Spirit which abides in us. Yet He is faithful who promised that "he will guide you into all truth" and also that "he will shew you things to come". (John 16. 13). "Where Thou art Guide, no ill can come." As we come to realise more and more the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit, we become more and more sure of guidance. We learn

to trust the still small voice of the Spirit; like Elijah on Mount Horeb, we feel we must "wrap our face in our mantle"—a sign of deep humility, for our Mantle is the Robe of Christ's righteousness, by which alone we can stand before the Lord, and in which alone we are "accepted in the Beloved". *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit"*. (Titus 3. 5.) Again St. John says *"Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit"*. (1 John 4. 13.)

What a wondrous gift is this. His "free gift" to all, bringing with it all that we need for enlightenment, and spiritual progress; of help and support, of strength in times of weakness, of upholding power, of protection from the clamouring voices without, which distract from the pathway, of encouragement, comfort and cheer when cast down by faults and failures: when, with Elijah, he cast himself under the juniper tree we feel inclined to say "Lord it is enough, I can go no further, I have failed utterly, and cannot go on". Then the Angel of the Presence—the still voice of the Spirit—comes to bring refreshment and strength, and food for the journey, until, as Elijah did, we can go in the strength of that food to Horeb—the Mount of God.

All this, and much more, is ours in the gift of the Holy Spirit, until we come to rejoice in the Indwelling Presence and say, morning, noon and night *"Praise be to thee for thine unspeakable gift"*.

Here, then, in this "free gift" of the Holy Spirit, is the fulfilment of the promise made to Moses, *"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared"*. The Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is the Indwelling Spirit of which St. Paul says:—*"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you"* (1 Cor. 3. 16). Pray, therefore, that the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit may be imparted and increase more and more. St. John, in his wonderful vision, sees the Spirit of God dwelling in the hearts of all men, transforming their lives, and gradually winning the world to Christ until—

*"All nations shall adore him,
His praise all people sing".*

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21. 3). Until we have found the Kingdom of God within our own hearts, being "born again of water and of the Spirit", we cannot be effectual in bringing the Kingdom of God into the lives of others. The salt will have lost its savour if we have not the Holy Spirit indwelling, changing, moulding, and conforming to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Above all things will the Holy Spirit teach us to "Love one another". *"If we love one another God dwelleth in us and his love is perfected in us"* (1 John 4. 12).

As, therefore, we are taught by the Holy Spirit to covet the best gifts, so shall we be taught to develop and increase them. Charity St. Paul describes as "the bond of perfectness", saying *"Above all, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness"* (Col. 3. 14).

The fruits of the Spirit, he says are *"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith"*. May we, therefore, seek to realise the Presence of the Indwelling Spirit of God ever more and more, and thus come to trust his sure guidance, to develop his Sevenfold gifts, and to claim the promises of God to those who dwell in him, and who have learnt to

*"Make our hearts thy dwelling-place
And worthier thee".*

As we learn to trust in the Angel of the Presence, we shall indeed find that *"He will give you rest"*.

*As through the wilderness the people went,
Leaving reluctantly the world behind,
Lest they should falter, God his Angel sent
And fed the flame of hope in their dull mind.
A fire by night his gracious Presence burned,
A Cloud by day He moved before their eyes;
None from the path of safety need have turned,
None have come short in his great enterprise.
Just to have known themselves to be but men,
Just to have let him lead them by his Hand,
Just to have had a little faith, and then
All had come safely to the Promised Land!
And yet they failed. O, by their failure teach
Those that come after, in the same distress,
More faithfully to follow till they reach
The land that lies beyond the wilderness.*

The blessedness of giving is not limited to cheques and bank-bills. There are gifts that far transcend these—gifts of patience, sympathy, thought and counsel, and these are gifts that the poorest can give.

Our human years are only a mortal stage of which death happens to be a part; but death is a door with two sides, and the other side of it belongs to immortality, which is more really ours than the present.

DESTROYERS OF THE SANCTUARY

"A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees; but now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers." (Psa. 74. 5-6).

This sublime lament might well have been composed in Babylon at the time of the captivity. It seems clearly to refer to the destruction of Solomon's Temple. There is no event in Israel's earlier history which the words can fit. The Psalmist laments the destruction of the Divine Sanctuary by fire, its profanation by pagan symbols, and concludes on the despairing note, *"we see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knowest how long"*. Looking around him at the ruined house of prayer and calling to mind its former glories, he breaks out into the bitter reflection just quoted. In the days when this Temple was built men achieved honour and glory by virtue of their labours upon the great cedars and stately olives which were cut down and shaped to their uses in this house; but now fame and reward is to him who leads his comrades in the work of destruction. "Ichabod" has been written over the portals and the glory has departed.

What would have been the thoughts of those men who hewed the timbers for the Temple, had they known that in generations to come their work would become the prey of the invader, suffering total destruction at the hands of God's enemies? 1 Kings 5 tells of King Solomon writing to his friend Hiram, King of Tyre, who had jurisdiction over the forests of Lebanon, *"Command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon . . . So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to his desire . . . and Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand in the mountains . . . so they prepared timber and stones to build the house"*. What a mighty work this must have been, this felling and transporting of cedars and firs of Lebanon to Jerusalem that the House of God might be built!

1 Kings 6 tells of the building and how these precious timbers were utilised. *"He built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling; and he covered them on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir . . . and the cedar of the house within was carved with knops and open flowers; there was no stone seen . . . and within the oracle he made two*

cherubims of olive tree, each ten cubits (about fifteen feet) high . . . and he overlaid the cherubims with gold; and he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers, within and without . . . And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive tree . . . and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims and palm trees and open flowers; and covered them with gold fitted upon the carved work" (vss. 15-35).

This was the carved work which these later despoilers attacked with their axes and hammers. Caring nothing for the labours of those who in times gone by had given their lives' best endeavours to creating these beautiful things for the glory of God, they wantonly destroyed that which they had neither capacity to create nor ability to appreciate, and the world was the poorer for their action.

Here is a parable suited to our own day. So far as the honour and worship of God is concerned, and the ready acceptance of the principles of the Gospel in the world's daily life, this is a time of frustration and disappointment. Those who are old enough to have known better and more rewarding times of Christian activity and fellowship tend to lament the bygone days when men were famous according as they had lifted up axes upon the thick trees—the foundation principles of the Faith and of the Word of God. Entering for a moment into the world of metaphor, we remember how they brought them unto Zion with songs and rejoicing, and shaped them into walls and floors and ceilings for the house of prayer that was being built. We recall with a tightening of the heart strings how the carved work was put into place and an edifice of worship, of fellowship and of service prepared into which many who could not find soul satisfaction in the formalism and traditions of past ages could enter, and rejoice in a new and wider vision of the Divine purpose for mankind. More than one Christian leader with insight deeper than his fellows has acted as did Solomon and taken the initiative in pointing the way to a more intense consecration of heart and life to God under the impetus of such increasing light of the Plan of God and the evangelistic work which went with it. The simple gladness and fervent zeal of those earlier days is traditional among many who now, toward the end of their earthly course, remember those former glories. One thinks of the floor of fir, a

symbol of everlasting life because of its evergreen nature. Here is the ground on which we stand. As we enter this temple we enter upon eternal life. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."* *"Whosoever believeth on me hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* Upon every side, the enclosing walls of cedar, a wood which according to Lev. 14 was one of the constituents in the ceremonial cleansing of leprosy, and leprosy is a symbol of sin. So, in our temple, there is that all around which cleanses from sin. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." The doors into the sanctuary, made of olive wood, suggest thoughts of the "way in" to God's purposes and to communion with him—access by Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared . . . but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit." So do the olive wood doors swing open, revealing to us somewhat of the glories which lie beyond.

What now of the carved cherubim, mystic figures which so often have been pointed to as symbols of the four attributes of God, his Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power standing revealed in all their beauty and magnificence? Here they remain, alternating with the carved palm trees, speaking of the righteous man who shall flourish like a palm tree (Psa. 92. 12-14) in his growth to the full stature of a man in Christ (Eph. 4. 11-13). Between the cherubim and the palm trees, above and around, wrought into a score of graceful patterns, the open flowers—probably lilies and pomegranates—fit symbols of the many precious promises of the Word; all flowers, all "open" for our enjoyment, means of the bringing forth of "much fruit". A picture of our coming to know God in the cherubim; of our growth in grace and Christ-likeness in the palm-trees; and our reception of the precious promises and the bringing forth of much fruit in the open flowers. And this is the "carved work" which unthinking ones in our own day set out to break down with axes and with hammers!

Make no mistake about it. The picture is very exact. In their heedless zeal many have done grave harm to the cause they espouse and disservice to the Lord they love. Some have set out to shatter the faith of others in fondly-held beliefs—often in matters of little or no importance, on the plea of "walking in the light" and in the endeavour to

substitute other and allegedly better conclusions. All too often the new belief is no nearer to ultimate truth, sometimes a good deal farther away from it, and some devoted disciple's joy and faith in his belief has been taken away to no purpose. Let us consider carefully what we are about before we apply our own little hammer to the carved work of the Temple!

To adorn and extend the Temple is not the same thing as breaking down the structure already erected by men of faith in times gone by. It is always our privilege and responsibility to bring forth out of the storehouse *"things new and old"* for the household of faith according to our ability. Every generation between Solomon and the Captivity did something to increase the beauty and majesty of the Temple at Jerusalem. Rich and poor, young and old, made their contributions according to their means, and the building which was eventually destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers was at that time in every respect more impressive and glorious than it was at King Solomon's ceremony of dedication. So must we ever be zealous to add to the edifice of the truth which we have inherited, but always with remembrance of the purpose for which truth is given to us, *"for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Eph. 4. 12). We need to add our contributions with care, that they may be helpful, encouraging, spiritually uplifting, to those to whom we minister, and not on the contrary deprive them of the confidence and faith which formerly they enjoyed.

"But surely", says the iconoclast (which word means "destroyer of idols"), "if a belief is error, it is better to expose it, whatever the consequences. Error never sanctifies; truth alone sanctifies".

How often is that old tag repeated! and none of us has ever yet attained the full truth. Like Paul, we know only in part, and cannot hope to know in full until we are beyond the Veil. Whatever truth we hold, it must be to some extent tinged with "error"—to some extent an inaccurate definition of that truth. Our aim and object should be constantly to advance to an increasingly accurate understanding of the truth.

"Well, that is what I mean", says the iconoclast.

Unfortunately, that is not what he really means. If he was honest with himself he would admit that what he really means is something like this: "I am convinced that this particular view of this particular subject is truth. *Therefore*, any other view of it must be error. *Therefore*, anyone holding a view

different from mine must be in error. *Therefore*, since error does not sanctify, I must first destroy their faith in their belief, and then, if possible, get them to accept my own", and so saying, he picks up his axe and hammer and goes out to destroy some carved work.

Many years ago a man of deep insight penned these words:

*"A bending staff I would not break,
A feeble faith I would not shake,
Nor even rudely pluck away
The error which some truth may stay,
Whose sudden loss might leave without
A shield against the shafts of doubt."*

How plain it is that the whole purpose of our insight into Scriptural doctrine and prophecy is that we might encourage and build up one another therewith. Unless it fulfils this function it is useless. Unless our knowledge is used to edification we are better off without the knowledge. Yet it is very, very true that "Where there is no vision, the people perish". "My people are destroyed for lack of

knowledge" (Prov. 29. 18. Hos. 4.6). We do well, therefore, to hold in grateful remembrance the labours of those who in past time lifted up axes upon the thick trees, and treasure the carved work they set up in the sanctuary. Even if some of it is becoming a little antique, not in accord with the best modern taste, it is good to recognise that it still gives joy to some, a joy that is taken away if we unceremoniously destroy it with our axes and hammers. We shall find at least one chapel in the sanctuary where we can make our own contribution to the carved work and add to the total store of the treasures wherewith God is honoured.

Christians are the inheritors of a rich tradition. Other men have laboured, and we have entered in to their labours. In the spirit of One Who made us members of himself, members who do not all have the same office, let us seek not our own, but each others' good. Let us be careful and reverent in the use of the revelation which our God has given to us. So shall we be his disciples.

NOTE ON HEB. 10.5

Q. How is it that Heb. 10. 5 quotes Psa. 40. 6 by saying "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me" when the Psalm says "sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened"?

A. The writer to the Hebrews quoted from the Greek version in common use in his day, the Septuagint. The translators of the Septuagint, realising that the expression "mine ears hast thou opened" (*karah*, literally "pierced") would be meaningless to Greek readers unfamiliar with the laws of Moses, substituted "a body thou hast prepared me" as conveying the idea of devotion to a master's service equally well. The original allusion is to the Mosaic law of Exod. 21. 2-6 and Deut. 15. 12-17, where it is ordained that a Hebrew servant who had the right to freedom, but because of his love for his master and his master's family refused to depart from his service, should have his ear pin-

ned to the doorpost with an awl in ceremonial figure that he was forever a member of the household, and would then become a servant of the house for the remainder of his life. His master was in duty bound to retain him, by the servant's own free wish and desire. The Psalm speaks prophetically of our Lord Jesus, who voluntarily and freely "took upon himself the form of a servant" (Phil. 1. 2-7), and submitted himself entirely to his Father's will for the redemption of the human race. So the writer to the Hebrews makes use of this prophecy and says "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world," he said, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but—a body hast thou prepared me" or in other words, a means has been provided by God whereby his Son can serve him in the Plan of salvation, and that the Son has willingly accepted that means, saying "Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God".

We all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that "*all sunshine makes a desert*"; and it is a matter of common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the cases of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as

possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

F. B. Meyer

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

*An outline of
the Divine Plan*

3. Nations without God

The nations of earth have been experimenting, each in its own way, all unwittingly playing their part in the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. Throughout all the millenniums of human history the race has been spreading outwards from its common centre, multiplying and increasing exceedingly. There is no doubt that the land now known as Iraq was the original centre from which the races of mankind radiated and in so doing became differentiated. This differentiation is a most important factor in the development of mankind racially and only in recent years has it been realised how important it has been. Anthropologists have noted that human history includes a long period, now in the past, wherein men were spreading into the uninhabited parts of the earth, taking on new physical characteristics as they did so, until the earth presented a spectacle of many widely divergent human types all more or less separated and having little intercourse the one with the other. Then, in more recent times, as means of travel became common and the continuing ebb and flow of racial groups in a rapidly filling earth brought the various types into more frequent and more permanent contact with one another, there has been progressing an assimilation and combination of formerly different human types. The result of this process has been the emergence of many varied characteristics amongst mankind, suited to the varied localities of man's home, the earth. From the simple creation of one human species at the beginning there has developed a variety fit in every respect to rank with the variety in other spheres of Nature which was developed by God before man existed.

Now although mankind at large has been quite unconscious of the fact, this development into variety as men have wandered across the face of this planet and chosen for themselves new territories in which to dwell, has been part of the Plan of God, and men have in this way been fulfilling that Plan. A Bible reference to the process is found in the Genesis narrative of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11.) In that story certain men had refused to obey the Divine command to spread themselves abroad on the face of the earth, and determined instead to remain a compact community. God's commission to man was to multiply, to fill the earth, to bring it into subjection and fruitful productivity. His

intention was—and is—that the perfect race which is ultimately to inhabit the earth shall be one of varied characteristics, wide experience, and ability to withstand every type of adverse circumstance. It is to be adapted to every different environment which can be encountered on this planet. To this end God planned, first, differentiation by means of separation as various groups and tribes of men wandered away from their parent bodies and struck out for themselves into the unknown, and then, after the earth had thus been covered with tribes and nations of men, consolidation of the varied characteristics thus acquired by intermingling and inter-marriage to produce a race having all the desirable qualities thus induced. The story of Babel shows man's refusal thus to separate and God intervening to compel them to do so; in reality, this process has taken place and is now measurably completed—just in time for the coming Kingdom.

But all these peoples, whether near to or far from the cultural or ancestral centre of the world, whether rooted in the soil of an ancient civilisation or seeking to lay the foundations of a young community in some newly-won virgin territory, were equally devoid of real guidance and understanding as respects the riddle of existence and the destiny before them. They, or their ancestors, had long since lost the light, and although there was an endeavour in part to struggle upward, as is witnessed by the lives and work of great philosophers and teachers like Confucius, Gautama Buddha, Zarathrusta, Lao Tse, and Socrates, the attempt was foredoomed at the outset. Weighed down as they were by the burden of human frailty, by disease, violence and death, all the nations and all men and women were in the position of "having no hope, and without God in the world". (Eph. 2. 12.) All their progress, such as it was, could avail them nothing in the hour of death, and none of them had found a way to abolish death. All, Jews and Gentiles alike, needed a Redeemer. And only God could provide one.

So, in the fulness of time, Christ came!

That signal happening is the most outstanding event of human history. It was a direct Divine intervention in the affairs of mankind; the greatest example of Divine intervention the world had known, for although in times past there had been

communication between the spiritual and the material worlds by means of messengers from God, sent to earth to execute some Divine commission toward men, never before had there been anything like this. One proceeding from the Father's right hand appeared on earth in the form of man. More than that, He was man. Many times previously had angels assumed human form in order to make themselves visible to, and hold converse with, men upon earth, but Jesus Christ was more than that. He became true man. He took human nature upon himself and for thirty-odd years lived the life of man, only resuming his spiritual being, the "glory" He had "with the Father before the world was" (John 17. 5.) after his death and resurrection.

He was born of a virgin—it is essential to accept that fact. It may well be that we do not understand how such a thing can take place; that no other instance of such a happening is credibly recorded; that we do not perceive why such a mode of entrance into this world is necessary. It is essential to accept the fact because Jesus, in order to be the Saviour of men, must trace his fatherhood directly to God and not through Adam, sin-stricken and imperfect. His manner of coming into the world was not that of men; He came from God the Father and in that affirmed his heavenly origin; He came by Mary the Galilean maiden and in that affirmed his humanity. While He was upon earth He was perfect man, complete and perfect in his humanity, as was Adam before he sinned. After his resurrection He was re-invested with the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. There need be no mysticism or deep theology about that. His humanity was left behind at the Cross, and the Christ who ascended into the presence of the Father was the "Lord the Spirit" who comes again in the full glory of that spiritual nature at his Second Advent.

There was a dual purpose in the First Advent of Jesus. He came to provide the means of redeeming mankind from the curse of sin, and he came to preach in plain terms, and to demonstrate in the sight of men, the way to life. As to the first purpose, and despite all the philosophy that has been woven about it, we still do not understand it fully. In just what way the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth redeemed all mankind from sin we are almost as ignorant as were the first believers; but we can be no less dogmatic than were they that it did redeem men. The Apostle Paul says that the man Christ Jesus gave himself a ransom, "a corre-

sponding price", for all, (I Tim. 2. 6) and in the use of that word he linked the act by which Jesus saved mankind with the process by means of which Roman slaves gained their freedom. The slave could be released only by being bought by the god, and the purchase price, the ransom or "*antlutron*" or "corresponding price" had to be paid into the temple treasury, and from thence was applied to the purchase of the slave from his former owner. Technically, the slave became the property of the god, and in that situation found his freedom. So Jesus gave his humanity as the price to purchase all mankind. They had all been condemned in Adam; an purchasing or redeeming Adam, Jesus redeemed them also.

But having purchased them from the power of sin He must do something for them, for the purchase of itself does not make new men and women of them; they have still to be shown the better way and given a full opportunity to accept and follow the better way. The preaching and ministry of Jesus was after all but a prelude and a foretaste, on a miniature scale, of his Kingdom, to be set up at his Second Advent, when all men will learn of his ways and eventually exercise their prerogative of free, unfettered choice between good and evil, life and death. But something else has to come first.

Before Jesus initiates this new world of righteousness in which all men are to hear of his principles and be helped to overcome their weaknesses and sins, it has been decreed in the Divine counsels that a body of teachers and leaders should be prepared. After all, the wholesale conversion of a world of human beings, to include not only the living nations, but all the restored dead, is a task of immense magnitude and it is not surprising to learn that God has arranged for it to be achieved along quite familiar lines by the employment of a great number of previously qualified missionaries. The interval of time elapsing between the First and Second Advents is designed for the training and preparation of these missionaries, and the collective name given to them is the "Christian Church".

This is where the distinction between the spiritual and earthly phases of the Divine Plan came to light. Prior to the time of Jesus, the Jewish people, looking for the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies, had visualised an earthly kingdom of righteousness and peace presided over by their Messiah, they themselves to be the ruling class exercising jurisdiction over a world of righteous and submissive Gentiles—all the wicked Gentiles and the enemies of God and of Israel

having been destroyed! Their conception of a future life and of everlasting life was restricted to this earth. Jesus showed his disciples that although God certainly does plan an everlasting home on the earth for the perfected human race in general, He has also provided for a heavenly salvation in the celestial realms for those of the Christian Church who are faithful to their calling and are found worthy at the end to be thus used in the Divine purposes. It is this spiritual company, the members of the Church, changed after death to be made like their Lord, himself in his glorious celestial life not perceptible by human sense and not perceived by human sight, that is to exercise authority over the earth during the Millennial Age and restore mankind to righteousness.

It has been the work of the past two thousand years, ever since the Day of Pentecost, to select and gather the individual members of this body. God has "visited the nations", as James the leader of the first Jerusalem Church declared at the Council whose proceedings are recorded in Acts 15, "to take out of them a people for his Name". It is after this, James continues—and he buttresses his position by a quotation from the prophet Amos—that God will turn his attention to the natural House of Israel, which is broken down, and in building it up and restoring its nationality and independence, open the way for all mankind to turn again to him and call upon his name. For these last nineteen centuries, therefore, the fulfilling purpose of God has been diverted to the calling, the training, teaching, preparation and perfecting of these who have given their hearts and lives to God in whole-hearted consecration, that they might be used by him in the next Age for the conversion of the world.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren" cries Paul in Rom. 12. 1 "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." "If any man will come after me" said Jesus "let him take up his cross and follow me". (Matt. 16. 24). The call of this Age is one of absolute surrender and devotion to the will and the service of God; that is the Christian call now. God seeks those who are prepared, not merely to express

belief and faith in Christ and endeavour to conform their lives in a general way to his teachings, but who are prepared to set aside, or relegate to second place, every other conceivable interest and attraction, that they might be the better able to grow up in Godlikeness, manifest his character and proclaim his plan in life now, be his ambassadors in this world, and at life's end be fitted by reason of their growth in grace and character, and their lives' experience, for his future purpose.

For this reason the period of time between the First and Second Advents is sometimes called the "Gospel Age". It is a period during which the Gospel is preached—Jesus said it would be preached in all the world before the end should come (Matt. 24. 14) and so it has—but relatively few have fully accepted that Gospel and made it a power in their lives. Those who have accepted it have found that a great stride forward in understanding has been taken. In this Age the emphasis is on the love of God rather than on his justice. The old law, of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, is abrogated and replaced by the Golden Rule "Do unto others what ye would they should do unto you". Selfishness is replaced by self-sacrifice. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15. 13.) Stress is laid upon moral persuasion rather than ritualistic compulsion. "By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3. 20) was a revolutionary idea in the days of the First Advent, but it was a necessary advance in man's conception of God and it came to stay. A completely new scale of standards for Christians was set out. Whereas Israel in the B.C. centuries was consecrated to God in a national sense, as a nation, consecration now became an individual matter and each man stood by himself before God. So, as the Age progressed, men and women of the calibre God is seeking lived out their lives with more or less of persecution and sorrow, or commendation and triumph, according to the manner in which they were received by their generation, and were laid aside to wait the day when God should gather them together into one glorious all-powerful company qualified and ready to come forth and convert the world.

To be continued



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

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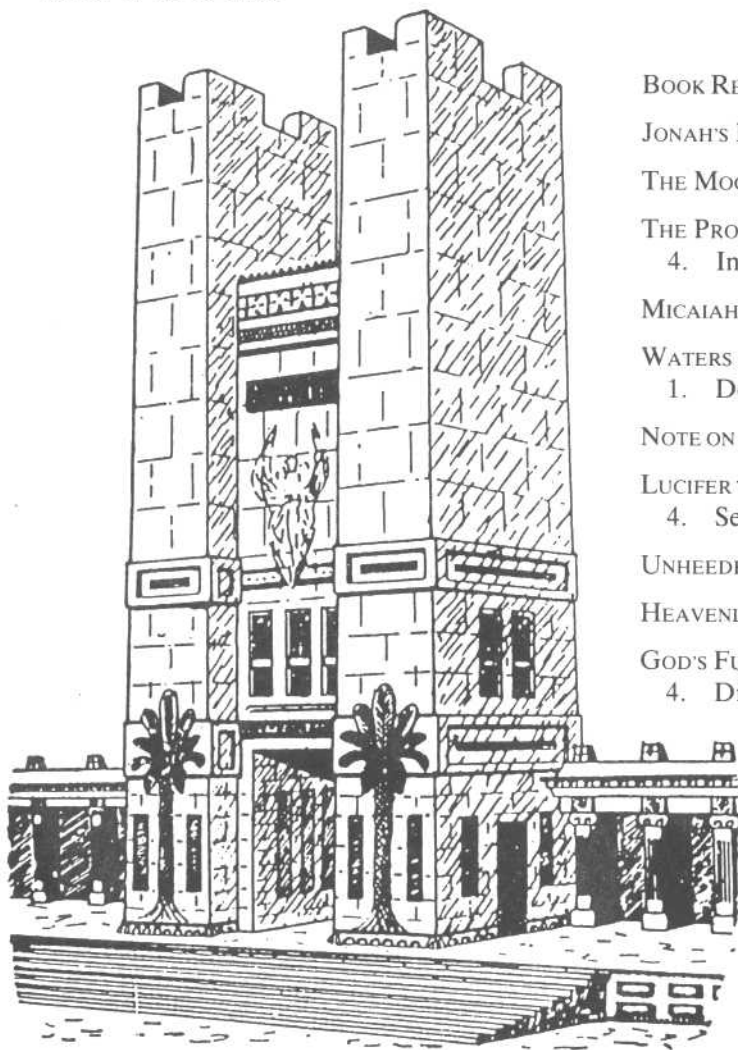
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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BOOK REVIEW

"Centuries of Darkness". Peter James and others. 434 pp Illus. Cloth. £19.99 UK. Jonathan Cape, London. ISBN 0-224-02647-X.

This absorbing work is devoted to a complete examination of that intriguing period which the Babylonians called the "times of confusion"—those few centuries at the close of the second BC millennium where there is a blank in the known history of almost every ancient nation, a blank which has always been a puzzle to chronologists. The thesis of the book is that this blank should not be there, that in fact a true chronology should be shortened by this amount. Even the Old Testament, which is usually positive in its chronological indications, lapses into obscurity at this point, the period of the Judges, between the Exodus and the Monarchy. The book is essentially one for students of ancient history and those interested in ancient chronology, who will find that it challenges many normally accepted conclusions, but does incidentally confirm a few views—such as the date of the Exodus and the duration of the Judges period—which have been advocated in past issues of this journal. An important, and interesting, feature of the work is the chronological data of nations not usually considered by students in this field, such as Cyprus, Crete, Nubia, Europe. There will be doubt in the minds of some readers as to what extent the authors have made their case, but there can be no doubt that the tremendous mass of factual data in the book's 400 pages will be of inestimable value to any serious student of the subject. The suggestion on pp 288-9 that world climatic changes could have played a part in the collapse of world civilisations at the time in question is one that would illuminate the general history of the Judges period. Climatologist C. E. P. Brooks, in "Climate through the Ages" (1948) said much the same thing of the same period, a change of climate to abnormal cold with formation of the permanent Arctic ice cap which previously had been ice free.

The work includes 19 plates, 75 engravings, 20 data tables and 13 maps; index, 50 pages of notes citing subject authorities, and a 29-page bibliography listing some 700 publications by quoted authors. A valuable book for the mass of information it contains.

Overseas readers should obtain copies through their own booksellers, quoting the ISBN number. Not available from Hounslow.

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Gone from us

— ✻ —

Bro. Will Nevin (Aylesbury)

— ✻ —

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

JONAH'S PETULANCE

This is the sequel to Jonah's mission to Nineveh, narrated in the last issue.

* * *

"So the people of Nineveh repented, and God saw that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he said he would do unto them, and he did it not. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." (Jonah 4.1).

Jonah is the only one of the prophets and great men of the Bible of whom it is said that he dared to be angry with God. Moses expostulated with God when the Lord proposed to disown rebellious Israel and make a great nation of Moses' family instead, reminding the Lord of the effect such action would have upon Israel's enemies, who would conclude that God found himself unable to fulfil his intention of bringing Israel into the land of promise and so had cut the knot by slaying them in the wilderness. Abraham pleaded with God to avert the threatened destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, if so few as ten righteous men could be found there, desisting only when even ten could not be found. Elijah, despondent at the apparent failure of his life's work, besought the Lord to gather him to his fathers; the Lord instead sent him back to perform yet other great deeds for his Cause. Of no other man is it said that he presumed to be angry with God. He must have felt very bitterly that the Almighty had, as we would say to-day, let him down.

Reluctantly, and against his will, he had come to Nineveh in obedience to the Divine mandate, to announce the onset of Divine judgment for their misdeeds. He did not want them to repent; he hoped they would not repent; he did not expect them to repent. Because of the threat they posed to his own people he would rather they reaped the penalty of their evil ways and be removed from this earthly scene and Israel be secure. They should get what they deserved and that would be the end. And now, most unexpectedly, they had responded to his preaching and come before the Lord in sackcloth and ashes, beseeching the Lord for forgiveness and the Lord had answered the plea and lifted the judgment. If, now, in later times the Ninevites relapsed into their old ways the threat to Israel remained, and the unrighteous would escape the penalty of their sins because of the leniency of God, and Jonah was exceedingly angry.

So *"he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was*

yet in my country? Therefore I fled before thee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; it is better for me to die than to live".

What marvellous testimony is this to the love and forbearance of God! Gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness, ready to forgive and restore where there is repentance, irrespective of the past! How many Christians in modern as well as in ancient times fail after this same fashion! More solicitous for the condemnation and punishment of sinners than for their reformation and reclamation! Much more inclined to dwell with gusto upon the vision of Paul *"the Lord himself shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God"* than the lovely words of John *"for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Some, in all sincerity, endeavour to gain converts by preaching the terrors of Hell for the unregenerate, failing to realise that the Lord will never, on any account, accept the allegiance of one who comes to him only because of fear of the consequences if he does not. The only ones who will ever win acceptance with him and enter the shining portals of eternity are those who have heard and answered the call *"My son, give me thine heart"*.

And the Lord looked down upon his loyal but at the moment definitely disgruntled servant with—who can doubt it?—very understanding sympathy. After all, He knows the hearts of all men and He knew that a little object lesson which he now proposed to give Jonah would put the matter right. *"Doest thou well to be angry?"* He asked the wrathful prophet. The A.V. rendering does not give the true inflection of the question. What the Lord really said was *"Art thou greatly angry?"*. As much as to say, as one would express it in to-day's vernacular, *"Poor old chap, are you really so upset about it all?"*. The Lord always understands, *"He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust"*, and He takes note, not of the words we say, but of the sincerity of our hearts.

But Jonah was in no mood for parleying, nor, apparently, for further conversation with the Lord on the matter, for the next verse (vs. 5) tells us that he *"went out of the city, and sat on the east side of*

the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he would see what might become of the city". It looks very much that he was cherishing a secret hope that the Lord might yet reflect that He could have been a little too generous in accepting this admittedly tardy repentance of the Ninevites and decide after all to impose the threatened judgment, and the least Jonah could do was to wait a little to see what was going to happen. How long the evangelistic campaign lasted is not indicated; it is possible that there were still twenty or thirty days of the forty days time limit yet to expire so that Jonah was probably endeavouring to make himself reasonably comfortable in his sylvan retreat until he could see which way things were going to turn out.

It is here that we come across one of the many evidences of the historical accuracy of the Scriptures which the critics so often miss. Jonah "*sat on the east side of the city*" and there sat "*until he would see what might become of the city*". Since the city, with all its suburbs, is known to have covered an area of about twenty miles along the river and more than ten miles across, an observer having this intention must needs occupy a position fairly high in altitude and a suitable number of miles away in order to have the entire city in his field of vision. Now the ruins of Nineveh—which was situated on the eastern side of the River Tigris opposite the present Iraqi city of Mossul—are in the middle of a extensive flat plain with no high hills nearer than the Kurdish mountains some fifty miles away. In the whole of this plain there are only two eminences, minor mountains. One of these heights, known today as Jebel Satra, some two thousand feet high and about a mile across, lies exactly due east of Nineveh at a distance of sixteen miles. The view from the summit of this evidence would see the horizon at fifty-eight miles away, with the entire city plainly in view below. Without any doubt it was to this locality that Jonah made his way, and built his little booth of tree branches and foliage at a height on its slopes from which he could view the city spread out, as it were, almost at his feet. Here, safe from interference, he could await the outcome.

Who, but someone who was actually there and experienced this incident, could have described so accurately what the topography of the countryside reveals to have been the position?

It was while sitting here and waiting that Jonah became conscious of the shade afforded by a quick-growing shrub which began to offer a welcome

palliative to the noonday heat. The A.V. calls it a "gourd", which is incorrect, and adds that the Lord "prepared" it. This word actually means "appointed", and the implication is that the Lord had arranged for this all along; probably Jonah was led to erect his little booth just at the point where the shrub was already growing. There has been a lot of discussion as to the nature of Jonah's "gourd". The Hebrew word is *kikayon*, occurring only here, and is generally agreed to refer to the castor oil tree, which has large flat leaves and according to a more modern resident of Kurdish Iraq is still employed as a wind-break. It is renowned for its rapidity of growth and equally rapid withering when cut. According to the story, the Lord had arranged this "*to be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd*". Apparently the booth was his shelter for the night and he sat outside during the day with the city in full view, hoping against hope that the threatened judgment might yet be inflicted upon the sinful though now repentant city, and this increasing mantle of shady leaves became a welcome protection from the midday sun. Considering Jonah's present attitude, the Lord was being exceedingly understanding.

But Jonah's contentment was short-lived. "*The Lord appointed a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered*". The word used, *talaath*, denotes the type of insect that lives on the ground and feeds on decaying vegetable matter. Apparently a horde of these insects attacked the young tree—it would still be relatively immature and succulent—and before long it succumbed and withered, leaving the prophet without shelter, angry and resentful. And then, as the sun began to beat down upon his head, there arose "*a vehement east wind*"—the word means hot or sultry—and Jonah just gave up. "*I wish I could die; it is better for me to die than to live*". Came that soft voice from Heaven, impinging itself upon his consciousness, "*Art thou greatly angry because of the shrub?*". And in his frustration and resentment he made answer in a tone no other prophet ever dared to use to the Almighty. "*I am greatly angry, deadly angry*". The shrub had sprung forth according to the dictates of Nature and was quietly pursuing its appointed course, fulfilling its useful function in affording shade to the prophet and withal contributing something to the beauty of the environment. It could have had a useful future, Jonah may have thought crossly, but now the Lord had callously cut its life short and ended all hope

for its future, and he himself had lost his shelter from the noonday sun into the bargain. He was deadly angry, and in his mind justifiably so, and now he wanted nothing more to do with this mission to Nineveh or with the whole matter of Nineveh's future. He just wanted to die and be out of it all and what the Lord would eventually do with the Ninevites he neither cared nor wanted to know. It had been a very fine shrub and it had served a very acceptable purpose so far as he himself had been concerned and now the Lord had quite arbitrarily and unnecessarily destroyed it and he was bitterly resentful. Which is where the Lord came back to him.

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on that shrub, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Paraphrasing: You are concerned about the well-being of a shrub which is destined to grow quickly in its season and to perish as quickly (Heb. idiom "A son of the night it was, and as a son of the night it died") of which you were not the creator nor have you done anything towards its creation or growth. Why then should I not be equally concerned about Nineveh, a great city of a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants who are so ignorant of moral values that they cannot discern between good and evil—not to speak of much cattle who have just as much right to life as your shrub?"

That is where the Book of Jonah ends. Jonah's reply, if in fact he made any reply to the Lord at all, is not recorded. Perhaps he did not reply. What could he have said? The God he served is a God of love and mercy, and Jonah had not displayed much of either towards the Ninevites. He was in fact not so very different from a good many modern Christians, devoted to the service of the Lord they love, but more zealous for the punishment of sinners than for their reclamation. *"The wages of sin is death"* looms rather more prominently in their theology than does *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"*. With God, the act of repentance cancels the judgment, and the opportunity for repentance is always open. He will only leave the sinner to the error of his way in face of full and final refusal to accept the Divine laws of righteousness as the rule of life, and that, too, only after there is full light and under-

standing of the Divine standards. And not many men have had that light. The men of Sodom had not, for although they rejected the message of the one righteous man among them, and the Lord therefore took them away, it was even so for their ultimate good. *"I took them away as I saw good"* He said, and through the prophet Ezekiel (chap. 16). He reveals his intention to extend the opportunity of grace to them once again—when they *"return to their former estate"* in conjunction with their neighbour Israel. That involves a resurrection from the dead, in the days of the Messianic kingdom—and Jesus did say once that if the men of Sodom had seen the mighty works He did in First Advent Israel then Sodom would have remained to that day. And He also said that the men of Nineveh would rise in the judgment with his own generation, and condemn it, and that must indicate an element of contrition and repentance for their own past and it is that which God will work upon if perchance they can be fully and finally recovered for his salvation. So the reprieving of Nineveh in the days of Jonah was an illustration of the overriding wisdom and love of God, who *"desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he turn from his evil ways, and live"*.

Did Jonah realise his error, and make peace with the Lord, and serve him still in further fields of service? Nobody knows. His after life is a blank. Whether he ever went back to Israel or remained in Nineveh is unknown. Perhaps, after all, the rather abrupt ending to the book, in which Jonah makes no rejoinder and God has the last word, was by design. Did Jonah indicate, by his silence, the justice and the intrinsic wisdom of the Lord's way? And is it not true, as in the case of the Book of Jonah, that God always does have the last word?

An indication that he did in fact return to Israel is the fact of the existence of the Book which bears his name and its place in the Old Testament canon. He must have been the writer; much of the contents could not have been written by anybody else. Jesus in his references to Jonah shows that He viewed the Book and the prophet as strictly historical. There is an interesting reference to Jonah in the apocryphal *"Book of Tobit"*, thought to have been written by a Median Jew about four centuries before Christ and therefore four centuries after Jonah, and very possibly an example of the quasi-historical "religious fiction" of the day based upon past Biblical history—unless, of course, Tobit really did live, which is possible. Tobit is depicted as an Israelite of the tribe of Naphtali, taken

captive at the fall of Samaria, when the "Ten Tribes" were carried into captivity, a century after Jonah! Talking to his son, Tobit says (Tobit 14.4) "*Behold, I am aged, and am ready to depart out of this life. Go into Media, my son, for I surely believe those things which the prophet Jonah spake of Nineveh, that it shall be overthrown, and that for a time peace shall rather be in Media*". This 400 BC literary work does at least verify that the Book of Jonah was known at that time and believed to ante-date the fall of Samaria in 722 BC. And, of course,

Nineveh was eventually overthrown by the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC, two centuries after Jonah's prediction, by which time the Ninevites had long since returned to their bad old ways, and this time without repentance.

But it still holds good that the Lord did say "*Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city of people who have not yet learned to distinguish between good and evil?*" At least until they have so learned and made their choice.

THE MOCKING OF ISAAC

A familiar but often misunderstood incident in the Book of Genesis is the occasion of Isaac's weaning feast when his older half-brother Ishmael was accused of "*mocking*" him and in consequence, with his mother Hagar, was expelled from the family home, creating a division which has persisted among their respective descendants to this day. It is unfortunate that the word "*mocking*" was chosen by the A.V. translators in Gen. 21. 9 for it gives an incorrect idea of Ishmael's action at the time.

The word is *tsachaq* and it occurs about a dozen times in the Pentateuch but nowhere else except once in the Book of Judges. It has the meaning of sporting, jesting, or playing with a companion or companions, of joining in play-acting, levity or dancing, when in the intensive form of the verb, and of laughter in other cases. Thus it is used of Sarah and Abraham's semi-unbelieving laughter upon hearing the intimation that Isaac was to be born to them, as though the matter was not to be taken seriously. In the intensive form the word is used of Lot telling his sons-in-law of the coming destruction of Sodom "He seemed as one that *mocked* (Gen. 19. 14); of Samson "*making sport for his captors* (Jud. 16. 25); and of the people of Israel at Sinai who, in their worship of the Golden calf, "*sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play*" (Exod. 32. 6). In a more personal sense the

word appears in Gen. 26. 8 where "Isaac was *sporting* with Rebecca his wife"; i.e. he was indulging in such light-hearted familiarity with her that it was obvious to the watching Abimelech that the couple were man and wife; and in a similar sense in Gen. 39. 1 where Potiphar's wife accused Joseph unjustly of the same thing "The Hebrew servant . . . came in unto me to *mock* me".

It is in this sense that Ishmael's "*mocking*" should be understood, the light-hearted "*playing about*" of a teenage lad with his five year old brother. It was this friendly association and familiarity which angered Sarah and led to her demand that Ishmael, as the son of the slave-woman, should be sent away, "*for*", she said, "*the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac*" (Rom. 19. 14). The woman's jealousy shines out through the words. She had already said, at Isaac's birth, "*God hath made me to laugh, so that all who hear shall laugh with me*" (Gen. 21. 6) where "*laugh*" is the same word, "*tsachaq*" as is used for Ishmael's "*mocking*". Sarah laughed in exultation of the fulfilment of the promise when her son was born; Ishmael laughed and played in healthy boyish exuberance with that son, and "*mocking*", with its present English significance, is no more fitting in that context than it would have been if used in the text relating to Isaac and his wife Rebecca in the later day.

There are many speculative difficulties about miracles. We are used to reasoning up from them to Christ, may we not reason from Him down to them? Given a Being like Christ, and the miracles are but the fitting framework of that Divine picture. The sick healed, the bread multiplied, the water turned wine, the winds hushed, the dead

raised—all these cease to be unnatural. His name is Wonderful, therefore the supernatural is his natural element. Supernatural works are natural to him. For the believer the person of Christ witnesses to his miracles. For the unbeliever the miracles witnessed to his person.

Bishop Alexander

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

4. In Flaming Fire

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God" (Thess. 1.9).

One of the aspects of the Second Advent is the superseding of what the Scriptures call "the kingdoms of this world", with all their imperfections, by the benevolent rulership of Christ, reigning in the heavens. This, of course, involves the elimination of every form of injustice, oppression, violence and so on, which is what every ordered system of government now existing attempts to achieve, but fails consistently on account of human frailty. In the day of Christ's reign these things will be done away, and all men will be well satisfied with their passing. But because this change for the better does involve the passing away of many forms of evil the Scriptures do portray the Lord as coming in this sphere of his Advent for the purpose of judgment and retribution, as a destroyer rather than a preserver.

The whole setting of what are called the "catastrophic" Scriptures implies an outwardly spectacular work, an epoch of destruction of evil things and powers, preparatory to the setting up of that which is to be, in the words of Zephaniah, the "desire of all nations",—the earthly kingdom of God. For this reason the descriptions of this phase of the Advent are cast in the form of fiery destruction, severe judgment, the judgment of God upon evil things which, because they are evil, must now pass away and be no more. The "flaming fire" is a metaphor to denote the utter consumption and extinction of all that is opposed to the righteousness of God and would be out of place in the new order of peace and safety now about to dawn on the world. This passage in 2 Thessalonians, lurid as it appears to be, is in reality a poetic expression of the Millennial work of our Lord going on throughout that Age, directed to the elimination of all sin and the concomitants of sin and such, if any, as prove obdurate in their refusal to turn from their evil ways, so that at the end Divine creation is clean and "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord". The "flaming fire" will have done its work.

There are many Scriptures which speak prophetically of this same time when the greed and sin and selfishness of mankind has brought the world into its Armageddon, a time of trouble from which there can be no escape except by the coming of the Messianic Age. That this time of trouble is the

natural result of man's own course and conduct since creation does not make any difference to the fact that a mightier hand than that of man is guiding and overruling these events for man's ultimate good.

It should be clear then that the "*Michael, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people*" of Dan. 12, who "stands up" and gives the signal for the great time of trouble; the "*Son of Man*" of Dan. 7 who comes to the Great Assize of the Most High and the fires of judgment, to receive royal power over the resurrected and restored human race; the mighty angel of Rev. 18 who is revealed in fiery glory from heaven to announce the downfall of "great Babylon", antitype of the literal Babylon of twenty-five centuries ago, with the consequent ruin of the military and commercial magnates of the earth resulting from the collapse of world order; the coming of the Lord to make an end of the anti-Christian power of 2 Thess. 2 by "*the spirit of his mouth and the bright shining of his presence*"; the appearance from Heaven of the "*Rider on a White Horse*" leading the armies of Heaven to engage in combat with the armies of earth, are all different symbolic representations of the same event described in Thessalonians as the appearing of the Lord in flaming fire to take vengeance on "*them that know not God*". It is to be feared that the translators of the English Authorised Version, believing, as did all men in the seventeenth century, in the twenty-four hour Day of Judgment with the hopeless condemnation of all sinners without opportunity for repentance, and the burning up of the earth as a place no longer fit to endure, led them, unwittingly perhaps, to present the situation in perhaps more drastic fashion than the avowed mission of Jesus "to seek and save them which are lost" would really warrant. If these passages are interpreted as what they really are, flights of apocalyptic poetry depicting the expected events of the "Last Days" in terms of signal catastrophic happenings in past history, a much more informative picture can be drawn.

That picture will be something like this. The arrival of the Lord from Heaven is coincident with a time in which the human race is facing a complete breakdown of its governmental systems, its economic and social order, and the preservation of its environment. Jesus likened it to a time of worldwide war, social unrest, famine, pestilence, all

on a hitherto unprecedented scale. The position will be as described by him in the words *"upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after the things coming on the earth"* (Luke 21, 25-26), after which He declared *"and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory"*. This latter remark associates the vision of Daniel 7, in which the Son of Man is pictured as coming in the clouds to supersede all human forms of government by his own empire of righteousness and peace, with the very condition of things which admittedly is characteristic of the world today. The consuming of the "Man of Sin" by the spirit of the Lord's mouth (2 Thess. 2.8) will already be in progress, and the period immediately following his arrival will witness its progressive consumption and eventual destruction by the "bright shining of his presence". There will already have been a widespread proclamation and understanding of the "truth now due" on those features of the Divine Plan which had previously been hidden by the theology of the Dark Ages, and this understanding will have helped in the consuming of the Antichrist, by the "spirit of his mouth", and anticipate the expression in Rev. 18. 1-8 where, says John, an angel *"came down from heaven, and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen . . . Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her"*. The picture is based on the victory over the Babylonians and the capture and fall of the city of Babylon by the Persians in the 5th century B.C., when Babylon, the unquestioned military and commercial master of Biblical lands was dispossessed and conquered by the rising power of Persia. In harmony with this historical parallel the 18th chapter of Revelation goes on to picture in detail how, first, the kings of the earth—leaders in the olden days of their military forces—lament and bewail the catastrophic end to their sovereignty; next, the merchants of the earth *"weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more"*; *"for in one hour so great riches is come to naught"*. In other words, the world's economic and financial system breaks down irretrievably under the impact of the world situation which they themselves have created. Finally, *"every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stand afar off, and cried when*

they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, what city is like unto this great city. Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness, for in one hour (in a moment, abruptly) is she made desolate". No better picture of the utter failure of a world-wide economic system could be drawn.

The completion of this work of the supersession of the rule of man by the rule of God, to the satisfaction of all right-thinking men, forms the subject of the vision of Rev. 19, in which our Lord, in the guise of a military leader riding a white horse, his forces behind him, engages in combat with the kings of all the earth and their armies. The ensuing victory of the forces of Heaven introduces the Millennium and *"the new heaven and the new earth"* of chapters 20 and 21, in which *"the dwelling of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, for the former things are passed away"*.

Be it noted that in all these passages, fire is the symbol used to denote the utter destruction to which every evil or unrighteous or unjust practice opposed to the principles of the Divine kingdom are devoted. There is no suggestion anywhere that human beings are thus destroyed; the reference is consistently to the powers, the institutions, the systems of human affairs which are alien to the incoming Kingdom of Righteousness. All must go, before that "judgment in righteousness" (Acts 17.31) which God has ordained, can begin.

Simultaneously with the "Harvest", then, this work of Divine judgment proceeds. In Rev. 14 it is shown as a "Harvest" of the "Vine of the earth", a vintage of the unrighteous ways of man, come to its fruitage in parallel with the wheat harvest which pictures the fruits of righteousness. It has its commencement at the same time, the moment of our Lord's arrival, and both harvests must be completed before the final scenes of the "Days of the Son of Man" can be enacted in readiness for the universal manifestation to all men of the reality of the Advent, so eloquently described in the words *"and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"*. This is the final event in the Advent; from then onwards "every eye shall see him" in the glory and power of his Millennial work.

To be concluded.

MICAHIAH THE TRUTHFUL PROPHET

To understand the account given in 1 Kings 22, consider first the conditions prevailing at the time. Ahab King of Israel is at war with Syria. In 1 Kings 20, Benhadad, a luxurious and insolent braggart, has demanded the unconditional surrender and plunder of Samaria, and Ahab has refused. A prophet of God assures him of successful resistance. It would seem that Jezebel's influence has temporarily waned, for we find prophetic authority being exercised and a large school of the prophets in existence. Apparently Baal worship has declined and the worship of Jehovah in a very imperfect way has been restored.

The Syrians are defeated twice with great slaughter and the King, Benhadad, captured. Some of the leading Syrians come in abject humility to Ahab to plead for the best terms possible. Ahab shows an unexpected clemency, makes a treaty with Benhadad and, after extracting a promise from the Syrian King to restore certain cities to Israel, lets him go free.

Three years later comes the events of 1 Kings 22, the story of Micahiah the son of Imlah. During these years there had been reigning in the neighbouring kingdom of Judah a man of a distinctly different type, Jehoshaphat. He was a good king, walking in the righteous way of David his ancestor. The Lord prospered his reign and he became rich and powerful, but during this rise to prosperity he had thought it wise to cement a friendship with his powerful ally Ahab by marrying his son Jehoram to Ahab's daughter Athaliah. Now, eight years after that event, Jehoshaphat goes down to Samaria on a friendly visit. Ahab receives him with royal hospitality, kills sheep and oxen in abundance. This is part of a deliberate plan for obtaining Jehoshaphat's co-operation in the projected campaign against the Syrians. Ramoth Gilead, an Israelite town, was still in the hands of the Syrians, who, according to the unfortunate treaty made with Benhadad, had agreed to restore it but had not done so. Ahab asks Jehoshaphat if he will join with him in the expedition and Jehoshaphat consents but would like to have prophetic advice. Ahab probably thought this a foolish weakness of his ally but strove to humour him, so four hundred prophets are summoned. These would not be Baal prophets or those of Ashtaroth such as Elijah had contended with. These spoke in the name of the Lord, as verse 12 indicates, but Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Perplexed by the din, it is clear that

they were not in his view true prophets of Jehovah. He was accustomed to enquiring of the Lord through the person of one man, the High Priest at the temple. They had used the word *Adonai*, which might mean the Supreme God of any religion, and Jehoshaphat, struck with their shrinking from the distinctive name Jehovah, asks, "*Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah; One who is not ashamed or afraid to speak in his awful name?*"

Ahab's read at once Jehoshaphat's secret dissatisfaction. He knew where to find such a prophet, but he had had some bitter experience with that man, Micahiah. He recalled the day when he had sent Benhadad away in peace and had been suddenly confronted by a prophet. How often the words had recurred to him since "*thy life shall go for his life*". No wonder with a burst of anger Ahab says, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil". Jehoshaphat's courteous disclaimer is an irresistible demand for his presence, so Micahiah is summoned, probably from prison. An officer is sent to fetch him.

Elijah's trial at Carnel was in some respects easier than Micahiah's. In that case it was the servant of Jehovah against the sham gods, Baal and Ashtaroth. Elijah had stood single handed against four hundred and fifty prophets, the King and his court, and triumphed. Micahiah's test was far subtler of approach and so far more difficult, for these men professed themselves prophets of the Lord. In the name of Jehovah they had uttered their predictions (verse 12). Probably to many, if not to all of them, there had been a time when the true voice visited them; the gift, like all God's gifts, could be turned by the receiver to evil use. He might trifle with it, dumb its utterance through fear of man, pervert it for gifts and rewards, like Balaam, and as he thus trifled with the great power he drove away its presence and an evil spirit came and dwelt there. He became a false prophet, a prophet of lies. We read not so much of the false prophets prophesying consciously a lie as of their seeing lying visions and so uttering deceits. Micah portrays this condition of things in Micah 3. 5-7.

While the officer has gone to fetch Micahiah, verse 11 tells of one of these false prophets, Zedekiah. As the name means "Righteousness of Jehovah", it is quite possible that he was once a true prophet of God but had lost the true vision by a desire to curry royal favour. Anyway he joins in the unanimous voice of the other prophets and

declares that the expedition against the Syrians will be successful. Their united reiteration of the cry, evidently with increasing excitement, reminds us of the repeated, "O Baal, hear us" of Mount Carmel and stands in similar contrast with the calm stern utterance of the true prophet.

In verse 13 the man who has gone to summon Micaiah appears to give the prisoner friendly advice. He acquaints him with what is going on, tells him of the united advice of the prophets and advises him for his own safety and possible release from prison to agree with the popular voice. There is in the whole incident, especially in the words of this officer, evidence of the strange confusion of ideas so common in superstition at all times, which in some sense believes in the inspiration of the prophets as coming from God, yet fancies that they can direct it as they will and that accordingly they can be bribed or beguiled or coerced to speak smooth things. The extreme form of this infatuation is exemplified in the case of Simon Magus, who believed the Apostles were the medium for conferring the highest spiritual gifts from God and yet madly persuaded himself that this power could be bought for money (Acts 8. 18). The delusion is silenced by the stern reply of Micaiah, "*As the Lord liveth, what Jehovah saith unto me, that will I speak.*"

Micaiah is brought out of the darkness of his prison into the full glare of a Syrian noonday sun. It is a significant scene; there are two Kings resplendent in their robes of silk and purple and gold, surrounded by all the glint of pomp and ceremonial display. Courtiers, magnificent in their dress and overbearing in their pride are numerous, and at a respectful distance are the prophets keeping up their repeated adjurations to the Kings to go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper. All around are the people and probably the troops.

Amidst this crowd the single prophet stands. To him the dull stillness of the dungeon has been suddenly exchanged for the eager interrogation of the King, the angry taunts of the prophets and the deep expectant hum of the people. All around an eager sea of faces. A weaker heart might have fainted under the heaviness of the burden laid upon him. Not so Micaiah; he was strong in the power of Jehovah and felt no fear.

The King puts the formal question and Micaiah

repeats the refrain of the prophets with their exact words, "*Go, and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the King*". Micaiah is a true disciple of Elijah in the defiant irony of the tone in which he takes up and mocks the utterance of the false prophets so bitterly as at once to show Ahab his scorn of them and him.

In verse 17 Micaiah drops the bantering tone and prophesies the defeat of the army which has become leaderless, and the King's worst fears are confirmed; Micaiah has as usual prophesied evil. But Micaiah is not finished; he has more to say from the Lord (verses 19-23). "*Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.*"

Zedekiah shows his contempt by striking Micaiah on the cheek. He professes indignation in words of blasphemy against God and of contempt for his prophets and sarcastically enquires how Micaiah came to know the secret dealings and counsels of God, with the idea of turning Micaiah's words into ridicule, but Micaiah ignores his words and merely declares the shame and terror with which Zedekiah shall find out, hereafter, the truth of his words.

Ahab's affection of disbelief, which his subsequent conduct shows to be but affectation, simply draws down a plainer and sterner prediction accompanied by an appeal to the whole assembly to bear witness of it. "*If you return at all in peace, Jehovah hath not spoken by me. Hearken O people, everyone of you.*"

What courage, what bravery! He was resolute in face of danger. A few hours later all was accomplished. The session is ended, the royal train rolls proudly back to the ivory palace of Ahab, the company of the prophets whose voice of counsel has prevailed sweeps triumphantly away and the crowd melts and disperses. The one man with whom was Jehovah's presence is led back, dishonoured, smitten and reviled to eat prison bread and drink its water.

A few days later, a King, dying on Gilead's mountains, an army slaughtered and scattered and fugitive attested the truth of Micaiah's words "*If thou return at all in peace the Lord hath not spoken by me*".

Look not sorrowfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine.

Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear, and with a manly heart.

WATERS ABOVE THE FIRMAMENT

1. Deluge from the skies

Many and varied have been the hypotheses put forward to explain the great Flood of Noah's day which, according to the Genesis account, swept over the world and destroyed all its living inhabitants with the exception of Noah and those with him in the Ark. Most of them are based upon a cursory reading of the Bible story with scant regard to physical likelihood or possibility. The primitive mediæval idea, that it started raining and went on raining until the entire planet was covered with water to a height of twenty-two feet above the highest mountain—about six miles—has only to be mentioned in order to be dismissed, if only for the obvious fact that there would be nowhere for the water to go when it was all over. Other explanations based on the physical conditions of Iraq—selected because of its obvious association with early Genesis—do not do full justice to the Bible account. Perhaps the commonest and most obvious one is that the usual annual inundation of lower Iraq by the rivers Euphrates and Tigris was abnormally increased in a certain year so accounting for the destruction. Such abnormal floods have occurred in historic times—Sir Leonard Woolley's conclusion in 1930 that he had discovered the Biblical Flood at Ur of the Chaldees is a case in point although that was later proved to have been a much later event. And the fact that the annual inundation always takes place in May-June whereas the Biblical Flood occurred in November does not help the theory. Another class of suggestions, the chief protagonists of which were Hugh Miller in *"The Testimony of the Rocks"* (1857) and Prof. G. F. Wright in *"Scientific Confirmations of Old Testament History"* (1906) was that at the critical time the whole of Iraq subsided many thousands of feet (sixteen thousand, said Miller) so letting in the sea, and when it was all over very conveniently rose again to its former level—but this rests entirely upon supposition and there is no evidence that such subsidence ever took place. Another favourite of a century ago was that the earth suddenly changed its axis of rotation, sending all the oceans cascading over the continents. Although it is true that the earth's axis does move very slightly over immense periods of time there is here, again, no evidence that any such sudden change took place.

These theories, however, did begin to point to another class of possible causes, which can show

greater probability, and moreover are more in line with ancient legends and the Bible account. These generally postulate a gigantic tidal wave coming in from the south to flood the land.

Tidal waves (the technical name is "tsunami") are fairly common in the past and the present. They are due to a number of causes. Subterranean earthquakes or volcanic eruptions, cyclones or tornadoes forcing the sea along and building up until it reaches land. The Indus valley in north-western India suffered a serious one early in this century whilst the unfortunate little country of Bangladesh on the other side of the same continent gets them every few years, invariably with heavy loss of life. The highest one that has been recorded was a tsunami which travelled across the Pacific at 500 miles an hour in 1737 and passed over the coast of Kamchatka, Eastern Siberia; the water was 210 feet high when it struck the coast. When the volcanic island of Santorini in the Aegean Sea blew up in the 14th century B.C.—at about the time of the Exodus—the resultant tidal wave was one hundred feet high as it passed over Crete seventy miles away and completely destroyed the Minoan civilisation, and fifty feet high when it hit the Palestinian coast five hundred miles farther on and destroyed the ancient city-state of Ugarit. In 1868 two naval vessels at anchor in a Chilean seaport were struck by an incoming tidal wave, carried two miles inland and left lying on the side of a mountain where signs showed that the water had reached a depth there of forty feet before receding. The tidal wave explanation, from the viewpoint of observed modern happenings, does have something to commend it.

William Whiston, in his *"New Theory of the Earth"* (1696) took this up with an elaborate set of calculations showing that Halley's Comet passed a little too close to the earth, over China, on Monday 2nd December in the year 2926 B.C., setting up by its attraction a huge tidal wave which circled the earth, at the same time dropping a large quantity of vapour which descended to the earth and condensed into water six miles deep. Fissures opened in the earth and the water drained away. Later enthusiasts in this present century have followed up Whiston's conclusions, merely changing the agent, such as Bellamy in *"Moons, myths and Man"*, in which the moon got too near the earth, and Patten in *"The Biblical Flood and the Ice*

Epoch" (1966) suggesting that an asteroid (small bodies a few miles in diameter circling between Mars and Jupiter), likewise got too close and obliged in the same fashion.

These "tidal wave" explanations do however line up better with such descriptive accounts of the actual event as exist to-day. The only two really informative ones of such are the account in Genesis, which probably goes back to at least the 25th cent. BC, and the Sumerian-Assyrian-Babylonian ones, which date from the 8th to the 17th BC with Berosus the priest-historian writing them up in the 3rd. These depict the Flood as coming in from the ocean in the south and being the result of a gigantic natural catastrophe. According to Genesis 7.11-12 "all the waters of the great abyss were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights". The Sumerian accounts insist that the waters came from the south—the Persian Gulf—in the form of an overflowing flood—a tidal wave. It has often been remarked that the detailed nature of the Genesis account bears all the marks of an eye-witness authorship; comparison of the 8th, 12th and 17th Cent. BC accounts shows that the older the account the nearer they appear to be to reality. The later versions are manifestly increasingly corrupted the farther they are from an early, now unknown, version which itself must at one time have been one and the same with the origin of the Bible version. And the combined testimony of both sources to the "outer space" origin of the flood waters gives new meaning to the Biblical references relative to the "waters above the firmament".

The Bible asserts that at the beginning, in addition to the oceans, the "seas" of this planet, there were terrestrial waters high above the atmosphere and that at a certain time in pre-history those waters descended to the earth. Gen. 1.6-8 reveals this in the story of primal creation. "God said, Let there be a firmament" (expanse) "in the midst of" (between) "the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse, and divided the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. And God called the expanse heaven". "Firmament" in the A.V. is Heb. *raqia*, which means something expanded or stretched out, an expanse, an expressive description of the sky. When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Latin the accepted scientific view of the universe was the Ptolemaic cosmology, which held that the sky was a solid

crystalline sphere enshrouding the earth, hence the Latin *firmamentum*, meaning something solid, was used to render *raqia*. When, later on, the A.V. was produced, in 1611, the cosmology of Ptolemy still held sway, and so the English translators kept the same word transliterated into English, hence "firmament"—despite the fact that Gen. 1.17 shows that this "expanse" is a medium in which birds can fly.

Later Bible writers confirm Genesis. Says the Lord to Job (38.4-11) "where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . who shut up the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb, when I made clouds its garment?" David in the Psalms (104.5-9), speaking of the creation of the earth, says "thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains, they go down by the valleys, into the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth". As a poetic description of the descent of "waters above the earth" to earth at the time of the Flood that expression is hard to beat. And a thousand years later the Apostle Peter, obviously fully aware of all this, wrote (I Pet. 3.5-7 RV), "there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the Word of God. By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." And the Genesis story of the Flood certainly stresses the fact of a downrush of celestial water as the primary cause. The ancients knew a lot more about this than the modern world cares to admit.

With the Ptolemaic belief in the crystalline sphere surrounding the earth out of the way,—only about three centuries ago—the way is open to get back to the Bible presentation, the earth travelling through space carrying a rotating mass of water, probably in the form of vapour, an unspecified number of thousands of miles up. This understanding has been held by responsible scientists throughout these three centuries. In 1696 the German Gottfried Leibnitz described these waters, saying that when the primitive earth "had cooled sufficiently, they fell, investing the entire globe". He did not associate this happening with the Biblical Flood. William Whiston, colleague of Sir Isaac Newton, said the same thing at the same time. Next came Jean Lamarck, a French naturalist who claimed that the catastrophe happened after man had appeared on the earth.

In 1750 the German scholar Immanuel Kant asserted that the Biblical Flood was caused by the descent of these waters and a few decades later Georges Cuvier, one of the most famous of zoologists, associated the event with the known numbers of mammoths and other creatures still to be found frozen solid in the permanently frozen soil of Siberia and Northern Canada. Then in 1886 the American Professor Isaac Vail (1840-1912) brought these older researches into focus with a complete review of the subject in *"The Earth's Annular System"*. Some of Vail's findings were strikingly confirmed during the following few decades by geologists and scientists investigating on site the riddle of the frozen mammoths of Siberia and North America. It is estimated that at least five million mammoths and a hundred million other animals lie thus buried in Siberia, and an unknown number in Alaska and the Arctic islands. These were known to the Chinese as far back as five centuries B.C., and are described in a national history of the Emperor Kang-Si in AD 670, they appear in a Chinese 12th century work as a source of trade in ivory. In the 17th and 18th centuries supplies were reaching London. The flesh was, and still is, edible, having been frozen since the animals were overwhelmed, a feature commented upon by Sir Henry Howorth in the late 19th century in his book *"The Mammoth and the Flood"*. He says *"a very great cataclysm overwhelmed a large part of the earth's surface. A vast flood buried great numbers of animals under beds of loam and gravel and there was a sudden change in the climate in regions like Siberia and Alaska"*. Modern food preservation experts have decided that for these animals to have survived in this state for five thousand years and still be fit for food they must have been quick frozen in a few minutes at a temperature of two hundred degrees Fahrenheit below freezing point, a level which is otherwise quite unknown on earth. Only a sudden irruption from outside the earth's atmosphere could produce this degree of cold.

Physicists have conducted radio-carbon tests on some of these remains and decided they met their end some five thousand years ago, which is within three centuries of the date of the Flood as indicated by the Septuagint. The archaeologist Raikes, writing in the archaeological journal *"Iraq"* (Vol. 28 1966 Page 60), adduces evidence of a great flood covering the country and emanating from the ocean which he dates at about 3000 BC. And C.E.P. Brooks, the 20th century climatologist,

says (*"Climate through the Ages"* 1948) that somewhere about 3000 BC there was a great natural catastrophe the nature of which he was unable to determine accurately but which changed world climate from its existing genial state to one of progressive deterioration, with volcanic phenomena, which has continued ever since. Four evidences from four different fields and covering two widely separated portions of the planet, all pointing to the same time in history, are intriguing, to say the least.

If then it can be conceded that some tremendous natural catastrophe of the nature envisaged by the authorities above quoted, and others, did take place at about the time indicated by Bible history, and the effect of such happening so far as the lands of the Bible are concerned would meet the descriptions of that event in both the Bible and ancient history, it is worth considering in greater detail the impact of such a happening upon the site of the antediluvian world. Such consideration has to concede that there are so many imponderable factors involved in such an "other-worldly" phenomenon that it can only be possible to draw a suggested picture. There are certain known limits within which the physical factors can be set. Any satellite or collection of material circling the earth at a distance of 22,000 miles or more can never fall on the earth; the rotatory force which keeps it revolving is sufficient to neutralise the earth's gravitational attraction. But below that limit the object will gradually lose speed and descend progressively nearer to the earth until eventually it falls to the surface. This happens in this modern day to man-made satellites which have been "put into orbit". The descent may take hundreds or thousands of years but the end comes at last. This is what happened to the *"waters above the firmament"*.

Coming from a region where the atmosphere is extremely attenuated, the vapours would tend to spread out over the area below, just as the clouds do, forming a kind of canopy which tended to be concentrated over the Poles, where the centrifugal force of their rotation would be lowest. Thus the final collapse would be in the Polar regions, which agrees with observed facts in the Arctic. That which fell in the Antarctic, from which there is open sea all round the world, would emerge as a giant tidal wave travelling northwards in all directions towards the Equator, until it reached land. There is open sea all the way from Antarctica to the Persian Gulf; such a wave would reach the area of the antediluvian world without hindrance, and

this could account for all the phenomena of the Bible Flood and recorded history and tradition.

But the details of that process must form the subject of another chapter. *To be continued*

Note on the ancestry of Jesus

A reader recently put the question: How is it that our Lord was of the tribe of Judah when, in recognition of the fact that He is our great High Priest and his sacrificial work was prefigured by Aaron, Israel's first High Priest and of the tribe of Levi, it would seem more appropriate that He come of the tribe of Levi?

* * *

It is true that the First Advent of Jesus, in which He came for the purpose of the suffering of death, is pictured by the work of the High Priest of Israel, making atonement annually for the sins of the people, albeit only in a typical and not real sense (Lev. 16), and were the First Advent the only aspect of his redemptive work there might be some fitness in his natural descent being counted from Levi, progenitor of the priestly tribe. But there is another phase of our Lord's work, the recovery from the effects of sin and the full restoration of mankind to full perfection and reconciliation with God. That is pictured, as in Heb. 5 and 7, by the parallel picture of Melchisedek, the Priest and King of the days of Abraham, no longer a sacrificing priest, but a royal priest, a priest upon his throne, a king dispensing Divine blessings and bounty. That is the purpose of his Second Advent, when He comes, no more to die, but to reign eternally. Hence the royal tribe, the tribe of Judah, is the appropriate one from which his descent is traced. This is in conformity with Scripture. From the very beginning it was decreed that Messiah should be of the line of Judah—in later times through King David, of that tribe, in all subsequent history the Son of David. Jacob, giving his parting blessing to his twelve sons in realisation of his approaching death, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declared that the sceptre should not depart from Judah," (Gen. 49. 10); the Lord repeated that promise to David (Psa. 89. 3-4), and for ever after Israel lived in expectation of the day when the Lord would raise up a son of David to establish the everlasting kingdom of God upon earth. Hence both Matthew and Luke give the ancestry of Jesus

from David—Matthew his official, "legal", descent from Solomon, and Luke the true blood descent from Nathan, younger brother of Solomon. In his humanity our Lord was a son of David even although in his Divinity He was the Son of God.

Nevertheless on the natural side our Lord did partake of Levi—to an extent Levitical blood did run in his veins. Mary the mother of Jesus was, according to Luke, the daughter of one Heli (this is the Greek form of the name—the true Hebrew name is Eliashib) and through him traced her paternal ancestry back to Zerubbabel the prince of the people of the Restoration from Babylon, and thence through Pedaiah to Nathan son of David. But Mary's mother, wife of Heli, was of the tribe of Levi. This is deduced from Luke 1.36 in which Elisabeth the wife of Zacharias and mother of John the Baptist is described as the "cousin" of Mary the mother of Jesus (*sungesis* means one of blood relationship and need not be confined to cousins). Elisabeth is stated by Luke to have been "of the daughters of Aaron" and hence, like her husband Zacharias, of the tribe of Levi. Not only so; she was additionally of the High Priestly section of that tribe. Since Heli, Mary's father, was definitely of Judah it is implied that Heli's wife was sister to Elisabeth, and hence herself of Levi, so that Jesus must have had connection with Levi through his maternal grandmother. This however would not entitle our Lord to any privilege of priesthood, for such rights descended from father to son only in the male line. Elisabeth therefore was Mary's aunt.

It may be of interest to note that Mary had at least one other sister, mentioned in the Gospels as Mary the wife of Cleopas and mother of James the Less and Joses (Matt. 22.56; 28.1; Mark 15. 42, 47; 16.1; Luke 24.10; Jon. 19.25). The name is the same in the English of the A.V., but distinguished in the Greek. In the case of Mary the mother of Jesus it is *Miriam* and in that of her sister it is *Maria*.

We cannot be yoked in with Christ unless we have his spirit. Two that are yoked together must be of one mind: and that which makes the yoke set lightly upon us is the fixedness of purpose which

does not chafe under it or try to get away from it, but which delights to bear it in view of the end to be gained.

LUCIFER THE PRINCE OF EVIL

4. Serpent of Eden

The story of Eden is narrated to explain how sin and death came into a world in which man was intended, by willingly and knowledgeably taking his destined place in creation, to live eternally in conditions of unalloyed happiness. That high calling was abruptly interrupted when the first man diverted from the Divine intention, foreswore his allegiance to the Lord God to whom he owed life and all things, and awarded his loyalty to another who promised him all the blessings he already enjoyed without any of the obligations and responsibilities. And so the idyllic picture of Eden became sullied with the entry of the Devil upon the scene and the ingress of sin. So, says St. Paul in Rom. 5. 12 "*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*". But the familiar story is so simple, almost childlike, that the idea of all the strife and injustice and heartbreak in the world, the battle and murder and sudden death, the futility and frustration and hopelessness, was inflicted upon mankind by a vengeful God as punishment of a primal woman for plucking and eating the fruit of a forbidden tree at the behest of a talking snake is in itself so unreasonable that no one could be blamed for questioning whether it really is a literal narrative of the manner in which evil came into the world. But a little careful thought reveals another angle to the subject.

The Bible narratives were intended, not just for the people and the culture existing at the time they were written, but for all peoples and generations at whatever level of intellect and culture the world was ever to see. The story had to be expressed in terms understandable and informative to all who in future times would read it. It can be literally true and yet use similes which can convey the underlying truths to men of future times whether simple of mind or profound of intellect, whether knowledgeable in all arts and sciences or able to understand only the elementary characteristics of the circle in which they have been born and lived. And it must express customs and actions, habits of life, outlooks and attitudes of men, in so simple a form that it can convey its meaning to later generations born into a different world and so could not be expected to comprehend them. So the story has to be written in terms that can convey the essential principles without claiming verbal exactitude. And when one comes to a story as old as that of the Garden of

Eden, admittedly the oldest story in all the world, account has to be taken of the repeated occasions upon which it has been copied and re-copied, translated and re-translated, from one language into another, so that even the true meanings of essential words get obscured or confused in the process.

Says the account (Gen. 3.1) "*now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent . . . God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die . . .*" What in fact was the nature of this "serpent" possessed not only of powers of human speech but able to discourse upon powers appertaining to God?

The Hebrew word here rendered "serpent" is "*nachash*", the normal word for that creature; this is a derived usage from the basic meaning. "*Nachash*" refers primarily to the practice of enchanting, wizardry or revealing supernatural knowledge, derived in turn from the verb "to hiss" hence the development to the "hissing" or subnormal mutterings of necromancers and the characteristic hissing of the serpent. Examples of this use in the Bible are the "enchantments" of Balaam in Numbers 24, the "divining" of Joseph in Gen. 44, and Israel's "sorcery" in the days of Ahaz and Manasseh in 2 Kings, chaps. 17 and 21. Properly speaking, the word is basically applicable to an enchanter or one having contact with the powers of darkness, and it might be that Gen. 3. 1 would have better been rendered "Now the enchanter was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field . . ." But this is not the end of the story. The Garden of Eden narrative in written form is more, perhaps much more, than a thousand years older than the Hebrew text from which the present Bible is translated. From the many Sumerian and Akkadian words existing in the present Hebrew text it is clear that it must be derived from an original written in those languages at a time which must have preceded Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees by at least five centuries, a thousand years before there was any Hebrew language. One has to go back that far to discern the basis upon which the Tempter of Eve was described in Genesis as a

serpent.

In those far off days the descendants of Shem and Ham, (known in ordinary parlance as the Akkadians and Sumerians), newly degraded into idolatry from the original worship of the Most High God of their fathers, looked upon the serpent as the symbol of life and made it a life-giving power and object of worship. In their sculptures it was given a dragon-like form, endowed with wings to denote its heavenly origin. (The dragon of mediæval English literature and art had the same form and was still known by the name of "serpent" even then). This mythological creature was called in their language the "*sirussu*" a word which combines the ideas of a human form shining with a fiery heavenly radiance (The angel who appeared in Daniel is described in very similar terms.) Eight *sirussu* stood guard at the four gates of the Temple of Babylon (*E-Sagila*, "Temple of the chief God") in Daniel's day, and those figures were of highly burnished copper, the brightly shining or fiery ones. In those times it would appear that the *sirussu*, usually defined by Sumerologists as the "walking serpent", was identified in the minds of men with a brilliant supernatural winged creature claiming to be the bringer of life to men and inviting their worship.

From whence did these men draw their inspiration for this glorious appearance of an other-worldly being who promised life. The extant descriptions and engravings of the *sirussu* date only back so far as about the days of Abraham and must have been based on earlier legend or histories which are now lost; the later the legend the more it tends to depart from the original source. Might it not be a lingering recollection, handed down through the ages of one who was seen by the first mother of all, and whose form was indelibly impressed upon her memory and remembered by her children, more and more vaguely as generation succeeded generation? By the 17th century B.C. the Babylonian god Marduk, hailed as the Son of God and the defender and redeemer of men, was depicted as a noble and valiant warrior endowed with six wings, bearing some resemblance to the "*seraphim*" which Isaiah the prophet saw in vision standing around the throne of God. Isaiah (Chap. 6.1) says they had six wings, two to cover the feet (more properly, the body), two above the head and two wherewith to fly, exactly as in the known relief engravings of Marduk. And the significance of the Hebrew word "*seraphim*" is "fiery ones" or "burning ones"—*saraph* is the verb for burning—

evidently in allusion to their dazzling and perhaps fiery appearance, so that the *sirussa* and the *seraphim* both owe their origin to a common source.

Traditions at the time of the First Advent must have preserved some such recollection of the form of the serpent of Eden. The apocryphal work "*The Apocalypse of Abraham*" (ch. 23) narrating the story of Eden says that "*behind the tree there was standing as it were a serpent in form, having hands and feet like a man's, and wings on its shoulders*". This is a work of the First century A.D. but it shows that some such tradition was still in existence at even so late a date.

There is one other interesting point. The oldest type of writing at present known, dated to about twenty-five centuries before Christ, was in the form of simplified pictures, known today as "pictographic". Examples of such writing are still very sparse and not yet fully and satisfactorily deciphered, but it is significant that the symbol for the *sirussu* is that of a great man, a noble or king, with wings reaching above his head. Is this the earliest representation of the serpent of Genesis which has come down to us?

Who or what was it, then, speaking to Eve in the garden, in words of human speech which she could understand? She knew that the lower animals were inferior and subservient to Adam and herself, and that none of these normally had the gift of speech. She knew that the snakes were created beings like herself, liable to death like all other animals; perhaps had even seen them die. Is it likely that she would be deceived by such a creature's claim to god-like wisdom and eternal life? But if in fact she found herself confronted by a gloriously radiant heavenly being, majestic and awe-inspiring in his splendour, her acceptance of his deception is much easier to understand. His power of speech would excite no doubt; his professed knowledge of the ways of God would seem to be logical. His insinuation that he was in a position to reveal knowledge being withheld by God would seem reasonable. Somehow such an interview seems a more natural occurrence than a conversation with a six-foot snake standing erect upon the tip of its tail.

Heavenly visitants to mankind throughout all history, as narrated in the Bible, have appeared in a variety of fashions suited to the circumstances, the outward visible body serving as the means of communication for the celestial being, which must by its nature be imperceptible to human senses. Thus an angel appeared to Joshua in the form of a

soldier with drawn sword in his hand; to Jacob as a wayfaring man who engaged him in a tussle of strength; to Abraham and Hagar and others as casual travellers passing by; and to Daniel as a gloriously resplendent being which to Daniel may have presented an appearance closely akin to the traditional *seraphim* which Isaiah before him had seen in vision and described. Is it conceivable then that the celestial Lucifer did in fact visit the woman, not in the form of an earthly serpent, which was not in all probability likely to impress, but as a shining apparition from the skies, one of the *seraphim* which most certainly would impress. The Latin word Lucifer in Isa. 14 means the shining one; *seraphim* in Hebrew means the shining one; *sirussu* in Akkadian-Sumerian means the shining one; and the historian in Gen. 3. added the attribute "enchanter", more subtle, crafty, cunning, than any of the beasts of the field. "*Arum*", rendered "subtle" in Gen. 3.1 means to be crafty or cunning as in Job. 5.12, Job. 15.5, Psa. 83.3 and "dealing very subtly" in 1. Sam. 23.22. The subtlety of the serpent is cunning, deceitfulness, exemplified in the seeds of doubt which he implanted in the mind of Eve.

So the Devil came to earth with the express intention of seducing the newly created human pair from their allegiance to God and transforming that allegiance to himself. There is little doubt that this was the intention and the true fact behind the story of the two trees. The Tree of Life—loyalty to God and continuing life. The Tree of Knowledge—disloyalty to God and inevitable death, for nothing that is not in complete harmony with God and his creation can endure eternally. And here this impressive visitor from the courts of God comes to tell them they are being deceived by their Creator and that Divine law is a chimera. They can forswear God and still live. There is an ancient Sumerian epic, dating in its present form from the 22nd century before Christ but evidently recording a much older story, a story of the time God created man. There was a garden—more properly a fertile luxuriant parkland—in which there were two temples or shrines, the "*temple of the plant of life*" and the "*temple of the pleasant fruits*". The man—in the epic the woman is not mentioned except as the wife of the man—the man went into the temple of the plant of life to worship. But he left that and went into the other temple, the temple of the pleasant fruits; "*and there he sat down*". Then a deity

whose name means "*the god of the earth*" came along and knocked on the door. "*Who art thou?*" asked the man. "*I am a gardener rejoicing in the tree. I will give thee the knowledge of a god*", Joyfully, the man opened the door. The story goes on to detail seven plants of which the man could partake and one other which was forbidden. But the man approached the forbidden plant. "*He plucked, he ate*" and the goddess-wife of the God of Heaven pronounced the sentence. "*He shall not see life all his days but shall certainly die*".

Stripped of its pagan associations, this epic, with which Abraham must have been familiar, written in its present form at least three centuries later than the latest possible date for Genesis as we know it, can be made to throw some light on the Eden story and the part played by Satan. The Roman naturalist Pliny, of the 1st century A.D. says (Book 12.1) that the ancients in past times used trees as temples or places of worship to their gods. (Allusions to this fact appear in Gen. 35.4; 35.8; Jud. 4.5; 6 11-16; Josh. 24.26 and other places). Is it possible that behind the two stories, that of Eden in the Old Testament, and that of the garden in the epic, there resides the idea of worship, that the Tree of Knowledge pictured worship given to the Devil instead of God. Could it be that there were two ritual trees, that the ceremonially partaking of the fruit of the one indicated continued faithfulness and loyalty to God and of the other, service and loyalty to the Devil—just as the ceremonial partaking of the bread and wine at the Memorial Service or at Holy Communion indicates full entry into communion with God and a common-union with Christ. That could indicate a much more serious and fundamental rebellion against God's holiness than the mere act of eating the fruit of a forbidden tree because it looked appetising. The fearful havoc which has been wrought in the world of Adam's descendants in consequence of his action can surely be better explained in the light of a considered and deliberate rejection of God and acceptance of the Devil, a rejection which may have been symbolised by the ceremonial performance of an otherwise trivial action.

The devil achieved his purpose. So, said the Apostle John, "*the whole world lieth in the wicked one*". But God is not mocked.

To be concluded.

UNHEEDED WITNESS

"... and they told him all things, whatsoever they had done and whatsoever they had taught" (Mark 6. 30).

Jesus himself had been round about the villages teaching. (Mark 6. 6). He had returned "into his own country" (vs. 1) after visiting the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, and with the twelve in attendance upon him, began to teach and preach in their synagogue. But the ministry fell on callous hearts and unheeding ears. They claimed to know him who He was and whence He came. They found cause of offence in him (v. 3) and set his words at naught. Because of that "he could do there no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk and healed them" (v. 5).

It was into an atmosphere charged thus with contempt and scorn that Jesus sent his followers, two by two, to preach. To assist them in their ministry He had equipped them with powers—power to cast out the unclean spirits which afflicted the populace. "They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." (v. 13). Witness work in Israel was no gala-day experience. Even He who spake as never man spake found the atmosphere of unbelief too frigid for success. The flow of healing power was checked and hindered in the midst of such frozen apathy. Could the disciples hope to have success where the Master failed? Could they thaw the frozen hearts with words of warmth greater than the Master spake? It had been an almost invaluable experience for them, for nothing can test the fibre of the witness-bearing soul like an atmosphere of indifference and apathy. When the words rebound they can have one of two effects. Either they can daunt and stifle the warm enthusiasm of the witness-bearer himself or they can react and feed the flames of that enthusiasm to whiter heat by awakening sympathy for deluded men.

With Jesus that indifferent response led to a deepening of his sympathy towards his unresponsive audience. When men to whom He spake of God's benevolence and love could not heed and accept what He had to say He knew there were sometimes factors other than human choice at work, and for these men his compassion began to flow. Cold callous indifference aroused and intensified in his heart that quality which could bear gently with ignorant and erring men, and made

him more resolutely determined to see his mission through.

As Jesus sat and listened to the stories of these twelve, we can be sure He knew how to turn this experience to good effect so that they should not be too elated with their meagre success. "*Rejoice not because demons are subject unto you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven above*".

Hence while they had some small success there was another better side. They, along with him, were Heaven's evangelists—God had sent him—He had sent them, and success or no success, they were linked with God in a witness-bearing to a demon-ridden world. It is that that counts.

We also find ourselves sharing the like experience. The testimony of the Most High has never yet been withdrawn—nor can it be till sin has been eliminated from the earth. But in this callous world God has not promised us much success. The product of this entire Age is but a "little flock". It is the reaction back into our own heart that counts. When after great rebuff we can say with compassionate sympathy "*poor deluded suffering world, your day has yet to come*" the value of our witness is not lost, it has returned to us with added interest. There has been gain to us, even if to none besides.

But there is something more we can do to bring these desirable effects home to our souls. It is to do as the disciples did. Review the day's experience for the Master's ear in the quiet eventide. Tell him humbly what we have tried to say and do in his Name—it is there that the temperature of heart and soul will reveal itself. You will tell him only what you have sincerely sought to do and say, and as you speak, if only in the deeper chambers of the heart, the fires of devotion to his cause will glow and send out their heat and warmth and you will find your sense of serving him intensified.

If then, this day your voice has rebounded as from the bastion rock; if that little conversation did not end as you desired; if that little tract was later found mud-stained upon the road, never mind: Go and tell Jesus about it all. The witness is not irretrievably lost: it will re-appear in the after years, sometime, somewhere, when an enlightened consciousness counts up the opportunities lost. Seeming defeat with God today can never fail; it is a sure contribution to the final overthrow of the wrong and the untrue.

HEAVENLY WISDOM *An Old Testament Study*

"Wisdom is the principal thing" (Prov. 4. 7.).

What a priceless gem is wisdom. Do we value its excellency; see our need and the unspeakable advantages it carries? It cannot be purchased with all the wealth of the world; it cannot be willed in an inheritance for another. It is written of a well-known Bible commentator. He was near the end of his earthly course and recorded: *"I have now disposed of all my property to my family; there is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that and I had not given them one shilling, they would be rich; and if they had not had that and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."* Nor does wisdom pass to us through the traits of heredity. It is a gift of God, and excels folly as much as light excels darkness. (See Prov. 3. 13-24.)

History records many men travelling great distances in search of wisdom. They crossed the seas, deserts, mountains to visit seats of learning in quest of what Paul describes—the hidden mystery of God. (1 Cor. 2. 6. 7.) One outstanding figure was the Queen of Sheba. She had heard from others of the great wisdom and fame of Solomon. *"There came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom."* It is commonly known how in the telling of strange and wonderful things there is a tendency, especially where fame is concerned, to exaggerate. The Queen decided to discover for herself. She was so confounded and amazed at such wisdom and skill that "there was no more spirit in her." Solomon *"gave her of his royal bounty."* He instructed a diligent pupil concerning this gift of wisdom, which was so appreciated she in return gave out of her treasures gold, precious stones, and of spices a very great store. There came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (1 Kings 10. 1-9.)

Jesus alluded to her. *"The Queen of the south came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon,"* and no doubt He was saddened by the disregard of the princes of his world for the Greater than Solomon. However, as He imparts to those with the ears to hear something of God's wisdom, does it not also leave us floundering, amazed, "with no more spirit in us"? Do we not applaud Paul who says, "the thousandth part was not told." The Queen said of what she thought was an exaggerated report, that not only

was it true, but the half was never told. She expressed her appreciation in gifts. We may lack the silver and gold she was able to give, but what about the spices? The Wise Men of the East gave of such to our Lord. Have we any spices to give in gratitude?

We know from the Parable of the Talents that when anything good is buried it profits no one. On the other hand, when some good thing, wisdom for example, is possessed and put to good use, many people benefit. In this connection let us read Eccles. 9. 13-18. Briefly the facts are: A poor wise man in a little city, or a poor man in a poor city. He was, one could say, buried alive in poverty and obscurity. Despite this, when opportunity came, he employed his wisdom to good account; he rendered valuable service in a time of public distress and danger. All his friends and neighbours benefited.

Embodied in this story must be some peculiar features for the wise man to conclude that to him this type of wisdom seemed great. Scanning it more particularly we find a few abnormal, unrealistic features: Since the city is so insignificant and so few in it, why did such a great king send such a great army and so many armaments against it? Surely he could have no reason to fear it, containing as it did, so few and they being so poor. We know that those who intimidate go out of their way and to great lengths to crush the timid and the weak, but the circumstances in this instance seem out of proportion. The city is besieged and the inhabitants examine their citizens for military strength. This poor man had nothing to contribute except his wisdom. They discovered his wisdom; we uncover his unnatural quality—selflessness. This poor wise man might have hidden his wisdom and no one be the wiser as to this selfish act. He might well have reasoned, "What have I to lose except my poverty? What does it matter to me who governs this place? With a change of administration, I may even be rewarded for my services." Putting aside his private, personal interests, he served the public good. The moral is, "Wisdom is better than strength and better than weapons of war." Now we understand why he was soon forgotten. Where do we find this brand of selflessness being rewarded, acknowledged, respected?

In substance we could find many applications where this great wisdom and selflessness were employed for general benefit. For instance, when

the Philistines encamped against Israel and the poor wise man (the shepherd boy, David) delivered the weak Israelites from the mighty hand of the oppressors with Goliath at their head. In fact it could be applied to all the prophets, including Moses and all those poor wise men of their time who did so much and received so little—soon forgotten, “of whom the world was not worthy.” Another application, the best of all, suggests itself, although it may not be found similarly applied by known writers.

“A poor wise man”—He who was so rich became so poor, having not where to lay His head, that we through His poverty might become rich. *“In a little city”*—Nazareth; so poor, so mean and despised that people questioned whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth. *“There came a great king against it, besieged it and built great bulwarks against it”*—the prince of this evil world; he feared this poor man and his great wisdom; the evil one’s dominion was threatened. Hence the bulwark of armaments: all the machinery of the Roman army and empire being brought into the assault. *“A poor wise man was found”*—He taught them in their synagogues, warned them and prepared them for the oncoming assault. They were astonished, amazed; “whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?” Never man spake as He, and all wondered at the gracious words He spake. He rendered invaluable service in a time of public distress and danger. A crisis had come to Israel; long outstanding accounts from Abel to that time were close to settlement date. Public distress was acute; poverty, sickness, doubt, fear and death filled the ranks of the fifth column in the city whilst outside were the evil hordes of Satan. The siege lasted three and a half years. The little city of Zion was delivered; the prince of this world was defeated, for through death this poor wise man is to destroy him who had the power of death. Christ, the power of God, the Wisdom of

God, triumphed. Those few men in the little city, the despised sect of the Nazarenes, delivered, now enjoyed a peculiar type of immunity; the consolation for this little flock was not to fear, the Heavenly Father had much also in store for them. *“And the poor wise man was soon forgotten”*—He left them temporarily, promising to return, but *“When the Son of Man cometh will he find faith in the earth?”*

It is interesting to contrast earthly wisdom with heavenly wisdom. Both these influences present claims to our affections. Their methods and what they have to offer are set out comparatively in Prov. 9. The heavenly has a sacrifice, bread and wine, and from the highest places invited the simple (those seeking instructions) to eat and drink bread and wine, and at the same time to forsake the foolish and live anew, in the paths of understanding.

The earthly wisdom, pictured as a foolish woman, also occupies a prominent and respectable high place of esteem in the city of men. She also calls to the simple—passengers out of their way, seeking, seeking, something . . . the advice these unfortunate people are given is that “stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” This so-called wisdom is earthly, sensual; that is, appealing to natural appetites, to a sense of pleasure and desire of gratification. If gratified, conscience and love (with all its wonderful attributes) are slowly but surely strangled by envy, strife, hatred, confusion, and every evil device. The heavenly wisdom is satisfying and entire for all the understanding; it glows with a light and purity; is a guidance for will, cleansing for the conscience and still more strength for a practical expression of a Christian life. *“Her ways are ways of pleasantness and her paths are peace”* (with God). *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom—wisdom is the principal thing,”* because a *“man of understanding hath wisdom.”* (Peoples’ Paper, Melbourne)

Let us guard against the negative form of evil-speaking, generally the most thoughtless. Absalom was an example of this. Who could quote any actual evil-speaking against his royal father? Who could charge him with speaking evil of dignities? And yet by insinuations, by his way of putting things, by his very manner, he wrought a

thousand-fold more cruel harm than any amount of evil-speaking out could have possibly done. Oh to be watchful as to such omissions to speak well, as amount to speaking evil? Watchful as to the eloquence of even hesitation, watchful as to the forcible language of feature and eye.

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

*An outline of
the Divine Plan*

4. Divine Intervention

The message of life preached by Jesus when upon earth at his First Advent laid down the principles by which men will one day live but it did not appreciably arrest the all-devouring influence of sin. Men were as selfish and unjust and cruel and wicked after his death as before his birth; in a good many directions evil has seemed to increase rather than decrease. But there is no evading the inevitable harvest of evil. Jesus declared that the Age which was dawning in his day would be characterised by wars, famines and pestilences of unprecedented and increasing severity, and his words have been realised. The human race has known no greater disasters—the Flood of Noah's day alone, perhaps, excepted—than it has experienced during the last two thousand years. Many of those disasters—in fact, nearly all of them—are attributable to mankind's own evil course. All of the wars, nearly all of the famines and pestilences, could have been avoided had man not been wedded to selfishness and sin. Foreseeing all this, Jesus also said that the Age will end in a harvest of evil in which the world as we now know it will disintegrate and collapse in ruins on account of its own corruption. The world system which men have built up through the centuries contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and destruction will inevitably come.

To-day we are entering into that bitter harvest. The herding of men and women into crowded and insanitary cities; the adoption of unnatural ways of life consequent upon new habits necessitated by the modern economic and social order; the tremendous nervous tension under which life is lived and the haste and speed characteristic of this present civilisation; all have promoted the incidence and extent of pestilence and disease, physical and mental. Consistent and widespread spoliation of the products of Nature and extravagant use of the earth's natural resources have created dust bowls and deserts where once flourished fertile fields and forests, and have caused famine and shortage of those necessities of life which can only be produced in sufficient quantity by an intelligent co-operation with Nature. The great advance in scientific knowledge and invention characteristic of our Age has led to a very general attitude of apathy and ignorance towards the things of God and the higher interests of life, and so has the mad rush for amusement and petty self-indulgence, the determination

to obtain every possible sensual satisfaction out of life irrespective of the interests of others or of mankind as a whole. The result of this arrant selfishness, working upon the mind, corrupts the nervous system and leads in many cases to insanity. The greed and hate of man breeds war between nations and saps individual men's physique and destroys men, and the earth with men. Their neglect of God and impatience with God and opposition to God causes the loss of moral sense—despite the specious claim nowadays put forward that man can evolve a satisfying religion out of the basic values of truth and uprightness, without invoking the help of a mystic God whose existence cannot be demonstrated by physical science—and in consequence crime and violence reigns unchecked and is increasing with each successive generation. Children to-day do wrong, not knowing they are doing wrong, because their parents have never told them. Parents are cruel to children often because they themselves do not know any better. The Divine standards of right going and good conduct have been cast away and men have nothing to put in their places—and without any real compelling force of righteousness the new pagans are sinking to excesses which have not been since Christianity ousted Roman paganism from society sixteen centuries ago.

Science, made to do service to human beings who are not yet fit to receive its blessings, is responsible for deterioration in another field also. The human race is becoming the slave of the push-button. Men are rapidly losing the ability to do things for themselves. They have already lost the wonderful artistic talent of earth's earliest ages, and can only goggle at exhibits in museums the craftsmanship of which they cannot reproduce. Machinery has destroyed individuality, and independent thought has given place to mass impulse, crowd psychology directed by skilfully planned propaganda. The Welfare State, or the Dictatorial Regime, as the case may be, is destroying man's inherent creativeness and his individuality, and is making of him a thing of clay, easily moulded to the form desired by authority, a clockwork automaton which responds only to stimuli from without, the very opposite of the Creator's intention and plan for man.

But no dictator or Cabinet of governors drawn from amongst men can continue the administra-

tion of this complex world on such a basis. God designed it to be a co-operative commonwealth, its every part and aspect, vegetable, animal and human, working together in precise adjustment for the common good. The world can only continue indefinitely by means of the harmonious labours of all the creatures that dwell therein. The dictators and the planners who have dictated and planned without God have ignored that fundamental principle and in consequence the world is running down to a stop. Its institutions, built upon unsound principles, are tottering to their fall. Unrestrained war and irresistible disease and pestilence are fast bringing the present order to ruin. Man cannot avert the irretrievable destruction of his own world by the very forces he has himself created. He is going to destroy his world and well-nigh destroy himself, and there is no human way out. He has come to the end of his tether. It is the end of the world!

Now this is where God's fulfilling purpose demands that He step in and take over. Once more, and for the last time, there will be Divine intervention.

The last age in the history of man's conflict with sin, although, thank God, not in the history of humanity upon earth, is the Millennial Age, the time of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Man has had a full experience of the evil results of self-government without God. He has been allowed to give full play to his uncontrolled instincts of selfishness and hate and cruelty, his unthinking wastage and destruction of the things essential for his continued life upon earth, his heedlessness of God and of the principles of truth and justice, and he has in consequence come within an ace of destroying himself and the earth also. God will come in the nick of time. God, Who has been waiting through the ages for such a time as this, knowing that it must surely come, will step in at the moment of apparently irretrievable disaster and save men from themselves. The Apostle Peter, speaking of this moment from his vantage point of two thousand years away, said "He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." (Acts 3. 21.)

Times of Restitution of all things!

This "Millennial Age" is to be an age of restoration and reconstruction. The earth will be restored to its pristine beauty and fertility, and man to that original perfection and harmony with God which was enjoyed by the first human beings at the time of Eden. The object of this Kingdom of God upon

earth is the conversion of all men to Christ and the establishment of everlasting righteousness. That purpose includes the resurrection of all the dead, their re-creation in new human bodies and restoration to conscious existence upon earth, in order that they as well as the living nations may share in this wonderful opportunity which God purposes to give the human race. The missionary and educational work of that Age will therefore be on a colossal scale, exceeding by far anything that has ever before been known. It would not be possible of accomplishment were it not for the fact that it will be carried on by the power of God and that all opposing and hindering influences will have been removed.

That latter fact is perhaps difficult to understand. Most people realise to-day that there are many powerful institutions, firmly entrenched, whose interests lie in the direction either of suppressing or actively opposing the moral uplift of the human race. By what power are these forces going to be retained?

The same breakdown of human government that marks the ending of this present Age and indicates the imminence of the Millennial Age will be responsible also for the failure of all evil and quasi-evil institutions. Jesus declared that this present Age will end in a great Time of Trouble such as "was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be." (Matt. 24. 21.) It is in this great time of trouble that all unrighteous human power and authority, whether political, ecclesiastical, financial or social, will be swept away and the evil content of present human society be dissolved. It is upon the remains of that ruined world system that Christ will commence to build the edifice of his Kingdom. The outward evidence of that re-building, apparent to men who have eyes to see even before Christ himself is manifested as having taken his power, will be the constitution in the one-time "Holy Land" of an earthly missionary nation supremely confident in the imminent revelation of the purposes of God, and ready to play its part in the evangelisation of the world. Three thousand years ago the Hebrew prophets spoke of this time, when the people of Israel, purified and truly converted to God by reason of the fiery experiences through which they as a nation have passed, would stand forth to be the servants of all the world in the things of God. It was out of Israel and Jerusalem that the saving power of God first came to the world in the person and message of Jesus Christ; it will be out of Israel and Jerusalem that the saving

message will come again, and this time the world, sick at last of its own failure, will give heed.

To claim that the vigorous young nation at present building the political fabric of the State of Israel is in any sense this new missionary nation which the Lord is going to use would be a travesty of the truth. The power that has set up a new political entity in Israel is one of the "kingdoms of this world" like its Gentile neighbours. But, unknowingly to themselves and to their neighbours, those busy workers are preparing the way for the converted and devoted people that will, at a later date, be manifest in that land and proclaim the law of the Lord. What is transpiring there at this present moment is a living witness to the surety of that which is coming. Vernon Bartlett, the celebrated commentator on world affairs, wrote this in 1950 *"It has been my good fortune during the past thirty years to move a good deal around the world. Israel stands out from all the other countries I have ever visited as the one with the happiest people. A miracle has happened to the Jew"*. These things are being noted by farseeing men of this world, and they cannot be explained in any other way than that "this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes". (Psa. 118. 23.)

These signs, then; the obviously imminent breakdown and collapse of world civilisation; the patent fact that without outside intervention the human race will shortly destroy itself from the face of the earth; the visible preparation now going on in God's "Holy Land" for its ultimate use as the seat of Divine government in the earth; all this, to those who will soberly consider its implication, constitutes sure and definite evidence that the long-promised Kingdom of God upon earth is about to be inaugurated. Jesus promised that those living—and watching—when the time became due would be cognisant of the fact. We, viewing these events in the light of Jesus' words, the foresight of the Hebrew prophets, and above all things, on the basis of God's immutable purpose, must accept the fact that now in our own generation we stand upon the threshold of stupendous world-changing events. Whether the actual transfer of power from the "kingdoms of this world" to the "kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11. 15) comes during this present generation, or the next, or is delayed even to the one after that, it is plain that the disintegrating process which marks the end of this world is well advanced and that the Divine summons to give heed to the laws of the new Kingdom may be anticipated at any time.

It is hardly to be expected that the old order will give way without a struggle. Satan will go down fighting. There are apocalyptic passages in the Bible telling in picturesque symbolism of the kings of the earth gathered together to make war against a warrior named "Faithful and True" who appears from heaven riding on a white horse. The issue of the conflict is not in doubt. The powers of earth are defeated and the heavenly Rider stands victorious. Whatever of opposition may be whipped up to the incoming Kingdom of Christ when the signs of its approach are much more outwardly manifest than at present, the onward progress of the Divine programme will not be delayed. God's fulfilling purpose, rolling irresistibly on to completion, will sweep all opposition from its path.

The world, then, disheartened and despairing, its whole system of life lying in ruins about it, will behold the amazing spectacle of a virile and vigorous nation appearing as it were from nowhere, in possession of the Holy Land and acknowledging leaders who will quickly become known as men of superlative qualities and truly marvellous governmental powers. Whether the world in general does or does not accept the claim made for these, that they are noteworthy men of God of past ages, raised from the dead to initiate the work of the new Kingdom, there will be no disputing the fact that they will have to obey. The moral power exerted by these men will be of such an order that humanity in general will have no choice but to give heed. And the fact that earth's new rulers will be incorruptible, just, and merciful, possessing keen insight and shrewd wisdom, and that their administration will immediately begin to restore much needed order to an anarchistic world, should without doubt quickly range many of earth's peace-loving citizens on their side.

It is difficult for men and women who have only known an order of society where right-doing is largely a matter of refraining from evil for fear of punishment at the instance of the law to understand the nature of this new rule that will hold sway over the earth. In this our day the number of citizens who conform to laws made for the general good because they understand and sympathise with those laws is relatively small. The majority either make no attempt to understand the law or they deliberately seek to evade its penalties. The law, on its own part, is not altogether effective, for it is not always able to detect and apprehend the law-breakers; hence some are able to break the law with impunity. In the next Age, on the contrary,

the psychological effect of the new principles of rulership will be to create a new respect for the law—which will be Divine Law; the laws of Nature, the laws binding upon man, and the laws of God, will be one and harmonious, working all together—and the inherent good in man will rise more easily to the top and find a much more congenial atmosphere in which to flourish than is the case to-day. The tendency will be towards doing good instead of doing evil; in fact, in almost every respect in the field of human conduct the next Age will be the reverse of this. So far as deliberate evil-doers are concerned—for it is not suggested that all men become converts to the new way of life at once—the administration of the new rulers, backed as it is by spiritual forces of which the world's present princes know nothing, will apprehend the evil-doer, not only before he has been able to profit by his evil-doing, but before he has been able to harm his intended victim. A ruling power that can detect crime while as yet it is nothing more than a determination in the

criminal's mind will not only fulfil the prophet's declaration that in that Age "*nothing shall hurt nor destroy*" but will also be able to convince even the most hardened of wrong-doers that "crime does not pay".

This then is the general background of the Millennial Kingdom, a state of society in which righteousness will flourish, evil will be shown up for the hateful thing that it is, and there is complete freedom from fear because the rulers of earth will be able adequately to protect citizens who are law-abiding against those who are not. That is not the final state of the Kingdom; it would be a poor consummation of God's purpose if the world attained to a level no higher than that of a kind of benevolent concentration camp where the inmates do right because they can neither escape nor are allowed to do anything that is not right. God intends that ultimately all men shall do that which is right, and take their place in his final creation, voluntarily and of free and assenting will; but that high ideal can be attained only by a series of steps.

To be concluded.

A NOTE ON ISA. 53. 3

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isa. 53. 3.)

This is the most bitter prophecy of the Old Testament. From the very beginning, when amid the loveliness of Eden the first guilty pair stood and heard the sad tones of God passing sentence, there had always been the promise of a coming Redeemer. It is fairly evident from Eve's words at the birth of Seth that when Cain was born she had seen in that, to her, wonderful event, the fulfilment of the Divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. That early hope was dashed when Cain became a murderer and was banished from the company of peace-loving men; but with the coming of Seth the hope revived, and from that time onwards the world was never without those who looked for the coming of the Deliverer. The ancient mythologies of Babylon, reaching back to the shadowy times before Abraham, pagan though they were, show unmistakable traces of the belief, persisting even though men's ideas of God had become woefully distorted. When Abraham made his bold venture of faith and left his native country for the land of promise, it was because he believed in the Coming One, and so to him came the promise that in his

own seed would the word be fulfilled and deliverance come. Throughout Israel's long history the flame of expectation never died down; always were they a people chosen by the Lord to hail and receive the Deliverer when He should appear, and under His leadership become a light to the nations, to declare His salvation to the ends of the earth. That was the hope that kept them separate from the nations around them, that held them, despite their many shortcomings and failures, a people for a purpose, fashioned and developed by virtue of many and varied national experiences for the part they would be called upon to play when Messiah should appear.

And to Isaiah fell the bitterness of proclaiming in advance that it was all to be of no avail, that when the supreme moment of Israel's existence had arrived, they would turn away from the Deliverer and fail at the very moment of achievement. He would be despised and rejected of men, and all the glorious things associated with His Advent vanish away like the morning mists. They would fail to recognise the time of their visitation, and the magnificent opportunity pass them by for ever—for even then the Divine sentence was in process of formulation "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof".



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

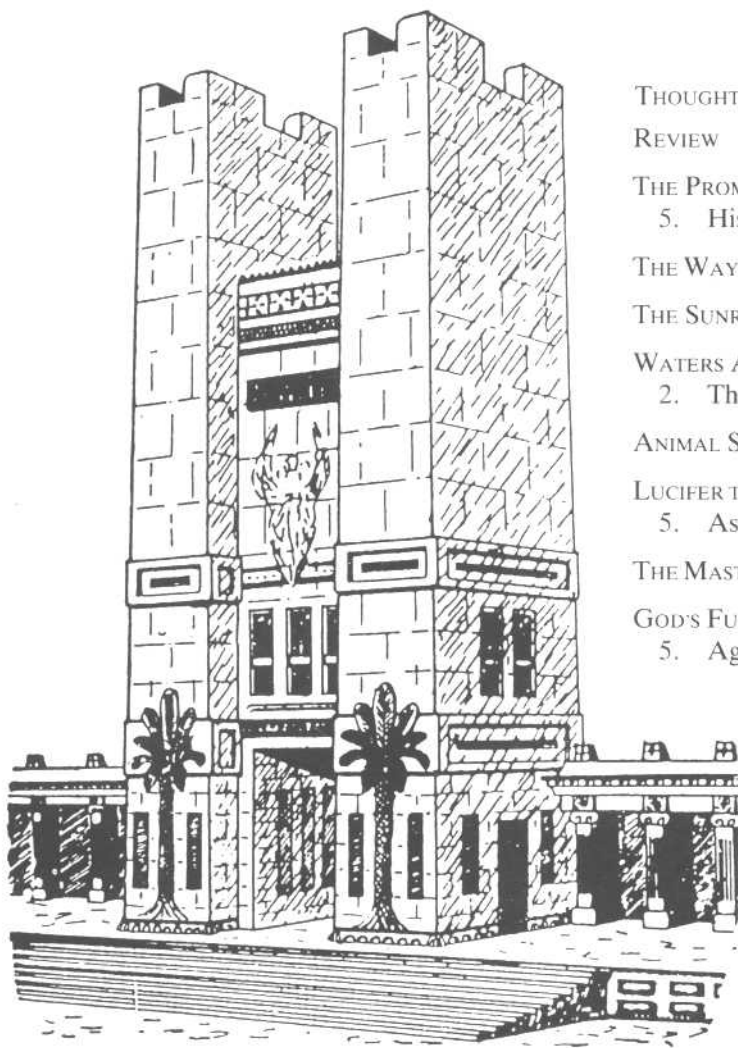
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

Archaeologists investigating an ancient site called Godin Tepe in the Zagros mountains of north-western Iran have found earthenware jars containing the residues of wine, which, they claim from chemical analysis, must have been made in about 3500 B.C. They claim this is the earliest evidence of wine-making known, five hundred years before the date formerly held.

They could well be right. 3500 B.C. is just about the date of Noah's Flood, on the basis of modern conclusions of chronology. The mountain on which it is most probable the Ark landed—despite the claims of to-day's Ararat enthusiasts, — is not far from Godin Tepe. In the series *"After the Flood"* (BSM 1984) it was suggested that Noah and his immediate descendants lived in these very mountains for probably a century or more before the plains of the "land of Shinar", modern Iraq, were sufficiently dried to permit the colonisation alluded to in Gen. 11. The extensive researches of Braidwood and Howe (*"Prehistoric investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan"* 1966) revealed, twenty-five years ago, village settlements as old as this later discovery in this same mountain area. It is fascinating to surmise that at this latter end of the 20th century discoveries come to light suggesting positive evidence of the immediate post-flood era—history going back to the very beginning of what St. Peter called "the world that now is".

REVIEW

Users of video cassettes may well be interested in an offer now available from the British Dawn Bible Students (will our Christadelphian readers please note that this is not the same as the Christadelphian publishing house of the same name, Dawn; there is no connection). The videos concerned are explanatory of many Bible matters and can be of real interest to Bible believers. Two are at present available and others will follow shortly.

No. 1 "For This Cause" is said to "show the Bible story from the standpoint of the wonders of Nature and the incomparable Word of God, witnessing to the providence of God, in bringing forth from this world a new world order of endless blessing for all his creatures." This particular thesis is one with which readers of the "Monthly" will already be familiar—the Millennial era of the future.

No. 2 "The Great Pyramid and the Bible" will probably interest a different circle, that which is already familiar with the claims of some investigators regarding the scientific features and possible connection with Biblical prophecy of that ancient edifice.

The videos are available at £5 each, less than cost of production, post free, on application to Dawn Bible Students, PO Box 136, CHESHAM, Bucks, HP5 3EB. Orders, with remittance, and all correspondence, should be sent to that address, and NOT to the B.F.U. at Hounslow.

Gone from us

— ❖ —

Sis. Eva Lightfoot (*West Wickham*)
 Bro. William Woods (*Dundee*)

— ❖ —

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

THE PROMISE OF HIS PRESENCE

5. His appearing

It is a basic principle that those who are Christ's are to be "changed" from earthly to heavenly life, to be with Christ their Lord, at a time prior to his revelation to the world, in order that they may be revealed "with him", to the world, at the time of his appearing to all men. The "two-stage" Advent, as it was called in the early part of the 19th century, is the framework within which this process takes place. The "shout", the "voice of the archangel", the "trump of God", are all phases and aspects of this earlier stage, when, as in the days of Noah, the simile used by our Lord in Matt. 24, the forces which are to bring the old world to an end are gathering force and impetus under the guiding hand of the Lord, already bringing the world to that point where all men will realise and accept the fact, and his "appearing" become reality. In the meantime, and whilst the kingdoms of this world, by reason of their own policies and actions, are declining to their fall, and the progressive despoliation of the planet itself is threatening the continued existence of human life, the Lord is engaged in another important feature of the Advent. That feature is the resurrection change of "the Church".

Once it is realised that the call and destiny of all committed Christians is that in the after life they shall initially become agents and missionaries for the conversion of all men, past and present, from whatever of separation and alienation of God may be their condition, and their full attainment of perfection of character and consequently reconciliation to and communion with God, the special position of the Church at the Advent becomes clear. It is not just a question of the righteous being taken away to heavenly felicity and all the rest cast off and consigned to everlasting woe. The last chapter of the Bible (Rev. 22, 17) contains a stirring invitation "*The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, And let him that heareth say Come, and whosoever is athirst, let him come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life, freely*". This is an invitation issued, not only by the returned Lord, but also by his Church, his "Bride", to all mankind to accept and profit by the opportunity of eternal life which it is the purpose of the then newly inaugurated Millennial Age to offer every man. And this demands that when at last "his appearing" is an accomplished fact his Church will be manifested

with him from the heavenly world. Their earthly lives will have been finished and they will already have participated in the "First Resurrection" (Rev. 20, 4, 6).

St. Paul makes this clear in I Cor. 15, 51-52 where he distinguishes between the resurrection of those of the Church who have passed into death before the Advent and those who are still living at the time of its impingement upon the world. "*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*". He further elaborates this in I Thess. 4, where he specifically states that the "living" ones shall not precede those who are "asleep". The dead in Christ shall rise first; then those living at the time of the Advent will follow them "*and so shall we ever be with the Lord*", so that all are with him in the heavenly state when at last He, with them, is manifested to all men and the fact of the Advent is universally recognised and accepted. The reference in Corinthians to the necessity of being "changed"—appearing instantaneously in a different form and different world, "*in the twinkling of an eye*", and in Thessalonians to being "*caught up*"—instantaneously translated to another place—is reflected from Paul's own insistence that flesh and blood cannot inherit the eternal world. The erstwhile terrestrial being becomes a celestial being in this moment of resurrection, the earthly body being left behind and the individual awaking to conscious perception of existence in the celestial world in a celestial body adapted to that world. The cessation of conscious human life in this world is followed at once by conscious celestial life in the other.

So the stage is set for the final scenes in the drama of the transfer of rule from the kingdoms of this world to the Millennial Kingdom of Christ. This is where it begins to be true that the world of man in general will begin to "*see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*" as Daniel has it in his noteworthy 7th chapter dealing with this same time. It is significant that in that chapter the final judgment upon the evil powers of earth is already in progress when the Son of Man is thus seen advancing to take his power and commence his reign. This high-lights

the fact that although the Church will have been resurrected to heavenly conditions there are still some final features of the termination of man's dominion to be worked out before the world-wide manifestation of the returned Lord can take place. And the most spectacular of those features will be the development and manifestation of the destined nation which is to be the first to hail and accept the returned Lord.

It is a cardinal principle of the Divine Plan that in addition to the Christian Church in heaven, poised as it were to enter upon its mission of world conversion, there is also to be a dedicated nation on earth, qualified and ready to work in conjunction with that Church to achieve this end. That nation, as verified by all Old Testament prophecy in addition to New Testament doctrine, is Israel. Not the Israel of the present day, taking its place as one of the kingdoms of this world, partaking of the policies and methods common to those kingdoms, but an Israel derived and developed from the existing nation but devoted to the Lord God and fully dedicated to his purpose, its policies and methods those of the celestial world rather than of this. That purified and renewed Israel must have—will have—renounced the defensive and offensive weapons and the commercial and social practices of this present world-order and will be relying entirely upon the power of God for its defence against aggression and for the stimulus they will need to go forward into their allotted destiny. The old historical examples of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and the Moabite/Edomite invasion of Judah in the days of Jehoshaphat (2 King 19; 2 Chron. 20) are foreviews and examples of the quiet faith in which Israel of the last days will avow its faith in, and proclaim the imminence of, the open manifestation of the Lord from Heaven, accompanied by his Church, and face, undisturbed, the onset of the powers of this world determined to crush, at its inception, this new challenge to their policies and power.

The 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel describe this last effort to resist the incoming kingdom of righteousness. The prophet took as the background to his picture the memorable invasion of the Middle East by Scythians from Siberia a few decades before his own day. Swarming down from the north, they overran Assyria, Syria, Israel and Judah, being brought to a halt only upon reaching the borders of Egypt. For ten years they held those lands in thrall, and then returned and vanished as suddenly as they had come. So, said Ezekiel, shall

it be in the latter days. Israel will be a peaceful and prosperous nation, having renounced all material means of defence. *"I will go up to the land of unwallled villages, to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil and to take a prey . . . upon the people that are gathered out of the nations . . . that dwell in the midst of the land"*. (Ezek. 38. 11-12). So the 9th century Scythians under Gog their chieftain (Gog in the Old Testament), a people from the far corners of the earth previously unknown to Israel, became the symbol of the entire modern world, to its farthest recesses, uniting to eliminate the earthly people of the Lord, with all their principles of justice and benevolence and right dealing, from the face of the earth, in the endeavour to preserve their own selfish interests.

The rest of the story relates how the people await the coming of the host in complete faith that God will deliver—and He does. Without lifting a finger themselves, they see the enemy host fade away and be no more. The 14th chapter of Zechariah describes the same events and indicates, as does Isaiah in his 66th chapter, that those would-be marauding peoples, so far from being literally decimated in this conflict, become the subjects of missionary endeavour and conversion to Christ, when back in the countries from which they came, at the hands of the very nation they sought to destroy.

This is the point of time at which the powers of Heaven actively intervene in the affairs of the world. Mankind at large is unbelieving and oblivious to the unseen presence and power of the returned Lord, overruling the preliminaries to the winding up of the Age in the completion and gathering of the Church, the development and preparation of the holy nation Israel, the bringing the wars and famines and pestilences, the social and commercial manoeuvres of this dying world, into focus at one culminating point which the Scriptures call Armageddon. This is the point at which men have to pass from their state of unbelief and indifference to realisation and acceptance of the fact that the Lord Christ has indeed and in fact assumed the sovereignty of the world. The evidences will be too patent to ignore or refute. This is the point when the Lord's words in Matt. 24 have their fulfillment, *"They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory"*. And more than that, they will accept him with acclamation. Says Isaiah, speaking of that event,

"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation (Isa. 25.9).

Is this "seeing" to be with the physical or mental sight? In past centuries the Lord was visualised descending majestically from the upper skies in a clearly visible human body—whether in 1st Century or 20th Century clothing has never been clearly defined,—surrounded by a halo of glory and attendant angels with trumpets, to take his seat on an earthly throne to conduct the Last Assize. The purpose as well as the nature of the Advent has been discerned and defined much more clearly since then, and the process of judgment to be more far-reaching than at one time was understood. He comes, not to condemn without hope but to *"seek and save that which was lost"*, so that the old twenty-four Day of Judgment, (which, it has been calculated, requires that the Lord would require to pronounce his judgment on some two hundred and seventy thousand men or women in every second of time in that twenty-four hours), develops into a thousand year Millennium in which all who have known Christ only imperfectly or have never known him at all will be reached with the Gospel, and, if they respond, will be brought to a condition of acceptance with him and of eternal life. The "seeing" him is therefore something much more vital than the ocular response to a visible object. The patriarch Job, after his harrowing experiences following a formerly blameless and prosperous life, did say *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee"* (Job. 42.5). The Book of Hebrews says of Moses that *"he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Heb. 11.27). Our Lord gave his flesh for the life of the world (Jno. 6.51) and since his resurrection is no longer human, but is *"the Lord that Spirit"*, restored to the glory He had with the Father before the world was (2. Cor. 3.17. Jno. 17.5) and therefore incapable of detection by human ocular organs. He did though appear transiently after his resurrection in various human forms to facilitate communication as did angelic beings in Old Testament times. The question is largely academic—we do not know what additional powers of perception appertain to the perfection of human nature when restored to the likeness of God which men do not possess today. We do not see Satan the enemy, banished from Heaven, but active in the earth, but we know that he is here. We do not see our Lord during this preliminary period prior to his revela-

tion to the world, but we know that He is here. We do not see God, *"whom no man has seen, nor can see"* (1 Tim. 1.16) but our communion with him is none the less real on that account. But there is still much that we do not know.

Especially is this true with respect to our understanding of the nature of the celestial world. Mediaeval theology had no difficulty. Heaven was on a golden floor in the upper skies not too far away and there the Most High sat on a jewelled throne ruling all creation with an attendant choir of angels rendering everlasting anthems of praise. Any idea of purpose, of progress, of change, of continuing achievement, was absent. Heaven was a completely static condition of unalloyed peace and contentment. Whether the human spirit, implanted by God at the beginning, ever seeking fresh things to discover and fresh fields to conquer, could be satisfied with an eternity in which nothing new was ever discovered and nothing new was ever done may be open to question. It was Fred Hoyle, the noted astronomer, who in his agnostic days once said of the future life *"All that the Christians have to offer me is an eternity of frustration"*. Modern knowledge of the Divine Plan and the Divine purpose for humanity can save us from that. Whatever the nature of the celestial world and wherever its "geographical" location it must be a sphere of life and of being in which there is still progress, continuing increase in knowledge and continuing achievement. *"Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"*. So, in thinking of the Advent, or of our Lord in the fulness of time, "coming" from "there" to "here", we must abandon the purely earthly, material idea of a physical and visible descent through earth's atmosphere from some point in physical space where the Deity sits on an eternal throne and from which He superintends all things.

This visible universe is not the only sphere of life. The convictions of many testify that there is a world of living intelligence above and beyond the physical, not perceptible by any of the human senses but a real world nevertheless. Sometimes it is called the spiritual world and its citizens spiritual beings because it lies beyond the bounds of man's senses, and sometimes the celestial world because it lies beyond the bounds of man's geography. Our own universe is an atomic structure built up from ninety-two elements, ranging from hydrogen the lightest to uranium the heaviest—discounting a

few heavier man-made ones—which, by chemical combination with each other, form all known substances, and powered by radiated energy vibrating at rates between a hundred thousand times a second and many many millions, technically called the “electro-magnetic spectrum”. Everything in this universe obeys the laws set by this atomic structure and this energy range; what may lie outside of these, we do not know and as men will never know since all our knowledge is derived from observational instruments which themselves are constructed from these atoms and can respond only to these energy vibrations. Our information regarding the celestial world comes to us through the Bible, the revelation of God, creator of both this world and that, supplemented a little in our own day by the reasoning of men whose deepening knowledge of the physical world is enabling them vaguely to see what possibilities may conceivably lie beyond it. At a conference of high level United States physicists in 1967, during a discussion on the problems of detecting life in space, it was said that we may no longer insist that life can only be manifested in material bodies such as ours, bodies of micro-cellular structure; there is no certainty that an entirely different form of life structure is not possible. At a rather earlier date another atomic physicist, appearing in a B.B.C. feature, referred to the possible existence of other universes dependent on other forces not capable of interaction with our own, so that they might conceivably exist, so to speak, on a different wave-length and be quite imperceptible to us although present in reality all the time. Firsoff, in *“Life beyond the earth”* (1963) suggests that there is “no reason why longer or shorter wavelengths” (than those of the electro-magnetic spectrum which govern all the phenomena of our universe) “could not form the basis of sensory perception . . . we cannot be sure that there are no other forms of vibrant energy that could be so used . . .” Modern scientific thought no longer denies the possibility of a world which is a real world but beyond our powers to perceive, inhabited by living intelligences who themselves cannot be perceived by man but can make their presence known, and communicate directly, to the human brain.

There are sufficient unknown quantities in the

equation to justify care not to be too dogmatic in the details of Christ's coming. That He comes first to gather his Church to glory is fundamental. That He comes at a time when the entire world by reason of its own selfishness and greed and godlessness is rushing into self-inflicted destruction is foretold in the Scriptures. That a time comes when the fact that He has taken control of earth's affairs to the satisfaction of every right-thinking person so that it can truly be said that every eye can see him is also so definitely stated that this must clearly be the climactic point of the Advent and the commencement of the *de facto* reign of the Lord over the nations cannot be disputed. Somewhere within this varied programme of happenings comprising the Second Advent there is a point which meets the individual believer's conception of the entire process, and if, as is inevitable, some can see one aspect best and another, another, there can be no doubt that when all these things have come to pass every lover of the Lord will be supremely satisfied with the outcome. There will be no disharmony then.

Elihu, that young Arab philosopher of nearly four thousand years ago, wiser beyond his years, voiced sentiments (Job. 37. 21-23) worthy of bearing in mind when the implications of the Advent are considered. For we know so little of that which is the other side of the Veil. But we do know that God is great, that He plans for the ultimate well-being of all mankind in an eternity of contentment and fulfilment. And the Second Advent is the means by which that era will be introduced. Elihu must have glimpsed something of that in his vision of the Deity.

“And now men cannot behold the bright light in the skies, for the light is not visible to all. It shines afar off in the heavens, as that which is from him in the clouds. Out of the north a golden light cometh; upon God is fearful splendour. From the north come the clouds shining like gold; in these great is the glory and honour of the Almighty. We do not find another his equal in strength. The Almighty, whom we cannot find out, excellent in power, and in justice, and abounding in righteousness. He will not afflict. Wherefore men should reverence him, and the wise in heart will reverence him”.

The End.

Nothing is sweeter than Love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven and earth; because Love is born of God, and cannot rest but

in God, above all created beings. He that loveth, flieth, runneth, and rejoiceth; he is free and is not bound.

Thomas à Kempis.

THE WAY OF AN EAGLE IN THE AIR

"There be three things that are too wonderful for me, yea, four that I know not; the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid". (Prov. 30. 18-19).

This is one of the wise sayings of Agur the son of Jakeh. We know nothing else of Agur; he is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible; but there is some ground for thinking that he lived in the Arab lands at some time between Abraham and the Exodus, his words being preserved in Israel and added to the Book of Proverbs when King Solomon compiled that book.

What a strange little statement it is! Four everyday sights in the world, two connected with the lower creation, one in the air and one on the earth; two connected with man, one in the sea and one on the land. Four everyday sights, common enough, so common as probably not to excite any remark at all on the part of ninety-nine out of a hundred witnesses—but Agur the son of Jakeh was the hundredth, a serious, reflective man, and as he watched, he confessed that in each of these four sights there resided a mystery, a something that went beyond his understanding, a something that stirred his emotions to their depths and left him with a feeling of quiet awe.

The eagle, winging its swift flight through the higher levels of the air, building its nest on high in the inaccessible crags of the highest rocks, swooping down upon the prey its keen sight had espied from far, cleansing the earth from the defiling presence of dead carcasses: Agur gazed upon the spectacle with wonder. The serpent, slithering out from its den to sun itself upon the warm rock, its brilliantly coloured scaly skin scintillating and glistening in the sunlight as it twisted and darted after its prey: Agur must have stood enthralled as he watched it shed that skin and emerge clothed in an even more brilliant and showy one. He beheld the birds and small animals stand petrified with fear, held spellbound by the serpent's malignant eyes, until it advanced upon them to their doom. The serpent, perhaps mused Agur, brings death to the earth—but the eagle cleanses death from the earth!

Then he lifted up his eyes, and away on the heaving billows of the great sea beheld a vessel, making its way with difficulty and labour through the mounting waves that threatened to submerge it. *"The way of a ship in the midst of the sea"* indicates

that he had in mind a boat caught in a storm, tossing and straining in the trough of the waves, helpless in the grip of the elements. However could it get safe to land, Agur must have wondered; yet in the fulness of time the storm would abate and the crew arrive safely home with their cargo. *"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then they are glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven."* (Psa. 107. 29-30). And in coming to the fourth subject of wonder there is no need to think other than that Agur conned over what Paul himself called a great mystery, the love of a man for the woman who is to be his wife. Perhaps the son of Jakeh caught some echo of those far-off days when the Lord God brought the woman unto the man, and she became his wife. (Gen. 2. 22). In the impulse which drives a man to seek and win the woman of his choice Agur found mystery beyond his ability to solve.

But why are these homely allusions in the text of Scripture? What is there here of instruction or furnishing unto good works for the Christian? Agur may have spoken and written down these words in all sincerity and others may have recorded and preserved them to later generations, but why should they have been taken hold of by the Holy Spirit and granted that immortality which is the lot of every word "written in the Book"? In short, what is there here for us?

We may take it that Agur ben Jakeh had no idea of any deep significance in his words. He spoke as he felt and said exactly what he meant. He intended the application of no other than a strictly literal meaning to his sayings. But the fact that the Holy Spirit enshrined these words in a setting which presents them for the consideration of every succeeding generation of truth-seekers does indicate that some deeper purpose is in fact intended to be served.

A great deal of Bible teaching is pictorial imagery. Everyday scenes and incidents are described, not for the merit or interest of the particular scene or incident itself, but because in the description of the scene or the relating of the incident parallel thoughts of spiritual things are suggested, and the mind is led to be exercised in the "things of the Spirit". An analogy between the natural illustration and some important spiritual truth is discernible, and although the illustration is at best but an illustration, it has served a valuable purpose in turning the mind more definitely and habitually to

the spiritual truths in which that mind has already been instructed, and familiarises it with the "things of the Spirit". The discerning of a likeness between the natural things of this world and what may be termed their spiritual counterparts brings more reality into our spiritual understanding and accustoms us to look at all things in life from the standpoint of the Spirit rather than the standpoint of the world.

The four "mysteries" of Agur ben Jakeh may be taken as illustrative of the four great mysteries in the Plan of Salvation—the power of Evil, the Redemption from evil, the call of the Church, and the hope for the World. And even if such an application be held to be no more than the use of the text to provide an illustration—well, it is by illustrations often that the deepest of truths are conveyed to our immature minds.

"The way of an eagle in the air." That downward swoop of the swift-pinioned bird to the earth reminds one of the well-known hymn *"He saw men plunged in deep distress, and flew to their relief"*. The eagle makes its nest in the highest parts of the mountains from whence it can survey the world around. Wisdom, says the 8th chapter of Proverbs, stands at the head of the ways, the chief of the high places of the earth. (Prov. 8. 2.) The personified "Wisdom" of Prov. 8 is thought to describe the Son of God, our Redeemer, prior to his coming to earth for our salvation. From that high place He surveyed the world, seeing death and corruption, and came down to the world to abolish death and cleanse the earth from the defiling influence of sin. The 'eagles' of the Bible were in reality great blessings to the land, for they disposed of animal carcasses which otherwise would quickly putrify in that tropical heat and pollute the land, spreading disease and further death. It is from this standpoint that we must use the illustration. Our Lord, coming to those who were dead in trespasses and sins, *"as the way of an eagle in the air"*, descends to earth, takes to himself the burden of death and sin, and leaves the earth clean and free from defilement, corruption and death. *"O death, I will be thy destruction."* He transmutes death and decay into life and immortality. Surely to us, as to Agur ben Jakeh, this "way of an eagle in the air" is too wonderful for our human understanding. *"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him."* (Deut. 32. 11.) The protecting power of God the Father is shown in this picture of the eagle and

its care for its young.

"The way of a serpent upon a rock." From the very commencement of the sacred history the serpent has been the symbol of Satan and of sin. The seed of the woman is one day to bruise the serpent's head and righteousness will then be supreme for ever, but in the meantime evil reigns, and that fact is a great mystery not only to the natural man who knows not the things of the Spirit of God, but also in large measure to those to whom have been revealed much of the Divine counsels and the Divine Plan. The way of evil through world history is like the way of a serpent upon a rock, tortuous and sinuous, a stealthiness of progress, first in this direction and then in that, seeking out opportunities for entrance into the good and pure and holy, that it might befoul with its corrupting influence. *"Your adversary the devil . . . goeth about, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Pet. 5. 8). *"From whence comest thou?"* asks the Most High of the Adversary in the story of Job. *"From going to and fro in the earth and from walking up and down it"* answers the Adversary glibly (Job 1. 7). That has ever been the way of Satan, like the way of a serpent upon a rock; and why such a thing has been permitted for so long has been a matter of wonder to men just as the natural case was to Agur ben Jakeh. But evil and the Spirit of evil is earthbound, as is the serpent. Jesus saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven and although he appears to men as an angel of light it is but an earthbound glory; it reflects no radiance to heaven. The serpent cannot follow the eagle into the air; it must forever twist and writhe upon the rock, its sinister beauty dazzling to mortal sight but having nothing in common with the graceful denizens of the air. It emerges from its hole; it suns itself upon the rock and fascinates by its fatal beauty even while it repels; it hypnotises its victims by its baleful stare and strikes death to them before ever they are aware; but its latter end is that it perishes in the dust and is no more. In the new earth which is to be, the nobler animals are to live in peace and concord one with another, but *"dust shall be the serpent's meat"* (Isa. 65. 25)—a metaphorical allusion to everlasting death—for *"they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain"*.

"The way of a ship in the heart of the sea." The ancient peoples looked upon a sea voyage as a hazardous undertaking—as indeed it usually was in those far-off days. The frail ship, with its load of human lives, so utterly at the mercy of the elements, so dependent upon the saving power of

God when storm or other danger threatened, very easily became to them a symbol of the uncertainty and difficulty of human life. That symbol is a more than usually apt one. The world of mankind, pursuing its normal course, very generally heedless of God whilst times are calm, becomes transformed into a frightened world when danger and disaster threatens, as it does to-day. And like the mariners in Jonah's ship, men then begin to call upon God for salvation. But, through calm and storm, through fair weather and foul weather, alternating between unbelief and faith, indifference and supplication, the world of man, like a ship in the heart of the sea, goes on its way, forging onward to an unknown land, in imminent danger from the towering waves and yet after each burst of the element's fury is seen to be still afloat, battered and shaken perhaps, but still limping on its way toward the unseen land of promise. That was the wonder to Agur ben Jakeh, that the ship survived at all, that it could still be seen in the far distance until at length, the conflicts and tumults over, it was lost in the calm glory of the far horizon. A fitting symbol, surely, of the way of mankind during this time of sin and death! Not because of their own righteousness, but because of his great mercies, does God save them and bring them at the end into his "afterward of peace". Zechariah, his spiritual vision quickened to perceive the details of that final ending to the ship's voyage, said "*at even time it shall be light*". The way of the ship in the sea, with all the vicissitudes it experiences, is a great wonder, but it ends in the light of the far horizon, the light of the "*land of far distances*". (Isa. 33. 17 marg.).

"*The way of a man with a maid.*" There are several words for "man" in the Old Testament, each having its especial significance. There is adam, and "ish", man as an individual, an ordinary being; "enosh", man as a mortal, dying creature; "ben", man as related to his surroundings (as "a man of the city") but in this passage the word is the

supreme one of them all, "geber", a "mighty man", a man indeed, a man head and shoulders above his fellows. That takes us at once to the glorious description in the Song of Solomon. "*My beloved is . . . the chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely*". The last and greatest mystery of the four wonders must surely be the mystery of Christ and his Church. "*Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy lord; and worship thou him.*" (Psa. 45. 10-11.) That is the "way of a man with a maid", the coming of the Lord from heaven to seek and win his Bride, that He might take her away and present her faultless before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy. We have heard that call and responded to it; we trust that we are of those who "*follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*"; we talk together, as did Paul to the Ephesians, of the love of Christ for his Church, but, like Agur ben Jakeh of old, we still stand in wonderment before this great mystery. We look forward to the "*marriage of the Lamb*" when the Bride has been made ready; we hear in anticipation the words that are one day to be uttered by the Bride to all the world, "*Come—take of the fountain of the water of life freely*" (Rev. 22. 17) but still we do not approach to the depths of understanding that must one day be ours when, in the splendour of that marriage feast, and in the overwhelming glory of the Father's presence we look back upon the long story of sin and redemption and perceive the evidences of Divine love and wisdom in every step of the way. Then, perhaps as never before, we shall understand why, long ages ago, a man of God was inspired to look upon the world he knew and speak of four things too wonderful for him to understand: *the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid!*

Envy, hatred, jealousy, animosity, bitterness, and all manner of uncharitableness, are the mental deficiencies of a disordered mind (Gal. 5. 19-21). Love, generosity, kindness, goodwill, forbearance, are the mental vitamins necessary to bring about a proper mental balance, and spiritual adjustment, scripturally termed "The spirit of a sound mind" (Eph. 4. 23, 5. 9-11; 2 Tim. 1. 7; Gal. 5. 22-23).

How easy it is to close eyes, ears and heart to this "electric" Gospel. How much better to be like Michael Faraday, who, when asked by a fellow-scientist on his death-bed, "What are your speculations now"? replied, "Speculations! I have none. I know whom I have believed. I am not thinking of speculations; I am resting my soul upon certainties".

THE SUNRISING

An Exhortation

"And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springeth out of the earth by clear shining after rain." (2 Sam. 23. 4).

How eagerly and longingly the watchers of the morning are waiting for the coming or manifestation of the Lord—the Sun of Righteousness. How and when does He come, we often ask ourselves. In the beautiful text quoted above we have a very clear indication of the way in which He comes—even as our Lord himself stated, that it would be in a clear and unmistakable way. *As the lightning shineth from the east even unto the west, even so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* Men will doubt no longer. *"Every eye shall see him."*

One by one the years slip by and hearts grow weary with the strain of waiting and watching for the signs of his appearing. Yet God grant that we are found ready and with oil in our lamps when the cry goes forth "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh".

St. Paul exhorted his disciples again and again to "be patient". He knew that the period of waiting would be very trying; so trying that many would fail to be ready and some would even be smiting others who were not quite in accord with their own views.

"Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." (Jas. 5. 7 and 8).

How hard it is to be patient in times of anxious waiting we all know well. How our imagination runs riot and fills us with foreboding or fears until we find the strain well nigh intolerable. When, on the other hand, some great joy awaits us, how eagerly we look forward, counting each day, and then, when the watched for day arrives, watching the clock. This is what we are told to do in these days of waiting—"watch". Not to grow weary, not to lose patience, not to doubt that the time will come at last. Oh yes, it sounds easy to talk, but as weary year succeeds weary year, and the hopes begin to grow fainter, the stoutest and most eager hearted watcher begins to sigh and groan for the longed for time. To some of us more impulsive natures, this is a hard testing time. How, then, are we to keep our hopes high and our confidence steady? Merely, brethren, by calling upon him Who alone is able to keep us from falling, and trusting in him implicitly, for *"He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or*

think, according to the working of his mighty power". Let us ever remember that the "Everlasting Arms" are always nigh, and the overshadowing wings ever ready to cover us, and that those who put their trust in him shall never be ashamed.

Soon, soon, the ever growing light of this cloudless morning shall dispel the darkness. The things which have seemed so shadowy and obscure shall be clearly defined and all shall be bright and warm, as the cold morning mists give way to the glowing beams of the glorious Millennial sunrise. *Then shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings.* The darkness will be past and the glad day arrived at last.

Take heart, weary watchers, and keep those lamps alight with the oil of love, for though "the love of many shall wax cold" in these days of abounding iniquity. He Who is our Guardian is also the Lord of Love, and can fill our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, melting down the hardness and keeping them "hearts of flesh". Ah, how soon the chill winds of adversity, ingratitude and unkindness can make that poor, weak flame, flicker and, alas, even die out. Let us call upon him to keep our hearts filled with oil of love, therefore, that when He shall appear, our lamps will be lighted, and we may go out to meet the Bridegroom. He alone can give us this oil, through the plenitude of his Holy Spirit.

Praise God, that in the glorious morning that awaits us "many nations shall be turned to the Lord", and many unbelievers shall be converted unto him "whom they had pierced". Many shall then outgrow the old "earthy" nature, and "spring forth" into the "new birth" even as the tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness after the refreshing rains of his Presence. Thus, in the "Times of Refreshing" which shall come from the Presence of the Lord, shall many weary wanderers turn their weary steps to him who has said *"Come unto me, ye weary, and I will give you rest"*.

*"He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth,
And love, joy, hope, like flowers,
Spring in his path to birth."*

"Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us."

WATERS ABOVE THE FIRMAMENT

2. The Advance of the waters.

The nature of the great Flood of Noah's day can only be determined, on the one hand, from the detailed record which comprises chaps. 6-8 of the Book of Genesis, and on the other, from such traditions of the same event that have survived in ancient Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian records. These latter have the demerit that they are clearly rather confused with memories of later lesser floods which have occurred in more recent historic times and the same may be said of sundry legends among others of the earth's ancient peoples which are sometimes adduced as evidence but actually stem from much more local disasters, as for example the Greek story of Deucalion's Flood which is now known to have had its source in the volcanic eruption on the nearby island of Santorini in the 15th century B.C. Nevertheless the Sumerian records offer valuable data.

The Genesis account offers internal evidence that it existed in written form in the 26th century B.C. and could well have been copied from earlier writings now lost. Records external to the Bible date from 250 B.C. back to various dates around 800, 1000, 1700 and 2000 B.C. and so are all of later date than the Bible account. They give evidence of having been copied, with variations, each from an earlier one and it is known that the Sumerian priests of 2000 B.C. had taken it in hand to record in epic form all the histories of the past which they could discover. Quite evidently both sources converge upon a common original prior to 2600 B.C. which is now lost. They differ the one from the other in some respects and the fact that they all mention the various gods of Sumer show that in their present form they were copied or edited not earlier than about 2400 B.C. when idolatry first emerged. Before that date no names of the gods appear in any known records; all men worshipped one God, the God of Heaven, the Most High God.

Nevertheless, the traditions and the Bible agree so much as to the physical features of the Flood that it is possible by combining them to form a fair—and vivid—idea of its true nature, a colossal tidal wave advancing from the southern ocean and devastating the antediluvian world. That such an inundation of the sea did in the past flood Iraq as far north as Samarra on the Tigris and Hit on the Euphrates, six hundred miles north of the present head of the Gulf, leaving behind a thick bed of salt-laden clay-sand agglomerate, has been abund-

antly testified. And the Sumerian tradition is positive that the Flood was not merely an unprecedented rainstorm or an unusually high river flood overflowing the land; it was a catastrophic and overwhelming flood coming in from the south and extending up into the heavens. Says one compendium of the various accounts "*when early dawn appeared there came up from the horizon a black cloud. Ramman (the storm god) thundered in the midst of it. The lord Nabu (messenger of the gods) marched in front, devastating the mountains and the plain. Nergal (god of the abyss, outer space) made the storm to burst, and Adar (god of war) advanced, overthrowing all before him. The Annunaki (spirits of the earth) lifted up flaming torches (lightning); with the brightness thereof they lit up the earth. The inundation swelled up to the sky and all light was turned into darkness. The waters rose on the mountains. Six days and six nights blew the flood-wind, as the south-storm swept the land. The wind, the water-spouts and the diluvian rain were in all their strength. Wind and flood marched on, subduing the land*".

"*Upon the approach of the seventh day, the flood-carrying south-storm subsided. The terrible water-spout, which had assailed after the fashion of an earthquake, grew weaker. The sea grew quiet, the tempest was calmed, the flood ceased. I beheld the sea; its voice was silent. The land was as level as a flat roof*". (The account is in the first person, as if written by the one who experienced it.)

Another account, rendered here exactly as it appears in the Sumerian language, has it "*the stormwinds with exceeding terror, all of them together raced along. The deluge the mighty tempest raged with them. When it was seven days and seven nights that the deluge in the land had raged and the mighty ship over the great waters the storm-wind had tossed, then the sun rose over it, in heaven and earth making light*".

It must be noted that in all the surviving traditions the Flood was a colossal inundation emanating from the south, and that its waters "*swelled up to the sky*", so that even the gods were afraid and took refuge in the highest heaven of all, where An, the Most High God, had his dwelling and from where he ruled all creation. This was no ordinary flood, to have survived in the consciousness of these people as memory of an event which took place two thousand years before their own time.

Against this background the Genesis record has to be examined. The narrative in the Bible has been translated and re-translated through the ages, existing in the earliest form of writing now known, the early Sumerian pictographic, thence to the later cuneiform, then archaic Phoenician—Hebrew, Judaistic Hebrew, Greek, Latin and finally English to the present modern versions. It might be questioned how accurately the original story has been preserved. One of the wonders of the Bible is the fact how little the text has suffered in transmission through something like five thousand years of history.

An analysis of the descriptive words employed in the Genesis account reveals a marked similarity to the general impression revealed by the Sumerian legends and strengthens the impression that the latter came from the original source from which the Bible account came, and the account was written by an eye-witness.

Reading from chap. 7 of Genesis, verse 11 *"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month"* (corresponding to our November; scientific examination of the herbage and seeds found in the mouths of those Siberian frozen mammoths shows that the catastrophe which suddenly ended their lives occurred in the autumn) *"the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened"*. The "great deep" here is a word derived from the primeval Tiamat, the abyss or chaos, which in our day would be called outer space, the medium from which, according to the ancients, the earth was created; "broken up" is *baga*, to be cleft through, rent asunder, to burst. It is significant that in the Sumerian account the same word is used, where Nergal, the god of this same abyss, *"made the storm to burst"*. *"The windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights."* "Windows" is *arubbah*, meaning both windows and chimneys; chimneys in ancient houses were holes in the roof through which the smoke went out and the rain came in. Three words are used in Hebrew for rain, one defining the heaviest torrential rain of winter, one for the lighter spring rains, and one for the lightest of all, the summer rain. Here it is *geshem*, the heaviest of torrential rain. The picture is that of a sudden cleavage of the heavens to bring down masses of water which overspread the earth, a super-terrestrial incursion which continued for forty days.

It is this forty days' downrush upon the earth,

compared with the longer period of five months during which, according to vss. 18-24, the waters progressively increased in depth before beginning to recede, that establishes, first, that the impact upon the world of Noah was in the form of a gigantic tidal wave from the south, and second, that the cause of this tidal wave was not due to earthquake or volcanic action as is normally the case to-day, but the sudden irruption of this colossal amount of water from above the earth's atmosphere, falling in the South Polar regions and rushing northwards around the entire perimeter of the globe. This is the phenomenon asserted by the various geologists and naturalists from the eighteenth century onward already alluded to, the "Valian thesis". A similar phenomenon occurred over the North Polar regions at the same time, and this accounts for the frozen animal life of northern Siberia and Canada also previously alluded to. The impact in both cases appears to have been between the Poles and the seventieth parallels of latitude—roughly the coastlines of the Antarctic continent and of Siberia and Canada. Here was generated the flood which brought to an end the antediluvian world.

This progressive extension and deepening of the Flood waters is graphically described in vss. 17-24. *"And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the Ark, and it was lift up above the earth"*. "Increased" is *rabah*, to multiply. *"And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the Ark went upon the face of the waters"*. "Prevailed" is *gabur*, to become mighty, and "increased greatly" is *rabah moed*, to multiply many. Now the Ark was being carried along by the rising waters.

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered." "Prevailed exceedingly" is *gabur moed*, to become mightily mighty. "Covered" is "to be concealed", not necessarily submerged. It will be shown later that one effect of the Flood was the creation of a thick mist which concealed distant objects from view. Only later in the account is it said that "the tops of the mountains were seen".

"Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered". This expression has usually been taken to mean that the flood-waters rose to a height of fifteen cubits—about twenty-two feet—above the highest mountains in the world, implying a depth of about six miles above sea level. The absurdity of this is manifest—where would the water go when it was all over?

And how would the occupants of the Ark have determined that figure? The word *le-malah* denotes elevation from a datum; in most cases where it occurs it refers to the excess of a man's age, as in Exod. 38. 28 "from twenty years old and upward". Here in Genesis the expression is better rendered "from fifteen cubits and upward did the waters prevail". The Ark was thirty cubits in height from base to apex. An engineering calculation exists taking into consideration the "tonnage" of a vessel the size given for the Ark, i.e., its own probable weight and its capacity for cargo, based on the dimensions given in Genesis, and this shows that when fully loaded the Ark probably "drew" about twenty-seven feet of water. The occupants therefore knew that the water in which they floated was something over fifteen cubits deep, and that was all they could have known about the external circumstances. (In point of fact for the major part of the time the depth was considerably more than that.)

The Flood increased in intensity and depth for six weeks. The following fifteen weeks saw it remain more or less at its maximum. The seven succeeding months saw the waters slowly draining away into the ocean from which they had come. Only after some twelve months was it all over.

All these details, related so graphically in the Book of Genesis and by the Sumerian epic legends, brings to the surface the enquiry as to the cause of so unusual an occurrence.

There is not much doubt that this was the extra-terrestrial catastrophe first propounded by Leibnitz in the 17th century and by other investigators since, culminating in Prof. Isaac Vail's "*The Earth's Annular system*" (1886), in which he pictured a watery envelope enshrouding the earth at a distance of perhaps some thousands of miles, collapsing in the form of masses of icy water at the Poles, from whence it travelled over parts of the land masses of the Northern hemisphere and the oceans of the Southern, locking the animal population of the northern lands in an icy grave and bringing the world of man near the Equator to a sudden end. Vail did overlook the fact that water vapour can only condense into liquid water round a nucleus such as a speck of dust and there is no dust in outer space, more likely is it that this envelope consisted of water vapour which by the time of Noah had descended to a much lower elevation where it would encounter the earth's dust laden atmosphere and begin to condense. At such point the temperature of space is about two hundred

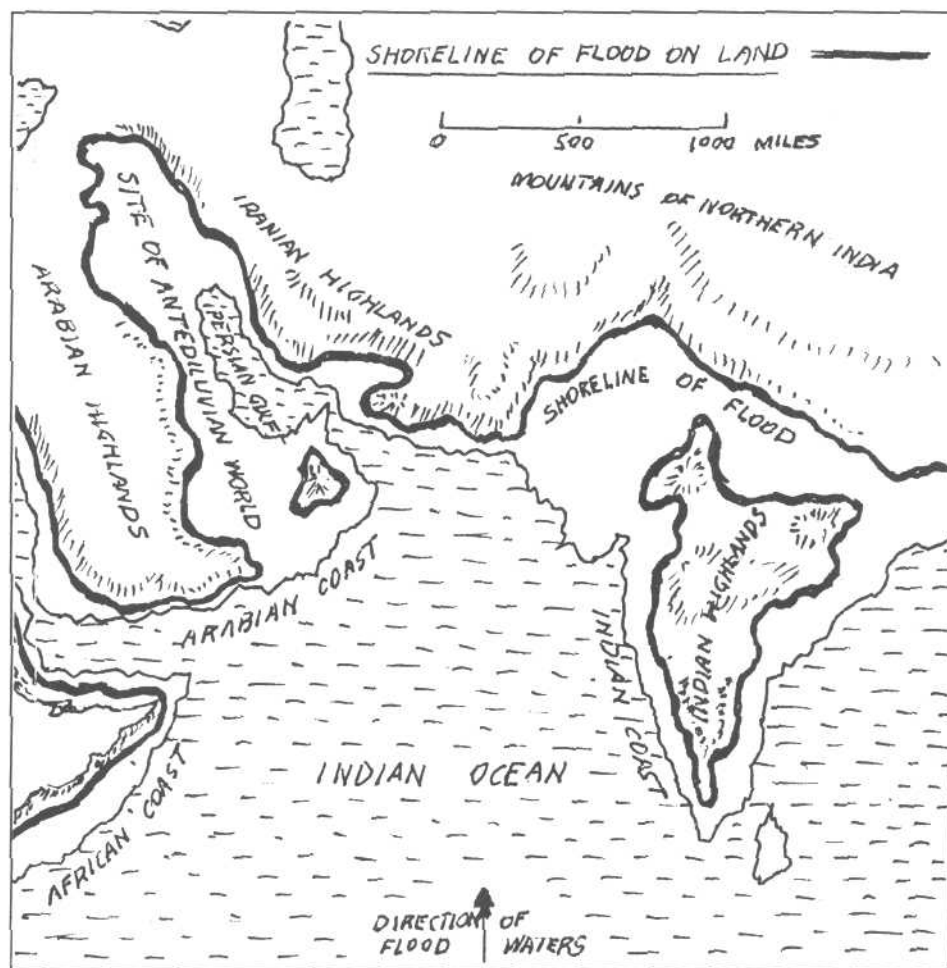
degrees Fahrenheit but lower down it falls rapidly to a hundred degrees below freezing point and since at this lower temperature the atmosphere can only hold about one-thirtieth of the amount of water vapour that it can at the higher, the result must have been a rapid transformation into icy cold water which then cascaded on the planet. Hence the Flood.

The study of tsunamis, tidal waves, is what is called an exact science, that is, given the basic data, their magnitude and performance can be calculated. For example, the speed at which such a wave travels over the ocean depends upon the depth of the sea at that point. The Antarctic sea is 18,000 feet deep; at this depth the speed of the wave set up by the descending waters around the Antarctic coast would have been 525 miles per hour—as it is to-day in the Pacific where such waves occur at intervals. The height of a wave resulting from such an unusual cause cannot be calculated but it would certainly be considerably greater than the highest of any wave known to recorded history, which is 450 feet. Even if the Flood-wave left the Antarctic at this height, its effects would be felt world-wide. When Krakatoa, an East Indies volcano in the middle of the sea, blew up in 1883, it hurled a cubic mile of rock and dust twenty-five miles into the air, and started a tidal wave which reached the English Channel and even affected the Thames at London. On the assumption that the Flood-wave was as little as 450 feet high it would travel northward and reach the Equator nine hours later but because of the greater distance round the earth at the Equator the height would by then have dropped to 330 feet and the speed to 470 miles an hour. After crossing the Equator the converging coasts of Africa and India would begin to constrict the waters, and the depth of the seabed begin to lessen, so that by the time the head of the wave reached the southern coast of Arabia in about another three hours it would have reduced its speed to 370 miles an hour but increased its height to 720 feet. It is a feature of tidal waves however that when travelling across open sea the wave measures anything up to a hundred miles from front to rear and the forward end of the wave is appreciably lower than its crest. In this case the full impact on the Arabian coastline would have been spread over a span of twenty minutes or so. In the case of the wave generated by the volcanic eruption on the island of Santorini near Greece about 1450 B.C. it is calculated that the full height of the wave was 350 feet but the forward end which struck the island of Crete seventy

miles away was only one hundred feet high; nevertheless it devastated Crete and brought its civilisation to a complete end, going on then another four hundred miles to the coast of Syria and destroying the Phoenician cities there.

Two-thirds of Arabia is at an elevation of some 1,500 or more feet above sea level, extending to its southern coast. The remainder, bordering the Persian Gulf, is much lower, running down to sea

"bank up" to a still greater depth as they advanced. But now a different set of laws came into operation. The energy dissipated by a tidal wave as it travels across the sea is minimal, but once on the land friction with the ground absorbs energy to an increasing extent with the result that the speed tends to reduce until the wave "wears itself out". In this case, however, the motive power at the Pole due to the forty days' continuing downrush of



PROBABLE IMPACT OF THE FLOOD IN THE MIDDLE EAST

level. The mighty wave struck this coast and overflowed its eastern half, continuing on its northerly course but hemmed in across the Gulf by the higher mountains of Iran, which rise to twelve thousand feet. Thus the forward end of the wave became still further restricted over a front of some six hundred miles, one third of the distance between Africa and India in the ocean from which it had come. The tendency would be for the waters to

water meant that as the forward end of the wave slowed down, the water, impelled by more water coming up from behind, continued to "bank up" to a still greater depth while the speed continued to decrease. Exact calculation of the conditions once the wave is traversing land is impossible because of the many conflicting factors, but an approximate endeavour would tend to show that by the time the forward end reached what is now the present head

of the Persian Gulf it could have been about one hundred feet high and travelling at some sixty miles an hour. Somewhere around this point it would have encountered the Ark, if the traditions of Sumer are to be taken as a guide, and here the enclosed vessel would first be overwhelmed by the waters, and then, rising to the surface, float northward under the control of the current. The further progress of the waters, from the geologic evidence of the waterborne clay and sand now existing, finishes in northern Iraq about six hundred miles from this point, and here, apparently, is where the wave came to a halt. But the still continuing addition of more and more water, due to the forty days, meant that the waters over Iraq went on piling up until they attained a depth of anything up to perhaps twelve hundred feet before coming to rest. So the Ark was left floating on an expanse of water covering the Mesopotamian plain six hundred miles long by about three hundred and fifty wide. No wonder that at this stage the occupants could not see the mountains.

The same phenomenon would have affected other parts of the world. The Indus valley in Western India and the present territory of Bangladesh, where the physical conditions are similar to those of Iraq, would have experienced precisely similar floods. The continents of South America, Africa, and Australia would have had their coastlands submerged with the higher mountainous interior unaffected—which answers the old critical questions about the animals unique to Australia. The geography of Genesis pinpoints the Persian Gulf area as the site of the antediluvian world and since those writers lived nearly five thousand years nearer to the event than do we they may perhaps be allowed to be better authorities on the matter than critics of a much later date.

One more element in the old traditions is significant. They refer to the "storm-wind", the "flood-wind", the "mighty tempest", and to Ramman, the storm-god, "*thundering in the midst of it*". They speak of the spirits of the earth, the Annunaki, lifting up their flaming torches and lighting up the earth with their brightness. That means storms of thunder and lightning. This was an additional feature of the event. The forcible displacement of the Antarctic atmosphere by so great a volume of water meant that the air had to go somewhere; it did so in a roaring tempest of ice-cold air which followed the waters northward, and upon encountering the tropical air of the antediluvian world the result was storms of thunder and lightning as had never been known before and rain of unimaginable intensity, rain born of the frightful conflict between hot and cold air that was raging in the upper atmosphere. No wonder at the ancient recollection that Ramman the storm-god "*thundered in the midst of it*". Here is another unwitting evidence that the original account of the happening was written by someone who was there at the time and witnessed this awe-inspiring scene.

It was five months before the Ark grounded. As the banked up waters began to drain off, slowly, through the narrow channel of the Straits of Hormuz at the south end of the Gulf, the Ark, drifting slowly with the southbound current, landed on the flanks of a mountain, and there it stayed for another seven months before the occupants could leave. The place of that landing, and the details of the recession of the waters until "*the earth was dried*", as revealed by the Genesis narrative, must come next to complete the story.

To be continued.

The holy life is not all mountain-top experience. It has its depths as well as its lofty heights. The valley of the shadows must alternate with the still waters; the dangers of the path with the safety of the fold. The young eaglet must be tossed out of its nest if it is to learn to fly up the steep slopes of the air. God must put His child to the proof to ascertain if his love is true and deep. Sorrow pain and loneliness may have to be allowed to plough up the subsoil of the heart, in order that the spirit of obedience, so dear to God, may become manifest under a thousand tests.

Our Heavenly Father's love and care and protection are his wings and his feathers, shielding us from all harm, keeping us warm and safe. He is able to make every experience in life work out for our good. We are, however, to remember that the promise that God will make all things work together for our good is a promise to the New Creature, and not to the old creature. Our temporal affairs may be permitted to go awry. We are not wise enough to know what is for our own best interests as New Creatures, and what would help us the most in our fight against the world, the flesh and the Devil.

ANIMAL SACRIFICES IN THE MILLENNIUM

Three passages in the description of Ezekiel's Temple are sometimes taken as justification for the belief that the practice of ritual sacrificing of animals to God, as known to ancient Israel, will be restored—and apparently continue permanently. There is no similar reference anywhere else in the Scriptures.

The impression stems from the literal interpretation of the entire passage describing the Temple of Ezekiel's vision and all that is associated with it. Now although it has been fully demonstrated that the Temple as described by Ezekiel is an architectural possibility and could conceivably actually be built it is not necessary to insist that all the related portions of the vision must necessarily be interpreted literally, and cannot be accepted as metaphors for the spiritual truths characteristic of the Age which the Temple represents. In some cases a literal interpretation is physically impossible, as, for instance, in the case of the River of Life which flows from the Sanctuary. That river, says Ezekiel, flows into the Dead Sea and makes the salt water fresh, bringing life wheresoever it comes. That, as an expression of a spiritual truth, is a wonderfully apt simile; in practice no stream running into the Dead Sea could ever turn its saline waters fresh, for that salinity is caused by the minerals carried by the rivers themselves—at present principally the Jordan and the Arnon. The Dead Sea can only be made fresh by giving it an outlet to the ocean and this is not envisaged by Ezekiel.

There are fundamental objections to the idea of animal sacrifices in the next Age. In the first place such an institution would be a retrograde step—such practices were in line with the level of human development three or four thousand years ago but certainly not to-day or to-morrow. God's distaste for sacrifices and offerings of that nature has long since been put on record and appreciated by devout men. The "*sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart*" and "*the sacrifices of praise continually*" are the offerings He desires and one cannot imagine his deriving much satisfaction from symbols of

devotion fitted only to a semi-barbaric people only just escaped from Egypt.

A more telling point is the fact that in Ezekiel these sacrifices are sin-offerings, burnt offerings and so on, presented as satisfaction for sin. But in that Age all offering for sin has long since been abolished. Christ gave himself for that purpose and from then onwards "*there is no more offering for sin*" (Heb. 10. 17). And in the Millennial Age, as in this present Christian Age, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin" (Heb. 10. 4). This points to a symbolic rather than a literal application of these particular verses.

There is also the well-known fact that every prophetic picture of the Millennial Age depicts it as a time when "*nothing shall hurt nor destroy*" and the animal creation is at peace. "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid*"; "*the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox*" (Isa. 11. 6-9; 35. 25). Such passages are likely to have a metaphorical intention much more important than the literal, but even so the general impression of order and peace without the prevalence of violent death in all God's earthly creation is predominant. And if there is in fact to exist such a condition of peace and harmony amongst the lower creation and still there persists the practice of animal sacrifice, then man has become the killer whilst the lion has become peaceful and this does not seem very logical.

All in all, it seems that Ezekiel's description of sacrifice associated with the Temple worship is intended to show in a figurative manner how men will come spontaneously before God to acknowledge their faults and shortcomings of the past and declare their full acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ and their future whole-hearted loyalty to him. The reality behind the symbols is found in those offerings of contrite hearts, of praise and prayer and devotion, which are so much better and mean so much more in the Lord's sight than offerings of slain beasts.

Is God all wise? Then the darkest providences have meaning. We will set ourselves as God's interpreters. Because we cannot make straight lines out of crooked we think that God has turned our life into inextricable confusion. The darkest hours in our life have some intent, and it is really

not needful that we should know all at once what the intent is. Let us keep within our own little sphere, and live a day at a time, and breathe a breath at a time, and be content with one pulsation at a time, and interpretation will come when God pleases, and as He pleases. *Dr. Parker.*

LUCIFER THE PRINCE OF EVIL

5. Ashes upon the earth

Apart from the story of the Tempter in Eden, the two vivid descriptions of the fall of that Tempter from his pristine holiness, and his subsequent condemnation, there is singularly little reference to this notorious celebrity in the Bible. Three passing references in the Old Testament, only noticeable because the Hebrew word for "adversary" has in these instances been rendered "Satan", and rather more in the New Testament, where the attribute of conscious and malevolent personality is more clearly marked, together with a final reference to his restraint and impotence in the Messianic Age, where personality is definitely demanded, and that is all. For a character upon whom is laid the blame for the entry of sin into the world, with all the anguish and suffering that has entailed, this might be thought to be surprising. Perhaps, however, the written word in the Bible is intended to reveal and dwell upon the love and wisdom—and purposes—of God, and to use history only as a means of displaying the course and consequences of sin in the world on the one hand and the results and benefits of righteousness on the other. It says no more about the original cause of the entry of sin and death than it has to say.

The earliest mention in the Scriptures of Satan as a personality is in the Book of Job, where he is depicted as the one permitted by God to afflict Job with the personal disasters and diseases which he bore with such fortitude. That school of thought which claims that there is no personal Devil, only the principle of evil as a powerful influence in daily life, is quick to point out that the proper name "Satan" in this book is merely the Hebrew word for "adversary", which is true, that the reference is merely a poetic embellishment to set the background to the theme of the book, the undeserved sufferings of a righteous man at the mercy of hostile Nature and hostile men, and the entire book a philosophical treatise cast in narrative form with no historical basis. Present-day study shows, however, that this is by no means the case. Internal evidence—which cannot be elaborated here—gives good reason for thinking that the Book of Job was a record of an actual happening, originally written by one of its characters—Elihu, an Arabian—not later than the sixteenth century before Christ and probably a century or so earlier. Some of the allusions are to matters which could

only have been known by one living at that time. Moses probably encountered the book during his forty years' life with the Midianites following his flight from Egypt and before the Exodus, and he would in that case have brought it back with him. Whether its description of Satan's access to the courts of heaven and his recorded conversations with the Deity had an objective reality or are merely presented as an explanation of the sufferings of Job may be arguable, but in either case it does indicate that at the period in question belief in the existence of a personal Devil was accepted.

Much the same position obtains in the next instance, where towards the end of the reign of King David (I Chron. 21.1) tells that "*Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel*". (There was always a rooted prejudice amongst ancient Middle Eastern peoples against taking a census.) The same incident, recorded in 2 Sam. 24.1, credits the Lord as being the one who incited David to do this; the AV margin tries to remove the anomaly by changing this to Satan, but unworthily, for the Hebrew text does not mention Satan. The contradiction is probably due to one historian putting the blame upon Satan because of the disastrous consequences and the other crediting it to the Lord on the basis that since He is Lord of all, whatever happens is ultimately his responsibility. Here again the implied supposition is that Satan is a conscious personal being—if the Lord on the one side is such so must be the other. The third Old Testament instance occurs in the Book of Zechariah, a highly coloured book of symbolic imagery, in which Joshua the High Priest of the Restoration is pictured being ceremoniously robed in new garments with Satan standing by to resist and thwart the ceremony. This is not presented as a literal happening; it forms part of an elaborate picture prophecy enshrining two phases of the Divine Plan; first, the Lord's intention to release Israel from her captivity in Babylon and re-establish her in the Holy Land, which was in Zechariah's time actually in progress, and secondly, a picture of the Christian Church of this present Age, cleansed and given the new ceremonial robes of justification and made fitting to take up her priestly work in association with her Lord and Head in the next, the Millennial Age, when the process of world conversion will proceed to its conclusion.

Satan here is depicted as opposing this important prelude to that final Age; this is a symbolic picture of Satan as the enemy of the Church. The underlying implication is that here the power of an intelligent personal being is involved.

Scanty as may be these few references to Satan in the Old Testament, they do serve to show that his personal existence as a conscious created being was believed and admitted. And it is not sufficient to assert, as some critics do, that men were more ignorant and credulous in those past days than now. Every generation tends to think that it is wiser and more knowledgeable than those of past times but modern research is increasingly proving the falsity of that assumption. King Solomon the wise, three thousand years ago, knew that. Even in his time it was true of the then past. Said he "*there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us. There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after*" (Eccl. 1. 9-11). In harmony with that sentiment is the fact that the ancients already knew the modern arguments against the personality of the Devil and had already rejected them. Hence the implicit assumption of his real personality in the few Old Testament cases where his name is mentioned.

The evidence is more pronounced in the New Testament. The story of the Temptation in the Wilderness at the beginning of Jesus' ministry demands a personal being, inviting Jesus to fall down and worship him. When Jesus said "*I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven*", He could only have referred to an objective experience involving a real personality, which stamped his Divine authority upon the prophetic visions of Isa. 14 and Ezek. 28. When he told Peter "*Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat*", and when Paul referred to Satan as "*a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour*", they used words which can hardly be made to apply to an abstract principle. And the colourful references to Satan in the Book of Revelation cannot by any means be applied to a mere principle of evil, only to the inveterate enemy of God and man who after waging a bitter warfare against both is eventually reduced to impotence.

Apart from a few casual references in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation—the messages to four of the seven churches of Roman Asia, Satan appears only at the end, in the time of the Messianic kingdom.

The earlier mention pre-supposes his personal existence—three known historical characters, David, Balaam and Jezebel appear in these messages and there is no reason to suppose that the fourth proper name, Satan, does not equally denote personality. But the account in chapter 20 of the inauguration of the Messianic Age leaves no room for doubt. Satan is seized and imprisoned for the duration of the Age "*that he should deceive the nations no more*"; restrained from interfering with the work of world evangelisation and conversion which is then going forward, waiting in enforced idleness for the time when, strangely, he is to be released for a brief season. "*And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations . . .*"

It is important to notice that the Divine programme for the days of the Second Advent provides first of all for the curtailment of the power of evil men and evil things in the world prior to the time of our Lord taking to himself his great power and commencing his reign over the nations. Chapter 19 of the Book of Revelation opens at this point. The heavenly chorus acclaims to all "*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*" and at this time there takes place the "*marriage of the Lamb*", the union of Christ with his Church in heaven which marks the closing days of this present Age. Next the Lord is depicted as a warrior riding a white horse, descending from heaven with his followers, to do battle with the powers of earth drawn up to resist him—and the outcome is that these powers are overthrown and the Lord reigns supreme. The 20th chapter continues the story by picturing Satan, the Devil, being bound for a thousand years, the duration of the Millennium, whilst the King institutes the era of righteousness in which not only are men upon earth, and earthly powers and institutions, restrained from inflicting harm upon their fellows, but Satan likewise is no longer able to influence and seduce the minds of men into evil courses of conduct.

It is this restraint of power and freedom to lead men into ways of disloyalty to God and rejection of his laws which will constitute the "binding". He will be powerless to touch men's minds in any way. Divine power will operate from Heaven to end, in one moment of time, any influence Satan has over men. He will realise that his long course of rebellion against his Creator, with all its terrible consequences for mankind, has come to an end, and he is left in solitude, alone.

So the Millennial Age will proceed on its course, with Satan an unwilling spectator of the work of conversion and reconciliation going on amongst mankind. Is there a hint here of the Divine reluctance to abandon even the most hardened of sinners if there is any possibility at all that they might repent though it be at the last minute? If the Lord has arranged to restrain the practice and power of sin amongst men during that Age that they might observe the benefits of a righteous world before making their final choice between good and evil, life and death, is it not logical as well as just that He put Satan in a position where he likewise is restrained from evil whilst he too can see the results of righteousness? If Adam and all his race are to enjoy a thousand years' opportunity to perceive the rightness of God's ways, and repent of whatever of sin there has been in their past, should not the angel of all evil, who after all is also one of God's creations, enjoy a similar opportunity? Whether he will take advantage of it is another matter.

It is in the sequel to the story that this latter question comes to the front. At the end of the Millennium, we are told, Satan "*shall be loosed from his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth*" (Rev. 20, 7-8). This does not look much like repentance. It looks much more that whatever the lessons of the Millennial reign have done for mankind, they have not done much for Satan. Origen in the 2nd century was sure that in the end Satan will be reconciled to God and enter eternity and one form of Christian faith avows that belief to this day, but that can only be through sincere and lasting repentance and disavowal of sin and this verse in Rev. 20 does not seem to point that way. But no man enters upon a battle with an opponent without belief that he has at least a good chance of victory in the conflict. If Satan does indeed come forth to lead an insurrection against God it must be that he does so thinking that he will win.

Could it be that he will by then have deceived himself by his own lie, "*Ye shall not surely die*"? The Divine law is, and always has been "*the wages of sin is death*". But as the Millennial era nears its close, many thousands of years after the days of

Eden, no created being has gone into eternal death. Men have lived their three-score years and ten and gone into the grave for a space, but now here they are, all back again—"*all that are in their graves*" said Jesus—and of the celestial world, those angels who rebelled and "*kept not their first estate*" (Jude 6) in the days of Noah are still alive, thousands of years later, despite their sin. Could it be that in fact God, having given life, is unable to take it back? Could the created being really be immortal? And if that be so, then rebellion against God could continue indefinitely. Is it conceivable that some such thought lies behind the prediction that in that still far-off day, Satan will "*go out to deceive the nations*".

If so, disillusion will come. "*The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and shall be restrained (kolasis) for ever and ever*" (Rev. 20, 20). The lake of fire and brimstone is an allusion to the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is the end, final and irrevocable.

The Christian faith demands that whoever sincerely repents of the past, no matter how heinous and foul that past may have been, and comes to the Lord in sincere contrition and conversion, that one is received into eternal life. All men without exception will have a full and final opportunity to attain that position in the next Age. All rebellious celestial beings have the same opportunity at the same time, on the authority of I Cor. 6.3 and Jude 6. Every brand snatched from the burning is a source of satisfaction with God. And it will always be gloriously true that there is "*joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*".

But there is also a terrible finality in the words of Isaiah and Ezekiel. They are applied to one who, having full opportunity and ability to do otherwise, persists in his evil way and continues to the end to fight against God. "*Thou shalt be brought down to Sheol*" (the grave) "*to the depths of the abyss*", "*A fire from the midst of thee . . . shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more*".

The End.

Divine truth is never found except in the Divinely appointed channels: and those channels are the Lord and the apostles and prophets. To continue in the doctrine set forth in their inspired

writings, to study, meditate upon them, and faithfully to conform our characters to them, is what is implied in continuing in the Word of the Lord.

THE MASTER'S JOY

A word of encouragement

The Lord Jesus joyed in God. All nature spoke to him of his Father. This wondrous world of which we, even to-day, know so little was to him, not alien soil, but a mansion in the Father's House, and the Father himself at the back of all Nature's bounty, beauty and beneficence. Jesus joyed in the Scriptures; they spoke to him of his Father and revealed the character of One with Whom He was in constant communion. As a boy He eagerly awaited his attainment of the age of twelve, the age at which He could get to Jerusalem and be found in his Father's House. What a keen desire there must have been in the heart of the boy Jesus to enter those Temple precincts where He could ask the great ones there, "*sitting in Moses' seat*", some of the many questions which were crowding in upon his perfect but as yet undeveloped mind!

God's Word throughout his whole life was the joy and rejoicing of the Master's heart. By that Word He repelled the Tempter at the commencement of his ministry and by it He caused the hearts of the disciples to burn within them immediately after his resurrection, at its close.

To the Lord Jesus God was unimaginably good: in the joy of his knowledge of God's love He sketched for us the picture of the prodigal son and the love of an earthly father, saying in effect, "if ye then, being evil, are like that, *how much more God!*" He experienced constantly the joy of boundless hope in a God so wonderfully and unimaginably good. Satan was the god of this world, evil was rampant, those who would do God's Will must endure persecution, He was confronted by the thought of a cruel death but the Master's gaze was habitually directed beyond these things. He lived in constant view of those conditions that will prevail when God's Will is done upon earth as now it is done in heaven.

The Lord Jesus continued in communion with the Father, not merely One to be enjoyed, but also one to be served, and this opportunity of loving devotion was in itself to Jesus another constant source of delight. The Will of God; this was placed centrally in the Master's life, and to carry it out was his meat and drink. His natural love for his own home, for his mother, and for his family circle, was

intense, and yet before all these He placed those who did the Will of God. "*Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*" (Matt. 12. 50). From this delight in doing the service of God there arose another source of joy, that of a constant sense of the Divine approval on his life. "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" was the testimony given from heaven to John the Baptist on the banks of the River Jordan, a testimony that was repeated to the three disciples upon the Mount of Transfiguration and attested by numerous evidences of the Father's favour during our Lord's earthly ministry. Those declarations were made that "*men might know . . . Jesus Christ*" whom God had sent, for Jesus himself needed no such outward assurances. Within himself, all the time, like sweetest music in his soul, vibrated the thought "I do always those things that please *Him*".

Greatest of all, our Master had the supreme joy associated with supreme self-sacrifice. Despised and rejected, scorned and spat upon, scourged and crucified, that wonderful love in the heart of Jesus inspired him to exult with a deep and holy joy that in this way, through the valley of suffering and humiliation, He could bring the prodigal world back to God. All the evil that was inflicted upon the Master, all the mental and physical suffering which He bore so patiently, all the evidences of hardness of heart and lack of faith in those near to him as well as far from him, only made him feel the more how desperate was their need of him; in prophetic vision he saw "of the travail of his soul" and was satisfied.

How true then is the Scripture which declares that "For the *joy* that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high". It was because our Master so consistently found joy in all that his life held that He was able to say "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you . . . Let not your heart be troubled*"; and the Apostle adds as a triumphant commentary and exhortation "*Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice*".

"The difference between theology and revelation is great and must not be confused. The latter is the work of God's spirit in man; the former, the

work of man's mind reflecting on God's work."—
George Tyrrell.

GOD'S FULFILLING PURPOSE

*An outline of
the Divine Plan*

5. Ages of Glory

Following the establishment in power of the Millennial reign in which Christ is manifestly Lord of all, and in effective control, the promised resurrection of all the dead will be next in order. But not all at once. A partially wrecked world containing several thousand millions of partially or almost wholly wrecked human beings will take a good deal of hard work to get on its feet again, and before there can be talk of adding to earth's millions from the ranks of the dead there is the matter of food and housing, and presumably clothing, to consider. There will therefore be a great setting of people to work, in the restoration of the earth, the reclamation of waste land, the irrigation of deserts, the preparation of homes not only for those then living who need homes but for those who are to come. All this will be an important part of the education that every man must have, but concurrently with this will be his spiritual instruction, his being made aware of the deeper principles that underlie his existence, the purpose for which God created him and the means by which that purpose is to be achieved. It is for the imparting of this instruction that God will have made ready the "Church".

With the ending of the old Age,—this present Age in which we live—the company of Christian disciples which began in the upper room at Pentecost and concluded its earthly career in the troubles that end the Age is gathered as a united company into the spiritual world, made like the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle John said "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3. 3). Being thus raised to participation in that spiritual realm, the powers and attributes appertaining to these are infinitely greater than anything known to man; but what is of first importance in the immediate connection is that these who have thus attained personal association with Christ are to become the servants of mankind for their instruction in the higher things of life. It comes strange at first to think of those of whom John said "They lived and reigned with Christ" (Rev. 20. 4) and Paul "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (I Cor. 6. 2) as being servants to men, but it was Jesus who explained the seeming paradox when He said "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20. 27). Hence the outcome of a Christian life lived to-day in patience and integrity, in doing good and speaking the thing that is right, in

emulating Jesus in all things, in suffering grief or wrong in consequence of a firm stand for right principles, is the honour of serving mankind in spiritual instruction and turning the hearts of men to Christ that they may at last see the error of their ways and come fully into line with God's purpose.

It will not be an easy task. The mending of men's bodies and the improvement of their outward environment will be child's play compared with that inward regeneration which is necessary if they are to be delivered from death and confirmed in life, reclaimed from Satan and reconciled to God. It will only be because the members of the Church have passed through that same experience themselves in their past lives that they will be able to speak and teach and urge with authority and with conviction. The work of Christ in the hearts of men in the Millennial Age will be effected by these, working on the minds of men, counselling, teaching, urging, converting men to Christ and leading them to reconciliation with God.

There will thus be a two-fold work in progress, the rehabilitation of men's bodies proceeding in step with the renewing of their minds. There is not much doubt that the latter will exercise a powerful effect upon the former; that in proportion as a man seeks intelligently and willingly to come into alignment with righteousness and yield himself more to the service of Christ, his physical organism will progress toward that perfection which empowers him to live everlastingly.

The world will therefore already be a much fairer place, and mankind already happier and living measurably at peace, when the general resurrection of the dead commences. "All that are in their graves," said Jesus, "shall hear his voice" (that of Jesus) "and shall come forth" (John 5. 28). Some of those dead breathed their last thousands of years ago and not one atom of their earthly bodies survives in its original form; but God who formed the bodies of the first human beings and arranged the processes of Nature to build the bodies of all who have lived since, is able to provide bodies for these resurrected ones, even in a moment of time, if need be. There can be no doubt about this; the dead shall return. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust," cries Isaiah the prophet in ecstasy, "for the earth shall cast out the dead." (Isa. 26. 19).

The usual objection to the literal acceptance of these plain statements of Scripture is that the earth could not support the multitudes of men and women that have lived. It is not generally realised that only in the last few centuries has this planet housed any considerable number of human beings. At the beginning of the twentieth century the population of the globe was only half of what it is now, and a century earlier it was only one quarter. Professor Julian Huxley has estimated that in the days of the Roman Empire, two thousand years ago, there were less than one hundred millions inhabiting the earth. From what is known of the subject it can be confidently stated that even if man has been upon earth for as long as eight or even ten thousand years—which is the longest period allowed by responsible anthropologists aside from the “missing link” enthusiasts, who still talk in terms of millions of years—all the men and women who have ever been born would, if they were raised from the dead at once, find the existing land surface of nearly sixty million square miles afford adequate space for life and sustenance, especially when it is remembered that the earth is to be made far more fruitful and productive than it is at present. It does follow, of course, that the further propagation of the human species will cease: the purpose of God in endowing human beings with procreative powers is revealed in the Book of Genesis to be for the adequate peopling of the earth, and when that object has been achieved it is but reasonable to expect that those powers will atrophy and disappear. The force of God’s original declaration “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help (companion) meet (fitting) for him” (Gen. 2. 18), and his subsequent ordaining of the marriage relation to be the normal condition of perfect, ideal human life is not invalidated by the fact that children will no longer be born. The story of Eden enshrines the principles of Divinely ordained human society, and the ultimate completion of God’s purpose will surely witness the ideal companionship instituted in Eden restored in its fulness, not again to be disturbed.

By the time that the earth is ready to receive its dead back to life and to feed and shelter those who have been sleeping in the grave, men in general will have got much more accustomed to the idea. In all probability it will not be necessary to ask, as did the Apostle Paul on a certain historic occasion (Acts 26. 8) “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”. There will have been so many signal mani-

festations of Divine power at work in the world that there will no longer be any denial of the possibility of such things. And without doubt there will be a great many who will have given themselves wholeheartedly over to the furthering of the interests of this new Kingdom upon earth, who will enthusiastically prepare for and receive the newcomers from the grave as they return, furnishing them with food and clothing, explaining to them the meaning of their re-awakening, that the long nightmare of sin and death is past and God now calls all men to righteousness and life. Every family, every individual, will have loved ones, relatives and friends, over whose death they have mourned or grieved in the past; it may well be that the resurrection will be in the reverse order to that of death, and that the coming back of individuals will be largely in response to the prayers of those living, so that the newcomers to the “Millennial” earth will find familiar faces to welcome them on their awakening to conscious existence, and well-remembered voices to explain to them the meaning of the new conditions in which they will find themselves.

Even this sunlit Age has its shadows. Sin will have been dethroned but not yet overthrown. God will have showered his abundant blessings upon men, removed the immoral systems that have oppressed them for so long, banished the spectre of fear, caused men to dwell in peace and security, taught them to control and utilise the earth so that it brings forth abundance for all, given them intellectual and spiritual instruction so that they can, if they will, make the utmost possible use of the life that is theirs. But with all this they will not necessarily have renounced sin, not necessarily have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, acknowledged that all they have and are is due to him, and become reconciled to God through faith in him. And none of the blessings they enjoy can continue if they remain thus unreconciled; nay, they will not even attain to the fulness of Millennial blessings unless their hearts have been made right with God. The law pronounced so long time ago “the wages of sin is death” stands as an immutable principle which can never be abrogated. The very basis upon which God’s universe is built demands that righteousness and only righteousness shall endure eternally. That which is evil, sinful, basically opposed to the Divine principles that govern continuing life, must, even although it endure uneasily for a time, eventually pass out of existence. No power in all creation can preserve it. It follows therefore that the man whose heart is

sinful, who deliberately sets himself against the forces that are making for righteousness in God's new world, must himself suffer the fate that was expressed by the prophet Ezekiel half a millennium before the Christian era: "the soul that sinneth, it shall die!" (Ezek. 18. 4).

A little thought will suffice to convince that the man who deliberately refuses to take his place as a citizen of the world, to discharge his due obligations and assume his share of the world's work, fulfilling the Divine injunction to love his neighbour as himself, acknowledging his Creator and God as the One in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being (Acts 19. 28) can be a source of happiness neither to himself nor others. Such a man, exercising to the last the inalienable right of free will with which his Maker has endowed him, can resist God to the end, and turn resolutely away from every endeavour God makes for his conversion. We may be quite sure that not one such individual—if such there be—will be left to incur the logical sequel to his elected course until God has, as it were, exhausted every persuasive influence within his power to win the obdurate one from the error of his way. But if God at last turns aside, it can only be because the case is hopeless; He will not coerce the will and condemn the unhappy man to an eternal life from which he cannot escape and the conditions of which he resents and cannot endure. God, who holds in his hand the breath of every living thing (Job 12. 10) will—sadly, we may be sure—allow sin to bear its final fruitage in that man's life, the exquisite mind and wonderful organism to falter and fail, and the shades of eternal sleep to close round him.

It is hard to think that, with all the incentive to righteousness characteristic of the Millennial Age, there will be many such. Time will prove, but that the Scripture states the principles upon which alone everlasting life may be attained there can be no question, and that eternal death must inevitably be the portion of all who, after full and fair opportunity, refuse to accept the Lord Jesus and conform to the Divine laws, the Scriptures are equally emphatic.

So, with the passing of the last of sinners, there comes the end of sin. Men will have been so fully tested and confirmed in their allegiance to God by their long experience, of sin in the first life and righteousness in the second, that there need be no fear that sin will raise its ugly head again. Satan, the arch-enemy of God and man, will trouble humanity no more. The last book of the Bible, in

one of its parabolic utterances, speaks of a final attempt to deceive the nations at the end of the Millennial Age. It is an obscure little passage but it is clear upon one thing; that the sequel to the attempt is the destruction of the last traces of evil in the earth. From that time and forward all things, on earth as in Heaven, are "holy unto the Lord". The prospect before men will be one of progressive and never-ending increase in knowledge and experience and intense joy in the continuance of everyday life under conditions of idyllic happiness.

So will the centuries pass, whilst the earth grows ever fairer and more beautiful and mankind attains to a better and more complete understanding of the message of Jesus Christ and the goodness of God. The days of evil will slip away into the background—never forgotten, an imperishable recollection of the terrible consequences of sin, but no longer having power to hurt and destroy. The song of the angels at Christ's birth—"peace on earth, goodwill among men"—will be realised in fact at last. Human beings will look upon each other, fair of form, virile of body, magnificent examples of the creative power of God. Conscious of the eternity of supremely happy life that is before them, they will rise at every dawn to prosecute with unflurried minds the occupations and pursuits to which they have set themselves. The world's work will continue—men will till the soil and reap the fruits of their labours; they will foregather together for the study and practice of arts and sciences which will always have something new to reveal; they will travel the world and rejoice in the varied glories of Nature and live their lives in absolute peace and harmony with one another and with God.

Will then the earth abide for ever? The Bible says it will, that God formed not the earth in vain, but intended it to be inhabited (Isa. 45. 18). One who appraises at its true worth the marvellous co-ordination of natural processes that gives us the earth as we have it to-day, with all its vegetable and animal wonders, so fitting and admirable a home for man, cannot but feel the apparent futility of it all if God intends eventually to destroy so much loveliness. The popular idea of the ultimate destruction of the earth is based, of course, firstly upon mediæval theology, which not only placed undue emphasis upon the lurid symbols of certain Biblical books describing the "end of the world", but also regarded all material matter as inherently evil and fit only for ultimate destruction—both of which attitudes are now quite discredited by well-informed Christians—and secondly by eighteenth

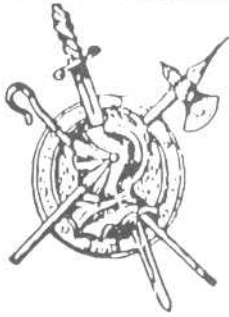
and nineteenth century physical science which explained the constitution of the universe by a set of theories which demanded the eventual destruction of the earth—either by freezing or by fire!—and indeed, of the entire universe as far as it was then known. Physical science, as well as the science of the Word of God, has taken great strides since then, and the present conclusions of the latest scientific investigators go much farther than did those of their predecessors to corroborate the purposes of God revealed in the Bible. It is considered by some scientists nowadays that the universe, so far from hastening towards an “end” not infinitely remote in time, is in fact capable of continuing indefinitely by its own processes of converting matter into radiation and radiation back into matter. This is not the place in which to embark upon a prolonged dissertation upon such a subject; but the fact that serious scientists, basing their pronouncements solely on what they discover from their researches, can see the possibility of the earth continuing “under its own steam”, as it were, into infinity, is enough to render any query as to the possibility of everlasting human life upon earth quite unnecessary.

Thus, at last, God’s purpose is fulfilled. The earth will continue, the eternal home of supremely happy human beings, satisfied with their lot and living their lives in complete harmony with the laws that God has ordained for their well being, always finding new heights to scale and new fields to explore in the continually opening vistas of human experience. The heavens will be the eternal home of those from amongst mankind who in this present Age have been Christian disciples and followers of Jesus Christ, their mission of reconciling men to God during the Millennial Age successfully completed. The angelic hosts, spectators through many long centuries of this drama that has been worked out on earth, will continue to occupy their ordained position before God. This earth, a speck only in the immensity of God’s material creation, will have become what He always intended it to be, and its citizens, perhaps—who knows?—fore-runners of other intelligent material beings on

other planets likewise devoted to the worship and reverence of God. It is idle to speculate on the possibilities that lie in the eternal ages of the great Beyond; the Bible takes us to the completion of the Divine purpose with mankind on earth and leaves us there. It may be that just because God is essentially a Creator there will never be any end to his creating. Of one thing we may be sure; evil, once overthrown and banished, its lessons experienced and placed on record for the instruction of all reasoning creatures for all time, will not raise its head again. From the time that the Divine purpose with man has been completed at the end of the Millennium, it will be true that “everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord”, and there will be no discordant voice in all his wide domain.

Is it just wishful thinking? Is all this but a kind of mental sop, a beautiful dream, wherewith to dull the senses to the harsh realities of to-day, a means of refusal to face the grim inevitable destiny against which heart and mind cries out in impotent despair? By no means! *These things shall be!* God has been silent, screened from the vision and the sense of men, approachable only by those who have sincerely desired to know him and have been prepared to devote their lives to his service and to die for the sake of his ways if need be; but He has nevertheless been working ceaselessly and tirelessly for the ultimate good of all men. The record of his work as well of his plans is to be found in the Bible, but here again, only the sincere and earnest of heart will be able to read its pages aright and understand them. God is calling all such now, to-day, to give themselves to him through the channel of faith in, and acceptance of, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Leader, and He will then assign them some position and work in the execution of his fulfilling purpose. It was in the realisation of that call that the Apostle Paul entreated “I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . and be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”. (Rom. 12. 1-2.) That is the call still.

The End



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

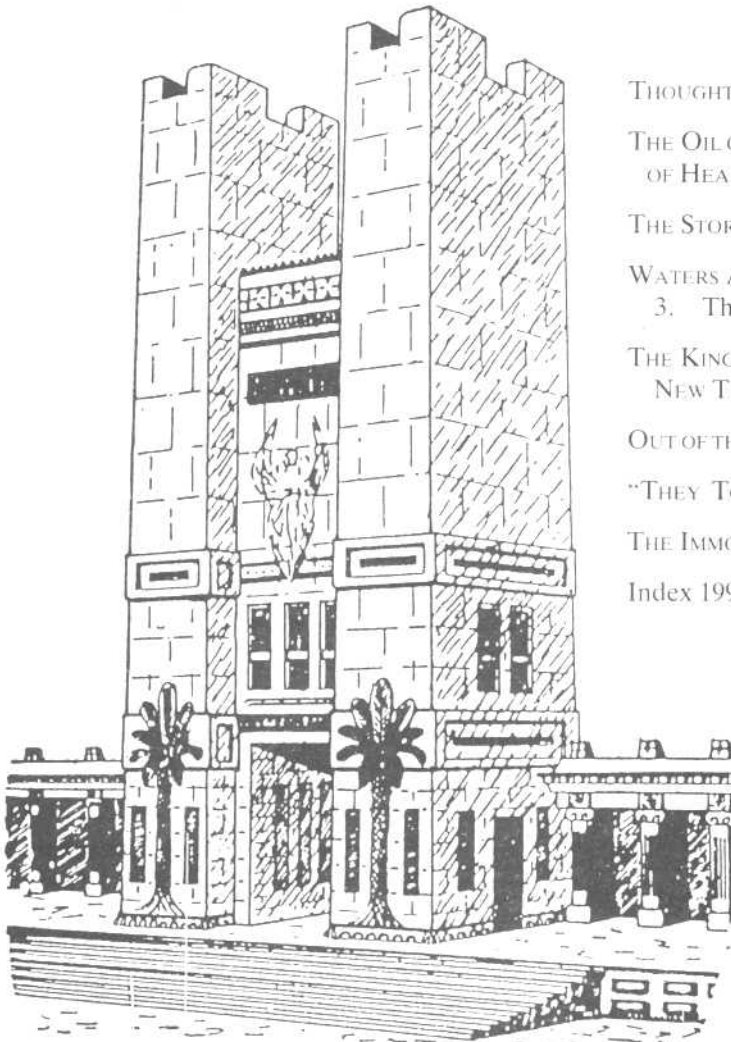
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his maker?" (Job. 4.17)

When Eliphaz the Temanite put that question more than three thousand years ago he was reproving his friend Job for his questioning of the Divine care for man. From the human point of view Job may be thought to have been justified in his complaint. An upright and righteous man, one who loved his fellow-men and always did the right thing by them and for them. Even the Almighty conceded that, *"There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil"*. Yet God had allowed him to fall into total and undeserved disaster. His family destroyed, his servants slain, his possessions stolen, and his own person smitten with the foulest of diseases so that even his own wife exhorted him to curse God and die. And all he said was *"the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"*

So Job's three closest friends came to commiserate with him, and at that his composure broke down and he lamented the day he was born. It had been better for him if he had never known life. *"Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?"*. It was that implied criticism of the ways of God which drew forth Eliphaz' statement.

It is so easy, when confronted with the same kind of situation to-day, to ask, if God is indeed, as reputed, a God of love, why He permits such things to be. The handicapped child, the life of pain, the hopeless injustices of daily life; why does God allow it? Why does He not stop it? We would, at once, if we could. And we do not stop to think that the creature cannot possibly be more merciful and loving than the Creator. Eliphaz knew the

answer. *"He maketh sore, and bindeth up. He woundeth, and his hands maketh whole."* Said Solomon *"this sore travail hath God given to the sons of men that they might be exercised therewith?"* There is purpose in the Divine love, and at the end all will be revealed; all will be well, for *"there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, for the former things are passed away"*.

NOTICES

Christian African Relief Trust. There has come to hand a further issue of the News-Letter recording this year's activities of the Trust, which was formerly referred to in this column. An expanding work has been conducted in the needy Central African countries and there is grateful appreciation of the gifts so many have sent in aid of this work. Copies of the News-Letter will gladly be sent to anyone interested upon application to the Secretary, Mr. G. G. Tompkins, "White Gates", Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield, HD8 0LR.

An explanation. Due to an unfortunate combination of adverse circumstances our correspondence all through 1991 has been subject to very considerable delay in replies, and for this we must express sincere regret. It is hoped that the situation will ease in 1992 and in the meantime that we have our readers' indulgence.

Renewals. Overseas readers in the 7000 and 9000 ranges will find a pink "renewal slip" in this issue if they are not already recorded as renewed for 1992 and it will be appreciated if they will return it indicating their desires as promptly as possible.

Gone from us



Sis. Margaret Collins (Milborne Port)
Sis. Grace Sears (Milborne Port)



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

THE OIL OF JOY FOR THE SPIRIT OF HEAVINESS

A Christmas Message

"The Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness". (Isa. 61. 1-3.)

Isaiah the golden-tongued was the first to receive this soul-stirring commission, but he was not the last. Our Lord at the commencement of his earthly ministry took the same message to himself and told the wondering listeners in the synagogue at Nazareth *"This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears"*. His whole life was spent in fulfilling the provisions of this mandate. He gave the commission to his disciples, and they in turn passed it on to those that followed, so that to-day we who carry the flaming torch in our own midst can say as truly as did Isaiah of old *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me . . ."*.

But there is more than one way of interpreting the details of the commission, and if we are to be as certain as was Isaiah of the meaning and application of the message preached we do well to consider them carefully and in the light of the main principles of the Divine Plan. We do not want to preach a message now which is due to be preached only in another Age; neither do we wish to fail in the preaching of the message which ought to be given to the people of this generation. Noah preached repentance against the background of a coming Flood; John the Baptist preached repentance because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand; Isaiah preached repentance in the light of the Divinely promised glorious restoration of Israel's former glory. All condemned sin; all preached repentance; all sought for conversion, but in each case there was associated with their message that which gave it both point and urgency.

So the question comes before us and has to be faced: Are these blessings which we offer to the unconverted—beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness—are they, as most theologians insist, spiritual blessings in Christ to be enjoyed here and now, in this life, by the converted, and nothing more, or are they blessings of the future, to be realised when God turns his face again toward his

erring children, and sends the "Times of Restitution", the Golden Age, spoken of by all his holy prophets since the world began? Future—or present? An inheritance to be anticipated or a possession in the heart now?

It is easy, of course, to say "Both", but that answer is altogether too indeterminate and avoids the real issue. Is our message to promise the repentant and converted one happiness and peace with God in this life only, or is it also to relate the fact of repentance and conversion to the ultimate purpose for which God calls to repentance and conversion? Are we to rest content with one who, being justified by faith, now has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and not tell him anything about the purpose for which God has called him? Or are we to prepare and fit him for his entry into the world that is to be—irrespective of whether it be a spiritual or an earthly world into which he is to enter?

Isaiah seemed to be in no doubt as to the scope of his own commission. In a blaze of passionate fervour he throws out his arms and cries *"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"*. This is comfort for the present evil time certainly, but comfort based upon a solid hope for the future. This clear vision of the promise and purpose of God is held forth as a positive inducement to the men and women of Israel to turn from their evil ways and return to God, who is working all things for their ultimate happiness. *"I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem"* cries the prophet *"which shall never hold their peace day or night"* and then addressing those watchmen *"ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth"*. And so the glorious message of joy and peace is to go on and widen over the length and breadth of the earth until the Golden Age of all prophecy has swept away this present world of sin and death, and the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings.

This theme of the future restoration of Israel's glory as the comfort for present distress is the burden of the Old Testament prophets. Not for nothing did St. Peter, preaching Restitution to the wondering crowds at Pentecost, remind them that

this coming glory had been spoken by all the prophets from the beginning. There is hardly a notable name, from Moses onward, that is not associated with some one or another foreview of the day that is to be, when not only Israel, but all men of every nation, will realise to the full what great things God has prepared for those who have waited for him and who love him. We could roam to and fro over the pages of the Hebrew prophets and find one all-absorbing central theme, the glory that shall come when the lessons of this Age of sin and death have been learned. To those fervent, devoted men this life had no meaning except it were co-related to the future life. Sin, evil, suffering, death, were insoluble enigmas until in the distant but certain future they perceived righteousness, goodness, happiness, life. Judgment must mark the dividing line between the two; yes, they knew that. And repentance and conversion must be the only bridge whereby one may pass from the one to the other; they knew that too. But they *never lost sight of what lay on the other side of the bridge*. To them it was no mysterious avenue ending only in mist and obscurity, a vaguely defined world having nothing of the certainty of this one. To those men the future earth was as clear and sharp as the present and as they saw it resplendent in the golden light of the Sun of righteousness they pointed men to it with every device and embellishment the art of description could bring to their aid.

Now the New Testament equivalent of the prophets are the Apostles, and the New Testament equivalent of Moses is Christ. What was their attitude to this question of the Divine commission, and what was the message they preached? Did their exhortations and writings relate only to this life or did they include a generous view of the life to come? Did their appeal rely for its force entirely upon the sense of release from guilt, upon the peace and joy of the Christian life? Or did they follow the example of Moses and the prophets and point men to the coming Day when God will arise to determine for all time the issues of good and evil and require all men to make a personal choice? How can we expect Jesus and the Apostles to have done anything else than follow their predecessors' examples? To preach Christianity without preaching the Kingdom is to preach a truncated Gospel—cut in half, with the very part which gives meaning to the whole thing missing.

Jesus went about preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Since He came, not only to die for men, and minister to them, and win their love and allegi-

ance, but also to raise every one of them out of death and teach them the issues of life, that the purpose of God in creating man might be accomplished, it is inconceivable that Jesus could have done anything else than preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in its future aspects as well as in its present one. It is just as inconceivable to imagine any instructed Jew receiving his message from any other standpoint. A Messiah without a Messianic kingdom is a contradiction in terms. Not one of those who gave credence to his claim to being the "sent of God" could have associated his message with anything else than the promised future Kingdom. Not one of those who gave their lives to him did so without expecting the glory and power of the Kingdom. So the disciples must have lent very attentive ears when, in response to their question, Jesus told them that when He came again, in the regeneration, seated on the throne of his glory, they also would be seated on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. When the dying thief begged to be remembered when the Lord should come into his kingdom it was because he had been taught by the rabbis, and because Jesus had confirmed that teaching in his preaching, that the Kingdom was a future event but one surely to come, and the thief believed him.

Similarly with the Apostles, there was a strong under-current of what to-day is called in Church circles, somewhat scornfully, "dispensationalism". The mission of the Apostles was two-fold, first, to convert men and women to Christ, and second, to *instruct and build up those thus converted that they might become, at the last, "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light"*. There were two aspects of the future Kingdom to which the Apostles had to give attention, the earthly and the heavenly. They knew that the High Calling to the heavenly Kingdom was first in order of time in the Divine Plan, and it is only what we should expect to find them spending their principal efforts in exhorting, teaching and establishing those who had intelligently given themselves in consecration to God, that they might eventually be the Divine instruments in the work of reconciling all men. St. Paul in 1 Thess. 4, in 2 Thess. 2, in 1 Cor. 15, and in a score of places, relates the present life of the Christian to the consummation of the Christian hope in the celestial Kingdom.

In just the same way we find that in their preaching the Apostles could not divorce their message from the theme of the coming Kingdom. When Jesus was about to leave them and ascend to his

Father they asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1: 6.) That long-cherished hope of the Messianic Age still held first place in their hearts. St. Peter's first sermon, preached on the Day of Pentecost and recorded in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, was a Messianic sermon. It took as its basis the prophecy of Joel which envisaged the events surrounding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom and Peter told his hearers that the prophecy was even then entering into its fulfilment. St. Peter's second sermon, a few days later, elaborated this theme and defined his position even more clearly. He called for repentance and conversion in order that the times of refreshing, the times of restitution, associated with the Second Advent of Christ, might come to earth. The Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 connected the growing missionary work of the Church with Amos' prophecy of the Millennial day; St. Paul, addressing the philosophers of Athens, related in Acts 17, made the whole point of God's call for repentance hinge upon the coming of that day in the which He was to judge the world in righteousness; later on, before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, he avowed that the whole of his position stood or fell upon the "hope and resurrection of the dead" which to all Jews was synonymous with the Messianic Kingdom. Making his defence before Felix the Roman governor, he re-affirmed that position, and later on, before the Jewish dignitary Herod Agrippa, "expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews" (Acts 26: 3) he affirmed it again. Last of all, the final glimpse we have of this doughty warrior is in the 28th chapter of Acts, where, a prisoner at Rome, he "*expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.*" (Acts 28: 23.) The curtain drops with Paul still "*preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ*". (Acts 28: 31.)

The glory of the Christian gospel is that it takes this life and the next life and of the two makes one harmonious and understandable whole. By explaining to us the future purposes of God it enables us to see our place in the Divine Plan *now* and to work intelligently for good. Our conse-

crated lives can be charged with definite purpose. We serve and labour and evangelise with a definite end in view and can see the connection between our present efforts, be they crowned with success or apparent failure, and ultimate outcome. Without the message of the Kingdom no evangelistic work can attain its highest peak. The prophets of old soared into their loftiest heights of understanding and gave voice to their most eloquent appeals when their eyes were fixed on the future. The Apostles laid down their clearest definitions of Christian doctrine when they were enabled by the Spirit to range in thought backward to the beginning, and forward to the climax, of the Divine Plan. The whole counsel of God must include a wide and comprehensive view of the eternal purpose of God, and if in our evangelistic work we are really to accomplish that to which we are called, that eternal purpose must be closely integrated with the call to repentance and reconciliation which admittedly lies always at the foundation of all our work. It is the glory of the Truth that we can speak positively of things which lie beyond the veil of the future, where so many others can only wander in a vague and misty land. It is that same certainty which can give our message the force it had in early days—if only we are truly positive about it. "*He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*"

So much of Christian evangelism to-day holds out as the great attraction of repentance and conversion a kind of deliriously happy life, here and now, in which the possession of Christ evokes an eternal sunshine around all one's affairs. The idea of a calling to sacrifice and suffering is not always stressed as it should be. In the teaching of Jesus it was stressed. "*Through much tribulation shall ye enter the Kingdom.*" Perhaps we are on much safer ground if we take Isaiah's words to mean exactly what they say and go out, in the power of our faith and knowledge of the Divine Plan, to preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn, to give beauty, joy and praise for sadness, mourning and heaviness, *because earth's dark night of sin is nearly at an end, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*

THE STORY OF THE SHEPHERDS

A reflection on events of the first Christmas

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them" (Luke 2. 8-9).

Favoured men, the first to gaze upon the Lord's Christ! The wise men from the East came with their gifts, but the shepherds were there first with their homage, and for ever afterwards those Judean shepherds glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it had been told unto them.

It would seem that the Wise Men came much later, probably a year or more. The shepherds heard the wonderful news the same day that it happened; the angel had said *"unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"*. Perhaps even whilst he was speaking Mary was experiencing the never-to-be-forgotten wonder of taking her child into her arms for the first time. When the Wise Men ascended the steps of Herod's palace their question was *"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him"* (Matt. 2. 2). Then there had to be a conference of chief priests and scribes to agree upon an answer to Herod's question that would afford the monarch the information he wanted without giving offence to his royal dignity. Even after the reply had been given, and doubtless further discussions, which have not been recorded, held between king and priests, the Wise Men were called again into the royal presence and in receiving instructions to go to Bethlehem, were admonished to bring Herod word again. The king's command to slay all the infants of two years old and under is an indication of the time that elapsed before the visit of the Wise Men.

Long prior to all this, Mary remained at Bethlehem forty days, the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses (Luke 2. 12), and then Joseph took her, and her child, to the Temple in Jerusalem to present him before the Lord. There was no fear of Herod as yet. There, in the Temple court, the aged Simeon took the child into his arms and praised God that, according to his word, he had set his eyes upon the One who was to be a light to lighten the nations, and the glory of his people Israel. Likewise Anna, coming in at that moment, gave thanks also, and spake of him to all

who looked for deliverance in Jerusalem. Herod's palace was only just across the valley from the Temple, but the proud king knew nothing of all this; evidently even then, forty days after the birth of Jesus there was no question of the Wise Men's arrival.

What a striking contrast there is in the manner of this revelation to the Wise Men and that to the shepherds! Those were guided by a star, but these were visited by an angel! The nature of that star which led the three travellers from the East has never been satisfactorily determined. All kinds of theories have been hazarded, but no one really knows. One thing is certain; the star was of this material creation, one of the worlds of light that God set in space in the dim faraway, ages before this world was, one of the "things that are made". The shepherds received greater honour, a personal visit from a special messenger of the Most High, a heavenly angel speaking with them and thrilling their hearts with the gladsome news. Once again God had reserved his choicest favour for the meek and lowly of heart.

Was it Gabriel, the archangel, who visited the shepherds that night? We cannot say for certain, but it is almost a foregone conclusion that he was the one sent. That expression "the angel of the Lord" in Luke 2. 9 seems to imply that the visitor was of exceptional rank in the heavenly realm, and the thought is supported by the coming of a "multitude" of angels to join him after he, alone, had delivered the message. He seems to have been a leader amongst them. There is no reason to think that the shepherds looked up and beheld angels flying in the heavens above their heads in the manner suggested by so many mediæval paintings and representations of this event. It is almost certain that they made themselves manifest in the fashion already so familiar to the people of Old Testament times, as men, standing upon the earth, glorious in shining raiment, assuredly, and quite certainly manifesting in their countenances evidence of their heavenly origin. The shepherds must have lifted up their eyes and seen the hillside around them crowded with the serried ranks of those resplendent beings, the radiance of their concourse turning night into day, the music of their voices rising and falling upon the still air like that of a vast choir, as they sang of glory to God in the highest, and peace upon earth to men. Then the radiance began

to fade, the outline of those beautiful forms become misty and shadowy, the hills and rocks and trees slowly to show up again, and the darkness settle upon the scene as the golden voices died away and were still. The angels had gone away into heaven; but those shepherds knew that what they had seen had been no fantasy; it was solid fact, and so with one accord they rose up to go without delay into Bethlehem to see for themselves this thing that had come to pass.

Why were these particular men singled out for this honour? Did God arbitrarily pick out a group of shepherds who just happened to be in the vicinity in order to vouchsafe to someone this marvellous revelation? Surely not! These men were the first human beings to greet earth's rightful king! They were privileged to extend earth's welcome to the One who had come from above. On behalf of the entire human race whom Jesus had come to save, they made obeisance. We are so accustomed to the words of John *"he came unto his own, and his own received him not"* that we forget that the first men to see Jesus in the flesh did receive him, and talked about him for the rest of their lives. The conclusion is that these men were men of God, waiting in hope and faith and expectancy for the promised Messiah, and—who knows?—probably of that band which *"looked for deliverance in Jerusalem"* (Luke 2: 38). What more appropriate than that the Most High should apprise the "Watchers" of that day of the fact that the One for whom they looked had come at last?

"And this shall be a sign unto thee"—a wonder. Surely it was a wonder to men trained to expect Messiah as a great military leader and powerful King, overawing and destroying all the enemies of Israel and restoring the kingdom's former glories! *"Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."* But their faith did not stagger; there is nothing in any part of the account to suggest that they even questioned the apparent strangeness of this Messianic Advent, so different from all that they had been taught and led to expect. They came, they saw, and they worshipped, and went away to spread the glad news that the King had come.

Thirty years were to roll by before anything more was known of this strange happening. It is unlikely that many of the shepherds ever heard again of the babe whom they had been thus led to visit and adore. They were rural Judeans, and probably never left the vicinity of Bethlehem for the rest of their lives. The babe was taken away by

his parents within a few weeks. Thirty years is a long time; it may be that some of the younger ones among them, grown into old age, began to hear of the prophet who had risen in Galilee, and of his baptism in Jordan, and connected the tidings with the scene they had witnessed a generation previously. At first they must have talked about their amazing experience often as they lay around their camp fires at night or drove their flocks together through the day, but as the years went by perhaps some, at least, of them, began to wonder a little . . .

The next Passover, or perhaps the Feast of Tabernacles, and Joseph with his wife was back at Bethlehem in readiness to keep the Feast at Jerusalem. The Wise Men had come, and presented their gifts, and departed. Herod was alerted. The sojourn at Bethlehem was ended; Joseph, warned of God in a dream, made preparations for a hurried flight into Egypt. Herod's soldiers would very shortly be on the scene, searching for the young child. Perhaps the shepherds had visited the Holy Family again. They would hardly have been likely to make no further attempt to offer worship to the Saviour of the world, their Messiah. Perhaps, seeing him like that, and believing, they glimpsed something of the truth which the disciples of Jesus thirty years later found it so very difficult to accept, the necessity of a Coming in humiliation before there could be a Coming in power. They may have learned some things from Mary, and Mary in turn may have learned much from them, for we are told that she *"kept all these things and pondered them in her heart"*.

So one day Bethlehem was left behind, and the young husband and wife, bearing their precious treasure with them, set out for Egypt and safety. Herod could not pursue them there, for Egypt lay outside his sphere of jurisdiction. And when, apparently only a few months later, Herod died and they returned, they passed by Bethlehem and settled sixty miles to the north, in Galilee, there to remain until the day of Jesus' showing to Israel.

Luke says nothing of the flight into Egypt; only Matthew records that. From Luke's account it would seem as if they went straight from Bethlehem to Nazareth. Why did he omit the part of the history relating to the flight? The obvious difference in the two narratives has given occasion for the assertion that one or the other account is unreliable, or even both, and that the historical value of both Gospels must be discounted accordingly. As with the majority of such statements, investigation usually reveals that the apparently

contradictory stories can be reasonably well harmonised.

It is thought that Luke drew the materials for his Gospel largely from Mary the mother of Jesus. It is quite possible for Luke to have known her. Who knows but that the girl-wife, horrified and grieved at the massacre of the Innocents and the anguish of their mothers, and knowing that this calamity had come upon them because of her own child, had put the evil memory far from her, and in after days either did not tell the details to Luke or would not have them included in the gospel which he was preparing? Matthew, of course, would have had it from Jesus himself, and it may be that the overruling power of the Holy Spirit thus respected Mary's reticence whilst taking care that the account should be preserved in one of the Gospels. It is not wise to be dogmatic, but the explanation may lie along this line. It may be noted also in passing that the true date of Jesus' birth was early October and not December 25, but this is irrelevant to what is being said here as to the human factors in the situation.

So passed the first Christmas, a season fraught with great joy and great sorrow. None of the principal characters in the drama knew of the tremendous consequences that were to arise from the happenings of those few weeks. None of them knew how many more Christmas seasons were to come and go before the song of the angels could become an accomplished fact. To-day, peace on earth and goodwill among men seems farther off than ever. But it will come.

Perhaps, as we enter into another Christmas season we may take time to think awhile of those

simple Judean shepherds, who, one dark night, saw a great light, and in the power and inspiration of that light became changed men. They came to see and to worship; they returned glorifying and praising God for the things that they had learned and witnessed. *We come to the Lord Jesus in like manner, but we see more than a babe in a manger. We see the King, resplendent in his power, taking to himself the sceptre of authority, bringing this evil world order to an end that He might set up in its place his own everlasting Kingdom of peace. To the age-old angels' song there is added a new stanza: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in".* Like those simple Judeans of old, we must needs return glorifying and praising God for the evidence of the coming Kingdom that we have seen and telling of that Kingdom with such zeal, such certitude, such forthrightness, that, like the people of Bethlehem and the country round about at the time of that first Christmas, *"all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them"*. The people of to-day sadly need such a message; the time is at hand, the angelic vision has appeared to us; our eyes have seen the King in his beauty. What else can we do but go on in the power and wonder of that peerless vision, talking to each other about it, telling our neighbours and friends the tremendous story, looking in faith for the fulfilment of the promise, waiting, watching, hoping, praying, until the angels come again, this time to raise the strains of a song that never shall die away so long as the earth endures.

A Note on Thomas

"Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, let us also go that we may die with him" (John 11. 16). The Jews were seeking Jesus to stone him, when news came of the death of Lazarus, and He set out to go to Bethany despite the entreaties of the disciples, who were apprehensive for his safety. It was then that Thomas came out in such a favourable light. He was the first to express his desire to follow Jesus even though it seemed to be into certain death. Because of his refusal to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus until he could see his Lord in his pre-crucifixion likeness, he has become known in later times as "doubting Thomas"; maybe the slight is un-

deserved, for in this incident his loyalty to Jesus shows up very strongly. He was prepared to take the lead of the others in following Jesus into death. Perhaps it was the same intense loyalty which forbade him believe until he had identified the wound-prints in hands and feet. If so, it seems clear that loyalty is not enough if it is not accompanied by spiritual discernment. *"Blessed are they who, having not seen, have believed"* i.e. have not seen with the natural sight, but have done so with the spiritual sight. Thomas is reputed to have carried the Gospel to Mesopotamia and then to India, where the memory of his name is cherished to this day.

WATERS ABOVE THE FIRMAMENT

3. The Mountain of the Ark

"And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days". (Gen. 7.24).

The maximum intensity of the Flood is indicated in verses 19-20 of this chapter, and this was apparently attained at the end of the first forty days. The main downrush of supra-terrestrial waters from the skies above the Poles began to decrease, although it was another ninety days, three months, before the oncoming waters from the southern ocean ceased sufficiently to achieve stability of level. It was only *"after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated"* (ch. 8.3), where "abated" is *chaser*, meaning to diminish, fail, be cut short, lessened. During these three months, therefore, the Ark floated aimlessly in a vast sea subject to lessening currents, the storms and violent winds, the thunder and lightning, of the first forty days, dying down, until Noah could look out over a more or less placid sea with no land in sight. No wonder he entered into his narrative the words which appear in ch. 6.23 *"Every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the earth. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the Ark"*. The whole of the world which the old patriarch knew had gone, submerged beneath the waters.

Now came a change. *"God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged. The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. And the waters returned from off the earth continually"* (ch. 8.1). This is a most intriguing and important part of the story when its full implications are understood. This wind had its origin in natural causes which no later writer could have known about had the Deluge story been a later invention; it is one of the evidences that the account is the work of an eye-witness. Before the Flood the enshrouding canopy high in the atmosphere refracted the sun's rays so that an equable climate subsisted from Equator to Poles—hence the vast animal population whose instantaneously frozen remains still lie in the northern wastes of Canada and Siberia. The present wind patterns of the earth did not then exist—winds would have been light and consistent. But with the disappearance of the aerial waters the sun was shining down upon the flooded land with unaccustomed bril-

liance and power—the Babylonian legends all make mention of the sunlight when the Ark was opened—and the time was April, verging on to summer. Just as the Poles from now on were going to be much colder so the land which Noah knew was going to be much warmer. A new climatic pattern was being initiated, induced by this new difference of temperature between the tropical and temperate regions. The air over the Equator is warm and light; colder and heavier air from the Polar regions is continually pouring in and forcing the lighter and warmer air upward. The earth's rotation gives these incoming north and south winds a twist towards the west so that they appear in the northern hemisphere as north-westerlies and in the southern as south-easterlies. These are known as the "Trade Winds" and in the days of sailing-ships were important aids to mariners. As the seasons change the regions towards which the Trade Winds blow move north and south with the sun; hence the latitude affected by the Trades moves north and south correspondingly. Hence there is a region in which the Trades blow in summer but not in winter; in the northern hemisphere this lies between latitudes 30 and 42 degrees, which is the precise latitude of Iraq. This gives reason for confirming that area as the site of the Flood.

But so far it was only April. The Ark had been afloat for five months. The downrush from the skies had ceased, but the draining away of the waters into the ocean was going to take a long time. And it was when that draining away began that the Ark grounded. The account gives the process very clearly. Says ch. 8.1. *"the waters assuaged"* where "assuage" is *shakah*, to subside or sink down. The downrush from outer space was "stopped" (vs. 2), which is *sakur*, to shut. The *"rain from heaven was restrained"* which is *hala*, to withhold, prohibit, restrain. At this point Divine power curbed the flood-waters and allowed them to drain away. So vs. 3 has it *"the waters returned from off the earth continually; and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated"*. "Returned" is *halak va-shub*, meaning going and turning back, indicating the gradual progress of an action; "abated" is *chaser*, to diminish, be cut short. And at this point, the beginning of the turning back of the waters, *"the Ark rested, in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat"* (vs. 4). Exactly five months,

to the day, after the commencement of the catastrophe, the Ark came to rest.

Those "mountains of Ararat"! Many are the legends and hypotheses respecting the location of that memorable mountain and many the various mountains all over the Middle East which at one time or another have been claimed to be the possessors of the honour. The ancients knew where it was; moderns have speculated. The Western world has for some three centuries fixed its sights on Mount Ararat in Eastern Turkey, (real name Aghri Dagh, "the Great Mountain") only because a colony of Nestorian monks, fleeing the Moslem conquerors of Syria in the 8th century A.D., settled in the Russian Caucasus and selected this adjacent mountain as the site of the Ark's landing, telling the story to every credulous traveller who came their way. In fact Ararat is only the most recent of the various sites claimed to be that of the landing of Ark; the legend associating this mountain with the Flood had its rise only in the 13th century A.D.

The earliest historical statements naming the mountain extant are found in the various "Flood" stories of the Sumerian epics as recounted and edited by the Assyrians in about 800 B.C. These recount how Noah, when the waters began to fall, perceived a mountain rising like an island in the midst of the sea "at twelve points", i.e. as we would say, "at twelve o'clock", which to them meant due East. It was said to be "in the land of Nisir", which in other Assyrian histories of the period indicates the Zagros mountains in the latitude of Baghdad. For this reason a mountain north-east of Baghdad called Pir-Omar-Gudrun has been selected by some investigators as the one meant but no one is really sure.

By 700 B.C. the "Ten Tribes" had been deported by the Assyrians to Gozan, the area on the present border between Turkey and Iraq, now occupied by the Kurds, and they fixed on a mountain called Al-Djudi, near the river Tigris where it crosses from Turkey into Iraq. Berosus, the Babylonian historian of about 250 B.C. says that the Ark stranded in the Gordyene mountains, which extend from Djudi south-easterly into Iran. The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, (1st century Aramaic paraphrases of the Old Testament), names Al-Djudi as the place, and as soon as Christianity became established in the Middle East this mountain was accepted by the early Christians as the Ararat of Genesis. The Mohammedan conquest of Western Asia in the eighth century led the

Koran to claim the same in its story of the Flood. Eventually a Jewish synagogue, a Christian monastery, and a Moslem mosque, all stood on the slopes of Al-Djudi in honour of Father Noah. Arab and European travellers of the 10th century onwards in their writings claimed this as the mountain of the Ark; the Emperor Heraclius ascended it in A.D. 620 to see for himself and to worship; in 1696 the British scientist William Whiston lent his endorsement in his "New Theory of the Earth" dealing with the Flood, saying that this was currently the received opinion from which he saw no reason to dissent. To this day both the Eastern Christian churches and the Moslem world hold Al-Djudi to be the mountain of the Ark; only to western Europeans are the later claims of Ararat in Turkey upheld.

How did the legend of Ararat in Turkey rise? During the early years of the Moslem domination of Iraq and Syria about the 8th century onwards a community of Nestorian monks in the vicinity of Al-Djudi, suffering under Moslem persecution, left their home and monastery and migrated to Etchmiadzin in the Russian Caucasus, where they set up a new monastery which became famous in the Middle Ages. Thirty miles south of their new home there rose a lofty peak, Aghri Dagh (meaning Great Mountain) three miles high, with a rocky outcrop near the top (still there) which, when viewed from their monastery looked (and still looks) suspiciously like the projecting hull of a ship. Nothing could be better. This, said they, is obviously the Mount Ararat of Scripture and the age-old claims of Al-Djudi were quietly forgotten. By the 12th century European travellers were beginning to pass through the area on their way to the East and received hospitality at the monastery and brought the story back. So the legend of Ararat was born. Renowned travellers like William of Rubruk (1253), Vincent of Beauvais (c 1260), Marco Polo (1295) Ray de Clavijo (1403), all heard the story and wrote it up in their books and so the legend became firmly fixed in European circles.

Both these mountains are in the lofty mountain ranges of the north—most unlikely candidates unless the Flood really was six miles deep over all the world as was once supposed. Somewhere much nearer the plains of Iraq is more reasonably indicated. The celebrated 20th century archaeologist Sir Max Mallowan, who spent his life investigating the Middle East, has said that in his opinion the Sumerian Flood stories definitely indicate a moun-

tain somewhere in southern Iraq ("Iraq", Vol. 26 Part 2, 1964). Can either the Bible or the epics afford a clue?

One definite clue there is, one which brings the Book of Genesis into direct contact with Sumerian legend. When the author of Genesis chapter 10 (the famous "Table of Nations") described how the early peoples divided into nations and the territories they inhabited, he said of one collection of tribes, those springing from Joktan the son of Eber, as settling in an area "*from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, a mount of the east*" (Gen. 10. 25-30). The A.V. rendering is not too good; more accurately it is as rendered by Margolis and most other translations; it is "*their dwelling was from Mesha, as thou goest unto Sephar, to the Mountain of the East*". This method of defining an area by three or four cardinal points is common in ancient writings; another example is Gen. 10.19 where the boundaries of the Canaanites were defined similarly "from Sidon to Gerar, to Gaza, to Sodom and Gomorrah". Now the "Mount of the East" in Sumerian lore is the place where the Ark rested and became the mountain of the gods and the connection between heaven and earth. The Book of Jubilees (4.16) preserves this tradition by declaring that the Lord has four memorable "*places on the earth, the Garden of Eden, the Mount of the East, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion*". The place-names and generations described in Gen. 10 show that it originated about the 24th century B.C., about a thousand years after the Flood; the whereabouts of the mountain was well known at that time. The location of the Mesha of that day is unknown; several sites in Lower Iraq are possibilities but not certain. "Sephar" is the ancient city-state of Sifru, not far from Ur of the Chaldees. The area concerned is obviously the marshland at the present head of the Gulf, and a triangular site with the Mount at its eastern extremity would point to some mountain on the edge of the plain between latitudes 31 and 34.

In the light of this clue, a further line of investigation presented itself. Every city in ancient Sumer, Assyria and Babylonia had its sacred building, the "ziggurat". The ziggurat was a stepped tower surmounted by a temple at the summit. The renowned "Tower of Babel" was the first of the ziggurats. The word itself is a Sumerian one meaning "mountain peak" and the ziggurat was a stylised representation of the mountain from which their ancestors had come at the first and where the Ark had landed, above which the gods

dwelt and ruled the world. In general the ziggurats always faced north-east but there are two notable exceptions, those at Babylon and Nippur. It has often been a point of speculation why these two should be an exception, but, so far as is known, there has been no serious enquiry why this is so. But the known fact of their connection with the Mount of the East is suggestive.

Babylon became the holy city of the sons of Shem, settled mainly in the north. Nippur was the holy city of the sons of Ham, the Sumerians, congregating mainly in the south. The ziggurat at Babylon was called *E-temen-anki*, meaning "the temple of the foundation of heaven and earth". That at Nippur was *E-kur*, "the temple of the mountain". That of itself is of interest.

When the German Professor Robert Koldewey excavated Babylon in 1900-1910, he found that the ziggurat was actually oriented 14 degrees north of east. The excellent plans in his work "*The Excavations at Babylon*" (1914) show this very clearly. The companion holy city, that of the Sumerians, Nippur (the Calneh of Gen. 10) was excavated by Prof. Hilprecht during 1890-1900. The plans in his work "*Excavations in Assyria and Babylonia*" (1904) show this ziggurat oriented 33 degrees north of east. If the surmise is correct then the priests serving the temples at both places would then conduct their ceremonies directly facing their sacred mountain, much as the Jews turn their faces to Jerusalem and the Moslems to Mecca to this day.

After which it remained only to acquire large-scale British ordnance survey maps of southern Iraq and draw two lines in the correct directions.

Such two lines travel across the plain a hundred and forty miles from Babylon and a hundred from Nippur to intersect on a solitary and rather modest mountain now called Kuh-i-Anaran, standing a little way out from the mountain mass of the Zagros and just inside the Iranian frontier. Both ziggurats point directly to Anaran; it is difficult not to attach some significance to that fact.

The next step is to look at the characteristics of this particular mountain in the light of what the ancients had to say about the "Mount of the East". There have been discovered a number of Sumerian ceremonial hymns which were chanted in the Temple services in praise of the mountain. One discovered by Hilprecht at Nippur runs thus;

*"O great mountain of Bel, of the lofty head,
Whose summit rivals the heavens,
Whose foundations are laid in the netherworld,
Resting in the land like a mighty wild ox,*

*With horns gleaming like the radiant sun,
As the stars of heaven are filled with lustre".*

Another one, recorded by Ragozin, reads:

*"O mountain of Bel in the east
Whose double head reaches unto the skies
Which is like a mighty wild ox at rest
Whose double horn sparkles as a sunbeam
And as a star".*

The famous, "*Epic of Gilgamesh*" which relates the legendary story of how the Sumerian hero Gilgamesh journeyed through strange lands to find his ancestor Uta-napishtim (the Sumerian Noah) and learn how he survived the Flood, relates how at one stage of his journey he came to the Mount of the East, "*whose twin peaks reach to the vault of heaven and whose bastions reach to the nether-world below*". From that mountain he had to follow the "road of the sun" to reach the object of his quest.

In these statements there is a remarkable unanimity. They describe the "Mount of the East" as resembling a mighty wild ox at rest, i.e., in a recumbent position, with twin peaks like great horns reaching into the heavens. Now Anaran is in a wild and unpopulated part of the country and it is unlikely that any photographs or pictures of the mountain exist. It is only one of hundreds in the area and has probably never attracted any notice. But an examination of the contours on the map does reveal a startling similarity to the ancient ceremonial chants Anaran comprises a long mass some three thousand feet high about twelve miles long by five wide crowned at its northern end by two enormous peaks rising side by side to a height of more than five thousand feet. In front of the peaks two giant outcrops fifteen hundred or more feet high project side by side into the valley, for all the world like the recumbent forelegs of a great beast lying down with his horns projecting straight up. The similarity is so marked that it gives good ground for concluding that this is the "Mount of the East" of Sumerian lore, and that the early pioneers who came "from the East" to build the Tower of Babel and later on the first city of Babylon knew perfectly well that their forebears of probably only a few generations earlier came from this mountain to build a new world. At any rate there would appear to be more evidence that Kuh-i-Anaran is the place where the Ark rested than is the case with any other claimed site. The combined indications of the Book of Genesis and the Sumerian epics, all dating to little more than a thousand years after the Flood, are likely to be nearer the

mark than the theories either of the Ten Tribes of the 8th century B.C. or a colony of Nestorian monks in the middle of the Christian era.

An interesting sidelight on all this comes from the writings of one of the many medieval travellers who journeyed through Iraq and recorded their experiences. In or about AD 1170 Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon, a German Jew, undertook an expedition through southern Russia, Turkey and Iraq to visit his compatriots. It is interesting to note that in his day northern Turkey was known as the land of Togarmah, and southern Turkey and the mountains down to Baghdad as the land of Ararat. Whilst visiting Baghdad and Babylon he was taken to the place in the "land of Ararat" where the Ark was believed to have rested. His account runs (he refers to himself in the third person throughout his narrative) "*Rabbi Petachia said that the mountains of Ararat are five days journey from Babylon. The mountains of Ararat are high. There is one high mountain, behind which are four others, two opposite two. The Ark of Noah was carried between these mountains and could not get out. However, the Ark is not there, for it has decayed. The mountains are full of thorns and other herbs; when the dew falls upon them, manna falls upon them . . . They look like small grains. They gave the rabbi a few to taste; they melted in his mouth . . .*" ("*Travels of Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon*" 1861).

This is a very fine piece of topographical information and it is not difficult to pin-point the precise mountain to which the worthy Rabbi was conducted. (He is noted for his accuracy of observation.) In all the writings of medieval travellers (and up to the 18th century) the rate of travel (always by foot or by mule) was thirty miles a day. This can easily be checked in the narratives of travellers such as Marco Polo, William of Rubruk, Clavijo, Benjamin of Tudela, and so on. The travel rate is consistent. This means that Petachia was taken to a place about one hundred and fifty miles from Babylon. The only mountain to meet that requirement, and the nearest mountain to Babylon by road, is Kuh-i-Anaran, the distance by present-day roads and tracks being about 160 miles. The remainder of the description also fits very accurately. Behind Anaran, which stands out into the plain a little in front of the main Iranian mountain mass, there is a valley about eight miles wide by thirty long, connected with the plain at each end by narrow gorges. Behind the valley, arranged in a rough semi-circle, are four prominent mountain peaks rising to about nine thousand feet. Standing

below the two peaks of Anaran, in the gorge, and looking into the valley, it is apparent from the map that two of the four peaks would appear as standing opposite the other two, just as the Rabbi said. It is almost possible to mark on the map the precise spot where he stood when he made his observation.

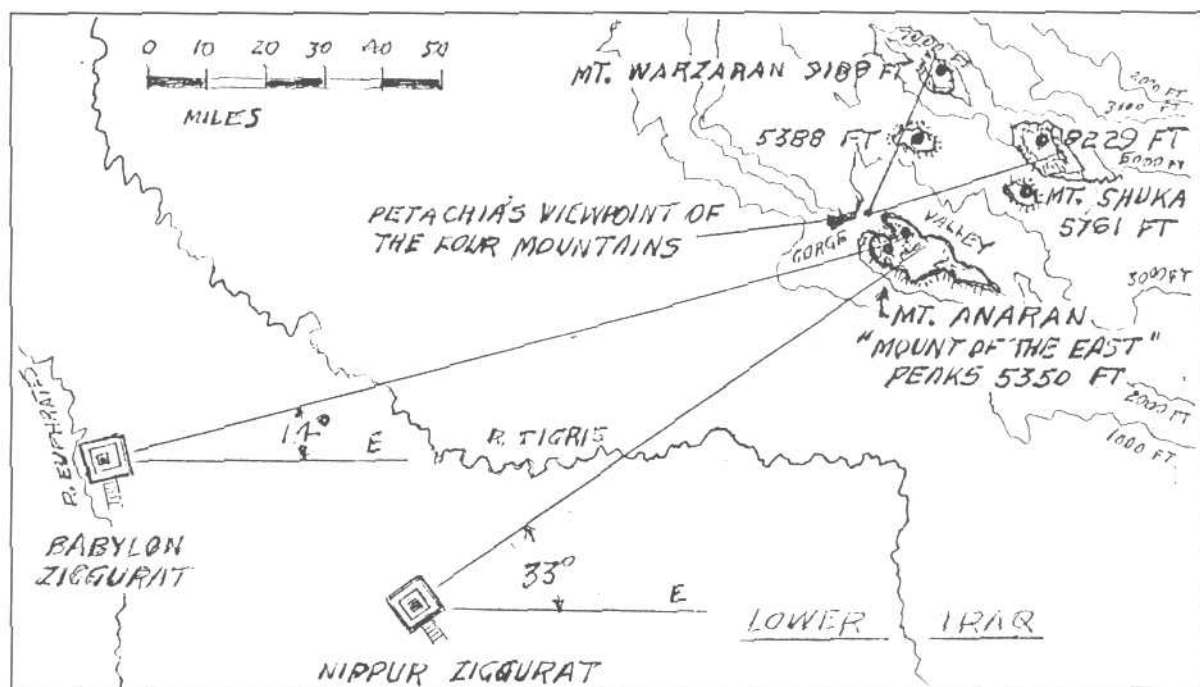
The reference to the manna is a supporting touch. Every mediaeval and modern traveller in those parts has noted the same phenomenon. Over a large area in north-western Iran and southern Kurdistan certain species of trees exude a sweet sap which coagulates and is gathered and used for food. It does not appear to be quite the same as the Israelites' manna in the desert of Sinai, but most travellers give it that name. Its Persian name is *ghaz* and it is quite an article of commerce. The fact that Rabbi Petachia encountered it on this occasion serves to confirm that he was in fact in this area; this "manna" is not found in the farther north.

It would appear then that in addition to the Sumerian epics and the Bible reference to this "Mount of the East" there was still, in the 12th century of the Christian era, a local legend connecting Mount Anaran with Noah's Flood. Unlike Mounts Ararat and Djudi, both visited from time to time by European explorers, Anaran, in a wild and

inhospitable country, has never had any recorded visitors except Petachia. Claudius Rich, sailing down the Tigris in 1815, saw this "remarkable conical mountain, looking just like a volcano," thirty-four miles away—from his position he would see only one peak, the other being immediately behind it—(Rich; "Residence in Koordistan" 1836) and Austin Layard, the "father of Assyrian archaeology", once passed within twenty miles of the mountain on his way from Baghdad to Susa without knowing that he was within sight of the "Mount of the East". And so far as is known no other explorer has ever been there.

The name "Ararat" in Genesis used to be said to be derived from Urartu, a land and people in north-west Iran which did not exist before the 10th century B.C. and Genesis was written more than a thousand years before that. The origin of the name in Genesis has to be sought in much earlier writings. Until recent times no similar earlier name was known but in 1955 a number of epic tablets recording the great deeds of years gone by, discovered at Nippur—the Calneh of Gen. 10.10—many years ago, were deciphered and found to relate to events connected with a hitherto unknown and unsuspected Sumerian city-state, Arattu.

The capital city of Arattu has not yet been discovered. No search for it has yet been made. Its



Relation of the ziggurats to the mountains

remains lie, not in the Babylonian plain where are the other ancient cities familiar to Bible Students, but two hundred miles to the east in the inaccessible Iranian mountains. It must have existed from a remote antiquity and was in the hey-day of its power about five centuries before the birth of Abraham. It then gave way before the military might of the powerful city-state of Uruk ("Erech" of Gen. 10.10) and was heard of no more. Fortunately the tablets offer a fairly detailed description of the location of Arattu and the route by which it was reached from Uruk, with which it apparently had extensive commercial dealings. The full extent of the country cannot be deduced from the tablets, but its capital city and probably main population appears to have been in the mountainous area between the present Iranian towns of Kermanshah, Hamadan and Nuhavend, roughly between the 34 and 35 parallels of latitude and 47 and 48 of longitude, approximately two hundred miles north-east of Babylon, with Mount Anaran more or less on its frontier.

The likeness of the name to the Hebrew Ararat invites investigation. In the early Sumerian language in which Genesis was first written the term for mountain is *kur* (from which the later Hebrew *har* is derived). The addition of *ara* adds the qualification of duality, "double-mountain" or "twin-mountain", so that the twin-peaked "mountain of Aratt" would be *kur-ara-arrattu* (primitive Sumerian had no definite or indefinite articles "the" or "a"). When Hebrew appeared at about the time of the Exodus and Genesis was translated from Sumerian cuneiform into Hebrew it became *ha-harai-aratt* (Sumerian words translated into Hebrew always either dropped the final "u" or replaced it by "a". *Harai* is a little used form of *har*

(mountain) again indicating duality as in the Sumerian original. ("Mountains", plural, in Gen. 7.4 is incorrect; the plural is *harayim* as in vs. 5, "the tops of the mountains were covered".) So the "double mountain of Arrattu" in the original became "the double-mountain of Aratt" in Hebrew, and in English, "Ararat".

One more clue. The "Book of Jubilees", written by some pious Jew about 150 B.C. and describing the period of the Flood, offers some geographical information indicating Jewish belief at that time. The Ark rested, it says, "on the top of Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat" (Jub. 5.6). After coming out of the Ark, Noah "planted vines on the mountain on which the Ark had rested, named Lubar, one of the mountains of Ararat" (Jub. 7.1) and he was buried "on Mount Lubar, in the land of Ararat". (Jub. 9.15). Chapter 8, defining the lands settled by the three sons of Noah, shows that this "land of Ararat" was in the area of Babylon, Susa, and Elam, and Chap. 9 that it was associated with the plains of Babylonia and the Assyrian mountains, the Zagros range of western Iran, to the East. This, of course, all rests on pre-Christian Jewish tradition but it does show that the country to which Rabbi Petachia was taken in the Middle Ages was regarded as the true site of the mountain a thousand years before his time, and more than two thousand years before the modern Mount Ararat even got its name.

So, it may be, at the end of the hundred and fifty days, the Ark, drifting on the southbound current along the edge of the Iranian mountains, and guided by the hand of God, came to rest on the flanks of Anaran, rising, as the ancient narrator declared, like an island in the midst of the sea.

To be concluded.

End of the year

The end of the year is a good time to take oneself to task, to renew our consecration, and to look back and see what we have become, more than what we have learned, although that also is necessary. We may have had to go through experiences which have not been pleasant but we all believe that things do not happen to us in a haphazard way:

the Lord is overruling all things for our good.

"In the centre of the circle of the Will of God I stand.

There can be no second causes, all must come from his dear hand.

All is well, for 'tis my father who my life has planned".

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When John the Baptist commenced to preach in the desert of Judea that the Kingdom of God was "at hand" he was continuing a centuries-old theme of the prophets of Israel. Some of the prophecies contained references which implied that God's people would become his Kingdom among the nations. For example one of these was Isa. 60.10-11 "*Foreigners shall build up your walls, and kings shall minister to you; . . . your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that men may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.*" Daniel 4. 3, 17 is more explicit when it says ". . . *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation . . . to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men*". Israel had always regarded the Lord God as their king and the making of a covenant relationship represented for them his kingship (Exod. 15, 18 and 19.6). From their earliest days as a nation they had looked forward to a time when God would more definitely intervene in world events through his prophet. This is the idea shown in the words of Deut. 18. 15 by Moses when he said "*The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your brethren—him you shall heed*". When Peter spoke to the assembled Jews in the Temple area at Jerusalem soon after Pentecost he applied those words of Moses to God's intervention through Jesus (Acts 3. 22-23).

The literal nature of a coming Kingdom was somewhat shattered by repeated defeats at the hands of God's enemies, particularly after the exile in Babylon. The post exilic prophets tended to develop the Messianic theme in terms of God's kingship in the hearts of his people and the final overthrow of evil in the world of men. In this way the idea of the Kingdom of God meant more to the people of Israel than a geographical location or even social improvement. Prof. C. H. Dodd has described it as 'kingly rule' or 'sovereignty' and that it "denotes a specific aspect, attribute or activity of God". Thus, in spite of their enemies and dispersion from their land, individual Israelites had remained part of God's Kingdom. They waited for a fuller manifestation of his 'reign' in the hearts and lives of all people. This is affirmed by Dan. 2. 44 ". . . *the God of heaven (shall) set up a kingdom . . . it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand for ever*". Yet there is a

sense in which Israel continued to believe that God maintained a present sovereignty among the nations as shown by Psa. 145. 11-13, "*thy dominion endureth throughout all generations*". The Hebrew concept of kingdom was transferred to the Aramaic word *malkuth* and the Greek equivalent *basileia*. Much of the teaching of the Old Testament was regarded by the first Christian believers as fulfilled at the First Advent of Jesus and in the work of the Early Church. This is reflected in the letter to the Hebrews (12. 27), which speaks of a new order parallel to the creation of the nation at Sinai in the expression "*receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved*". In the Gospels, only Matthew (3. 1) records John the Baptist's expectation of the 'Kingdom of Heaven', (Matthew's expression gives deference to Jewish custom which avoided the use of the name of God). John's anticipation, in line with many of the prophets, was for a Messiah who would judge the wicked, including those in Israel (Luke 3. 4-9, 17). Jesus, however, although continuing to announce the Kingdom as John had done, expanded the idea and placed upon it a different emphasis. This is evident from the question which John's disciples asked Jesus about his identity (Luke 7. 19) and the answer given them pointed to the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy which Jesus had read in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4. 17-20; Isa. 61. 1). By so doing Jesus had announced that the "acceptable year of the Lord" had in fact come.

In his ministry, Jesus did many miracles which the Jews should have interpreted as God breaking his silence and being responsible for activities in the affairs of men in a way that had never been known before. Israel's hope for a coming Kingdom was based on the belief that there was a need to overthrow evil and its power which gripped mankind. That the Jews had failed to interpret correctly the spirit and words of the prophets is clear from their accusation of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub. Jesus explained to them that such activity was possible because exorcism was evidence that the Kingdom of God was at work in their midst, demolishing the kingdom of Satan; or as the third Gospel expresses it ". . . *if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you.*" (Luke 11. 20; see also Matt. 12. 28 "*Spirit of God*"). In the first century the idea of miracles was not uncommon. The most important feature of Jesus' mighty works

rested upon the authority with which He did them. He was not concerned with a display of exhibition wonders for the entertainment of the crowds. Evidence of this is seen by his attitude to the temptation (Matt. 4. 5-7) to throw himself from the parapet of the Temple. However the authority with which he did his work among the people was present in other clashes with the Jewish leaders which gave rise to alarm among the religious hierarchy. He would have been harmless enough within the compass of the law had he cured those who were ill and taught interesting moral lessons. Jesus' ministry meant much more than that and threatened to break the authority which they claimed to possess as the occupants of Moses' seat. On several occasions Jesus either implied or specifically said that He was greater than the great men of Israel's history. He claimed to be the new leader establishing judgment and authority from God. This claim remained firm till his death and He expressed it in the words at the Last Supper "*as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you, that you may . . . sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Luke 22. 29-30).

The authority of Christ was shown in his attitude towards the Sabbath, which challenged the traditional interpretation of God's law. The argument with Jews about the disciples gleaning in the grain-fields demonstrated his claim that He had direct authority from God for what He said and did. His pronouncement of forgiveness for the palsied man's sins supported a similar claim. Yet while He acted in the spirit and power of the Kingdom to 'make men whole' Jesus refused to try to prove his authority by providing a sign to impel them to believe in him. The hindrance of the Jews to Christ's teaching was not one of faith, however, but of hostility to the principles of the Kingdom of God. They could not believe that God would introduce that Kingdom without operating through the approved channels of Jewish religious leadership.

That the authority by which Jesus performed his miracles, was also present in his teaching is evident from the remarks of the temple guard when they reported back to their superiors after trying to arrest Jesus (John 7. 46). The authority of the words which He spoke had been apparent in his ministry in Galilee. (Mark 1. 27; Matt. 7. 29). It was in the descriptions of the Kingdom of God given in the parables that made the impression of him unique as a teacher. Their importance is shown by the fact that they constitute one third of Jesus' recorded teaching. Instead of treating the

parables as if they were allegories, the tendency now is to interpret each parable as an illustration of a single concept of what the Kingdom of God is like.

The overall development of God's kingdom was shown by Jesus in such parables as the 'mustard seed' in which a tiny beginning grows into a huge residence for birds. The meaning of this story is not unlike some of the prophetic utterances concerning the nations flowing into the kingdom (Micah 4. 1). However, as in God's kingdom of old, the progress of the new kingdom would not be entirely smooth and so Jesus warns the disciples that not all would accept the Word of the Gospel, in the parable of the Sower. Those who belonged to the kingdom would continue to live side by side with those who did not, for in his last hours before the cross Jesus spoke of his disciples being in the world but not of it (John 17. 15, 16). The story of the wheat and tares taught the same lesson.

That members of the Kingdom of Heaven would be distinguishable from their fellow men and women was made clear from the appeal which Jesus made for forgiveness and compassion in the parables of the Unmerciful Servant and the Good Samaritan. It may be argued that after nineteen centuries of the Gospel message, a great many people not professing to be Christians do in fact tend to exhibit the characteristics which Jesus said must be the hall-mark of his followers. He accounted for this possibility in the Sermon on the Mount, in references to salt and light. The Church could not operate in the world, retaining its original purpose, and not greatly influence those who are not in it.

Nevertheless the parables of Jesus make a fundamental difference between those who are genuine disciples and those who are not in stories such as the Sheep and Goats, and that of the two men who built houses on different kinds of foundation. In those parables Jesus showed that a time of judgment and testing would eventually occur in which those who had forsaken all for his cause would be rewarded. Various facets of single minded discipleship are illustrated by the anecdotes about those who discovered treasure or searched for a valuable pearl. The reward is both a present experience and a future recompense; the latter being related in the parables of the Pounds and the Talents in the words, "*enter into the joy of your master*" (Matt. 25. 21).

Some who heard Jesus tell his stories could not understand them, nor did they enter the Kingdom

of Heaven. Jesus did not tell his stories to confuse them but they were rebuffed by the spirit in which the parables were told. Even his friends misunderstood that spirit and were gently rebuked for turning little children away from their 'King'. "*Whosoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child*" He said, "*shall not enter it*". Yet on another occasion he told the Jews that "*eager men are forcing their way into . . .*" the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 11. 12; *Phillips*). Still further, He compared God's reception of sinful unbelievers into his kingdom, to that of a shepherd bringing back a sheep to the fold, or a long lost son being received by a father into the family circle (Luke 15).

Preserved in John's Gospel is an aspect of God's Kingdom which is not so explicit in the synoptics. Instead of referring to the actual kingdom, the fourth evangelist writes of "eternal life". Both terms are brought together in the account of the rich young ruler approaching Jesus to find out how to obtain eternal life. As the young man went sadly away, Jesus remarked how hard it was for those who were rich to enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 18. 18-24). Jesus' use of the expression in the words of his prayer "*this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent*" (John 17. 3) echoes the sentiments of the prophets, particularly Jeremiah 9. 24. He was particularly a prophet of the covenant and it was he who spoke the momentous words of chapter 31. 31. In this way Jesus commenced a kingdom on the same basis that Israel had known of old, a

covenanted people with a special relationship to their God.

The epistles do not have a great deal to say directly about the Kingdom of God. However, there is enough to show that the theme was often in the minds of the early Christians and that its principles had serious implications for them. Paul refers to it in his letters to Corinth particularly warning them that those who do not receive spiritual life now, can hardly be ready for that kingdom which is not the environment of flesh and blood (1 Corinthians 6. 9-10; 15. 50). Other references indicate that members of that kingdom must seek to be in active co-operation with God now, in order that they may enter into the inheritance of the Kingdom. This is a kingdom in process of being established. Jesus broke through into world history and accomplished at his first advent things to which the prophets had looked forward in their Messianic sayings. The Church has continued the events of the kingdom to the extent that the quality of its corporate life has been in accordance with that of Jesus and his teachings. The Master clearly stated before Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world and in his prayer he taught the disciples to pray for the kingdom to come. Yet he had said to the Jews, the Kingdom of God is among you. The kingdom experience continues in the hearts and lives of those who believe in him, until, as Paul explains in 1 Cor. 15. 24-28, Jesus has subjected every other form of authority and kingdom which has opposed God's Kingdom, and then he will hand the kingdom over to the Father.

Wanting no good thing . . .

Psalms 34. 10 says: "*They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*" Though the good thing intended here is what is spoken of in verse 22, "none shall be desolated," or in John 14. 23, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"—for this is a good thing indeed—yet that which most readily comes to the mind in reading these words is some earthly good thing which we may desire. We think of some who are greatly burdened with trials and difficulties, and seem to have far more than their share of illness and suffering, and it might be hard to realise

these were "not in want of any good thing". Though this is not easy to explain by cold logic, yet the testimony of the poorest and most destitute brother or sister in Christ is: "I have wanted no good thing". The following, by Alexander Peden, dated 1682, surely explains this position:—

"I remember, as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell. The callous soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had: 'we will leave thee nothing,' said they, 'either to put in thee or on thee.' 'I care not,' said she, 'I will not want as long as God is in the Heavens'."

OUT OF THE IVORY PALACES

Failing Years

*My eyes are dim. I can no longer see
The distant scenes of Earth I used to love.
While mists have veiled the glory of the stars
That circle in the purple vault above.
Yet He who marks the sparrow's wavering flight
Is not unmindful of his little one.
He gives indeed the spiritual sight;
Revealing glories earth has never known.*

*My hearing fails. The music of the birds
That fill the air with melody in Spring
Is fast becoming just a memory.
Wind in all the pine trees, distant bells that ring
No longer penetrate with joyful sound
The silence where I dwell so oft alone.
Yet melodies are ringing in my heart
Which for the loss of all earth's sounds atone.*

*My voice is gone. I cannot sing his praise
Or speak the wondrous message of his love.
Yet deep within my heart the anthems ring
And incense rises to his courts above.
I cannot sing—but I can write the songs
That other lips may sing in coming years.
Oh! how my spirit swells with love for him
That oft finds outlet only in my tears.*

*I gave myself a willing sacrifice
An offering freely on God's altar laid—
Shall I complain or grieve that He accepts
My talents? Shall the disposition made
Of them distress my soul? Ah, no, dear Lord!
Take as thou wilt, my voice, my eyes, my ears,
I'll praise thee still—if only with my pen
And worship silently amid my tears.*

*Some day I know the offering, consumed
Upon thine Altar, shall bring praise to thee,
And thou wilt wake thy child in happier spheres
Where heaven's beauty undimmed eyes shall see.
There shall we hear thy voice and sing thy praise
When ears are opened, speech no more
restrained.*

*Set free from all the hills and bounds of flesh
We'll show thy beauty to a world reclaimed.*

Laura Kathleen Poole.

Christ is Everything

*He's EVERYTHING to us! These words touch
deeply
Within the inner sanctum of our souls
And chords responsive echo rare and sweetly,
From those whose hearts the love of Christ enfolds;
Who look beyond this world of imperfection,
To that pure realm of satisfied desire,
And in the circle of Divine affection,
Find all those joys to which their hearts aspire.*

*He's EVERYTHING! But all the hidden meaning
That lies beneath that all-embracing word
Is known to those alone who on him leaning,
Have had the Spirit's life within them stirred;
Whose eyes behold in his all-glorious Person,
An object of their reverential love,
Who die with him in deepest soul-immersion,
Who rise with him to walk the heights above.*

*Whose needs so vast and varied He supplieth,
Each one completely suited to his grace,
And if sometimes their cravings He denieth,
His compensating comfort they can trace.
Yes, Christ is EVERYTHING! And if thus surely
We find our all in him who cannot fail,
What matchless joy to share his love and glory
In heav'n's unhindered bliss beyond the veil!*

M.S. 1941

A little farther on

*Just a little farther on,—and all who honour Me
With joy shall prove My promise true—they too
shall honoured be.*

*Full well I know thy heart's desire;
The heights to which thou dost aspire;
Thy love which burns with holy fire;
And all to "honour Me."*

*Just a little farther on,—the victor's song will
then be sung
By all who honour Me. Thou hast done well,
yet still—press on.*

*And greater works I'll trust to thee;
And grander glories thou shalt see;
Thus thou shalt fully honoured be;
A little farther on.*

“THEY TOOK KNOWLEDGE OF THEM”

If we could roll back the wheels of time, and take our stand in Jerusalem when the scene described in the foregoing words was enacted, we would not only have been greatly instructed by the Apostolic remarks, but also amused at the shock to the ruffled dignity of the pompous City Fathers, caused by the Apostle's remarks. They had just had such a castigation from Peter's inspired tongue that it left them staring around in astonishment. It was one of those occasions which sometimes do occur in history when the tongue of the illiterate can concentrate more stinging reproof into a few short words than the tutored man, with whole dictionaries at his command, can inject into his cultured reprimand. What a sight for angels and men to behold, as the proud phylacteried Doctors writhed under the lash of the piercing words, and looked at each other too astounded to speak!

Peter and John had done a noble act the day before. A poor man who had never walked from birth was daily carried to his pitch, from which he might ask alms of the passers-by. Peter and John had bestowed on the unfortunate man such wealth as they had at their command and made him to experience the pleasure of “perfect soundness” (Acts 3, 16) in his hitherto useless limbs. The unrestrained demonstration of gratitude of the man towards his benefactors soon drew a crowd, and afforded Peter and John an opportunity to make one of their most memorable appeals to the Jewish people concerning the Name which had healed the impotent man. Standing in Solomon's Porch, Peter exhorted the crowd to repent and be converted, so that refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, assuring them as children of Abraham and the prophets that God, having raised up Jesus, sent him to them to bless them by “*turning every one of them away from his iniquities*” (Acts 3, 26).

While they were addressing the people, a company of Priests and Sadducees, together with the Captain of the Temple, “*came upon them*” and arrested them, “*being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead*”. As it was late in the day—“now eventide”—they were lodged in prison overnight. On the morrow all the elite members of the priestly clan were gathered together for the “exposure” of these ignorant and audacious men. “*Annas the High Priest, Caiaphas, John, Alexander and as many as were of the kindred of the High Priest were gathered together at Jerusalem.*” Evidently high

authority thought that its voice could now extinguish the Nazarene heresy, if it made show and display enough over it; so the entire resident kin of the High Priest were gathered together to augment the pomp and authority of the judicial bench. Probably they thought that after a night in jail Peter and John would be somewhat cowed, and ready to recant, or at least to promise never again to desecrate the holy Temple courts with the name of Jesus, and the salvation which He offered to the people. When the pompous bench was settled at its ease, the two were ushered in before it, and the questioning began.

“Tell us by whose authority, and in whose name, you were teaching the people, and speaking of a resurrection contrary to our official creed?” Undaunted by the official robes, or the artificial solemnity of the place, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, completely reversed the rôles each side was intended to play, and cited the official assembly to the bar of Scripture and of God.

“*Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what manner he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole.*” Peter turns the whole aim and intent of the judicial charge! He selects the ground upon which to reply. He ignores the point of the priestly grievance, and says not one word about having taught heresy on holy ground. He has no apology to make for his trespass upon Levitical prerogative, nor for teaching without an official diploma. He makes no excuse for openly affirming what the Sadducees denied. Pointing to the restored man, who had been cited to appear, Peter says, in effect: “If you would desire to know for what reason we have need to answer you at all, it is because of this poor man! From birth he has been impotent and unable to walk! He has been laid daily at the Beautiful Gate. Ye have passed him by unaided and ignored these many years. We, coming into the Temple to pray, bestowed on him such assistance as we could! We exercised the powers bestowed upon us in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye slew, but whom God has raised from the dead. Who are we more than other men, that we could do this thing, except our statement is true that Jesus is raised from the dead, and that healing and salvation are

offered to the nation in his Name? This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which has become the head of the corner". What a stinging indictment of their eminent position in Israel! Were they as they claimed, the builders-up of Israel, why had they not taken that God-provided stone, in which was healing and true building power, and built that into the structure of the State? Here, in their midst, this former impotent man's present soundness was proof that another and greater Builder had taken the Stone, and had made it the Head corner-stone of his building; and healing through his Name had come to this afflicted son of Israel!

Those were the facts of the situation. There should have been no sickness in Israel if they were obeying the Law of the Lord; and none knew this better than the occupants of the judicial bench! Not only did Peter press home the charge of crucifying the Lord, but he made the testimony of Moses also reveal their sin, and become their accuser. No wonder they knew not what to say in reply.

Apparently, as soon as Peter ceased, a whispered consultation among them began. "Who are these men? Where had they acquired such argumentative skill? Who had given them insight into the prophetic writings to apply Scripture so exactly to the point? They have performed a most wonderful act of healing, but who are they, anyway? They have not graduated through the schools! At best they are only illiterate and ungifted men"—"They are men of no standing at all, but they were with the Nazarene and heard him talk—that is where they got their understanding from." So reasoned among themselves the educated wisdom of this world!

"The wisdom of this world" versus "the wisdom of God"! "The wise . . . the foolish . . . the mighty . . . the weak . . . ! the "are" . . . the "are not" . . . ! (see 1 Cor. 1, 27-28) had met face to face in that judgment hall, and the "base things" had brought to nought the high and mighty in Israel. True, they *had* been with Jesus, and they *had* learned of him, but more than that they were with Jesus still, and that contact accounted for it all. The power to put disordered nature right where need arose, and the

power to speak, both came from him. With such a mentor no wonder Peter and John were bold, and had no fear of man!

It is not the great ones of the earth to-day who understand the Will and Way of God, any more than the pompous hierarchy in old Jerusalem. The present world condition is revealing the weakness of those in the place of power. There is no clear ringing challenging message of God issuing therefrom. Again the God of heaven and earth has a strange act to perform (Isa. 28, 21). He is about to turn the world upside down and bring his chosen people to the fore. It is the question of the "builders" and the "Stone" again, but set on a larger stage. The intending builders of a New World are laying foundations contrary to God. God's way and Christ's way is to build through and around Israel. The favoured nation of the old days is to be the nucleus and foundation of the New Age. That is the chosen way of God—and from it He will never turn. It is again the privilege mainly of illiterate and untaught men to know the way of God, and if we read the signs aright, it will be the privilege of some from this lowly class to do again as Peter did. While such a possibility is still in the hands of God, and will come only in its due time, and when circumstance is ripe, it is a privilege, great beyond measure, to be given to see and understand the Way of God in these momentous days. Like Peter and John, it is our privilege to learn to read in the Book of God, and fit its statements into their proper place, and know, of very surety, that God still has his secrets for the "illiterate and untaught" who go aside to consort with Jesus and learn of him.

Look well to the oracles of God, brethren in the Lord. From time to time new flashes of light break out of it upon the pilgrim's path. It may well be that the unparalleled state of world affairs will afford conditions suitable for another "bursting forth", if only the pilgrim's gaze is keen enough to see. It is only when historic happening is running alongside prophetic forecast that the meaning of prophecy can be understood. Then, like Peter in his Pentecostal address, we will be enabled to say: "This is that which was spoken by the prophets."

Many people are splendid Christians in church, but too often it happens that when the service is ended and they go out, they leave something in the pews—their Christianity.

The truest joys which we have experienced have come when we have had grace to enter most entirely into a sorrow not our own.

Bishop Westcott

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

A Nineteenth century divine, Dr. Adam Clarke, once offered one thousand pounds reward to any person who could find the expression "immortal soul," or its equivalent, in the Bible.

That was over a century ago.

The money has never been claimed.

The learned doctor was perfectly safe in making his offer, for the expression does not occur in the Bible. Strange as it may appear, this, which was one of the most commonly accepted beliefs of Christendom, has no support in the Book upon which the doctrines of Christianity are based.

This subject of the soul has intrigued Christians and non-Christians alike. From the dawn of history men have reasoned and philosophised about that part of human personality which survives death, and many conflicting theories and views have become interwoven around the central truth that there is life after death—that human identity will survive the dissolution of this present body.

The Bible itself is sufficient for a clear understanding of this subject. Unfortunately, the early development of the Christian church and its doctrines was at a time when the philosophical thought of several great nations had been made familiar to thinking men of the day, and when many of these men, pagans, became converts to Christianity they brought much of their "science falsely so-called" with them and endeavoured, with some success, to incorporate it into their new faith.

Belief in the immortality of the soul was a prominent feature of Greek thought in the time of Christ. It had its beginnings some six hundred years previously, at a time when the world appeared to be entering upon a new stage of knowledge and the spirit of enquiry was abroad. In Greece the philosopher Pythagorus was delving into the mysteries of life from the standpoint of human reason unassisted by Divine revelation. In Persia, rapidly becoming the dominant power in the world, the religion founded by Zoroaster was making headway with its belief in an immortal soul which would be re-united with the body at the Last Day. A little later the great teacher Gautama Buddha arose in India and founded the faith known as Buddhism, proclaiming the doctrine of successive re-incarnations of the soul until it becomes absorbed into the Divine Essence and ceases to have a separate identity. In China, Confucius had his day and left his legacy in the shape of

another religious faith. These men, and others with them, were profound thinkers, and elements of their teachings were intermingled one with another as the years went by, until Plato, one of the greatest of Greek philosophers, four hundred years before Christ, began to propound a comprehensive theory of the deeper mysteries of life which eventually became the accepted belief of the pagan world.

Plato claimed that the soul has always existed and must always continue to exist; that it is imprisoned in the earthly body and is set free at death; that if during life the soul has been purified by noble and good thoughts and actions, it will be translated at death to a heavenly region above the earth, but if the man has committed base and ignoble deeds his soul will be condemned to a dark abyss below the earth. Since the soul, being the Divine part of man, was, according to this reasoning, immortal, Plato foresaw an eternity of perpetual happiness or perpetual misery for man after death. These conclusions were not claimed by him to be based upon Divine revelation, but to be the result of human reasoning.

As evidence that this was the prevailing opinion in the time of Christ there may be cited the words of Titus to his soldiers at the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as recorded by Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian—"What man of virtue is there" said Titus, encouraging his men to the assault "who does not know that those souls who are severed from their fleshly bodies by the sword are received by the ether and joined to that company which is placed beyond the stars?". It was in this environment that the early Christian Church had its growth, and it was philosophy such as this which was brought forward to supersede Bible teaching regarding the soul.

What is that teaching?

Right at the outset the Bible lays down its foundation principle. Describing the creation of man, it declares "*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Gen. 2. 7). Note the expression; "*man became a living soul*." It is not said that God implanted a soul *within* man as is required by Platonic philosophy, nor yet that a soul from some other man or creature just dead entered the new-made man, as would be insisted upon by Buddhism. The conjunction of two factors, a body formed of the dust of the ground,

(the elements of the earth) and the bestowment of the spirit or breath (Heb. "*ruach*") of life, resulted in a "living soul". Confer upon a human body the spirit of life, and there is a living soul! That is the foundation upon which the story of man's creation, his fall, his redemption by Jesus Christ, and his ultimate conversion and salvation, is built.

The word rendered "soul" is *nephesh*. It occurs about seven hundred times in the Old Testament and always conveys the idea of a living, sentient being. About four hundred and seventy times it is translated "soul", one hundred and nineteen times "life", "person" 30 times, "self" 19 times, "heart" 15 times and "mind" 15 times. It is also rendered by such words as beast, body, creature, man, thing, fish, mortally. Only twice does it favour the traditional view by being rendered "ghost".

Twenty-eight times *nephesh* is applied to beasts or sea creatures, as for example "The moving creature that hath life" (Gen. 1. 20), "Whatsoever Adam called every living creature" (Gen. 2. 19), "All that makes sluices and ponds for fish" (Isa. 19. 10), "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast" (Prov. 12. 10). The close connection of the soul with the blood, which is the lifestream of human beings, is shown by such Scriptures as Lev. 17. 14 and Deut. 12. 33, "The life of the flesh is in the blood" where *nephesh* is translated "life".

In the New Testament the word "soul" is translated from the Greek *psuche*, occurring some hundred times of which about half are rendered "soul" and the remainder, with few exceptions, "life". It will be seen that *psuche* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh* and has the same meaning. This is borne out by occurrences of similar nature to those in the Old Testament. Thus in Rev. 8. 9 and 16. 3 the creatures in the sea are referred to as "souls" (*psuche*). Our Lord Jesus used the same word when He said "The Son of Man came . . . to give his life (*psuche*) a ransom for many". "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." (Matt. 20. 28. Jno. 10. 11). In quotations from the Old Testament *psuche* is used as the equivalent of *nephesh*, as, for instance, 1 Cor. 15. 45, "The first man Adam was made a living soul (*psuche*) and Rom. 11. 3, "I am left alone, and they seek my life" (*psuche*).

Evidence that the soul is not immortal lies in the Scriptural declaration that under certain conditions the soul must die. "Fear him" said Jesus, "which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matt. 10. 28). This saying of our Lord contradicts the theory of Plato, that the soul, once

created by God, is immortal and cannot die. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way" says James, "shall save a soul from death" (Jas. 5. 20). Ezekiel the prophet repeated again and again the Divine law "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. chaps. 13, 14 and 18).

It is clear then that the Biblical expression "soul" is intended to denote the living, sentient creature which owes its being to the union of God-given life with an organic body which is able to live and move and have its being in the environment in which it has been placed. It may be a fish, a beast or a man—the term "soul" or "living being" is equally applicable to all. This study is concerned with man's ultimate attainment of everlasting life and so the human soul is the one which is now concerned. The question naturally arises—"if this living man is in a "die-able" condition; if there is no separate "soul" which leaves the body after death for some other sphere of life, in what way will the Divine assurances of future life be brought to pass?" As the questioner in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians puts it "How are the dead raised up? With what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15. 45).

Paul gives the answer. When speaking in the Court of the Areopagites in Athens he declared that future life for man will come, not as the result of man's possessing an immortal soul which cannot die, but by means of a *resurrection from the dead*. The Athenians would have none of that; they preferred the beliefs in which they had been indoctrinated; but Paul, writing to the Corinthians, makes plain that in the resurrection each "seed," as he puts it, each identity or personality, will awaken to conscious life in a body fitted to its new environment. There are bodies terrestrial and bodies celestial, says Paul; natural and spiritual bodies, the former adapted to habitation on this earth and the latter to life in the spiritual sphere, in heaven. He further goes on to show that Christian disciples of this present Age who have become members of the "Body" or "Church" of Christ by wholehearted surrender to him and baptism into his death (Rom. 6. 3-6 and 12. 1) are to lay aside the earthly body and in the resurrection be clothed upon with a glorious spiritual body, incorruptible, *immortal*. (1 Cor. 15. 53). Immortality, then, is to be attained by Christians at the time of their entrance into the presence of their Lord. So Paul exhorts his converts to "seek for glory, honour, and immortality" (Rom. 2. 7) and tells us that our Lord Jesus brought "life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tim. 1. 10). The word used is *aptharsia*,

meaning incorruption, and is the same word used in 1 Cor. 15. 42-54 where Paul, speaking of the same matter, tells us that the believer, dying, is "sown in corruption and raised in *incorruption*". "This corruptible must put on *incorruption*, and this mortal must put on *immortality* (*athanasia*—deathlessness).

The idea behind this use of the word "immortal" or "incorruptible" is that of continuance into all perpetuity without cessation or decay. The symbolic "crown" which is the promised reward of the Christian is said in 1 Cor. 9. 25 to be of this nature. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an *incorruptible* (*aphthartos*). So also is the promised inheritance of 1 Pet. 1. 42 "An inheritance *incorruptible*" (*aphthartos*).

This view of New Testament teaching, that man is not by nature immortal, but that future immortality is the prospect before faithful followers of Jesus Christ, has been held and endorsed by many Christian teachers. Dr. Parker (1830-1902) declared "*Christianity treats man not as immortal, but as a candidate for immortality.*" John Wesley said "*It is, indeed, very generally supposed that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least opinion in the oracles of God*". That great Christian statesman, the Rt. Hon. W. E. Gladstone, wrote this: "*With St. Paul for our guide we shall not readily be persuaded to accept the idea that the gospel has propounded to us the natural immortality of all human souls as a portion of the Christian religion.*" Dr. Watts (1674-1748) said "*There is not one place of Scripture that occurs to me, where the word death, as it was first threatened in the law of innocency, necessarily signified a miserable immortality of the soul, either to Adam, the actual sinner, or his posterity*". Going back several centuries we have the striking testimony of William Tyndale, translator of the Bible into English, "*The heathen philosophers, denying that, (the resurrection) did put that the souls did ever live. And ye, in putting them in heaven and hell and purgatory, destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the Resurrection*".

In our own days much more is known about the growth and development of religious thought and doctrine through the ages than was available to the men who are quoted above. The study of religion has become a science, and the conclusions of a later authority in comparative religion may be quoted here as throwing an interesting light upon this subject. Prof. E. O. James in his "*Comparative Religion*" (1938) says that "*Because He (Jesus) had*

established a 'new and living' way to the life of the age to come, here and now, his followers were conscious of the 'power of an endless life' in the spiritual experience which was theirs . . . In this state of salvation 'though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day'. . . Thus, for the Apostle (Paul) the death and resurrection of Christ were the means whereby he was enabled to realise eternal life as an ever-present spiritual experience and to look forward with confidence to the consummation beyond the grave as an accomplished fact."

Jesus said the same thing in simpler language when He declared "*He that believeth on me hath everlasting life,*" (Jno. 6. 47). It is only in this sense that the believer can be said to have immortality now—the assurance he has from his Lord that having become a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven he has begun to taste the powers of an age to come and an enduring life the very antithesis of that condition of evil and death which is the lot of mankind in general now.

Actual entrance into that spiritual world is still conditional upon faithfulness "unto death" (Rev. 2. 10). None will be brought before the "*presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude 24) unless they have remained faithful to their Lord through all the vicissitudes and trials of earthly life. But it is true nevertheless that "*He that the Son hath life*" of an altogether different order to that which animates his unreconciled fellows, and unless sin is once again willingly embraced and the influence of God's Holy Spirit stifled, that life will develop and progress until it is revealed in full maturity in the Resurrection.

The Plan of God provides for an earthly salvation as well as one in heaven. The earth itself is to be the home of a happy race of neverdying human beings, reconciled to God and supremely happy in their destined environment. It is a noteworthy fact that the Bible, whilst guaranteeing them life everlasting, without end, does not describe that life by the term immortality. It is as if the word is reserved to describe the higher form of life which is the prerogative of those whose salvation lies in everlasting association with Christ as members of his Church; whose future habitat is in the heavens and not upon earth. There is some quality in that life which Peter perhaps discerned when he described all such as being "*partakers of the Divine nature*" (2 Pet. 1. 4), and which, little as we can hope to understand it whilst in the bonds of the flesh, must make some vital difference between *athanasia*, immortality, and the condition of never-dying, living without end, which is to be the lot of restored humanity.

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