



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

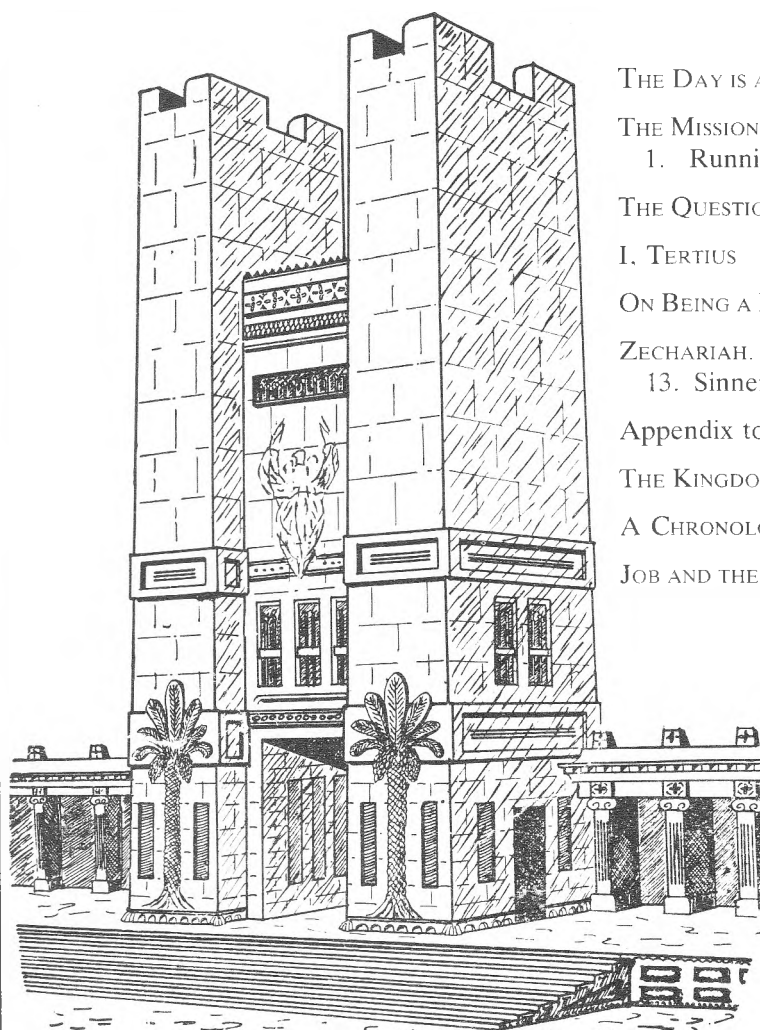
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Treasurer: N. CHARCHAROS (Tring)

Circulation Control & Stockroom: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Consultant Adviser: B. G. DUMONT (Hounslow)

Notices

New feature for 1995. The serial feature "Zechariah Prophet of the Restoration" which has appeared in the "Monthly" for the past two years, will reach its conclusion at the end of 1995. Parallel with this there will be a reprint of the series "The Mission of Jonah" which appeared some twenty-five years ago and is perhaps ripe for a new generation of readers. As is usual with such reprints dealing with ancient history, the presentation will include a few revisions of the original treatise to take account of new facts coming to light since that treatise was written.

The "Tower of Babel". This serial feature was concluded in the November/December issue of the "Monthly" but due to an adverse circumstance a modern photograph of the present-day remains of the Tower which was intended to be displayed failed to be available in time for inclusion. The photograph therefore is included on page 19 of this issue and perhaps will afford an impression of the reality of the story which could not have been done so effectively in any other way.

"The Almighty—the Eternal". A treatise published fifteen years ago under this title, which attracted much interest at that time, is now available as a 40-page booklet, and will be sent upon request. The booklet deals in depth with the relationship between the Father and the Son from the purely Scriptural standpoint and may suggest lines of thought unfamiliar to students who find orthodox theology on this subject not altogether satisfying.

Literature List. A list of all available literature can be had on request and readers are reminded that all our publications are sent free of charge and post free, on the

principle that the ministry of the Christian gospel should be "without money and without price". It is held, and the experience of many years has testified to its truth, that if our Lord wishes a particular ministry to continue and prosper He will stir the hearts of some of his followers to make it financially possible, and so all may benefit irrespective of individual financial abilities. Conversely, if He does not so make provision, this must be taken as an indication that in his wisdom it is time for that particular service for him to close down and He turns to another corner of his vineyard.

This may be the right point to remind readers that all contributors to the funds may receive a copy of the audited annual accounts at the end of the year upon request.

A correction—especially for U.S.A. readers. A U.S.A. journal, "Bible Students Newsletter", to our knowledge read by one circle of our readers, contains in its Fall (Autumn) 1994 issue an account of a tombstone in the form of a pyramid in the town cemetery at Yeovil, England, relative to William Hallett, died 1921, bearing a wealth of Scripture quotations. It is said, mistakenly, that the present Editor of the "Monthly" was acquainted with this William Hallett and will be writing a book on the early history of the Yeovil group of Bible Students with which he was associated. This is not so; the present editor never met or knew this William Hallett and has little or no knowledge of his period, although he was acquainted with his two sons in later years; but they also have long since departed this life, and to the date of this notice no one has been traced who can throw further light on this relic of the past. If such does become known it will be communicated to our friends of the "Newsletter" for their interest and possible use. It will be futile therefore for anyone having seen the "Newsletter" account to apply to us for copies of the hypothetical book.

THE DAY IS AT HAND

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore put off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Rom. 13. 12).

The beginning of a New Year is an appropriate time mentally to view the dawn of a new era, a new world, the world of righteousness of Divine promise. The receding of the longer nights, the promise of longer days, brighter days, evokes an anticipation of better things to come, a lifting up of hearts and a looking forward to the future. That is what the Apostle had in mind when he penned these words; but he was not just talking about the changing seasons. Something of which the evolution of night into day was but a symbol, a shadow, an illustration. *"It is high time to awake out of sleep"* he urged *"for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed"*. No matter how long or short a time measures out the period any of us can count as the span of our discipleship, it is an unassailable fact that the duration of our earthly pilgrimage is less now—perhaps considerably less—than it was when we started. And Paul adds a proviso that, although short, is pungent with meaning. *"Knowing the time"* he says. We know the day is at hand because we are awake; many do not know it because they are still asleep, and so although they share in the benefits of the new day when they do awake and it has already started they miss the glory of the sunrise. Jesus used that simile when, talking of his own Advent, He said *"As the radiance"* (lightening, lightning) *"cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, even so shall the coming"* (parousia presence) *"of the Son of man be"* (Matt. 24.27). Was He thinking, when He uttered those words, of the vivid picture drawn by the prophet Isaiah, illustrative of the same event, expressed against the background of the prophet's own day, *"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"* (Isa. 60. 1-3).

But so many wake up early, while it is yet dark, and failing to perceive the incipient signs of early dawn, turn over and go to sleep again. And so they miss the dawn altogether and when they do wake up again it is already full day.

Against the background of the Apostle's words, that is often so sadly true of the one-time enlightened believer who waits and watches for his Lord's coming. Said the Apostle again, writing to the Thessalonians, *"Ye are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch, and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; but let us, who are of the day, be sober"*. (1 Thess. 5. 4-8). The constant exhortation of the Lord to his disciples, and through those disciples to we who succeed them, to be watchful in looking and waiting for his promised return, is in itself a warning against wearying of waiting and consequently a slackening of watching and so finally that lamentable conclusion expressed by the unfaithful servant pictured by Jesus *"my Lord delayeth his coming"*. And that at the very time when the testimony of the outward signs which He said would indicate that the ending of night and the dawning of day should be so conclusive to the observant disciple that there could be doubt no longer. That was the gist of Paul's insistence *"the night is far spent; the day is at hand"*. The foolish virgins in the parable missed the wedding feast not because of lack of love and devotion to the bridegroom, or appreciation of the invitation to the wedding, but because, at the crucial moment, after waiting a while which seemed too long a time to wait, they went to sleep again.

Is the simile of "going to sleep" too strong a one to fit every case? Many there must be—many there certainly are—who are as ardently desirous of his coming to establish his kingdom as any, and yet are not convinced that the time is ripe. It is not such who can rightfully be accused of saying *"my Lord delayeth his coming"*, not such who are included in the category of those whom Peter speaks when he says *"There shall come in the last days scoffers, saying, where is the evidence of his presence, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as from the beginning of creation"*. (2 Pet. 3.1-2). The certitude that now is the time, these days in which we live are indeed and in truth the "Last Days", that the powers of Heaven are in fact now working, bringing the affairs of this world to an end in preparation for the powers of the next, is born either from the claimed indications of Bible

chronology, which in the past has oft times not fulfilled the expectations claimed for it, or upon co-relation of the current condition and trend of world affairs, political, ecclesiastical, financial, ecological, with the foreviews given by Jesus himself two thousand years ago, and this can be much more illuminating. The true basis for a sound faith in the surety of the promise lies not in the prediction of a stated event at a point of time twenty, forty, a hundred years hence. It resides in the truth enunciated by our Lord to the unbelieving Pharisees "*Ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?*" To relate the condition of the world in which one lives and the direction in which it is heading to the onward sweep of the Divine Plan as it is outlined in the Scriptures is the surest base for perceiving that the time has come and the expected is happening.

And here is the force of the basic simile "*The night is far spent; the day is at hand*". The night begins to give place to the coming day perceptibly before the full blaze of meridian day illuminates the world. A light in the eastern sky—the taking shape of objects which in the darkness of night were only dimly seen or not seen at all. Clearer and sharper as the light grows stronger unto meridian day shows them up in all their perfection. The Lord comes "as a thief"—it has been justly observed that a thief does not blow a trumpet to announce his arrival. Only he who is awake and watchful is conscious of his presence; all others are asleep. And yet a time comes when "*every eye shall see him*", when the fact of his presence is so patently obvious that no one in all the world is oblivious to the fact. "*Watchman, what of the night?*" was the call recorded by Isaiah all those centuries ago. "*The morning appeareth, but it is yet dark*" was the response as rendered in one version. The priestly watchmen, waiting on the roof of the Temple for the approaching dawn, were the first to see the signs of the coming sunrise over the

eastern mountains and announced the fact to their fellows below, waiting to commence the morning sacrifice, whilst the rest of the world was still asleep.

So should we, entering a New Year with all the unknown happenings and experiences as yet unrevealed, see in the fast fading night and the ever broadening day the pattern of our Christian experience, and, too, our expectation of the revelation of our Lord. Every eye shall see him—do they as yet? That question is easily answered. The world "*lieth in the Wicked One*" as John put it, and increasingly so as time goes on. He is not yet revealed to them. But He comes as a thief, so we detect a thief-like approach, an aspect in which the powers of Heaven are quietly working in world affairs diverting and bringing them to that focus which results in "the kings of the earth, and their armies" and all the powers of this world, finding themselves in unison together facing the "Rider on the White Horse and his armies" in that final battle which results in the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord; "*and He shall reign for ever and ever*". That is when every eye shall see him and as Isaiah, again, exultantly proclaims, they will cry out "*Lo, THIS is our God. We have waited for him, and He will save us. We will rejoice and be glad in his salvation*" (Isa. 25.9). But mark this well, the last members of his Church will not witness that great sequel from this earth, for they with all their fellows of past ages will be in those armies which follow him at that appearing, partakers with him of the glory of the celestial. That is when the victorious Lord is pictured as binding Satan, that he should deceive the nations no more. That is the full dawn of the thousand-year era of world conversion and restoration, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away. The night will be finally gone; the day will have come.

What can I wish that this week may bring to me? A few friends who understand me, and yet remain my friends. A work to do which has real value, without which the world would feel poorer . . . an understanding heart . . . a story of something beautiful the hand of man has made . . . a little leisure and the patience to wait for the coming of these things, with the wisdom to know them when they come.

The prayer of a great sailor, Sir Francis Drake, could well be ours: "*O Lord God, when Thou givest to Thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same, until it is thoroughly finished, which yieldeth the true glory.*" So we go back to normal with stronger resolutions.

THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 1. Running away from God

The great ship lay by the quayside, rising and dipping on the slow Mediterranean swell. Men thronged her deck carrying bales of merchandise and boxes of goods to be stowed away in the capacious hold. Her bearded Phœnician captain stood on the quay arguing volubly with the merchant whose goods he was about to transport overseas, interrupting himself now and then to shout hoarse instructions to the labourers staggering across the gangway with their loads.

The blue sea, with its fringe of golden sand, the white houses of Joppa, and the green hills behind the town formed a picture of rare loveliness. The great waves rolled in from the ocean, flinging white spray over the jutting rocks which lay beyond the stone pier, lifting the ship gently as they passed under her keel, and raced in glistening foam across the flat beach. The hot sun bathed the beach in a vivid white glare, the stone paving slabs reflecting the heat and causing little eddies and swirls of hot air to rise quivering here and there.

Into that bustle and confusion came Jonah the prophet of Gath-hepher, fleeing from his mission and his God. *"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."*

The simple sincerity of the story is a witness to its truth. Was ever flagrant defiance of God's command recorded with such candour and frankness? No attempt to excuse the action; no plea of justification or extenuation; just a plain, unimpassioned statement that this man, commissioned to perform a specific duty in a stipulated place, deliberately ignored the command and sought to make its fulfilment impossible by taking himself off to the other end of the world!

Jonah came from Gath-hepher, in Galilee, three miles from Nazareth. The only mention of him outside the book which bears his name is in 2 Kings 14, 24-27 which records his prediction that Israel would recover possession of certain lost territories, which prediction came true in

the reign of Jeroboam II. It is possible that Jonah lived shortly before that time, not long after the death of Elisha, and this would point to a date about 800 B.C. He might even, in his youth, been one of the "sons of the prophets", disciples of Elisha, sharing that stalwart old warrior's life in Galilee and the Jordan valley. Such an environment would surely be the place for God to find a man for his purpose. Galileans were proverbially fiercely patriotic and fearless in their loyalty to God. That Jonah himself was not without courage is testified by the later events in the story. Why then did he make up his mind to flee to Tarshish? It was not that he was afraid of the mission. He was too true a prophet for that. Nor did he expect that by fleeing to Tarshish he would be out of the sight of his God. He knew God too well for that. Neither could it have been altogether national prejudice, reluctance to take the good news of God to an alien people, for his attitude to the crew of the ship, most of whom must have been non-Israelites, betokens a consideration for their safety even at the cost of his own life which speaks volumes. A man willing to give his life for Gentiles must surely have been willing to preach the righteousness of God to Gentiles.

The motive underlying Jonah's flight can only be understood in the light of the dread with which Israel regarded the Assyrian people, whose capital city was Nineveh. The Assyrians were the most cruel and ruthless people of antiquity; wherever their victorious armies appeared there followed ruin, desolation, suffering and death. Their unfortunate captives were treated with every imaginable form of barbarity, and those of the people who escaped torture or death were transported long distances into strange lands, there to eat out their hearts in fruitless longing for the homeland they would never see again. Under the Assyrians nearly a century after Jonah's day, the "Ten Tribes" were taken into the captivity from which they never returned.

At the time of Jonah the Assyrian empire was in a very unstable condition. It was threatened on the north by the Medes and Scythians and on the south by the Persians. The three great rulers, Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib, who are mentioned in the Old Testament, had not yet arisen to restore Assyrian greatness, and the

golden days of its earlier power had passed away. During the period in question the rulers of Assyria were undistinguished men occupied with internal troubles and revolutions, and powerful enemies on the north and northeast frontiers. In consequence, Israel was enjoying a time of rest from oppression, and a hope that Assyria would never recover her former power to ravage and destroy as she had done; they prayed that these troubles and tumults might culminate in the destruction of Assyria. With their fixed belief in the ultimate triumph of righteousness, they were sure that Assyria and its great city of Nineveh must inevitably come into the judgment and be overthrown when it had filled up the measure of its wickedness and they longed earnestly for the day to come. The Prophet Nahum, who lived near Nineveh nearly two hundred years after Jonah's death, gave voice to this longing in vivid fashion: "*God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies . . . with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies . . . Woe to the city of blood! it is all full of lies and robbery . . . There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous; all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap their hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?*"

Jonah, sharing in these sentiments with all the depths of his passionate nature, was appalled at receiving the Divine commission to go and preach repentance to the Ninevites. On one hand he had cause for rejoicing in that their wickedness had come up before God, that the time had come when destruction must be meted out—the destruction for which every true son of Israel longed. On the other hand, suppose his preaching was successful and Nineveh repented! What then? Jonah knew his God well enough to realise that He takes no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but is ever willing for the sinner to turn from his evil way and live (Ezek. 18, 31–32). The threatened doom of Assyria could be averted by national repentance, and he, Jonah, would have been the means of that repentance. There would be no vengeance exacted for all the innocent blood which had been spilt in Israel by the Assyrians; moreover, they would survive as a nation and might easily return to their old ways and inflict fresh suffering on Israel. Jonah shrank from

going to Nineveh, not because he was afraid of failure, but because he was afraid of success. He knew that God would be gracious and he could not bear that knowledge.

There was only one thing to be done. He must go away; must put as great a distance as possible between himself and Nineveh; make the execution of the commission a physical impossibility, so that God might have time to think again, and relent, and inflict upon the Assyrians the punishment they so richly deserved. In any case, if he did not go to Nineveh, they would not have the message. If they did not have the message, they would not repent. If they did not repent, God would most assuredly visit his judgment upon them. So Jonah resolved to flee unto Tarshish.

Tarshish was a mystery land to the ancients. The tribes of Dan and of Zebulun—in whose territory Gath-hepher was situated—knew all the stories about Tarshish. Dwelling as they did close to Tyre and Sidon, the cities of the Phœnicians, they could not but become involved in much that appertained to that nation of merchants. They were themselves, many of them, seafarers, joining with the Phœnicians in their voyages to the ends of the earth, and this maritime connection of these tribes is mentioned several times in the Old Testament (Gen. 49, 13; Jud. 5, 17; Ezek. 27, 19). Those seafarers brought back marvellous stories of the wonders beyond the seas, of the Pillars of Hercules (the twin rocks of Gibraltar and Ceuta) sentinels at the gateway to the Western Ocean (the Atlantic) through which none but Phœnicians knew the way, of the Golden Islands (the Azores), the Sea of Mud—now called the Sargasso Sea—into which ships, penetrating, became fast and never returned, and in the mysterious north, the Tin Islands—Great Britain—source of the rare metal which meant so much in the making of tools and other goods. The Canaanites and Israelies listened with awe to these wonderful tales and never tired of watching the loaded merchant vessels set out on their long journeys to the west. "Ships of Tarshish" they called them, irrespective of their actual destination, and it is by that name they are referred to repeatedly in the Old Testament. Any large ocean-going vessel was a "ship of Tarshish" and Tarshish as a name defined any of the far distant lands, unknown to all save the Phœnicians, to which their trading vessels penetrated. From the list of goods they brought back, recorded in the Old Testament and

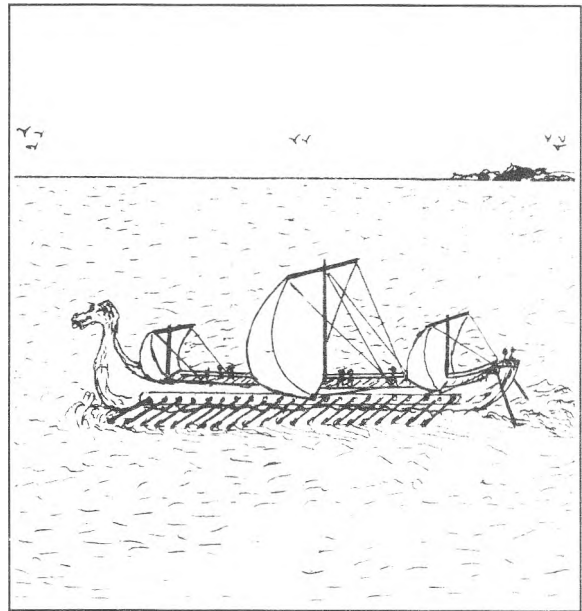
elsewhere, ranging from African ivory and apes to British tin and Baltic amber, it would seem that, for vessels plying from Joppa and the Phœnician ports of Tyre and Sidon, Tarshish was the general name given to the lands lying outside the Straights of Gibraltar—western Africa, the Azores, the West Indies and South America, Western Spain and southern Britain. Since Britain was a land with which a regular and heavy trade was conducted, it is by no means improbable that the ship upon which the prophet embarked on that fateful day was actually bound for our own shores. Had that wonderful intervention of God not taken place, Jonah might well have ended his days among the ancient tin miners of Cornwall or the shepherds of the South Downs.

So it was that the captain turned from his discussion with the merchant to find a stranger waiting for an opportunity to bargain a passage on his ship. It would be no unusual request; in days when passenger ships were unknown and travellers not numerous, it would be possible to make the journey only in some such manner. Quite often the would-be passenger was a fugitive fleeing from justice or from the wrath of some powerful man; provided the passage money was good and the applicant willing to make himself useful on the voyage, there would be no awkward questions asked. Jonah evidently had anticipated this and had a sufficient sum with him to meet the captain's demand, for we are told in verse 3 that he "paid the fare thereof" upon boarding the ship. It is unlikely that a fixed tariff existed for such journeys, as would be implied by our own usage of the word "fare", but rather that a little bargaining took place. An agreement having been reached, Jonah would be free to go aboard.

Jonah had perhaps seen ships of Tarshish at the ports of Tyre and Sidon so near his own home, but this was probably the first time that he had set foot on one. Surely he hesitated before crossing the gangway! Up to now there had been opportunity for repentance and a turning back to execute his mission. Once the ship had sailed there could be no turning back. Rightly or wrongly, he must go on, away and still farther away from his mission and his God. What thoughts possessed his mind at that moment we do not know—only that he stepped on board with unshaken resolution to "*go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord*".

We are indebted to the world of engineering

research rather than to classical or Biblical scholarship for our knowledge of ancient ships. The academic scholar thinks largely in terms of kings and battles, and ignores such things as houses and ships and the lives of common men. But in consequence of the labours of research workers interested from a technical point of view there is quite a mass of detailed knowledge available regarding the ships of the ancients (Torr's "*Ancient Ships*" is perhaps the best authority on the subject). It is likely that the ship upon which Jonah set foot was a typical Phœnician merchant galley. Built especially for carrying merchandise, such galleys were about two hundred feet long and rose some forty feet from water-line to deck. The bow and stern were



TYPICAL PHŒNICIAN MERCHANT SHIP
Time of Jonah

curved upwards another ten or fifteen feet, the bow ending in a carved figurehead. One tall and immensely strong mast, rising from the centre, carried a spar supporting a great square sail. There were sometimes one or two smaller masts with sails. The mainsail was relied upon when the wind was available, manipulated by means of ropes handled by men called in Hebrew *chobbelim*, meaning "rope-men" (the "pilots" of Ezek. 27). The Mediterranean, however, is a sea where there is some-times no wind for days together, and therefore no vessel equipped only with sails could rely on making steady progress.

Oars were therefore employed in addition to sails. In a ship of this type there could be as many as a hundred thirty-foot oars, requiring three hundred rowers, sitting on benches immediately beneath the main deck. It would be down amongst these rowers, if not, indeed, below them, with the cargo, that Jonah was found fast asleep during the storm. The ship was steered by means of two long paddles, fastened one at each side, at the stern, and not by rudder as in modern vessels. Somewhere near the stern there was also fixed a paddle wheel device by means of which the distance travelled could be ascertained. According to records of actual ship performances which have been left by ancient writers, such a vessel could do seven knots (eight miles per hour) and the average daily rate was five knots (nearly six miles per hour). It was customary to hug the coast, keeping within sight of land, for as much of the voyage as was possible, and to cast anchor when darkness fell, resuming the journey on the following morning. Under these conditions the voyage from Joppa to Britain would occupy four or five months.

And now there is growing excitement amongst the small crowd of people on shore. The loading of the ship has been completed and the crew are going aboard, ready for their long journey. It may be eighteen months before they see the homeland again. Here comes a crowd of swarthy Phœnicians who have been to offer propitiatory sacrifices in the Temple of Dagon up on the hill in the middle of the town. Dagon will ensure them a favourable voyage and good trading. A knot of Israelites and Hittites, members also of the crew, have been to Baal for the same purpose—for, alas! the worship of Baal was all too common in Israel in those dark days. And here come three men with light complexions, fair hair and blue eyes, to take their places among the rowers. They are Britons, fresh from offering to the British god Lud, a great deity indeed in their own far-off land, with a temple on a hill destined in later years to be known, in his memory, as Ludgate Hill, but an unknown god indeed in this land of Dagon and Chemosh and Baal and Ashtaroth. Therefore they had no temple in Joppa in which to worship Lud, but a small shrine in a corner of the quay on which they had placed their tribute and trusted that he would take them back safely to their own land.

The captain had already made his private offering to Dagon, as befitted a respectable member of the community. He was probably a

man who had knocked about the world a good deal and seen many religions and forms of worship, and reserved the right to be liberal about them all. His words to Jonah a few hours later give the impression that he placed all gods on a more or less equal footing and was prepared to judge by results. Probably his chief concern was to see that none of the gods had been omitted from their share of the usual observances, so that he could put to sea without apprehension that any of them thus slighted would show his displeasure by some form of disaster.

Jonah's fellow passengers came aboard: let us suppose, two prosperous Carthaginian merchants returning home to Carthage; a Government official on a political mission to the same city; a shifty-looking Hittite who was evidently glad to get away from the country and would quickly make himself scarce at the first port of call. The captain, glancing with practised eye at sea and sky, took his stand at the stern and gave the order to cast off. Mooring ropes were quickly thrown ashore; a signal made to the towing boats riding on the waves far ahead, and as the men in them bent to their oars, the tow-ropes tautened and the great ship began to glide away from the land.

The *mallachim*—literally “ocean-sailors”—stood around the sides with long sweeps where-with to ward the slowly moving vessel away from the treacherous rocks which run out to sea at Joppa. Two more stood in the bows waiting for the captain's gestures, signalling in turn to the rowboats ahead; the steersman bore heavily first on one steering paddle and then on the other, awhile the rowers waited with their long oars held close to the vessel's sides and the rope-men for their time to hoist the great sail.

The rocks were cleared. A final signal, and the towing ropes slackened and were cast off. The three small boats turned and began riding the billows on their way back to shore. A word of command, a hundred oars flashed in the sunlight and dipped into the water with a quick splash; the mainsail unfolded steadily and billowed out in the wind; the ship turned her nose to the west and began to plough her way through the open sea. Jonah's voyage had begun.

The sandy beach, the white houses, the low green hills of Joppa faded into the distance and were gone. To the left, as Jonah leaned over the stern of the ship, rose the bluff headland of Mount Carmel. It was there that Elijah not so

long ago, had slain the priests of Baal and then himself most unaccountably run away into Sinai. But he had gone back. For Jonah there could be no going back. For the sake of his people, he was deliberately going into exile. "It is expedient," he may have thought, "that one man should die for the people and the whole nation perish not." What kind of life lay before him he did not know. He only knew that the pleasant land of Israel, with its tender associations and stirring history, was gone from his sight for ever, that for the sake of the people, and to ensure the coming of Divine judgment upon the Assyrians, he must stay away and never come again into a position where he could be called upon to go and preach repentance to Nineveh.

So the afternoon wore on, until at last Carmel itself disappeared below the horizon. The ropemen sang their sea-shanties as they manipulated the great sail to get the best out of the scanty wind, the monotonous call of the oar-master was echoed by the grunt of the rowers as they bent to their task, and the ship quivered and shook as she steadily made her way onwards into the west—on to Tarshish.

And Jonah, worn out by fatigue and grief, shrinking from the companionship and the conversation of his fellow voyagers, made his way below deck into a secluded part of the vessel, and there, alone with his heartache, found peace at last in the kindly arms of sleep.

(To be continued)

Note on the Sundial of Ahaz

"So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down" (Isa. 38.8).

The story of the sun's shadow going backwards on the "sundial of Ahaz" in the days of Hezekiah is well known and the most likely explanation—that the phenomenon was caused by the emergence of the Shekinah light from the Temple, "brighter than the sun at noon-day", has already been published in these columns. An alternative possibility was suggested a century ago by one Benjamin Scott, F.R.A.S. in the words *"The going back of the shadow on the dial has repeatedly been noticed, even in the present (19th) century. It is dependent, not on astronomical, but on meteorological causes. The shadow is not invariably dependent upon the position of the sun, but upon the brightest point of light in the sky. If when the sun nears the western horizon a dark impenetrable cloud covers the orb, the shadow will be cast by the bright silver lining of*

the cloud, which may be near the zenith, and the shadow will repeat nearly a quarter of the circle. In the present (19th) century an instance is recorded by the Canon of Metz Cathedral. In the case under consideration, the object was the satisfaction of Hezekiah that the promise made to him was from God. The prophet is accordingly directed to foretell, as a sign, a natural phenomenon which was about to occur".

It might be remarked that this is likely to be of comparatively frequent occurrence and so unlikely to constitute a "sign" to the observers: the cause of the phenomenon would be discernible by anyone and there would be nothing remarkable about it. Something quite out of the usual was required, a happening only explainable as an instance of Divine intervention; the sudden shining of the Shekinah from the Temple, its brilliance temporarily eclipsing the sun and blotting out the shadow on the "steps of Ahaz", would well explain the occurrence.

"... always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus ... for we ... are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake ... so then death worketh in us, but life in you" (2. Cor. 4. 1-12). It was a case of Paul putting Paul to death, for his brethren's benefit, that life, and strength might be induced in them. It was the life's-blood of Paul that became the quickener, the energiser of these, his dear brethren in the Lord. When other men might be taking life leisurely,—yea, when many of his brethren were taking life easily, Paul was intensively seeking ways and means of putting himself at the service of these

believers, hoping thereby to produce spiritual energy in his brethren. Persecution might stop some men, but not this seasoned warrior—perplexities might daunt less determined men but not this unconquerable spirit—*"On every side pressed hard, but not hemmed in, without a way, but not without a bye-way; pursued but not abandoned, thrown down, but not destroyed. At all times the putting to death of Jesus, in our body bearing about."* That is Rotherham's beautiful translation of Paul's intensive words, as he describes what it means for him to serve his Corinthian brethren.

THE QUESTION BOX

What is the meaning of "shutteth up his bowels of compassion" in 1 John 3.17, "If any bowels and mercies" in Phil. 2. 1, and similar texts?

The word had a different meaning in Apostolic days to that which is its general use to-day. Anatomically, it meant the vital organs, the heart, lungs and liver; metaphorically was denoted the tender affections, love, sympathy, kindness, etc. (much as to-day the *heart* is regarded as the seat of the affections). There are two instances where the word is translated in this manner, in 2 Cor. 7. 15, "His *inward affection* is more abundant toward me", and Luke 1. 78, "through the *tender mercy* of our God whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us", If the occurrences where it is translated "bowels" be examined it will be seen that in all instances save one (Acts 1. 18), the reference is to this inner feeling of compassion and tenderness (see 2 Cor. 6. 12; Phil. 1. 8; 2. 1). The same word used in its verbal form is rendered "*moved with compassion*" in Matt. 9. 36; 14. 14; 18. 27; and "*had compassion*" in Matt. 15. 32; 20. 34; Mark 8. 2.

There is a link, too, with the Old Testament. In the Levitical types the "inward parts" of the sacrifice, the heart and the other organs, were offered up on the altar "*a sweet savour unto God*"; it has been pointed out that this symbolises the heart's best endeavours and affections, given to God. Now this same word translated "bowels", *splagchna*, was the term used by the Greeks to denote this sacrifice of the inward parts of animals, having the same idea in mind. We can say therefore that the "inward parts" represents our hearts' best affections, manifested toward each other and to our Lord, offered up to our Heavenly Father in sincere consecration of life in his service and the service of his people.

* * *

If the flood story is literal how did Noah feed the carnivorous (flesh eating) animals the twelve months they were in the Ark?

There is every reason to think that Noah did not take any carnivorous animals into the Ark. Popular belief pictured lions and tigers in the voyage but examination of the Genesis text does not bear this out. There are distinct and separate

Hebrew terms for predatory and non-predatory animals. Domestic cattle, sheep, etc. are almost invariably from *tsen*, *migne* or *behemah*, the latter word also applying to wild grazing animals, and in the A.V. these words are normally rendered "cattle" or "beast" the latter word without further qualification. Predatory animals are referred to as "beast of the field", "beast of the earth", "beast of the forest", "wild beast" or "evil beast", in all but a few cases from *chaiyah* which means "living creature". In about a dozen instances "beast" appears without any qualification and in such cases refers to a grazing animal.

Seven times in the narrative reference is made to the animals taken into the Ark and in no instance are the terms for predatory animals used. "Cattle" and "beast" from *behemah*, "beast" and "living thing" from *chaiyah*, "creeping things" from *remes*—this refers to small ground animals such as rodents, lizards, etc.;—no predators.

As soon as Noah was out of the Ark (chapter 9) the predators appear. The fear of man is to be upon every "beast of the earth" (vs. 2). God makes a covenant of peace with Noah, his sons, and all living creatures including the "beasts of the earth" (vs. 10). The covenant, is "*with every living creature that is with you*" (in this new world into which Noah had entered) "*FROM all that go out of the Ark TO every beast of the earth*". The beast of the earth were not included among those that came out of the Ark; the covenant was to extend over the whole animal creation, from those that were *in* the Ark to those that were *outside* it.

It is generally accepted nowadays that the Flood was not universal; only part of the earth's surface was submerged. The extensive plain which is now Iraq was under deep water but the mountainous districts to the east and north—Persia and Armenia—remained above water, and here there would be plenty of predatory animals to survive the disaster. Many years must have elapsed before such animals spread into the plain, allowing ample time for the small collection saved in the Ark to populate this region before their enemies began to take their toll of them. And, without flesh-eating animals on board, Father Noah's food storage problems would be considerably lessened.

I, TERTIUS

"I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." (Rom. 16. 22).

That is all that is known about Tertius, this first century Greek Christian of Corinth who was Paul's scribe for the writing of the epistle to the Romans. Nowhere else in the whole of the Scriptures is he mentioned. He looks in at the door, as it were, introduces himself as the one who wrote at Paul's dictation, conveys his greetings—and shuts the door again. We have a brief glimpse of—possibly—dark hair, grey eyes, finely modeled features and a pleasing smile, and then he is gone. This is Tertius, whose hand first traced on parchment or papyrus the words of that immortal epistle which the English poet Coleridge declared to be *"the most profound work in existence"* and Luther *"the masterpiece of the New Testament, the purest gospel"*. Admiration of this epistle has been expressed in many a glowing phrase from the lips and pens of Christian leaders, from reformers and theologians alike. Many in our midst echo their sentiments, and the Epistle to the Romans is a favourite subject for class study. In thought one naturally sees the outstanding figure of Paul, the master-mind whose creation it is; but when we think of the stalwart and indomitable Apostle of the Gentiles laying bare his soul in this his exposition of Christian doctrine, an exposition that has profoundly influenced the lives of Christians in all ages since his day, we do well to grant a fleeting thought also to the zealous and devoted penman who sat so constantly at his side taking down the burning words, filling sheet after sheet with the cogent arguments, at the end adding those salutations in which his own name appears, and then pasting the sheets together to form the long roll which was the original copy of the Book of Romans.

The Epistle to the Romans was written at Corinth in Greece, probably during the course of Paul's third and last visit to the Church in that city, and not long before the final journey to Jerusalem which resulted in his being carried a prisoner to Rome. The Corinthian Church had been founded by Paul about the year 52, nearly thirty years after the Crucifixion, and the Epistle was written, probably, about six years later. Two years more and Paul himself was in Rome, having followed his epistle thence. Tertius was one of the Corinthian converts and might very well have known the truth for six years, but

could not have known it longer, when he was privileged to render this act of service to the Apostle and the Church, and in consequence had his name inscribed, to be preserved for ever, on the pages of the New Testament. Tertius would not have dreamed at the time that his work would have such far-reaching consequences or that the simple, fervent mention of his own name would resound through the world and throughout the centuries, to lands and peoples of whose existence he had no conception, as it has done. He was probably a young man, or at least in middle age, perhaps a scribe or clerk by profession, and an earnest member of the little Christian community at Corinth. When it became known that Paul was minded to send a long and important letter to the Christians at Rome, and because of his own weak eyesight required an assistant to write at his dictation, someone would quickly respond *"Why, Tertius. He will appreciate the privilege and he will do the work well"*.

In the great day of the Bible commentators, a century ago now, it used to be suggested that Tertius was possibly the same as Silas, who figures several times in New Testament narratives and on one occasion—at Philippi—was imprisoned with Paul, an imprisonment that gave birth to the Philippian Church (Acts 16). There is no foundation for the suggestion; it was made on account of the fact that *"Tertius"* is the Latin for *"third"* and that the Hebrew consonants SLS found in the name Silas are those forming the Hebrew word for the numeral *"three"*. In point of fact, Silas is the Greek abbreviation for the Latin name Silvanus, which in turn denotes a forestry worker or woodman (Compare our English word *"sylvan"* as applied to woodlands and the like). We are still left therefore with that picture of the young man who puts his head in at the door and says, *"I, Tertius, . . . salute you"* and is gone.

The Corinthian Church was a remarkable church. It seems that it consisted almost entirely of Gentiles—Greeks. Paul's first work at Corinth had been with the Jews but they had rejected him and sought to have him expelled from the city (Acts 18). The dispute came before the notice of the Roman proconsul of the city, Lucius Junius Gallio (called Gallio in the book of Acts), a man described by secular historians as a just and cultured man, of a genial and even

lovable disposition. Something of his judicious and impartial administration can be sensed in the story in Acts, where it is apparent that he quickly saw through the Jews' trumped-up accusations against Paul and contemptuously dismissed the charges and acquitted Paul. It was following this that Paul found a hearing ear among the Greeks, and the Corinthian Church began its ordered existence in the house of Justus. It was a church that had many undesirable features, for Corinth was in more than one respect an undesirable city, and the Christians had been born and brought up in that environment and educated in those standards and customs. But it was a church that was very dear to the heart of Paul, and although he had on more than one occasion to be utterly scathing in his condemnation of their shortcomings and their failings, there was evidently much there that he dearly loved. Probably Tertius was one of those whom he held in high esteem, not only for his works' sake but for his Christian integrity and sincerity. Even if Tertius did not realise the importance of this epistle he was writing, it is certain that Paul did, and that he knew that it was going to be a text book of Christian instruction and belief, not only for the Roman Christians to whom it was addressed, not only for the scattered Christian Churches of his own day, but for all Christians in all ages everywhere to the end of time. Knowing this, he would not be likely to choose other than a clean vessel to enjoy the honour of being the scribe of this Epistle.

We may take it, then, that Tertius was zealous, sincere, full of faith and anxious to serve in whatever way he could be of service. There were others, of course, in the fellowship, of whom Paul speaks approvingly and who sent their greetings also to the brethren at Rome. "*Timotheus my workfellow*" he says—we all know Timothy and the sterling service he rendered in after days as elder of the Church at Ephesus—"... and *Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. Gaius mine host, Erastus the treasurer of the city, and Quartus a brother*". Erastus must have been an important man in Corinth; he was the city treasurer and Corinth was one of the wealthiest cities of the Empire. But he was a Christian. Quartus was, maybe, a brother in a much more humble and obscure walk of life; he might even have been a slave; but he also was a Christian. And they were all one in Jesus Christ, these

men who with the womenfolk met for praise and worship and fellowship in the house of Justus. It is a picture quite at variance with that of the Church of Corinth drawn in other parts of the New Testament where that church is pictured as being in many respects anything but a model of Christian behaviour and conduct and witness. Perhaps however, the Apostle's oft reproofs had had their effect and there had been, by the time of this his last visit, some repentance and reformation. We do not know; in any case the Church at Corinth never became noted for Christian fervour and example as did, for example, those at Ephesus and Colosse and Berea.

Nevertheless, it is probably true that even in its darkest days the Corinthian assembly had a minority of earnest ones who did not countenance or endorse the behaviour of the majority and who on that account were drawn together more into a little spiritual fellowship of their own. Perhaps these whose names appear here in his salutation at the end of the Epistle to the Romans were such. We have seen the same kind of thing happen in our own day—most true Christians have in every century—and perhaps can understand and appreciate the position.

What happened to Tertius after the Epistle had been dispatched and Paul had left Corinth for Jerusalem, never to return? We do not know. He is unknown to history. Perhaps in after years he left Corinth on some kind of missionary work, emulating in some small degree the Apostle he had once served in so signal a fashion. Perhaps he remained at Corinth, serving as a faithful minister, through all the vicissitudes of a life spent in a fellowship that was both light and dark, that savoured much of this world even although it professed much of the next. One likes to think that he did remain faithful, that the vessel chosen to do Paul's work in the days of his presence remained a chosen vessel to the end of the way. If such was indeed the case, one can picture him growing older with the passing years, ministering faithfully and consistently, never weary of reminding the brethren of the exhortations left by the founder of their church, Paul the minister of God to the Gentiles. He would have heard, in time, of Paul's death in far away Rome, and with that news would have felt suddenly older. There would be the parting with Timothy, gone to assist the failing John in the administration of the Church at Ephesus and all the communities in

Western Asia who looked to Ephesus as a centre. Then perhaps the slow lapse of twenty or thirty years; news comes to Corinth of the death of John, the last of the Apostles. No one is left now who saw the Lord in the flesh; very few remember anything of the early struggles of the infant Church and the herculean labours of its founders. A new generation had grown up around Tertius, and—who can doubt it—he saw, rapidly increasing and flourishing unchecked, more of those evils against which his beloved mentor Paul had spoken and written so many years ago. But now there was no Paul with his forthrightness and fiery eloquence, to bring into the assembly that sense of shame that in times past had brought godly repentance and a great cleansing. Perhaps in the interim Tertius himself had acquired something of Paul's ability and could himself induce a reformation in the Church; perhaps not. Perhaps he could only pray and intercede for the erring ones in the solitude of his own home, or endeavour by quiet word and remonstrance to turn this one or that one from the error of his ways. Perhaps, at the end, and in spite of all his faithful service, he was ignominiously turned out from the apostate assembly and his name branded as one to be avoided and spurned.

We do not know, only that all these things have happened to faithful servants of Christ in church after church, century after century, and that such experiences have often befallen those who have sought consistently and persistently to "*warn their brethren night and day with tears*" (Acts 20. 31). It would not be a strange thing if it had happened at Corinth to Tertius.

Power of the Brain

According to the "Moody Monthly" (1964), experts say that no man has ever used more than one five hundredth part of his brain capacity. If that statement is correct, and bearing in mind that God certainly did not provide man with a brain that was not intended to be used, we can visualise what mighty increase in mental powers must be the order of the day in the next Age when evil is restrained and men are encouraged to use all the powers which God has given them in the manner he intended. Doubtless sin and death are responsible for the limited use we now make of our brains; in that glad day when sin and death are things of the past men will indeed "enter into the inheritance prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

But we also know something else. We know that to every sincere disciple of Christ who has been true to his Master and true to himself, and has not denied his Master's Name, there comes at the end a reflection that must have come at the end to Tertius too, in whatever state he encountered that end. It is the reflection that came to Paul himself and which he expressed in fervent words, confident words, immortal words, saying them on our behalf as well as his own, that we may take fresh courage in anticipation of the coming of such a time. "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*" (2 Tim. 4. 18).

One may picture Tertius, in that day, at the time of the fulfilment of the promise, approaching towards the glory of the Throne, around which the triumphant hosts of heaven are standing, beholding the ones he had known and loved in life before, his loved master Paul among them. The weight of earthly years falls away and vanishes, and he steps forward in the wonder and the glory of his resurrection life to greet his long-lost brethren, brethren with whom he had borne the heat and burden of the day back there in the First Century at Corinth in Greece. And as he sees them, at last, face to face, in the image of the Master, enshrouded in that radiant glory which is the inheritance of all who have been raised to live with Christ, perchance there comes again, unbidden, to his lips, those words penned so long ago, *I, Tertius . . . salute thee*".

Israel in Egypt

A note in the *Jerusalem Post* dated 22nd February 1964 forms an interesting commentary on the rapid increase of Israel when Jacob's sons settled in Egypt. The June 1963 instalment of the Bible School on Exodus showed how that increase could well be possible with an average life span of 110 years or more and that four or five generations could well have been born in that time. The note referred to is as follows:

"*Ashkelon*—Yitznak Hachamon died here last week-end at the age of 110. He leaves nearly 100 descendants, including great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. He came to this country from Libya and lived in Ashkelon with one of his sons. He was reported to be mentally alert to the last."

ON BEING A MINISTER

Just who qualifies as a Minister? Does the term only apply to Priests, Vicars, Pastors, Elders and Deacons, or can it be applied to other or even all Christians? For the answer one needs to look at the origin of the word minister. In the Hebrew "minister" comes from the root verb *sharath* which had the meaning of one who serves. In the New Testament common or Koine Greek an equivalent word is *diakonos*. A literal meaning is through (*dia*) and dust (*konis*). In the early Christian congregation it would have the meaning of one who became dusty by running in the service of God and fellow humans. The term applied to both brothers and sisters. In the King James Bible and some other versions the word is translated as Deacons but a better and more accurate meaning would be minister (one who ministers or serves. A servant.)

In most Churches and Congregations brothers are appointed to take the lead, and whether they are elders or pastors, always assuming that because of their love and maturity and many other qualifications not only are they appointed by the brethren but also ordained by God then that brother can rightly be called a Minister. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he makes clear the responsibilities of overseers and Ministers. So we come to another question. Does one have to be appointed by the Congregation to be a Minister? Certainly all Christians should strive to attain the spirituality and high standard of the faithful and true Christian overseer. The Scriptures tell of brethren who had ministries to serve in various ways. That applies to Overseers in our day too. Some have gifts of making clear God's Truths from a platform. Some are good organisers. Some are gifted in the preaching work, either publicly or from door to door. Stephen, who was described in Acts ch. 6 verse 4 as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, along with six other brethren all men of good report, served in the daily ministration. That would be serving the food and probably a distribution of all the necessities of the brethren. Verse 8 says "*And Stephen, full of grace and power wrought great wonders and signs among the people.*" There are many examples of other ordained

ministers who served God and the brethren in a mighty way. The finest example of a faithful and true Minister is that of our Lord Jesus. How wonderful are the Words of Life which our Lord gave to a great crowd of people, in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. After Jesus had addressed the crowd everyone would be tired and hungry and feeling the weariness caused by the heat of the day. So did Jesus say "God bless you all and now you can all go home and dwell upon my words?" No, instead He miraculously provided the practical blessing of feeding them all and the disciples helped him in the ministering. To follow Jesus' example a minister should of necessity provide not only spiritual but also practical help.

All the Apostles were Ministers and Paul was greatly favoured and blessed by becoming the Apostle to the Gentile nations. He ministered to the Congregations as is seen by his letters but Paul also took gifts and collections of money to the poorer brethren. Part of our ministry is to serve others just as Martha did when she provided for Jesus and many other sisters are mentioned in the Bible both for their witnessing the Word and serving the brethren. All have a Ministry. Some brethren can work in the proclamation of the Gospel. Some may not be able to do this, possibly due to shyness or some disability. One can send letters or phone people or witness to visitors. But there are other ways of fulfilling the ministry. If we are better off financially than some of our brethren maybe we can assist there. If we have a car we can offer the brethren lifts. Do we welcome brethren into our home for a meal. There is always an opening to give out the Gospel and there is always an opening to give practical help too and one needs to look for those opportunities. Some may not be appointed by the Congregation to be overseers but if they do things for others and bring glory to our Heavenly Father by using their talents even though these talents may be small, then they are Ministers, maybe not appointed in the Congregation but certainly ordained by God.

"Let intellectual and spiritual culture progress, and the human mind expand, as much as it will; beyond the grandeur and the moral elevation of

Christianity, as it sparkles and shines in the Gospels, the human mind will not advance.

Goethe

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

13. Sinners in Zion

We come now to the most difficult passage in the whole of Zechariah's prophecy—difficult, because the opening sentences seem on the surface as though they could apply only to the First Advent whilst almost immediately there appear expressions which can only refer to the Second Advent. The sword is raised against the Lord's Shepherd and in consequence the sheep are scattered. Two parts among them die but the third part is preserved in the fires and becomes the people of the Lord. The Day of the Lord dawns and the nations surround Jerusalem. One part of the citizens is led into exile but the other part is preserved. At this point the Lord rises up to defend Israel and scatter the besiegers. The difficulty lies in reconciling the smiting of the Lord's shepherd with the rising up of God to overthrow all evil and deliver those who trust in him.

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones" (ch. 14. 7). This "shepherd" who is also the Lord's "fellow" can be none other than Christ; the word rendered "fellow" is literally "my companion", the "man of my fellowship", and indicates one bound to the Father by the closest possible ties of association, much more so than the ordinary bonds of friendship. Abraham and Moses were said to be the "friends" of God; Daniel was the "greatly beloved", but this word indicates a closer and more constant oneness and when associated with God cannot be applied to other than the Son. Zechariah must have known this and seen in the expression a reference to Israel's Messiah. Jesus endorsed this (Matt. 26. 31). The R.S.V. adopts a rendering which is peculiarly fitting; "the man who stands next to me". However the passage is interpreted, this, the central figure, is undoubtedly Christ the Messiah. The smiting of this Shepherd is then the rejection of him by the flock; not only that initial rejection which led to his crucifixion in the days of his humanity, but the long-continued rejection which has subsisted throughout the Age and is still true, at least in part, at the Age's end. In this the rejection of chapter 13 differs from the rejection of the same Shepherd in chapter 11, where the reference is only to the First Advent. But to

perceive how this can be it is necessary to examine the structure of the passage more closely.

The point that emerges most noticeably is that chap. 13. 7 to 14. 2 is written in a style dissimilar from that which goes before or comes after. It really forms a self-contained little section in its own right. Up to chap. 13. 6 and also from chap. 14. 3 onward the style is prose narrative, telling in the one case of the progress of Israel's repentance and cleansing, and in the other of active Divine intervention and the establishment of the Kingdom. But this little section is not narrative and it is not prose; it is poetry written in the characteristic style of Hebrew poetry, and gives every evidence of being a kind of triumph song in highly rhetorical terms inserted at this point to give maximum effect to what it has to say. The passage consists of nine couplets, the typical form of Old Testament poetry, arranged in sets of three each. Couplets 1 to 3 tell of the smitten Shepherd and the consequent scattered flock, of whom two parts die and a remnant is left. Couplets 4 to 6 describe God's care for the "remnant" which is saved out of that scattering, and couplets 7 to 9 sing of the further purifying of that remnant by the elimination of a further part proved unworthy so that a fully tried and tested nucleus remains to experience deliverance. Thus understood, the passage stands in the following fashion.

1. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd;
And against the man that is my fellow.
2. Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered;
And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.
3. And it shall come to pass that in all the land two parts therein shall be cut off and die:
But the third shall be left therein.

* * * *

4. And I will bring the third part through the fires;
And I will refine them as silver is refined,
and will try them as gold is tried.

5. They shall call on my name;
And I will hear them.
 6. I will say, it is my people;
And they shall say, the Lord is my God.
- * * * *
7. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh;
And thy spoil shall be divided in the
midst of thee.
 8. For I will gather all nations against
Jerusalem to battle;
And the city shall be taken, and the
houses rifled, and the women ravished.
 9. And half of the city shall go forth into
captivity;
But the residue of the people shall not
be cut off from the city.

Now if this is recognised as a "theme song" then its theme is clearly that the rejection of God's Shepherd has become a means whereby the apostates are separated from the faithful, the dross from the pure metal, until only the true-hearted "remnant" remain in the land of God's choosing and faces the massed evil of the world in complete faith that God will deliver. Perhaps this is why the "song" is inserted at this point, between the account in chaps. 12 and 13 of the preparation of the land and nation for the final battle, and the stirring picture in chap. 14 in which the kingdoms of this world pass away and the Lord becomes King over the whole earth. If this is so it becomes easier to accept the language of this song as covering, in a poetic fashion, the entire story of apostasy and faith from the First to the Second Advents, so that Jesus could logically apply ch. 13. 7 to himself in his earthly life, when the rejection began, and yet prophetically Zechariah could see that rejection still persisting at the time of his coming again, when, as Jesus predicted, there would still be a lack of faith in the earth. At the same time the rapid development of the "remnant" which is to face the final challenge becomes a very real and present part of the picture.

Who are the sheep that are scattered and what is meant by God turning his hand "upon the little ones". In chap. 11 the sheep are the whole house of Israel and they are abandoned to dispersal and death because of their rejection of the

Shepherd. That was fulfilled in full measure at the First Advent. This later picture might well extend the same theme to the whole of the Age with particular relevance to the Age's end. Throughout the Age, the sword has been smiting the Shepherd and the sheep have been scattered, for Israel has been continually "abiding in unbelief" (Rom. 11. 23). And if the whole history of Israel's rejection of Messiah is looked at from the viewpoint of the resultant situation at the end of the Age a solution to the problem of the two parts that are cut off and die presents itself. Out of Israel there have always been, and are still, those who remain in the lands of their dispersion, in every part of the world, by choice, having no faith in the promises of God and no intention of taking any part in the rebuilding of the Land of Promise. These constitute one part. Then there are those who do settle and live in the Land, sharing in the creation of that State and people, but either do so from a purely nationalistic motive or, if they start out on the basis of faith in the Divine promise, later repudiate that faith and revert to the standards and expectations of this present world. These form the second part. One part still in the Dispersion, and one part within the frontiers of Israel, but both parts have rejected the shepherd and both parts, so far as inclusion in the Divine purpose is concerned, are "cut off and die". Like their forerunners in the days of Jesus, they see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets, sit down in the Kingdom of God, whilst they themselves are thrust out (Luke 13. 28).

There remains the "third part" which is left therein. This third part would seem to be identical with the "little ones" of verse 7. The Shepherd is smitten and the sheep scattered but, says God, "*I will turn mine hand upon the little ones*". The "little ones" are, literally, those who are esteemed mean, despised, small in other's view. This can well fit the few who retain their faith in God. The expression "turn mine hand upon" is not so easy to interpret. "Upon" is a word having a negative power, most frequently used in the sense of forbidding or being against a thing, and would be more accurately rendered "against the little ones" which is how the RSV and a number of other modern translations render it. In fact the same word is rendered "against" twice in this same 7th verse. The Septuagint uses the Greek *epi* to translate the Hebrew word all three times in this verse, and

epi has the sense of being on, upon or over the subject. It might be then that the hand of God is "over" or "upon" the little ones in the sense of protection and this is the view usually taken of this verse. Since however the "third part" is later said to be brought into the fires of testing it might be in this sense that God turns his hand "against" them. Zephaniah, speaking of this same "third part" in the same prophetic setting, says that God will "*leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*" (Zeph. 3. 12). It may be therefore that the expression is intended to indicate that from the onlooker's point of view the Lord, having allowed his Shepherd to be smitten and the sheep scattered, has indeed turned his hand against his little ones, although from the long term angle it is clear that He is dealing with them, to use Malachi's expression, as a refiner and purifier of silver.

This is where the second stanza of the poem comes before notice. "*I will bring the third part through the fires, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name and I will hear them. I will say, it is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God.*" This refined and purified and tested people is, of course, the Remnant, the stalwart nation of faith which will experience the Deliverance. The time can only be the end of the Age and the eleventh hour of the End at that, for at no time in history will such a national faith in God, and such a consequent Divine acceptance, be true. Despite the smiting of the Shepherd which has subsisted throughout the Age, and the falling away of so many, God has at last completed the formation of his earthly elect. Ready for their glorious destiny they stand in their places in the land they have made ready, waiting.

So to the third stanza which appears in the A.V. as the first two verses of chapter 14. Were this poem set to music, here most certainly would come the fanfare of trumpets. "*Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.*" The time has come, the time of Israel's victory, and nothing can now hold back the march of events already irrevocably ordained in the Divine time-table. The powers of Heaven and earth are drawn up in martial array and they face each other, waiting.

A failure to understand aright the nature of this prophetic picture of the attack upon Jerusalem leads some to see in this expression

the division, among the attackers, of spoil taken from Israel at this time. The idea of such proceeding is not consistent with the basic principle that this is the time, not of Israel's defeat, but of Israel's victory. Neither does the text read that way. "Thy spoil" means Israel's spoil. Had it been otherwise the passage would read "*Their*" spoil shall be divided . . ." The point here is that despite the overwhelming physical superiority of the enemy and their proud boast that they have come "to take a spoil and to take a prey" (see Ezek. 38. 12-13) it will be the devoted people in the city who will take spoil of their attackers, as Ezekiel again says in 39, 10 "*They shall spoil those that spoiled them*". And the nature of that spoil is well described by Isaiah; it will be no less than the allegiance and devotion of the erstwhile godless nations to the standard of righteousness which will be unfurled by the Holy Nation in that day, "spoil" more valuable to the people of God by far than treasure of gold or silver or possessions or lands. "*The nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising . . . the wealth of the nations shall come unto thee . . . the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee . . . ye shall eat the riches of the nations, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves . . . and the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory . . . thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God*" (Isa. chaps. 60-62). The forces of the Lord in that day will have no need of earthly treasures for their spoil; their God already owns "all the gold and silver, and the cattle upon a thousand hills". The spoil they look for and will take is something much more precious, the hearts and minds and the lives of men, and this it is that will be yielded to them at that historic period of human history.

But first there has to come the peak, the crucial phase, of the refining fire that is to winnow all that is dross from the community of Israel. Chap. 14 verse 2 presents what is to all appearances a strange and unexpected anticlimax. At that momentous hour when God moves in, as it were, to intervene and deliver, the prophet sees the city "taken", the houses rifled, the women ravished, and half of the inhabitants driven into exile. Nowhere else in all the many Old Testament foreviews of this dramatic time is such an eventuality pictured; in every other instance the attacking forces come immediately up against the irresistible powers

of Heaven and are utterly broken. Here in Zechariah the very next verse presents the same theme, and shews the all-powerful Lord advancing to the battle. What then is the significance of this strange diversion, introducing itself as it were at the last minute of the eleventh hour?

It must be remembered that we are still hearing the strains of the "triumph song" which closes with this verse 2. To a great extent the language used reflects past occasions of triumph and rejoicing in Israel's history, and the nature of the coming event is described in terms reminiscent of past similar happenings in Israel's history. The man of Israel, hearing or reading the words, was expected to cast his mind back to the former event and visualise the predicted reality within the general background of that event. In this case there is not much doubt that the background is that of Sennacherib's defeat outside Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. In both cases the enemy surrounds Jerusalem in confidence that he will capture the city with ease; he openly defies God, God answers the challenge, and he is defeated and expelled from the land—Jerusalem is saved. In both cases that salvation is in consequence of faith and reliance upon God. Hence to understand this verse it is necessary to compare it with the things that happened in the days of Hezekiah. There is an abundance of material upon which to draw for the record of that celebrated event, the defeat of Sennacherib, is repeated no less than four times in the Old Testament, in 2 Kings 18-19, 2 Chron. 32, Isaiah 22 and Isaiah 37, with another "triumph song" extolling the victory in Isaiah 33. As if all this were not enough, we in our day have the additional advantage of Sennacherib's own account of the campaign, inscribed on a six-sided cylinder which is at present in the British Museum, and another which is held by the University of Chicago. From all of this the aptness of this incident from history to illustrate the deliverance of Israel at the end of this Age is very marked.

"*The city shall be taken*" says the A.V. "Taken" is *asaph*, to gather or encompass, as in a net. Hos. 4. 3 uses the word of fishes of the sea thus taken, and the meaning here is that the city is surrounded or besieged, but not captured in the sense of a forcible entry being effected. Incidentally the same word is used for "gather" in the same verse where God says He will gather all nations against Jerusalem; the enemy encompasses the city but God encompasses the enemy!

It is rather remarkable that Sennacherib uses the same term in his account. "*Hezekiah himself, like a bird in a cage, I shut up within Jerusalem, his royal city.*" And of course Sennacherib, despite his boasting, never did get inside the city! From this picture it would seem justifiable to conclude that in a poetic manner Zechariah is saying what all the other prophets do say, that the enemy will surround the Holy Land but not actually capture it; the intervention of God will come first as it did in the case of Sennacherib.

Now Zechariah expands his theme. "*The houses shall be rifled and the women ravished*" he says. This at first sight would seem to contradict the inviolability of the city. Again the historical precedent can be a guide to the meaning. According to the account in 2 Kings there was a period immediately before the great deliverance when faith on the part of Hezekiah and his people was not as strong as it should have been and they yielded to the Assyrian demands for treasure and tribute. The cylinder of Sennacherib gives a more complete list of the booty the invader took from Hezekiah at this time. "*Thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of all kinds, pearls, thrones adorned with ivory, tusks of ivory, sandal wood, ebony, the contents of Hezekiah's treasure house, his daughters, the women of his palace, and his male and female slaves.*"

All these did the Assyrian take and send to Nineveh, the treasure for the adornment of his city and the women for the rest of their lives to be at the mercy of their captors. Not only so, but during the actual siege some there were who left the city trusting to the Assyrians rather than in God, and these too were captured and sent also to Nineveh. "*I threw up mounds against him*" goes on the remorseless conqueror "*and I took vengeance upon any man who came forth from the city. All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off.*" That there were a number of such among the leaders of Israel is recorded by Isaiah 22. 3 which is an account of this siege. "*All your rulers have fled together, without the bow they were captured. All of you who were found were captured though they had fled far away*" (RSV). So that when Zechariah declares that the houses were rifled, the women ravished, half of the city go forth into exile, he is telling us that just as in the days of Sennacherib there was an element of unbelief which led to the loss of all part in the coming deliverance for some of the people, so will it be now. After all

the purging fires of the Age which has resulted in a dedicated people awaiting in a dedicated land the onslaught of the enemy, there will be at the last moment a portion whose faith does not hold and who in consequence are abandoned to the powers of this world. The particular details given by Zechariah are symbols only, drawn from the story of Sennacherib. The reality is that, for the last time, unbelief is found in Israel, and because deliverance can only come by faith and God is now waiting to deliver, the unbelievers go forth into exile.

Isaiah seems to have had a keen insight into this position. The language he uses in Isa. 33. 14 although primarily directed to the unbelievers who left the city in Hezekiah's day, is even more cogently applicable to the similar situation at the end of the Age. *"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites"* he says, and poses their terrified questions *"who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"* The prophet gives the obvious answer; *"He that walketh righteously . . ."* and so on, but from other prophetic writings it is evident that he is not heeded. When Amos

comes to speak of the same great Day he says *"All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, the evil shall not overtake us"* (Amos 9. 10) and then immediately the Lord proceeds to *"raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen"* i.e. introduce the opening stage of the Millennial Kingdom.

"But the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." That is the concluding triumphant line of this victory song. This word "residue" is the one so often rendered "remnant" in reference to the people of faith found ready for the Divine purpose at the end. And here Zechariah concludes his poem and prepares to draw aside the curtain to reveal the last great act in this wonderful drama. The enemy is in position around the Holy Land, all unbelievers and idolaters have been excluded from within its borders, the "remnant" is fully prepared and strong in faith. All things are now ready.

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle."

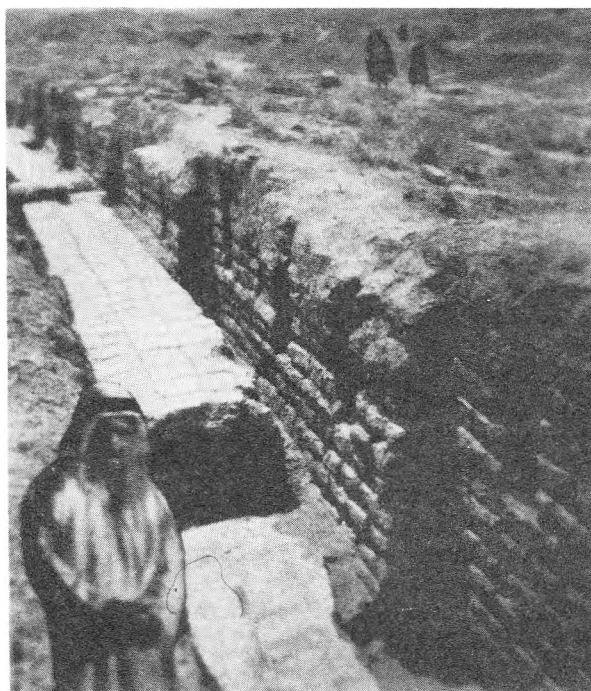
(To be continued)

Appendix to the "Tower of Babel"

(Series 1994)



The accompanying photograph shows all that remains to-day of the Tower of Babel, that was to "reach unto heaven" and stand for all time as a symbol of the people who would make themselves a name on the earth. Just that one line of broken brickwork. The people who built it, and with it the first great civilisation to rise on the earth after the Flood, disappeared from history four thousand years ago. The man Abraham, born into that civilisation, rejected it, obeying the Divine call to leave it for a land which God would show him, and became the progenitor of a nation which will yet stand forth as a light to the nations, to declare Divine salvation to the ends of the earth.



THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

An Expository
Talk

The New Testament begins with the birth of earth's rightful king and immediately commences the ministry of John the Baptist calling upon Israel to repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And thus a momentous change began in God's dealings with his chosen people. Throughout their history men of God had arisen calling them back to their allegiance to the Lord God and the law of his servant Moses, but to none of those faithful prophets was given so vivid and so definite an announcement as was charged upon John. Though those ancient worthies had spoken of and looked forward to the day God's kingdom would be upon earth, and of the glories of the King who would reign in righteousness, not to them the honour of heralding, and seeing, that King. That so signal a message was given to John to announce was not unexpected when one recalls the miracle of his birth and the prophetic words of his father concerning him and his destiny, which caused the people to exclaim "*What manner of child shall this be!*" To him, the last of the old line of prophets, was deputed the honour of introducing Israel's king. What an honour! What a message!

John "*grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing to Israel*" and it may well be that by the time he had grown to manhood some of the prophetic words about John had been forgotten and a new generation had arisen; yet there was in Israel an expectancy that God was about to intervene on behalf of his people. That he did intervene at that time through the prophet John and his Son the King of Israel is the basis of the New Testament gospel. Though John was of priestly descent his mission did not begin at the temple or in the city. It was ever so with prophets—no code of practice governed them as kings, priests and judges were ruled; they arose any time and anywhere. Their unconventional appearance on the scene of Israel's life often made for their rejection by the nation and John was no exception though many were baptised of him and his message stirred the rulers in Israel enough to send emissaries to hear from John himself his status and message.

What did the Jews understand by the mandate of John, or better, what should they have understood. Further, what should the Christian of to-day, looking back over the years, see in the

phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven"? Because the Scriptures were read every Sabbath day the Jewish nation would know of the exhortation to impress upon their own hearts and minds the words of the Mosaic law and promises, and by that would know in themselves that they had failed as a people to reach that standard of righteousness which would give them the "*days of heaven upon earth*" (Deut. 11, 18-21), and thus they would reason that the prophets' call to repent was to encourage them back to their obligation to their God and Saviour. But there was more in it than that. And those who heard John would recall the words of Daniel that "*the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High*" and they would assume that the days were near when they would be in their proper status at the head of the nations. If they were expecting their own national ascendancy the course of events and the passage of time would prove that the kingdom was not at hand as they hoped. And the course of events has induced Christians to hold differing thoughts as to the meaning of the kingdom *in* heaven, some apply the expression to the church of God or to missionary work, yet it must be clear that none of these ideas quite fit the story. Others believe that John was calling on all to repent, for the king, not the kingdom, was at hand. The king was there in their midst, yet He did not encourage Israel to believe that because the king had come the kingdom on earth was imminent. (In point of fact the work and mission of Jesus at that time was more in keeping with his title of Son of Man—his title of king being more appropriate when He reigns over all his subjects.) As He drew near to Jerusalem for the last time and knew that the people would receive him with "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" He gave to his disciples the parable of the ten pounds so that they might not harbour false ideas of the imminence of the earthly kingdom. But how quickly the mood of the people changed, for some charged him before Pilate that He claimed to be a king. Pilate straightly asked him "Art thou the king of the Jews" and even had the words "This is the king of the Jews" placed over his head on the cross in Greek, Latin and Hebrew, that all might know. What was in Pilate's mind we cannot know. Possibly he considered that of all men Jesus was

most worthy to be Israel's king if imperial Rome would allow it, for he had clearly heard of the teachings and miracles of Jesus and his wife regarded him as being a man of God. Shortly after the resurrection of our Lord the disciples asked him "*Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" They were thinking of the kingdom in terms of earthly glory. Though their expectations were incorrect, their question was pertinent, for in their midst now in resurrection glory was Israel's king and many Scriptures had already been fulfilled concerning him.

What did the coming of the king entail upon Israel? From later verses in Matt. 3 it is apparent that his coming meant a time of judgment and no claim that they were the children of Abraham would avail them then—hence the need to repent lest they be burned as chaff in the fire of judgment. The chapter closes with the opening of the ministry of Jesus, yet the voice from heaven which inaugurates and blesses his mission did not proclaim him as Israel's king. He then received his anointing and benediction but not his kingdom. Shortly after, the tempter offered him the kingdoms of this world which offer was rejected out of hand. The Tempter was in fact insulting the King, inasmuch as no usurper can offer a kingdom to its true king. All these considerations have not served to explain the meaning of the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" and we must look elsewhere in Scripture for help, particularly in regard to the First Advent. The king was there but not the expected kingdom on earth under the rulership of heaven. Yet in spite of the fact that Israel rejected their own king and had him crucified by the Roman power the announcement of the kingdom of heaven being at hand was not annulled. In fact some remarks of our Lord tell that the kingdom of heaven had come to Israel whether they accepted their king or not. Luke 10, 9-11 is an example of this. Here the commissioned seventy disciples were to heal the sick and say to them that the kingdom of heaven *is* come nigh, and if they were received ungraciously by the cities they visited they were still to say the kingdom had come. And so we observe that whether received well or scorned the kingdom had come to those people who had heard the message of grace. Hence the judgments to come upon Chorazin, Tyre, etc., who rejected the specially chosen disciples endued with powers to gather the harvest of that time. Luke 16, 16 is another example of this—"The law and the

prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it". Strange words indeed if in no sense the kingdom had come! These very words may help us in our examination of the topic for they speak of dispensational change—the law and the prophets ordained of God closed with John; since then something new which the Bible calls the kingdom of heaven is in vogue. This reminds us of John 1, 17 "*For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*"—dispensational change again. These words do not mean that prior to the coming of Jesus Christ the grace of God was unknown and that since the coming of Christ the law of Moses is no longer necessary. But it is certainly true that before the First Advent the love of God was set upon one people who had entered into covenant agreement with him on the basis of the law mediated through Moses, and that since his coming a much freer approach is made for all men, whether Jew or Gentile, and the grace of salvation is theirs in believing that this Son of God is the redeemer of all. This is grace and this is truth. It was even possible for the publican and sinner to enter into this grace, this kingdom of heaven, before the meticulous observer of the law and traditions who prided himself on his works. To this agree our Lord's words (Matt. 21, 31-32) "*... the publicans and harlots go (not will go): into the kingdom of God before you, for John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him*".

It will be observed that the expression "the kingdom of God" appears synonymous with the phrase "the grace of God" in these few texts and the question must arise as to whether we may regard them as alternatives in other cases. A good example of this alteration occurs in Paul's words to the Ephesian church (Acts 20, 24-25) "*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more*". How clear it is that in Paul's use these phrases are interchangeable! Surely this is why we read of the gospel of the kingdom! For in that kingdom (present or future) and that gospel, the grace of God shines forth.

A CHRONOLOGICAL CONUNDRUM

The investigation of Bible chronology in order to determine the date of the Second Advent has been the pre-occupation of many devout students throughout the Christian Era. Those of the nineteenth century were the most prolific; more than fifteen dates within the confines of that century were predicted, followed by half a dozen or more in this twentieth. The sincerity manifested by so many seeking to ascertain the "time of his appearing" forbids dismissal of the subject as mere obsession.

The starting point for all these calculations is always the same, the ancient Jewish impression that the Messiah would appear at the end of six thousand years from creation, the time of the Garden of Eden. Rabbi Elias in 200 B.C. was apparently the first to advance this hypothesis on the analogy of the seven creative days of Genesis, six thousand years under the dominion of man, and the seventh the reign of the Messiah. At a later date, in the early Christian Era, the Kabbalists, a school of Jewish mystics, claimed that the six occurrences of the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, aleph, in the first verse of Genesis, indicates six millenniums of world history to be followed by the seventh of rest. On such nebulous foundations was built the belief, for several centuries before and after the First Advent, that Messiah would appear at the end of six millenniums, and since the pre-Christian Scriptures enshrined a chronology indicating that something like five and a half thousand years had already elapsed it is not surprising that, at that time, it is recorded that "*all men were in expectation*". Thus began a series of calculations which set date after date, beginning with A.D. 350 in the 2nd century, going on to A.D. 500 by a number of famous early Christian leaders in the 2nd to 4th centuries, then a few dates around the A.D. 1000 mark, after that, among many, Christopher Columbus who in 1543 opted for 1653, William Whiston the scientist in 1700 who made it 1766, James Napier the mathematician who in 1550 said it would come in 1786. But from 1600 onwards with the introduction of Bishop Usher's chronology based on the "Received Text" of the Hebrew Bible of the 9th century (the Masoretic) the 19th century became the favourite, and with the political upheaval in Europe caused by the French Revolution of 1793 expectation of the

Advent reached a scale never before known.

But in all the claims and counterclaims for one particular date or another, sometimes even naming the particular month and day, it does seem that one factor escaped attention, or at least was ignored. Dependent, as every system had to be, on the addition of the ages of the patriarchs of Genesis at the birth of their sons in the ancestral line, it had to be assumed that each son was born on the day the father reached the stated age. Thus the A.V. says that Adam was 130 years old at the birth of Seth, and Seth 105 at the birth of Enos; thus the period from Adam to Enos is made the sum of these two, 235 years. But this could only be true if Seth was born the day Adam attained the age of 130, and Enos born the day Seth attained 105, and so on through all the patriarchs from Adam to Jacob, and this is in the highest degree unlikely. The statements would be equally true and in accordance with ordinary usage if Adam was 130 years and 11 months old at Seth's birth, and Seth 105 years and eleven months old at that of Enos, and the period then would not be 235 but 237. A man is said to be forty years old, say, until he attains his forty-first year.

In later Bible history there are a number of occasions where fractions of years must be involved in the periods stated. In the egress of Noah from the Ark in November to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt in April, for example, there is of necessity a half year involved. Taking all such factors into consideration, it would appear that the addition of whole years, which has been the normal procedure, may be short of the truth by anything up to half a century. If the law of averages is taken into consideration, which is probably as near the truth as can be expected, it still remains true that the calculated date can be short of the truth by as much as twenty-five years.

Is there really a problem here? Is it not true that when the disciples asked the momentous question "*What shall be the sign (signal) of thy presence, and of the end of the Age?*" Jesus did not say anything about adding up Biblical time periods? Did He not answer the question by saying that when they, or their successors, perceived a certain combination of events taking place in the world, wars, revolutions, general anarchy, the breaking down of ordered

government, of financial institutions, of social conditions; the resurgence of Israel as a sovereign State, the world ecological system breaking down, causing famines and pestilences; when they should see these things happening on a scale which led to "*men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking to those things which are coming upon the earth*", then that would be the time? Not a stated day in a given year, but a period, during which one world would pass away to be succeeded by another which would never pass away! Is that what Jesus referred to when He spoke of "*the days of the Son of man?*" The plural; not "the day" but "the days"; And he did say, back there in A.D. 33, that He himself did not know when it would be. If fallible man can add up a few sets of figures in the Scriptures to reveal the secret, surely Jesus could have done so there or then! He did say that it would be when the world of man had reached

a state of hopeless disruption, and that then those who then considered his words would know that the time had come.

Perhaps, after all, the chronology students have been right, but are just trying to be too exact. Not just one little point of time, like the old-fashioned theology when the Lord was to appear in the sky at a certain moment and immediately start judging sinners. Not just twenty-four hours of solar time of which the faithful must be made previously cognisant, lest they miss the great event. Rather a period, a period of earth's history which sees the inevitable end of a social system founded upon human greed, injustice and cruelty, passing away under the weight of its own corruption and being replaced by a new order of things "*wherein dwelleth righteousness*." "*WHEN ye see these things come to pass*" said Jesus "*THEN know*." Is that the true chronology?

JOB AND THE RESURRECTION

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and after my skin has been thus destroyed yet from my flesh shall I see God" (Job. 19. 25-26 RSV).

This is the most remarkable pre-Israelite expression of faith in the resurrection to be found in the Old Testament. That such a faith could exist at so early a time in human history is considered by modern theologians so unlikely that the evident meaning of the passage is disputed and all kinds of variant explanations offered to minimise its significance. Even so, it may well be asked how the old patriarch acquired his very definite faith in a resurrection to earthly life in which happy state he would "see" God.

The present Hebrew text of vs. 26 is admitted by all scholars to be "corrupt", that is to say, it has been mutilated by successive copyist and translators so that the Hebrew is now almost unintelligible. The A.V. rendering "and though after my skin worms destroy this body" does not make sense, and "worms" has been supplied by the translators anyway; the Revisers substituted (as in the margin) "after I shall awake, though this body be destroyed" by adopting a possible variant reading. Of the few modern translators who have made serious attempts to get at the probable original meaning Margolis has it "*when after my skin this is destroyed then without my flesh shall I see God*"; Leeser "*after*

my skin is cut to pieces will this be, and then freed from my body shall I behold God; Rotherham "*and though after my skin is struck off this followeth, yet apart from my flesh shall I see God*"; Ferrar Fenton "*and after my skin is destroyed I shall yet in my flesh gaze on God*". and Douay "*I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God*". The RSV gives what is probably the best rendering "*after my skin has thus been destroyed yet from my flesh shall I see God*." The International Critical Commentary (Vol. "Job"—S. R. Driver and G. B. Gray) says that the Hebrew words "from my flesh" can equally mean "from within my flesh" or "away from, outside, my flesh." Most translators appear to have adopted the latter meaning and this obviously with the theological idea that Job would, in the after-life, "see God" in heaven where the body of flesh is a thing of the past. This however ignores the fact that neither Job nor any of his contemporaries had any conception of a spiritual world or a heavenly salvation; whatever understanding of a future life they had was one to be lived upon earth. The passage is therefore best understood as an expression of Job's faith that although, his present disease being incurable and his state hopeless, his skin now ulcerated and corrupting from his afflictions must surely perish and his whole body inevitably be destroyed in death, at a future day his Redeemer would come to earth

and stand upon the earth and restore him to life in a new terrestrial body. From within that new body of flesh he will look out and see his Redeemer. God who had so inexplicably hidden himself from Job during the term of the patriarch's suffering but in whom he had never lost faith. Job knew that his misfortunes and sufferings had been at least permitted by God, if not directly inflicted by him. He had long since given up hope that he would recover: death was the only sequel he could see and in his agony he longed and prayed for death. But death was not the end of all things for Job; he knew that he would live again. He expressed that faith in words of rare beauty in ch. 14. 14-15 *"all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands"*. The notable thing about his declaration in ch. 19 is his knowledge that this life by resurrection is to be accomplished by means of a redeemer in the New Testament sense. Christ became man's Redeemer by paying a price, the yielding up of his human life upon the Cross. In both instances where the term "Ransom" is used the word implies a deliverance effected in consideration of a price paid. Our Lord does not deliver man in the fashion of a military conqueror who batters down the prison by brute force and so sets the captives free; the act of redemption cost him suffering and death. Now Job uses the Hebrew term which indicates this same idea. Of the two words for "redeemer", "*padah*" and "*goel*", *padah* has the meaning of procuring freedom or release, to deliver, unconditionally; *goel* means the same thing but upon payment of a price. Job used the word *goel*, and in so doing anticipated Isaiah, who a thousand years later described the Lord as the *goel*, the Redeemer, of Israel, some nineteen times in his prophecy. There are thus three important principles embodied in this 25th verse of which Job was aware and convinced: that the act of redemption was going to cost something, that the Redeemer ever liveth, and that he would "stand upon the earth" at the Last Day, when Job would hear his call, and would answer it. Job knew nothing of Christ; the Redeemer he visualised was God whom he worshipped, but all that he saw and believed and hoped for is fulfilled in the person and work of Christ who is the manifestation of Deity to man.

Job also understood that resurrection is by recreation, the re-emergence of the identity, the personality, in a new body. This is a

fundamental principle: at death the old body returns to its dust and its constituent atoms coalesce again with the whole terrestrial mass. In the resurrection, as St. Paul explains in 1 Cor. 15. *"God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him"* a newly-created organism or body adapted to the environment in which the resurrected one knows himself for who he was and who he is. Job fully realised this. Though this skin and this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh, from within my flesh, I shall see God. This is a fair paraphrase of his utterance. He knew full well that his present body, disease-ridden, emaciated, corrupting, must inevitably pass into the grave and be destroyed, but he shouted to the heavens his faith that in a day yet to come he would stand upright in a body of new flesh and in that flesh see God his Redeemer. *"Whom I shall see for myself, and not another, though my body be consumed within me"* he says (vs. 27). That is an affirmation of faith in the preservation of his identity, his personality, even although during his sojourn in the grave his terrestrial body has dissolved away and nothing is left. *"Then shall the dust return to earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it"* says the Preacher in Eccl. 12. 7 and this was Job's understanding. He knew that his personality was safe in God's keeping until the day of resurrection and that he would then arise and take up the thread of conscious existence just as a man does when he awakens from his nightly sleep.

From whence did Job obtain this knowledge? There was no Bible—not even the Old Testament—in his day. God had not yet spoken to Israel by Moses and anyway Job was not an Israelite. It is evident that in those early days God had means of imparting knowledge of himself and his plans of which we now know little or nothing. Since Job was of the land of Uz, which took its name from Uz the son of Nahor, Abraham's own brother, it is possible that Job was a descendant of Nahor. In such case, and since Nahor, like Abraham, was a worshipper of God, it could be that the primitive understanding of the Divine purposes which was undoubtedly passed down from father to son from earliest times, and through Noah and Shem at the time of the Flood, reached down to Job through Nahor and afforded the sorely-tried but steadfastly faithful old patriarch this faith in the coming redemption and resurrection which enabled him to endure his affliction in hope of a future guaranteed by the promise of God.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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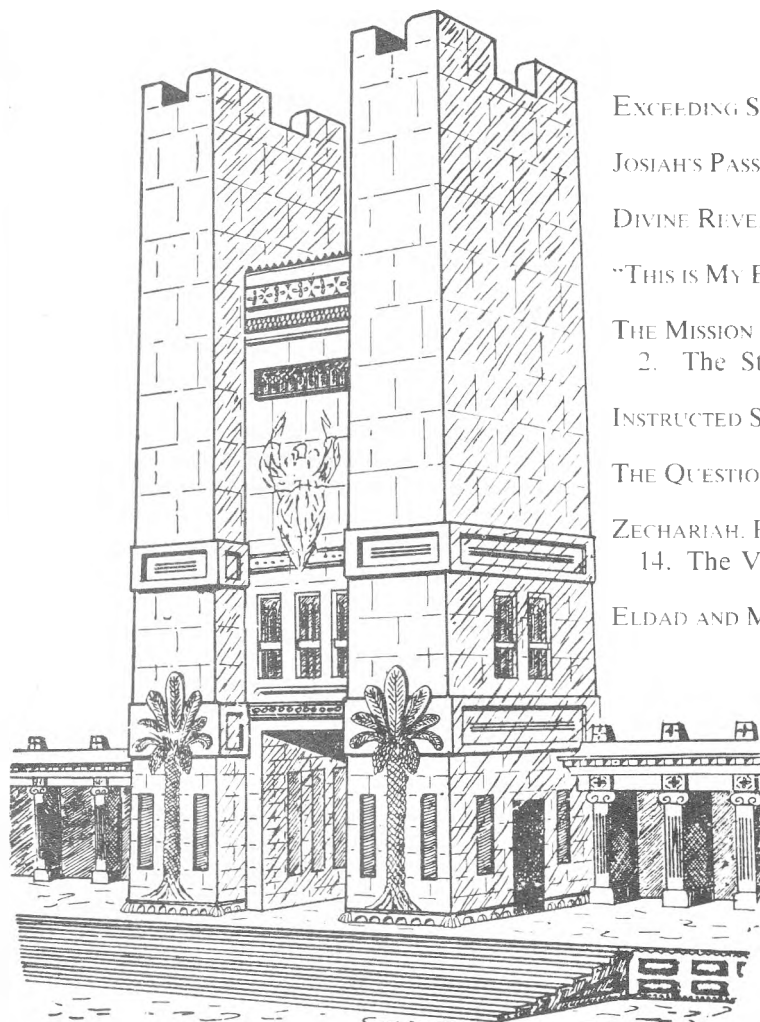
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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EXCEEDING SORROWFUL UNTO DEATH

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch" (Mark 14.34).

Says the literal Greek rendering, in the "Emphatic Diaglott", *"extremely sorrowful is the soul of me, even to death"*. A colloquial English equivalent could be "encompassed with a deadly anguish" or "full of intense anguish". The account in the Gospel of Mark, the only one who could actually have heard the words uttered, for the disciples were all asleep, is a graphic portrayal of the intense mental suffering of our Lord on that fateful night in the garden of Gethsemane. *"He prayed"* says Mark *"that if it were possible this cup might pass from him"*. Upon coming in to the garden, to quote the A.V., *"He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy"*. More lucidly, as the same word is rendered in Acts 3.21, *"the people came together, greatly wondering"*, or Mark 9.15, *"the people, when they beheld (Jesus) were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him"*. This word can equally denote amazement in the sense of being stricken with terror or apprehension, or wonder at something difficult to understand. And in this verse He was "very heavy" in the same sense as the word in Phil. 2.26. "For he" (Epaphroditus) was *full of heaviness*, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." So on that fateful night, the picture we have of our Lord is one which shows him to be in the throes of an intense mental sadness mingled with some sense of depression at the situation in which He found himself. To him it was a bitter cup, a cup from which He prayed that, if it should be his Father's will, He should be spared. To him, it was a stressful hour, a time from which He would fain be delivered. *"All things are possible unto thee"* He said to the Father, *"take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."* He prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

What was this cup, this hour, from which He would fain be delivered if it should be the Father's will?

It has been suggested that in order fitly to take the sinner's place in giving his life a "ransom for all" He must experience a period of utter despair and isolation from God, as though the Father had, after all, deserted him at the last; this is the interpretation so often put upon the well known words *"my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"*, words which the

agnostic philosopher and writer H. G. Wells in the early 20th century once described as "an eternal enigma to the faithful." That cannot possibly be the explanation of that cry. Many a Christian martyr has gone to his death in full faith and without any such cry, and the disciple cannot be greater than his Lord. The instructed Jew, if not the rest, knew what that cry meant. They knew that in times past, when their forebears, suffering the relentless persecution of their enemies, particularly during the time of Greek persecution immediately prior to the First Advent, shouted the same cry at the moment of their expiry, surrounded by their relentless enemies. Knowing that there was no hope and they must surely die, they shouted out the opening phrase of Psalm 22, the psalm which opens on a note of despair and closes on one of victory, and so attested faith that despite their hopeless situation all would yet be well. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me?"* they cried out, and so they died. And those who heard remembered the ending of the psalm, *"Be not thou far from me, O Lord . . . deliver my soul from the sword . . . save me from the lion's mouth"*; and then the triumphant affirmation of faith *"In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee . . . he hath not despised the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard."* In that triumphant cry they voiced their faith that although they must go into certain death they would nevertheless live again beyond the power of their enemies. So Jesus; in the very next breath He uttered the words of faith, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* and so passed, knowingly, into the eternity from which He had originally come. No despair, no sense of separation from God, but a triumphant arrival, at his knowledge that he was about to return to the Father.

If, then, his feelings of intense sorrow and heaviness was not due to apprehension at the prospect immediately before him, what did He really mean? Was it his realisation of the utter failure of his disciples to understand why He must suffer death before entering his glory? Was it genuine sorrow at the defection of Judas, even now entering with the priests to betray him, sorrow not for himself but for Judas? Was it his realisation that Peter's confident assertion half

an hour previously, *"although all shall be offended, yet will not I"* were but empty words, that before another half hour had passed Peter with all the others would have panicked and left him alone in the hands of his enemies? Was it that He already knew, as He had just said to Peter, that in the next few hours, Peter would deny all knowledge of him, not once, but three times in succession? Was it because He deeply desired that his closest followers should watch with him during his hour of trial, and yet knew already that they, insensible to his need, would go to sleep and fail him at the critical time? Was it because he was living again that triumphant entry into Jerusalem when the people cried *"Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"* and knew that very soon now those same crowds would be crying *"Crucify him; crucify him"*? Was it the bitter knowledge that the nation to whom He had come for their salvation had so far failed to understand him that they resolutely rejected him, and that nothing now could save them from the national disaster that did come upon them forty years later? His sorrow and anguish, perhaps, was not for himself but for them, even although He must have known that it was going to be like this. *"To this end was I born."*

Jesus had one advantage that his followers do not possess. He knew the world He was about to enter for He had come from that world. *"I left the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."* *"In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, ye may be also."* How clear it is that Jesus at the end of his earthly life must have had a clear vision of that celestial realm from which He had come and to which He would now return, a world in which there would no enemies and no rejection. If the angels of heaven rejoice at one sinner who repenteth, how great must have been

the exultation at his coming following the end of his brief earthly sojourn. *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"* they sang *"to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."* If his followers on earth can be faithful unto death despite all the agonies of martyrdom, having never seen or known that world, and visualising it by the eye of faith, necessarily imperfectly, going into death in complete assurance, how much more must Jesus have looked forward to his re-entry into that world, so soon to be accomplished, from his knowledge of it in his pre-human life.

Is it not evident that He was keenly anticipating his re-union with the Father and with the heavenly hosts? *"Father"*, He said in that wonderful time of communion recorded by John. *"the hour is come, Glorify thy Son . . . I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do. Now, O Father, glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was . . . and now I am no more in the world . . . and now come I to thee."* How plain it is that the recorded anguish of spirit, the cup He would fain have pass from him, was not the anticipation of the death He must shortly die, not any feeling of separation from the Father or rejection by the Father, but rather the intense feeling of loneliness at the end, failure on the part of the disciples, whom He so dearly loved, to understand his position and to be with him in spirit at the last, and the failure of the people, to whom He came to minister to receive his words of life and his redeeming power. For himself, He had no fears; for them, only an overriding sorrow. *"Daughters of Jerusalem"* He said to them, *"Weep not for me but weep for yourselves, and for your children."* At that time of crisis, his thought was not for himself, but for them.

"Surely he hath borne our grief, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

He that is much in prayer shall grow rich in grace. He shall thrive and increase most that is busiest in this, which is our traffic with Heaven, and fetches the most precious commodities thence He that set oftenest these ships of desire, that makes the most voyages to the land of spices and pearls, shall be sure to improve his stock most, and have most of heaven on earth.

In a deep sense it is possible for me to be living in heaven, even while still on earth. My heart can be resting in the peace of heaven; my mind seeing by its light; my soul drawing strength and inspiration from that other world. I shall feel increasingly that that is the world to which I really belong, and that the things of that world matter most to me.

JOSIAH'S PASSOVER

*The story of a
great cleansing*

It was the eighteenth year of the reign of good King Josiah that the great Passover was kept—the most memorable Passover that Israel had known since the day of his entering into the land. *“Surely there was not holden such a Passover”* wrote the historian *“from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah”* (2 Kings 23, 22). It was a famous Passover, one to be remembered and preserved in tradition and exhortation throughout their generations. There had been some seven hundred Passovers celebrated since the invading hosts had crossed Jordan and built the stones of Gilgal, but this one was the greatest. What was there about it that made it so noteworthy?

Perhaps it was the freshness and enthusiasm of the whole thing. The story in 2 Chron. 35 reads like that of a revival in nineteenth century England. Faith in Israel had fallen to a very low ebb. The days of Hezekiah had long since passed—he had been dead for about seventy-five years. Judah had suffered under the sway of two idolatrous kings. Manasseh the son of Hezekiah and Amon the son of Manasseh. Under those two men the knowledge and worship of God had languished and died. The idolatrous religion of the surrounding nations had been set up in its place and the people had, in the main, readily accepted the change. Manasseh had erected the symbols of Baal worship all over the land and images even in the Temple itself; he it was who first gave to the Valley of Hinnom its evil reputation, and caused his son to pass through the fire to Moloch. When Josiah came to the throne, as a young lad, the land and the people were steeped in wickedness and the word of the Lord was silent; there was no open vision.

Now it was when king Josiah was twenty-six years of age that he became seized with the desire to rebuild and repair the Temple of the Lord, which had evidently suffered seriously from neglect and consequent decay. Exactly ninety years previously that Temple had been the scene of a mighty deliverance in Israel. Sennacherib the Assyrian had lain encamped with his army, outside the walls of Jerusalem, demanding unconditional surrender. Isaiah the statesman-prophet had gone into the Temple and laid the insulting letter before the Lord, pledging the faith of King and people that God

would deliver . . . and the angel of the Lord had gone forth that night, and slain in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and eighty-five thousand men: and Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land, there to meet death by the assassin's dagger. Thus was Jerusalem delivered. But all that was ninety years ago, and the people who had rejoiced in that great thing were now asleep in the grave, and their sons and their grandsons no longer believed that such things could be, and they bowed down before Baal and Ashstoreth and Moloch and delighted themselves in the abominations of the heathen—until Hilkiah found the Book of the Law among the Temple treasures.

It was finding that book of the Law that brought about the great reformation and the great Passover. Josiah had ordered the restoration of the Temple. It was whilst bringing out of the treasury the silver that was stored up therein, wherewith to meet the cost of the work, that Hilkiah the High Priest discovered a greater treasure still, the Book of the Law of Moses. He gave it to Shaphan the scribe to take it to the king.

Hilkiah was the High Priest but he had not known that this treasure was in his keeping. To what depths must the priesthood and the Temple service have sunk! Quite evidently the old injunction that the Law was to be recited in the ears of the people and taught to the children had not been honoured for a long while past. The consternation that was evoked when the contents of the Book were made known to Josiah a little later reveals that the Law of Moses was in general unknown to Judah at this time. It had been forgotten, and with it the ceremonies and ritual of the Day of Atonement, the Passover, and the feast days must have fallen into disuse. Probably Hilkiah knew that such a book had once existed; maybe he had heard his grandfather and predecessor in the priestly office speak of some such thing; and there may have been a vague tradition that a copy had once reposed somewhere in the Temple archives. But he had never seen it and was probably much more concerned with the “modern” religious thought of his own day. There seems to be something of awe in his tones as he says to Shaphan, surely in hushed words “I have found the Book of the Law in the House

of the Lord". And Shaphan took it to the king.

Shaphan was much more indifferent. He merely remarked to Josiah "Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book." It meant nothing to him; just an old book found in the recesses of the Temple, and probably hopelessly out-of-date. It was perhaps with a feeling of boredom that he began to read it before the king. But the effect upon Josiah was immediate and decisive. He realised at once that his ambitious plans for the rebuilding and rededication of the Temple counted for nothing in God's sight without a deeper and more important thing, the existence of which had not until now even occurred to him. The Temple was but the outer shell; without the worship and service of a consecrated people, conscious of its own weakness and shortcoming, but confident in the saving power of God, the beauty of the restored Temple would be as ashes and its sacrifices an abomination in the sight of God. In the midst of his schemes for the restoration of the Divine Sanctuary in the sight of all Israel, Josiah heard the terms of the Divine Law, and he rent his clothes.

Just so, it may be, do we, in the midst of all our planning and scheming, activity and service for our Master and our brethren, all our preaching and witness to the world, come up suddenly against the essence of the Divine Will for us, and realise that all these outward things are of no account in his pure sight unless we have first made our hearts right with him. The will of God for us is, first of all, our own sanctification, and it is after we have started on that consecrated walk that He leads us to opportunities of outward service for him. It is the consecration that hallows the service, and not the service that vitalises the consecration. "*Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices*" asked Samuel of Saul "*as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*" The question comes down the ages and rings in our ears, with its answer "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice". Happy are we if, like good king Josiah, we can realise the situation directly the word of the Lord falls on our ears, and act, swiftly and decisively.

Josiah did not content himself with rending his clothes. Repentance is a necessary preliminary to justification and no progress can be made until that first step has been taken, but it is not a condition in which to linger. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to *salvation*" says Paul in

2 Cor. 7. 10, and unless there is that tangible fruit of repentance, and a speedy fruit at that, the repentance is not very genuine. So Josiah called his ministers of state and his court attendants, and sent them speedily to enquire of the Lord's will for him at the hand of one who could rightfully claim to speak on his behalf. They seemed to know where to go: they made their way to Huldah the prophetess, who, for all that the information we have is very scanty, seems to have been of some repute and held in some respect. Her words leave us in no doubt as to the forthrightness of her own allegiance to the God of Israel. Her reply was framed in terms of the strongest condemnation. Albeit there was a word of approval for the king's own personal condition of heart before God, the old lady made it plain that Israel as a nation must suffer the inevitable consequence of its sinful way. Judgment must needs come upon them before times could be better. "*Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place and shall not be quenched.*" (2 Chron. 34.25).

Here is a principle that applies in our own day also. Again have men—the whole world of so-called "civilised men" this time—forsaken God their Creator and Sustainer, and rendered homage to gods of their own creating, to works of their own hands. In the midst of the distress and trouble which that course of action has brought upon them we proclaim the coming of a new and better order, the Millennial Kingdom, in which evil and lawlessness will be put down with firm hand and all men walk in the light of the glory of God and in the peace of his laws. But before this roseate picture can become a reality there must first be judgment upon the world for its wrongdoing. The Lord Jesus is to be "revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1. 8) before He comes with clouds, glorious in the retinue of his saints, and all the people of the earth join in that great mourning which is at once the evidence of their realisation of his Advent and the sign of their repentance. God waits to bind up the broken-hearted and give liberty to the captives, but nothing now can avert that Divine judgment under which the last vestiges of the rulership of "this present evil world" will pass away, never to return. And in our

witnessing and preaching we should remember that. Not only must we, as Paul on Mars Hill, declare that God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and like Peter at Jerusalem, speak of the coming pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, but we must also, like that faithful old prophetess in the dim long ago, pronounce the inevitability of Divine judgment on this world, to burn out its evil as by fire, to consume the defiling images and symbols and sweep clean the corruption off the land. It is only when God has thus devoured all the earth with the fire of his jealousy that He will be able to turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon his name to serve him with one consent (Zeph. 3.99).

The king's decisiveness did not fail him. Unwelome as the news of the coming desolations of Israel must have been to his ears, he nevertheless took the only course that could be right with God. He summoned the elders and the people, gathered them together, with the priests, in the Temple, and there, in the presence of the God of Israel, he caused to be *"read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord"*. There was to be no further excuse for ignorance. All Israel was to hear the Law read, and the authority of no less a person than the king himself lay behind the injunction to heed the words. And then the king drove home to all the seriousness with which he regarded the position. He *"stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book"* (2 Chron. 34 21). That was a mighty thing to do! Josiah stood before his subjects, openly confessing himself to be a breaker of the Mosaic Covenant and worthy only of its curses because of his shortcoming, and then solemnly and formally made a covenant between his God and himself that he would in future keep the words of the Law as a true son of Israel. He publicly repudiated his own past sin, his nation's sin, and espoused afresh the holy calling of the chosen nation. It was a great thing to do, and it was the only thing. Thus was he able to call all Israel to pledge themselves to follow his example; so he *"caused all Israel to stand to it"* and the people entered once more into the covenant made with their fathers.

It was in that strength that Josiah proceeded to the logical end of his reform. He went straight from the making of the covenant to a great sweep-

ing away of the idols and the images from the land. The thoroughness and speed with which he conducted that campaign of destruction is shown more clearly in the parallel account in 2 Kings 23. Up and down the land he went, breaking down images, grinding them to pieces and scattering their dust to the winds, defiling the sacred places of the idolatrous religions, turning out their priests, demolishing their buildings, desecrating their sacred symbols and smashing their works of art, until nothing was left of paganism in all the land from Bethel to Beer-Sheba, and the land was cleansed.

And it was only after all that, after the king had shown the sincerity of his repentance by his determination to be clean in God's sight, that he came to the Passover!

The greatest of all Israel's Passovers was that held by King Josiah after his reformation work was done, and it was the greatest, not because it was organised and directed by a king, but because it was inspired by a man who had become clean in the sight of God. Just as the ancient Hebrew women used to take their lamps and sweep out every corner and cranny of their houses, the night before the Passover, that not the slightest trace of leaven might remain in their homes, so did King Josiah with resolution and ruthlessness seek to sweep out every trace of personal and national uncleanness in the sight of God, that his Passover might be truly acceptable to the Most High.

There is a challenge for us! We approach another Memorial season, another day of coming together in a ceremony which goes to the very roots of all we hold most dear. *"Till He come!"*—we repeat the words and cling to our faith that the time will not be much longer delayed and the angel of deliverance come to us and to all the world. It is thus that we gain much of the strength to sustain us for another year of pilgrimage. *"So let a man examine himself!"* come the solemn words of Paul to us, *"and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"*. As did Josiah, so let us, approaching this season, stand to our covenant with our God, and renew it in the sight of our brethren, go forth to cleanse out of our hearts all that stands between us and God, all that divides us from our brethren, with ruthlessness and determination rooting out everything that savours of the world, the flesh and the devil. And being thus cleansed, thus zealous for the righteousness of God, thus filled with the Spirit, we can come with our brethren to partake of the feast and feel its life-giving influence entering into and permeating every fibre of our

being. This wine is life, said our Lord to his disciples—*My life, given to you. This bread is My flesh, given for you.* Can these things do aught but revivify us to greater works than ever before and a closer following than ever before, *if we are clean?* One there was at the Last Supper who was not clean, and he had no part or lot at the fellowship of that table. But to those who did share in the broken bread and poured out wine, *because they were clean*, there came a union in fellowship which lasted as long as life itself, and inspired

them to go forth as one family to turn the world upside-down for Christ and his Kingdom. And they did turn the world upside-down!

May we, then, at this season, remember King Josiah and his Passover, and how he prepared himself for that Passover by first becoming clean in the sight of God and removing out of his kingdom those things that did offend and cause iniquity. Let us prepare in like manner, cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

DIVINE REVELATION

The contemplation of the grandeur and diversity of things revealed by the Holy Spirit, the power of God, in Divine Revelation, constitutes in thought and variety a very wide spectrum of God's plans and purposes, as manifested by the Prophets and by the Gospel of our Lord, and his apostles. None but Jesus Christ can reveal the glory of the Father. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is something more than that which gives splendour, or a symbolic mantle, as an insignia of high office. The glory of God must be explained as the august content of God's own nature, embracing the aggregate of all his attributes according to their undivided yet revealed fulness.

Who would not reverence and glorify God, knowing his manifestations of wonderful goodness. How greatly it appeals to the contrite heart that He is indeed the affectionate Father, ever ready to accept the deep satisfaction of requited love, and to exercise and impart to his people the delicious sense of his Fatherly affection. Should we not therefore take down our harps from the willows and have them tuned in harmony so as to unite our spiritual hearing in unison with the splendid rendition upon the harp of God, comprising the master composition of things both old and new, which brings the very virtuosos of Divine Truth into an orchestrated whole within the human heart? As the strains of this glorious melody emanate from the score of a heavenly composition which epitomises the joyful sound produced through having the knowledge of the Divine Plan sown in our hearts, we are indeed edified by the words of the Psalmist (19.15), "*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.*"

Advanced truth can be received only by those whose minds have been prepared to receive it. If the soil of both mind and heart be not porous it will not absorb sufficient moisture to mature the perfect grain of fuller growth into the likeness of Christ.

That humility gives evidence of a priceless quality of character is expressly attested by the Father of lights, as He speaks through the Prophet Isaiah (57.15) "*For thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.*" Words of wisdom indeed are these, pointing to the way of humility, and admonishing to humbleness of mind. Jesus, during His ministry, manifested the sublime quality of self-abnegation, whereby we are enriched in the spirit, by his testimony (Matt. 11.29) "*Take my yoke on you, and be taught by me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and your lives will be at a resting place*" (Diaglott).

With hearing ears attuned to spiritual revelation, for such as would be favoured with continuous light from heaven upon his pathway and walking in the light, as God gives us to the light, we may visualise by faith the wonderful foreknown purposes, manifesting the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through "JESUS CHRIST" (Eph. 2.7), enjoying our reasoning in accordance with the Divine attributes of Wisdom, Justice and Love. We may look up to HIM before whose grandeur all men must keep awed silence, and in reverence in our adoration for the gift of His sublimities, of eternal distinction, in a boundless Universe, having been called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

“THIS IS MY BODY”

We come to the Memorial season again and hear the familiar words repeated, “*This do in remembrance of Me*”. Living two thousand years later one must receive these words a little differently from those early disciples who heard them for the first time. They had known our Lord *personally* and the poignant events that closed his earthly life would fill their memories strikingly every time they heard the words uttered. The memory of any incident or happening is much more meaningful to a person who *experienced* it, than to one who merely learned about it from someone else. Memory is a wonderful thing. Some memories give pleasure and some give pain. Some serve to lift up, and some to depress. To quote from the writing of another: “*The power of memory is lasting and influential . . . No man can be solitary who has memory. The poorest of us, if we have memory, is richer than he knows, for by it we can reproduce ourselves, be young even when the limbs are failing, and have all the past belonging to us when the hair is silvery and the eyes are dim. It is a rare and divine endowment . . .*”

At this season of the year when we gather to carry out our Lord's injunction, “*Do this in remembrance of Me*”, we remember only what we have been told. Not that it is the less important or real on that score, for we have been brought along a way where we can say with another of time past, “*We have not been persuaded to know Jesus Christ merely because of what we have been told, but we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed Jesus the Saviour of the world.*” So faithfully and impressively did the early disciples narrate, for our benefit *their* “memories” of our Lord, that we seem to find ourselves within the circle or circuit of their own understanding and memories: brought very close to the actual happenings, so that it means as much to us as it did to them on the first anniversary of our Lord's death—“*Do this in remembrance of Me.*” The delivery of Israel out of Egypt by the plagues God used, when all the first-born in the land perished in one night except those for whom the blood of a slain lamb effected deliverance, was a picture of the deliverance of both the church and the world through the sacrifice of Jesus. Israel, through the Passover, remembered annually in a special way their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage. Later, as Jesus effected

the greater deliverance, the Passover remembrance was superseded by the Memorial instituted by Jesus—“*This do in remembrance of Me*”.

It is not possible by mere words to prepare anyone to observe our Lord's injunction: only Christian *experience* can whet the appetite for such spiritual observance. If we have not come to know the Lord personally and individually through the verities of his word, believed in and acted upon, then the Lord's table can provide no satisfying fare, but if we have learned to appreciate the great ransom sacrifice on our behalf, and have entered into the Divine service as a result, then at the Lord's table we will find communion sweet. Jesus took bread, gave thanks, brake it and gave to the disciples saying, “Take, eat, this represents my body broken for you.” Upon what do our minds dwell as we take and eat the bread? Not the wafer in our mouth, but the body that was broken that night—and not merely that night. It was consummated that night, but it had steadily been “broken” for the whole three and a half years of his ministry: “*My flesh I will give for the life of the world.*” He took the cup, gave thanks and invited his disciples to drink, saying “*This is my blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*” The bread and the cup, represented the complete sacrifice to atone for the sins of the whole world. The flesh of our Lord was daily put to death. He came not to be ministered unto, but *to minister* and to give his life a ransom for all. He thought not of his own interest, but of the interests of others, and above all, the will of his heavenly Father—“*Not my will, but thine, be done.*”

For as long as it was the will of his Father that his body should continue to be broken, his life was preserved. Whole nights spent on the mountains in prayer without physical rest, days of great privation, often reduced him to weariness. The powers that be sought to slay him, but until his hour was come no power formed against him could prosper. In the Father's plan there was a pre-arranged period during which his body should be broken and his flesh expended. Nothing could interfere, except it be the Son's own choice.

Said Pilate, “*Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee?*” Replied Jesus, “*Thou couldst have no power at all except that it were given thee from above.*” We read of him in

John 18.4; Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth . . . continually offering his body to be broken.

At last in the Father's programme, it was time for blood to flow. "*Jesus, knowing that his hour was come . . .*" He had submitted to his body being broken for three and a half years, but all the time conscious of his Father's protecting care and supervision. Now the consummation of his sacrifice was at hand—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Before our Lord lay the betrayal, the arrest, the trial with its mockery and humiliation, then death amid the ignominy of the cross. These physical sufferings alone made an anguish that was terrible to endure. Another element of our Lord's suffering was the falsity of the human hearts about him. There was the traitorous kiss of Judas, the sad denial of Peter, the flight and desertion of the other disciples, the rejection and crucifixion by the people he had come to save. It could be safely assumed our Lord had meditated well upon the twenty-second psalm which so fully portrays his earthly sufferings, and the words of the first verse were his expression in the hour of his extremity:—"My God, why hast thou forsaken me." So at last, body broken, flesh expended, and blood spilt, the sacrifice was complete.

"This do in remembrance of Me." Why?

Is it merely to recall our Saviour's great sacrifice for ourselves and all men, that we may be stimulated to appreciate it anew at this season, the anniversary of its consummation? Undoubtedly that is one purpose. But is it all? Have we not been brought clearly to see, by the aid of the Spirit's power, that those who during this Age accepted Jesus' sacrifice have been privileged to become members of his body. Does not the Scripture reveal that the Church will one day rule *with Christ* in his Kingdom? And does it not just as clearly reveal conditions to be fulfilled? If we suffer with him, we will reign with him. "*Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?*", was the question asked of one who sought the kingdom position with Christ. "*In this world ye shall have tribulation. If they have persecuted Me, they will persecute you also.*" If during this age any are going to be associated with Jesus, their bodies are going to be broken too. Not that further sacrifice for sin is required,

but that we may taste of his experiences—"filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ."

None will question that consecration spells service, and Christian service spells "broken bodies",—expended flesh. He that will save his life in this world shall lose it, but he who loses it (expends it in Divine service made possible through Christ's sacrifice) will find it (in the Kingdom by and by). We are always "*bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus . . .*" (2 Cor. 4. 8-10), and like Jesus our Head, as our bodies are being "broken" we are conscious of our Father's protection—the Christian is immortal until his work on earth is done. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed (Lam. 3.22). He is wonderfully good to us in all our ways, giving us the strength we need in all the buffeting experiences against the world, the flesh and the devil. "*Far from my home on life's rough way. Oh teach me from my heart to say, Thy will be done*".

Soon, like our Lord and head, our life of service will be consummated. While blood flows through our veins the Heavenly Father will keep us faithful to the end. The end is yet before us—we have not yet resisted *unto blood* . . . Not yet (Heb. 12.4). But the implication is clear that we are required to do so, therefore—"Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12.3). This is of the closest relation to the admonition we dwell upon at this season of the year—"Do this in remembrance of Me." By appreciating our Lord's earthly experiences we find a strength which helps not to grow weary and faint, but humbly press on in the Narrow Way. All difficulties can be faced: There is no problem that cannot be solved, by remembering our Lord's earthly experiences and the manner in which He met them. Let a man examine himself as he eats the bread and drinks the cup. Have we elected to follow him faithful unto death.? If that is not our desire we eat and drink unworthily. May the remembrance of our Lord at this season be one that lingers with us throughout the year, helping to provide the strength that enables us to win victories, and to be numbered with the overcomers at last who will eat and drink it *new* with him in the Kingdom.

"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*

THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 2. The Storm

It is an interesting fact that the only two stories of the sea contained in the Bible—one in the Old Testament and one in the New—are each concerned with the same locality and both tell of Divine intervention for the salvation of the mariners. In both cases a great storm threatened to engulf all; in both cases not a life was lost. The narrative of Paul's shipwreck on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27), parallels that of Jonah's adventure, except that Paul's ship was wrecked, whilst Jonah's apparently got back safely to port.

"But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken" (verse 4).

The exactitude of the words used enables us to reconstruct the scene with great accuracy. The prevailing wind in the Eastern Mediterranean, in springtime, the season when the ancient long-distance ships commenced their voyages, is E.N.E., blowing away from the land and speeding the ships on their way. Climatic conditions on the mainland sometimes cause this wind to increase to a veritable gale, blowing down from the mountains of Asia. If this gale meets a hot south wind coming up from the African coast the result is a raging whirlwind over the sea. This is the "*tempestuous wind, called Euryclydon*" of Acts 27. 14, which caught and eventually wrecked Paul's ship nearly a thousand years later. (This same wind in the Mediterranean is today called the "Levanter" and behaves in precisely the same way, a striking testimony to the accuracy of the Bible narratives.) The word translated "tempest" in this fourth verse is one which means a whirlwind, and the Greek equivalent has given us our English word "typhoon". The expression "was like to be broken" is literally "to be shattered to pieces." The tremendous strain on the ship's structure by this terrific wind pressure upon the great sail and tall mast tended to strain the ship's timbers and cause her to go to pieces. The sailors would at once take the regular precaution against this threatened disaster by passing stout ropes over the bows, sliding them under the ship and securing them round the hull. This is the meaning of the expression in Acts 27. 17, "*they used helps, undergirding the ship*"; for the Alexandrian corn-ship on which Paul travelled would have been a very similar vessel to the "ship

of Tarshish" on which Jonah had embarked.

The next verse indicates that disaster had overtaken the vessel, for the mariners (the "ocean-sailors", or general crew of the ship) are found calling upon their gods for succour and throwing the cargo overboard in order to lighten the vessel. That Phœnicians should dispose of their precious goods in this salutary fashion indicates a definitely serious state of affairs. Since in verse 13 it appears that the ship's only hope lay with the rowers, who "*rowed hard to bring it to the land*", it is probable that the mainsail had been blown to ribbons by the wind, if indeed the mainmast had not gone and taken the sail with it.

So one might imagine the whirling clouds in the dark sky above, the wind roaring and screaming through what was left of the ship's rigging, the great sail in tatters billowing and sweeping from side to side to the danger of every man on deck, the vessel itself wallowing helplessly in the raging seas, pitching and tossing as if in its death agony and threatening to capsize at any moment. Below deck the rowers strained with their oars while up above the steersman laboured to keep the ship head-on to the wind, and the captain's hoarse voice spurred the men to renewed efforts as they jettisoned the cargo to lighten the vessel and enable it the more easily to ride the towering waves.

Amidst all this clamour and confusion, Jonah lay deep down in the ship, fast asleep. This was not the uneasy tossing of a man haunted by a troubled conscience; sleep under such circumstances must surely have been the deep slumber of one who had made his resolve, even though at great personal sacrifice, and had sought relief from his grief and heartache in the land of forgetfulness.

"What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The shipmaster (*rab chobel*—chief rope-man—probably the captain of the vessel) had descended into the "sides of the ship"—a technical term meaning the interior, or "below deck"—to seek out the sleeper. Perhaps he had been missed at a time when all had been summoned to assist in working for the vessel's safety. At any rate, Jonah was admonished to add his prayers to those of his fellows in distress. Perhaps his God could

succeed where others failed or would look with greater favour on his devotee than the other gods did upon theirs. The captain did not seem to be too sanguine—probably he had been in such storms before and found himself left to extricate himself and his ship by his own skilful seamanship—but still, any way of escape was worth trying.

It would seem that Jonah had no opportunity to call upon his God, for as soon as he set foot upon deck he found himself in the middle of an exciting and probably badly frightened crowd of men intent on discovering the cause of their calamity. The sailors were evidently no longer attributing this storm to natural causes; with the superstition of their kind and indeed in line with the common state of mind in those days, they had decided that someone among their number had incurred the wrath of one of the gods and that he was being pursued by this form of vengeance. It became a matter of necessity to find out the guilty man.

"And they said every man to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is come upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah" (verse 7).

The casting of lots was resorted to in ancient times as a means of determining the answer of Heaven to a specific question. The "lots" usually consisted of two small tabs of wood or metal, one white and one black. The scene can be imagined; the gale shrieking its violence and the ship shuddering and plunging like a mad thing, the rowers pulling hard at their oars and the steersman at his paddles, and an excited group on the deck oblivious to all but the matter in hand. The two lots were in the bag and the first cast was to be between the captain and the crew. The captain strode forward, put his hand into the bag and withdrew it. One of the crew stepped out and did likewise. The two men opened their hands and all crowded round to look. The mariner held the black lot!

Once again the process was repeated, between the crew and the passengers. This time one of the passengers held the black lot. So, eventually, the choice lay between one other man—and Jonah. The gambling instincts of the sailors would by now have been thoroughly aroused and a close circle formed around the two men facing each other over the bag. Who would draw the black tab?

"And the lot fell upon Jonah!"

"Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this

evil be upon us?—What is thine occupation?—Whence comest thou?—What is thy country? Of what people art thou?"

The excited questions rained upon him from all sides. Customary discipline was completely laid aside; the paramount need was to ascertain who this man was, what he had done to offend his God, and how that God could be appeased: and there was no time to be lost.

The "critics" object that these questions are ungrammatical and illogical, and not to be taken as a record of an actual occurrence. A most telling comment on this attitude has been made by one student of the Book of Jonah in the words. "That a mob of excited and angry sailors gathered round Jonah and feeling themselves in danger of being drowned and of losing their ship through his fault should, one put one question, and another another, not in strict logical sequence and not expressed in accurate literary grammar, is a difficulty that could hardly have occurred to anyone but a professor who had, perhaps, never had any experience of a great storm at sea". Sailors are not the most grammatical or logical of men even at their best; and these men were not at their best.

And so, at last, Jonah was forced into full and frank avowal of that faith which was in him all the time, but had been thwarted and suppressed by the specious arguments of worldly reasoning. He had been a greatly honoured prophet of God; his words had been received with respect away in Galilee before his ignominious flight; and we know that his prophecies came true (2 Kings 14. 25). But he had allowed what we would call the reasoning of the natural mind to take priority over the leading of the Spirit, and in consequence, instead of going on in his prophetic office to even greater works of service for his God, he found himself face to face with complete disaster, and—worse still—he had involved other and innocent men in his ruin. In this crisis the true nature of the man comes to the top. The worldly wisdom with all its pretence falls away and he takes his stand, whatever the consequences, upon the only foundation left to him—his relationship to his God. *"I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land"* (verse 9).

This is the great turning point in Jonah's life. Before this declaration, he had been an apostate, a renegade, running away from God

and planning for himself. Now he turns and puts himself into God's hands, announcing his allegiance and loyalty in no unmistakable terms. We can lay great stress on that expression, "the God of heaven". The storm had come from heaven; it was raging in the air; and the mariners now had no doubt that it had been sent by the God of heaven, to pursue and overtake a guilty devotee. Jonah signed his own death-warrant in avowing himself a servant of this mighty God: there was no question now but that he, and he alone, was responsible for the calamity that had overtaken the vessel.

So much is evident from the mariners' horror stricken query in verse 10, which, correctly rendered, is "What is this that thou hast done?" (The Hebrew is the same as in Gen. 3. 13, where God says to Eve, "What is this that thou hast done," and as in Gen. 12. 18. It implies a recognition of the serious nature of the action that has been taken and a bringing it home to the offender.) These sailors, Gentiles, heathens, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, looked askance at this man who had so defied his God and disobeyed his command.

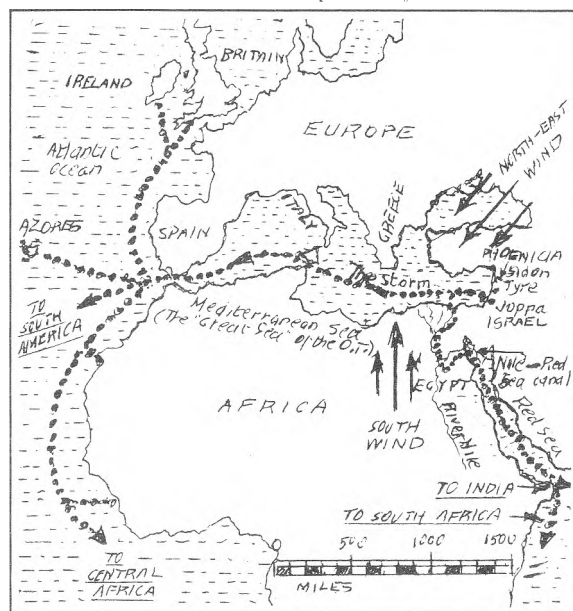
These sailors probably had good reason, aside from the evidence of the storm, to believe in the power of the Hebrew's God. The scene on Mount Carmel, when God sent down fire from heaven upon the sacrifice, and Elijah slew the priests of Baal, was probably not more than a generation in the past, and these Phœnicians, whose home towns of Tyre and Sidon lay so near to Carmel, must have been quite familiar with the story. Now that Jonah had told them he was fleeing from this same Jehovah, they had good reason to be afraid.

Now what was to be done? That was the question uppermost in their minds. It is a testimony to Jonah's evident sincerity of repentance at this stage that the sailors should ask his advice. They were apparently assured that he, a prophet of Jehovah, would give them right counsel irrespective of the consequences to himself. For Jonah, too, the issue was no less clear. To what extent he received guidance from above at this point we do not know; we only know that without any hesitation he instructed the sailors to cast him overboard into the raging sea. Only thus could their lives be saved.

It is to their credit that they did all they could to avert this drastic remedy. The rowers ploughed their oars through the water in the vain endeavour to bring the ship to land. The

effort was futile; they were fighting against God, and no man can do that and be victorious. They realised at length that it must be Jonah's life or theirs. The God of the Hebrews had them at his mercy.

Now here we have the supreme act in this drama of the sea. These pagans with one accord came before God in prayer, acknowledging his almighty power and beseeching forgiveness. "Who hath resisted his will?" asked Paul on a much later occasion. These men must have felt like that. "We beseech thee, O Jehovah, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's



VOYAGES OF PHŒNICIAN MERCHANT SHIPS
Time of Jonah

life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee" (verse 14). A saddening reflection it is that Jonah's own countrymen, throughout their long history, hesitated not to lay hands upon their own prophets and put them to death. "Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted?" asked Stephen at his trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7. 52) And yet these rude, uncultured men strove with might and main to avoid laying violent hands upon this man who by his own confession, had brought them all into dire peril. They respected his prophetic office more than did the people to whom the prophets were sent.

"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging" (verse 15). The same Divine intervention that

had caused the storm to strike the vessel at the commencement of its voyage now caused the same storm to cease suddenly. The sailors believed that the God of heaven had personally intervened to deliver them; and they were right. The effect upon their minds is shown by the next verse. They were profoundly impressed, and delayed not to offer sacrifice and make vows.

The sacrifice would probably be of slain beasts, offered there and then upon the vessel. These ships, setting out on voyages which occupied several months, usually carried a number of living animals—chiefly sheep—to be slain *en route* to provide food for the crew. Tinned meat and refrigerators were unknown in those days! There would be the necessary

sacrifices at hand, therefore, and vows that more opulent and appropriate ones would be offered directly the adventurers set foot upon shore again. So the battered vessel came limping back to Joppa bearing a company of subdued and thoughtful men. Out there, in the raging and tumult of the storm, they had come face to face with God; perhaps life was never quite the same for them afterwards. It must have been an Israelite who had voyaged in a Phœnician ship who first suggested those stirring words to the Psalmist: *"Those that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep."*

(To be continued)

INSTRUCTED SCRIBES

"Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure" (treasury, internal room in which the family valuables were kept) *"things new and old."*

Coming as it does in the conclusion to the parable of the wheat and the tares, declared by Jesus to have its application at the end of this world-age and the inception of the Millennial Kingdom, this word has considerable significance. Things new and things old; a happy combination of old things which are valuable and must be conserved, and new things which now have but recently been acquired. In this setting these things are the truths respecting both the sowing and growth of the seed of the Gospel during the Age, and the harvest of some at the end of the Age when the final witness is given preparatory to the establishment of the Divine Kingdom on earth. It was not therefore an idle remark; it enshrined a fundamental truth, that the "instructed scribe", at whatever time during the progress of the Age, must expect to hold and preserve those fundamental truths which were the heritage of the Church from the beginning, and at the same time expect to discern new truths, or enhanced understanding of truths formerly held but now illumined by the progress of events. These are things which our Lord called "signs of the times." He did reprove some of the Pharisees on this score for their failure to observe the significance and

trend of outward events in their own day and the connection these had with the foreviews of their ancient prophets. *"Ye can discern the face of the sky"* He accused them *"but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"* (Matt. 16. 13). Their failure was terribly revealed forty years later when the Romans desolated Judea and invested the city, when one solitary man during the entire three years siege went about the city proclaiming "woe to this city, woe to this people"; neither indifference nor maltreatment persuading him to desist. And when, the Romans, having temporarily lifted the siege, they thought the threat was ended and gave themselves up to feasting and rioting, the besiegers came back and captured the city, sending the inhabitants into slavery and scattering the Jews among all nations, the prediction came terribly true.

So must it be at the end of this Age. The instructed scribe knows what is coming because he reads aright the signs of the times. A wise old elder of three generations ago was fond of saying "the Lord has given us the signs of the times but He has not given us the times of the signs." And how right he was. These things are derived from observation of the world around us and the relevance of the affairs of that world to the clear foreviews of the Scriptures. How should we know when the time of the end of the Age is due, asked the disciples of Jesus in Matt. 24. Clear and ambiguous came the answer. When you see certain things happening

in the world in conjunction with each other, then you will know that the end is at hand. You will be living in that period which He himself described as "the days of the Son of Man". "Then know" He said "*that the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". Within the ambit of these signs will reside the evidence that the powers of Heaven, the long promised Advent of the Lord himself, is taking place. And the accompanying injunction was to go into all the world to proclaim to all and sundry that the time had come. "*This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness and then shall the end come.*" (Matt. 24. 14).

The editorial in a recent issue of a contemporary journal utters a word of warning in this connection. "*There is danger in grabbing at events and hoping they fit the prophecies. Let us watch soberly as in 1 Thess. 5.6.*" "Grabbing at events" may not be a very elegant expression but it does express a vital truth. Ofttimes the most fanciful of claimed "fulfilments" are attached to current world events, only to be nullified when the passage of time proves them to be unjustified. Nevertheless this does not vitiate the purpose and practice of predictive prophecy. The Scriptures are full of examples of pious men of old who pondered and considered the significance of current events in their own day and were proved to have been rightly guided. Daniel "*understood by books the number of the years*" when the Lord would fulfil his promise to deliver his people from their captivity; three years later he saw the reality. John the Apostle on Patmos was given a revelation of "things which must shortly come to pass" which he recorded in a series of metaphorical visions which could only be understood by those thoroughly familiar with the Old Testament records upon which they were based—records unknown to the enemies of the Church in that day and largely unknown to its enemies in this. And the reference to 1 Thess. 5. 6 is particularly apt, for in that passage Paul stresses his confidence that his readers, because they were watchful, were conscious of the significance of the times in which they lived whilst all others were not. They are children of the light, of the day, whereas the others are of night, of darkness, asleep. The people in captivity with Ezekiel had lost faith in the promised future deliverance. "*The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth*" they said. Came the word of the Lord to them through the prophet "*say unto them, the days are at hand, and the effect of*

every vision". "*In your days*" (not later on, in prospect) said the Lord "*I will perform it*" and He did!

A significant expression in Luke 12 deserves notice in this connection. The admonition to the watchful servants that they must be ready for their Lord to arrive home to find them expecting him and will in consequence gird himself and serve them with their meal implies a sense in which the coming is associated with the present experience of the Church. In no sense can our Lord be pictured as *serving* his own servants in the eternal state. This would seem to imply a present experience at the end but before the full revelation to all men which is the outward expression of the Advent. The servants partake of a feast ministered by the Lord which becomes perhaps the first manifestation of the Advent and this, perhaps, is the feast of the fuller understanding of the Divine Plan which is due at the end of the Age, as was promised to the prophet Habakkuk "*The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie*" (Hab. 2. 3). The word "cometh" in the A.V. of Luke 12. 36-37, is not explicit enough; it is in the aorist tense which denotes a present and continuing action, so that "having come" is nearer the sense. He comes to serve them as with a meal before He takes them to be with him in the celestial state and so be revealed with them at his open revelation, the final aspect of his coming.

But here we touch upon matters appertaining to what may be termed the "laws" of the celestial world and because of our physical limitations we must needs picture these in largely human terms. We can no longer think, as did our forebears of the 16th century, of our Lord travelling through space from some distant point in our universe to arrive here, as it were, "spot on time." We have to reconcile as best we can what we know as the "omnipresence" of our Lord since his resurrection (Eph) "*to fill all things*"; (*pleroma*, to occupy the full space completely, so that He is as it were everywhere at the same time, with a sense in which He comes and is present at a point of time when He was not so present previously. Mankind in general will know of that presence only by the physical senses, "*every eye shall see him*"). The watchers, the instructed scribes, will discern it, as our Lord told them they would, by the signs of the times, by world events, and this is where they become "instructed scribes".

THE QUESTION BOX

Q. The May/June issue of the "Monthly" under title of "Seven Times of Nebuchadnezzar" referred to the Sumerian/Babylonian calendar year as comprising twelve months of thirty days each followed by five "non-days" at the end to comprise 365. The July/August issue under "The Lunar Month in Prophecy" gave a period of 360 days as the "prophetic year". The latter article stated that this "prophetic year" did not seem to rest on a very sure foundation. Does this not render the two articles mutually inconsistent?

* * *

A. Not really. The 360 days and five "non-days" is nothing to do with Biblical "prophetic" years, which are expressed by the Hebrew word "yom", usually meaning a twenty-four hour day but sometimes longer periods, such as the six creative days, the day when the Lord made heaven and earth, the day of the Lord, and so on. The Babylonian calendar, up to about 1500 B.C., unlike Israel's, was not based on the length of the lunar month of 29½ days but on the apparent passage of the sun across the twelve signs of the zodiac of slightly above thirty days each, this for convenience being expressed as twelve months of thirty days plus the balance of five days, called "non-days". The Israel calendar had twelve months of alternately 29 and 30 days each, totalling 354, but every three years or so they added an extra month, Ve-adar, at the end, to make up an average of 365. That is why the statement is made that the lunar year of either 354 or 360 days in interpreting prophetic periods does not rest on a very sure foundation. Every ancient nation made its year one of 365 days by one means or another. Only the Muslim world measures time by the moon. In short, the ancient nations knew only of one year, the solar year measured by the passage of the earth round the sun. Any other method brings the year out of step with the seasons in a short time and has to be adjusted.

There is no witness of the Christian Church like its own unity. Jesus, knowing this, and realising how divided his followers were, prayed

Q. Dan. 12. 4. In "the Time of the End, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". Does this refer to the knowledge of God and his ways or to general knowledge of human and terrestrial matters?

* * *

A. Commentators have applied these words to the unprecedented increase of travel and of knowledge in every department of human affairs, characteristic of the "Time of the End". This text led Sir Isaac Newton in the 17th century to predict that men would one day be able to travel at the "amazing speed" of sixty miles an hour. (Horses were the fastest means of locomotion in his day!) The French philosopher Voltaire poured scorn upon him and said he must be getting into his dotage. Whilst such an increase of travel and knowledge has come to pass and is a sign of the "Time of the End", it is possible that the revealing angel was also talking about knowledge of Divine things. The expression "run to and fro", in addition to its literal meaning, was also used metaphorically to define running through a book, to examine a book thoroughly. In this sense the Lord spoke to Habakkuk—at much the same time as to Daniel—telling him to "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it" (Hab. 2. 2), i.e.; that he may understand it thoroughly. In this sense the angel's words to Daniel could well mean that a feature of the Time of the End would be the giving of increased attention to the Divine revelation and a clearer understanding of the Divine purpose. This has certainly been true of the past two centuries even though a lesser number of people are sufficiently interested to give themselves to its study. For those who do, there is recompense in a sane and balanced view of what God is now doing and will do in the face of rapidly disintegrating world conditions.

earnestly to his Father "That they may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."
(John 17.21)

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

14. The Valley of the Mountain

"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle" (ch. 14. 3).

This is the climax, this the farthest limit of the powers of this world. At this point God breaks through into human history, and for the first time, perhaps, since the days of Jehoshaphat, the armed forces of earth come up against a power which is from heaven, and because it is from heaven cannot be resisted. The Lord comes forth to war, as He did do several times in Israel's national history, but this time He comes forth not only for the deliverance of the Holy Nation from its immediate enemies, but the deliverance of all mankind from the great enemy. Here, at this time, the dominion of evil is to be overthrown and in its place instituted an order of things *"wherein dwelleth righteousness"*.

How does the Lord go forth and with what weapons does He fight? There are not wanting expositors who visualise a sanguinary combat in which all the instruments of devilry devised by man are used on both sides, and a victory distinguished by masses of dead and wounded strewn over a blood-soaked land. It is true that many of the prophetic foreviews of this final conflict are couched in such terms but this is because men, accustomed to such scenes, can only visualise a conflict in which one side gains the victory and the other suffers defeat in some such manner. These foreviews must be taken as pictures illustrating the principles involved: the issues to be decided in this battle are greater by far than can be resolved by the indiscriminate slaughter of human beings, most of whom are still so ignorant of the eternal verities that, like the men of Nineveh in Jonah's time, they cannot *"discern between their right hand and their left hand"*. Just as Jesus said *"the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save them"* so now, when God is pictured as descending upon the Mount of Olives amid awesome cataclysms of Nature it is not that He might destroy men, opposed to his righteousness and unregenerate as they are, but that He might destroy their capacity for accomplishing their evil designs and reduce them to a condition of submissiveness before him, that He might then *"withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man"* (Job 33. 17). It must be expected therefore that

the actual concrete actions and events by means of which the prophecy is to be accomplished can be only imperfectly visualised, involved as they are with celestial powers the nature of which is outside our ken. The natural picture presented by Zechariah, the descent, the earthquake, the battle and so on, is to be regarded as a picture, a painting which, when regarded and considered, conveys a message; it is the message that is of importance.

Perhaps the cardinal principle to be built into a satisfactory understanding of this passage is that which was illustrated on those previous occasions when Israel, exercising faith, was delivered in the face of apparently hopeless odds. *"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord"* said Moses just before the Red Sea crossing. *"The Egyptians whom you have seen today, ye shall see them no more again for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace"* (Exod. 13. 14-15). The people obeying, in faith stepped down into the sea-bed and were delivered. *"Be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him"* was good King Hezekiah's exhortation to his people at the time of the siege. *"With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah"* (2 Chron. 32. 7-8). And in that night the host of the armies of Assyria melted away. When the forces of Moab and Ammon and Edom invaded Judah, to cut them off from being a people, *"all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives and their children"* while King Jehoshaphat, standing in the Temple court, lifted up his voice to God *"we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee"* (2 Chron. 20. 12-13); their faith was vindicated and Judah was saved. So in this, the greatest and final deliverance, the situation that is pictured is one in which the cleansed and dedicated Nation manifests serene confidence as to the outcome, the enemy surrounds the land with every expectation of an easy victory; the armies of heaven advance to the battle and in an awe-inspiring display of other-worldly power frustrate the invaders' purpose and reduce their armed might to nothingness.

The features which Zechariah saw in his prophetic vision are well known. The people, in the city, waiting. The invaders, having already taken captive and sent into exile the faint-hearted and apostates from among the people, preparing to follow up their advantage. Only the men of faith remain and it seems that even for them there is now no hope. Perhaps they have all gathered in the Temple courts as did their predecessors in the days of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah to pray for deliverance, the while the enemy is already rifling the houses. And at that moment besieged and besiegers alike look up into the skies and behold a stupendous sight; God Most High, the Ancient of Days, descending, accompanied by his attendants and holy ones, descending upon the Mount of Olives, his feet touching the sacred soil, a mighty earthquake, the Mount cloven in two, a deep chasm from west to east separating the mountain into two parts, that great multitude of exultant foes halting in their tracks as they move in for the kill, finding their eyes being burned out of their sockets by the dazzling radiance, their tongues stilled and destroyed by the terror and thunder of the earthquake, their bodies maimed and destroyed as the earth heaves and opens and swallows them up; a blind unreasoning panic seizes them and they turn each against other, the blind, the dumb and the maimed until, at the end, there are none left. The mountainous districts surrounding Jerusalem which, from time immemorial, had looked down upon the city from their superior height of several hundreds of feet, are broken up by the earthquake and sink down to form a low-lying plain like the plain of Jordan, and within that broken up terrain is buried for ever the remains of the host that had defied the living God. In the centre of the plain stands, proudly, Jerusalem upon her hills, exalted "*above the tops of the mountains*". And so the Nation is saved, and so perish all the enemies of the Lord. That is the picture as drawn in verses 4-15 of Zechariah's 14th chapter. How should it be interpreted?

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives . . . and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half of it toward the south" (ch. 14. 4).

This is an earthquake; but is it a literal or a

metaphorical earthquake? It is a very common practice among prophetic students to interpret the whole of this passage upon a literal basis. Geologically, there is nothing against the possibility. The entire land is in an earthquake zone which runs up from the Red Sea and into Galilee and Syria. Earthquakes have occurred there a goodly number of times in history and Zechariah refers to one such in his very next verse. There is nothing in the prophetic description from verse 4 to 11 which is physically—geologically—incapable of realisation. That does not demand, of course, that the prophecy is intended to have such literal fulfilment; the possibility that this is a figurative use of language, in line with practically the whole of Zechariah's prophecy, to picture happenings and processes of a more fundamental nature and involving greater issues, must also be considered. It could also be argued that the prophecy has a dual function, possessing literal and figurative elements. But it has to be shewn that the interpretation suggested has some valid place and purpose in the outworking of the plan, that it contributes towards the attainment of the predetermined end, which in this case is the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and this will be the endeavour here.

The descent of the Lord upon the Mount of Olives obviously marks the moment of Divine intervention in earth's affairs. This is true whether the descent is literal, the Deity in visible human form taking his stance upon the mountain top, or figurative. This same theme is dwelt upon elsewhere. "*The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake*" says Joel (Joel 3. 16). "*The Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth, and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft*" is Micah's contribution (Micah 1. 3) although here the prophet is talking about Divine judgment imminent upon Israel and Judah of his own day. In like fashion Nahum tells of coming judgment upon Assyria: "*The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries . . . the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence*" (Nahum 1. 5). In these latter two instances the language is figurative; history shews that. Likewise the variety of allusions in the Old Testament to the event now under consideration directs the conclusion that the language here is figurative

also. In Joel the Lord "roars out of Zion"—Jerusalem. In Daniel 7 He appears on a heavenly throne to conduct the Last Assize and invest the Son of Man with the rulership of earth. In the apocryphal Book of Enoch, quoted by Jude, (Jude 14-15) and possibly enshrining some very ancient prophecy not otherwise included in the canonical books, the place of descent is said to be Sinai, "*The Holy Great One will come forth from his dwelling, and the eternal God will dwell upon the earth, on Mount Sinai, and appear in the strength of his might from the heavens . . . and the high mountains shall be shaken and the high hills shall be made low, and the earth shall be rent in sunder . . . and behold, he cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all . . .*" (Enoch 1. 3-9). In any case this whole picture has to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament revelation that it is Christ the Son who comes in person to the earth at this time to deliver Israel and subdue all evil; since this deliverance is but one of the sequence of events occupying the *Parousia*, his presence, the descent on the Mount of Olives becomes the symbol of the first outward evidence that his Presence is an accomplished fact. Up to that point of time many will have continued to say "*where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as from the beginning of creation*" (2 Pet. 3. 4). Beyond that point, all will realise the fact, and believe.

The impact of that intervention upon men, and its consequences upon the enemy, is likened to an earthquake. At the coming of the Lord the earth will quake, the heavens pass away, the sun and the moon become dark, the stars cease to shine, the works of man be burned up—all these symbols are used to describe the disintegration and utter destruction of man's world, which in this context is synonymous with evil things, because man's world is predominately evil. A new world is to follow in which all the good that has survived—for such good as does exist in this present world, because good is lasting, will survive—will blossom forth into greater good under the more favourable conditions of that world. So Zechariah tells of a great earthquake which splits the Mount of Olives into northern and southern parts with a valley between. Geographically that valley, running east-west, would be exactly opposite the East Gate of the Temple; the idea is irresistible that the prophecy intends some notice to be taken

of that fact.

The succeeding verse has given translators—and expositors—a great deal of trouble. As it appears in the A.V. the meaning is very obscure. Speaking of this valley the verse says "*ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah King of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*" (ch. 14. 5). When the descent and the earthquake are held to be literal it is said that the citizens of Jerusalem will flee into this valley for protection and shelter—ignoring the fact that people do not run toward the site of an earthquake for safety but away from it. In any case the text, as with all such obscure passages, needs closer examination before interpreting. The preposition "to" is in italics, having been supplied by the A.V. translators because there is no preposition in the Hebrew, which should read in the A.V. "ye shall flee the valley" i.e. away from it and not into it.

The word *Azal* has been put in as a place name but no such place in the district is known. Properly, the word is *el-atsal* and some expositors have suggested that this may be intended for the *Bet-ha-etsal* of Micah 1. 11 which, say some hopefully, was perhaps to the east of the Mount of Olives. In fact this place was near Beer-Sheba, twenty-five miles in the other direction, so that geographically this could not have been intended.

The mention of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah should next be investigated. Zechariah refers to this as though it was a well known event to the people of his day even although it was by then over two centuries in the past. No account of this earthquake is given in Biblical history, the only other allusion being by the prophet Amos, who says he began his prophetic ministry in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam, king of Israel, "*two years before the earthquake*" (Amos 1. 1). It was evidently a happening which made a deep impression and of which the memory was long lasting. Fortunately Josephus gives an account of it; his account reveals the similarities which led Zechariah to use it as an illustration in this later picture of Divine intervention and Divine judgment. It will be remembered that the books of Kings and Chronicles relate how Uzziah arrogated to himself the priestly duty of offering incense in the Temple, for which

sacrilege he was smitten with leprosy. Josephus declares that the earthquake came as Divine judgment for the act. He says (Ant. 9. 10. 4). *"Uzziah was corrupted in his mind by pride . . . accordingly, when a general festival was to be celebrated, he put on the holy garment and went into the temple to offer incense to God upon the golden altar, which he was prohibited to do by Azariah the High Priest . . . and when they cried out that he must go out of the temple, he was wrath at them and threatened to kill them. In the meantime a great earthquake shook the ground, and a rent was made in the temple, and the bright rays of the sun shone through it, and fell upon the king's face, insomuch that the leprosy seized upon him immediately; and before the city, at a place called Eroge, half the mountain broke off from the rest on the west, and rolled itself four stadia (about half a mile) and stood still at the east mountain, till the roads, as well as the king's gardens, were blocked by the obstruction"*. The source of Josephus' information is unknown and no independent check on its veracity is possible; physically however, the account is consistent with the topography of Jerusalem. His "east mountain" is the Mount of Olives; the "west mountain", the heights of Ophel at the south-eastern corner of the city half a mile away, on the slopes of which were the "king's gardens", and at the foot, the "fountain of the fowler" called En-rogel, the "Eroge" of his account. It would appear that part of Ophel collapsed and fell four hundred feet into the valley separating it from the Mount of Olives and blocked the valley besides burying the king's gardens. Such a line of cleavage, extended northward, would intersect the Temple area and account for the effect noted by Josephus.

With this background story in mind attention can be turned back to verse 5. The first important factor to notice is the expression "ye shall flee", appearing twice in the verse. A great many ancient authorities adopt a term meaning "to be blocked up" in lieu of this expression and this rendering, which is also that of the Septuagint, has been adopted by modern translators such as the R.S.V., Moffatt and Rotherham. The determining word in the original Hebrew, which was without vowels, is *ynstm*, which is pointed in some manuscripts as *yenastem*, "ye shall flee", and in others as *yenistam*, "shall be blocked up". The expression in the A.V. "*shall reach unto Azal*", critically

rendered, means to turn toward each other so as to touch or join together. Thus the sense of this verse is not that of anyone fleeing, either into or away from the valley, but of the valley itself being closed or blocked up. This is where the analogy of Uzziah's earthquake holds good; Josephus says that the valley was blocked by the earthquake. So the best translation of this verse, supported by the LXX and the modern translators mentioned, would read "and the valley of the mountains shall be blocked up, for the valley of the mountains shall close together as it was blocked up by the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah".

So far for the rendering, but what does it mean? Why should there be an earthquake, creating a valley through the centre of the Mount of Olives, if the next step is to close up that valley again? Is the solution connected with the remaining elements in the verse "*and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with him*"?

This, in fact, is the answer. This dividing of the Mount of Olives pictures not only the last event of "this present evil world" but also the first event of the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness". It pictures God, in Christ, not only coming to judgment upon the last adversaries to resist the incoming Kingdom, but also his coming in splendour to take up his dwelling with men, as realised in the Millennial Presence. And to appreciate this it is necessary to associate this vision of Zechariah with that of his predecessor Ezekiel when that prophet saw, in like manner, the glory of the Lord coming from the East to take up residence with his people.

The 43rd chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy describes how he took his stand by the East Gate of the Millennial Temple. "*And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory*". And the glory of the Lord came into the Temple by the East Gate, and a proclamation was made to the effect that the Lord was now to dwell with Israel for ever—and then the East Gate was shut, never again to be opened. The reason? "*This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut*". In figurative sense, the Lord had come, finding the gate open to receive him. He was never again to go away, for now his people were ready to accept him

and not repudiate him again. No need for another to come would ever arise, for He will be all-sufficient. So the gate would never need to be used again; it could be shut and the way closed for all time.

Now this is what Zechariah also saw. Within the limits of his vision he saw Jerusalem and its Temple, with its own East Gate fronting directly upon the Mount of Olives. He saw the enemies of Israel around the city and he knew that God was coming, not only for their overthrow but to dwell with Israel eternally. And the valley through the middle of the Mount of Olives made a passage for the God of Israel, coming from the East straight to that East Gate. That is why, when before his eyes that great chasm appeared in the Mount, and he saw also the

Lord advancing through it toward the city he cried out in ecstasy "*And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with him*".

That explains why the valley is to be blocked up. Just as in Ezekiel's vision the East Gate of his Temple was to be permanently closed after the God of Israel had passed through it into the Temple, so here, the valley is similarly to be blocked up after the God of Israel has passed through it on his way to deliver his people. The symbols used by the two prophets differ, but the principle is the same. There are yet other effects of the earthquake to be described in succeeding verses, but here at this point, the Lord comes, his holy ones with him, to deliver his people and remain with them forever.

(To be continued)

Prolific Jewish Families

Doubt is sometimes expressed as to the reliability of the genealogical tables of our Lord's ancestry preserved by Matthew and Luke on the grounds that over certain periods the number of names is so great as to demand sons being born to their fathers at an unreasonably early age. During the periods between Solomon and Josiah, for example, there were sixteen kings which averages 20 years per generation; over the same period Mary's descent from Nathan involved eighteen progenitors which averages 18 years per generation. For so many men to become fathers at such ages is said to be so unlikely as to be incredible and the account viewed with suspicion accordingly.

It is interesting therefore to note in a past issue of "*Jerusalem Post*" (23rd April 1974) in an account of the plight of Jews resident in Syria, the following remark:

"Unbearable as their situation is, it might seem less tragic if the population were an aged remnant destined soon to die out. But they are young and prolific with the boys and girls marrying between 15 and 17 and producing 10 children by the time they reach 30."

That national characteristic was evidently the same in those distant days of the monarchy; Matthew and Luke are not so suspect after all. And neither is the still older story of the apparently unbelievable increase of the Israelites in Egypt prior to the Exodus.

Holiness and Obedience

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: ye shall be unto me a holy nation" (Exod. 19. 4-6) here are God's first words to his people; He speaks of redemption and its blessings, fellowship with himself: "*Ye have seen how I brought you into myself.*" God's will is the expression of his holiness; as we do his will, we come into contact with his holiness. The link between redemption and holiness is obedience.

Obedience : not knowledge of the will of God, not even approval, not even the will to do it, but the doing of it. Knowledge, and approval, and will, must lead to action. The will of God must be done. It is not faith, and not worship, and not profession, that God here asks in the first place from his people, when He speaks of holiness: it is obedience. God's will must be *done* on earth, as in heaven. A moments reflection will make the reason of this clear to us. It is in a man's work that he manifests what he is. I may know what is good, and yet not approve it. I may approve, and yet not will it. I may in a certain sense will it, and yet be wanting in the energy, or the self sacrifice, or the power that will rouse and do the thing. Thinking is easier than willing, and willing is easier than doing. God wants his will done. This alone is obedience. In this alone it is seen whether the whole heart, with all its strength of will, has given itself over to the will, of God; whether we live it, and are ready at any sacrifice to make it our own by doing it. God has no other way for making us holy.

(Andrew Murray 1890).

ELDAD AND MEDAD

Eldad and Medad had been slaves in Egypt. Born slaves of a nation of slaves, they hardly dared hope that deliverance would come in their own lifetime. Until Moses came their way. The name of Moses had been familiar for many years to all their friends and acquaintances in the slave village which was their home. He was a great man and lived at the King's Palace, and was reputedly the son of the King's daughter. Eldad and Medad knew better; it was whispered from mouth to mouth, when the Egyptian taskmasters were looking the other way, that Moses was in reality one of themselves. Some of their own kindred had seen and spoken with his father and mother. Miriam his sister, and Aaron his brother, were slaves like themselves. There was a reason, too, for Moses being at the King's Palace. He was learning all the wisdom of the Egyptians so that one day he could lead the slaves out of their bondage into a land where they could live as free men. Eldad and Medad, young men both, straightened their backs and their eyes glowed with pride and hope as they talked about that. They had been brought up by godly parents and although very few of their fellow-slaves believed in God or had any hope that He might one day deliver, Eldad and Medad had been well instructed in the ancient stories of their ancestors and they knew of God's promise to their forefather Abraham, that after many years in Egypt He would cause them to be delivered. There was no outward evidence that the time had yet come or was anywhere near, nevertheless there were days when they hoped, and talked with brighter eyes and fast-beating hearts.

Then came the bitter disappointment when Moses left the King's Palace and disappeared—none knew where. There was talk of some trouble; an Egyptian overseer had been killed and Moses was concerned in it; no one seemed to know much about the details but one thing was definite—Moses was no longer their hoped-for champion. Eldad and Medad conversed about it at times but for the most part they kept their thoughts to themselves, even yet hoping against hope that in some wonderful way God might remember them and fulfil his promise. . . .

* * *

They had waited a long time—forty years since

the disappearance of Moses and in all that long period no sign that God either knew or cared. Eldad and Medad were no longer young men now; they had both passed their three score years and began to find the daily tale of brickmaking strangely arduous, much more so than of yore. But there were compensations. To the little circle of slaves that, unlike the majority of their fellows, refused to worship the gods of Egypt but held fast to the dim traditions of Abraham and the promise, Eldad and Medad had become pillars of strength. They still believed, strong in faith, and looked daily for the coming of the Deliverer. Somehow there was in them the workings of a Spirit, telling them that the time would not be much longer delayed . . .

* * *

He came with breathless haste, that young man, so zealous for the honour of his master and leader, the great Moses. From the centre of the camp of Israel he had run, across the level sand shimmering in the blinding glare of the noon-day sun, to where Moses stood at the gate of the Tabernacle. The seventy elders, grave, dignified sons of Israel, supremely conscious of their position of ministers to the Lord's people, made way somewhat reluctantly to give him access to the Leader. Joshua, taut and rigid in his soldier's attire, stepped forward a half pace, hand on sword, almost as if to challenge the newcomer's progress. Only Moses remained calm, unruffled.

The runner halted, panting. He was almost out of breath, but not so much that he could not turn and point, with not altogether steady finger, to the dense crowd of men and women which could be discerned, even at this distance, in the great space at the centre of the black goatskin tents. He spoke, hurriedly, his voice one in which subservience and indignation were strangely mingled, and as he spoke the enquiring eyes of the listening elders sought the face of Moses and remained fixed on him. "*Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp!*"

It was true! While the rest of the elders of Israel had gathered at the Tabernacle to hear the instructions of God at the mouth of Moses, the Divine Spirit had rested upon those two who had remained back there in the Camp and now

they were telling them of the things of God, without any mandate or permission from Moses the Leader. Disapproval showed itself on each countenance: resentment that these two men should apparently have appointed themselves to proclaim and teach the truth of God without waiting for or seeking an ordination from Moses the accepted leader of the people in things relating to their covenant with God. A whispering began, a shaking of heads; these two men were surely slighting the company of the elders, setting up their own judgment as against the judgment of the majority. This independence of thought and action ought to be stopped; the Lord surely had already shown that his favour was with the organised body of elders and the priesthood in whose care reposed the Tabernacle and all its ceremonies. What right had these two, owning responsibility to no influential company in Israel, subject to no kind of control from priest or prince, to assert for themselves the privilege of preaching to the people? Surely Moses would quickly put a stop to this incipient heresy. He had been in the mountain with God and had spoken with God and God had given him the Law which he had written with his own finger; Moses would surely very soon put these upstarts in their proper place. The elders turned towards him expectantly, still burning with indignation at this audacity. *"Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp."*

Joshua had sprung forward, his youthful features alive with fiery zeal. The hand grasping the sword twitched nervously. There was outraged loyalty and hot jealousy for his Leader's honour in his tone, as he cried impetuously "My Lord Moses, forbid them!"

The magnificent figure of Moses stood motionless, his clear eyes piercing into the distance straightly to those two dynamic forms in the middle of the crowd, moving from side to side and gesturing with hand and arm as they addressed the multitude. Long did he gaze, and slowly withdrew his eyes from viewing that distant scene to turn them upon those who now crowded around him so closely. He looked upon the runner, waiting before him, so secure in his knowledge of duty well done; upon the righteous elders, every movement of their robes betokening the quivering of outraged dignity; upon Joshua, standing there in wrathful indignation; and as he looked, the keen eyes suddenly softened, the stern lips, almost hidden by the

shaggy beard, parted in a half smile and in an indulgent, almost fatherly tone, he asked them *"Enviest thou for my sake?"* The strong hands moved suddenly in a gesture of entreaty; the fine eyes looked upward with an expression of unutterable longing. *"WOULD TO GOD"* cried the great Prophet of Israel *"WOULD TO GOD THAT ALL THE LORD'S PEOPLE WERE PROPHETS AND THAT THE LORD WOULD PUT HIS SPIRIT UPON THEM!"*



More than three thousand years have passed since that memorable day. We have not learned the lesson yet. We, many of us, still circle around our favourite leader, our favourite organisation, our favourite avenue of service, and refuse to admit to ourselves the supreme truth that God, Who has all the resources of all his creation at his command, all the heart's devotion and life's endeavour of all who have given their lives to him on which to call, is not limited to one means of expression or one channel of revelation in the world of men. The One Who "hath made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccl. 3. 11). Who has evolved the flowers and the trees, the insects and the birds, the mountains and the valleys, into a thousand different forms and has never made any one sunset exactly like another must surely be pleased to beautify his truth with the same variety of expression and diversity of ministration. The Apostle Paul tells us as much. Does he not say *"there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are diversities of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operation, but it is the same God which worketh all in all . . . all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will"* (1 Cor. 12. 4-11)? We must needs be positive in our own beliefs in Divine Truth and zealous in the discharge of the work that has been committed to our hands; that does not entitle us to assume that there can be no other acceptable service for our Lord nor that none who have not received their ordination to ministry through our own channel can share in the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. No single well can give forth all the stored waters of the earth and no one river can carry all the rainfall from the heavens; neither can any one of us comprehend, far less expound and minister, more than the veriest fraction of the accumulated treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are gathered up within

God's holy Word.

Let us then in our own service and ministry bear this great truth in mind and look with sympathetic brotherliness upon all who are serving with their talents our gracious Master. Let us seek to find true fellowship wherever the Spirit of Christ is manifest and let us, in our own allegiance to the things we ourselves have received, try to help, rather than hinder, those who are labouring in a different corner of the vineyard. The disciples tried once to restrain some who "followed not with us", and Jesus reproved them. "*Forbid them not*" He said "*for there is no man that shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me*" (Mark 9. 38-40). When Peter, more concerned about the Lord's intentions for others than for himself, asked "Lord what shall this man do?" he was told, very kindly but none the less plainly, to mind his own business and see to the execution of his own commission. "*Go thou and preach the*

gospel." So with us; we enter most into the spiritual presence of our Lord if we realise that He is conducting a great work here on earth in this our day; that to each one of us is committed some very small and yet some very definite and very important part of that work; that we individually are not permitted to view the whole work in its entirety and indeed could not do so, but that our Master has all the threads in his own strong hands and will bring all together in one harmonious pattern in his own due time. Meanwhile we do well to pray and labour for the increase of the number of those who will serve the Lord. "*Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into the harvest.*" The need is great, there is room and yet room for all who will come and serve our Lord. Would to God, let this be our prayer, would to God that *all* the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!

On tithing

The proprietary of tithing is one of the questions to which the short answer is that the Christian is not subject to the law given at Sinai but to a higher rule which embodies the spirit of the older law without holding to its letter. The Mosaic Law required that every Israelite yield one tenth of his annual increase, whether of cattle or crops, or other forms of wealth, to the Lord, by the agency of the priesthood. This was a method of acknowledging that all that they had achieved and gained came from the Lord and it was obligatory; no man could be a true son of Israel unless he paid his tithe. Inevitably the response became mechanical and the tendency with many was to feel that, having paid their tithe, their duty to God was done and they could thereafter please themselves what they did with the rest. Some, like the woman of Jesus' parable, who cast two mites into the treasury, did more. She gave "*all the living that she had*" and in so doing pointed to a deeper understanding of the principle behind tithing, which was later to find its full expression among Christians.

The propriety of tithing is, on occasion, a subject of discussion today. It sometimes extends to refinements such as whether the Christian should "tithe his income" before or after rates and taxes have been deducted. All

of this is really going back to the Mosaic Law which was given to Israel only and has nothing to do with today. Jesus gave a higher law and one that called for, not just ten percent, but complete, one hundred percent, dedication to God. In short, the Christian lives for the purposes and service of God, and all his endeavours, his abilities, his possessions, and income, are entrusted to him as a stewardship to be used according to his discretion to the glory of God. This is the difference between Christ and Moses. Each individual believer is a steward and no regulations are laid down as to the administration of his stewardship; that he must decide for himself on the basis of his knowledge of the Divine Will and the measure of his zeal for its accomplishment. St. Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16. 2) "*let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him*", for the needs of the Church. No fixed ten per cent, but each to be judged of his own contribution. When Ananias brought his offering St. Peter conceded that the disposition of the proceeds from the sale of his land was entirely within his own discretion (Acts 5. 4). This is the tithing that is incumbent upon the Christian, a considered and reverent placing of his life and all its attributes in the manner which he discerns is acceptable to God.



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hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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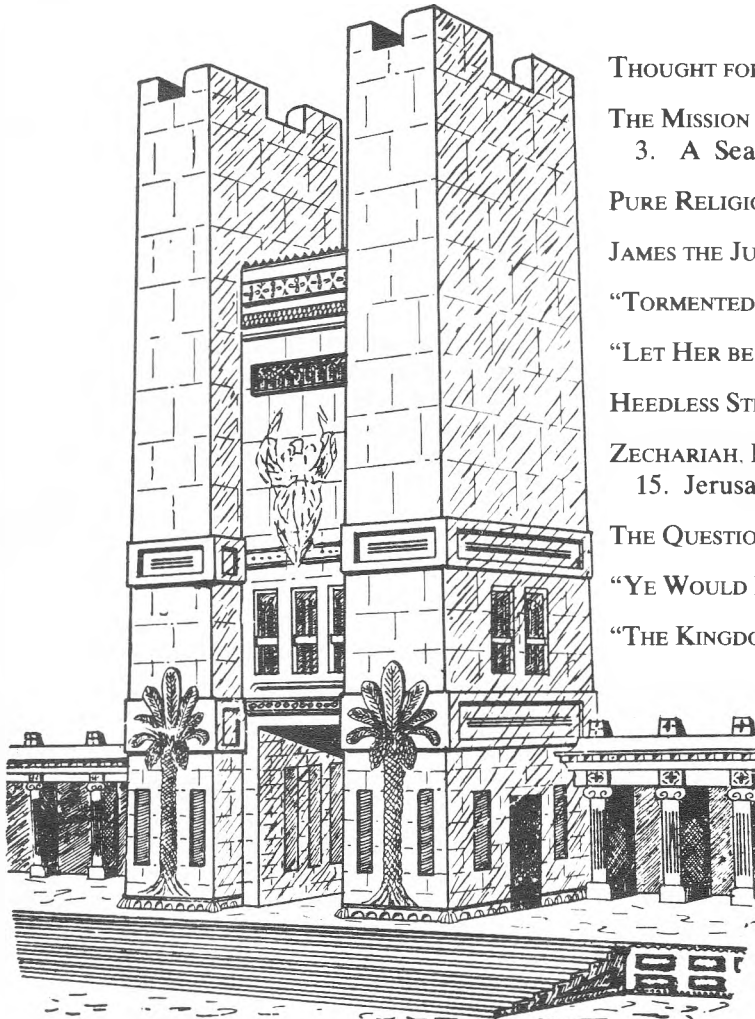
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Secretary: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

Editorial & Publishing: A. O. HUDSON (Milborne Port)

Treasurer: N. CHARCHAROS (Tring)

Circulation Control & Stockroom: D. NADAL (Nottingham)

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord" (Matt. 13. 51).

And they thought they had! He had told them about the men who had received the seed of the Word, some into good and some into stony ground; other men who sowed, some, the wheat, and some, the tares, in the wheatfield; the man who discovered hidden treasure in a field, and the merchant who invested all his assets in one magnificent pearl, the fishermen who drew a netful of fish to the shore and found it contained some good and some bad. When he had finished He asked them if they had understood all that He had told them, and they said yes, we understand it all. And of course they did not. Their knowledge, limited by the confines of the Judaistic theology in which they had been brought up, limited their comprehension within a frame which allowed them to interpret his words only in line with their own Messianic beliefs, the coming of an all-conquering Messiah riding a war-horse and wielding a great sword with which He would lead them to martial victory over the ungodly, the rejected ones of the parables. In their day they could do nothing else than equate those with the hated Gentiles and picture his own followers at the head of the righteous, the accepted ones of the parables, the people of the Lord, his Israel. The manifold peoples of this wide earth, many of whom they did not even know existed; the long sweep of two thousand years of coming history, of which they had no conception; the preaching of the gospel over all the earth, the extent of which was known to none of them in that day; the magnitude of the resultant harvest at its end; how could they have had any conception of its reality? "Yes, Lord, we understand completely and there is nothing more left to learn."

And are we so very different? We come to an understanding of Divine truth based on these same sayings of Jesus and we see so much more in them than they, limited as they were by the state of human knowledge and current conception of the Divine purpose which was inevitable in their day, could ever hope to see. Like them, we immediately conclude that, having attained to that greater degree of understanding, there is no further progress to be made and we have the final understanding of truth. In a totally different context the Lord reminded the Pharisees of their claim that if they had lived in the days of their fathers they would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets (Matt. 23. 30), but of course events proved that they were. And we in our turn, unless we are very careful and honest with ourselves, are apt to condemn past generations for their refusal to walk in the light of progressive truth and then do the same thing ourselves. If at the end of our Christian walk we have no deeper understanding of the faith than we had at the beginning we have not learned much.

But that is not the same thing as rejecting advances that have been made, and going back to the position obtaining in past and earlier days. Progress in Christian understanding must of necessity be based upon what has been attained to date, but it must enlarge into a deeper and more accurate understanding as time goes on. It cannot stand still. The Christian cannot be like the old-time steam-roller, forever going forwards and backwards over its limited stretch of road until that road is completely flattened.

"We all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord."

THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 3. A Seafaring Story

The story of the most astonishing happening related in the Bible is recorded in three short verses comprising no more than fifty-five words:

"Now the Lord had prepared (Heb., appointed) a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly . . . And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomitted out Jonah upon the dry land."

No writer of fiction could have contented himself with so brief a reference to so amazing an occurrence. One of the indications that this story is in fact a strictly historical account is the restraint with which the marvellous is subordinated to the main purpose of the book. To Jonah the incident of the great fish was a purely personal matter. He learned a vital lesson from the experience and that lesson he has put on record in words of distinct beauty (2. 2-9), but he relates only so much of the actual experience as is necessary to his purpose.

Of course enquirers and sceptics in these days are not content with that. That a man should be swallowed by a giant fish and come out alive seems so incredible and apparently impossible a thing that to profess belief in the story is usually to elicit a pitying smile. It is in fact this part of the account that has done so much to discredit the book. Rather than believe that such a thing did actually occur, men prefer to dismiss the entire narrative as a pure invention having no basis in fact.

Reasons for accepting the Book of Jonah as true history have already been given. Those reasons should be sufficient ground for accepting the fact that this amazing thing really did happen to Jonah and Christians need not feel that any additional evidence is needed so far as their own faith is concerned. It is good, however, to investigate such further arguments and evidences as can be brought forward, for the assistance of others who may still be honestly incredulous of the entire proceeding.

Such arguments and evidences do exist and they make interesting reading. It would almost seem as if God, knowing what a strain this story would put upon the intellectual credulity of many in our day, has seen to it that independent testimony to the possibility and the probability of this having actually happened has been placed

upon record.

On the score of possibility, modern history does afford two authenticated instances of a man being swallowed by a whale and being rescued alive. (Nothing in the book of Jonah requires that the fish concerned must be a whale, the expression being in the Hebrew "a great fish". The Hebrews had no word for whale, but the translators of the Septuagint adopted the Greek *ketos*, "whale", and the A.V. translators used the same word in the N.T. when our Lord referred to the story.) Whales were abundant in the Mediterranean in ancient times, and up to the advent of the steamship. They are rare today but are occasionally seen. The London *"News Chronical"* of 17 May 1957 reported the stranding on a beach in Cyprus of one which had to be disposed of by a detachment of the British Army, wearing gas masks. On the score of probability, there are a number of indications in classical literature which go to show that the town of Joppa in Canaan was at one time the scene of some strange and memorable happening connected with a whale. It is appropriate to examine these evidences.

On August 25, 1891, the French *Journal des Debats* (a leading French journal founded in 1789) published the results of an investigation by its Scientific Editor, M. de Parville, into the story of a strange happening reported to have occurred a few months previously. M. de Parville, with a fellow scientist, had verified the facts and published the story, with the comment that he now found it quite possible to believe in the Biblical story of Jonah. The reputation of the *Journal des Debats* is such that an account of this nature would not be published in its columns unless the evidence was conclusive, and the fact that it was afterwards published in the British *Literary Digest* of April 4, 1896 offers a further guarantee.

It appears that in February, 1891, the *"Star of the East"*, a whaling ship hailing from Liverpool, was engaged in hunting whales in the South Atlantic near the Falkland Islands. In the ordinary course of the work a whale was sighted and two boats sent in pursuit. The first boat to approach the animal harpooned it, whereupon the whale swam away at high speed, dragging the boat for about five miles, then turning and coming back towards the other boat,

the harpooner in which also succeeded in sending a harpoon home. Both boats were towed about three miles by the whale, after which it "sounded" or went below the surface. As was customary in such cases, the men in the boats began to wind in the ropes attached to the harpoons with the object of bringing the whale to the surface, and soon it unexpectedly broke through the water and began to beat about in its death agony. In the confusion one boat was struck by the whale's nose and upset, the occupants being thrown into the water. All save two were rescued by the other boat.

The survivors rowed back to the ship, and in a few hours had made the dead whale fast to the ship's side and were busy cutting it to pieces. They worked all that day—the incident having taken place in the morning—and part of the night. Next morning they resumed, and eventually came to the stomach, which was to be cut loose and hoisted to the deck. Whilst engaged in this task they were startled to find that something inside the stomach was giving spasmodic signs of life. Upon cutting it open, one of the missing sailors, James Bartley, aged thirty-five, was found inside doubled up and unconscious. He was soon revived, but for two weeks his mind was unhinged. By the end of the third week he had recovered sufficiently to go about his duties again.

The sailor remembered being lifted into the air and dropping into the water. After that he recalled a fearful rushing sound, which he thought might have been the beating of the water by the whale's tail, and then he was enveloped in a terrible darkness and found himself slipping along a smooth passage that seemed to yield and carry him forward. He felt about him, and his hands came in contact with soft walls that seemed to shrink from his touch. He finally realised that he had been swallowed by the whale, and although he tried to face the situation with fortitude, he evidently fainted, for his next recollection was awakening in the captain's cabin.

Upon the whaler's return to England, Bartley was taken to a London hospital. His skin had been bleached and wrinkled to the appearance of old parchment by the gastric juices of the whale's stomach, and never regained its natural appearance. He enjoyed normal health, nevertheless, after his recovery. The happening was said among the whaling captains to be unique in that, whilst it frequently happened

that men were swallowed by pain-maddened whales, there had never been known any other instance where a man came out alive.

Shortly after its publication in the *Journal des Debats*, the story appeared in various American newspapers at the instance of a Pittsburg business man, James I. Buchanan, who had received it from his cousin, a Scottish captain named George Jarvie. The latter knew nothing of the earlier newspaper account, but had received the story in his contacts with South Atlantic seafarers, among whom, he declared, it was generally vouched for and believed.

The second case is that of Marshall Jenkins, seaman on a Mediterranean whaler, who in 1758 was swallowed by a twenty-foot whale and disgorged alive almost immediately. Whilst the facts in this instance are not so fully recorded as those of James Bartley they are regarded as equally authentic.

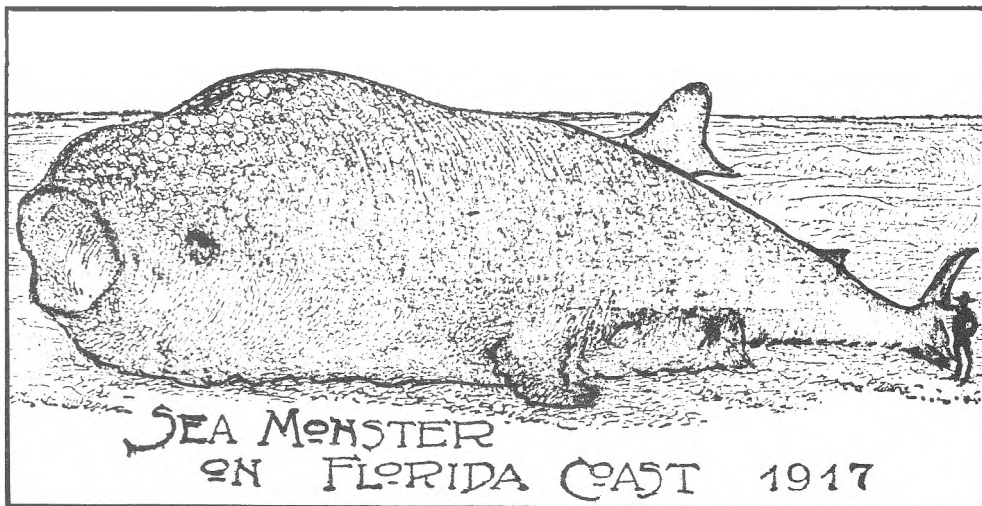
A few more recent factual incidents may be of interest as relevant to the subject. In December 1964 a Russian whaling ship killed a sperm whale and took from its stomach a still live giant squid weighing 450 lb. (London "*Daily Mail*" 31 Dec. 1964). This creature, weighing nearly four times as much as a man, must have been some eight feet long and five round. How long it had been in the whale's stomach is not known, but that it should be recovered alive is supporting testimony to the stories both of James Bartley and of Jonah. Hans Hass, the famous under-sea explorer, tells in one of his books ("*We come from the Sea*" London 1958) of a fifty-foot whale captured off the Azores in 1953, inside the stomach of which was found two half-digested sharks, exceeding ten and eight feet in length respectively. A giant tunny fish forty-five feet long caught near the Florida coast in 1917 had within its stomach a 400 lb octopus and an unknown fish weighing nearly three quarters of a ton; these were dead. And in November 1946 fishermen killed a twelve-foot tiger shark thirty miles out to sea from Bombay and found in its stomach the complete skeleton of a man and some clothing. In a somewhat different sphere some thirty years ago the world's press carried the story of a schoolmaster in India who punished a small native boy for some misdemeanour by locking him in the school woodshed and forgetting to release him. Upon going to the woodshed twelve hours later he found no boy but a large serpent giving visible evidence of having swallowed a heavy meal

whole. The reptile was killed and the boy extracted. He was still living, although he died a few days later in hospital. Much more recently, the London "*Daily Express*" of October 8, 1987 carried the story of a man a few days earlier fishing in the River Pechora seven hundred miles east of Moscow, whose dog, swimming in the river, was seized and swallowed by a large pike six feet long. The fisherman caught the pike and cut it open, whereupon the dog jumped out, barking and unhurt. With these authentic reports on hand the story of Jonah might not look so fantastic after all.

The reference to the "belly of the fish" need only be taken as referring, in a general way, to the monster's interior, although if Jonah was actually swallowed he would obviously have ended up, as did the nineteenth century sailor, in the whale's stomach. From a biological point of view, there are some grounds for thinking that Jonah, upon being swept up by the fish, was in fact carried, not in its stomach, but in its capacious mouth. This hypothesis was put forward in a paper read before the Victoria Institute of London in 1924. The species of whales known to have existed in the Mediterranean in former times attains a length of anything up to one hundred feet. The mouth is between ten and twenty feet in length, eight to twelve feet wide and eight to fifteen feet high, the front portion being closed in with a screen of long

flexible bones which forms a network or kind of giant strainer. This screen of bones is so devised that it opens inwards to admit solid objects, but allows only water to pass out. The animal obtains its food by swimming along the surface with its mouth open, sweeping up small fish, seaweed and any floating matter, all of which is retained in the mouth whilst the seawater filters out again.

It was thought this whalebone screen that Jonah was swept after he had been thrown into the sea. If the whale was a full-grown specimen, eighty or one hundred feet long, it could have swallowed him without difficulty. If a small one, it could not have swallowed him and he must perforce remain lying on its great tongue, unable to go either forward or backward. Certain considerations which will be presented in the succeeding chapter give some grounds for thinking that this particular whale could in fact have been a small one forty feet long. Jonah would then be lying in a cavity about the size of an ordinary living-room, with plenty of fresh air—and sea water—so long as the whale was cruising on the surface. The average temperature of the water in the Mediterranean is 70° F., so that he was not likely to be suffering from cold. At frequent intervals, however, the whale would "sound", i.e. dive below the surface and remain below for periods usually of ten minutes or so at a time. Now, a whale is not a true



This deep sea monster was killed off the east coast of Florida in 1917. Scientists claim that it was comparatively young. In its stomach were a black fish weighing 1,500 pounds, an octopus of 400 pounds, besides 500 pounds of coral. It could easily have swallowed ten Jonahs without trouble. Length 45 feet; weight 30,000 pounds; hide three inches thick. Was mounted on a house-boat, and exhibited in many coast and river cities of the United States.

fish; although a sea creature, it is a mammal, breathing by means of lungs like any animal. Consequently, when below the surface it exists by breathing the air contained in its huge mouth, and must return to the surface before that air is exhausted. Whilst there was air in the mouth of the whale, there was air for Jonah too, so that although at such times he was in dense darkness he at least had air to breathe, and, moreover, would be warm and comparatively dry. A man requires seventy cubic feet of air per hour for breathing, and since the capacity of even a small whale's mouth is at least six hundred and fifty cubic feet, there would be no risk of Jonah suffocating. The sea-bath to which Jonah was treated when the whale swam along the surface might have become monotonous, but at least endurable. The swimming speed is only four miles an hour, so that there is no need to imagine foaming torrents of water pouring in and around Jonah, but rather a gentle swirling stream flowing in and out again. This is strikingly borne out by Jonah's words in verse 3, *"Thou didst cast me into the depth, in the heart of the seas; and the flood was round about me; all thy waves and thy billows passed over me"*. The word for "flood" is *nahar*, which means a stream or river, the other words being rightly used for the waves and billows of the sea.

When the whale "sounded", i.e. dived toward the sea bottom, Jonah, though safe and able to breathe, was in intense darkness and excessive heat. The downward or perhaps undulating up-and-down motion must have been terrifying in the extreme, and this would be equally true whether he was in the creature's mouth or in its stomach. How could he have expected, in the natural way, ever to survive this awful experience. It is here that his sterling faith comes to the top; quite evidently Jonah, for all his frowardness in refusing God's commission for him, still had faith in Divine power, and now that he was in this terrible predicament his heart turned to God in true repentance. *"The waters compassed me about, even to the soul. The depth (Heb., abyss) closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever. Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God"* (verses 5-6).

We must not be misled by the use of the past tense in that last phrase. Jonah uttered this prayer whilst he was being carried by the whale,

not after his escape. It is common in Hebrew literature for happenings yet future, but regarded as absolutely certain to happen, to be stated in the past tense as though they had already happened. Jonah realised that Divine power, preserving him hitherto in this marvellous manner, had done so for a purpose. God had not let go his hold of Jonah his servant. And He had afforded an opportunity for repentance and a retracing of steps which could not have been obtained by Jonah himself in any way whatsoever. Without the intervention of God, Jonah was irrevocably committed to going to Tarshish, but the hand of God took hold of him and brought him back.

It is evident then that Jonah's repentance took place during his sojourn inside the whale. As the great mammal plunged into the green depths, down to the very foundations of the mountains, into the ravines and valleys of the sea bottom which threatened to hold Jonah prisoner for ever, the prophet's prayer went up to God who sits on the throne of the universe, and keeps watch and ward over every one of his creatures. Surely He heard that petition, and in his mercy gave command that the suffering of his wayward child be no more prolonged.

It is likely that Jonah, like the sailor in the modern story, speedily became unconscious in his prison. Human endurance, even although buttressed by faith in God, could hardly be expected to be equal to seventy-two hours of such a fearful ordeal. Some such sequel seems to be indicated by verse 7: *"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple"*. As sensibility faded into unconsciousness, the last thought in Jonah's mind must have been that his prayer had been heard and that he would be saved. He suffered the shades to gather about him in confidence that he would awake and find deliverance.

Here is a perfect picture of our Lord's death and resurrection. Jesus once said that this experience which befell Jonah was a figure of his own passing into and through the shades of death closing round him and said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit", then to lie in the garden grave until that momentous morning when the event occurred at which the *"keepers did shake, and became as dead men."*

So with Jonah! The instrument of destruction became the vehicle of salvation. Whilst master of himself, confident in the possession of ways

and means whereby he could plan his own course in life and avoid the Divine call, Jonah had brought upon himself the loss of all things and, apart from Divine interference, certain death. His repentance changed that, and what had been Jonah's grave became instead his gateway into a new world, a world in which unswerving obedience to the word of his God would be his joy and delight.

"I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of

thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord."

And so it came to pass, as is recorded in words of the most exquisite simplicity, words that instantly convey to man, woman or child of any intellectual level the utter control God has over his creation, that *"the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land"*.

(To be continued)

PURE RELIGION

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1.27).

There is a very manifest tendency in these days of extremes to lay the emphasis upon that aspect of the Christian calling for which one has a preference and to ignore that which does not suit one's own taste. There are, it may be, three types of those who "profess and call themselves Christians", in any sect or group; we might define them the Professional, the Pious and the Practising. They have their distinguishing characteristics which separate them the one from the other, and each a varying degree of usefulness in the Lord's cause, but one of the three is the more likely to learn the lessons of life and to be fitted for the future work of the Church than are the others.

The Professional Christian places his church or sect foremost, upholding it and its institutions and its traditions, right or wrong. He is not usually conspicuous for his knowledge of the Scriptures or his appreciation of the call of discipleship, but he is well informed on affairs of the day, details of current events, and those things which have to do with church activities, social interests, youth welfare, and so on. The Church is, to him, a convenient background for table tennis parties and whist drives, and the presiding minister a useful contact to give "tone" to whatever is being done. If he ever had studied the Bible to satisfy himself as to the basis of his faith it was a long time ago and he is more concerned now with keeping the church attendance up to normal and the finances in a sound condition. He has never heard—or never heeded—the call to consecration, and the phrase "a covenant by sacrifice" means nothing to him. He knows a lot about this world but

very little about the next. That does not worry him, for all his interests and ideas are wrapped up with the things of this world, and the hidden Christ is only a historical figure, the long-since-dead founder of the institution which he himself today actively supports. Of the coming of Jesus to establish an earthly Kingdom he may have heard, but if so has given so fantastic an idea no credence. If such an event did happen he would of course quickly accommodate himself to the new situation and say, importantly, to his new leader, *"Lord, Lord, in thy name I have done many wonderful works . . ."*

The Pious Christian is of different stamp. His Christianity is to him a very intimate and personal thing, a means by which he may attain his own salvation but not an instrument whereby to influence his fellows, the "world", outside. He holds tenaciously to the Scriptural truth that God has appointed a day in the which He will deal with the world of men, and is not disturbed therefore if little or none of the light he possesses reaches them now. As often as not he lays considerable emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and the desirability of Scriptural research for its own sake, and is therefore a keen student of the Scriptures, and an expert in matters of prophetic interpretation. He is intensely—and sincerely—devotional, attaching supreme importance to personal Christian experience, to the inward sense of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the consciousness and confidence of salvation. He has heard the call to consecration and counts himself a footstep follower of the Lord Jesus; but his solicitude for his own spiritual welfare and perhaps that of his immediate fellow believers excludes in great degree any thought for the interests, spiritual or material, of humanity in general. Scorning and despising "the flesh", and this life

and world and all that is in it, he looks only to the next life and next world, waiting with some impatience for the day when he can meet his Lord and say "*Lord we have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets*"

Apart from both these is the Practising Christian, the one who has made his faith a personal thing and goes on from that to make his Christianity effective in the world. He is separated from men by his consecration but associated with the world for his service, service to fellow-men which is also service to God. He is a light in the world, showing outwardly an illumination which is all-pervading within. He holds forth the bread of life, bread which he himself has received from the One Who gives living bread from heaven. His service is according to his ability and opportunity, but it is always a service that conveys to other men something of the good that he himself has received and

shows them something of the life that he himself lives in Christ. To him Christianity is a way of life, and every aspect of life has to be shaped and controlled by the faith for which he stands. He has learned to effect the proper division between outward works and inward piety, between service for this world and preparation for the next, and in so doing he is becoming well fitted for appointment to the exalted position of joint-heir with Christ, a Priest and King, for the world-wide work of the next Age. It was of such that the Saviour declared they were to be in the world but not of the world: the Professional Christian is *IN* the world and *OF* the world: The Pious Christian is *NOT IN* the world and *NOT OF* the world: neither of these is the injunction left us by our Lord. "*IN* the world but *NOT OF* the world" is his ideal, and the only position that can earn his commendation at the end "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*".

The Apple of his Eye

"*He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye*" (Zech. 2. 8.) A proverbial expression derived from the Old Testament, expressive of the little image of oneself seen in the pupil of another's eye when looking closely into it. This word "*babah*" means "little man" or "little figure" and is found in other languages as Syriac *bobo*, Italian *bambino*, Latin *pupa*, and English *baby*. In several other instances a different word is used having the same meaning: "*Keep my commandments, and live: my law as the apple of thine eye*" (Prov. 7. 2.) "*he*" (God) "*kept him*" (Israel) "*as the apple of his eye*". (Deut. 32. 10) "*Keep me as the apple of the eye*" (Psa. 17. 8.). The idea of personal attachment and even kinship is inherent. This conveys the idea of something that is kept close to the heart.

Remembering that man is said to have been made "in the image and likeness of God" it is perhaps not too fanciful to think of this

expression as relative to God looking closely into the eye of man and seeing his own image there. It may not look very much like it at present when so many of the works of man are anything but godlike, but may it not be that God looks into the hearts of the creatures He has made and knows what He can do with them, in due time, when the lessons of this unsatisfactory life have been learned and under the administration of the Messianic kingdom the many who are reclaimable do turn to "*call upon the name of the Lord to serve him with one consent*"? (Zeph. 3. 9.). In the meantime, those who have yielded heart and life to Christ can take to themselves the inspiration of knowing that they are growing into his image and likeness. "*We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory unto glory, by the Spirit of the Lord*".

We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults. We would have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeaseth us, and yet we will not have our own desires denied us. We will have others kept

under strict laws, but in no sort will ourselves be restrained. And thus it appeareth how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

Thomas A' Kempis.

JAMES THE JUST

A stern, unbending figure, rigid in his adherence to the Law of Moses and a fervent upholder of the Covenant in all its detailed ritual, a Nazarite from his youth to the day of his death; that is James the Just, known and respected by all sincere God-fearing Jews in Jerusalem during the days of Jesus. In one respect he was like the Apostle Paul in that at first he rejected the teachings and ministry of Christ, but after the Resurrection became a convert and died a martyr for the faith. In another respect he differed from Paul in that whereas Paul gave his life to preaching the Gospel to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, travelling the world over in the endeavour to extend the faith, James limited his work and his outreach to Jews alone, Jews of the homeland and Jews of the Dispersion, and after his conversion probably never went outside Jerusalem and certainly never left the homeland of Judea and Galilee.

He was a natural brother of the Lord Jesus, the first born to Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus. There were three more brothers—Joses, Jude, Simon (in Hebrew Joseph, Judah, Simeon) and at least two sisters. There used to be all sorts of theories advanced to avoid the plain implication in the New Testament that Mary was the mother of these children, devised at a time when the idea of Mary having other children after Jesus was considered improper or God-dishonouring. So it was suggested, without a shadow of evidence, that these children were those of Joseph by a former marriage, ignoring the fact that were this so, James, as the firstborn of Joseph, and not Jesus, would have been heir to the throne of David. Another supposition was that the reference to Jesus' brothers really means cousins and that they were the children of Mary and Cleophas, which contradicts plain Scripture statements. The frequently repeated assertion to the effect that the same Greek word in the N.T. can mean either "brother" or "cousin" has no foundation in fact. "*Adelphos*" is used consistently for exactly the same purposes as English "brother". Where cousin or other kinsfolk are intended "*suggenes*" is used.

James, therefore, a few years younger than Jesus, grew up with him in the little home at Nazareth, sharing in all the joys and sorrows of the family life centred around Joseph's work as the village carpenter from the fruits of which

he supported a growing family of at least six children. Nothing is recorded of those early years but there is one vivid side-light which gives a clue to James' later character. Matt. 1. 19 says that Joseph was a "just man". This expression implies much more than it would normally denote in colloquial English. Spoken of a First Advent Jew, it means that Joseph was a whole-hearted and rigid devotee of all the minute ritual and ceremonial of the Mosaic Law. It means that in that humble Nazareth home every requirement of the Covenant was scrupulously observed; the feasts properly celebrated, the Sabbaths kept, synagogue obligations honoured, the Scriptures read and the children instructed all as commanded by Moses. In this atmosphere both Jesus and James grew up; the one went through Jordan and preached a new message which took him to the Cross, the other became a pillar of orthodoxy and an unyielding allegiance to the Law of Moses.

One wonders what kind of discussions took place between these two youths, fast approaching manhood, the one already reaching out in spirit to the wider understanding of God's purpose, and his own place in that purpose, which was so soon to lead him away from Judaism and make him the Light of the world, the other, steeped in the Rabbinic lore of the past and zealous, like Paul, for the salvation of his own people, not yet ready to receive the new light that was due. Nothing is said of all that; James only figures in the story of Jesus' ministry twice. Once, soon after choosing the twelve disciples. Jesus' mother and his brothers came to him apparently in some alarm to take him home, saying "*he is beside himself*" (cp. Matt. 12. 46 Mark 3. 21). Again, later on, the brothers cast doubts upon the validity of his mission and work; "*for neither did his brothers believe on him*" (Jno. 7. 3-5). There is not much doubt that James, as the eldest among them, took the lead in all this, and that right up to the Crucifixion he remained at best unconvinced by the ministry and teaching of his brother. It is significant that neither he nor his brothers were present at the Cross.

To the orthodox Jews he was a man to be admired and emulated. "James the Just" they called him because of his outstanding rigid virtue. He was a Nazarite, like Samuel and others of old, having taken the vows of that

order in his youth, thereafter abstaining from wine or strong drink, never allowing razor to come upon his flowing locks, and dressing always in white robes in symbol of purity. Because of his Nazarite status he had the advantage of the priestly concession whereby members of that order were permitted certain privileges of entry into the Temple. He was called the "camel-kneed" because, it was said, he had knees like those of camels from being so often in the Sanctuary in prayer for Divine forgiveness of the people, James was an outstanding Judaist of his day.

But immediately following the death and resurrection of Jesus he became a Christian!

No explanation for this sudden about face is given in the New Testament. The first intimation of the fact appears in Acts 1 where the brothers of Jesus are found gathered with their mother and with the Apostles in the "upper room" in that continuing fellowship which preceded the stirring events of the Day of Pentecost. An apocryphal work, the *"Gospel according to the Hebrews"* does offer an explanation but its historical accuracy is doubtful. It certainly represents a tradition current in the Early Church and there may be some basis of fact. It states in brief that Jesus immediately after his resurrection, *"went unto James and appeared to him, for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep . . . He took bread and blessed and brake and gave it unto James the Just and said unto him, My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep."* There is one obvious fault in this account; James the Just was not at the Last Supper. The account cannot be taken as true history, but it may well enshrine the conviction of the Early Church that the conversion of James did take place in consequence of the Resurrection. Paul says definitely, but without indicating the source of his information, that Jesus appeared to James at least soon afterwards. (1 Cor. 15. 7). The evidence, scanty but precise, is that James threw in his lot with the believers immediately after the death of Jesus, his life thereafter being bound up with the history of the Christian community in Jerusalem.

Paul met him, perhaps for the first time, five years later (Gal. 1. 19), but there is no indication of James' precise position in the Jerusalem Church then. By A.D. 48, however, fifteen

years after the Crucifixion, he was the acknowledged leader. By this time most of the Apostles were scattered over the Roman world fulfilling their commission of preaching the gospel to all the nations. It seems that home affairs were by common consent left in the hands of James. Some six years earlier the Apostle James, brother of John, had been killed by Herod. Now the Church was entering into a theological crisis, the gathering storm over the burning question whether Gentile converts were to be subject to the Law of Moses. The native Jewish Christians in Judea still observed the Mosaic Law; it had never occurred to them to do otherwise. But there were Gentile churches beginning to spring up; Paul and Barnabas with others had laboured mightily at Antioch and a zealous and missionary-minded assembly was the result. Now some of the brethren from Judea came to them with the demand that they take upon themselves the obligation of the Mosaic Law (Acts 15. 1) and this they would not have. So a general council was called at Jerusalem, and Paul, Barnabas and others attended to plead the case of the Gentiles.

At this, the first Church Council called to discuss a major doctrinal controversy, James presided. He was still a Nazarite; he must have presented a striking figure with his flowing, uncut locks cascading over the shoulders of his snow-white robes. He must, too, have realised the momentous nature of the conference over which he was called to preside. On the one hand his eyes fell upon the Pharisees and others who, though having accepted Christ for themselves, retained their fanatical Jewishness which refused entry into the Christian fellowship to any Gentile who would not submit to the Mosaic Law and become, in effect, a proselyte to Israel. Messiah was for Israel alone and those who became Israelites by adoption. On the other hand, he looked upon the representatives of the Antioch Church there present, and those of Jerusalem who had themselves begun to see that "God is no respecter of persons", and he must have prayed silently for wisdom and grace to direct the issue aright.

James' concluding judgment shows the progress he had made in that fifteen years. His every instinct must have urged him to add his sympathy to the arguments of the Pharisees. His own life's training cried out Amen to all that they said. But he could not be blind to the fact that there were longer vistas in the Divine

revelation than he or his had ever dreamed of or could be contained within the framework of Judaism. He would have listened attentively as Peter adduced his own testimony to the manner in which God had used him to carry the faith to the Gentiles. There had been much "disputing" (Acts 15. 7) which incidentally means orderly debate and argument, not acrimonious wrangling as the English word would imply to us. Then Paul and Barnabas held the assembly silent as they recounted the story and the success of their own extended missionary work among the Gentiles of Roman Asia.

James' summing up at the end reveals how clearly he had grasped the fundamentals of the Divine Plan as revealed by the life and death of Jesus. His knowledge of Old Testament prophecy and doctrine came into focus with all that Jesus had said, and with the logic of events as related to the missionary endeavour of those who had gone into the world with the Christian message. For the first time, perhaps, a clear and succinct expression of the three-fold purpose of Christ's Advent was enunciated and placed on record; he quoted the words of Amos of old to demonstrate his point. Israel must first be scattered ("sifted") among the nations that from them all God might find and take a "people for his Name", the Church of this Age, partly Jew and partly Gentile. Following the completion of that work the scattering of Israel would be reversed and the nation be restored and rebuilt in its own land, purified, converted and an instrument of God's hand for the future. Finally an opportunity for all mankind who remain, the "residue", to call upon God and be reconciled. The twin purposes of this Christian Age and the forthcoming Messianic Age are well expressed in the words of James. The conviction with which his conclusions struck home, no less than the respect in which he was held by all present, ensured the unanimous acceptance of his judgment. The threat of a serious division in the Church was averted and the delegates from Antioch went home with, maybe, a new respect for the rigid Judaist who had until then stood before their minds as an immovable exponent of the old order which they knew was now in process of passing away.

This was James' greatest recorded achievement. He and Paul met once more, some ten years later, upon the occasion of Paul's final visit to Jerusalem. Even then it is obvious that elements of the Mosaic Law lingered within the

practices of the Christian fellowship and it was through getting involved with these that Paul figured in the Temple riot which led to his arrest and despatch to Rome and his first trial (Acts 21). It is probable that there was always a certain amount of more or less tolerant difference of viewpoint between these two. Paul's breadth of vision, his depth of doctrinal understanding, and the restless spirit which drove him ever on to fresh fields of service probably grated upon the other man with his essentially narrower outlook and quiet determination to serve the interests of the flock in the place where he himself found Christ. James on his part, try as he might and undoubtedly did, never really had much enthusiasm for the wider missionary outreach.

The Epistle of James was most likely written after all these things had happened, when he was approaching sixty years of age. The Church at Jerusalem was well established by then and included a good proportion of "second generation" converts; the outward events in Judea and Galilee began to portend the fearful tragedy which was to befall the nation ten years later at the hands of Titus the Roman general. The Epistle reflects all this. First of all it breathes an atmosphere of the Mosaic Law with its insistence upon "works". Paul brought to light the doctrine of justification by faith but James still insisted upon the place of "works"; *"faith without works is dead"*. His zeal for the Law, though, is tempered by his Christian interpretation. There are probably more references and allusions to the words of Christ in this epistle than in any other. He wrote to the Christians of the "twelve tribes scattered abroad"—this fact alone dates the epistle as late in James' life since there were no Christians in those lands until the missionary journeys of Paul and others—and the abuses such as "respect of persons" in the assemblies to which he refers show that some of these assemblies were already losing their first love. His strictures on the "rich men" in chap. 5 might very well refer to the state of Jewish society generally at the time, just before the nation came to its end. In fact, it has been said that the Epistle of James is the final appeal to both Jews and Jewish Christians before the end of their existence as a nation. Although not of the twelve, James did, like Barnabas and Paul, rank as an Apostle, and it might be a fair appraisal to say that he exhibited at one and the same time the marks

and characteristics of a Hebrew prophet and a Christian apostle. He stood before his fellows and his nation as representative both of the old dying covenant and the new one which came in with Christ.

He died, a martyr, in the year A.D. 63, seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem. During the few months' interval between the sudden death of the Roman governor Porcius Festus—the one who sent Paul to Rome—and

the arrival in Judea of his successor Albinus, the High Priest Ananus took advantage of the absence of Roman authority to persuade his colleagues illegally to condemn James and murder him by throwing him from a pinnacle of the Temple. Thirty years of faithful service to the church founded by Peter and the eleven on the Day of Pentecost came to an end, and the first Bishop of the Church at Jerusalem sealed his testimony with his blood.

“TORMENTED FOR EVER AND EVER”

The word “torment” occurs some sixteen times in the New Testament, of which about five have been used one time or another to buttress the mediæval idea of physical suffering as the ultimate penalty for sin. A brief survey of its uses and meanings may not be out of place.

The Greek word is *basanizo*, and when the New Testament was written it did bear the general meaning of our English word “torment”, but only in a secondary and somewhat restricted sense. At the time of the First Advent criminals suspected of committing, or known to have committed, serious crimes were commonly subjected to physical torture in order to extract the truth from their otherwise sealed lips. To this process was applied this word *basanizo*, derived from the name of a certain kind of stone, *basanos*, which when rubbed on various precious metals, such as gold, indicated their purity. On account of this property it was called the touchstone. Liddell and Scott define the word as meaning, primarily, to rub on the touchstone, to try the genuineness of a thing, to test or make proof of, and then as a secondary meaning to put to torture. Whenever the word is used in the New Testament it should be read either with its primary meaning, of the subject being tested or subjected to severe strain, or when the secondary sense is applicable, as an allusion to the searching enquiry and retribution which comes upon that which has entered into judgment with God. Thus Thayer, who gives the shades of meaning of words as they were used by New Testament writers, defines *basanizo* as the testing of metals by a touchstone, the questioning or investigation by torture, the being harassed, distressed or vexed as by pain. Vine applies it to the doom of evil spirits and to retributive judgments upon impenitent mankind at the close of this present Age.

Thus the classical Greek primitive everyday meaning, a crucial test of genuineness with the implied rejection of the unfit, became transmuted in the New Testament to the theological concept of an intense investigation into the righteousness or unrighteousness, the good or evil, of the subject, and the consequent rejection of the evil and the unrighteous. This is how “torment” should be understood in the relevant texts, and Vine’s definition of “retributive judgments”, associated with the Divine law “the wages of sin is death”, would seem to come near the truth.

An associated word “*basanistes*” occurs once in the parable of the unforgiving servant, as the name of the functionaries in the prison to which the guilty man was committed. Matt. 18. 34 in the A.V. says he was “*delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due*” but the word would be better rendered examiners or questioners, as Liddell and Scott define it; the fact that these officials used torture as an aid to their work is secondary. RSV renders “jailers” although perhaps the modern word “inquisitors” would be quite apt in current English.

Three occurrences of “*basanizo*” relate to mental or physical stress and three more to the stress of physical pain due to natural causes—disease etc. In most of these instances the A.V. translators realised that “torment” would be an inappropriate translation and used other words more suitable to the situation—vexed, tossed, toiling, pained. Nevertheless in all these texts the primary meaning of the word—a test of fitness under stress—can be discerned. Thus we have:—

2 Pet. 2. 8. “That righteous man” (Lot) “*vexed his righteous soul with their unlawful deeds*”
Matt. 14. 24. “The ship was in the midst of the sea, *tossed with waves*”

Mark 6. 48. "He saw them *toiling* in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them"

Matt. 8. 6. "My servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously *tormented*"

Matt. 4. 24. "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and *torments*"

Rev. 12. 2. "She being with child cried, travailing in birth, and *pained* to be delivered"

Three more instances have to do with the final judgment of evil spirits whom Jesus is declared to have exorcised from obsessed men.

They are:—

Matt. 8. 29. "Jesus, thou Son of God, art thou come hither to *torment* us before the time?"

Mark 5. 7. "Jesus, Son of the most high God, I adjure thee by God that thou torment me not"

Luke 8. 28. Virtually the same as Mark 5. 7.

Behind these three texts lies the Scriptural insistence that these "evil spirits" or demons obsessing the man were of those "angels that sinned" as recorded in Gen. 6. and now "reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2. 4.) so that the question as to torment "before the time" could logically infer these demons' recognition that judgment and retribution must be their lot eventually at the Day of Judgment, but not yet, not at the time of the First Advent.

There remain six occurrences of this word, one in the Gospels and five in the Book of Revelation, all metaphorical (symbolic) and therefore to be interpreted with some caution. That in the Gospels is found in the parable of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16. 19-31). Putting it very briefly, the rich man in that parable pictured the unbelieving Pharisees and unbelieving Israel at the First Advent, Lazarus the despised Gentiles at that time outside the purposes of God. The position was reversed when the nation was cast off in consequence of its rejection of Jesus, and the Divine calling went to the Gentiles. This was when the rich man "*died and was buried, and in Hades he lift up his eyes, being in torments*" This "torment" was that condition of judgment and retribution into which the unbelieving nation passed when its land was desolated by the Romans and the people scattered among all nations after the Crucifixion.

This leaves five instances in the Book of Revelation. Of these, two can be quickly dismissed. The first is in connection with the plague of symbolic locusts in chapter 9, emerging out of the abyss to "*torment* men five months" with

stings like the stings of scorpions. The "men" thus tormented are, of course, the unbelieving world as contrasted with the "saints" who have already been "sealed" in chapter 7; the locusts with their king, Apollyon, are evil forces of some description and the torment here might very well picture the trouble and anguish brought upon the unbelieving world by influential evil powers in this world. The second has its place in chapter 11 where God's "two witnesses" are said to "*torment*" dwellers on the earth by reason of their consistent and persistent witness for righteousness. The "torment" in this case is obviously the annoyance caused to the unbelievers by the implied reproof of an expressed standard of morality and conduct which they could not refute but at the same time refused to accept into their own lives.

Finally we have the three cases which do undeniably have to do with the final judgment of God upon evil institutions and evil men and it is here that a dispassionate view of the somewhat lurid symbols employed can be helpful. In chapter 14, against a setting which speaks very clearly of the end of this Age and the imminence of the Messianic Kingdom which is itself the Day of Judgment, an announcement is made that great Babylon is fallen, and that any man who continues to worship—support—the mighty complex of evil powers in this world which is what is meant here by Babylon, will incur the wrath of God and be "*tormented* with fire and sulphur in the presence of the Lamb"—of the Lord Christ. A parallel description of the same event in chapter 18, this time from the standpoint of the "kings and merchants of the earth"—the political and financial ruling powers—bewails this catastrophic ending to the institutions built up by the greed and selfishness and inhumanity of man, and refers to it as "*torment*" in vss. 7, 12 and 15. Now whilst one can logically conceive the process of physical torment as applied to a human being it is impossible so to apply it to a universal world system of power such as is intended here by the description "Babylon". "Torment", "plagues", "sorrow", "mourning", "famine", "death", "burning", "desolation"; all these terms are used to express the magnitude of the colossal disaster that has come upon this great system and its supporters.

Of these apostate supporters of this doomed system of evil it is said, in addition to their being "tormented with fire and sulphur" that "the

smoke of their *torment* ascendeth up for ever and ever" (ch. 14. 11). This allusion is a clue to the source of the symbolism. The basis of all references in Revelation to the lake of fire and sulphur ("brimstone" in Old English) and the torment of those who are cast therein, is the Old Testament story of the fiery destruction of the corrupt cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 19. When the subterranean bitumen and oil and sulphur deposits underlying those ill-fated Cities of the Plain erupted in one of the greatest cataclysms of Nature the history of mankind has known, the adjoining Dead Sea became a lake of fire and the heavens above rained down burning oil and sulphur over the whole area. The cities with all their contents and all their populations were wiped out in a holocaust of fire and the story has never been forgotten. From that time to this, four thousand years, the very site has lain sterile and desolate. Isaiah alludes to the same disaster when he sought a canvas on which to paint his own picture of the downfall of world evil at the end of this Age. "*The streams shall be turned into bitumen and the dust thereof into sulphur, and the land thereof shall become burning bitumen. It shall not be quenched night or day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever*" (Isa. 34. 9-10). The expression "for ever and ever" ("to the ages of the ages" in the Greek) does not indicate perpetuity as is the usual implication of the English expression. It implies a long period of indefinite length. According to Vine it is an idiomatic expression betokening an undefined period; another definition is "the sum of all the ages in which God is working out his redemptive plan". Obviously the smoke of Sodom has not been "going up for ever"; the fires went out long ago. The fire burned while there was something to burn, and when they went out there was nothing left. So too with this latter-day repetition in the Book of Revelation. The whole fabric of our modern world is entering into judgment with God and stands in the "presence of the Lamb" for the Lord Christ at his Second Advent comes to execute the judgment. So far as men, human beings, the creatures of God's making, are concerned that judgment will be a thousand years long and there will be every opportunity and encouragement for each and all to "foresake sin and serve the living God" even though their past obduracy will have earned them the "torment" which is retribution for the past. But the institutions themselves, the vast edifices and empires

of greed, graft and corruption which men have built through the ages will go at once, destroyed by the fires of their own inherent evil, and great will be their fall. No wonder that the kings and merchants of the earth will bewail the loss of all they held dear when they perceive the "torment", the retributive judgment, which has come upon their creations. Easy it is to understand how their supporters "have no rest day nor night" while they are passing through this agonising experience.

But the end of the longest day comes at last, and after the torments have done their work these same, chastened by what they have gone through, will perceive the radiant glory of Christ's Messianic Kingdom taking the place of the old defunct world order, and a new morality, a new way of life to which they may aspire, and, attaining, find that they have entered into life indeed.

One more allusion, and this is indeed the last. At the end of the Messianic Kingdom, when sin and evil has been eliminated from the earth and all who remain have found "peace with God through Jesus Christ" and so enter into eternal life, when death is no more and mankind has achieved its true destiny, the Revelator sees the final act of the drama. "*The devil that deceived them*" he says "*was cast into the lake of fire and sulphur, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*" (Rev. 20. 10). The entire expression is metaphorical; there is no literal lake of fire and here again the picture is one of judgment, final and irrevocable. The torment is God's retributive judgment, the "day and night for ever and ever" "the lake of fire" indicative of the utter destruction of all that is defiled and unclean in the sight of God. The Scriptures support the idea of a personal Devil and present him as unrepentant. Hence his end is described in no uncertain terms: "*a fire from the midst of thee . . . shall devour thee . . . I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth . . . and never shalt thou be any more*" (Ezek. 28. 18). The lake of fire is that destruction, and the judgment stands for all time.

There are one or two other places in the New Testament where the word "torment" occurs but is rendered from other Greek words not always fully justifying the translation. In John 4. 18 *torment* is from *kolasis*, meaning restraint, in Luke 16. 24 and 25 from *odunao*, meaning anguish, in Heb. 11. 37 from *kakoucheo*, to do harm, and in Heb. 11. 35 from *tumpanizo*, which does mean torture in the ordinarily accepted sense. None of these words include the idea of retributive judgment as does *basanizo*.

“LET HER BE COVERED”

“Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven . . . Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? . . . For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head, because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11. 5, 13, 10).

The Apostle Paul was not referring to hats, which were not in use by women in his day. He was talking about the long veils, or mantles, with which Eastern women enshrouded themselves when in the open air or any place of public resort. These veils covered the face and head with the exception of the eyes, and it is this complete concealment of the features to which Paul refers. There were two reasons for the prohibition, neither of which have application in this twentieth century. The Christian church was gaining a footing in a pagan world, and sought to show by the purer and holier lives of its adherents the power which resided in the faith of Jesus Christ. To this end the Apostles were careful to counsel the avoidance of any custom or practice which might bring reproach upon the body of believers.

It was usual for women devotees of paganism to throw off their veils and dishevel their hair when under the stress of strong emotion. This practice was sometimes carried to extreme lengths, and the woman would relapse into a trance, and exhibit all the symptoms of demon obsession. The damsel who brought much gain to her masters by soothsaying, and who, meeting Paul and Silas, called out: *“These men be the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation”* (Acts 16.17) was one such example. It would be in the highest degree undesirable that any suspicion of such practices should rest upon the Christian assemblies, and hence Paul’s instruction that the Christian women remain veiled. He said that to be unveiled was equivalent to being shorn or shaved, a reference to the fact that priestesses at the pagan altars usually had their heads shaven; the reputation of these priestesses was such that Paul found it necessary to dispel any impression that the Christians had similar priestesses associated with their worship. In the background hovered the sinister forces of demonism, and it is this fact which explains Paul’s allusion to the woman having “power” on her head *“because of the angels”*, the fallen

angels, the “wicked spirits in high places” of Eph. 6. 12. “angels that sinned” of 2 Pet. 2. 4. whom the Lord himself recognised as demons. It was a Rabbinic belief that the wearing of the veil by a woman was a safeguard against evil spirits, who, as in the days of Genesis 6, still sought to ensnare *“those whom they chose”*. And although Paul should not be understood as necessarily endorsing Rabbinic teaching, it is evident that he perceived a connection between the pagan religion and demoniac forces and would have no suspicion entertained by any that the Christians had any such association. The word rendered “power” is *exousia*, which means “authority”; Paul’s meaning here seems to be that the wearing of the veil by the woman became a sign of her submission to the authority of Christ, and there should be no suspicion on the part of neighbours or strangers that she had any part or lot in the practices for which the pagan women were notorious. Paul’s use of the word “power” to denote the veil reveals his familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures, for the Old Testament word for “veil” or “mantle” is *radid*, which comes from the idea of spreading out or prostrating on the ground, hence introducing the idea of submission. In the Old Testament therefore, the wearing of the veil involved the thought of submission, the woman subject to the authority of her husband, or if unmarried, to her father or the menfolk of her house. In Paul’s epistle, this thought is carried to a higher plane, and the veil is made a symbol of submission to Christ,—for woman stands on an equal footing with man “in Christ”, where there is neither male nor female, bond or free, Jew nor Greek, but all are one in him.

It is obvious that these pagan considerations have not now applied for many centuries, and that St. Paul’s prohibitions in this chapter no longer have any force and need not be invoked as the basis of modern customs. Nevertheless, whilst rejoicing in the liberty which is ours as Christian believers in these things, we need to remember that the spirit of Paul’s injunction still holds good. It was to avoid the behaviour of Christian believers and their assemblies falling into disrepute that he, by the leading of the Holy Spirit, established the rule. In our own day we should regard this as still important, and if in some particular assembly the abandonment of a custom which has the sanctity of centuries

would lead to misunderstanding and reproach it is our Christian privilege to maintain the tradition, not of necessity but that the faith may not be lightly spoken of. That is not often the case nowadays; it is sixty-three years since the then Archbishop of Canterbury ruled that the

wearing of hats or head coverings in church need not be considered obligatory, but it may well be that an explanation of the true reasons for St. Paul's words on the subject would lead some to feel easier in mind on the matter.

Heedless Stewards

"The profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served from the field." (Eccl. 5. 9).

King Solomon is known to have been an expert on horticulture (I King. 4. 33) and in this remark in Ecclesiastes he showed himself possessed of an insight which seems lacking in the economic world today. *"The abundance of the earth is for everyone. The king is dependent on the tilled field"* is the Septuagint rendering; those old scholars who translated the ancient Hebrew into Greek certainly caught the essence of Solomon's idea. The economics of ancient civilisations were based on the growing of crops and the keeping of flocks and herds. Their arts and crafts, their industries and manufactures, all that made for the refinements of their cities and their trading enterprises, were not allowed to affect the fertility of their soil or the welfare of their pastoral interests. Sunk in idolatry as were so many of them, they knew that the perpetuation of human life upon earth depended upon their husbandry of the soil and that which Nature causes to spring forth. In their religious observances "fertility rituals" which had as their object the maintenance of the gods' interest and influence in the productiveness of Nature were the most prominent feature, and in this those pagan religions showed something of early man's understanding of the essential need for man to co-operate with Nature and to preserve the balance of Nature, if man is to continue upon earth.

Modern man ignores this. Modern man, arrogantly contemptuous of those earlier generations, goes on his way heedless of Nature's laws and the needs of the future. He

turns fertile land into dust bowls in his greed for quick profits; he despoils the land of trees in his insatiate appetite for raw materials and industrial development, depriving the birds of their homes and reducing their numbers. Insect pests increase and so he poisons with insecticides the earth already polluted by industrial "smog" and the exhaust gases of tractors. He defiles the streams and rivers with chemical waste and kills the fish, and now has started dumping radioactive waste in the sea with the bland assurance that there is too much water in the oceans for it really to matter. New diseases attributable to the vitiated and poisoned food thus produced appear and terrifying drugs are invented to counteract the diseases. A few enlightened voices are raised in protest and warning, but they are dubbed cranks and old-fashioned and the mad orgy of destruction goes on. And the thoughtful Christian, who, like his Master, loves humanity and the earth of God's creating, wonders where it is all going to end.

It ends when God intervenes in human affairs and establishes the Messianic Kingdom. This orgy of destruction is one of the evidences that the time is very near for the close of man's rule on earth and the inauguration of the reign of Christ. Then will be the time that the wilderness and desert places,—largely man-made—will rejoice and blossom as the rose. The cleansing of the rivers and seas and the re-fertilising of the earth will be a long process but it will be accomplished and the words of the Psalmist fulfilled *"Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless us."*

The family discipline is the discipline of wisdom. He who administers it is the God only wise. What deep wisdom there must be in all his dealings; He knows exactly what we need and how to supply it, He knows what evils are

to be found in us and how they may best be removed. His training is no random work, it is carried on with exquisite skill. The time, the way and the instrument are all according to the perfect wisdom of God.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

15. Jerusalem Exalted

Following Israel's dramatic deliverance at Jerusalem, marked by the revelation of the Lord from Heaven and his assumption of kingly power, there is a kind of orderly procession of related events which have the effect of leading the whole world into the light and life of the Millennial Kingdom. Here in Zechariah's 14th chapter there is a short passage, verses 6-11, which has its place between the great deliverance and the full establishment of the Messianic reign over all the earth. Only after relating, in symbol, the nature of those happenings does the prophet bring his book to a close in the glories of the Kingdom itself. As with the previous part of the chapter, the physical setting of the prophecy is the literal city and its surroundings, and in fact these verses are closely connected with the earlier description of the besieged city, the advent of Israel's deliverer, and the earthquake.

So, after completing his account of the Lord's coming, with all his holy ones, the defeat of the besiegers and the salvation of the city, Zechariah says (vs. 6-7) *"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark, but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light"*. Not a very lucid passage, but that is because some of the words have proved difficult to translate correctly, and even today scholars are dubious as to their meaning. It is evident that the verses refer to the entire "Day of the Lord" of chapter 14 so that this darkness followed by light at the end becomes a familiar picture. As Joel says in reference to this same period *"the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining"* (Joel 3. 15) and Amos *"the day of the Lord will be darkness, and not light; even very dark, and no brightness in it"* (Amos 5. 20). The "one day known to the Lord" of verse 6 is an emphatic expression indicating that this day is a unique day, no other day is just like it; which is just what Jeremiah says in the same connection: *"alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it. It is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it"* (Jer. 30. 7). Very fittingly, therefore, do these two verses stand where they do. All that goes before them is the time of darkness, of battle and tumult and the overpowering of evil forces. That which comes after them is of the

new day of light, of healing and rejoicing, of life and righteousness. In a very real sense the next verse, verse 7, can be said to picture the beginning of true Millennial blessing.

This verse is quite evidently relative to the coming of new life to the world. The King is now in control and the powers of his Kingdom begin to become evident. *"It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be"*. The "former sea" (the sea in front) in Zechariah's geography is the Dead Sea, east of Jerusalem. The "hinder sea (behind)" is the Mediterranean, on the west. "Living waters" are perennial streams, not flowing in the rainy season only, like so many rivers of the land, but there all the time, "in summer and in winter" so that they become truly rivers of life to the people. In symbol, therefore, rivers of life are to spring up in Jerusalem, one flowing eastward into the Dead Sea and the other westward to the Mediterranean. Zechariah is not the only prophet to take this theme. Joel, in the passage already quoted, follows the deliverance of Jerusalem by saying *"a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim"* (Joel 3. 18). The valley of Shittim (acacias) was the name of the region where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea (as indicated by Micah 6. 5 and Num. 25. 1) so that this river seen by Joel corresponds in symbol to the eastern stream seen by Zechariah. Ezekiel likewise saw a river proceeding from the restored Temple and going down into that same valley and so into the Dead Sea *"which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed"* (Ezek. 47. 1-12). And, of course the vision of John in Rev. 22. 1-2 comes readily to mind, the seer beholding a river of water of life proceeding from the Holy City, with trees of life on its banks, yielding fruit for food and leaves for "the healing of the nations". Quite evidently, therefore, we have here a vivid picture of the place of the restored and now victorious Holy Land and Holy Nation in the purposes of God, the agency by means of which all the Divine blessings, cleansing from sin and impartation of everlasting life may come to the nations. Ezekiel and Joel saw this in terms of the cleansing of the land; the Dead Sea was to

be made sweet that fish might live in its waters and vegetation surround its shores: but Zechariah was universal. He saw a second river of life making its way in the opposite direction to mingle its waters with the Great Sea which encompassed all the earth, so that eventually the whole world of mankind would draw benefit from its life-giving waters. In no more eloquent fashion could the universal power of Messiah's Kingdom, bringing life and health and freedom from sin to men in every place under the sun, be pictured than by this vision of the two rivers.

It is not generally realised that two such streams do actually at present exist although they are not perennial; they flow only in the winter. The Kidron, mentioned often in the Scriptures, rises on the north side of the city and flows alongside the eastern wall of the Temple, past the Pool of Siloam and in a south-easterly direction to the Dead Sea. There is the prototype of Zechariah's stream flowing into the "former sea". Then on the western side of the city, not far from the present railway station, there commences the Wady al Werd, a stream which flows westward, more or less following the railway, joining other streams en route until at last it falls into the Mediterranean, seven miles south of Tel-Aviv, as the Wady Sorek. This is the stream which gave the prophet his figure for that one which flows to the "hinder sea". In other words, he took as his picture two existing streams and made of them a symbolic scene—twin rivers of life carrying life-giving energy and powers of healing to all the world in the day when God "*turns to the people a pure language*", that they may call upon him "*to serve him with one consent*". (Zeph. 3. 9).

There are some expositors who amplify the content of verse 8 regarding the two rivers to infer that there is to be a continuous waterway from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea via Jerusalem, and onward through the south valley to the Red Sea, so that Jerusalem becomes a seaport controlling world trade between Europe and the Far East. Why the Holy City should thus become involved with mundane world affairs does not readily appear and the connection of all this with God's intention to make Jerusalem the earthly centre of Divine administration is far from obvious. In point of fact the idea is, physically, impracticable. Jerusalem stands more than two thousand feet above sea level, and no city at that elevation could ever be a seaport. . . The Jordan valley up to

the Sea of Galilee is well below sea level so that such a waterway, if it ever came into being, would also flood an appreciable area of the Holy Land. This element of the prophecy is clearly a picture of two separate streams, each having its source in or near the City, flowing outward in opposite directions.

What wonder, then, that the Prophet should break out into the fervent declamation of verse 9 "*And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one*". He might well have had in mind the noble words of Psalms 46 "*the nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted. 'Be still, I will be exalted among the nations: I will be exalted in the earth'.*" *The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge*". Zechariah in his vision beheld the reality of which these words were a poetic portrayal. Now the Lord had taken his great power and was reigning as King.

Once more the prophet turns his gaze upon the whole land of Israel, viewing it in his mind's eye much as Moses must have seen it from the top of Mount Pisgah, and he sees the final effect of the earthquake in the promised exaltation of the mountain of the Lord's house above the tops of the mountains (Isa. 2. 2). In this vision he saw the sinking of the highlands of Judea into the plain so that Jerusalem stood proudly erect upon the twin hills of Mount Moriah and Mount Zion in the centre. Physically, the heights of Hebron to the south and Samaria to the north tower anything up to a thousand feet above Jerusalem, so that the expression "*as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people*" (Psalms 125. 2) is no figure of speech, but based on reality. Now, symbolically, all the heights of the country sink down to leave the Holy City towering supreme above. "*All the land shall become encompassed as the Arabah*" (the plain of the Jordan valley) "*from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem, and she*" (Jerusalem) "*shall be raised on high, and inhabited in her place*". So is the opening phrase of verse 10. "Rimmon south of Jerusalem" was to the north of Beer-sheba, forty-five miles from Jerusalem, at the southern end of the Judean highlands; Geba—the name of several places in ancient Israel—a town seven miles north of Samaria, now called Jaba, at the northern end of the highlands where they begin to slope down into the valley of Megiddo, some forty miles north of Jerusalem. "*Geba to Beersheba*" is used

in 2 Kings 23. 8 as an expression indicating the full extent of the land; here in Zechariah it pictures the exaltation of Jerusalem in the Holy Land and in its extreme symbolic sense the prominence of the Holy Nation and the Holy Land in the sight of all the world, as the people and the city of the Great King. Both Isaiah and Micah spoke of Jerusalem being established in the tops of the mountains and exalted above the hills, using the same metaphor as did Zechariah, and in none of the three cases is anything other than the metaphorical meaning intended. Any suggestion that a literal fulfilment is implied would have to take into consideration the fearful havoc and destruction to which the restored and rebuilt Holy Land would be necessarily subjected if something like half its surface area were suddenly to be precipitated between two and three thousand feet downwards into the bowels of the earth.

But there is yet more to come in this cameo picture of Jerusalem's prosperity. The same verse goes on to say that *"she shall be inhabited"* (or abide) *"in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate: and from the tower of Hananeel unto the King's wine presses"*. What is to be made of this bit of geography? The inference is that the city as thus defined has up to this time lain desolate, or at least not in the possession of God's Israel, but that from now on she shall be permanently established and take her place as the ruling centre of the land, and, according to verse 11 never again be disturbed: *"men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."*

There is a certain amount of uncertainty about the precise boundaries of Solomon's and Nehemiah's Jerusalem: the eastern walls were practically those of the "Old City" today, but the northern wall was not so far north as at present, running more or less level with the north side of the Temple area, whilst the southern wall extended more to the south, as far as the Pool of Siloam. Zechariah's description has to be understood in this context.

"Benjamin's Gate"—also known as the Gate of Ephraim—seems at that time to have been located at the western end of the north wall, not far from the present Jaffa Gate. Some distance east of this point there had been in earlier times a gate known as the "Old Gate" or "First Gate", in Zechariah's time long since blocked up—he calls it "the place of the First Gate"

indicating that it was no longer there. There were several points on the wall to which the name "Corner" was applied but the easterly direction implied by this verse seems to demand that the "Corner Gate" here was at the point Nehemiah calls the "Corner"—the eastern end of the wall where it turned south by the Temple area. Today that point is marked by St. Stephens Gate. Hence the full width of the Old City as it was then, from west to east, was defined.

The Tower of Hananeel, one of the defensive structures on the wall, was about half-way along the north wall, where the Tower of Antonia, the Roman garrison, stood in Jesus' day, adjacent to the Temple. The "kings winepresses" were in the gardens of Ophel, then bounded by the south wall. Hence the full length of the city, north to south, was thus indicated.

In this phrase, therefore, Zechariah is saying that the entire city, west to east and north to south, would be the possession of Israel and never again be disturbed or threatened. There can be no doubt that this promise is to be literally as well as spiritually fulfilled. In the latter respect, it is synonymous with the enduring prosperity of the Holy Nation as the Divine instrument in the earth for world conversion. In the former, Jerusalem has already spread over a greater area than that defined by Zechariah but the promise remains; west to east, north to south, to the utmost extent of the Holy City.

There is a rather intriguing parallel to this passage in the writings of Jeremiah. His celebrated 31st chapter, which speaks of the final restoration in the Holy Land and the New Covenant which God will make with his people, concludes with a promise which, obscure on the surface, well repays examination. *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall go forth against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the house gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the Lord: it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever"* (Jer. 31. 38-40). Both prophets refer to much the same time in history; both take the city of Jerusalem as their stage; what is there in Jeremiah's words which may add to what Zechariah has said?

"From the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner" obviously means the same as the

similar expression in Zechariah; this is a promise of the rebuilding of the city, or the Temple, or both. Now Jeremiah departs from Zechariah. From this corner gate, which was at the north-eastern corner of the Temple area, the measuring line is to "go forth" (go straight forward, is the meaning) over the hill called Gareb, sweep round in a curve (the meaning of "compass") to Goath, and then, including the valley of the dead and the fields of the river Kidron, come to the "corner of the horse gate toward the east". This corner was the south-eastern corner of the Temple area. The area thus delineated by the measuring line would therefore apparently be the piece of land lying immediately to the east of the Temple—the Kidron valley and the Mount of Olives.

Gareb and Goath, as place names, appear nowhere else in the Bible and not one commentator or expositor, so far as can be ascertained, has done more than suggest they must have been places near Jerusalem. It has been necessary to embark upon a little original research therefore to find some meaning in this passage. The meaning of Ha-Gareb is the "Mount of the Lepers", the word coming from a Hebrew root defining scabs or scurvy, and used for leprosy in Syriac. The only eminence on the east side of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives, by which name it was known in the days of David, and again by Zechariah and later. But there is reason for thinking that in between these times it bore a more opprobrious name. 2 Kings 23. 13, relating to the time of Josiah, knows it as the Mount of Corruption. That at least could be fitting for a place which was the habitation of lepers. The same chapter reveals that Solomon had built, on the Mount of Olives, idolatrous sanctuaries, "high places", for Ashtoreth and Chemosh and Molech; Josiah pulled them down and defiled them "with the bones of men". What more natural that in order to complete their desecration the mountain should at that time, or soon afterwards become a place to which lepers were banished and lived their lives, and so earn the name it bore in the days of Jeremiah?

So the line went out from the north side of the Temple over the Mount of Olives, and curved round to Goath. Another difficult word! It comes from the Hebrew term for the lowing of cattle—cows and oxen. "The place of lowing" would be its literal force. How to find where such a place was located in that day? 2 Kings 23. 13 helps again here; the narrator says that the high places of Ashtarothe and

the rest stood on the "right side" of the Mount of Corruption, i.e. on its southern aspect. Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, was usually represented as a cow. The measuring line, curving round Olivet to "Goath", would come to the place where Solomon built the idol sanctuary. The sanctuary itself was destroyed by Josiah; the place where it stood was still known in Jeremiah's day, perchance, as the "place of lowing"—Goath. From there a straight line back to the Temple would bring in the countryside leading down to the river Kidron, include the valley running along the east wall of the Temple, used then as it has been ever since as a general cemetery for Jerusalem's dead and also for the disposal of the ashes from the Temple sacrifices, and finish at the Temple south wall, exactly as described in Jer. 31. 40.

What then is the purpose of this geographical exercise? It evidently meant something very real to Jeremiah; can it mean as much to us?

As an addition and a sequel to Zechariah's vision of the restored city it is full of meaning. Zechariah saw the Lord descend on the Mount of Olives and, as it were, advance upon the city from the great valley that had been created and enter the Temple, never more to depart. The valley itself was closed up, just as in Ezekiel's parallel vision the East Gate was closed up, because the Lord had entered that way and never again could it be used by others. For all time that way is sacred. Now Jeremiah, seeing the city restored and knowing the Lord has come in, sees the whole tract of land thus hallowed by the Lord's coming, that whole Mount of Olives, cleansed from its past defilements, measured and marked out and separated from secular uses that it might be, as he says in chapter 31, 40 "holy unto the Lord". When one considers the stirring events in our Lord's earthly life associated with the Mount of Olives, few would dispute that it could very properly be made a holy place in the new earth that is to be. The spiritual meaning is the more important; the coming of the Lord has sanctified for ever all that formerly was evil and unclean but now is cleansed and good, but a strictly literal fulfilment of this particular vision would also be entirely proper. Perhaps, one day, when the peoples of earth come up to Jerusalem to worship and go to see the place from which the Lord of all creation ascended to his Father, they will meet, in spirit if not in letter, with the injunction "take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground".

(To be concluded)

THE QUESTION BOX

Q. The Golden Gate at Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Bible; did it exist in earlier times under another name?

* * *

A. The present Golden Gate stands on the site of the East Gate which faced eastward from the Temple in the direction of the Mount of Olives. The East Gate is mentioned as such in Ezek. 43. 4 and 44. 1-3, and is probably referred to in Jer. 39. 3 where it is called the "middle gate". Excavations a century ago revealed traces of a wide terrace in front of the gate and what were probably gardens sloping down to the river Kidron in the valley below. The gate gave access directly to the Temple courts and it is likely that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem just before his death it was through this gate that He entered. Tradition has it that the "Beautiful Gate" of Acts 3. 2, where Peter healed the lame man, was this gate and it has been suggested that the present name "Golden Gate" is due to a misunderstanding by the Latin versions whereby the Greek *horaia* (beautiful) was rendered by the Latin *aurea* (golden) on account of the similarity of the words. The Talmud calls it the Gate of Shushan (the capital of Cyrus of Persia in the sixth century B.C.) which could suggest

that the returned exiles under Zerubbabel named this gate thus in honour of their benefactor.

The original gate has disappeared with the exception of two huge stones which are built into the modern edifice. The present structure dates from about the 4th or 5th Century and was blocked up by the Turks in A.D. 1540, with the exception of a small opening just large enough for a man to pass through. A Muslim tradition declares that if and when it is opened a Christian prince will ride through to capture the Holy City; needless to say, that tradition did not envisage the present Israeli possession of the city and its environs. Of greater moment is the prophetic vision of Ezekiel in which he saw the Lord in his glory come from the east and enter the rebuilt Temple by this gate that He might remain with Israel for ever, and the gate thereupon being shut that it might not be used again, for the Lord was henceforth never to leave them; this is a symbolic picture of Israel's final conversion at the end of the Age. The regathered nation is reconciled to God, and the Lord appears, to overthrow all evil powers and establish his long-promised Messianic kingdom under which Israel enters upon her ordained destiny "*to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth*".

Voices

There are little sights and sounds with which we are all familiar, that have a healing effect upon the mind that is overstrung with work and worry. The ripple of the silvery stream beneath the shady trees; the hum of the bees and the chirping of the grasshopper in the clover; the golden corn waving in the soft breezes; the flitting butterfly amid the fragrant flowers; the glittering insects in the grass basking in the warmth of the sun; the rustle of the rabbits in the undergrowth; the cheerful singing of the birds; the fleecy clouds floating in the blue skies; the melodious skylark soaring exultingly above all. Such influences are too subtle for human explanation. Little voices they are, proclaiming the grand harmony, the peace universal in nature, and they act as a restorative mentally and physically.

But there are other little sights and sounds of a spiritual kind that tend to heal the heart that is overwrought with failure and sorrow. These are little voices proclaiming a loving God who is watching and caring; a great High Priest who is sympathetic, understanding and ready to help. What sights and sounds are these? The kindly word gently spoken in a tone of cheer; the sudden sparkle of a gracious smile; the unexpected gleam of a sympathetic tear; the little extra pressure of the hand; the secret act of self-sacrifice, unseen, unheard; the silent look that can find no words yet shows it has heard and understood. These are powerful little voices. They require no scholarship, no talent, no skill beyond the scholarship, talent and skill that the spirit of God bequeaths to every loving and earnest heart. (*Forest Gate Bible Monthly*)

“YE WOULD NOT”

“So he bringeth them unto their desired haven”.

It is impossible for us to realise the depth of disappointment that swept through the Master's heart as He wept over a callous Jerusalem and resigned himself to its fate. How repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, He had tried to gather it beneath his wings, and protect it from its own perverted self as well as from its enemies! Oh! the bitterness of that sad lament “. . . . *I would but ye would not*”! Had his coming and presentation to the nation not been the theme of psalm and prophecy over many preceding centuries the situation could not have been so tense, nor fraught with such tragic disappointment when, at last, He came to them. Had Scripture forecast not touched his life at so many points, the nation might have been able to tender some excuse for rejecting him, notwithstanding his miracles! Everything that could be done to prepare his way before him had been done and yet when He, the subject of every type, psalm and prophecy, “*came to his own, his own received him not*”.

The waves of time stand not still on the broad bosom of history. Mis-spent years, with their unembraced opportunities return no more. Their intended blessings pass away unreaped, but more than that, the crucial moments, passing un-improved, turn the drift and set of circumstance into an ebbing tide, thenceforth to bear away towards the deep the unresponsive and heedless dreamer in the boat. So had it been with Jerusalem. Her hour had come—the hour for which the city and nation had waited long, and with his coming a tide of opportunity had presented itself to people and priesthood alike, and He, as Heaven's messenger, as Pilot and Ship-master too, had presented himself to guide the ship into port, to bring this hitherto supremely favoured nation into the haven of its centuries-old desire. But they would not let him take them to his heart, nor would they take him to theirs. The crucial eventful moment passed, and the opportunity, ungrasped, was gone “*.....I would.....ye would not.....henceforth.....*”; bitter sequence indeed!

But there was another side to that story. There are some better things to relate. It was not true to say of all “but ye would not”. There

had been a few who had heard, as it were, the tender call and found shelter beneath his protecting “wings”. As a brooding hen He had gathered them and drawn them close to himself, and when at last the long-threatening storm broke destructively upon the nation, these cherished objects of his care were kept safely nestling close to his loving heart! The hour of opportunity, rightly taken by this few, had brought them to rest beneath the out-spread wings of heavenly love and care, so fitly represented by the golden cherubim above the sprinkled Mercy seat!

Again, another hour of opportunity is with us today. A fuller, deeper call to consecration has come to us. Of many churches and peoples in many lands the Master will yet have to say “*...I would... but ye would not...*”! Again a spirit of indifference, and of “little faith” prevails among those whom He expected to hear his call. The opportunity will pass—has almost passed, and few indeed have heard the invitation to pass under his wings and find comfort and shelter here.

Do you know the warmth and shelter of his loving heart, dear brother and sister in the Lord? It is open to you to be as one of his “chicks”, by day and night, safe kept by love Divine amid the gathering storm-clouds of this momentous day! One tiny word makes all the difference to the comfort and protection of your life—it is either “ye would not” or “ye would”, that is all! Of himself our loving Master can still truly say “I would”—what can He say of you... and of me? Let our prayerful resolve henceforth be to remain “Under his Wings.”

Under his wings I am safely abiding,

Though the night deepens and tempests are wild.

I know I can trust him, I know He will keep me,

He has redeemed me, and I am his child.

Under his wings; what a refuge in sorrow,

*How the heart yearningly turns to his rest,
Often when earth has no balm for my healing,*

There I find comfort and there I am blest.

Under his wings, O, what precious enjoyment,

*Here will I hide till life's trials are o'er,
Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me,*

Resting in Jesus, I'm safe evermore.

Prayer is the silken thread God has placed in our hands by which we draw down from Heaven

the strong cable of Almighty power and strength for our daily need.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AT HAND

It was at a time of crisis like the present that one of the most singular figures of history came to the front. John the Baptist was a man of obscure parentage, the son of a priest, brought up in a country village and never moving more than a hundred miles from his birthplace. But his influence upon world history and the fates of nations has been tremendous. The principles he enunciated, the moral teaching he expounded; above all, the startling declaration which formed the chief burden of his message, all have been proven true, gloriously true or tragically true according to the notice men have or have not taken of them, throughout all centuries since his day.

He was born two thousand years ago, and was executed by a tyrant whilst still a young man. He was thirty before he came into the public eye, but within six months he had an entire province of the Roman Empire waiting on his words. His short-lived appearance prepared men for the coming of the greatest teacher the world has known—Jesus of Nazareth! But the impetus of that forward move which accomplished the birth of Christianity has spent itself, and now the world we know faces an even greater crisis than that which destroyed Judea two thousand years ago.

The effects of society's disease are manifest. Crime, vice and immorality; rampant and increasing. Respect for the law; vanishing. The most elementary rights of the weaker are habitually denied them by the stronger. Fundamental qualities such as self-denial and generosity are discounted as signs of weakness; selfishness, self-seeking and greed are exalted in their place. Honour in business and political life has given place to intrigue, bribery and corruption. The social fabric is undermined by laxity in the marriage relationship, dishonesty in daily life and excessive addiction to debasing pleasures and diversions. Twenty-year-old boys shoot policemen and gangs of children rob houses. A dry rot permeates society and causes grave concern to all serious observers. And the question comes "Why?"

The peoples of earth—speaking now more particularly of the so-called "civilised" peoples—have renounced God and in the main no longer acknowledge his supremacy. The moral principles of the Bible have been cast aside and many men take whatever course their

inclinations, desires and passions dictate. There is no real belief in judgment to come, or in the certainty or likelihood of retribution for their crimes. Therefore many indulge themselves according to their fancy without thought of the consequences to themselves or their fellows.

But the Bible still proclaims the basic principles of creation: that which is evil cannot endure; it may subsist, uneasily, for a time, but it must eventually pass away. It bears within itself the seeds of its own destruction. That is why St. Paul says in one place "the wages of sin is *death*" and Ezekiel in another "the soul that sinneth, it shall *die*", and St. Peter, referring to the order of things instituted by man upon earth, speaks of a heaven and earth of evil repute, which now exists, being destroyed as by fire and replaced by a new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The operation of this Divine law implies retribution, judgment, and so a secondary maxim is propounded: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap".

The world is reaping a bitter harvest, one of its own sowing. The ills from which we suffer have their origin in the things we or our fathers have done in times past. There is no escape; it is inevitable that the world should enter into this period of judgment and suffer the calamities that must come upon it. It is unjust to blame God. We are created with the ability to govern ourselves along lines of benevolence and equity, but we have elected to take the easier way and must find for ourselves that it leads only to destruction. God means to save: He does not will that his purpose in creation should be frustrated; but men must learn their lesson.

Now although there can be no universal deliverance from the judgment of this world, there can be, and is, individual deliverance from the state of mind and way of life that has led to this state of things. That is the first step. Multiplied a thousand, a million, ten million fold, it will bring world judgment to an end and usher in an eternity of peace. But it can only be attained by means of repentance.

The word "repentance" is associated with the emotional fervour of nineteenth century revivalism, conjuring up visions of the old-fashioned "penitent form" in mission halls and impassioned appeals to leave one's sins at the foot of the cross. Now this does enshrine a fundamental principle, but it is not the whole

meaning of the word. To "repent" means to change the mind, to repudiate a previous course of action, to enter upon a new way. Applied to men and women conscious that all is not well with the world in which they live, nor with themselves, it means to consider what there is in one's own way of life that is out of accord with the principles of rightness, and to resolve that those things shall be banished and a new way of life adopted, a way which shall have as its object due acknowledgment of the supremacy of God, and the well-being and happiness of one's fellows. Since no such resolve can be put into effect to any appreciable degree without close attention to the examples and precepts of Jesus Christ, it follows that such repentance must of necessity involve belief in the efficacy and integrity of his teaching and acceptance of his leadership in life.

This of itself is not enough. Many have sought to model their lives after the example of great philosophers and teachers, becoming powerful influences for good in consequence; but they have not banished the evil that is in the world, and nothing short of the elimination of evil can solve the problems which distress mankind. The acceptance of Jesus and his message involves something more than any other teacher demands. Jesus claimed to have come from above, from God, to bring his world-saving message. He declared the necessity of his death as a man in order that men might be saved, and also his intention of returning again to earth after the lapse of a pre-determined period of time—during which the seed of his teaching was to germinate and spread among the nations—to complete his work of abolishing evil and bring all men into fellowship with God. If Jesus is to be accepted as a reliable guide to a new way of life all this must be accepted too. If He was mistaken in this theological aspect of his message, forming as it does the whole framework within which his teaching is set and upon which that depends, then He was a misled and completely deluded man and no leader in whom men today, with the problems they have to solve, can afford to repose confidence.

Jesus was not mistaken! He did come from God. In his Divinity He is supreme over all created things, and comes again in the glory of that Divinity, a glory not perceptible by human sense but none the less real, to finish

his work on earth. There can be no physical or intellectual proof of all this, for these are matters transcending human values and means of measurement. The proof comes *after*, and not before, the repentant individual has "turned" to serve God. Having accepted Christ, not only as a guide to conduct and instructor in morals, but a personal Deliverer from sin and the effects of sin, he becomes increasingly conscious of a new and different sphere of understanding which advances satisfactory and convincing proofs not capable of demonstration by the materialistic arguments of every day.

Repentance, then, *does* involve coming to Jesus in submission as to a Master and leader. It *does* involve claiming him and accepting him as a personal Saviour and subordinating one's whole life and interests to his service. The object is not merely that one may be "saved from the wrath to come". God does not look with approval on people whose sole desire is to save their own skins, and advance their own interests. The world has seen too much of that already. Rather should one come to God in dedication of life to be used by him in the further reclamation of the world from evil. It implies service, and it implies hard work. The day set aside by God for this purpose is the still future Millennial Age, during which all men, including the returned dead, will be taught the ways of God and be led to choose between good and evil and decide their future destiny for themselves. Nevertheless there is much that can be done in this present day, before God breaks through into human affairs with his promised Millennial Kingdom. That is why the repentance and dedication to Christian service of any man or woman has an immediate effect upon the prevalence of evil. It is one more blow struck for right dealing and right living, one more influence making for peace and rectitude in the affairs of men and nations, leading immediately to some mitigation, however slight, of the troubles that now afflict mankind.

This then is God's call. "*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things*". (Acts 3. 19-21.)



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

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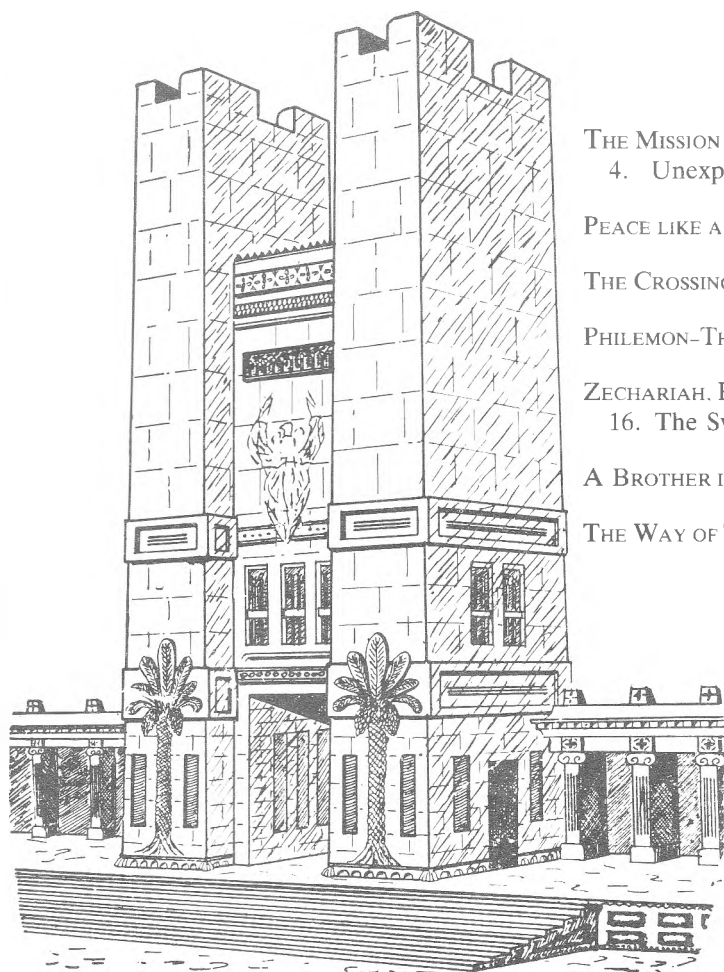
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A Personal Word

The first Editor of this journal, from its inception in 1924 to the year 1935, was Ebenezer Housden, who retired from that duty in the latter year on account of age. His successor, Albert Hudson, has occupied the Editorial chair from that time until the present, a span of sixty years, but the time has come, for the same reason, to give place to a younger occupant. From this issue onward that occupant will be Derrick Nadal. As is the immutable decree of Nature, the new Editor will probably make the same initial mistakes as did his predecessor when he embarked upon these responsibilities, and it may be that the more discerning—or critical—of our readers will find cause for mild criticism, and with that an opportunity for the exercise of Christian understanding and charity. The expressed objects of the journal outlined at the top of this page, remain—it must be though that *“the path of the just is as the shining light”—the sun—“which shineth more and more unto the perfect day”*. The “Monthly” will continue in its endeavour to remain in the forefront of advancing understanding of Bible truth as illumined by continued study of the Divine Word, and further discoveries in any field of human knowledge which shed greater light on its contents. As the great Apostle said in another connection, *“forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press forward”*. The theology of the Bible has to be expressed and re-expressed with every advance in human knowledge and in the language of each successive generation. To that extent the understanding of past centuries can be expected to expand into new reaches undreamed of by our predecessors, yet firmly founded on the principles they were used to uncover and

expound in the days of their service. *“Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”* The retiring Editor expects to continue as a contributor to the contents of the journal.

There are two further things that should be said. As indicated above the Bible Study Monthly will continue with the same objectives that it has always had. No changes are foreseen in the immediate future and if they occur they will be made very slowly as led by the Lord.

Many readers have, in their letters over the years, expressed their warm appreciation for the help and enlightenment they obtain from the Monthly. These thanks are due in large measure to the retiring editor who has worked tirelessly for these many years. God has made him a blessing to countless readers all over the world. *“For we are labourers together with God.”*

Gone from us



Bro. Ronald Armstrong (*Hyde*)
 Bro. Leslie Cowley (*Coventry*)
 Sis. Edith Surrey (*Forest Gate*)
 Sis. Rosemary Webb (*Forest Gate*)
 Sis. Florence Eastham (*Blackpool*)
 Sis. Mabel Royle (*Manchester*)



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

THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 4. Unexpected Witnesses

It is not often that Greek and Roman classical writers are called in to add their testimony to the truth of the Scriptures, but there does seem to be justification for relating certain scattered allusions in Pliny, Strabo, Ovid and Herodotus to the story of Jonah, allusions which indicate that at a time remote in history the town of Joppa in Judea had cause to commemorate some event which was connected with a whale.

The chain of testimony commences with Pliny, a Roman historian and naturalist who lived at the same time as the Apostle Paul and perished in the eruption of Vesuvius which buried the towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79. Pliny is the author of a voluminous work on natural history. In Book IX of this work he speaks of a well-known Roman statesman, Marcus Scaurus, who, during the year of his aedileship, staged a great natural history exhibition at Rome. Scaurus imported hippopotami, crocodiles, leopards and many other animals strange to the citizens. He also brought, from the town of Joppa in Judea, the skeleton of a monster which, from Pliny's description, is agreed by modern naturalists to have been that of a whale some forty feet long and between ten and fourteen feet high. This skeleton had been preserved for many centuries in a temple at Joppa, apparently in order to commemorate some noteworthy event. Pliny himself says that the skeleton was that of the monster which figured in the Greek legend of Andromeda and Perseus. According to the story, the hero Perseus, returning home to Greece from travelling to the farthest parts of the earth, and passing Joppa in Canaan, found a maiden named Andromeda chained to a rock on the seashore. She had been placed there to placate a terrible sea monster which was ravaging the land. Perseus slew the monster and delivered Andromeda.

Pliny, like other educated Romans of his day, looked on these tales much as we do today—highly embellished poetic legends handed down for ages and having their origin in some barely recognisable basis of truth. The fact of the skeleton itself, however, is quite a different thing. It is known that Marcus Scaurus was Aedile of Rome in the year 58 B.C., and there can be no reason to doubt that Pliny's account of this exhibition, held only a generation before

his own time, is accurate. We are left, therefore, with this reasonably well established fact, that for an unknown length of time prior to the year 58 B.C., the skeleton of a forty-foot whale reposed in a temple at Joppa to memorialise some far-off forgotten event.

The story of Andromeda is given at length by the Latin writer Ovid, who was born in 43 B.C. Ovid's description of the monster is strongly suggestive of a whale, as witness the following extracts:

"But see, as a swift ship with its sharp beak ploughs the waves, driven by stout rowers' sweating arms, so does the monster come, rolling back the water from either side as his breast surges through . . . Smarting under the deep wound, the creature now reared himself on high, now plunged beneath the waves, now turned like a fierce wild boar when around him a pack of noisy hounds give tongue . . . The beast belches forth water mixed with purple blood" (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book IV, 670). The Greek geographer Strabo (A.D. 20) also says that Joppa was the scene of this exploit, in his *Geography*, Book I, 34.

The legend goes back a long way, for Euripides, the Greek playwright, who lived at Athens, 480-406 B.C. (about the time of Nehemiah), wrote a play on the story; incidentally, in his play the monster is definitely called a whale. Sophocles, another Greek playwright, at about the same time, also introduced the story into his plays. Something noteworthy must have happened at Joppa to set these men romancing for the benefit of Greek audiences four hundred years after the time of Jonah.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, says that the Persians in the time of Artaxerxes, included descendants of Andromeda and Perseus, so that, whilst he does not retail the story of the monster, it was evidently current in his day (440 B.C.) as having occurred at least several generations earlier—say, in the sixth century B.C. at latest. This is getting nearer to Jonah's day.

Herodotus also records the story of Arion and the dolphin. He is evidently a little dubious as to its truth, for instead of employing his usual definite style, he prefaces each statement with "they say", as though he is not personally prepared to vouch for its accuracy. The story is set in the time of Periander, King of Corinth

(sixth century B.C.). A renowned Greek musician, Arion, was returning from Italy and overheard the sailors of the vessel conspiring to throw him overboard in order to seize his possessions. Entreaties were in vain, and eventually, after taking his stand on the rowing benches and singing to his own accompaniment what was known as the Orthian strain, Arion leaped, fully dressed, into the sea. A dolphin received him on its back and carried him home to Corinth, where he arrived ahead of the ship, much to the astonishment and dismay of the sailors when they in their turn came into port. The narrative in full is to be found in *Herod*, Book I, 23. Strabo repeats it briefly in his *Geography* Book XIII, 4.

Although Herodotus assigns this story to the sixth century B.C., there is evidence that it has an older basis. There is an engraving in a tomb at Praisos, in the island of Crete, dating from about 800 B.C., picturing a man being carried on the back of a giant fish. The story behind this tomb painting is quite unknown, but it is evidently in the same category as the later one of Arion and the dolphin. The Cretans in 800 B.C., were in close touch with the Phœnicians and the Israelites—the Philistines who figure so much in the Old Testament were Cretan colonists, engaged in the growing of wheat for export to their own land—and a great many of the Greek tales came from the earlier civilisation of Crete.

But before dismissing the story of Arion and the dolphin as pure fantasy, there has to be noted a modern equivalent. The London *"Daily Mail"* of 26 August 1969 reported the case of a Swedish cargo ship which, a few days previously, was sailing a few hundred miles off the coast of Nicaragua in Central America. The lookout man, discharging his normal duties, stiffened, blinked, and looked again, thinking he could see in the sea ahead a man, riding on the back of a large turtle. He took a second look; the man was still there, riding on the back of a large turtle. At the sight of this rather unusual phenomenon, the seaman sent for the captain to take a look and tell him he was seeing things. The captain came, and looked, and told him he was certainly seeing things. There was a man out there, riding on the back of a large turtle. The vessel was manoeuvred to approach closer and a boat was lowered to rescue the traveller, probably to the considerable relief of the turtle. The rider turned out to be a Korean seaman from a Liberian ship who had fallen overboard

unnoticed, had encountered the turtle, and had been clinging to its back for fifteen hours with little or no hope of rescue. He was eventually landed at Los Angeles little the worse for his experience.

But putting on one side for the moment these stories of strange happenings at sea, what can be learned from this mass of fairy tale and folk lore? Is there anything of value in connection with our study of the Book of Jonah?

There seems to be a common thread running through all these legends, one which fits in with the historic fact recorded by Pliny. That thread, stripped of the fantasy and embellishment, may tell us this.

Jonah's experience with the whale, recorded in the book which bears his name, occurred at a time probably between 810 B.C. and 850 B.C. The fact that the whale vomited out Jonah upon dry land denotes unmistakably that the animal became stranded on a shelving beach, and Jonah was able to escape without even having to "swim for it"! What is more appropriate than that God should return Jonah to the very beach—the beach at Joppa—from which he had set out so determinedly a few days before? With what force would the futility of fighting against God be impressed upon the prophet's mind. And, from a different angle of view, would the prophet not take this as an indication that God had blotted out all that had happened since the ill-fated ship set sail? Jonah was back again at his starting point, with an opportunity to make a fresh start.

Granted that this assumption is correct, it may be expected that the ship would have arrived at Joppa before Jonah. It is true that the Bible account does not say what became of the ship, but a little reflection will suggest that the mariners, having already cast overboard the wares which they were taking to Tarshish for purposes of trade (Jonah 1. 5.), would have no reason for continuing their voyage and must perforce have returned to their home port. The storm had fallen, but their sails and masts were gone, and they were compelled therefore to rely upon the rowers. Under these conditions, they would make about five miles an hour, not much faster than the whale, but whereas they would steer straight for Joppa and make all haste to get their unseaworthy ship safe to land, the whale would swim more or less aimlessly and take perhaps three times as long to reach the shore. We can expect, therefore, the arrival of

the disabled ship with its relieved crew, full of the tale they had to tell about the strange passenger, and how his God, wroth with him, had pursued their ship with a fearful storm and only relented when they had cast him into the sea. They probably told the story in subdued tones, with an anxious glance over their shoulders as they did so; this Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, had shown himself to be a most powerful God.

The story would go the rounds of the town for a day or so, and then be eclipsed by a new wonder. A whale, venturing too far inshore, was observed to be in difficulties. There are but few whales in the Mediterranean today, but they were common so recently as a hundred years ago and dwellers along the coast of Canaan would be moderately familiar with them. A crowd would quickly have gathered on the beach to watch this monster twisting and rolling in the waves and thrashing the water with its enormous tail, until perhaps a larger swell than usual, rolling in from the sea, lifted the forty-foot creature and swept it into shallow water with its great head driven on to the sandy beach.

By this time a goodly number would have been present, for the stranding of a whale is a lengthy process and it might have spent several hours wallowing in the shallows before it finally gave up the conflict. Some were drawn by curiosity, others with a view to killing and cutting up the stranded body and making profit of this unexpected gift from the sea. There may or may not have been present some of the sailors from Jonah's ship, but if they were, neither they nor any others would have been in the slightest degree prepared for what happened next.

The great mouth slowly opened, and the contents of the whale's stomach were expelled on to the beach—and among them a shape that moved spasmodically, and then, perhaps, sat up and raised shaking hands to its head. At that the onlookers must have taken fright and scattered in all directions. They would soon recover their wits and approach, cautiously, to find Jonah more or less in his right mind and capable of discoursing with them intelligently.

Probably they worshipped Jonah. He must be more than a man, who travelled the seas inside a whale and emerged alive. Certainly they worshipped the whale. Joppa had been, for centuries, the port for the Philistines, the town from which their grain ships set out with their cargoes for Crete, six hundred miles away, and

the god of the Philistines was Dagon, the sea-god, part man and part fish (see 1 Sam. 5. 1-7, esp. verse 4, margin). The sailors of Jonah's ship must by now have heard of the occurrence and hastened to the scene, and would quickly confirm that this was the man they had cast overboard. The conclusion was obvious. Dagon had taken a hand in the matter and sent his own special messenger to pick up Jonah and transport him safely back to Joppa. There was probably a religious revival of unprecedented dimensions in Joppa that night, with both Jehovah and Dagon the recipients of fervent protestations of devotion and allegiance.

There would, of course, be no further attempts to make money out of the dead monster. As a Divine messenger, he was sacred and his remains must be duly respected. Both Jehovah and Dagon had shown that they were not to be trifled with.

The stranded whale would, however, remain an obvious fact—increasingly so in the hot Canaanitish sun, and the fact that there is practically no rise and fall of tide in the Mediterranean necessitated approximately eighty tons of whale meat remaining on the beach at Joppa until something was done about it. Fortunately, a feature of the Middle East is the presence of vultures (the "eagles" of the New Testament) and they are proverbially keen of sight and of scent. It is possible that nearly all the vultures in Canaan visited Joppa for a short time whilst Jonah was there.

There remained the skeleton—picked clean, massive, but at least transportable. Since the vultures had not eaten that, it had to be assumed that Dagon required it to be preserved. The obvious thing was to house it in the local temple of Dagon as a permanent memorial of the most wonderful happening ever recorded in the history of Joppa. Bones are almost indestructible, and in any case the ancients were adepts at preserving such things, and the task would present little difficulty.

If something like this was in fact the sequel to the story of Jonah, it explains why, over seven hundred years later, Marcus Scaurus found the skeleton of a whale in a temple at Joppa and shipped it to Rome as a fitting subject for his great exhibition. In that lapse of time the true story associated with the relic would have been forgotten and overlaid with other explanations, or varied so much from its original form as to be unrecognisable. At the time, however, the

story would spread rapidly. The very next ship to sail for Crete would carry it there and that might give rise to the inspiration for the tomb painting already referred to. In another century or so the Greeks were visiting the country in increasing numbers, and to every visitor who inspected the famous relic the story would be told and retold, with additions, and these stories, taken back to Greece, would be worked upon by the Greek poets and dramatists, giving rise to the legends here quoted. It may be that the theme of Joppa and its wonderful monster has been immortalised by the Greeks on the level of legend just as that of Jonah and the whale has been preserved by the Hebrews on the infinitely higher plane of truth.

Legends do grow on a basis of truth in this fashion. That typically British story of St. George and the Dragon is considered by many authorities to have been derived from this same story of Andromeda and Perseus. The birthplace of St. George is supposed to have been Lydda, which is nine miles from Joppa, and it was at Joppa that he is said to have slain the dragon and rescued the doomed maiden. He is also said to have then been a missionary for

Christianity in Nicodemia and martyred by the Roman Emperor Diocletian. Upon this rather slender basis he was canonised a saint by Pope Gelasius in A.D. 496. His birthday, April 23rd, was ordained by the Council of Oxford in A.D. 1222 to be observed as an annual national holiday in England and Wales. In A.D. 1350 he was instituted patron saint of the Order of the Garter by Richard III of England. It is rather intriguing to think of the possibility that the most familiar figure in English pageantry, the votary of British chivalry, the guardian spirit of the Crusades, the symbol of British patriotism, may in reality owe its origin to a legendary memory of Jonah the Israelite, the prophet of God.

And so Jonah, in chastened mood, must have retired to his native village of Gathhepher to await the next instruction from God—an instruction which he would receive in very different spirit to that in which he heard, and rejected, his first commission to go unto Nineveh, and cry against it, because their sins had come up before God.

(To be continued)

“PEACE . . . LIKE A RIVER”

*A discourse based
on Psa. 46.4*

Among the many blessings which are ours through faith in the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord, there is one, bequeathed to us by Jesus, which is especially precious to us in these days when all around us is turmoil and strife.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples of his necessary departure to prepare a place for them, and was preparing them for the persecution which would come upon them in a little while. They became troubled and alarmed, and sensing their distress, He promised them that He would send them the Holy Spirit, and then bequeathed to them that precious gift which had been such a source of blessing to him in his hours of trial. He said: “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you*”. His *OWN* peace, which was nothing less than the peace of God, which, as Paul truly says, transcends all our powers of thought! Much has already been written concerning this peace, but no apology is made for yet another consideration of this subject, for God’s peace is such that our finite minds can never ascend to its fullest heights, nor fathom its deepest depths. God dwells in perfect peace

because of his ability to see the end from the beginning and because of his power to accomplish that which he designs to perform. If we would have his peace we must have, primarily, perfect faith in him, in his word, and in his ability to bring order out of chaos which we see around us today. Further, having accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, and being justified by faith, we must go on to that condition of heart and mind in which the peace of God will “garrison” our hearts and minds (see Phil. 4. 4–7). The Apostle Peter urges us to “*Seek peace and ensue it*”, or, as Moffatt puts it: “Let us make peace our aim”. Why need to seek it, if it is a gift? Because it is not a natural element of this passing evil world, neither is it for the indolent and lazy ones! God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and if we would have this peace in its fulness, we must seek to know the factors upon which it depends, and apply them to our lives.

Peter’s desire for those who had “*obtained like precious faith*” to his own was that grace should be multiplied unto them “*through the*

knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet. 1. 2). This "knowledge" of God implies much more than merely knowing "about" him. It implies intimate acquaintance or personal knowledge. Rotherham's translation of Job 22. 21 conveys the thought: "*Shew thyself to be one with him, I pray thee, and prosper*". We may have an intellectual appreciation of God and his attributes, but it is only as we develop a heart reliance upon him and his word, resulting from an experience of that sonship which is ours through vital union with Christ, that we can find the real peace which came to Jesus whilst He was bearing the greatest burden that a man was ever called upon to bear. It may be our portion to bear heavy losses, to fight stern battles, or to keep long and lonely vigils, but even as Jesus by communion with his Father found peace in every circumstance, so, we by learning to commune more and more with our Father, through Jesus, can find peace, perfect peace in every experience. To have this peace multiplied unto us, as Peter desires, is indeed a blessing beyond the power of human comprehension, but the figure used in the prophecy concerning natural Israel in Isa. 48. 18 may bring some fresh thought to bear upon this wonderful subject. This verse also brings to our attention yet another factor upon which this peace depends. It reads: "*Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river*". This peace of Israel depended upon their obedience to the Divine Will as expressed in God's laws, but they failed to fulfil the conditions, and thus lost the accompanying blessing; nevertheless, it is prophesied of her (Isa. 66. 12) "*I will extend to her peace like a river*". In the meantime, the Church, as spiritual Israel, can rightly claim this blessing, if the conditions are fulfilled: as the Psalmist says: "*Great peace have they which love thy law*". Therefore, if we have perfect faith in God and his word, if we accept the righteousness which comes by faith in the blood of Christ, and, offering our all to him in sacrifice, learn to know and do his will, we can and should have peace—like a river.

A river is usually symbolic of plenty, constancy or perpetuity, and thus truly pictures the peace which comes from God. A river begins as a tiny stream in the hills, then, making its way through many scenes, is joined by numerous tributaries, which cause it to become wider and deeper, until it is finally lost in the sea. The

changes which it may experience and the ever widening and deepening of its course as it wends its way ever onward to the sea, does indeed graphically illustrate the peace of God as it comes to his obedient children.

Cast the mind back to the time when we had no personal knowledge of God. Then we had no real peace. But, with our introduction to the new life which is the portion of all who "diligently seek", we enter into a wonderfully new experience, full of glorious possibilities. First, we learned something of the love of God (John 3. 16) and of his justice (Rom. 3. 26), and our river of peace began as a tiny stream (Rom. 5. 1). It soon increased as we learned something of his wisdom and power, and as time went on our knowledge of him and his plan increased, and each aspect of truth became as it were tributaries uniting to swell our river of peace (Psalm 46. 4). Thus, for a while our river wended its way, as it were, through pleasant scenes. The sun shone, on its sparkling waters, the grassy slopes which lined its banks were refreshingly green, and the graceful willows at its edge afforded pleasant shelter. The distant lowing of the cattle and the singing of the birds complete a picture of perfect peace.

In the natural picture, as the river becomes wider and deeper, men build upon its banks, and it becomes lined with warehouses, factories and squalid dwellings. The singing of the birds or the quietness of the wilderness gives way to the noise and clangour of commerce, and the sparkling stream becomes a murky and sluggish river, for, although it continues on its way ever onward to the sea, its flow is retarded by all the commercial activity on its banks.

So, in our Christian experience, whether in the workshop, office, factory or shop, or about the duties of the house, whatever our vocation may be, contact with the world and its activities tends to slow down our river of peace, and dull its sparkling waters. Nevertheless, it is the same river, and is ever flowing towards its outlet, the sea; and as it slows down it must widen and deepen, as it should do as our heart reliance upon God is developed in the turmoil of life. Our river of peace might well be like the mountain streams which rush headlong down the rocks, to be lost in the upland lakes—pretty, but of little use; or it might continue its flow untouched by commerce and worldly activity, and flow unimpeded to the sea. Then it would be like the lives of those who shut themselves

up in monasteries, convents, and like institutions. Their lives may have a serenity and beauty of a sort, but our Lord's prayer for his own was not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil thereof. So, if our river passes through the squalor and turmoil, the smoke and the ceaseless activity of the world, let us remember how Jesus, in his perfection, moved amongst such greed and hypocrisy, such depravity and degradation as must have deeply affected his sensitive nature. Then above all the distractions of life we shall hear him saying: "*These things I have spoken unto you, that you might have peace*".

As the natural river flows through the industrial area it becomes liable to pollution, and steps are taken to prevent this by laws which require every stream which flows into it to conform to a certain standard of purity. So in the Christian life our pure river is liable to become tainted with impurities, and thus our peace disturbed. So we need to be vigilant, especially in these last days, when, as foretold, many false prophets have arisen, and see that every so-called truth is scrutinised to see if it conforms to the standards set up in the Word of God. As the river nears the sea it is affected by the wind, which whips it up into angry waves. Nevertheless, those who work beneath the surface find that all is calm and quiet below. So in Christian experience the winds of affliction may blow upon us, and our river may become ruffled, but this is only the surface; deep down in our hearts the peace of God remains. The tides also affect the river, so that for a while its flow is held up, thus causing the river to widen and deepen. The tide of adversity may hold up the flow of our river temporarily, but this should only cause it to widen and deepen for even as the tides are provided to cleanse the river, so the adversity should, if we are rightly exercised thereby, cleanse and purify us and make us ready to meet the God of peace. Sometimes the adverse wind and the tide coincide in the natural picture and floods result, with corresponding disaster. We may experience the tides of affliction and the winds of adversity together; this causes a crisis in our life which may seem to us to be a catastrophe, but the tide of affliction must ebb

and the winds of adversity must abate, and soon our river flows on more swiftly to the sea, and we are strengthened and purified as a result of the apparent catastrophe.

Sometimes, however, when the "*surges rise and rest delays to come*", we may lose our hold on this peace. In such circumstances let us recall that our Lord's river flowed through scenes and circumstances much more intense than any experience we have to endure. The winds of adversity and the tides of affliction were permitted to assert their full force upon him, and we see the extent to which they bore down upon him as He cried out in Gethsemane. In such weariness of mind he sought his Father's face, and as a result of sweet communion with him, He went out of Gethsemane the very personification of peace.

Surrounded by the howling mob, standing before the murderous High Priest and Elders, and facing the quaking Pilate, He remained calm and composed, and that peace which came from God remained with him until He died.

So He lived and died, but He arose, and now lives, that we might have the same peace, even as we follow him through Gethsemane and Golgotha to the reward which He has already gained.

This peace, then, will be our portion in ever increasing measure until our river is lost in the sea.

When and where will this be? Surely it will be when "*this mortal shall put on immortality*," and we enter into our eternal destiny.

Here and now, wonderful though it is, our peace is like a river, comparatively narrow, affected by the frailty of human nature and its circumstances of life, but then, when that which is perfect is come, it will open out into a boundless sea, and we shall dwell in God's perfect peace throughout all eternity.

But this is not all. The rapidly increasing river, springing from beneath the altar in the Sanctuary, will flow out into the desert, bringing life to all who have been submerged in sin and death. (Ezekiel 47.) Thus cleansed and made whole, being freed from all that disturbs or alarms, the whole world, united under one Head, will find peace at last.

Hand and heart, instinct and motive, the whole life within and without must be transformed up to the "ideal". And only the

Omniscience of God knows what that is! And only the Omnipotence of God can sustain in the making!

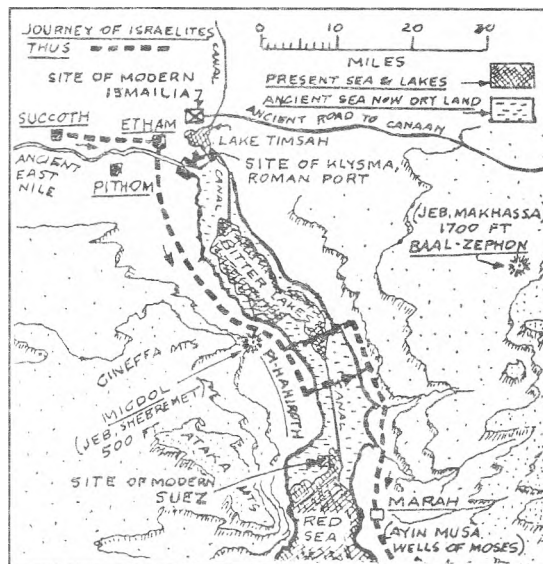
THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

The story of Moses leading the tribes of Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land is one of the epics of history; the highlight of that epic is the description of the Red Sea parting its waters to allow the fugitives to cross into safety. Critics never tire of enlarging upon the impossibility of such a happening and claim this as a bit of folklore inserted into the story. But in this particular locality it is not impossible, and a close examination of the topographical indications in the narrative and some investigation into the climatic phenomena of the district shows in a reasonably accurate fashion just what did happen. It must be remembered, however, that no matter what natural forces can be shown to have been the agents of the great deliverance the overruling providence of God cannot be ignored. It was by his disposition of things that the powers of Nature came into operation at that moment of time to effect his purpose and in that lies the essence of the wonderful thing that happened.

The first factor to be considered is the territory. It was not known until almost the turn of the century that the configuration of the land has changed greatly since the days of Moses; this was established by the labours on site of the French Egyptologist, M. Edouard Naville, the British geologist, Sir J. W. Dawson, and the American geologist Prof. G. F. Wright. Between 1883 and 1900 it was ascertained by these three, working independently, that the southern part of the isthmus of Suez, where the crossing took place, has been rising, and the northern part sinking, through the ages, so that land which was once below the sea is now above it, and vice versa. Lake Menzaleh, in the Nile delta, was fertile land supporting farms and towns in the days of Moses. According to the 10th century Arab historian Mamoudy the sea began to break through in 535 A.D. and within a century the present lake had submerged the sinking land. Conversely, south of present day Ismailia the sea had receded and rising land taken its place. As late as Roman times, the Red Sea, which now ends at Suez, extended as far north as Lake Timsah (see accompanying map) and there was a seaport nearby called Klyasma. A branch of the Nile, now dried up because of the progressive elevation of the land, entered this extension of the Red Sea at Klyasma, and merchant ships from Arabia were able to

sail up the Red Sea and into the Mediterranean via the Nile—a kind of ancient version of the Suez Canal. Several of the Pharaohs from the 15th B.C. century onward found it necessary to dredge and deepen this branch on account of the rising land level; the last to carry out this operation was the Roman emperor Hadrian. Since then the continuing elevation has caused the sea to recede to Suez, leaving only the Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah as evidences of its former extent.

The Red Sea thus formed a continuous barrier between Egypt and Asia except at the north, which was heavily defended against invaders. This is why the Hebrews needed Divine intervention in order to escape; the only possible



land passage was barred by Pharaoh's soldiery. Hence Moses had to turn south along the seaside, a seemingly suicidal policy since no land way across into Sinai existed.

The Exodus proper began at Succoth. "They took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, on the edge of the wilderness" (Exod. 13. 20). Succoth was near Pithom, one of the store cities built for Pharaoh by the Israelites; the site of Pithom was discovered by Naville in 1883 with the ruins of many of the store-buildings. Examination of the brickwork showed that the lower courses were of Nile clay bound with well-chopped straw, the

intermediate ones with more scanty straw and the upper ones with pieces of rushes and Nile water plants instead of straw, a striking confirmation of Exod. 5. 12, where the Israelites were given no more straw and had to search for "stubble" instead. In Roman times the town was called Heeropolis and Naville found a Roman milestone here indicating nine (Roman) miles to the port of Klysma—about eight and three quarter English miles, showing that the Red Sea still extended thus far. In fact Strabo, the Greek geographer, refers to the Red Sea as the "Heeropolitan Gulf".

From Succoth the people marched to Etham, near modern Ismailia, about twelve miles, a reasonable day's journey for such a host encumbered with children, tents, belongings and cattle. Etham is the Hebrew equivalent of Khatem, the Egyptian name of the garrison town on the frontier through which all travellers into or out of Egypt must pass. Abraham, Joseph and Jacob all passed through Khatem. The Israelites, of course, must have encamped in the open country outside the town. Through the town and beyond it ran the road which led directly to Canaan, the Promised Land. A few weeks' journeying on that road would have brought them to their destination, had it not been for Pharaoh's soldiery barring the way, and, too, for the Lord's instruction to Moses bidding him at this juncture to turn southward, remaining still on the Egyptian side of the sea. "... turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it ye shall encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (Exod. 14. 1-2).

None of these three names have survived and resource has to be made to topography to follow the story. In going southward from Etham Moses would shortly leave the valley and find himself traversing a narrow passage a few miles wide with the sea on his left and a range of mountains, now the Gineffa mountains, on his right. This was the part of the sea which today is known as the Bitter Lakes. Some twenty-five miles from Etham the passage opens out into a broad grassy plain, ideal for an encampment such as Israel needed. At the entrance to this plain there stands one notable rock peak some five hundred feet high which is today called Jebel Shebreimet, an ideal "look-out" point. "Migdol" is a Hebrew word meaning "watchtower" and this peak might

well have borne this name in ancient times. Directly opposite this peak on the other side of the sea, rise the imposing precipices of the northern end of the Rahan range, with one solitary upstanding peak seventeen hundred feet high called Jebel Makassa. This could easily be the Baal-zephon of the narrative—the name is Semitic, meaning "Lord of the North," and it has been suggested that it might have been conferred by Phœnician sailormen. Coming up the gulf from distant lands, the appearance of this majestic mountain looking towards the north, on their starboard bow, was a signal that the dangers of their voyage were past, they would shortly be entering the eastern Nile and so emerge into their own sea, the Mediterranean, to dock safely in their home ports of Tyre and Sidon. Here, perhaps, they gave thanks to their god Baal, unknown here in Egypt, for protection in danger and a safe voyage nearly completed.

Pi-hahiroth is an Egyptian word meaning "the place of meadows". This grassy plain in which they were now encamped well fits the name. It seems fairly conclusive that here, a stretch of several miles along the then sea, now mainly land, just south of the Bitter Lakes, was the place of the crossing.

This explains Pharaoh's exultant exclamation "*they are entangled in the land; the wilderness hath shut them in*". By following this route the Israelites were on the wrong side of the sea and had no means of escape. Southward the way was blocked by another range of mountains (the Jebel Ataka, near Suez) and behind them the narrow pass, through which they had entered, could be easily held by Pharaoh's troops. The latter part of his words really means "the wilderness is closed to them", that is, they have missed their chance of getting into the wilderness on the other side of the Red Sea outside Egypt. So he decided to recapture them. It might have taken two days for Israel to reach this point from Etham; it would take a day for a messenger from the garrison at Etham to reach Pharaoh at his capital and advise him of the position, a day to collect his force of chariots and cavalry and two more days to reach the narrow pass at Migdol. The Israelites had probably just about got well settled in their camp at Pi-hahiroth when they "*lifted up their eyes and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid*" (Exod. 14. 10).

With the sea in front and the Egyptians behind, and no apparent avenue of escape, there

is perhaps some excuse for their loss of faith. The position must have seemed hopeless. It were better, they said, that they had never attempted to leave Egypt. But Moses was equal to the occasion. *"Speak unto the children of Israel"* God said, *"that they go forward. Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea"* (Exod. 14. 15-16).

This startling instruction had to be passed to all Israel. The number of men, women and children involved, with their flocks and herds, would require a stretch of land alongside the sea something like seven miles long by a mile deep and messengers had to be sent through all this area with Moses' commands. There was much striking of tents and packing up of possessions and rounding up of cattle to be done before a move could be made. All this would take time but the Egyptians were not likely to be in any hurry. They had the escaped slaves neatly bottled up, or so they thought, and were camped across the only practical exit from the plain, so they almost certainly settled down for the night with the intention of commencing operations on the morrow. That they did establish a camp instead of advancing on the fugitives at once is indicated by the narrative.

Israel, on the contrary, was wide awake. The confidence of Moses must have communicated itself to the erstwhile fearful host: perhaps memories of the wonders they had so recently seen brought a measure of shame for their lack of faith and a spirit of expectancy as they gazed across the heaving waters at the opposite shore six miles away, plainly visible in the light of the full moon. In many a heart there must have been the unspoken question "What is God going to do?" So they waited, wondering . . . *"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left"* (Exod. 14. 21-22).

The natural cause of this wonder is attributed in the narrative to "a strong east wind" blowing all that night. Israel was facing the sea at the southern end of the Bitter Lakes, where the ground is now twenty-seven feet above sea level but at that time was below sea level to the

amount of probably seven or eight feet. The sea here was probably about six miles wide but only this deep. To the south, fifteen miles away, lay what is the present head of the Red Sea at Suez, where the water was much deeper: to the north, only a mile or so, the Bitter Lakes, where the water also was deeper. The sea lay in a valley not more than twenty miles wide between the Egyptian and Sinai mountains, running roughly north-south. And there came down from the high tableland of Northern Sinai a tempestuous easterly or more likely north-easterly gale which, deflected by the Gineffa mountain range on the Egyptian side, channelled itself at increasing force down the valley, driving the waters towards what is now modern Suez and laying bare the sea bed over the ten miles or so of shallow water. Some water would remain in the rather deeper Bitter Lakes so it was true that the waters were *"a wall unto them on the right hand and on their left"*. They were safe from attack on their flanks; only from the rear could they be pursued.

This recession of the sea was not a unique phenomenon, occurring only at the time of the Exodus. The same north-easterly gale has acted in much the same way through the ages and still does so today. The results are not now so spectacular since there is no longer any shallow sea to be swept aside. Nevertheless the records of the Suez Canal Company show that during its first thirty years of existence the variation of sea level at the present head of the Gulf at Suez amounted to over ten feet; since there is virtually no tide in the Red Sea this is largely attributable to the action of the wind. In 1895 the waters at the eastern end of Lake Menzaleh in the Nile delta was lowered six feet by this same wind, as measured on the instruments of a British Army surveyor at the time. A confirmatory example of this effect is on record by the work of a United States Government survey of wind effects on Lake Erie (reported by Prof. G. F. Wright). The difference in water level between Toledo at the western end and Buffalo at the eastern end under certain wind conditions was found to amount to fifteen feet.

This is one of the instances in Old Testament narrative where God has intervened to time a perfectly natural and not uncommon act of Nature to occur at just the moment needed to execute some feature of his purpose. It is in that fact that the essence of miracle resides.

The people of Israel, perceiving the waters ebbing away to reveal a vast expanse of flat sand stretching into the distance, rounded up their cattle, gathered up their goods, and set out to cross. The gale blew across their path but they took no notice of that. They did not go over as a procession; that would have taken an interminable time. There was at least ten miles length of exposed sea-bed and they would have crossed together as one body over much of that distance. They could have completed the six miles crossing in something like four hours. Level sand is usually quite firm after the water has left it, as witness our English beaches when the tide is out, so that progress though slow would not be difficult. With darkness falling at 6.00 p.m., and allowing a few hours for the waters to recede, they could have got started by 10 o'clock and the last stragglers be walking up the opposite beach by 2.30 the following morning.

By that time one of the Egyptian sentries, making his rounds, most likely had his suspicions aroused and sent an investigating party to reconnoitre the Israelite camp. The party returned with the alarming news that the birds had flown and the sea-bed was bare. This latter phenomenon might have been no new thing to the Egyptians; unless they had known it happen before, their superstitious fears would almost certainly have precluded them from attempting to follow. As it was they did not hesitate to drive their chariots on to the sea-bed in pursuit. The time would have been about 2 a.m. and the fugitives just about at the other side.

Chariot wheels and sea sand, even firm sand, are probably not a good combination. The Egyptians found the going difficult. *"In the morning watch"* the narrative says, the Lord *"looked at the host of the Egyptians and took off their chariot wheels"* so that the occupants were pitched out. The Hebrew morning watch was the period 2.00 to 6.00 a.m. It might have been about 4.00 a.m. when the pursuers began to say to each other, as narrative has it, that they had best get back to shore for it was evident that the Lord was fighting for Israel. A new factor had come in to complicate the situation; the wind had dropped.

As the force of the gale died down the banked

up waters far out in the Red Sea to the south began to return. The sand became saturated with water and the erstwhile firm surface turned into treacherous quicksands. According to Exod. 14. 23 the pursuers had got to the midway point of the crossing so that they had something like three miles between themselves and safety. *"And the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared"* (this expression denotes about 5 o'clock) *"and the Egyptians fled against it. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh. There remained not so much as one of them"* (vs. 27-28). With the cessation of the wind, the sea would have returned from Suez in a roaring tidal wave which could easily have attained a speed of sixty miles an hour. Fifteen or twenty minutes would have seen the end. The hosts of Pharaoh had no chance. The fact that their bodies, again according to the narrative, were were cast up upon the eastern shore shows that the easterly gale had been replaced by a south-westerly blowing down from the Ataka mountains near Suez, which would have brought the waters back all the more quickly.

It might reasonably be queried why the cutting of the Suez Canal through this former sea-bed, or the periodic subsequent dredging of the Canal, has not brought to light objects or weapons giving concrete evidence of this disaster to the Egyptians. It is perhaps too much to expect. The Canal at this point lies towards the western side of the ancient sea-bed, so far as the boundaries of the latter can be estimated, probably two miles more from the area where the Egyptians must have been overtaken by the waters. The Canal itself was 29 feet deep when constructed and has been deepened to 42 feet in recent years but implements of comparatively modern or mediæval times have been found to have sunk much more than this in the alluvial soil of Egypt so that if any remains of those chariots and the weapons do survive they will be lying at levels far below any man-made excavation of modern times. The evidence for the historical and literal accuracy of this enthralling story still lies in the exact correspondence between the narrative itself and the physical features of the territory in which it is said to have taken place.

PHILEMON—THE CHANGE FROM WITHIN

With all the many differences in law, manners and customs, nevertheless the Romans, Greeks and Jews had one thing in common—a dependence on slave economy. However much the twentieth century mind may admire any or all of these civilisations that fact must be admitted.

The difference between the Jews and everybody else on this question was that under their law no slave could be held longer than six years (in the Year of Jubilee all slaves had to be freed) and there were regulations laid down for their protection. A young female slave, for example, on reaching a marriageable age had either to be married to her master or his son, and in the eventuality of neither wanting her she had to be freed.

The Greeks treated their slaves, on the whole, better than the Romans though this is not saying a great deal. If a Greek slave was required to give evidence in a law court as a witness he could expect to be tortured, but on the other hand his master could not put him or her to death without the consent of the Court. If any slave was in danger of having their virtue assaulted they could take refuge in a temple, and claim the right to be sold to a different master. Children born to slave women became slaves themselves.

With the Romans, however, the slave was not a person, he was a 'thing' and absolutely in the power of his master. This is not to say that every Roman slave owner was a callous brute; many of them treated their slaves well, but being convinced of the rightness of the course they were pursuing would probably have been horrified at the suggestion that slavery was wrong.

There had been attempts to bring about a change in conditions. The Romans and the Greeks at the time Paul was writing his epistles were conscious of the pressure put on the system, less than a hundred years before, by the Thracian ex-gladiator Spartacus. The Romans particularly had cause to remember this revolt against slavery in 73–71 B.C. It had cost too many lives, and imbedded too many dangerous ideas about liberty. According to what is known of the leader of the slaves he was a humane man, and remembering that, though intended for the gladiatorial arena, unless he distinguished himself in his first fight and was subsequently freed, it meant winning every contest for three years when the doubtful mercy of two years' slavery ending in freedom would

be accorded him (at least that was the custom with prisoners of war and the Thracian had been a soldier). One can understand how a short cut to liberty would appeal to Spartacus.

Onesimus was a different proposition altogether. His name, by a stroke of irony, meant 'profitable', but this apparently was the opposite of what he was in reality. After being more trouble than he was worth to his master he finally ran away, helping himself to some of Philemon's money in the process. Philemon may very probably have been glad to see the back of him, and there is no account given of any attempt on his part to follow and recapture the young man. Perhaps this was an indication of the change in Philemon's inner feelings for even the kindest pagan slave owner would have set out in indignant pursuit.

It has been agreed that Paul wrote this letter from prison. It has not been agreed where Paul was in prison. Some would argue for Ephesus and point out that it was not so far from Colossæ where Philemon lived, whereas Rome, the traditionally held viewpoint, several hundred miles away, would be too far to be the objective of an escaped slave.

The answer or answers to that argument would be—

- (a) No runaway slave would take refuge in any town where there was the remotest chance of his master finding him, or of being recognised.
- (b) Rome was a large enough city for any runaway to hide quite successfully for a long period of time, and the underworld of the capital would always welcome one more fugitive.
- (c) That was Onesimus's purpose in helping himself to Philemon's money.

We do not know how Onesimus and Paul met. Onesimus may indeed have seen Paul at Philemon's house, for the apostle seemed to be on friendly terms with him and his family.

"To Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia and Archippus our fellow soldier . . ."

and Archippus has also been included in the farewell messages in the letter to the Colossians.

Onesimus may have been denounced as a runaway slave. Epaphras, whose position approximated to that of minister to the Church at Colossæ, who was with Paul at that time may

have recognised him and persuaded him to put his case to the apostle. It might be asked if anyone desperate enough to run away—and a thief into the bargain—would throw away his chance of freedom so easily. The penalties for runaway slaves were severe; the law would have upheld Philemon if he had put him to death. It is unlikely that any other fugitive slaves would have given Onesimus away, for they stood together. As one writer observed, their code was “love each other, love lies, love licentiousness” and so on. A possible explanation may have been that Onesimus learnt the apostle was in Rome—we know Paul had been allowed to rent a house there and to receive anyone who wanted to see him—and that the memory of the teaching he had half-forgotten stirred up feelings of remorse. Perhaps Onesimus’s conscience, which hitherto had not had much opportunity of making itself heard, went into action. Perhaps he may have had a superstitious fear of the apostle which, bearing in mind Paul’s fiery preaching, is very possible.

Whatever reason finally prompted Onesimus to throw himself on the mercy of Paul, there is no cause to disbelieve that he presented the apostle with a very delicate problem. To give shelter to a runaway slave was the equivalent of being a receiver of stolen goods. Paul was quite capable of dealing with such a situation, however, and such was the influence he could exert over practically everybody that, probably overwhelmed with gratitude and relief from a remorseless conscience, Onesimus, for the first time perhaps, began to justify his name—

“Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.”

There is no reason to suppose that Paul approved of slavery, though he never preached directly against it for fear of its upsetting the real purpose of his life—the spreading of the Christian belief. His attitude seems to have been that if a man is free in Christ, the slavery he is enduring is a passing thing, besides which, believing in the imminent return of Christ there would have seemed little purpose in his eyes in campaigning for the freedom of slaves. Nevertheless Paul, whilst stressing the need for servants to be obedient to their masters, also emphasised the need for masters to treat their servants/slaves properly. The status of a slave was less than nothing. There were slaves who bought their freedom and some who received it as a reward, but the standard of behaviour was

understandably low. What incentive had men and women to try to lead moral lives if they were the property of their masters and death was the only means by which they could obtain freedom. It is almost impossible for us to realise what the advent of Christianity meant to the slave community, or what a tremendous assertion Colossians 3. 10-11 is—

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.”

In other words, Christ is the master of all men.

The problem Paul faced was neither philosophical nor theological, but intensely practical. The apostle does not seem to have been a sentimental man, yet one can assume that there were some good qualities in Onesimus, and that he had been converted by Paul’s teaching, otherwise why should he stay there in the prison, and so we read—

“Whom I would have retained with me”.

It would appear that Paul had developed an affection for Onesimus, referring to him as “his son”. As in other troublesome circumstances, and as it was impossible at that moment for obvious reasons to visit Colossæ, Paul has to rely on his ability as a letter writer.

His letter to Philemon is unique among his writings. It is the shortest, and it is certainly the most cordial. No fiery teaching, no scathing denunciation; sweetness and light abound from the first verse. The Churches at Corinth and Galatia would scarcely recognise Paul as the writer, which proves that Paul could be all things to all men.

We do not know if Philemon was rich; the fact that Onesimus was his slave is not conclusive; even persons of modest incomes owned a slave or two, but the Church at Colossæ met in his house so we can perhaps assume that he was reasonably prosperous. Paul does not rush into battle on Onesimus’s behalf. The first nine verses are given to personal greetings, and one can gauge Paul’s diplomacy by—

- (a) He does not refer to himself as an apostle.
- (b) He refers to Apphia, Philemon’s wife/sister /daughter as “beloved” which was extraordinary in itself, unless Apphia was cast in the mould of Lydia.

There are diplomatic references to Philemon’s faith, and the love which Paul is sure he has for

his fellow Christians and for Paul also. This love, the apostle continues, has made him confident enough to ask a favour of a brother in Christ. He could use his authority and command Philemon, but he would rather ask him, as an old man, and a prisoner of Jesus Christs.

This is appealing enough to bring tears to the eyes of a graven image and by this time Philemon would be in the right mood to grant anybody's request. Paul then lays the case before Philemon. He is making this request on behalf of his son, Onesimus. There is sympathy in the recognition of the slave's uselessness in past days, but things are very different now. Paul manages to infuse the right note of regret in the information that he is sending Onesimus back to Colossæ. If he could have kept Onesimus with him he knows he would have continued to care for Paul as Philemon would have done had he been in his place. He knows, however, that Philemon will receive "his son" as if he had been Paul himself. As if this is not enough to cut short any protest Philemon may have made Paul points out how well things have turned out—

"For perhaps he therefore departed for a season that thou shouldest receive him for ever. Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself."

It probably occurred to the apostle at this point that some reference to the stolen money might be appreciated, and so, taking the pen from whoever was writing at his dictation, he adds the following—

"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account."

Paul makes it clear, immediately afterwards, that he has written this with his own hand, so will repay anything owing, but hastens to add that he would not dream of saying how much Philemon owes him. Paul, even his very soul. If any other than Paul had written this letter it might be said to be a gentle attempt at intimidation!

Paul then proceeds to assure Philemon that he knows he will do even more than he has asked, and ends by suggesting that perhaps Philemon will prepare a room for him as he hopes that through the prayers of the Church he may come to them at Colossæ. He includes

Epaphras in the list of farewells which is understandable since he was a minister of the Colossian Church. There may, however, be a subtle undertone. It is perhaps a way of intimating that there is a witness to his request for forgiveness on behalf of Onesimus. It would hardly do for Epaphras to return home to find Onesimus dead or sent to the mines!

Nevertheless Paul was depending upon the soundness of Philemon's belief in Christ. It would have been no problem for him to behave in a benevolent way as long as his rights and privileges were not attacked. If it was a shallow faith Onesimus would have cause to regret returning, but Paul, who knew from his own experience how belief in Christ can alter a man's attitude, must have been sure of the genuineness of Philemon's faith. It was not the kind of letter to send to a pagan slave owner, although its very audacity might have carried the day.

There are reasons for thinking that Paul did not go far wrong in assessing the character of Philemon. It may be stretching the long arm of coincidence, but unless Onesimus was an inheritance, or the child of a slave girl, why did Philemon not take advantage of the law that compelled slave dealers to take back slaves sold under false pretences (and any slave dealer in his right mind would hesitate to dwell on Onesimus's unprofitableness) or pay compensation? Perhaps he had tried to give his slave every chance. But the strongest reason for believing that Philemon did as he was asked is that the letter is in existence, that we have it in the New Testament today. No-one seems to doubt its genuineness, and there is no reason why anyone should forge such a personal letter. Slavery was not wiped out of existence by Paul's words; perhaps Philemon did not free his other slaves. It took centuries of the influence of the Christian spirit, an essentially practical thing, to wipe out such an iniquitous economic system, which the undoubtedly sincere Spartacus thought he could batter down by sheer force.

Over forty years later, at the time Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was being taken to Rome to die a martyr's death in the arena, there was a Bishop of Ephesus called Onesimus. It would be interesting to think it was the same man—it would be a satisfactory ending, and in any case in a world which the Christians were turning upside down, there would be nothing incongruous in such a solution.

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

16. The Sword of The Lord

The prophet's work was done. Through a long series of visions he had traced the story of the deliverance of God's people from captivity and oppression, their cleansing from defilement and the exaltation of the purified and dedicated "remnant" to be the Divine instrument for world evangelism. He had told of the restoration and rebuilding of the City of Peace, its investment by the forces of evil powers resisting the incoming Kingdom of righteousness and the dramatic intervention of God Most High to overthrow the power of evil and take control of earthly affairs. There, at the point where the "*kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ*" (Rev. 11. 15) the visions came to an end and left Zechariah contemplating the serene future in which the sovereignty of the Lord God was manifest to all and the knowledge of his glory beginning to "*cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea*". But even in this sunlit scene there are some shadows, and the prophet has to take note of them before he closes his book at the point where absolute holiness pervades the Millennial Kingdom and evil is no more.

To this end he divides this final stanza of his story into three parts. In the first (chap. 14. vss. 12-15) he looks back, as it were, to the dramatic intervention from above which has saved the Holy City and its people from the despoilers, and ruminates on the details of their destruction, the nature of the calamities by means of which they were defeated and the comprehensive and final nature of that defeat. Then he turns his attention to the early days of the Messianic era which is to follow, and in vss. 16-19 sees the peoples of earth rendering allegiance to their new King and acknowledging earth's new centre of government. At the same time he warns of the consequences incurred by those who refuse to offer that allegiance. But this is only a temporary intermission, for in vss. 20-21 he sees holiness and righteousness supreme. The Temple of the Lord has become, as it was originally intended to become, a house of prayer for all nations, and in that house "*prayer shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised*" (Psa. 72. 15).

So he talks of the judgment which has fallen upon the forces of evil, choosing descriptive symbols suited to the picture he has chosen in

which to present that judgment, the destruction of a mighty host outside the walls of Jerusalem. "*This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord shall smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem. Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth*" (ch. 14. 12).

This is the first of a threefold judgment; this verse pictures what is obviously a supernatural disaster falling upon the host, the intervention of the powers of Heaven to thwart their objective. Next in verse 13 comes internecine strife whereby the invaders fall upon each other and slay each other. Finally in verses 14-15 the forces of Judah, the defenders of Jerusalem, are pictured as though they advance upon the demoralised enemy and gather all their possessions and equipment for themselves. But the commencement of this three-fold judgment is from Heaven.

Their flesh consumes away as they stand, their eyes as they gaze, and their tongue—significantly singular and not plural, in their mouth. How should this be interpreted? Not literally, for if in verse 12 they thus vanish into nothingness they would hardly be in a position in verse 13 to turn weapons upon each other and destroy each other, neither would there be anyone for Judah in verse 14 to fight. Each verse has to be understood as picturing one aspect or phase of this great debacle, and the entire four verses as enlarging in detail upon verse 3 of this chapter, the coming forth of the Lord "*to fight against those nations*"

The power which executes God's purpose is celestial, from Heaven, but the hosts against whom it is wielded are very much of this earth. The vision demands that there is in the forefront of the conflict a solid phalanx of armed men surrounding the Holy Land with intention of going in to possess, backed up by all the resources of a world-wide power determined to defy God. It is upon this whole combination that the mysterious catastrophe falls. "*Their flesh shall consume away as they stand upon their feet*"; that could well refer to their man-power and all their equipment of war, a mysterious whittling away of men, perhaps by spontaneous desertion or flight as in the days of Gideon or by pestilence as in the days of

Sennacherib, the immobilising or loss of equipment by reason of adverse climatic conditions. In modern warfare tanks are often held fast in mud and rendered useless, planes grounded due to fog and snow, ships confined to harbour on account of hurricanes. It only needs the impact of some of the forces of Nature—wind, rain, snow, storm—to a degree of unprecedented severity to render all the might of the invading host powerless and frustrate all their fell designs. Quite possibly this is the manner in which their flesh will consume away as they stand upon their feet, and in line with this it may be expected that the eyes which consume away in their sockets may well stand for the intelligence service of the host, all their radio detectors and look-out posts, all the means by which they evaluate the forward position and the situation of their intended victims and so plan their course of action. Even today it only needs a severe magnetic storm on the sun to disrupt the world's radio communications for twelve hours; only a super snowstorm blanketing a wide area in white to render the most efficient aerial spy camera useless. The world of Noah's day was brought to an end simply and solely—and most effectively—by the unaided forces of Nature. *"The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished"* says Peter. And if such unexpected and unexplainable disasters befall the confident host which, in Ezekiel's vision of the same event, boasted that they were going in to an undefended land *"to take a spoil and to take a prey"* what wonder that the tongue is consumed away in the mouth. The tongue, the voice of authority, the power of command, the direction and leadership of the entire adventure—silent, speechless! Is it of some significance that the noun is in the singular here; not "their tongues" but "their tongue"? The supreme control of these forces of evil, frustrated in its purpose by forces it can neither understand nor withstand, stands mute in the face of defeat.

Now this is the first aspect of the three-fold judgment; intervention from Heaven. The second is an earthly one; the hosts begin to fight with each other. *"... a great panic from the Lord shall be among them: and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* (ch. 14. 13). This is a case of history repeating itself: on more than one occasion in Israel's history the people were delivered by reason of their enemies falling out

with each other and engaging in fratricidal combat. The case of the deliverance under Jehoshaphat is perhaps the most noteworthy. *"For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came . . . they looked, and behold they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped"* (2 Chron. 20. 23-24). So in this case: a blind, unreasoning panic born of the inexplicable disasters and defeat they had experienced leads to internal dissension and strife in the multitude and they begin to war with each other. To what extent this conflict extends into the countries of the world from which this doomed host has been drawn it is not possible to say, but it may well be that in this verse we have a terse indication of the rapid break-up and dissolution of alliances and associations between the political powers of this world which signals the final submission of these powers to the incoming Kingdom. If so, the third aspect of the judgment, the entry of Judah into the picture, is logically next in sequence.

"And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague" (ch. 14. 14-15). It may seem a little illogical to present Judah in this verse as fighting the enemy when all through the narrative the position is that Judah stands still and leaves the fighting to the Lord. There is no inharmony in reality. It is the Lord who comes forth from his place to render the invaders powerless; it is for the people of the land, here called Judah because that was the name of the people in Zechariah's day, to accomplish the subsequent "mopping-up", to use a modern military expression, and to collect the spoil. Here again there is a parallel with the historical deliverance in the days of Jehoshaphat; after the Lord had destroyed the invading armies the people of Judah went out to clear up the battlefield and to gather in the spoils, *"and they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much"* (2 Chron. 20. 25). So the picture here is that of the people having a definite part to play in the fight, even although that part involved, at first, remaining passive, in faith, in Jerusalem until the Lord had given

victory. Then they could sally forth and collect the spoil. This can reasonably describe the aftermath of this great event when all nations on earth shall bring their tribute and offerings to the Holy Nation which has been so signally manifested as the beginning of the Divine Kingdom on earth. "*The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts*" (Psa. 72. 10). And of course the greatest and most valuable "spoil" will be the sincere allegiance to earth's new King of such among these nations as will accept the opportunity and become reconciled to God, in consequence of Israel's evangelistic fervour. "*The nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising*" Isa. 60. 3). "*Their seed shall be known among the nations and their offspring among the peoples; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed*" (Isa. 61. 9).

But all the paraphernalia of war, of strife, of man's greed and selfishness and cruelty, will be destroyed, offered up to the Lord in a fervour of devotion and repudiation of evil. This is what is meant by the plague upon the horses, mules, camels and so on. In Old Testament days, when Israel had defeated a particularly obnoxious enemy they offered up to God the captured livestock and other spoils of war to indicate that they themselves were not to be defiled by contact with the accursed possessions of the idolators. The valuable spoils were devoted to sacred purposes and the animals and perishable things destroyed by fire. A notable case is that of the booty taken by Joshua at the capture of Jericho. The gold, silver, copper and iron vessels went into the treasury of the Lord and the city with all its other contents was destroyed. Achan sinned by abstracting for his own use some gold and silver and a "*goodly Babylonish garment*" and suffered the death penalty in consequence, having "*trespassed in the accursed thing*". It is for this reason that the Hebrew word *cherem*, meaning properly something devoted or consecrated to God, is also given the meaning of accursed or a curse, because the thing thus devoted is laid under a curse lest any should touch or take it, as did Achan. It has to be devoted to God and utterly destroyed, because it is inherently evil. Now this is the meaning of verse 25. The various beasts here enumerated were all part of the panoply of war—horses for chariots, mules and camels for carrying goods, and so on. As such they were part of the spoils

of war and must be devoted to the Lord and destroyed because they are evil things. So the same plague falls upon them as upon the marauding host and thus all evil is destroyed from the land. Only the valuable things, the good things, remain, and these pass into the custody of the Holy Nation which itself is already consecrated to God.

But one question has to be asked at this point. Is this very warlike and rather lurid picture of armies fighting each other in fashion of armies today, with all the bloodshed and suffering that is involved, really an accurate portrayal of the literal reality of things when the time comes for its enactment? Is the transition from the rule of the powers of this world to the peaceable and beneficent reign of Christ over the nations to be effected by such warlike means? Must the Lord stoop to human methods of overcoming one's enemies to win their eventual allegiance? Is it by such artifices that He must effect the purpose expressed by the prophet "*the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever*"?

There is no denying that many good Christians would see no inconsistency in such being the case. The old obsession of Armageddon, a time of indiscriminate slaughter of the evil-doers and final triumph of the righteous, born, it must be admitted, of the Hebrew invasion of Canaan at the Exodus, dies hard. But is this the way of the One who came once as Jesus of Nazareth, the Man of peace, and comes again as the King of peace? Has Heaven no artillery more effective than that of man's devising?

A quiet consideration of this passage may suggest that Heaven has. In the first place it is admittedly basic that Israel's defence against what is pictured as a marauding host is not with earthly weapons but in complete trust in and reliance upon the powers of Heaven. The parallel vision in Ezek. 38. 39 makes this clear. The Judah of vs. 14 does not fight with carnal weapons but with their faith in God; they dwell in undefended villages and they are supremely confident despite the menacing threat by the rest of the world.

The phraseology of vs. 12, blindness, deafness, physical inability, suggests a supernatural infliction rather than one imposed by force of arms. The horses, mules, camels, asses, of vs. 15 must be metaphorical for such, customary as they were in the days of Zechariah, certainly have no place in modern physical warfare.

Whatever the reality, it must be one that the attackers can neither understand nor withstand—and whether they withstand or not, a battle fought with literal weapons is one they certainly can understand. The entire passage gives the impression of a concerted attack on the incoming kingdom of righteousness as represented in the one nation, Israel, which has taken its stand and pledged its faith in that kingdom. That could conceivably include a military investment of the Holy Land but even if so Heaven can frustrate the attempt without the shedding of literal blood, and that perhaps is what is implied in this chapter. Behind that, it is more likely that the vision envisages a worldwide attempt to crush, by every possible political, commercial, financial, expedient, this one small nation centred on Jerusalem which has dared to express its utter faith in God by relying on his protecting power, and thereby challenged all others.

After all, it does not seem very logical for the Lord God to destroy thousands of human beings in Armageddon only to resurrect them not so very long afterwards to introduce them to the Millennial Kingdom and invite their sincere conversion. Might just as well start the process immediately after their defeat when, with all

opposition vanquished, the work of that Kingdom can start getting under way.

This is the end of the rule of evil in the earth. Sin has yet to be cleansed out of the hearts of men and this process will occupy the entire Messianic reign now to commence, but the outward practice of evil and oppression ceases henceforth. *"In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth"* (Psa. 72. 7). The enemies of the Lord have been overthrown, but in their overthrow they find that the Victor comes to heal, and with the destruction of all in the world that oppresses and afflicts mankind they are left with the opportunity to rebuild their lives on the principles of truth and righteousness, if they will. So the noble Messianic psalm goes on *"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him . . . men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed"* (Psa. 72. 6-17).

So that out of the turmoil and strife of a dying and doomed evil world a new world, wherein dwells justice and love, security and life, is born.

(To be concluded)

A BROTHER IN ADVERSITY

*An incident in the life
of St. Paul—Acts 21. 15*

The story of Paul's life as told in the Acts of the Apostles is the story of a 'great heart'—the story of a faithful 'man of God'. Yet, heroic though that story is, it is not the whole story. The careful student is enabled to fill up some of its missing chapters by extracts from Paul's own pen.

And though Paul calls them all light afflictions, lasting but a moment, one soon comes to realise that only a man built of moral granite and steel could have endured them. He endured sufferings and privations which would have chilled the ardour and extinguished the love of probably ninety-nine out of every hundred men. We have only to read the scrap of his own autobiography as recorded in 2 Cor. 11. 22-33, to realise how full his life was, at all times, of threatening danger and menacing death. All this extensive catalogue of suffering is omitted from the account of his life in the Acts, and much of it had been experienced before he appeared on the scene as the evangelist to the nations. It is

an amazing record, and would make a heartening study to take this catalogue clause by clause and seek to bring out some aspects of the hardships which the narrative records. Five whippings by the Jewish lash, three beatings by the Roman rod, three times wrecked at sea and at the mercy of the waves (this, remember, does not include the story told in Acts 27), added to which were perils from both stranger and his own kin; limping foot-sore over wilderness track or fording with danger some river in spate; travelling from place to place, ill-clothed, cold, hungry and athirst; chased by open foes or betrayed by false friends—these are the things that fell to him every day and at every turn of the road. Something of the fiery ardour of soul, which carried him through all this suffering is shown by his reactions and responses to the frequent warnings on his way up to Jerusalem for the last time. *" . . . behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Spirit*

testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God. And now, behold I know that ye all among whom I went about preaching the Kingdom shall see my face no more . . ." (Acts. 20. 22-25. R.V.) Then from his lips fall words of white-hot urgency imploring the elders of Ephesus to feed the flock of God and discharge diligently and faithfully the duties of under-shepherds laid upon them by the Lord Jesus.

At a later stage of his journey one with a gift of prophecy apprised Paul of the dangers awaiting in Jerusalem, illustrating with Paul's own girdle how he would be bound hand and foot. "*So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles*" (Acts 21. 10-12). Sorrowing friends besought him not to proceed further on his way, but to tarry at Cæsarea, or turn aside to some other less dangerous field of service. "*What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus.*" Here is an example of unwavering resolution akin to that which dominated the heart of Jesus as He too went up to Jerusalem for the last time (Mark 10. 32-34). Knowing what awaited him, some of the disciples were afraid, inasmuch that they marvelled at his stepping resolutely ahead of them. Jesus knew the supreme hour of his earthly life was near, and fortified by the approval of his Father, he went unfaltering along to meet it.

It requires the courage of complete conviction to do this. There must be the unwavering assurance within the heart and mind that the intended step is according to the Will of God, and that God will be with his servant right through to the end of the Way. Only thus assured and fortified will men step calmly and quietly into the arms of death. This is the martyr's courage, not the worked-up courage of the battlefield, and comes only from the presence of God in the soul. That calmly heroic attitude was only one aspect of Paul's many-sided make-up. He could face danger better than suspense and uncertainty. He could stand before false brethren or hostile foe better than the unknown reception. This shows us that this 'Great-heart'

was a man, much as we are ourselves. The text shows him arrived in Italy and on the last stage of the journey to Rome. For two years he had been under arrest at Cæsarea, subject to the whims and caprice of the Roman governors there. Appealing to Caesar, there followed that disastrous and hazardous journey through the Levantine and Mediterranean Seas, until, at last, the centurion and his charges set foot on Italian soil. Then the journey on foot began from Puteoli (a port more than 100 miles down the coast) to the Imperial city. A delay of seven days provided opportunity for Paul to receive a company of brethren residing there, who evidently gave him a cordial welcome, for they "*entreated him to stay with them*" (Acts 28. 14). Apparently also they sent on a messenger ahead of Paul to inform the brethren in Rome of Paul's coming "*And from thence (Rome) the brethren, when they heard of us, came to meet us as far as the Market of Appii and the Three Taverns*"—a distance of some forty and thirty miles respectively. How would they receive him? Would they despise him for his chain? Would they scorn him for his diminutive and bedraggled appearance?

For many years he had looked forward to seeing Rome, but he had not then thought of entering it bound by a chain. In the prosecution of his commission Paul had thought on entering Rome perhaps as the last stronghold of the enemies of the Lord. Years ago he had sent to them the announcement of his intention "*I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Rom. 1. 16). Now, however, when the ordering of his circumstances actually found him nearing Rome, and as he thought of the abject condition in which he was making his approach—an old, weather-beaten, grey-haired broken man, a chained prisoner recently escaped from the sea, his heart was heavy within him, and though he had found some of his friends by the way, he wondered what the brethren of Rome would think and say and do!

As he approached the waiting groups his quick sensitive eye searched their faces, if haply he might read thereby the attitude of their hearts. Strong and self-reliant as he was at other times and in other places, yet he was also exceedingly sensitive to human sympathy, and in these little groups of brethren he found what

he sought. Their greetings and welcome were such, that despite his chain, and the fatiguing nature of his journey thus far, his spirit rose out of its slough of despond and he thanked God and took fresh courage. Their welcome restored him to his wonted confidence and helped him to regain the optimism of which he wrote to them years before. His heart began to swell again with hope of achievement in Rome despite the chain, for he knew that he carried in his heart and mind the force and power that could win human hearts even in that proud imperial city.

That is a story from which we of little stature in Christ may gain great comfort. Paul knew that God and his Master were with him. Even as they drifted before the storm the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision and assured him that he and his sailing companions would be saved, though the ship would be lost. And Paul knew, as much as any man alive, the verity of the Lord's presence and comfort in the dark day. Yet notwithstanding that, apprehension and uncertainty had gripped his heart as he neared Rome, as he wondered how he would be received by the brethren there. Ought he not to have suppressed his fears and told himself that the Lord was his sufficiency no matter what his brethren did? Was it a proper thing to do, when he wondered what these brethren would say? Was he allowing the coward within to overcome the martyr spirit of his earlier days? Or was he resolute before the bigger thing that lay ahead in Rome only to falter before the lesser things that met him on the road?

Do we not often find ourselves there? Nothing on earth would make us deny or prove faithless to the Lord, but oh! how we tremble at what the brethren will say! Well, a great-heart giant in the Lord trod that self-same way, and found new heart of grace for the bigger thing in life, because he found the look and touch of sympathy in his brethren's eye and hand. This little episode affords a source of comfort to those who are little in their own eyes and who know, with considerable frequency, what it is to feel discouraged by the way. If a man of Paul's stature in Christ—a man in constant communion with his Lord—could feel the bitter effects of adversity, and sink down to zero (or below) there is no need for shame or blame if a more immature follower of the Lord finds himself or herself sinking beneath the load of care. It is not the fact that we sink at times that matters

most, but that, like Paul, we can rise again at a touch of Providence and take new courage and press on again.

Perhaps it may be to our greater advantage to view this illustration from the two-fold point of view, that of Paul, and then that of the brethren.

It is possible for any one of us to be like Paul—a prisoner of circumstance. The bonds that bind us may not be forged of cold steel, nor is it necessary for us to be undertaking a journey, like Paul, under compulsion. Some peculiar phase of life, linking us to an uncongenial environment, may be our chain, some dominating circumstance beyond our control may have us captive in its train as we move forward to some crisis in our life, and for the time, circumstance proves too much for us, and the spirit sinks and courage fails. A depressed heart magnifies the burden out of its proportion, till it seems to fill both heaven and earth, with no way out to escape its crushing weight. Again, we say it might be any one of us, you, good Brother; you dear Sister. No one is immune from such circumstance while living in this evil world. We may not say these things are exactly orderings of Providence in every case, but always, when not Heaven-sent they are by permission of that Supervising Power. They are secondary as well as first causes in operation in and around us, and unrighteous forces as well as the heavenly messengers may be serving the purpose of Divine Wisdom in the distressing and overbearing circumstance. But God, the All-merciful and All-wise, is watching, and when we have sunk deep into what may seem a bottomless pit, we come to our "Three Taverns" and "Appii Forums".

The smiling welcome from the brethren of Rome was a providence of God for Paul. The smile and welcome were the product of the spirit of God, long active in their lives. It was none the less a Providence because the love of the brethren is a fruit of that indwelling Spirit. That brings in the other side—the brethren's side of this little episode. The news that Paul was nearing Rome could have left the brethren unconcerned. "What is that to us?" they could have said, "he should have been more careful and discreet in word and act, and not have brought this trouble on himself". Reasons in abundance for withholding help or comfort could have been found, and Paul could have been left to enter Rome a dejected prisoner, unwelcome and unesteemed. But instead of

imputing blame or deciding that his imprisonment was just, they saw a brother in distress and went forth to show that they were eager to help him in his distress. Even though they could not unlock his chain, nor remove him from the Roman's supervision, there was something they could do. They could meet him on the way—and when they looked into his suffering eyes, their own could smile a welcome and a “God bless you, brother”, and let him see that the stigma of the chain was of no deterring consequence to them. Chain or no chain, Paul was their brother.

and it was Paul they saw, not the chain.

And so, in time of need, one of Christianity's great-hearts found grace to help, and took new courage to his heart, and sent up his thanks to God because the spirit of brotherhood—the spirit of God and of God's great family—had found expression in the hearts and faces of brethren who hitherto he had never met.

If opportunity to do this self-same thing should come to you, dear brethren in the Lord, what will you do? Will you not lend yourself to Divine Providence to work out its gracious purposes?

THE WAY OF TEMPTATION

Some people think that history is boring but it can be exciting and interesting. The great value of past records lies in the lessons which can be learned by a contemporary generation from one that has gone before. Not only can mistakes be avoided but positive attitudes can be adopted to accomplish that which others have failed to do in the past. That is the thought of the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the church at Corinth about the year AD 56. He was writing to a young community of believers who had been reared in the religious ideas and practices of the Greeks and amid the immorality of the pagan Roman Empire. It was natural that they continued in some of their bad ways even after becoming Christians but Paul explained that these things must be left behind. He illustrated his teaching from the history of Israel. (1 Cor. 10. 1-14.)

The descendants of Jacob were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. When Moses led them out of Egypt in a great act of redemption they had been ‘baptized into Moses’ beneath the ‘cloud’ and in the Red Sea. There is little in the Old Testament to give specific interpretation to these events but they have great significance to followers of Jesus. Paul evidently sees all these mighty works of God as part of the process of making Israel into God's own special people. They accepted their freedom as an opportunity to do whatever they liked and did not realise that they were a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. Their lives in Egypt would have given them no conception of what the Almighty Creator is like. They had seen something of his power and glory in the physical happenings of the Exodus but they had no idea of his wisdom and holiness.

In 1 Cor. 10 Paul mentions some of the disasters which overtook the Israelites as they journeyed towards the Promised Land. The troubles came as a result of the Israelites yielding to temptation. Their Law strictly forbade the worship of alien gods or their idols, but as soon as Moses' back was turned they persuaded Joshua to make a golden calf which they could see in their worship. It was their conception of the god who had led them out of Egypt. (Exodus 32. 1-6). They were impatient to get on with the festival and their celebrations were characterised by gluttony and sensual dancing. God made a special relationship with Israel in which the people promised to obey his laws. They enjoyed the providential care of the Almighty Creator as no other nation had ever done, yet they sought refuge in a god which was sightless speechless and powerless. This resulted in a rapid deterioration of their behaviour. The book of Numbers shows that the people of Israel grumbled and rebelled as if they sought to stretch God's patience. Fear and discontent were rife among them. Towards the end of the journey they encountered Moab, a people to whom they were distantly related. At first this tribe sought to destroy them with the curse of Balaam but failed. Then they seduced them through their women and were led into further idolatry.

One of the most distinct differences between an unbelieving world and the people of God in Old Testament times is the attitude to marriage. For Israel, as for the Christians, the marriage partnership was one in which Almighty God was personally involved. Anything which interferes with that partnership, affects the relationship with God. Centuries later, David

discovered this when he sinned against Uriah the Hittite. (2 Sam. 11). He, who should have established the spiritual standards of God's people as their leader, had been tempted to take another man's wife and had succumbed to the enticing situation set up by Satan. In Psalm 51. 4 (RSV) we read how he pleaded with God for mercy, for "*against thee, thee only have I sinned and done that which is evil in thy sight.*" Jesus once said something about plucking out our eye if it causes us to sin (Matt. 5. 29). When David saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof top, it would have been better that he lost his sight rather than commit such sin. God had greatly blessed David yet he coveted Uriah's wife. The only way to conquer temptation is to be filled with God's spirit and prayerfully absorb God's Word, and David knew that.

There were further sad consequences to God's people when David, proud of his big army, trusted in the power and skill of his military machine. He wanted security in the knowledge of how many men he could have under arms. He gave orders to Joab to take a census of the people of Israel and Judah but the commander-in-chief remonstrated with his lord. David still yielded to temptation because of lack of trust in God. The census was taken and God's people were smitten. (2 Sam. 24). Why does the record say that this happened because "*the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them*"? Did God tempt David? James tells us that "*. . . God cannot be tempted by evil and does not himself tempt anyone*" (James 1. 13. REV). The complexity of this event increases by reference to 1 Chron. 21. 1, where it is recorded that "*Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel.*" The question must be asked, 'Who tempted David?' Some scholars might argue that because the records were written by different people at different times they ascribed the event in history to different causes. But that is a superficial examination of the event. A reference to Job may help to solve the problem concerning David. The trials and distresses of Job were instigated by the malice of Satan but permitted by God so that the saintly man might grow nearer to his Maker. A similar lesson can be taken from the horrid treachery of the sons of Jacob when they sold their brother Joseph in a devilish act of cruelty. Later he told his brothers plainly, that God had sent him to Egypt to preserve life. After their father had died

he reassured them again by saying "*. . . you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good . . .*" (Gen. 45. 5; 50.20).

Paul applied the lesson of Israel's history to the Church at Corinth. By God's power, they too had been brought out of darkness into the light of his loving purpose. They had witnessed something of the signs which accompany conversion through the Holy Spirit. They had been baptised into Christ and fed upon the spiritual bread and water of which he had spoken in his ministry (John 4. 14; 6. 22-40 and 7. 37-39). The new converts at Corinth were proud of their newly found freedom in Christ and it was necessary for Paul to write to them "*if you think you are standing firm, take care, or you may fall.*" (1 Cor. 10. 12 REV). They had not achieved as much as they thought they had. They should have been free from the fears and superstitions of their old religion, just as Jewish Christians should have been free from the restrictive practices of the Law. However, this freedom appears to have become a signal for them to give way to natural inclinations and self indulgence. Redemption, knowledge and spiritual signs had not prevented Israel being tempted nor would these things stop believers in Corinth from having testing and trials. The first letter to the Corinthians shows that they had already yielded to all kinds of temptations and Paul wrote to help them avoid further failure. Their supposed spiritual growth was insufficient to detect their weakness. They had been guilty of worshipping leaders within the church and thereby forming sects. They had retained ideas of human wisdom but failed to discover the true wisdom of Christ. They were unable to keep reasonable order within the church. They who were the temple of God, and thereby should have maintained high standards of holiness before him, were in danger of becoming involved in the immorality of the world in which they lived. Corinth was notorious in the Roman Empire over a long period of time for its depravity and corruption. Within the church there was to be not even a taint of the reckless wickedness of their neighbours. If there is doubt about any practice of any kind, a Christian must steer clear of it entirely. Uprightness of behaviour in every sphere of life is the only course available to the follower of Christ. The sin of the Church at Pergamum (Rev. 2. 12-17) was that some of them held to the teaching of Balaam.

In our modern world there are the New Theology and the New Morality which could become a similar snare among God's people. A period in world history when humanity reaches a cross roads, described by Paul then as a time when the 'ends of the ages' have come, leaves God's people particularly vulnerable to being led astray. It is a time when in the foment of society, ideas and practices are being turned upside down, and that which is good and true is likely to be thrown out.

During its history the Christian Church has often repeated the faults of Israel and the Corinth church. There is a temptation to place the outward and the material above inner spiritual values. Believers cannot love the world and love the Father. *"Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father . . . the world and everything in it that people desire is passing away . . ."* (1 John 2. 16, 17 (GNB)). The Twentieth Century has seen the greatest increase in material products that has ever taken place in the world's history. The temptation to distort the value of material blessings has never been so great and that is especially so in the affluent western world. Those who appear to have benefited most, have not become more content but rather developed the 'grumbling culture' as did Israel in the desert and the early Church in Corinth. The more that peoples of empires and nations enjoyed comfort and luxury the more prone they have become to destruction. Disciples of Jesus Christ who are not alert to the temptation will be swept along by the popular illusion that the more we possess, the happier we shall be.

Whenever the Devil creates a destructive situation his intention is to seduce someone into

doing wrong and weaken their determination to resist sin. When God allows an event to occur in the lives of his people by whatever means, his intention is to enrich their faith and purify their characters by the experience. That was the kind of ordeal which Abraham, Job and Joseph endured and through which they were made more resistant to what is wrong. God is sovereign lord in every experience of the lives of his people, hence the apostle is able to write *"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him and who are called according to his purpose."* (Rom. 8. 28). In the first letter to the Corinthians the same pen wrote *"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide a 'way of escape', that you may be able to endure it."* (1 Cor. 10. 13). But that 'way of escape' must be deliberately chosen, it is not an automatic happening. God does not drive us along this 'way out', and we can choose the path which enables Satan to cause us more trouble. Paul urges the brethren to 'flee from idolatry'. This A.V. translation catches the idea in the Apostle's mind better than modern translations which tend to weaken the thought. We are not compelled to 'flee' but if we seek God's path then we shall turn away from man made 'shrines' and the debased and often debauched conduct that goes with them.

God knows the breaking strength of his workmanship. He intends to complete that which he has begun. Therefore he will not allow us to pass through fire that burns us nor through floods which drown us. There is no occasion to fear or be impatient. Disciples of the Lord must watch and be sober for the indications of their Father's care. They must trust God who has safely kept his people throughout the ages.

"Blessed be God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

(2 Corinthians 1. 3. 4).

We work together, if far apart,
Hands in unison, heart to heart
We work as having one common aim;
We work as bearing the same good name;
We dare not loiter, but still pursue
The work of the Master, with Him in view.



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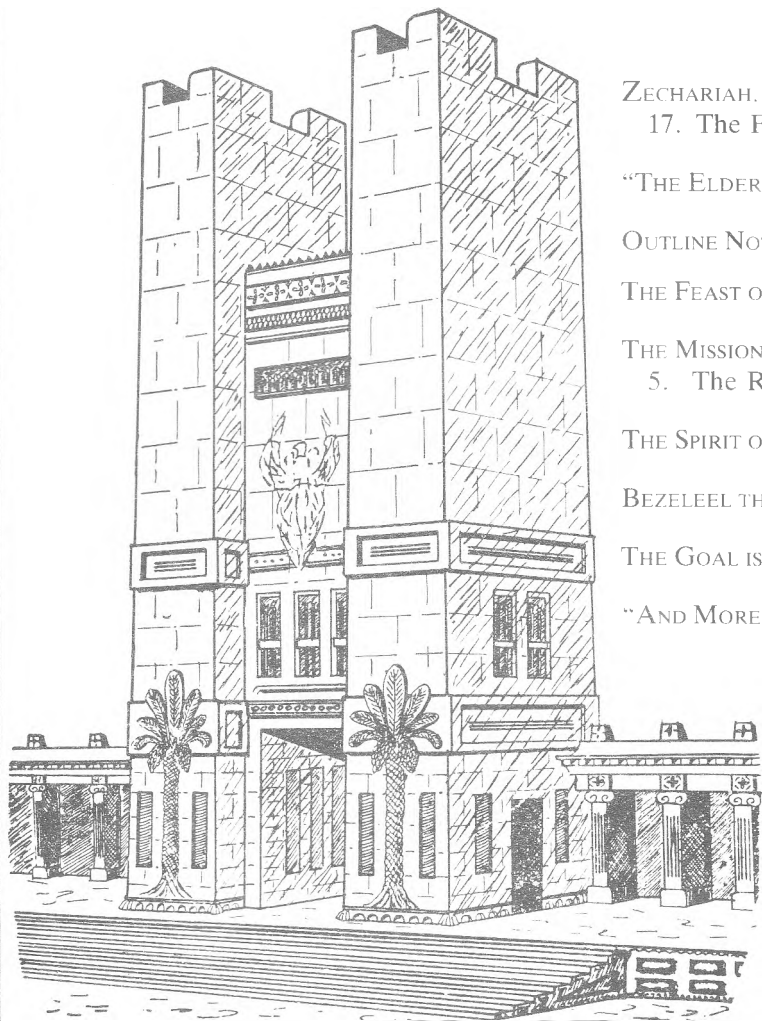
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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Thought for the Month

"When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." Daniel 6. 10 (RSV).

Was Daniel able to read the Scriptures in his Quiet Time by his window? Taken from their home in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, the young men of royal and noble blood may have been treated like ordinary prisoners and would not have taken their libraries with them. However, it is possible that they were given somewhat better treatment than the chained slaves who walked to Babylonia in utter dejection and misery. It would be interesting to know what access Daniel and his friends had to the sacred writings of Israel. In any case they would be thoroughly taught concerning the history of their nation and would be familiar with the lives of the great and godly men such as Abraham and Moses. He would know of the great patriarch's intercession with God to spare the cities of the plain. Daniel would be familiar with the pleadings of Moses for the forgiveness of Israel in their idolatry and for his sister Miriam in her rebellion against his leadership. Now in the period at the end of the exile, Daniel, with others, was praying for Israel's restoration.

Jesus too, knew the power of prayer and in the Sermon on the Mount he gave commandment to his disciples when he said ". . . go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret;" Several times in his ministry he went apart from his followers and the crowds so that he could pray alone. They were critical events in the Master's life but who can doubt that it was he, who set the pattern

for the whole church, to do *"everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"*. It is well for the followers of Jesus to take note of the value of prayer to the men and women of old and to have a place each day for a Quiet Time. It is a time not only for us to speak to God but for us to listen to him. It is a time to ponder his word listening for the challenge to our personal lives. Other times can be set aside for analytical study and the discovery of the meaning of words. It is not a time to tell God again and again about our interpretation of his Word. It is a time to see afresh what our Heavenly Father has to say about a passage of Scripture. It is time to ask God for strength and courage to be obedient to what He is saying to us and that does not become clear if we are forever telling him things he already knows. Above all this, it is a time for strengthening the bonds of the relationship between ourselves and our Father. Everything else in our lives is futile if that relationship is not strong and real. Like all relationships, this one needs to be worked at. It is from that relationship with our God, that all diligent study of his Word and all faithful service for his Kingdom must spring. That relationship also is the only means by which we can become like him.

Gone from us



Sis. Gertrude Taylor (*Hitchin*)

Bro. George Gray (*Liverpool*)

Sis. Dora Biddle (*Christchurch*)

Sis. Irene Bullen (*Bury-St-Edmunds*)



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

ZECHARIAH, PROPHET OF THE RESTORATION

17. The Feast of Tabernacles

The world's deliverance from evil is followed by the last and greatest Feast of Tabernacles. Here, and for the last time, Zechariah draws upon the historical ceremonial of the people of Israel to illustrate the nature of "things to come". Everyone in all the world, he says, (ch. 14. 16) will go up to Jerusalem year by year to worship the Lord and to keep the Feast of the Tabernacles; these are obviously figurative expressions to denote the response of mankind in that day, to the blessings of the Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles in Israel was a development of the normal end of year harvest celebrations which are characteristics of every people in every age. It is probable that Israel had some such celebration when in Egypt; this is referred to in Exod. 23. 16 as the "feast of ingathering" and was made obligatory under the Mosaic Law. Upon Israel's entry into the land this feast was expanded in its scope; for seven days the people dwelt in temporary shelters made of tree branches and leaves, "booths", from which the feast was re-named the Feast of Tabernacles (temporary dwelling places). This period was one of rejoicing for past deliverance and promise of future blessing. *"Because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice"* (Deut. 16. 15). Significantly, the feast was held almost immediately following the close of the annual Day of Atonement ceremonies, which culminated in the formal effecting of atonement for the sins of the assembled people by the officiating High Priest. The typical picture therefore is that of sacrifice and offering on behalf of sin ended; the people cleansed and brought into a state of reconciliation with God, the rigours of the past forgotten, rejoicing in the plenitude of present harvest blessings and joyful anticipation of even greater blessings to come. And this is why Zechariah, looking into the roseate future immediately following the establishment of the Divine Kingdom on earth, sees it as an idealised Feast of Tabernacles.

This going up of all the nations year by year to worship and "keep the Feast of Tabernacles" as related in ch. 14. 16 is obviously a picture of world-wide acceptance of the Kingdom. Men everywhere will hail the new administration with relief and joy and hasten to proffer allegiance

to earth's new King. It does not follow that this attitude of mind is universal—the process of world conversion is going to occupy a long period of time and the requirements of the text can be considered well fulfilled in the spectacle of successive contingents of converts entering into a state of reconciliation with God and, in the gladness and gratitude thus engendered, thus "keep the Feast of Tabernacles". These are they who, in Isaiah's vision declare *"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). The delivered Holy Nation is involved in this, for the Lord says through Isaiah again (ch. 66. 18-19) *"I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory . . . and I will send those that escape"* (a reference to delivered Israel) *"unto the nations . . . and they shall declare my glory among nations"*. Here is the missionary work of the Millennial Age in full operation and it is the result of this work which is described in terms of the nations coming up to Jerusalem to worship.

But not all of mankind are thus converted, at least at the beginning. Verses 17-19 of chapter 14 provide for those who do not thus "come up". The penalty is that upon them there shall be no rain. For some reason Egypt is singled out and specifically named among the general mass of earth's peoples and this may well be, as is sometimes suggested, an allusion to the fact that Egypt has virtually no rainfall and obtains all its water for crop-growing purposes from the annual inundation of the Nile. The fact that Egypt is independent of the need for rain will not absolve the dissidents among them from the penalty. The meaning, of course, is that the unregenerate of the nations have no part nor lot in the life-giving blessings of the river of water of life, the symbolic medium of transmission of Divine life to man in that day. Ezekiel describes this river as he saw it in vision, and so does John the Revelator (Ezek. 47; Rev. 22). The river flows from the sanctuary of God, and together with the trees of life which grow on its banks furnishes both food and healing for the nations. It is obvious of course that the blessing of lasting life which is offered freely to all men must be consciously

accepted on the basis of true conversion and allegiance to the Lord Christ who is the channel of that life. *"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'. And let him that heareth say, 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"* (Rev. 22. 17). That is the law of the Millennial Age, and that life is available to all who will accept it on the terms offered. Such as may decline it, in the obduracy of their hearts or in their refusal to turn from the ways of evil, *"upon them shall be no rain"*.

So the curtain rises upon the last scene, a glimpse—a very brief glimpse—of the world as it shall be when the elimination of evil is accomplished and all men and all things in the world are holy unto the Lord. *"In that day shall there be upon the bridle bells of the horses 'Holiness unto the Lord' and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar"*. That inscription appeared on the golden mitre worn by all of Israel's successive High Priests from Aaron downward; it denoted the complete dedication of the wearer to the service of God. In those days the High Priest stood out as one specially consecrated and sanctified individual in the midst of a secular society; in the world of the future, says Zechariah, everything from the highest to the lowest will be sanctified to the Divine service—even the beasts of burden. There may be some allusion here to the fact that the horse was peculiarly the symbol of war and the political power of this world; in that day it will be the symbol of Divine power and of peace, for God will have made *"wars to cease to the ends of the earth"*. The "pots in the Lord's house" were the cauldrons in which the flesh of the sacrifices was boiled, much more lowly in the scale of Divine service than the golden bowls of the altar which were used to carry the blood of the sacrifices into the presence of God. But in that day all will be equal. Whatever service or work is performed, be it lofty or menial, will be of equal value in the sight of God, for all will be done as unto him and for his glory. Yea, says Zechariah triumphantly, every vessel in Jerusalem and in all Judah shall be holy; the distinction between sacred and secular will stand in direct relation to the eternal purpose of God and nothing that exists, nothing that is done, is outside that purpose. The whole of human life and all its

activities will be holy unto God.

"In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts." Of all the alien tribes and peoples with which Israel was daily in contact the Canaanites represented idolatry and defilement in its grossest forms. Repeatedly during Israel's history the Temple was defiled by alien peoples or alien worship. Not so in that coming day, says Zechariah. The Temple will be cleansed and holy, free from any suspicion of defiling influence. A loftier vision of the same truth was given to John when he looked upon the celestial city which pictured the completed work of God with mankind. *"There shall no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Rev. 21. 27).

Thus ends what is without doubt the most colourful and eloquent book of symbolic imagery in the Old Testament, paralleled only by the Book of Revelation in the New. The two books, separated in time of writing by six centuries, do in fact constitute a remarkable pair. The Book of Revelation is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects the Christian Church, the heavenly instrument in God's hand for world conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of the Church. The Book of Zechariah is an account of the conflict between good and evil as it affects Israel, the earthly instrument in God's hand for world conversion, and closes with the overthrow of evil and the triumph of Israel. The two books commence their respective stories at separate periods on the stream of human history, but they coincide at their close, both culminating at the point where the Lord Christ at his Second Advent takes to himself his great power and commences that reign over the earth which is elsewhere described as *"the desire of all nations"*. Perhaps the best commentary upon the whole dramatic story resides in the Lord's words to the prophet, to be repeated to Israel, right at the commencement of Zechariah's ministry. *"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."*

The End

THE ELDERS YE YOUNGER”

*A discourse on
1 Peter 5. 1-5*

The early Christian churches were not less prone to difficulties than ours today. No assembly of which we have received knowledge through the Scriptures was immune from frictions and jealousies any more than others throughout this Age. Even the exemplary and sympathetic Church at Philippi had its little rift in the harmony—Syntyche and Euodia being the particular participants in its time of discord.

There is probably no community of men in the whole wide world where the music runs smoothly all the time. Even in cloisters, where implicit obedience is imposed by solemn vow, unspoken discontent has been known to smoulder over long years and then burst into flame under moments of intense strain, producing disruption and strife between Abbot and monk, or Abbess and nun. Temperamental differences in men and women make harmonious contacts over long periods extremely difficult to maintain. Such differences are not always due to perversity or cantankerousness. They more often arise out of variations in the mental and physical structure of the individuals concerned. These things usually determine and govern personality—and as no two personalities are identical, the result in our lives—that is, in our own particular ways of thinking and doing things—is that we tend to approach and assess the facts of life a little differently all round. This is a state of things which cannot be evaded or avoided, since, possessing, as we each do, a degree of freedom of will, as well as of the mind, we each tend to exercise these faculties as we deem best, and that usually means differently in every case. Ingrained habits, together with strong personal preferences, often make a person “hard to get on with”. Human nature being what it is, adaptation and adjustment, each to each, is a necessity in any association where men and women come together for communion and fellowship. Everywhere, among people of every class, each society or community of men has to use compromise and adaptability as the cement to give cohesion to the whole.

When we come together in the name of the Lord the same difficulties intrude themselves. Mutual belief in the Cross of Christ does not cancel out, automatically, all the incompatibilities that arise from personality. Even those called to be saints can still rub and fret and chafe each other till they become raw in

some part or other of their sensitivity. It is to help us in these times of difficulty that God has provided for us a “regulator”—his own Holy Spirit,—to enable us to discern and apply the necessary adjustments between members of the Church, and to mollify and soothe, as with holy anointing oil, the sores which friction could inflame and mortify. With the Holy Spirit shed abroad in each heart it ought to be possible to see the mutual intercourse between Christian men at its highest level, and yielding its most edifying results. Unfortunately things do not just work out that way, because there is not always heart-room sufficient for the supply of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we are like an engine that will not work because there is not enough power to make it work.

It seems to have been something like that in Peter's day. From the evidence he gives, some of the churches of the “Diaspora”—the strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1. Pet. 1. 1) had been experiencing difficulty from these natural human causes. Elders had been applying regulations and controls too stringently, and the younger element seems to have been in revolt. Peter sought to remind them of the need of suitable adaptation to each other for the sake of the flock of God (1 Pet. 5.2, 5). Obviously the churches had been up against a problem as old as man, the thrust and drive of youth at variance with the maturing sedateness of advancing years. In communities cradled and reared in the traditions of patriarchalism this was remarkable, and seems to indicate how severely the Elders had been “lording it over God's heritage”. Not lightly would the younger men raise revolt, yet this is just what the context seems to indicate.

Peter had a word of exhortation and advice for these Elders, basing his appeal on his own seniority, and upon remembrance of the price his Lord had paid to free them all from sin and make their Christian fellowship possible. He had a word for “ye younger”, because there was both precedent and propriety in their proper subjection to maturer men. He besought both old and young to be clothed with humility, seeing that God would reject either old or young who ventured to assert their pride by placing self-assertiveness before the best interests of “the flock of God”!

The same "joie de vivre" that makes the lamb skip and gambol in the field also prompts the youthful member of the human tribe to seek outlets for his upsurge of energy and enthusiasm. Experience and observation have shown that if the young cannot give effective vent to their joy in life in acceptable righteous ways, they are likely to do so with gusto and exuberance in other ways. The "sowing of wild oats" has often been, alas, the outcome of some over-strict, over-careful parent's indiscreet attempt to protect and shield its offspring from the "world". Undue restraints, in bygone days, applied with too much stringency by a too austere presbytery has driven forth into rebellion and sin thousands of young lives which the Church could ill afford to lose. The Puritan attitude of old, which made the whole life—not merely the garb—a drab thing (even to forbidding the young, because it was the Sabbath day, the pleasure of puckering their lips to whistle off their joy), tried, and tried in vain to dam up the blithe exuberance of youth, and had much to do with making England the sink of wickedness which Wesley found when he ventured forth to visit the extensive parish which he claimed for his own.

Adaptation and adjustment is always essential where two or more people come together in the Name of the Lord, but it is even more essential when the "comers together" are both old and young. The wisdom of the "seniors"—the seniority, for that is the term which in this place contrasts best with the words "ye younger"—is put on its honour so that Christian men may advise, suitably and understandingly, as to the avenues in which the "younger" can unleash its drive and energy so that it can be of service to the entire flock. Such advice, rightly directed and conditioned, is the thing that Peter here advises as requisite to make co-operation between old and young a realistic experience for all and for the flock of God.

Let us see what it is that Peter has to say to both old and young. The A.V. text says "*Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.*" (1 Pet. 5. 5). That rendering is considered doubtful by the Diaglott, yet other versions give renderings very similar to the A.V. It reads as though the "elder" and the "younger" were to take turn and turn about in their subjection each to each. But such a notion is at once ruled out by the

first word of the verse—"likewise". Evidently Peter had exhorted and advised the "elders" to submit themselves (not to the younger, but) to the "Shepherd of the flock", and serve both him and it out of a ready mind, and of a good free will. Not for greed or gain, nor yet to satisfy a dictatorial craving, but as servants and under shepherds serving under him who has the care of all the flock in his heart. And in like manner as "they" submit themselves to the leading of the Lord, so were the younger to submit themselves for guidance to the leaders of their seniors. This is where the "likewise" comes in, and thus throws upon the seniors the grave responsibilities both of copying the Lord aright, and of serving as examples to the younger element, so that they can follow in their steps. If then the Elders take their cue and pattern from the Lord, the words of Peter expectantly assume that the "younger" will copy them, taking their advice with profit to themselves and to the whole flock of God.

There is some variation in the second part of the text in various translations. The Diaglott reads, "Be ye clothed with humility". Knox says "Put on humility which is the 'livery' you must wear". Twentieth Century reads "Put on the 'badge' of humility in mutual service". Rotherham and Weymouth both have "Gird yourself with humility". Evidently the exact shade of meaning has not been easy to discover. But Weymouth in a footnote gets down to the exact thought—he says "the Greek means as with the apron of one who waits upon others". Moffat comes right out with this thought in his text. He translates:—"Indeed you must all put on the apron of humility to serve one another". Here we have a definition that suits every translator's thought. The apron was the "badge" of servitude; it was the "livery" of all who serve; it could be "girded" on, "put on", and with it a servant could be "clothed"!

It was the custom in both Greek and Roman households for a slave to don an apron to protect his flowing tunic in his working hours. It was intended to shield him from any contaminating substance met with in the course of his task—much as the housewife finds today when doing her household work. It caught all the smears and dirt, shielding the drapery beneath from becoming soiled or grimed.

Peter desired to see his brethren gird themselves for the task on hand, both old and young, with the slaves' "livery" and "badge",

remembering the while that both the elder and the younger elements were responsible concerning the flock to the Shepherd of the flock. But it is quite possible that a deeper illustration ran through Peter's mind. The girding of the apron would recall for him that fateful night when the great Shepherd of the flock himself took basin, water and towel to wash their road-stained feet. Taking for himself the opportunity which every follower despised, the Master girded himself and set before them the lesson, once for all, that lowly service was sweet and precious in his sight. *"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter"* he said to this very man himself—nor had Peter ever forgotten that scene nor the lesson it was intended to teach. He had come to "know hereafter" what it all implied. *"Ye ought also to wash one another's feet"* said the Master in the upper room.—*"Ye all should put on the apron of humility"* said Peter to his own followers—it seems to have been just his way of repeating his Master's words!

"The Order of the Towel" (if we may not irreverently describe the scene in the upper room) had but one member in its illustrious rank—the "Order of the Apron" stands open to all who will don its badge and insignia of surrender and servitude to the Shepherd of the flock. It is the badge of sincere under-shepherd care for the sheep of his pasture lovingly and faithfully rendered as unto him. If then the "younger" see this badge faithfully and lovingly worn by the "Seniority" they too will come with ready zeal to throw all their fresh young energy into their desire to "copy Him"! Wise old Peter! How well he knew that you must bring the "young" face to face with the Lord himself, if you would enlist their thrust and drive in the work of the ministry. He knew and understood that their glimpse of him—of his life and death, his resurrection and Shepherd care—would control and restrain them better far than all Church restrictions or Board-of-Elder regulations. The "One" they would obey with joy, immediately; the other they might defy, with sullenness, continuously.

So much, then, for the wearing of the "apron" itself—but what is that grace, that quality, that virtue with which it is associated? What is this humility? Is it not that attitude of self-

depreciation which rises in a Christian's heart when he realises his utter inability to repay the debt he owes to God for his redemption? Is it not also that sense of insufficiency that grips the Pastor's mind when he comprehends the immensity of the task to which he has been called? The humble mind is the one that both knows and confesses that any natural endowment, or any deeper understanding or any more mature development which he may have attained, more than another of his brethren, is owed entirely to the bounty of the Lord and not to his own achievement. He will always say "What have I that I have not received as a gift from God?"

Seeing then that all, both old and young, are under a debt to God they can never pay; seeing also that all we have attained is a gift from his hands, what ground have we for pride or self-conceit in our service for the flock of God?

God's pattern of humility was seen at Calvary, when One who was rich emptied himself of all his glory to serve the Plan of God, even unto death! The recognition of those sufferings—as Peter asserts (v. 1.)—is enough to subdue our vaulting pride, and all our braggart airs when we remember that it was that precious blood and not our own worthiness that opened wide to us the gateway into the Fold.

Thus Peter's words take "the elders which are among you" and "ye younger" also to the scene of their redemption, to remind them, each and all, of the infinite price that He has paid; to assure them of its present outcome in the existence of a "flock of God", and to invite them, old and young, to gird themselves with the "apron of humility" that they may serve the flock of God with faithful loving service to the end. With right appreciation of the great sacrifice pervading every heart, both "Elder" maturity, and "younger" enthusiasm can be linked together under God's hand, to serve its every need. Thus beneath the great Shepherd's care all the little differences that arise from variations in personality can be blended into a greater unity to serve a mutual need.

The invitation to us all is to "The Order of the Apron"! Let us see to it that neither youthful exuberance or assertiveness nor senior sedateness or rigidity, shall mar or smirch the "insignia" of our noble profession in the Lord.

OUTLINE NOTE ON THE SECOND ADVENT

The mightiest event of history since the Crucifixion is the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ to complete the work He commenced two thousand years ago. Through the centuries since Pentecost the Christian Church has hoped and looked for that day when the Lord returns to fulfil the promise He made to his earliest disciples. The apparent imminence of his Return has been proclaimed and prophesied many times during those intervening years, but the fact that so many lurid happenings have been associated with that Coming has, in this matter-of-fact day, thrown the age-old expectation into disrepute. The various attempts of well-meaning Christian students to fix upon a definite date for the visible appearance of Jesus in the clouds of heaven, and the consistent failure of those predictions, has disinclined many from paying attention to what they consider so visionary a subject.

It is true that many still expect the coming of Christ to be accompanied by terrific convulsions of Nature — rending rocks and falling mountains, hosts of trembling sinners brought up from the grave to hear their sins rehearsed and then condemned to everlasting punishment, a few saintly souls caught up to heavenly glory and the world and all that it contains burned up. All this is an inheritance from the literal acceptance of Bible imagery of mediæval times and it dies hard; nevertheless it is becoming more and more accepted by students that the vivid symbols of Scripture were not intended to be interpreted in so crudely literal a sense.

The return of Christ is pictured in the Bible as a time of universal rejoicing. He comes to inaugurate a reign of righteousness over the earth which has as its object the extermination of evil. The time of his return is to mark the downfall of every man-made institution and system which is founded on unrighteousness. His lightnings which enlighten the earth (Psa. 97. 4) reveal the inherent rights and privileges of every man and hence his return is the signal for a great clamour on behalf of liberty. This present order of things will crumble and vanish away, the hills “melting like wax at the presence of the Lord” and “mountains being cast into the midst of the sea” (Psa. 97. 5 and 46. 2). Amidst the strife and confusion of this time of trouble which is the harvest of human misrule there will ring out commandingly the voice of One having authority: “Peace, be still”. And just as it was

when those words were first uttered during the storm on the Galilean lake, there will be a great calm.

The return of Jesus to this earth, and his revelation to all men, is an event to be expected. Our knowledge of the spiritual world makes it no longer necessary to insist that He must be seen by physical sight before the fact of his coming can be expected. Our Lord’s own words to Nicodemus makes it clear that one who is of the world of the spirit comes and goes “as the wind” and is not discerned as such by the natural sight. It is evident that after dwelling among men in the days of his flesh and giving his life on the cross to save men, He returned to his Father’s right hand to wait while his teaching had its primary effect. The world at the First Advent was not ready for the full revelation of all that Christ can do and will yet do for man; it was ready only for the germ of Christ’s teaching, and it is that germ which for two thousand years has worked in the hearts of a relatively small proportion of earth’s millions while the rest have followed the laws of evil and reaped the bitter harvest.

Christ returns to establish a new order of society the spiritual administration of which will be in the hands of those who during the past two thousand years—the “Christian Age”—have come into heart harmony with him and by reason of a consecrated devotion to his message and service are thoroughly trained in every aspect of the Divine law and ways. These followers of Jesus—called variously in Scripture the “Church”, the “Bride of Christ”, the “Little Flock”, are those to whom the educational and uplift work of the next Age can be entrusted. Christian disciples who have learned well the foundation principles of their faith and have manifested their profession in daily life will have achieved a balance of judgment and a clear apprehension of right and wrong which is lacking in many of even the noblest of men and women today. It is just these characteristics which will be needed in the administration of that coming day when all men will be required to hear the word of God, and hearing, make choice of their eternal destiny. It follows therefore that the first work to be accomplished by the Lord Christ at his return is the gathering to himself of his faithful “saints” who all through the Age have been “looking for his appearing”.

(Titus 2. 13). In order that these may be made like their Lord, which is the promise of the New Testament, they must be "changed" from earthly to heavenly nature. Such passages as I Cor. 15. 35-38 and I Thess. 4. 14-18 describe this change to the spiritual world as the hope and destiny of the Christian church, and it is from that new environment in the spiritual sphere that these resurrected ones, partakers of the "First Resurrection", will administer the

affairs of the new Kingdom on earth, Christ's Kingdom.

Thus the world in general, a groaning creation, travailing in pain, is waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Rom. 8. 19). In the day when the power of the Almighty Father is manifest in that new social order which is the Kingdom of God upon earth, men will look up into the heavens and will realise that, even as he promised, Christ has come.

THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

Harvest Thoughts

Reference to this feast of the people of Israel first occurs in Exodus 23. 16 "*Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field*". (NIV) Later in Leviticus 23. 34, more specific instruction is given, "*Say to the Israelites: 'on the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days'*". This was one of the three great feasts of Israel when the people were expected to appear before the Lord. It is so referred to in John 7. 37,38 when "*Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.'*"

In the King James version along with other translations this festival is referred to as the Feast of Tabernacles. This is not exactly a wrong translation but it is a little confusing since the Hebrew word used for God's dwelling place among his people when they travelled through the wilderness is not the same as the one used for this feast. Rotherham and Strong use the word 'booth' in their translation and so does the R.S.V. and the new Revised English Bible. So what were these 'booths' or 'tabernacles' or tents, and why did God instruct the people of Israel to make them?

Leviticus 23. 40-43 answers these questions when it says "*On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days . . . live in booths for seven days; . . . so that your descendants will know that I made the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God*". At the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 8. 13) Solomon reminded the people of the law which bade them attend the

Temple three times a year including the Feast of Booths. After the Jews returned from exile in Babylon they rediscovered the Feast of Booths and there is reference to this in Nehemiah 8. 14-18 where the people went into the countryside surrounding Jerusalem and their towns and brought in branches of olive, myrtle and palm. This was healthy pruning of the trees and not acts of vandalism. We are also told in Nehemiah's account that it was a time of 'very great rejoicing'. This kind of celebration continued right up until the coming of Jesus at his First Advent to which reference has already been made. By that time the idea of pouring water out and giving thanks for rain, had developed, and Jesus used the idea to convey what he had to offer to those who would come to him. There may also be a reference back to the experiences in the wilderness when God miraculously gave water to Israel. When a large proportion of the population live just above the 'bread-line' any slight variation in climate and harvest can make all the difference to whether one's family lives or dies of starvation. It is then that this kind of thanksgiving has real meaning.

This festival included camping out on the roof tops and in the court yards. One can well imagine the excitement of the younger members of the family. But the making of such a 'shelter' required the strength and skill of the older members of the family. These were shelters not from rain or snow, but from the sun and its heat.

At these festivals work stopped and they became truly seven Holy Days. They lived close to neighbouring Canaanite peoples who worshipped the Baal. It was so easy for Israel in its early days to slip from the true worship of the LORD into the fertility rites of the pagan worship. These festivals, appointed by their God, were intended to direct the thoughts of

God's people to the one great almighty Creator of the Universe upon whom they were dependant. But this God was not one to be manipulated. They could not perform certain rituals and say particular formulae and expect that God would do just what they asked. Israel was a trusting family, which looked to God in love for all that He had done for them.

In the beginning God had made all things well. Everything was beautiful and functioned perfectly. God had given to mankind the privilege of being stewards of his Creation. *"And God said to them 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' And God said 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food'."* Genesis 1. 28-30. By these words God had provided the wonderful gifts of creation for the blessing of mankind and at the same time had established the relationship between all living things on the earth. Rebellion against God did not alter the privileges which God had given except inasmuch as mankind was deficient in ability to do the work properly. Man's failure to trust God had undermined his thankfulness for all that He had done and given. Through the ages mankind has abused these gifts and in recent centuries due to the misuse of increased knowledge, has done such harm to the planet that it is reaching a state of being uninhabitable. God's people cannot approve of such desecration of his workmanship. The Old Testament abounds with references to the wonder and the beauty of the earth and all that lives here. The clear relationship of all things that draw breath and the acknowledgement of God's creative goodness is echoed many times. Taking our cue from Israel of old there is scope for God's people to join their hearts and voices in adoration and praise and thankfulness for all that God has given in the natural world. Then to go forth into the world and express those sentiments in our lives. The way we perform our acts of daily worship in the handling of the physical creation

and in the use of the wonderful things God has made, is the truest reflection of our heart's devotion to the living God who made us. God's loving protection and provision for his creatures are revealed in the tiny particles from which all things are made to the mighty forces of nature, wind and water, sun and snow.

That God will restore to full function the wonders of his creation is shown by Paul in his letter to the Colossians, for Christ is not only head of the Church but supreme over all creation. *"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth . . . For God was pleased to have all his fulness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross."* Col. 1. 16-20 (NIV). Human alienation from God has caused disruption throughout all creation. Man's failed stewardship has brought a return in part, to pre-creation chaos in which animal and plant life have shared the results of man's folly. Jesus has been appointed to put that right. The discord in nature, the plagues and epidemics are part of human ignorance and greed. Paul's words indicate that all creation shall be restored to harmony and the blessings of integration of purpose and abounding fruitfulness will bring lasting peace, joy and blessing.

So Jesus, in the Temple at the time the Feast of Booths was being celebrated, cried out his invitation to those in Jerusalem, pilgrims and citizens alike, to come to the water of life. There was spiritual drought among God's people and their Messiah was offering them the soul reviving opportunity to come to him. But there was much more to his invitation than personal salvation, great as that is. The invitation was for the Spirit of God to flow out from them to the nations, a work which has only just started. It must go on till God's gifts in the natural world are shared fairly and none hunger and thirst. In the last chapter of the Bible we see that work continuing as the river of the water of life flows out from the throne of God, producing flourishing trees which will spiritually heal and feed the nations. The curse, now upon the natural orders of life on earth, will be removed for ever and mankind will enjoy the fruit of the labours of Christ.

Let us Thank the Lord for all his love.

THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 5. The Repentance of Nineveh

"Now 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. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh" (Jonah 3. 1-3).

There was no hesitation this time. The lesson had been well learned. Jonah packed the simple necessities required for his journey, bade farewell to his village home in Gath-hepher, and set out.

How did he travel? It was a long journey he had to take—about nine hundred miles. He would join a caravan of merchants and travel with them for company and protection. The trade route which from time immemorial had run from Egypt to Asia passed within a few miles of Gath-hepher, and Jonah would be in no difficulty about the start of his journey. A day came that he could have been seen striding down the hill from Gath-hepher to the road in the valley, and before long was at the foot of the hill waiting for a caravan to pass by.

He would not have to wait long. Trade by land was prosecuted as diligently as trade by sea, and perhaps even as he made his way down the hill his eyes had espied a cloud of dust in the distance, far away to his right. It was to that direction he had turned when he went to Joppa, along the road in the direction of Egypt, and he had proved by experience what his fellow prophet Isaiah was to declare a century or more later—that woe is to those who go down to Egypt for help (Isa. 31.1). Now he was going in the opposite direction, to the north instead of the south—and God dwells in the "sides of the north"! Some such thought may have flashed across his mind as he sat there by the roadside waiting for the caravan that was coming up out of Egypt.

There would be no fare to pay this time. He could attach himself quite freely to the mixed multitude of men and animals and lumbering waggons, loaded with merchandise. Intermingled with the throng, and in strong contrast to the mild Egyptian and Babylonian merchants, were the fierce, well-armed Arabs whose work it was to defend the caravan against attack, for marauding bands were frequent. There would probably be men of half a dozen different nations in that motley assembly.

Down to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and

on to Damascus, where there would be a halt, and much unloading and loading of goods. Some of the merchants would be going no farther, but others would be waiting to join, and so before long the procession would be streaming out over the road that led northward, and Jonah would find himself climbing the mountains of Lebanon.

Did he reflect, as he did so, that he was following in the steps of his forefather Jacob, who went this same way in search of a wife? Did he think of Eliezer, the steward of Abraham, who came this way to bring back the bride of Isaac? Jonah's heart must have beat quickly as he remembered the soul-stirring events of which these mountains had been witnesses.

So to Carchemish, on the River Euphrates, where Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt was to meet his doom at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, finally sealing the fate of Judah (Jer. 46. 2). A halt here, for at this point the route from Egypt and Canaan joined the greater road which ran to Europe in the west and to Asia in the east. If Jonah had commenced his journey without any beast upon which to ride, it is likely that he had acquired one by now, for it was about three weeks since he had left Gath-hepher and there were yet several hundred miles to cover.

A few evenings later the caravan would be winding down the mountains towards a city which in the glinting rays of the setting sun presented a resplendent fairyland of rare beauty. Built in the shape of a vast crescent moon, lying along the hillside, its white walls and gleaming palaces set off to perfection the stately temple in its midst. Jonah's pulse beat quicker as his eyes fell upon Haran, the city of the moon-god. Here it was that Abraham came with Terah, his father, in the dim long ago when the promise of God was fresh and new. From here did Abraham remove himself when his father was dead, away from the pomp and glitter of its cultured idolatry, to the land which God had promised should be his and his seed for ever. *"In thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed"*; so had run the promise; and Jonah, given the opportunity to extend that blessing to the Ninevites, had turned away so that God's blessing should not come to them. Perhaps the sight of that proud city, its very

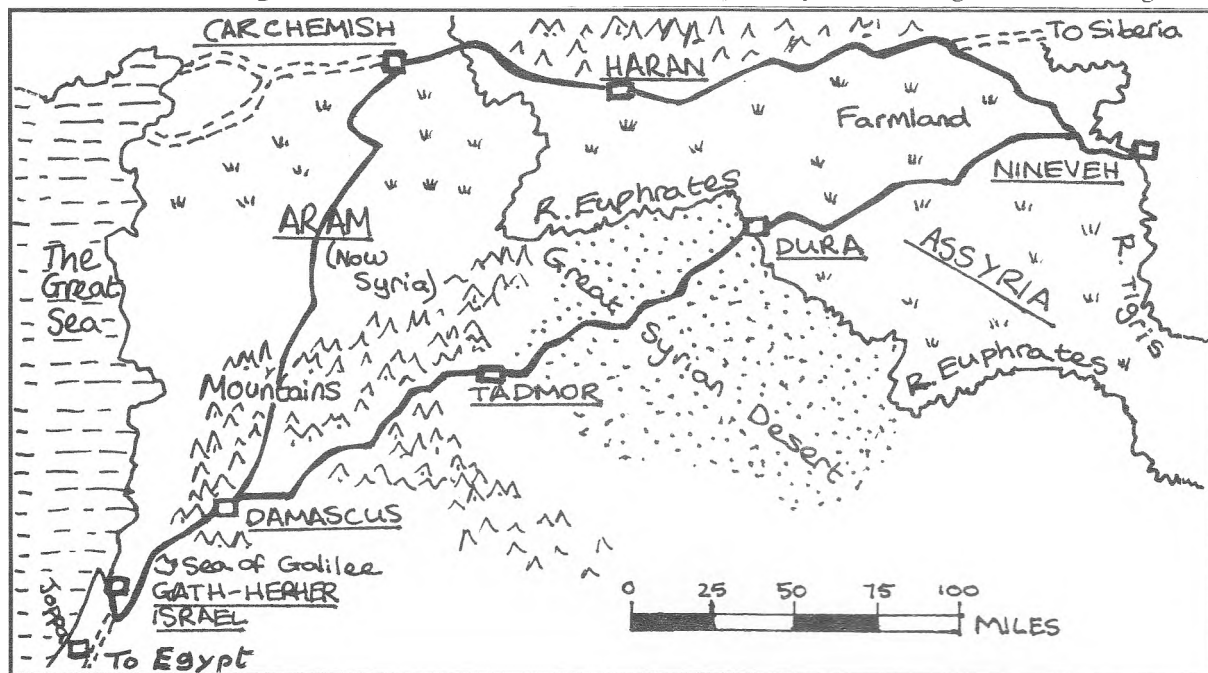
outline testifying to its consecration to the moon-god, strengthened Jonah's determination to proclaim faithfully all that his God gave him to speak, be the consequences what they may.

But the glories of Haran were left behind, the palaces and markets and gardens and fountains, the elaborate ceremonies and ritual, and the caravan was in the plain. The crescent-shaped city lay hidden again in the mountains, and now the road led across long stretches of gently rolling pasture land with barely an inhabitant, frowning mountains on the left and a seemingly endless desert on the right—and at its end, the River Tigris and Nineveh.

of the great Syrian desert, where the sun scorched by day and the frost chilled by night. So to the great river Euphrates at the ford of Dura (now Dier-el-Zor) where the road crossed that which ran north to Haran and south to Babylon. Jonah must have thought then of Abraham who had once passed this way.

The river crossed, he was in a different land, green with grass and trees and rippling streams. And soon then the road turned to run alongside another great river, the River Hiddekel, now the Tigris, and on that river stood Nineveh the city for which he was bound.

The journey was nearing its end. For eight or



It is possible that Jonah did not pass through Carchemish and Haran. It is known nowadays that besides the main trade route which ran from Egypt through Damascus northward to join the west-east one at Carchemish there was an alternative which left the main route at Damascus and ran directly eastward to Nineveh, cutting a couple of hundred miles off the journey at the expense of an arduous desert crossing. If Jonah was in a caravan adopting this route, he would have gone east from Damascus instead of north and found himself crossing a difficult mountain range to arrive at Tadmor (now Palmyra) which had been the northern limit of Solomon's kingdom in earlier times (I Kings 9. 18). Then came the arduous hundred and twenty miles crossing

ten weeks he had been plodding forward with opportunity every time a caravan passed in the opposite direction to relent and turn back. But he did not turn back. He remained faithful to his call. And then, one day, there came a shout from an Arab at the head of the caravan, a brown arm pointed, and away there in the dim distance Jonah descried the battlements and towers of a vast city.

He had reached Nineveh!

"Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city of three days' journey (verse 3).

Prior to the rise of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, Nineveh was the greatest city of the ancient world. It was in ruins before Nebuchadnezzar began to build, and that king

made Babylon the greatest city of all time; but when Jonah first cast his eyes upon the place where his message was to be given it was a city calculated to impress the beholder. It had not at that time, risen to the peak of its magnificence; it was Sennacherib who did for Nineveh what Nebuchadnezzar was later to do for Babylon; nevertheless, what Jonah did see was impressive enough.

This "great city of three days' journey" was actually a group of cities loosely linked together by outlying suburbs, parks and gardens, in the triangular area formed by the junction of two rivers, the Tigris and the Great Zab. This triangular space measured about twenty miles each way, and the expression "three days' journey" probably refers to the time required to travel around it.

The palaces of the kings, and the chief temples, were in the well-fortified and defended portion known as Ninua, the city of the fish-god. Twenty miles downstream lay Calah, the mercantile part of the city, with its quays and docks at the head of a long lake created by a dam across the river many miles lower down. In between lay the houses and gardens of the people.

Ninua is best known today in consequence of modern excavation, but it is probable that Jonah passed right through this part of the city and preached his message among the common people. That seems to be the setting of the account. Nevertheless, he would doubtless have gazed with intense interest upon the wonders of Ninua, so different from anything he had ever seen or imagined before. Damascus would have impressed him as a city of merchants, Haran by its artistic beauty and high culture, but Nineveh in its massive architecture. Great brick fortifications, tremendous palaces faced with coloured tiles and marbles, massive temples, gigantic statues of winged lions and other strange beasts at every turn; the predominant impression produced upon his mind must have been that of overpowering brute force, and that was truly characteristic of Assyria. As he wandered along the magnificent highway leading straight to the eminence upon which stood the king's palace he may well have wondered whether any of these busy hurrying city folk would stop and listen to his message. There might have been a natural hesitancy in making a start. Perhaps he lingered on the bridge which carried the road

over the canal that surrounded the palace area, and looked down into the placid water. Today that canal is merely a ditch, quite dry for most of the year, but in Jonah's time they called it the Tebiltu Canal and planted trees and flowers and lawns on its banks. But the water only showed him his own reflection, staring back at him, and presently he must have gained the farther side of the palace area, crossed the centre of the city and found himself before another elevated area, with more palaces and temples. We know nothing of these today, for this part is the hill known as Nebi Yunus (Prophet Jonah) and is crowned by an Arab village, in the centre of which is a mosque, and below that mosque, say the Mohammedans, the Prophet Jonah himself lies buried. Hence no excavations can be undertaken, for the whole hill is sacred. A staircase leads from the interior of the mosque to the tomb, but no Christian is allowed to descend. As partial compensation, the visitor is permitted to examine the large piece of swordfish suspended on the wall of the mosque, and asserted to be part of the whale that swallowed Jonah. The people of the village are ready also to point across from their own hill to the other palace hill a mile away, where, they say, the body of the whale is buried—and that hill is a mile long and one hundred feet high. It is only right to add that although many wonders of Assyrian art, the remains of palaces and temples, and a library of twenty-four thousand written tablets dealing with almost every conceivable subject have been brought to light in that other hill during the last two hundred years, the whale's bones have not been discovered!

So Jonah, having entered one day's journey into the city (verse 4) and perhaps passed out of the Ashur Gate into the residential suburbs leading to Calah and Ashur, found his voice and began to cry his message: "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*". It is a very bare announcement as recorded in the story; there can be little doubt that we are given only the outstanding expression of his preaching and that in fact he had much more to say. No prophet of God can preach without including in his preaching a call to repentance, and Jonah must have exhorted the people of Nineveh to turn from their evil ways, even although he may not have felt himself commissioned to promise that God would avert the judgment now over-

shadowing the city.

And the Ninevites believed! That is the most amazing thing in the whole of this amazing story. That a people which for generations had been brought up to glory in brute force, in pillage and murder and every kind of inhuman atrocity, should repent of all their deeds at the preaching of one obscure man, is a most remarkable outcome. *"The people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them"* (verse 5). Neither was the reformation confined to the lower orders, for *"word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes"* (verse 6).

Jonah seems to have been a most successful prophet. He promised Israel that their lost territories would be restored, and his promise came true. He so impressed the pagan sailors that they wrought with all their power to save him from death and acknowledged the supremacy of his God. Now he had, single-handed, converted the people of the most ruthless nation of the ancient world and made them as little children—the only recorded occasion in the whole two thousand years of Assyrian history when the slightest touch of softer feelings showed itself in that fierce, warlike national temperament. The conversion of Israel by Elijah on Mount Carmel is looked to as a great thing—surely this conversion of the Ninevites by Jonah is equally great!

What influences brought about conversion? Was it purely the prophet's eloquence, his sincerity, his impassioned appeal? Were there some feelings of guilt in the hearts of the Assyrians, some realisation that retribution for their crimes against humanity must surely come one day? Or was there something else?

Perhaps there was. Perhaps the fearful experience through which Jonah had passed in consequence of his first attempted flight to Tarshish was having its repercussion here at Nineveh, a thousand miles away. For the Assyrians also worshipped the fish-god, Dagon. In the Nineveh palaces frequent representations of Dagon have been found, and in the very oldest mythologies of these lands he was known as Oannes, a mysterious Divine creature, half man, half fish, who came up out of the waters of the sea in the very dawn of history to teach mankind the elements of agriculture and of civilisation. It is not difficult to see in that

ancient legend a dim and distorted recollection of Noah, the man who came up out of the Flood to set the world going once more. The people of Nineveh, therefore, would probably be as superstitious in regard to matters connected with the sea-deity as were the people of Joppa.

We do not know what space of time separated Jonah's second call from his first, but it was probably a matter of months. News travels fast in the East, and the caravans which constantly plied between Egypt and Assyria passed Joppa on the way. Merchandise brought from overseas to Joppa joined these caravans and found its way to Nineveh. It is quite possible—even probable—that the story of the Israelite prophet who ran away from his mission and was brought back from the sea by a giant fish had found its way to Nineveh before Jonah's arrival. It would be told in the markets by the visiting merchants and be passed from mouth to mouth through the city. The great sea-god who had thus sent his messenger to return the prophet to his duty was worshipped at Nineveh. Jonah's story would be sure to have been elicited by his travelling companions during that ten week's trek to Nineveh, for at night when the travellers had pitched camp and were sitting around their fires there would be nothing to do but tell stories to each other and discuss each other's past lives and future aspirations. In such case, it would be natural for the travellers, upon arrival at Nineveh to announce that they had with them the hero of the story, and since it is quite possible that Jonah's physical appearance was permanently altered by his sojourn in the whale's interior, he would speedily become an object of wonder and veneration.

There may therefore have been a mixture of motives in this conversion. The king, his advisers and his priests perhaps, had a consultation and decided that their own god was evidently on excellent terms with the strange God preached by the prophet, to have gone to the trouble he did in restoring him. It might even be that Jonah's God was superior in power to their own and had called upon Dagon to perform this service. In any case, it would seem that the preacher must be taken seriously. Hence the king issued a State decree to stamp with the seal of officialdom the repentance which had already spontaneously burst forth from the people.

The word rendered "decree" in verse 7 is a technical word for State edicts issued by Assyrian and Babylonian kings, and is used in

fact by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus and Darius, as recorded in the books of Daniel and Ezra. It is an interesting evidence that the writer of the Book of Jonah was at least in Nineveh at the time of the happening. Verse 7 preserves the official announcement, in its stereotyped wording, and if set out properly should read like this:

"And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh.:-"

*" 'BY THE DECREE OF THE KING
AND HIS NOBLES*

" 'Be it proclaimed:

" 'Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed nor drink water. Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth and cry mightily unto God;

" 'Yea,

" 'Let them turn every one 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?' "

The decree was published throughout the city, and most certainly a copy was placed in the State archives. It may be amongst those twenty-four thousand tablets which were recovered from the palace library and distributed to the

world's museums, for many of them have not yet been deciphered or translated. The crowning vindication of the story of Jonah may yet come from the labours of some cuneiform translator, patiently transcribing the records from those little fragments of baked clay—and what would the critics say then?

So God repented of the evil that He said He would do unto them, and He did it not. That is so characteristic of God. He has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but would rather that he turns from his evil ways and lives. Like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son, He is always waiting to go out and meet the repentant one and draw him back into the light and warmth of home. So in the final outworking of the story of this world, men will find that God has been planning all the time to lead them to repentance, and no matter into what depths of degradation their past lives have been steeped, if they will listen to the "greater than Jonah", they will inherit a salvation greater by far than that which came to the Ninevites three thousand years ago. *"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive"* (Ezek. 18.27).

(To be concluded)

THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

*Practical dissertation
on a well-known text*

"God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love and of a sound mind."
(2 Tim. 1. 7)

The apostle Paul was one of the greatest exponents of the Christian religion. Born a Jew, of the strictest sect of the Pharisees, instructed by the famous teacher Gamaliel, he was meticulous in the observance of the Jewish faith ("as touching the Law, blameless") and most zealous in the persecution of the first Christians, being an accessory at the martyrdom of Stephen. But when Christ appeared to him in a miraculous blaze of light on the Damascus road, he did a complete volte-face. Never was there a more dramatic conversion. From that moment he served the Lord Jesus Christ and devoted his life entirely to the preaching of the Gospel and the upbuilding of the Christian church. Moreover, the man who was famous for his own spirit of dedication taught that this is the only way to serve God. He exhorted the brethren at Rome, (and we know the message is also for us,) to present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12. 1). This

dedication would lead to that union with Christ which provides the answer to all man's needs of mind and spirit.

One of the most serious problems in the world today is mental illness. A third of all hospital patients in this country are psychiatric cases. Social reformers would have us believe that better social conditions mean happiness and mental stability but a few years ago it was reported that the country with the highest standard of living, Sweden, had also the highest suicide rate.

At times we all feel depressed. Life has its stresses and strains and it is to be expected that bereavement, illness, fatigue and the troubles of those near and dear to us may make us low-spirited, if only temporarily. But the more lasting, pathological depression—can a Christian really be overtaken by this? What has the word of God to say about its avoidance or cure?

It is generally accepted that the main causes of depression are guilt, fear, frustration and anxiety, leading to a sense of inadequacy and

hopelessness. But why does man feel guilty, fearful, frustrated, anxious.

As soon as Adam sinned he was aware that he had done wrong. This is proved by his attempt to hide from God and then to blame Eve for his sin. Eve reacted in the same way and blamed the serpent. Even non-Christians know when they have done wrong and it is the attempt to push this voice of conscience into the sub-conscious which often contributes to mental breakdown.

Fear, under control, is a good thing, as a warning of danger. But when it is unnecessary or exaggerated it is one of the most destructive forces in the world. People are fearful of so many things, of death, of want, of pain, of the loss of loved ones, of the hereafter. Many are afraid of fear itself, that they may be found to be cowards in the face of danger. Some are afraid of the supernatural, especially in these days when witchcraft is so widely practised.

Why do men feel frustrated? Mainly because they desire to do so many things which they cannot accomplish. They work long hours, only to find their hard earned money depleted by heavy taxes and inflation. They are ambitious and find that younger men are promoted before them. They want, perhaps, to do good and noble things to help their fellow men and are frustrated by bureaucracy, lack of funds, etc.

Anxiety results from any or all of the other causes of depression. The occasional anxious feeling due to immediate circumstances is the experience of everyone, but anxiety in medical terms lasts much longer and goes much deeper. If it is unchecked it can lead to the loss of that hope which is so necessary for man's well being. Only in the Scriptures, however, do we find a positive foundation for hope, whatever our condition. The psychoanalyst Jung has said "*Among all my patients in the second half of life, there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life*".

The very antithesis of the state of disintegration above described is that peace of heart which is the gift of our Lord to his disciples. "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14. 27).

Paul starts his letter to the Romans by proving that man had good reason to feel guilty. Very much to the point here is a recent remark in the Press that it is not guilt feelings but guilt

itself which is the cause of the trouble. "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*" The Jews had been given God's Law and the Gentiles had been given a conscience and the evidences of God in creation, but man did not wish to retain God in his image and the Jews, knowing the Law, continued to break it (Rom. Chs. 1 & 2). But Paul goes on to show that if one recognizes and confesses this guilt, help is at hand. All sin is primarily against a Holy God, and as this God is all loving He has himself provided the remedy by sending his Son as an atonement. So the only way to be rid of these guilt feelings is to accept the truth of Paul's words "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*" and "*being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus*" (Rom. 8. 1 & 5. 1). Peace within our hearts leads to a peaceful attitude towards others and the effects of this change of outlook are incalculable. When we feel guilty we endeavour, unsuccessfully, to justify ourselves, but an acceptance of the simple fact that through our faith in Jesus, God, the only true Judge, no longer holds us guilty, brings a psychological release which is creative instead of destructive.

The Apostle has a great deal to say about the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin. If we have really committed our way to the Lord we are promised "*Sin shall not have dominion over you*", and "*Now, being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life*" (Rom. 6. 14. 22). The Christian has the joy of knowing that Christ has overcome the Adversary and he can, by faith, enter into that victory.

Fear attacks all men. Many would not admit that they are afraid of death, but it is, after all, so final in the mind of the unbeliever. Because of this the writer to the Hebrews says that men are "*all their lifetime subject to bondage*" (Heb. 2. 15). But to accept Paul's teaching of the continuing life of the Christian is to nullify such a fear. So, in accordance with the words of Jesus "*Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die*", the Apostle speaks of a spiritual life which begins with one's consecration and will never end (John 11. 26, Rom. Ch. 8). Physical death is experienced as a momentary loss of consciousness before the Christian's full hopes are realised. So, according to Paul, fear of death no longer exists for the Christian.

What about the fear of pain? Pain is always

unpleasant and unnatural but one of the hardest things to bear is that it seems to be purposeless. But for the child of God all things have a purpose and strength is given for every trial. Suffering produces character and sympathy for others and, if endured joyfully as permitted by God for our spiritual welfare it brings us nearer to the Lord who *"learned obedience by the things which He suffered"* (Heb. 5. 8). This must be very important when we notice that the Apostle expressed his desire for this fellowship of suffering in the same sentence in which he said he wanted to *"know the power of his resurrection"* (Phil. 3. 10). If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. He who has presented his body a living sacrifice will rejoice in this opportunity to demonstrate his faithfulness and while this does not diminish the pain it leaves the mind in a state of peace. Paul, who experienced more suffering than most of us are asked to undergo sums up the position by saying *"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us"* (Rom. 8. 18). Above all we have the example of our Beloved Lord *"Who for the joy that was set before him endured the Cross"* (Heb. 12. 2).

We have many Scriptural answers to the fear of want. *"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him"* (Matt. 6. 8), and Paul who knew how to abound and to suffer need, wrote *"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4. 19). If we seek first the Kingdom of God all these things will be added unto us.

We may fear the loss of loved ones. This is a very natural fear but God has promised to care for the widows and the fatherless, and our knowledge of God's plan, not only for the Church but for all men, reassures us. He has promised to be with us to the end of the way and we can safely trust him, whatever the future may hold.

Thank God we have no dread of the next life, which promises nothing but joy as we look forward to the time when we shall sin no more, when we shall be used in the work of the Kingdom and we shall see our Father face to face.

Need we be afraid of being afraid?: Remember the timid disciples cowering in secret

for fear of the Jews and suddenly finding the courage through the power of the Holy Spirit to face even martyrdom. To quote Paul again, *"I can do (endure) all things through Christ who strengthens me"*, (Phil. 4. 13).

The forces of evil, whatever form they take, hold no terrors for the Christian who is equipped with the whole armour of God. We are told that we shall be able to stand against all the wiles of the Adversary because Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil.

Romans 8. 28 is surely the answer to any sense of frustration. If all things are working together for good, then *"whatever is, is best"*. The Christian has committed his life to an all wise, all loving Creator and his only desire is to please him. Therefore he has no wishes of his own to be frustrated. Selfish desires and ambitions are put to death as he accepts the will of the Lord.

Any feeling of inadequacy or inferiority is also excluded since the Christian has confessed his frail nature and knows that God does not condemn him but has accepted his sincere devotion. How can one feel inferior when he has the assurance of John *"Now are we the sons of God"*? Yes! in spite of the sin which so easily besets us. (because of the weakness of our faith), in God's sight we are his sons and we can humbly claim this relationship now.

If we accept the Scriptural antidote for guilt, fear and frustration there is no opportunity for that deep underlying anxiety to develop. Every day is lived in a spirit of peace, accepting all things as God's perfect will, casting all our care upon him for He careth for us.

The very necessary condition for a faith like Paul's is a commitment like Paul's:— *"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3. 13,14).

It is illuminating that the words holy, whole and healthy are very closely allied in derivation. Therefore a holy (dedicated) man may enjoy a whole (integrated) and healthy mental, moral and spiritual life.

Let us thank God that we have *"the mind of Christ"*.

It is all too possible for the believer to be affected by the spirit of the age in which he lives. He can accept its maxims and adjust himself to its intellectual and social fashions.

Perhaps, in the last resort, this is the meaning of worldliness. To be a worldly Christian is to be a Christian who is unduly influenced by the spirit of the times in which he lives.

BEZALEEL THE CRAFTSMAN

He was not a politician like Moses. He was not a priest like Aaron. He was not a soldier like Joshua. He was a simple man of Israel, undistinguished, but—he was a craftsman. He could do what none of those others could do. He could create things of beauty out of simple materials like metal and stone and wood. And what he created remained long after the politicians, the priests, the soldiers, of his generation, had run their course and slept with their fathers. Creations like his, made by men like him who lived four or five thousand years ago, repose today in many of the world's museums, the wonder and envy of all who behold them. And without him, and his fellow-craftsman and assistant Aholiab, and the men and women of his day who worked with him, the crowning glory of early Israel, the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the centre of Israel's worship and of their most solemn ceremonies, would never have seen the light.

Bezaleel was a descendant of Judah in the seventh generation, at the time of the Exodus, and was therefore probably a man in the prime of life at the time of his call—his grandfather Hur was one who supported the hands of Moses at the historic battle with the Amalekites (Exodus 17. 8-13). He was third cousin to Nahshon prince of the tribe of Judah at the Exodus so could be considered well connected. But he was just a craftsman, one who could take tools and materials and produce useful and beautiful objects which his fellow countrymen took in their stride without thinking much of the skill and ingenuity of the man who had made them.

But the Lord knew. He who appointed Moses and Aaron and Joshua to the important posts they were to fill in the events of the Exodus knew where to find a man who could do what neither Moses nor Aaron nor Joshua could ever do. Although that man was not destined to stand out so prominently before his fellows as were these three and others like them, his contribution to the outworking purpose of God in history was none the less great in the sight of the Most High. Moses gave Israel the skill of leadership, Aaron that of approach to God, Joshua that of freedom from enemies,—but Bezaleel gave Israel beauty and solemnity in worship, and without that all those other blessings would have been of no avail. When the Psalmist said *"I was*

glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of the Lord"; when he sang *"O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"* he must have been thinking of Bezaleel and his creation. When Solomon dedicated the glorious Temple that he had built and recalled that within its confines reposed its most precious treasure, the Ark of the Covenant which Bezaleel had made five hundred years earlier, still intact and as good as ever, he must have spared a thought for the man who had made it to the glory of God and the uplift of God's people. The earthly body of Bezaleel had been lying in some forgotten grave for many centuries past; his memory remained in that magnificent edifice whose central glory was that which his hands had created, hands consecrated to the service of God.

So he comes on the scene when God calls him, he performs the task assigned to him, faithfully and well, for he is a true craftsman, taking pride in executing it, and when it is finished, as quietly disappears and is heard of no more. He is not mentioned again in Scripture except for two casual references in the Books of Chronicles which enable us to fix the chronology of his life. The Lord does not necessarily preserve the records of his faithful ones on earth, but who can doubt that those records exist in Heaven and remain for all time on the roll of the Lord's consecrated workers? *"She hath done what she could"* said Jesus of Mary on one historic occasion. This short account in the Book of Exodus tells of one who at the very beginning of Israel's history did just the same.

From whence did he get his materials? Nearly one ton of gold, two tons of silver, and three tons of copper, all to be used in this project. It must have been brought from Egypt for this was only six months after they had crossed the Red Sea. And how could a nation of slaves have accumulated such wealth? The answer lies in the Exodus story itself. The Egyptians were so glad to see them go that they loaded them with all the gifts they desired in order to speed them on their way; and Egypt under the 18th dynasty was an immensely wealthy nation. There were some six hundred thousand men aged between twenty and sixty at the Exodus; on this basis there must have been some three hundred thousand separate families of all ages up to a hundred years of age. This would imply that

each family would have contributed about ten ounces of gold in the form of jewellery, a little over two pounds of silver mostly in ornaments, and a pound and a half of copper utensils, to make up the quantity stated in Exod. 38. The Scripture statement that they "spoiled the Egyptians" is a considerable understatement. More expressive are the Lord's words to Abraham six centuries earlier "*Afterwards shall they come out with great substance*".

And what about the timber for the building and the furniture. An approximate estimate yields the conclusion that probably at least a hundred giant trees having trunks of three feet or more across must have been felled, cut into planks and planed to shape and size. A massive forestry exercise indeed! It is known that Sinai had huge forests in those days, used extensively by the Egyptians. But from whence did Israel get the tools? It would seem that the precious metals were not the only "spoil" taken from the Egyptians. The precious stones used for the High Priest's vestments, the linen for the curtains, the ram's skins and seal skins (mis-translated "badger skins" in the A.V.) for the rain-proof covering, all products of Egypt, were here in the wilderness ready for the purpose. Those Israelites did pretty well when they came out.

But now Bezaleel, with his faithful Aholiab and his army of "wise hearted" (literally skilful or ingenious) helpers all qualified to engage in one trade or another, was faced with the task of translating all this mass of material into the reality which the Lord had outlined to Moses on the Mount. It may not readily be realised what a stupendous task that was. Six tons of miscellaneous small objects, all to be melted down and fabricated into the destined forms! Right at the outset they would have to set about the building of a battery of blast furnaces. He would have found some men of Israel experienced in that art; the Egyptians, like most ancient nations of their day, had already perfected it. Their famous copper mines at Serabit-el-Khadem, only about thirty miles from Sinai, had plenty of them for smelting the copper from the ore brought up by the miners; some of them are still there, together with the slag heaps left by those ancient labourers of four thousand years ago, for anyone to see today. And then the solidified metal had to be fabricated by expert hands into the golden lampstand, weighing half a hundredweight, the

mercy seat and the two cherubim for the Most Holy, which, of solid gold, amounted to a couple of hundredweight each. These latter at least must have demanded the equivalent of a modern foundry, with operatives accustomed to melting the gold in a crucible and pouring it into a sand mould and then smoothing and polishing the resultant product. The same process was necessitated for the silver and copper sockets in which stood the upright wall-panels of the sanctuary and the posts for the curtains enclosing the "Court". Another army, of wood-cutters, must have been kept busy felling trees both for fuel for the furnaces and to provide the timber for the walls of the building and posts for the Court, no light task.

The sanctuary walls and its wood furniture were to be "overlaid with gold". This is usually assumed to have been effected by hammering the gold into thin sheets which were then fixed by means of a suitable adhesive. On the basis of the details given in the account, however, the amount of gold available for this purpose after the construction of the solid gold furniture and accessories would only allow a covering much too thin for hammered-out sheets. This requirement could only be met in modern times by electro-plating. But it is not possible today to electro-plate on wood; only on a base metal. It is known however that the ancients could do this but despite expert examination of examples which have been recovered from the ruined cities of ancient Babylonia it has not been possible to find out how this was done. It might well be that some of Bezaleel's "wise-hearted" men had been employed on this process when slaves in Egypt and so used their technical skill to achieve something which modern man, with all his boasted achievements, has so far been quite unable to do.

Six months they had, to accomplish all that work—and when it was finished, "*Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord commanded*". That was all; Moses recorded the completion, and thereafter Bezaleel and his comrades fade out of the story. They play no part in future history. Raised up to perform a specific work at a certain time, they retire into the background and are heard of no more.

So it is, and so it must be, for all of the Lord's dedicated workers who are called to a specific service, just because in the first place they are uniquely fitted for that service and in the second

place are wholly and altogether dedicated to that service because the Lord thus called them. Throughout the story these twin principles stand out, ability and willingness. The people were invited, not compelled, to give up their treasures to make the enterprise possible. The workers accepted the invitation to labour—and how they must have laboured! Their satisfaction at the end was the knowledge that they had played a part—only a part but it was a part which only they could play—only a part and yet an essential part in the outworking of the Divine purpose. A thousand years later, when the Babylonians advanced to destroy the city and the Temple, at least one of the treasures those men had made, the Ark of the Covenant, still reposed in the Most Holy of that Temple. What happened to it after that no man knows; when Herod built his Temple on its site, five hundred years later still, there was no Ark in the Most Holy. Perhaps—it is possible—that the priests

at the time, realising that the city was doomed, hurriedly concealed it in some cave near Jerusalem, hoping to retrieve it when all was over. But they were all slain by Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers, so that no one was left who knew the hiding-place. Perhaps it is still there, awaiting discovery at some future time.

So must it ever be, with all whose lives are dedicated to our Lord and his service. All members have not the same office, said Paul. Many differing talents and abilities are with those who labour for him and each is appointed to that which he can best accomplish. Our Lord is the one who weaves these varied contributions into one harmonious whole. And when we have finished and life, with its abilities begins to fade, happy are we if, like that faithful and self-effacing Bezaleel of olden time, we can pass quietly into the shadows with the unspoken reflection *"I have finished the work thou gavest me to do"*.

THE GOAL IS LOVE

Instruction for a Young Leader

"This instruction has love as its goal, the love which springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a genuine faith. 1 Tim. 1. 5 (REV).

Paul was writing to his son in the faith, Timothy of Lystra. He had adopted this young man on his second missionary journey and Timothy had travelled with the apostle through Asia (now Turkey) and Greece. He had graduated from being a servant of the apostle to being an elder in the church at Ephesus. As a relatively young man, he was a leader in a community containing older people. Paul had given him instructions on how he was to deal with the problems within the church and mentions these briefly in verses 3 and 4. He then states how wrong were those things which caused the Ephesian believers to falter. The goal of Christians is not to acquire special knowledge which labels them as a proud elite. Only the exercise of love can set them apart unself-consciously from others and only love can enable them to reach the goal of their beliefs which is to be in their Heavenly Father's home.

In the church at Ephesus there were two factions which distracted believers from following their Master. There were Jews who had never broken free from the belief that because they were descendants of Abraham they would automatically be acceptable to God. They

measured their behaviour against the traditions of rabbis, but self effort in obedience to a set of rules could never make them right in God's eyes. The ability to trace their ancestry to the patriarchs had no merit in winning God's approval. Within this church was a rival group whose background was Greek. They tried to please God through human philosophy. They believed they had a particular kind of knowledge which designated them of superior intellect and they had been initiated into the secrets of their wisdom so that they could attain the 'better life'. Paul had shown the folly of this wisdom at the beginning of his first letter to the brethren at Corinth. True wisdom was based on knowing God and understanding his way. It could not be found by secret societies with human limitations. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was open to all who would listen and act upon it. It was not an academic appreciation of the nature of the universe discovered by human thinking. God alone could open up his purpose to the human mind. Christianity was not confined to the very intelligent and upper class of human society. It was open to the beggar and the slave and they frequently had an advantage in coming to Christ, for they had less of an image of self importance which had to be broken at the cross.

The ability to think is good, useful and neces-

sary, but knowledge only becomes truth when we have a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Structures of human thought readily collapse when one false premise is removed. Only those with a sure foundation in the work of Christ can build a sound structure. The building is done mostly in the way we live; in the way we behave and speak. It finds its expression in the motives and attitudes we have in life's experiences and toward all people we meet. God's purpose for the Ephesian Christians was being thwarted by human diversions. The Jewish law and the philosophy of the Gnostics needed Timothy's serious attention in order that the good work which Paul had begun should not be brought to an untimely end. Therefore he used strong language and Timothy was charged with the task of setting right the church under his care. The word translated 'charge' in the RSV is a military instruction. It carries with it the seriousness of an order from a superior officer. This was not just an old friend giving an opinion. Paul, the aged and experienced apostle, knew what the Christian life was about. He knew what God wanted at the end of the journey. It was vital that believers' eyes were correctly fixed on the right goal. When we undertake to do a project or task it is necessary to know the aim or goal before we begin, so that we produce the desired result. Paul says the goal in Christ is love.

The love of which the New Testament speaks to us is not the instinctive emotion of basic human behaviour. The love between married partners or between friends is not only perfectly natural but it is part of our God-given lives. The feelings which develop between parents and children and between brothers and sisters is also part of God's loving Creation. But the love which receives most attention in the New Testament is a godly love and it is well described many times in the Old Testament. This is the love which Jesus talks about in the parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a love with no ulterior motive and no expected reward. It is love for its own sake which was expressed in its highest and deepest form in the suffering and death of Jesus.

There are many people and things we can like. We cannot help liking some people. Unfortunately such loves in human nature are readily corrupted and become self satisfaction. If those human likings are genuinely brought under the control of love developed in Christ, then they can and should help us to exercise the love which

he had for everyone he met. The fruit of the spirit, listed in Galatians 5. 22, cannot be fully developed unless the various aspects are controlled by a godly love. Nowhere is this love more fully described than in 1 Cor. 13. In writing to Timothy, Paul shows that this love springs from a certain heart condition. ". . . love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith." The heart in scripture is used to denote the basis of inner life from which springs the will and decision making of a Christian. It can include emotion, reason and will, all of which have been thoroughly cleansed in the believer. Conscience is an indicator governed by an understanding of one's self which must recognise a need for correction. It is the ability to distinguish good from evil in making positive choices for what is right. These aspects of the Christian character only operate well when they spring from total trust in God. This is a faith which shuns what is hypocritical and outward display. Paul uses these ideas, heart, conscience and faith not as independent parts of personality but central to the integrity of the whole life in Christ. They dispose of the notion of love as only passionate and emotional. This is intelligent love, full of conscious compassion, the ultimate example of which was Jesus himself, and later manifest in his early followers.

However, there are stories in the Old Testament which show how close to God some of his ancient people came to understand what He is like. Few enjoyed companionship with their Creator as did Moses. His leadership of Israel was fraught with problems, complaints and apparent disasters. Yet through it all he reflected the character of God. On one occasion his own brother and sister rebelled against him. These two had been with him for much of his life yet they allowed jealousy to come between Moses and themselves. The seeds of envy can be very bitter between once loyal friends. The story is recorded in Numbers 12 how Aaron and Miriam cast doubt on his leadership and that God had specially spoken through him. Arrogantly they said "*Has the Lord not spoken through us also.*" They contrasted so strongly at that moment with Moses, who was "a man of great humility." Not satisfied at criticizing his leadership they had to drag into the argument the fact that Moses' wife was a foreigner—a Cushite. God made the position very clear; Moses was no ordinary prophet, for the LORD

had spoken face to face with this man. He was especially gifted above all others. Moses led Israel to deliverance, through the power of God, from Egypt. He had been the one through whom the Law of the Lord was given. Moses had been the 'go-between' in their relationship with God at Sinai. Miriam and Aaron should, by human standards, have been so proud of their brother, and in their better moments undoubtedly they were very grateful to have been the family who guarded and reared young Moses. The ugly sin of bitter jealousy had grown in their minds until they were a danger to the people they led. There were occasions when Moses became very angry, in part at least because of the people's rebellion against God. He was not angry as he witnessed his sister's disease but only very, very sad. He could have turned in pride upon Miriam and told her that it served her right that she had contracted leprosy. He could have wished it equally upon his brother but in that moment he revealed the compassion of his heart as an intercessor. He prayed for the one who made herself his enemy and pleaded with God to heal his sister, "... *Heal her O God I beseech thee*" he cried. This story reveals what God is like, for Moses had learned to love the sinner though he hated the sin. He forgave his sister as God forgives us all. Such love forgives so that the sinner is healed. This is the sort of love which prompted God to give Jesus to the world. This is the love which will heal the nations and give new life to all people. Only those who persist in rejecting God's forgiveness will destroy themselves. God yearns, as Moses yearned for Miriam, that the sinner will turn and be healed.

There is another wonderful story in the days of Elisha. The Syrian tribes to the north east of Israel were constantly raiding God's people. Naaman was one such leader who was like a thorn in Israel's side. In 2 Kings 6. 8-23 we have an account of how the Syrian ruler, Ben-hadad was becoming fed up with the way in which his plans always seem to be known and frustrated by Israel's king. He began to blame his officers for leaking intelligence to the enemy. They defended themselves by saying that the source of information to King Jehoram was Elisha the

prophet. They said he knew the conversation that took place in the king's bedroom. So Ben-hadad sent a party of men to capture Elisha. On the way they were struck with blindness and Elisha led them into the city where in normal circumstances they would have been slaughtered. Instead Elisha told the king to give them a meal and send them back to Syria. The account ends with that lovely little post-script "And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel." The prophets were beginning to understand the Divine principles upon which all mankind will be reconciled to their God and to each other. Violence only begets more violence. The children of God are peacemakers. These two events in the history of Israel show us something of the Divine love. It was not always apparent among God's people and it took hard experiences to develop it strongly. Love is pre-eminent because God is love. Only He is able to direct our lives into that love which is supreme. Only the master gardener can produce the fruitage in our lives. How does his love change us?

It doesn't allow us to answer back when others are rude to us.

It doesn't allow us to be jealous when someone else gets what we want.

It makes us patient with the unthankful.

It makes us gentle with the arrogant and hurtful.

It makes us joyful when others get success we would like.

It makes us ready to help those who have been unkind.

This is the only goal which will make us the kind of people God needs to heal the nations. The Ephesian Christians thought knowledge and ancestry could please him. We may go on pretending that because we have special knowledge and because we belong to a certain group that we shall eventually achieve a place of distinction in the Heavenly Kingdom. There is only one goal and aim in the life of the child of God. That is to be like him. Only then shall we be ready, educated and fitted for the wonderful work of teaching resurrected humanity how to love.

To give praise is very becoming for the believer. It becomes as natural as breathing is to the physical body. Thankfulness and praise are twin sisters and where the one is found the other follows close in its track. Realising the deep need

of love and mercy and being the recipient of the same, causes the heart to overflow with gratitude to its donor. Like the Psalmist, the language is: "*I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*"

"AND MORE THAN THAT"

A study in Eph. 3.

Careful students of Paul's letter to the Ephesians are prone to remark with wonder the majestic nature of the language employed in the attempt to fit the things of God into the words of men. There is far too much of this lofty thought throughout the whole Epistle to be dealt with in this article—for indeed, a whole series of articles could not scale all the heights and sound all the depths which our beloved brother Paul wrote into it.

Our attention at this time will be given to some three or four of these massive thoughts, though we know that even then the half will not be told.

The first point for our consideration is in chapter 3. 8, where Paul speaks of the *unsearchable* riches of Christ "*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" The word that is translated "unsearchable" is a word that has baffled translators, for no translation has yet set forth the whole thought as expressed by Paul. Moffat renders the phrase "the fathomless wealth of Christ" while Weymouth has the "exhaustless wealth of Christ". Rotherham and the Concordant Version translate it "the untraceable riches of Christ" and if untraceable what purpose could have been served by Paul's ministry? How could he inform the Gentiles of wealth which was untraceable? Does not the fact that he was charged with the mission to the Gentiles require that the subject of his ministry should be apprehensible, and therefore in some degree "traceable"?

The precise meaning of the Greek here is "that which cannot be measured out with the foot". The situation that this phrase brings to mind is that of some young worthy nobleman, newly come into a vast inheritance, despatching his trusty steward to "ride the boundaries", and survey the wealth of the estate. Furlong by furlong, day after day, he goes, and yet the end seems as far away as ever. The time fails him to "measure it out by the foot"—yet with every passing step he *is* tracing out its dimensions, or estimating something of its buried wealth. He could report back that he had traversed a thousand stadii, but there was "more than that."

And that is precisely Paul's thought here. As the Steward of the Lord he was tracing out the

length and breadth of the Lord's inheritance, and surveying its intrinsic wealth, yet there was always "more than that". He had never said the last word about it, at any time. No matter how he enthused about the Master's inheritance, there was always more to say—always "more than that." And for the saint, who, in thought, traversed with Paul, the wide reaches of the Lord's heavenly estate, there was always some present satisfaction and enjoyment as they pressed along their track, but they never reached its end—there was always more to come. Thus when we "trace it out," the track will have no end, and therefore we will not be able to "measure it out with the foot" We *may* measure it day by day, but we shall not be able to "measure it out"—it is too great for that.

Our next point is in verse 10, where Paul speaks of "the manifold wisdom of God" . . . *to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God.*" This is a wonderful statement, and merits more attention than can now be accorded to it. The word translated "manifold" or "diversified" has to do with a range of colours—as, for instance the spectrum effect when light is passed through a crystal prism. The student of geology also sees this colour range as he views some rock specimen under a beam of polarised light. Among its components may be seen the sparkling green of its olivine, the dark brown of its hornblende, the flashing red of its haematite, the shining silver of its felspar. Occasionally a specimen of more diverse and complex composition may be on the slide, and as he views the richly variegated colouring he is taught to call it "*poikilitic*." This is the very word used by Paul—the "*poikilitic*" wisdom of God; yet that is not all that Paul has to say—to emphasise this variegated wisdom of God he adds another word by way of prefix and calls it "the *poly-poikilitic* wisdom of God"—the *much variegated* wisdom of God."

We are told that colour-makers, working with the elements now available can produce and distinguish no less than ten thousand shades and hues within the range of the visible bands of the spectroscope. Not every eye would be capable of distinguishing the slight degrees of light or shade in this vast range of colour, but to the

experienced eye this range would indeed be a "*poly-poikilitic*" one.

To the angelic hosts watching with intense eagerness the expression of the Wisdom of God as it reveals itself in the experience of the Church, the wide scope, added to the manifold variety, of their Providential leadings, day by day, can be well compared to this colossal range of ten thousand hues and shades. God's dealings take each child just as he is, each different child being the subject of a different mode of leading and development; each different child being the object towards which a different facet of Divine Wisdom is directed, so that its full individuality may be developed to its fullest possibility.

Since our "*poly-poikilitic*" range is limited to ten thousand hues and shades all we can say is that the Wisdom of our God has ten thousand hues and shades—and more than that! Here is a Wisdom equal to every emergency and every experience the long age through in the lives of every one who will constitute the Church of God.

The next point of our survey is found in verses 18 and 19—"*the love that surpasses knowledge.*" Here is a wonderful galaxy of words indeed. "Breadth," "length," "height," "depth" . . . the love . . . which passes knowledge . . . filled with all the fullness of God." Behind the "*poly-poikilitic*" Wisdom of God lies a love which outstrips all the range of our finite ken — which overleaps the utmost bounds of our present comprehension.

It is related that Nansen, the Arctic explorer, having one day bored through the ice, let down his sounding-line into the waters beneath the ice-cap. Down and down it went, but did not touch bottom. Another line was added, and another, until all the lines in the ship were tied together and let down—but even then they failed to reach the ocean bed. When writing up the records of that day, Nansen wrote, "3,500 fathoms . . . and deeper than that." That is exactly Paul's thought about the Love of God. It is the full measure of man's necessity—and greater than that! How much more none can ever know. Words just break down when contemplating a Love like that! When our sounding-lines have reached their utmost depth in the hearts and lives of men, all we can say

is—in Nansen's words—"3,500 fathoms, and more than that"!

Our final point is in verse 20—"above all we can ask or think . . ." Here the Apostle's words seem to fail him completely, as writing in the most highly inflected language of the ancient world, he tries to commit to the parchment the things which his illumined eyes could see. He piles up word on word, idea upon idea in his enthused attempt to utter what he knows. Now his theme is Power—after Wisdom and Love comes Power. It is a power that is "able to DO—able to do *above* what we ask—*abundantly* above what we ask—*exceeding* abundantly above what we ask—and then as though realising that the tongue may be less accomplished than the brain, he adds as a last attempt to state the impossible, "able to do exceeding abundantly above what we can . . . think." And with that our attempts at understanding reach their boundaries, and we can only say "all that we can ask or think—and more than that"! And having reached that point, heart and mind and soul can only bow in reverent silence before the wealth of Grace in Christ Jesus our Lord, before the infinite resources of Manifold wisdom, before the illimitable heights and depths of Love Divine, and before the all-prevailing power of him who is the glorious Author of it all.

Children with "wonder" minds can always see much more in life than those who are coldly calculating in their approach to things. Children of God with "wonder" minds can always see in these glowing words and thoughts of Paul more than those who are coldly statistical in their definitions of truth. These glowing words were a transcript from Paul's own experience. It was both fact and action in his own life and character before it found its way to his manuscript, and because he lived intensely with his Lord, his pen could write with an intense intimacy about those things he received from his Lord, and which he strove so enthusiastically to write for his friends.

"If you become his man," said one old saint to an early British king, "you will come upon wonder upon wonder in his call—and every wonder true."



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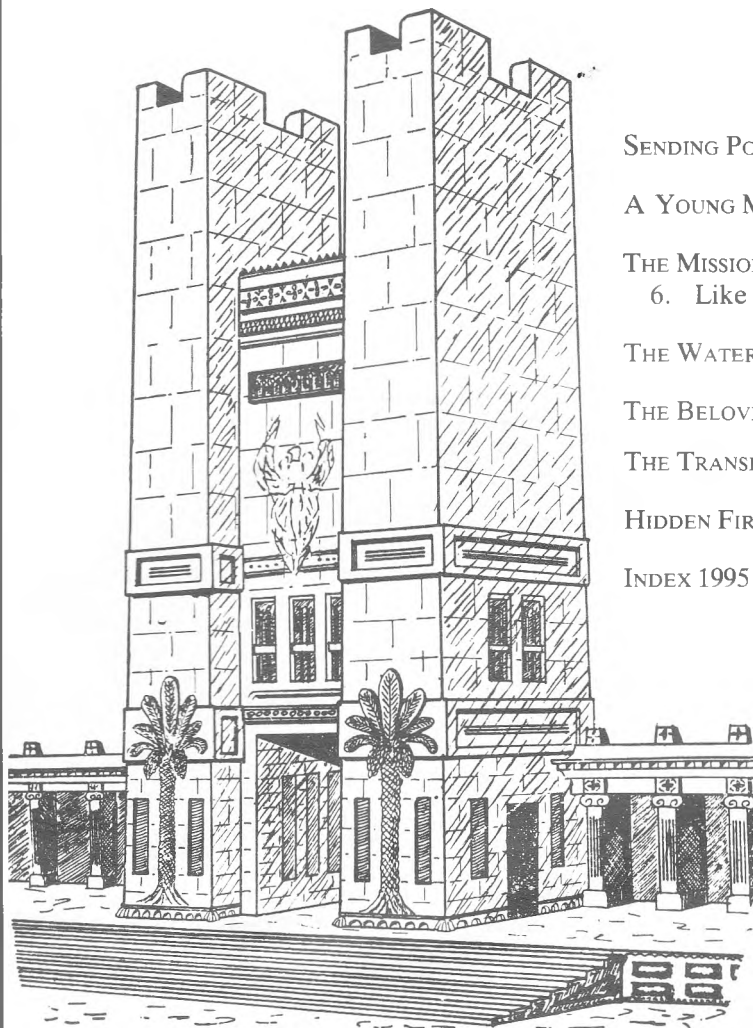
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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

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The Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust, a parallel organisation to the Bible Fellowship Union, runs this Christian retirement centre, primarily for those sympathetic with the views expressed in this journal. It now has several vacancies and is planning further accommodation for a couple. Gainsborough House welcomes friends for country holidays and short stays in single and double guest rooms.

It is situated on the West side of a delightful village, 100 miles South West of London. Readers considering moving to a retirement home are invited to write for details to the Secretary; John Thompson, Bethel, 24 Henning Way, Milborne Port, SHERBORNE, Dorset, DT9 5HN (Tel: 01963 250074).

BOOK REVIEWS

"The Rise of Babylon" C. H. Dyer, 236pp Paperback, Illus. Index. ISBN 0 8423 5618. 5 Tyndale House Publishers, POB 80, Wheaton, IL 60180, U.S.A. \$8.95.

Allusions to the modern rebuilding of Babylon have been current for some years and this book, by one who has been there to see for himself, summarises what has been done to date and is projected for the future. It pictures the present political ruler of Iraq as aspiring to restore the ancient city to its former magnificence, the fourteen pages of photographs affording a vivid impression of what has been achieved. The palace in which Daniel once stood, the Ishtar Gate, the Processional Way, the Greek Theatre, all stand today much as they did in the days of their glory. Whether the addition of a teahouse and other adjuncts of modern tourism is a help to the ultimate effect may be open to question. A feature of the book is a concise history of Babylon from 2000 BC; the detailed account of the events surrounding the time of the Captivity and Restoration is particularly good.

The latter part pictures the "Last Days" as imminent, culminating in an all-nations military attack on the land in consequence of which the rebuilt city will be destroyed, with apparently most of Iraq, preceding the coming of the Lord to set up his Kingdom. This part is in the best tradition of 19th century "End Time" theology although it may be questioned why, if He comes to reconstruct human society upon a peaceful and equitable basis, He finds it necessary to destroy a sizable proportion first. Isaiah did say that the work of righteousness was to be peace and assurance for ever. It is this destruction, suggests the author, which fulfils the old prophecies of the final irreversible doom

of the city. As a record of what is currently happening, there is much in the book to interest students of prophecy.

"Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology" W. L. Craig & Q. Smith. 342pp Paperback, Index, 0 19 826383 X Clarendon Press Oxford £13.95.

This perhaps rather cumbersome title introduces an exhaustive examination of the argument for and against the existence of God in the light cast upon this conflict of thought by modern knowledge of the Universe. It comprises a series of alternate essays in which the relative arguments are propounded. Considerable thought is given to modern cosmological findings—hence the "Big Bang"—and one is left with the impression that despite man's best endeavours we are still short of absolute truth. Perhaps a significant summing-up on the last page is embodied in one sentiment upon which both Craig and Smith concur, "a profound astonishment that the Universe exists at all". Maybe David king of Israel felt like that when he said "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained,—what is man?". On page 237 Smith advances an important principal, that if, in fact, there is an omnipotent Supreme Being, He must of necessity create a Universe and animate beings which and who must ultimately be itself and themselves supremely good, which at least disposes of the mediaeval doctrine of Hell torment. A book definitely for theologians and others acquainted with terms used in theological and cosmological discussions. Admittedly "the wisdom of this world"; when so read, a medium of profound thought.

Renewals. All readers from whom we have not heard since July last should have had a pink renewal notice in this issue. It will be appreciated if any who have not yet done so will signify their wishes without delay. We are pleased to continue sending the "Monthly" to all who are definitely interested whether or not they feel able to contribute to the cost, but we do not wish to

incur the cost of continuing to send to anyone who is no longer interested.

Please note that it is essential that cheques (checks overseas) sent as gifts for the "Monthly" are made payable to **BIBLE FELLOWSHIP UNION**, otherwise we may have to return them for amendment.

SENDING PORTIONS

A Christmas Message

With the recurring seasons come the festive days of Christmas when an attempt is made by many to recapture the spirit of goodwill expressed in the message of the Saviour's birth. Something that often lies dormant in the heart of man is called forth, as in a moment of generosity he seeks to express his feelings in a small gift. Too often the exchange of such tokens masks a commercial or other base motive. But behind the Christmas shopping and merriment lies a long history which goes back farther than the advent of mankind upon earth.

The thought of "recurring seasons" brings to mind a host of memories concerning the blessings of Nature. Each breath we draw, each morsel we eat, is a token of love, planned by a wise and benevolent Creator when this planet was being prepared as a home for the human race. Too many of these gifts are taken for granted by most people without a moment's reflection upon the greatness and goodness of a loving God. The minute care and wonderful forethought which provided us with eyes and ears, hands and feet, are lost upon a busy world too absorbed in its own important and clever enterprise. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* (Jas. 1. 17). This is a principle of the natural world as well as the spiritual life. Yet apart from the "household of faith" this fact is ignored and unacknowledged.

In the natural family a tiny child for the first few weeks of its life has no recognition of those who provide and sustain its life. With the dawning intellect comes the first signs of appreciation of the love which surrounds it. In early years the child is still oblivious, for the most part, of the forethought and self-sacrifice of its parents and it is only conscious of all being well so long as necessities and comforts are to hand for the taking. As the child develops towards maturity it begins to respond and reciprocate the love that is showered upon it. How rewarding for a mother to hear the baby's voice say "thank you" and for a father to accept a simple gift from a child's own hand! Just as wonderful are such moments for the Heavenly Father as He watches the first responses in his growing child. After we have learned to be thankful for his bounty and care, we begin to desire to give something

to him in emulation of his love. Our giving does not amount to much compared with his vast treasure house yet to his sensitive heart there is a thrill of joy at our humble efforts to imitate him.

The next step in learning to be generous is a willingness to give to all, regardless of their relationship to us, but especially to the poor. This is also a godly characteristic and one enjoined upon Israel in their law by Moses (Deut. 15. 11) The spirit of giving was as important as the gift itself, and there was to be no feeling of it being given grudgingly. Here and there in the history of Israel we catch a glimpse of this principle being revived, along with other reforms. Celebration of great occasions included the "sending of portions" to each other. So it was in the days of the Jewish Queen of Persia, Esther, when the Hebrews throughout the Empire were saved from annihilation. (Esth. 9. 19.) Later, at the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the restoration of the Law of God, under Nehemiah, the festivities were marked by the sending of portions for whom nothing was prepared. (Neh. 8. 10.) Obviously it is a Scriptural truth that in one's own enjoyment, thought should be given to others, who perhaps are not so well able to enjoy the festivities as ourselves.

"God so loved the world that he gave . . ." and of all the many, many gifts which He bestowed upon mankind, none is so great, so wonderful, so full of Divine love as the gift of his beloved Son. Sacrifice therefore characterises Divine giving, and as imitators of our Heavenly Father, we must be prepared to give till it hurts. She . . . *"hath cast in more than they all"* was the Master's appraisal of the widow's mite. Self denial had prompted her gift to the treasury and it thereby meant more to God than the well advertised large donations of the wealthy.

So Christmas comes once more, to remind us of God's great gift. And we, to celebrate the occasion, will send presents to our friends and relatives in token of our love for them and recognition of God's love toward us. Perhaps we shall be able to spare some generosity for those "for whom nothing is prepared" like God's people of old. The Welfare State and National Insurance schemes have not dispensed with the need or opportunity for true almsgiving. In any

case, we can copy the example of Peter and John, who having no silver and gold to distribute to the poor, "gave such as they had".

If we once more sit down to a festive meal and talk together around the family hearth, let us spare a thought for those in this and other lands who will not fare so well as ourselves during the festive season. It is winter in the northern hemisphere and many will be cold and hungry. Many more throughout the wide world will know nothing of the "Babe that was born in Bethlehem" who became the Saviour of mankind. If we forget those who lack material comforts or who are ignorant of the Gospel we shall have forgotten the very spirit of Christmas,

which began in a stable, was nurtured in a peasant home and became a message of peace and hope and joy unto all the world.

May the spirit of giving, the joy of making others happy, the peace of the angelic messengers who sang in the skies above Bethlehem, bring to our hearts a warmth and pleasure which will extend beyond the Holy-days which mark the end of the old year. For us it should continue on into the New Year, enriching and ennobling the life. As we celebrate the festival which commemorates his coming to live among us, may we have that spirit which will eventually fit us to live with him.

‘A YOUNG MAN’S QUESTION’

"As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Mark 10. 17 NIV). Jesus and his disciples were in an area east of Jerusalem and the River Jordan known as Perea. He had already given his disciples two warnings concerning his sufferings and death in Jerusalem and a third warning followed the interview with this young man. His ministry in Galilee and the northern parts of the land had been completed and he was now in the last weeks of his life. Peter's confession that Jesus was Israel's Messiah had been made at Caesarea Philippi. They had visited the home at Bethany twice; the second occasion for the raising of Lazarus. Soon the Lord would be passing through Jericho, climbing the steep slopes of the Judean hills and triumphantly entering Jerusalem on a donkey. His presence in the synagogues was no longer welcome and the Jewish religious leaders had displayed bitter opposition to him. Jesus, on the other hand, had recently blessed the children showing his compassion for young folk and his indignation that anyone should think that they are not important.

This encounter with the young ruler is recorded in all three synoptic gospels, each writer contributing something to the composite picture. Matthew (chap. 19) tells us that he was young and Mark suggests as much by saying that the man ran to Jesus. Mark also says that Jesus loved him and Luke (chap. 18) records that he was a ruler. This eager young man who had been placed in a position of authority in

Jewish society came to Jesus and knelt before him. Could he have realised the urgency of the situation? He must have been aware that Jesus had been excluded from the synagogues and to approach the prophet of Nazareth in this way required considerable courage. He must have felt the need deeply and everything that we know about this man speaks of the fine qualities of his character.

The young man was stopped in his tracks as Jesus asked why he called him 'good' for only God may be called 'good'. Jesus was not denying his sinlessness but he never sought equality with God. (Phil. 2. 6.) The young man should not have addressed Jesus like that. No Jewish rabbi would expect it and there is a quiet rebuke in Jesus' reply. As always he focussed people's attention on his Father. There was no intention of turning the man away and Jesus knew the need and the value of asking questions. He knew his followers would find some of his sayings difficult to understand at this time. The young man was puzzled and Jesus was ready to help him, although he might not receive the answer he expected or desired.

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The word inherit had greater significance than it has in English concerning benefit from a will. It developed the extended meaning of 'receiving a share' (by lot) or from a spiritual point of view 'receiving the blessings of God through his promises'. It was that which an Israelite expected to enjoy as a covenant child under the law. "What must I do"? he asked. His question characterises the mistake of all Jews in their

religious thinking. They wanted to do something which would earn them eternal life. They wished to demonstrate their goodness and piety in order to gain a reward. That is the human way of trying to please God. It runs through the history of mankind in the search for God by all cultures and religions. It is human nature to want to prove itself good enough for God's reward. The Christian faith is unique in that it reveals God searching for the sinner and providing him with all he needs. Jesus turned the question back to the questioner, by reminding the young ruler of God's law. He did not mention the first four commandments which concern man's attitude to God. Jesus probed the man about his attitude to fellow man and in particular his attitude to his parents; that is why he mentioned the fifth commandment last, to give it emphasis. Jesus was leading to the next part of the discussion concerning the use of wealth but we should notice in passing that Matthew adds "... and, you shall love your neighbour as yourself." That was not in the ten commandments of Exodus 20 but it occurs in Lev. 19. 18, and was quoted in the gospels on more than one occasion. This young man had been reared and trained in the requirements of the Law of Moses. Now he claimed that he had always achieved obedience to it. It is not unlike the claim made by Paul to the Philippians (3. 6) where he recited a summary of his flawless Jewish background. He was zealous for the Law and had outshone his contemporaries in obedience to it. It took a violent experience in Paul's life to make him realise that keeping rules and regulations could never bring the quality of life that he so much wanted. At least both these young men were aware of their need.

The young man who ran to Jesus, realised that his strict upbringing in the Jewish law with his careful attention to sacrifice and ritual could never achieve that which he longed to have. It is sad that so many who profess to serve God do not understand that self accomplishment never brings God's approval. Jews believed and taught their young folk that if they kept the Law given by Moses they would be part of God's people and would inherit his kingdom. This young man wanted eternal life which was more than just living forever. Eternal life in the New Testament had something to do with the quality of life which would begin in the 'here and now', and last through the ages.

Many Jews were like the Pharisee in the

Temple, who Jesus described in his parable, also recorded in Luke 18. He was conceited about his standing before God because of what he believed he had achieved; he was self righteous and felt good about himself. He had the knowledge of God's purposes; he belonged to the right people, so how could God miss him as the one person who deserved the highest reward. The lesson has still not been learned among many who profess to follow Jesus. They belong to the right group, they know the purposes and promises of God and they serve him zealously in proclaiming his truth. Yet they may lack the one thing that is necessary to enjoy 'eternal life'. Paul taught, what the prophets had demonstrated, that children of Abraham lived by the grace of God through faith. At least this young man recognised, that up till now, whether he kept the law or not, he had failed to obtain eternal life. Had he in fact asked the wrong question?

Jesus said that the young ruler lacked one thing and told him to sell his property and distribute his wealth to the poor. The 'one thing' was not poverty, as some commentators have suggested. What the young man lacked was treasure in heaven. Earthly wealth is not a bad thing in itself but it readily becomes evil in the business of life. So often it obscures heavenly treasure and the scriptures frequently speak of material possessions as a hindrance to pleasing God. In the complexities of getting on in this life, wealth has a nasty habit of getting in the way of spiritual progress. There is a large section of the Sermon on the Mount devoted to this subject. It is referred to again and again in Paul's writings. It is summed up nicely in the explanation of the parable of the sower recorded in Matt. 13. 22, "*The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.*" (NIV).

The lesson which the young man needed to learn is well illustrated in Luke 16 and used to be known as the parable of the Unjust Steward, but is now sometimes called the parable of the Shrewd Manager. Looked at superficially, one might believe that Jesus was encouraging the kind of fraudulent behaviour common in the secular world. But that most definitely was not so. The story is about a wealthy man who discovered his manager was 'wasting his possessions' and so told him to quit the job.

Before he left the employment, the manager so manipulated the accounts that he was able to greatly help those who were in debt to his employer. Thus he made friends with those people and hoped for their help when he was unemployed. The principle that Jesus was teaching was not fraud but the right handling of God's stewardship of material things so that it would eventually provide spiritual blessings. God has provided us all with some material gifts in life; some more and some less. If we use them selfishly they will be spiritually unprofitable. If they are used for the blessing of others they will produce in our characters riches in heaven, prepared for the time when material things will have no further service for Christians. That is an Old Testament principle which pious Jews should have understood. Giving to the poor, caring for the deprived, helping those in trouble are ways by which men of old demonstrated that they knew God. (Jer. 22. 16). The rich young ruler who knelt before Jesus had the choice. He could go on being a highly respected member of the community giving a little here and a little there. In doing so he would not build up much treasure in Heaven. If he obeyed Jesus' command, he would by so doing, store up much heavenly wealth. This is not a matter of buying a place in heaven but discovering the effect of unsparing generosity upon the development of character. It is not a once and for all donation to charity but a constant outpouring of all that we have throughout our Christian lives which changes us from selfish people into the likeness of Jesus. The young man in Perea was not the only one to ask this question for a lawyer came to Jesus and wanted to know how to obtain eternal life. He was told to love God and his neighbour as himself and he tried to justify himself by asking who his neighbour was. Jesus told the parable of the 'Good Samaritan'. The effect of helping one's neighbour as did the Samaritan is really not so different from the words "*Sell everything you have and give to the poor*". Although the young ruler had more of this world's wealth than most people have, he was dissatisfied. He lived in a land, like most ancient lands, where there was much poverty. To have the quality of life he wanted, he had to walk the streets of Jerusalem with the

carpenter of Nazareth. Could he do that looking and behaving like a wealthy man? Was he prepared to go forth along the roads of Israel and beyond, with fishermen who said '*silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I thee*.'? After the young man had gone Peter was heard to say "*We have left all and followed thee!*" The disciples were very surprised at the Master's words when he told them how hard it was for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The terms of discipleship are very clear in the Gospels yet Christians since then have tried to revert back to the Jewish misconception of the Old Testament. It is much easier to say that we toe a certain doctrinal line or are involved in doing particular Christian activities than it is to say conscientiously 'we have left all we had to follow you'.

After that Last Supper with his disciples, in the night that he was betrayed, Jesus, in his prayer recorded in John 17, said "*this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*". To know the Father in Heaven and his son, is to be like them. To be like them, is to be ready to see them face to face. They are compassionate, concerned for the needs of the poor and deprived (Jer. 9. 23, 24; 22. 16). The young man could not afford to disobey Jesus, nor can any who follow him.

In those days the Jews regarded the rich as being specially God's people and their wealth as denoting God's favour. The rich were able to entertain pious pharisees and priests and so be looked upon as pious themselves.

The cost was too great; the young man could not bring himself to accept Jesus' invitation and sadly he went away. He was not alone in his sorrow, for Jesus too was saddened by the decision. His was not a selfish sadness. He was sorry for the young man who was going to find out the hard way, that riches are deceitful and wealth is a delusion. Jesus knew that if the young ruler pursued the path he had chosen at this interview, he would be eternally poorer for the decision he had made. That 'other rich young man' wrote, when he was getting old, *I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*" Phil. 3. 8 (RSV).

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THE MISSION OF JONAH

*The prophet
who ran away*

Chapter 6. Like as a Father

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry" (4. 1).

Jonah's anger with God is a thing unique in Old Testament history. Many men rebelled against God and disobeyed him; some, like Moses ventured to remonstrate and plead with him, but of no other prophet is it said that he dared to be angry with God. Jonah must have felt very sure of his own position to venture upon this familiarity. His anger has been put down to petulance, and his character presented by nearly all orthodox commentators as that of a narrow, self-centred, ill-tempered man. There is no evidence of this in the story. He does not seek to reverse the decision of the Almighty. He does not plead with God to change his mind. He does not advance any argument such as the peril to future generations of Israelites if the city is spared. His acceptance of the Divine decree is full and absolute, but his feeling of one-ness with God is so intense that he feels privileged to "speak his mind" as we would say to a familiar friend. *"Was not this my saying,"* he says, *"when I was yet in my own country? Therefore I fled before 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"* (verse 2). These words are wonderful words to have been uttered so early in Israel's history. This is no "tribal god of the Hebrews", as some would have us believe was the only conception of God to which men had attained at that time. Here is a man who knows that God is Love, knows it so well that directly Nineveh repented he realised that the threatened destruction would not come. Against his own will and desire he had been made the instrument of salvation to the Assyrians and of future anguish to his own people. His mind could reach no farther than that. Assyria would one day forget her repentance and newly found piety and return to her old ways. He knew that. And then would come to pass the desolations of Israel foretold by prophets of old and perhaps seen by him also in prophetic vision. He knew that too, and he could not bear the knowledge. In the bitterness of his soul, he prayed that he might rest in death, for life no longer held anything of value to him. *"Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live"* (verse 3). Like Elijah of old, he was utterly discouraged and dispirited. He had not wrought any deliverance for Israel;

he had not had any greater success than his predecessors; he could not bear to see his countrymen suffer, and so, despite all the wonderful preservations he had experienced, he prayed now that he might die.

And in all his grief he quite forgot that if Assyria could be saved by repentance, so could Israel. One of the most striking impressions one gathers from the story of Jonah is the prophet's ignoring of his own people's sin. He was zealous for judgment upon Nineveh, but not for judgment upon Israel.

In that fact lies a lesson for all time. Jesus brought it home to the individual, made of it a personal matter, when He spoke of the man seeking to pluck the mote out from his brother's eye, all the time failing to perceive the beam in his own (Luke 6. 41). So Jonah had yet to learn the greatest lesson of all—the overruling and overriding providence of God which is able to protect and deliver those who are sincerely his own, even although to our human reasoning there seems to be no way out.

The reply of God to Jonah is one of the most intimate touches of the Father's attitude that we have on record. In an indulgent, almost semi-humorous tone. He asks *"Art thou greatly angry?"* The Hebrew can be equally well translated as in the text or the margin, but the latter does perhaps agree better with the setting. *"Art thou greatly angry?"* asks the Most High gently. But Jonah is in no mood to respond lightly. He is in deadly earnest. *"I am angry, even unto death,"* or, as we would say, *"I am deadly angry."* Such an answer is demanded at this point, although it does not appear in the text. The conversation probably took place in the booth Jonah had erected, for although verse 5 reads as though Jonah *then* went out and built his booth, a number of scholars consider that the verse should read: *"Now Jonah had gone out of the city and abode on the east side of the city, and there he had made him a booth, and had sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city."* It is certainly more reasonable to expect that after the Ninevites' repentance Jonah would retire and wait the forty days to see what the outcome was going to be.

We may picture him therefore as making his way eastwards, through the Ninlil Gate beside the great reservoirs which supplied Nineveh with water, over the outer ramparts and along the

road leading across the plain east of the city. 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 in the eastern side of the River Tigris opposite the present Iraqi city of Mossul—are in the middle of an extensive flat plain with 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 eminence 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?

So there on the slopes Jonah built his little booth and sat under it, gazing upon the city spread out on the plain below him and the River Tigris winding across the desert toward the sea. There he sat on the fortieth day, waiting, hoping against hope for the catastrophe. It could be so easy for God—a great flood as in the days of Noah, a wall of water rolling down the river bursting over those lofty walls, overflowing the houses and palaces, carrying all that pride and splendour away in one vast maelstrom of rushing torrents until great Nineveh was reduced to a sea of mud. Or there could be fire and brimstone from heaven, as in the days of Abraham when God destroyed the cities of the plain. There were so many ways in which Nineveh could be overthrown—but the sun came up on the morning of the forty-first day, and as the pools of mist cleared away from the plain the city stood

revealed in all its accustomed magnificence; the river rolled on to the sea as serenely as ever and Jonah was exceedingly angry. But God was not finished with Jonah yet. There was a personal lesson to learn, and now was the time when the prophet would be impressionable. So as Jonah remained in his booth, a light shelter of tree branches, ill adapted to protect him from the noonday heat, a spreading vine-like plant began to grow and twine itself over the booth. 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 this gourd*". Apparently he sat 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 words mean 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, inspiring 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 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 that 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 pity on the shrub, for that 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?"

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"*.

But there was more to come. *"It came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said 'It is better for me to die than to live'"* (verse 8).

This "vehement east wind" is a well known phenomenon in Iraq and Iran. Under certain circumstances, the sun's heat produces an eddy of intensely heated air which can kill a man in a few seconds. The natives call it the *sam* or poison wind. Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller of the thirteenth century, tells of this wind having suffocated sixteen hundred horsemen and five thousand footmen on one occasion in Iran and a modern writer, so lately as 1928, tells of a case in his own knowledge where a man was struck down and suffocated in this very district. It need not be considered any exaggeration, therefore, when we read that Jonah fainted and wished in himself to die.

Again that gentle indulgent question, "Art thou greatly angry?" and again the same sullen reply, "I am greatly angry, deadly angry." Swift as an arrow came the accusation from the Almighty, *"Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither made it grow; son of the night it was, and as a son of the night it died. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand people that cannot discern between their right and their left hand; and also much cattle?"*

Jonah had no answer. The reason? The pity and mercy of God is greater by far than the sentiment of men. Jonah had admitted to feelings of pity and mercy for this creeper of the field, a few strands of vegetation whose life was inevitably for a brief span and even then only to serve as food for living creatures of a slightly higher order in creation. A son of the night it was and as a son of the night it died, and yet for this humble representative of the plant world Jonah had pity. How much more would God have pity for that great city which housed a hundred and twenty thousand human beings, with all the tremendous possibilities inherent in their hearts and minds. True, their ignorance of God was so profound that in his sight they could not yet discern between their

right hand and their left but one day they will come before him for that instruction which may well bring them into his image and likeness. They were cruel and bloodthirsty by upbringing and training, but they were not utterly depraved. Their repentance, short-lived though it was, showed that, and God knows that He can in due time do much with that unpromising material.

"*And also much cattle.*" Jonah was solicitous for the creeping vine; God was tender toward the cattle. Can we take a leading point from this? Man is to be the glory of earthly creation, a king over this dominion and God took pains at the first to make him in his own image and likeness. But God does not forget that He made the cattle too, and took delight in what He had made, and has a place for them in his world. When the angel of death was hovering over the threatened city, God looked down and saw, besides repentant men, the dumb beasts his own hand had made, and on their account too He bade the angel sheath his sword.

So we leave Jonah, in his booth, waiting . . . for what? We know not. We do not know whether he spent the rest of his days in Nineveh or went back to his own land. We do not know whether this experience closed his career or if he was given yet other works to undertake. What is claimed to be his tomb is shown at Nineveh, and again at the modern village which stands on the site of the ancient Gathhepher, and again in the village of Khan Yunus on the southern frontier of Israel. We do not know where he is buried. The curtain drops upon a lonely man, sitting in his little shelter away there on the Kurdish hills, bitter in his disappointment and apprehensive for the future, and yet, we may hope, conscious of a dawning realisation that there is something grander and greater in the plans of God for mankind than either he or his people had ever dreamed. The full understanding of that has to wait for a later day,

a day when the One whom Jonah prefigured is revealed to men at his Second Coming to complete the work He began at his First. Like Jonah, He went into death and was raised up out of death. But still the world was not converted; was not made again in God's likeness. More; the vast majority of men have gone into death without even so much as hearing the only "*name given under heaven whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4. 12). The world is still waiting for that day of Christ's reign on earth, when all, the living and the dead, will come before him to hear the gospel of the Divine purposes proclaimed to them as it has never been proclaimed yet. The lesson of Nineveh is that God condemns no man until he has had a full opportunity to accept the Divine way of life. The reign of Christ on earth will give all, the awakened dead as well as the living, a full opportunity to learn and accept God's ways and be reconciled to him through acceptance and discipleship of Jesus Christ. Only if and when that opportunity has been intelligently and deliberately rejected will God turn sorrowfully away and leave the incorrigible sinner to his choice.

That is why Jesus said (John 5. 28. 29) that *all* will return from the grave, some to a resurrection to life, but others to a resurrection to judgment. That is why Daniel said (12. 2) some will rise to enduring life and others to shame and enduring contempt. That is why those Ninevites despite all their vices and depravity, their short-lived repentance and national obduracy, will stand face to face with others, men and women of today, mute witnesses to a long-foretold condemnation.

For it was said by One having authority: "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonas, and BEHOLD, A GREATER THAN JONAS IS HERE!*"

THE END

APOLOGIES: Readers who have received defective copies (e.g. blank pages) of any issue of the Bible Study Monthly, should write to us at - 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England. We will gladly send a replacement

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We also apologise for the error of the name of Joshua instead of Aaron appearing on page 94 of the July/August issue.

THE WATERS OF SHILOAH

*Spiritual truth based
on a natural fact*

"Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord will bring up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks." (Isa. 8. 6-7).

Deep down beneath Jerusalem there is a strata of hard, impervious rock, sloping very gently towards the south-east. All the rain that falls upon the city and percolates into the ground gathers at last upon that unyielding shelf and forms underground streams which emerge at length as springs upon the hillsides outside the city. By far the most important of these springs is that known as the Virgin's Fountain, halfway down the steep sides of the valley of Jehoshaphat. This spring never fails; the underground reservoirs feed it constantly and from time immemorial it has formed Jerusalem's most reliable water supply. The Jebusites, long before Joshua invaded the Promised Land with his hosts, had bored a tunnel from the fountain into the mountainous mass upon which their stronghold was built and had then made a vertical shaft to the surface so that they could descend and draw water in times of siege without having to venture outside their walls. In much later times the Israelites—probably in the period between David and Ahaz—had built a covered aqueduct just under the ground to convey the water from the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam, with the same purpose in mind. When Sennacherib invaded Judah in the reign of Hezekiah the son of Ahaz it would seem that this aqueduct had been blocked up and knowledge of its course lost, for Hezekiah set to work and excavated another tunnel through the mountain to convey the water to the Pool of Siloam, which was by then inside the city walls. In our days both Hezekiah's tunnel and the remains of the earlier aqueduct have been found, the latter buried far underneath the soil and rubbish which has accumulated in the Valley of Jehoshaphat since the days of Isaiah.

It was this lost aqueduct to which Isaiah referred in the text. That overflowing water coming out from the heart of the mountain below the city and the Temple, never failing, always fresh and clear, was a very real Divine provision for the people. It was a kind of literal counterpart

of the spiritual provision—sustenance, refreshment, protection—which God had made for his chosen. Quietly, unobtrusively, safe from all attack by enemies, the waters of Shiloah "flowed softly" to meet the needs of dwellers in the city, and in just the same way God's provision for his people was always there and always effective to meet all their needs and shield them from all harm, provided they would but exercise the faith necessary to avail themselves of its benefits.

But the people would not. They turned away from the gentle, pure, life-giving stream and fastened their covetous eyes upon other waters, waters that were outwardly more spectacular and more pleasing to the natural senses; but waters that, had they but realised the fact, were not waters of life at all. They were waters which in the end brought trouble and disaster and death.

Away across the desert, in the land of Assyria, there was a mighty river. Men today call it the Tigris, but the Assyrians gave it a name which meant "shining water". They had built their capital city of Nineveh upon that river and from there had set out to conquer the world. The Assyrians are known chiefly to students of the Old Testament for their military skill and their ruthlessness, but they were also an industrious and an artistic people, and they had harnessed their great river so that it became the principal support of their economy. The river and its tributaries had been dammed at various places to create artificial lakes, great reservoirs which stored up the water that came down from the highland in abundance in springtime, when the winter snows melted. From these lakes they had cut canals, leading in every direction through the desert, and irrigated the soil so that it became one of the most fertile countries in the world. The children of Israel knew of this lovely country, so different from their own rugged, austere Judea—many of them visited Assyria as merchants and brought back tales of its grandeur; Jonah had preached in Nineveh only a century or so before Isaiah's day—and as they compared the earthly beauty and the man-made efficiency of that widespread network of rivers and canals with their own modest, quiet, hidden stream of Shiloah, they turned away from the living waters and gave preference to the waters of the great river. They forgot their own stream had never failed them and had always sufficed

for their needs, and turned instead to embrace the appeal of a worldly creation, the continuance of which depended upon the will and the whim of imperfect men.

Today, the great dams are in ruins, the canals choked up with silt and sand, the onetime fertile fields returned to desert. The river, once alive with boats and teeming with activity, now winds sluggishly through marshes choked with reeds and rushes. The work of man has utterly failed and all the glories of yesterday have become as a fading flower. But the waters of Shiloah flow still, as abundantly and as fresh and pure as in the days of Isaiah. The women of Jerusalem still draw water from the Pool, and the gardens around the south-east corner of the city are still watered from its overflow.

Assyria was the undoing of Israel eventually. Because the people had refused the waters of Shiloah, God told the prophet He himself would bring upon them the waters of the great river to overflow and submerge them in a great destruction. And so it came to pass. In the midst of their unbelief and wilfulness and apostasy the Assyrian hosts overran their land and took them away into captivity. Thus was fulfilled the word of the Lord *"I will bring upon them the waters of the river even the king of Assyria and all his glory, and he shall come up over all his channels and go over all his banks"*. That is always the fate of the people that turn away from the Lord's guidance and leading and permits itself to be dazzled by the more spectacular attraction of worldly things and methods. Doubtless the scientifically arranged canals of Assyria were technically much more efficient in watering the land than the quietly flowing underground stream emerging from the rocky hillside outside Jerusalem, but those canals could only be kept in operation by a prodigious amount of labour, and when the labour failed, as all human effort and organisation must eventually fail, the wonderful channels with their sluice gates and regulators and mechanical contrivances quickly went out of action and the water ceased to flow and the land dried up and became a desert. The stream that was the river of God has always remained full of water and has always made glad the city of God. Jeremiah saw this very clearly, and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he cried out aloud *"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water"*

(Jer. 2. 13). How often in the days that have passed since Jeremiah, have God's people repeated that tragic mistake! And it is not as though there had been no warning, no entreaty. *"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments"*, comes the voice of the Most High, regretful, sad, pleading. *"Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."* (Isa. 48. 18). It is impossible not to see in that eloquent appeal the picture of the waters of Shiloah, flowing softly, quietly, steadily, surely, through their narrow channel, to supply all the needs of the people of God in the holy city. We may enjoy those waters, in a spiritual sense, if we but rely upon them and turn our backs upon the shining waters that have been gathered together by the mind and power of man. David in the twenty-third psalm sings of his being led by the Lord beside the still waters, where his soul became restored and where he found the quiet pathways of righteousness. Perhaps he too had followed the course of that crystal stream and seen in it a fit symbol of the Divine sustenance which he knew his soul needed.

This is a great truth, enshrined in this vivid picture. Divine provision for all our needs! The lesson is as necessary to us as it was to Israel after the flesh—perhaps more so, for we live in a day that offers far more in the way of distraction and attraction. There are more theories abroad, more subtle reasonings that tend to turn our minds away from the "truth as it is in Jesus". Especially is it so in this latter day, the day of the world's trouble and world's judgment, when the keenest and brightest of human minds are busy devising plans and schemes to restore the balance of the world without calling upon the aid of God, and the constantly deferred expectations of the "saints" tempt more than a few to give some ear to the alternatives suggested by man. Is that why the forty-sixth Psalm, in the midst of its description of world judgment, reminds us once more of the river of God that will supply all our needs? *"Though the earth be removed . . . though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea . . . though the waters thereof rage and swell . . . though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. . . ."* Yet, for all this . . . *"there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."* In the midst of the din and clash of earth's kingdoms, locked in deadly conflict, falling and disintegrating into

irretrievable ruin, the waters of Shiloah flow softly still, yielding refreshment and strength to all who continue to put their faith in them. *"In quietness and confidence shall be your strength."*

It is only to be expected that this Divine provision for the people of God should evoke a response of praise to God. That at any rate is the theme of the Psalmist's words in the sixty-fifth psalm. The whole psalm is one of praise. It opens with the well-known words *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed"* and in verses 9 and 10 the singer seems clearly to have brought the underground "river of God" into the scope of his song, *"Thou visiteth the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water"*. Now this could be a poetic phrase with no intentional application to any particular river, just a rapturous acknowledgment of the blessings of rain and water wherewith the land could bring forth its increase. On the other hand, the expression "the river of God" is significant, and the phraseology of the next verse does seem to indicate that David had the waters of Shiloah very specially in mind when he composed this noble psalm. *"Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof."* The word for "furrow" is *geled*, meaning a man-made channel or a mechanical excavation. It is used to describe the aqueducts which were made all over the land to convey the precious water without risking its loss by evaporation. "Settlest" means to descend, to go down or to deepen. There is the thought here of the life-giving water descending or flowing down an excavation in the course of its beneficent work, an apt description of the stream from the Virgin's Fountain flowing through the underground aqueduct to the Pool of Shiloah. In his joy at the continued providence of God thus manifested David cries *"thou crownest the year with thy goodness . . . the valleys are covered over with corn, they shout for joy, they also sing."* A continuous song of praise is pictured as rising to God from all things in the land, animate and inanimate, because the living water is flowing and does not fail.

In a spiritual sense our lives should be like that. In all our circumstances and in all our activities the background of praise should always be evident. We may not at all times see the river flowing; our ears may not continuously hear the murmur of its waters; the outward evidence of its presence may become for a while

hard to discern or appreciate, *but the river is always there*. The waters of Shiloah will never fail, they can never fail, for they come forth from God. And while the waters flow our welfare is assured and we can—and should—continue to give praise to God. Like the sunlit valleys in David's psalm, we can shout for joy; we can also sing!

Isaiah, too, rises to this high plain of praise for the blessings of the river of God, but true to his character he wants to bring all men into the picture and extend his view far beyond the Gospel Age and the Church, into the Messianic Age and the world of men. Neither has he yet finished with those Assyrian canals on which he poured such scorn previously, even though knowing, and declaring, that the great river would triumph temporarily over the river of God insofar as unfaithful Israel was concerned. But Isaiah knew that the great river would be rolled back and the river of God come into its own again, in due time, and by a bold reversal of imagery he sees the quiet waters of Shiloah expand and increase and invade the territory of the great river and reach, with its life giving waters, all the world.

"Look upon Zion" he cries *"the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby."* (Isa. 33, 20-21). These "broad rivers and streams" are the ship canals and irrigation channels of Assyria, intersecting the level fields of that almost completely flat country in all directions, used both for agriculture and the transport of men and goods. Shipping of all kinds, from tiny coracles made of wickerwork and covered with bitumen, to boats capable of carrying a hundred tons of goods, crowded those waterways continually, Isaiah looked at all that in the spirit of his mind, then at the quiet little stream bubbling out of the hillside below the Temple, and said in effect "In that day when Jerusalem is pronounced holy to the Lord, He will cause those quiet waters of Shiloah to become great rivers and canals overspreading all the land and bringing life wheresoever they come. But there will be no ships"; the "galleys with oars" and "gallant ships" were the merchant vessels and the war

vessels, for the Assyrians had battleships suited to their day and age; and Isaiah made it plain then and there that the evils of commercialism and militarism will have no place in that new land of living waters which the Lord God is to introduce when the "broken cisterns" of men have passed away.

The waters of Shiloah will not always flow in secret, hidden from sight, disesteemed of men and precious only in the sight of God and those who trust in God. Men will not always look to the shining waters of Assyria for their needs and put their trust in that which is man-made to the ignoring of that which is God-made. The waters of Shiloah will one day flow forth to meet the needs of all the world. It is Ezekiel who makes that so very plain. In his vision of the Millennial Temple he sees waters emerging from underneath the sanctuary, at the south side of the altar, flowing eastward and emerging again under the outer wall at the south side of the east gate. It is an interesting fact that the literal stream that has its source in some undiscovered subterranean recess deep down below the place where Solomon's Temple stood does emerge below the city wall, half way down the side of the valley, on the south of the Eastern Gate, from thence flowing into the Virgin's Fountain and onward to the Pool of Siloam. Ezekiel's description is really a poetic replica of the stream that actually exists at Jerusalem. It is impossible to avoid the thought that he had that well-known stream in mind when he saw the vision. And he saw it going outward into the country, growing wider and deeper all the time, until at last as a

mighty torrent it reached the eastern sea, the Dead Sea, and healed those salt laden waters so that they too became fresh and pure. "*Everything shall live whither the river cometh*" he said. (Ezek. 47. 9). And as he looked, he saw trees, trees on both sides, growing rapidly and coming to maturity, evergreen trees whose leaves never faded and whose fruit was borne continually. That fruit, he said was to be for the food of man, and those leaves for medicine, for the healing of the nations, and the source of the virtue that resided in both fruit and leaves was the river of life in which the trees were rooted, a mighty flood that will encompass all the world and will reach every man, the waters of Shiloah, flowing out from the sanctuary, becoming a river of water of life to which all are invited to come, and of which all are urged to partake. "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come, And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" (Rev. 22. 17).

The waters of Shiloah will flow to all eternity, for life can only be sustained by the continuing power of God. Through all the long cycles of the endless ages of glory, man will depend upon God for life and will look to him for life, and that life will come ceaselessly, surely, enduringly, out of the sanctuary where God dwells, and reach to the farthest bounds of his material creation. The waters will never cease, for man himself will never cease to be. In God, the Father of all, men will live, and move, and have their being.

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

"*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*" (Col. 4. 14).

This is one of the three brief, direct references to Luke in Paul's epistles. We may glean further information about him from the two books of the New Testament which he wrote. He was a Gentile Christian, possibly a native of Antioch in Syria and it is believed that in this city he became a Christian and first met the Apostle Paul.

There has been very little doubt throughout the history of the Church, from the days of the Early Fathers until the scholarship of recent years, that Luke was the writer of the third Gospel and of the book known as the Acts of the Apostles. Luke provides the first clue that he was in Paul's party when it crossed into

Europe. Up to this point Paul and his companions had been referred to in the third person as "they" but Acts 16. 10 reads "*And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go to Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them*". In Philippi a persecution broke out causing Paul and Silas to leave the city hurriedly. It appears, from the language used, that Luke remained behind to consolidate the preaching that had already been done and to build up a Church which in after years earned great praise from Paul in his letter to them. It was at Philippi where Luke rejoined Paul at the close of the apostle's third missionary journey recorded in Acts 20. 6. Except for relatively short absences, Paul and Luke remained together until Luke

abruptly laid down his pen in Rome never to add to his record.

As Paul travelled towards Jerusalem for the last time he gathered together those who carried the gifts from the Gentile churches to their Jewish brethren. He mentions this work in his second letter to the Corinthians and some authorities regard the reference to "*the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches*" to be Luke (2 Cor. 8. 18) Prior to his voyage to Rome, Paul spent two years at Cæsarea and it seems probable that during this period Luke did much of the research for writing the Gospel and first episodes of the Acts.

The account of the journey to Rome is very interesting because of the many incidental details which Luke added. Like all his descriptive passages he paints a vivid picture of their adventures in the boat and towards the end, it becomes an exciting story. Finally they reached Rome together and shortly afterwards we lose sight of Luke except for two final glimpses of the 'beloved physician' through the eyes of his great friend. To Philemon, Paul described Luke as a fellow worker. At the close of his life, amid much trouble, in which his other brethren left him, Paul wrote to Timothy "*Only Luke is with me*" So he remained with the invalid apostle to attend his physical ailments and encourage him through his lonely detention.

Paul must have found a kindred spirit in this very gifted and devout follower of the Lord. Both had forsaken worldly wealth and ambition to become disciples of Jesus and to preach the gospel. They shared a great thirst for truth and neither spared effort to overthrow popular superstition and outdated tradition. It was for this reason that Luke commenced an orderly and accurate account of "*those things which are most surely believed among us,*" (Luke 1. 1). Although no attempt was made to write a complete biography of the Master, Luke gives a fuller and more balanced picture of the Lord than the three Jewish evangelists. As a Gentile, he saw things in a different light from the other gospel writers; from a broader and more universal aspect. They were concerned to show Jesus primarily as the Messiah of Israel, he of whom the Hebrew Scriptures spoke. They looked for the restoration of their national kingdom. Luke saw Jesus as the Saviour of the world, who alone could heal suffering mankind. He was interested in the pagan and outcast as well as the favoured people of God. How much does the third gospel

tell us about the character of the writer?

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Luke wrote the most beautiful book in the world. He was a brilliant writer and his gospel is of high literary value. He had great freedom and ability in the use of the Greek language, yet the style is simple and pure. There is a charm and earnestness in his anecdotes which appeals to the youngest reader; yet there is exactness of detail which holds the interest of the careful student.

In the third Gospel we have the setting of Christ's life in the Roman world, and historical data is given which links our Lord's life with the society in which he lived. Most of the information which we have about the birth and early years of Jesus are in Luke's record. He it is who depicts our Master in the home and family life of his day. It was the custom of the first century to keep women and children in a place of inferiority and it is Luke who most clearly showed that Jesus gave them their rightful place. He emphasised the gentle and simple things in the purpose of God. All this gives evidence of Luke's wide sympathies, which extended still further when we consider the parables and miracles which are peculiar to his record.

Luke was interested in the poor and despised, and our Lord's visit to the synagogue at Nazareth recorded in Luke 4 was an appropriate beginning to His ministry. It is Luke's pen that gives us the great stories of compassion in the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. It is he who tells of the striking contrasts between the Pharisee and publican praying in the Temple, and the real life study of Simon and the 'sinful woman'. Luke emphasised the evils of class and racial prejudice in the record of the parable of the 'rich fool' and in Jesus' tolerance towards the Samaritans.

As a medical doctor Luke would be intimately acquainted with human suffering, and his description of miracles of healing demonstrate his knowledge and his sympathy. He wrote about the "man full of leprosy" in Luke 5. 12, and the woman who could not straighten herself (13. 11). He refers to Peter's mother-in-law as having a 'great fever' (4. 38). His delicate and restrained treatment of our Lord's experience in Gethsemane is masterly and again a singularly professional reference to the 'drops of blood'. (Luke 22. 44). The word 'wholesome' adopted by Paul in his later epistles is peculiar to Luke's gospel among the evangelists, found in

Luke 5. 31; 7. 10; and 15. 27.

However, he was not only a scientist and historian; he had great interest in devotional aspects of the Christian life, and has been called the first Christian hymnologist. The remarkable poems of Mary at her visit to Elizabeth and of Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist are a tribute to Luke's diligence. The third Gospel gives us the greatest insight into our Lord's prayer life. It records Jesus' teaching about prayer and also gives us several of his prayers at critical times in his ministry, as when he spent all night in prayer before selecting the disciples. In narrating the Transfiguration on the mount, it is Luke who informs us that Jesus was praying. Finally, on the cross, his prayer of forgiveness (not spurious as some have supposed) was a precious memory of our Saviour preserved by Luke.

In the third gospel and in Acts the writer added numerous facts, incidental to the main story which left him open to serious criticism if they were inaccurate. During the last hundred and fifty years many scholars have endeavoured to discover faults in his writings. Their suspicions and suppositions have proved groundless. The more that Biblical and secular archaeology advance, the more evidence accumulates corroborating Luke's statements. The matter is summed up in the words of Rendle Short in his book "Modern discovery and the Bible", "*Luke correctly describes and gives the names of so many towns which he and Paul passed through in their travels that many of our Bibles contain maps to show the exact routes followed. He shows the true Greek love for the sea. He constantly, and for no apparent reason gives the names of islands passed, tells on which side the ship sailed by, whether the wind was favourable or unfavourable, what ports served inland towns, in which direction the harbour looked and so on.*" Later Rendle Short quotes from Bishop Gore "*It should, of course, be recognised that modern archeology has almost forced upon critics of St. Luke a verdict of remarkable accuracy in all his allusions to secular facts and events . . . Eduard Mayer, has called the work of Luke 'one of the most important works which remain to us from antiquity' and Mayer has certainly no prejudices in favour of religious tradition.*"

In writing of the experiences of Paul, in much of which he was an eye-witness, Luke gives many geographical and nautical notes which richly embellish an exciting account of a thrilling story.

In the first chapter of Acts we are given the Master's command to the disciples, telling them that they were to be his witnesses from Judea through Samaria to the uttermost parts of the Earth. The book unfolds for us the fulfilment of that prophetic command, as the gospel was preached along the Roman highways until it reached Rome the centre of the great empire. Several of the events which Luke writes in the early chapters of Acts show the impact of the Gospel on the Jewish world. The dramatic power of the Holy Spirit, the radical transformation of the first disciples, the early persecution and martyrdom, give a clear picture of obedience within the early Church to the word of the Lord. The first message of the church was salvation through the resurrected Lord, for they were "witnesses of the resurrection." Woven into the expanding story of the early Church, are anecdotes of healing which again bear testimony to Luke's medical interest. He uses words in Acts as in his gospel which are technical terms and only normally found in standard medical works such as Hippocrates. Dr. E. H. Plumtre has shown in an interesting treatise how the vocabulary of the Apostle Paul was influenced by his companionship with Luke. In his later epistles, the Apostle introduces words which like those of Luke would normally only be found in medical text books. As in his gospel, Acts reflects the meticulous care with which Luke wrote. Yet after nineteen centuries his narrative remains vivid and real.

One of the most important lessons from Luke's two books is his humility which stamps him as a truly great man; he never mentions himself. Except for evidence which he unwittingly gave, together with the testimony of others, we should never have known who the worthy disciple was to whom, in the Lord's providence, we owe so much. Was this the end of his story? Some have thought it to be an abrupt end to Acts. Had he reached the end of his long roll of papyrus? Others see the Acts as a record of how the Good News was brought from Jerusalem to Rome and the author therefore had completed his task. Luke's first book speaks to us of 'those things which Jesus began to do and teach'. His second work is a treatise of those things which Jesus 'continued to do and to teach' through his followers. That story did not end with Paul, or with Luke or with any of the first disciples. It has continued through the Christian era until this day and it is our privilege to continue those things which Jesus "began to do and teach".

THE TRANSLATION OF ENOCH

Enoch is one of the most singular characters of the Old Testament, a man who appears on the stage only to leave it immediately; visible long enough for it to be known that he was a man of God and that God took him. The Old Testament says "*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*" (Gen. 5. 24); the writer to the Hebrews adds "*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*" (Heb. 11. 5).

This unusual ending to the brief record of a saintly man's life has given rise to endless conjecture and speculation; so much so that the question "What really *did* happen to Enoch?" is by no means an uncommon one.

The usual conclusion of nineteenth century commentators was that Enoch went to heaven without dying—a kind of instantaneous passage from the scenes of earth to the presence of God. Many have found this a satisfactory answer, but the fact that other words of Scripture are contradicted by this conclusion is sufficient justification for an endeavour to attain a deeper and more accurate understanding of these two cryptic texts. In such an enquiry any suggestion which may be of assistance, no matter from what source it comes, will be of value as an aid to thought.

Besides the two texts quoted above, Enoch is mentioned in only one other place in the Scriptures. Jude (verse 14) quotes him as predicting the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment. This reference contributes nothing to our knowledge of the life of the prophet and does not materially assist our enquiry. It does however stamp Enoch as one of the prophets who spoke of the coming of the Day of the Lord.

The first point of enquiry is as to the precise meaning of the words in Genesis 5. 24. Does the phrase—"*Enoch walked with God, and Enoch was not, for God took him*" really mean that he was taken to heaven without dying as is so often supposed, or does it bear another meaning?

What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" asks the Psalmist (Psa. 89. 48). "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" says Paul (1 Cor. 15. 50) and again "*the King of Kings and Lord*

of Lords . . . dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see." (1 Tim. 6. 16). Our Lord declared "*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man*". (John 3. 13). Such Scriptures are sufficient to confirm that no man, not even Enoch, has escaped death, even had not the writer to the Hebrews stated so definitely, after including Enoch in his portrait gallery of heroes, that "*these all died in faith*" (Heb. 11. 13). It should be accepted therefore that Enoch, when his allotted span was expired, *did* pass into death and "*slept with his fathers*".

The use of that latter expression serves as a clue to this strange word in Gen. 5. 24. Although we must believe that Enoch did eventually sleep with his fathers, there is no record to that effect in Genesis. This is the more strange when it is noticed that in every other case the formula is consistently the same "*Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son . . . And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.*" (Gen. 5. 3-6). The same expressions are used for each of the patriarchs up to Methuselah, *except Enoch*. Why the exception?

Is it not a reasonable conclusion that the time and circumstances of Enoch's death were not known to the men of his day, and therefore the record could not be completed? There is another fact that helps to confirm this thought. The ages of the antediluvian patriarchs ranged between 895 and 969 years, but that stated of Enoch is an exception. The record states that he lived 365 years and God took him. It is possible that the ancient historian intended his readers to understand Enoch lived 365 years among men, famed for his piety and at that age disappeared unaccountably and was never heard of again? Was it that God took Enoch away from the habitations of men perchance to carry out some work during the remainder of his earthly life, living perhaps as long as his fellow patriarchs but like Moses, ending his life in a solitary place known only to God?

"*Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*" The Hebrew here has the significance of "walking to and fro" as a man does with his bosom companion. That could well depict the fact that Enoch was a man living in close and habitual communion with God in a

day when quite certainly the wickedness of man was increasing on the earth and *"every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6. 5). Heb. 11. 5 confirms this view by saying *"Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."* Picture then this venerable man surrounded, in all probability, by a godly family, attaining what would be considered "middle age" of nearly four hundred years. One day Enoch was not to be found; he "was not" for he had been "translated". What had happened?

"God took him" says Genesis. The word is *"laqach"* meaning "to be taken away" or "removed" as in Amos 7. 15 "The Lord *took* me as I followed the flock," and Josh. 24. 3 "I *took* your father Abraham from the other side of the flood". A more definite word is used by the writer to the Hebrews when he declared that Enoch was "translated". The two occurrences of this word in this verse are from the Greek *metatethemi*, meaning to take up an object and put it down somewhere else. These words appear frequently in the New Testament and a clear idea of their usage is gained by noting the following occurrences:

Heb. 12. 27 "signifieth the *removing* of those things that are shaken."

Acts 7. 16 "And were *carried* over into Sychem."

Luke 16. 4 "When I am *put out* of the stewardship"

Acts 19. 26 "Paul hath persuaded and *turned away* much people."

This word "translate" continued to bear this same meaning, of transference from one place to another, in much later times. There is in Wakefield Cathedral a memorial tablet to a one-time Bishop of Wakefield who, at a certain date, says the tablet, was "translated to Newcastle," meaning that he was appointed to the latter city and so was transferred from Wakefield to Newcastle.

It is not necessary to insist that the expression "was not" must imply death, or the death condition. It need only indicate that the one referred to is not present or not to be found. A striking example of the usage of this expression occurs in the Babylonian story of the Flood. (It is probable that Genesis 5 was originally written in the same language—Sumerian—and perhaps not very much earlier than the Flood story, which has survived in its purest form in Genesis

and in a much more distorted form in the Babylonian account.) Telling of the time when he sent forth the birds from the Ark, Utnapishtim (the Babylonian Noah) says "To and fro went the dove, and returned, for a resting place *was not*". In this light the expression need only mean that Enoch was not to be found, and this is exactly what Heb. 11.5 declares. This usage of the term "was not" is extremely frequent in Sumerian literature.

It seems then that both the inspired writers intended their readers to understand that Enoch was taken away from amongst men, but not necessarily to heaven. It could well be to some other part of the earth. From that day onward, Enoch was never seen or heard of again, and the ancient chronicler who first compiled the history which now appears in Genesis 5—probably in the days immediately after the Flood—was unable to say any more about this venerable character beyond the well known fact that in the three hundred and sixty-fifth year of his life he "was not—for God took him". Where He had taken him was not known, and for that reason the length of his earthly life and the time of his death could not be recorded.

Now it is a remarkable fact that the traditions of the Israelites shed a distinct light on the fact of, and reasons for, this mysterious disappearance. The apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus declares (44. 16) that *"Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated, being an example of repentance unto all generations"*. This can only be taken as a reflection of Jewish understanding of the Genesis account, but one is impelled to ask in what way Enoch could be an "example" to "all generations". Perhaps the answer is to be found in the Hebrews verse, where it is said that in faith was Enoch translated, having already pleased God (Heb. 11. 5). Now in that chapter Enoch's faith is placed on the same level as that of Abraham, Moses and others, who at the call of God left their home, kindred and country and went out to a place which God would show them, *not knowing whither they went*. (Heb. 11. 8). Perhaps Enoch also went out to a solitary place, away from men, in close communion with God, to do a work for God just as did Abraham and Moses in later days, and maybe that was the secret of his translation.

Many have wondered from what source Jude took his famous quotation when he said (Jude 14) *"Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying Behold the Lord*

cometh with ten thousands of his saints . . ." and so on, for the quotation is not to be found in the Old Testament. It was more than a hundred years ago that a complete copy of the "*Book of Enoch*" in which this passage occurs was made available in the English language, and although none would now claim that this book was written by Enoch, competent authorities declare that not only Jude but our Lord himself was quite familiar with it. It is to this book that we are indebted for sufficient light on Judaistic tradition to confirm the suggestion advanced above as to the nature of Enoch's disappearance.

Although the Book of Enoch was put together in its present state no earlier than one or two centuries before Christ, its nature suggests that certain portions are taken from written records which are considerably older. Apart from a great deal of pseudo-astronomical lore with which we have no immediate concern, the book purports to tell of the conditions prevailing immediately before the Flood—an amplification of the story told briefly in chapter 6 of Genesis. It is evident that various "fragments" of older records, some considerably distorted by their passage through the generations, by copying and recopying, translation and re-translation, have been put together in a clumsy and disjointed fashion with much material of later composition, but a careful study of these "fragments" does reveal one very interesting fact. That fact is that the prevailing theme of the book is the taking of Enoch away from the world of men and his establishment in some part of the earth where he could not be approached except by one or two favoured ones who were aware of the secret. The story tells of both Noah and Methuselah coming to hear his words. Perhaps the most eloquent passage in this connection is 1 Enoch 12. 1, which says "*Before these things Enoch was hidden, and no one of the children of men knew where he was hidden, and where he abode, and what had become of him. And his activities had to do with the Watchers, and his days were with the Holy Ones*". Again chapter 70, verse 1 declares "It came to pass after this that his name *during his lifetime* was raised aloft to the Son of Man and to the Lord of Spirits from amongst those who dwell on the earth. And he was raised aloft in the chariots of the Spirit and his name vanished from among them."

The similarity of this to the story of Elijah is very striking, and this likeness is heightened by

words which are accredited to Enoch himself. (39. 3) "*And in those days a whirlwind carried me off from the earth and set me down at the end of the heavens*". Elijah too was separated from Elisha by a chariot of fire and carried up by a whirlwind into the heavens (2 Kings 2. 11) and the translation of Enoch is depicted here as having occurred in very similar fashion. The sons of the prophets besought Elisha that they might go and search the mountains, believing that the "wind of the Lord" (Heb. *ruach*, translated "wind" or "spirit" as required by the context, and incorrectly rendered "spirit" in this instance in the A.V.) might have dropped Elijah somewhere within reach (2 Kings 2. 16). They searched and found him not. So with Enoch; it seems the Israelites believed that he had been removed to some inaccessible part of the earth and throughout the Book of Enoch he is described as continuing in a closer and more direct communion with God and the spiritual powers of heaven than man had enjoyed since the Fall in Eden. They believed that he bore God's message to the "fallen angels" of whom both Jude and Peter speak in the New Testament (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2. 4), warned Methuselah and Noah of the coming Flood, and declared that the judgment of God would come upon the ungodly; but as far as mankind generally were concerned, they knew not where he was and they never saw him again. Incidentally the Book of Enoch depicts the events of Genesis 6. 1 as first taking place in the time of Jared, the father of Enoch.

The "*Book of Jubilees*", written about two hundred years before Christ but incorporating much legendary matter from the lost "*Book of Noah*" of unknown antiquity, says that Enoch after his translation was with the angels of God in the lost Garden of Eden for 294 years, during which time he wrote down all the knowledge they taught him concerning the heavenly bodies, the seasons and the forces of Nature. He also recorded the sin of the angels (the "fallen angels") and the coming Divine judgment, the Flood. The origin of this piece of information is quite unknown, but it does at least indicate the popular belief that Enoch was not in heaven, but very much on earth, in the forbidden land of Eden, still guarded by the Cherubim with the "flaming sword that turned every way". Since the Book of Genesis says that Enoch was 365 years old at his translation, the addition of this legendary 294 years away from the homes of

men would make him 659 years old at his death, which does at least compare fairly well with the ages of his fellow patriarchs before the Flood.

It was the opinion of Jewish tradition that Enoch was the one to whom God entrusted the secrets of astronomy, of heavenly wisdom, what we in our day would call "scientific knowledge", and of writing and other useful arts, to be revealed in turn to mankind. It is of interest therefore to find that in the Babylonian tradition of the ten kings who reigned before the Flood, sometimes thought to be a dim memory of the ten antediluvian patriarchs, the seventh, in some of the legends, the eighth, who would in that case correspond to Enoch, is supposed to have been a special favourite of the gods of heaven and to have been initiated into all the mysteries of heaven and earth. Such legends have some value in that they show a fixed idea, prevailing throughout ancient times, that there once was a man, especially acceptable to God for his piety, who was entrusted with Divine secrets and taken into some place of separation from his fellows in order that he might learn those secrets. The short remark in Genesis about Enoch, brief and uninformative as it is, is quite evidently true history.

There is a hint in Heb. 11. 5 that some search for Enoch was made after his translation, for the verse declares that he was "translated that he should not see death, *and was not found*", as though men searched for him and their efforts were fruitless.

The most difficult part of this verse is the expression "that he should not see death". Once only is the same expression used elsewhere in the Scriptures, and that is in the well known saying of our Lord "*If a man keep my saying he shall never see death*" (John 8. 51). It should not be thought that this promise implied the escape of the physical human frame from the inevitable end which comes to all men when life's allotted span is past. Our Lord referred to a far deeper truth, and a far more enduring life than that which men today are pleased to call "life". Those who are the faithful of Christ, who have been "born again" and have a life within them which is from above and not of "this corruptible seed" (1 Pet. 1. 23) shall truly "never

see death" even although their "earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5. 1) be dissolved. In like manner the Ancient Worthies of old who are said in Heb. 11. 39 to have obtained a good report through their faith have not failed of their reward, and it can truly be said of them that having manifested their loyalty and allegiance to God by their faith there is a city which God hath prepared for them. (Heb. 11. 16). They, too, do not "see death". Enoch was one of these; and his faith, exercised as was that of Abraham. Moses and Daniel, is an assurance that he inherits the promise which God has prepared for him and so does not "see death"; but just as surely as Abraham and Moses and Christian believers throughout the centuries, finishing their course with joy, have gone down into the grave, so, in some lonely place far from his fellow-men, Enoch must have yielded up his breath to the One Who gave it.

One can well visualise the saintly old man in his quiet retreat spending his time in meditation on the things of God, perhaps seeing in ever clearer vision the trend of events in the world of sin and death, and—who knows—being the one who first discerned that impending fate which hovered over the antediluvian world. It may have been that he perceived the natural signs of the impending catastrophe many years before it happened—perhaps with knowledge born of long observation of the heavens, undisturbed by other distraction, realising something of the mighty changes which were at work in the earth and which at length culminated in the "breaking of the great waters of the abyss" and the opening of the "floodgates of heaven" (Gen. 7. 11). Some dim memory of this may be the reason why those long passages about the stars, winds and forces of Nature in the Book of Enoch are accredited to this mystic personage. It seems that he lived as a righteous man in a world fast giving itself over to every form of evil, that he prophesied to it concerning coming retribution, and that in the heyday of life he was removed from his place among men and until the day of his death lived in his peaceful retreat, serving and living in "quiet fellowship with God".

ODD MOMENTS *Psalms 90, 12*

"Possibly the greatest snare of all is the omission to use odd moments, for we all have some spare time during the day, although we may try to make others believe that we are "on the go" from morning till night.

Instead of allowing the mind to be lazy at such times it is profitable to use the odd moments for meditation remembering that prayer may be uttered or unexpressed."

— W. A. Dinsdale

THE HIDDEN FIRE

*A discourse on
the power of prayer*

'Men ought always to pray and not to faint.'
(Luke 18.1).

True religion is the harmonious union of man with God and prayer is its vital link. It is more than conversation between two minds. It is a communing of spirit, a common union of thought, ideas, aims and desires, in which the lesser is charged and recharged by the mystical energy of the greater.

Enthusiasm is the hidden fire which gives to Christian life its glow, the radiant force by which natural life is changed, transfigured, into the glory of the heavenly. The word is derived from the Greek, *en-theos*, which is, literally, God in us. An observer of the effects of prayer in the lives of the faithful has noted that to be in touch with God by prayer 'is to be in contact with the power-house of the universe.' No wonder it has been described by a poet as "the Christian's vital breath: the Christian's native air." It is something above and beyond the powers and forces which man has so far harnessed for his everyday needs and pleasures. It is a transforming element in which believing intelligence "lives and moves and has its being," partaking of its very godlike nature and strength; or how otherwise understand the prayer of St. Paul for the Ephesians, "that you may be filled with all the fulness of God".

Friendship without communication fades away as fire without fuel loses its lively glow. Renewal and refreshment are alike necessary to the fire which burns on the hearth and that of the spirit which burns as a secret flame on the altar of the dedicated heart. Study of the written word, fellowship with those of like precious faith, does something toward keeping the fire burning, but it is that secret link with the Invisible which gives life its wisdom, assurance and vigour.

*"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew
their strength.*

They shall mount up with wings as eagles."

(Isa. 40. 31)

The early heroes of faith walked and talked with God. They knew Him face to face. Theirs was a privileged state of personal friendship and communion remote from modern times. What manner of men were they, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, Joshua and David, those kings and prophets to whom God spoke, to whom they spoke freely on behalf of

others as well as of their own affairs? The mental calibre of such men must have been as vigorous as the world about them. Theirs must have been, not a primitive seeking after an unknown God, as some critics would like to have it, but a pristine freshness of knowledge, a confidence and assurance largely lost by a later jaded and faded world.

It was Jesus who roused and restored man's privilege of union and conversation with his Maker. Breathing the very essence of prayer in all He said and did, He taught his followers not only how to pray but the use and power of prayer. The apostles in their mission to men followed it up with exhortations and testimony on the efficacy of the mysterious means by which God supplies the needs of the faithful, nurtures and cultivates the filial tie between himself and those born of his love.

Down the Christian centuries prayer has been recognised as the essential element by which the problems of life have been solved and its difficulties overcome, its sorrows endured and its joys sanctified. More than a channel of blessing it has been the magnetic force which has drawn and held the human mind in the keeping power of God. Eternal light and love being the very substance and essence of his nature and character, a solemn recognition of the great privilege of prayer, of the correspondence and common union of the creature with the Creator must have a humbling effect upon all who propose in their minds to call upon him whose ways and thoughts are so much higher and wider and deeper than the limited capacity of the earthen vessel.

To "walk humbly with God" is no hardship to those who have learned of their own littleness and of the graciousness of One who in love and benevolence is more ready to listen than his sometimes reluctant children are to speak.

Prayer has been variously described by poets, preachers and writers of Christian literature. It is a personal experience, a tryst shared by two alone, from which one receives all the benefits. As an old French peasant described it, "while He is looking at me, I am looking at him". A wordless communion is often more deeply felt and much more effective than the long diatribes with which men have bombarded the Almighty in public or harangued him in private by what has been called "wrestling in prayer". "Two men

went into the Temple once on a time; one said his prayers in the usual way, but the other man knew no prayers to say; so he talked with God as a friend. And the Lord who knew from beginning to end, the forms the first man had used so long, was sure that today they would not go wrong, so He turned his ear and inclined his heart, to the man to whom praying was not an art, but who talked with him as a friend."

In that telling illustration of the publican and the sinner Jesus showed what prayer is not. It is not formalism, nor vain repetition, nor set words, nor gabbled requests, nor selfish pleadings, nor self-justification, nor weak excuses, nor the vanity that dares to advise or hustle the Almighty into a Divine interference in the affairs of the human race which are immovably tabulated in his own purpose and foresight. Before his wisdom the suppliant might well, like King David of Israel, be dumb with silence, holding the tongue even from saying what is good, to bow the heart before him who needs no counsellor, in unquestioning submission.

If there is an art in prayer it lies in simplicity, in brevity, almost in silence. The needs and longings of the human heart and mind cannot be formulated into words when the spirit is moved and drawn into closer contact with that life-giving force of God. God is his own interpreter. The human mind is an open book before him. Having made man He does not need man's words, the verbal expression of his need, his desires or dissatisfactions. He asks for the heart. If He receives that He has all, and prayer "uttered or unexpressed" becomes the tie that binds the earthly child to its Heavenly Parent.

There are times when prayer must and should be vocal. Praise and prayer are almost the same word. The humble are grateful and a grateful heart must find some means of expressing its gratitude or suffer injury to itself. So the joyous burst of praise in glorious hymns whose words and music have stood the test of time is an expression of faith and gladness, a joyous adoration which is a solid foundation for the more secret communings which transform human nature into a finer substance.

A well regulated heart will begin every day with praise and thanksgiving. "Early in the morning our songs shall rise to Thee". There is so much to be thankful for. Who that count their blessings know where to stop? The catalogue of natural blessings is long. If the realisation of such a full cup does not prompt

heart and voice to a spontaneous outburst of praise and thanks as rapturous as a blackbird's melody in Spring, there is something sadly amiss with that heart, some hidden disorder of the spirit for which remedy should be sought immediately. If the physical voice has lost its timbre, the inner voice can still make melody in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

It has been said that gratitude is the first essential of Christian character. That being so, it is the well-head of prayer, the place where life with God begins. Jesus certainly commended it when only one out of ten restored lepers returned to give thanks. To take for granted the common blessings of daily life, to make the words "thank God" into a common cliché is not only unbecoming conduct, but an affront to the open-handed generosity that has showered good things with absolute impartiality upon all his creatures.

While the affairs of the nations appear weighty matters to the masses composing them, to Almighty God they are no more than a drop in a bucket, the small dust of the balance, to be settled and dealt with in his own way and time; but the individual is precious. Jesus dealt with persons, with men and women, with children, knowing their needs, seeking to supply each one with more abundant life.

While He condemned the lip service of the ritualists, the hard of heart, the faithless, the self-seekers, He loved the lowly who came to him just as they were, seeking peace and comfort and life. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd and He had compassion on them. He provided the way by which the weary and heavy laden might come to God and find rest. As individuals with all their differing temperaments, needs and circumstances, men and women were invited to turn, to come, to find rest in the presence and upon the shoulder of one whose arm comfortably sustains the universe.

David, in his time, had bowed himself low, subjecting himself to the all-seeing eye. "Search me O God and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting". His was the true basis of fellowship with God. Absolute trust, honesty of heart, the courage that seeks correction, the desire to be in complete harmony with God, coupled with the confidence that the heart's desire will be abundantly satisfied. This seems to be the essence and purpose of prayer, the unreserved

trust of true love leaning upon the everlasting arms in perfect confidence.

Prayer is like the modern telephone. It is instant communication with a loved and trusted friend. In moments of stress the invisible line carries its message. Even before it is received the answer is on its way, help given, strength restored, the right thing said or done because a mystical power was set in motion which scientists have not yet been able to take apart and put into one of their pigeon holes of new discoveries. "*The Lord is true, a helper tried.*" How many have borne this testimony to those words! Courage and strength has been infused into weak moments. The sought counsel of God has become indispensable in the perplexities of life. His loving solicitude and tenderness have conveyed his very presence into lonely moments of sorrow, saving the downcast from complete despair. Under his pure, inspiring influence Christian pilgrims return to their task, their battles or their lone paths, refreshed, determined, better fitted to do whatever they have to do.

Much of the lassitude, doubt, discontent and depression which afflicts the lives of professing Christians is due to lack of prayer. The Scottish bard recognised that "A correspondence fixed with heaven is a noble anchor". The handclasp of faith moors life close to the Rock where storms cannot break the straining cable. Scepticism and infidelity have spread their infectious germs around so that some doubt the very existence of God or his readiness to assist his own. The unbelieving world busy on its own great inventions fails to realise that what they can do their Creator can do very much better. Swift communication, television, remote control, the great seeing eyes of the astronomers' telescopes, are mere toys in the hands of man, compared to the powers and resources of the Creator, who through his prophet asks the question, "Shall not He who made the eye see?"

Nothing goes unobserved or unheard by that spiritual realm, much less the affairs, the communings of his saints, his treasure, his children, who love him, who are loved in return with Divine concern and intensity. The dull, the cheerless, the pessimistic, the wavering, are clearly not the people of the closet who pray in secret and are openly rewarded with the shining face, the serene heart, the happy confidence, the abiding vision of things to come in which the whole earth is seen lifting heart and hands in joyous praise and endless prayer, to him that sits upon the throne.

The life which draws its strength from God does not waste time in unloading its troubles onto others equally troubled. The trustful heart takes its burdens to God, seeks counsel of no man but of the Lord only and comes away with the marks of that high communion upon his brow, carrying into the world of hustle and grab and sin a shining face, though like Moses, he knows it not.

"When sorrows like sea billows roll", what human heart, however dear and sympathetic, can reach out to our frail craft? It is God who made the heart, reserving for himself those dim recesses of longing that none but He should possess the secret shrine. Men may talk with the tongues of angels and we remain un comforted, unenlightened and uninspired, but let God speak in the still, small voice, upon the dedicated altar of the heart and new life begins to flow into the numbed soul. Whatever the battle, the need, the perplexity, the heart pours out all and rests in his presence while He gives the balm, the vigour, the counsel, the strength and the guidance. All the fret, the grief, the pain, the fear, the doubt, gives place to stillness. Faith claims his promise to sustain. "I will guide thee with Mine eye". "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee". "When thou passest through the water I will be with thee". "I will teach thee and instruct thee". "Fear not, be strong and of a good courage". God's faithfulness fulfils his word "exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think". His is no miser hand but an abundant, generous Fatherly hand. Power and love are there; it needs only faith to find it.

Those who have entered boldly to the throne of grace seeking his help, they only can tell of the coming away, of the enlightened heart and lighter step, of being carried through the day's business as though on unseen wings, of paths cleared and difficulties surmounted, of doors opened and battles won. True it is He dries our tears, buckles on our armour, makes a bridge of our sighs and fears, and himself bears forward on eagle wings the souls He loves and who love him. Who that has felt under him the everlasting arms but treasures the memory of the dark, hard places that called out the strength of God. As one has truly written. "It is in our darkest hour that the Day Star shines the brightest". What but prayer could bring such aid? "*Call to me and I will answer thee*".

There is no confidence like that of a heart given to God. The feeble, unhappy, ineffectual life is the one that prays and asks amiss or never prays

