



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

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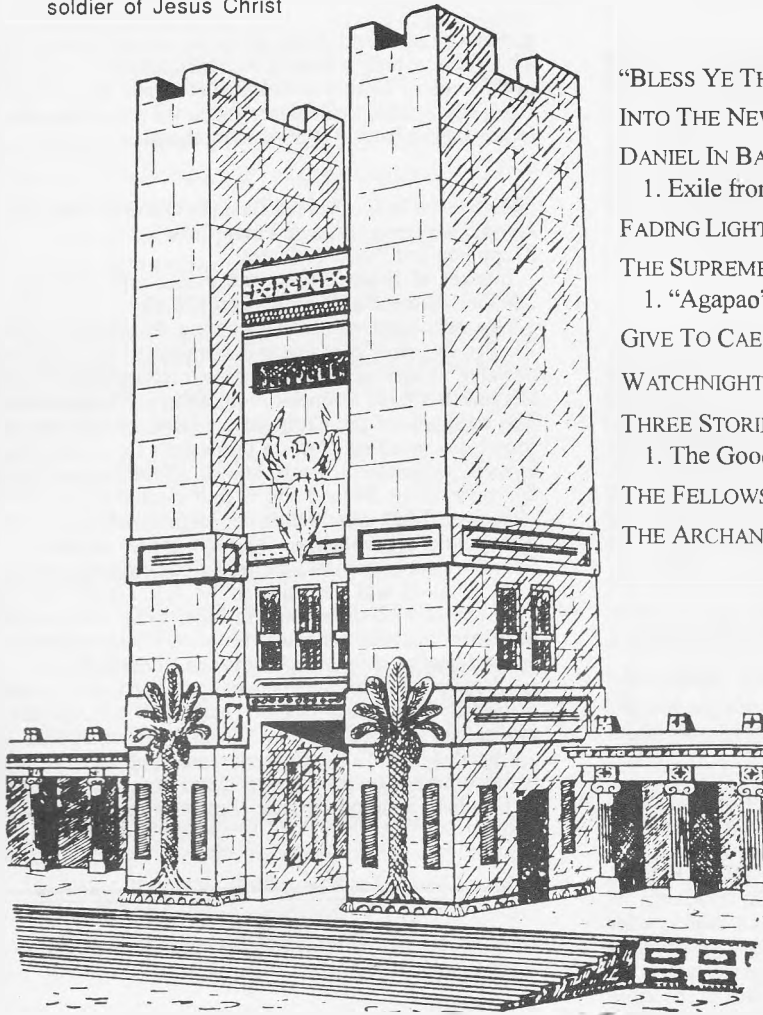
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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NOTICES

New Year Features. The series "*Daniel in Babylon*" which commences in this issue, published 25 years ago, is of perennial interest. Reprints dealing with ancient history include some revisions in the light of more recent research. "*The Supreme Grace*" is the first of several series dealing with 1 Cor. 13. A short series entitled "*Stories of Salvation*", using the teachings of Jesus, appeared as a booklet nearly thirty years ago. On page 17 there is a poem from the collection "*The Quest*" and this is followed by a report on the Christian African Relief Trust.

* * *

Literature Reprints.

Paradise on Earth - a 100 page booklet examining the Scriptural basis for belief in the Millennium. This doctrine, as old as the Christian era, somewhat lost in the dark and medieval period, found new interest in the last two hundred years. Consideration is given to the prophetic background, the practical aspects and the changes in earthly conditions expected.

A Glimpse of God's Plan - a 16 page booklet, briefly reviewing Creation and the Beginning of Sin; the promise of Deliverance and the Birth of Jesus; the Ransom for All, the Church and the Kingdom to come. Based clearly on Scripture, full Bible references are given to each topic.

The above booklets are available upon request from: Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

A **Literature List** will also be sent on request. All literature is sent free of charge and post free on the principle that the ministry of the Christian gospel is "*without money and without price*".

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BOOK REVIEWS

"Goddesses in World Mythology"

(Martha & Dorothy Imel) 645pp Qto Softback.

0 19 509199 X Oxford University Press/OUP USA £12.99.

This monumental work is intended for students of comparative religion. As a source of reference it calls now for a corresponding compendium listing the many gods of olden time. One of the prime difficulties in this type of research is the multiplicity of names given by different peoples to the same deity. This work associates such names together in a masterly fashion thus facilitating the elucidation of ancient epics and the like. The gallery of names is classified in fifteen territorial sections covering all countries in the world and all periods of history. Names appear in alphabetical order, each with all known alternatives, principal characteristics, nation or people to which it applies, and so on. A bibliography, and two indexes, one of

goddess by name and one by attributes, completes a production which is essentially a book of reference, and as such invaluable to students of Christian or other religions or of the Bible, especially to such as are interested in the primal development of polytheism from primitive monotheism.

AOH

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"Discoveries in the Judean Desert - Qumran Cave 4 - Gen. - Num". (Eugene Ulrich & Frank Cross). 272pp Fcp Hardback. 49 Plates.

Indexes of Biblical texts and manuscript contents, 0 19 826366 1 Clarendon Press Oxford £70.00.

One of several volumes examining the plethora of "Dead Sea Scrolls", now available to investigators. As such it will be of value to serious investigators, especially those versed in Hebrew; but there is much of interest to less erudite students. The examples of pre-Christian manuscripts exhibited in the forty-nine excellent plates a thousand years older than the formerly earliest Hebrew texts known, afford abundant evidence that prior to the Second and Eighth Centuries A.D. Hebrew "Received Text" upon which the English A.V. is based there were many differences in various copies of the Hebrew Scriptures due to copyist's errors, scribes' omissions and so on. Contradictions and confusion in the A.V. are shown to have been due to such differences in older texts, with sometimes additional material not found in the A.V. Examples are the age-old queries about Esau's wives in Genesis; the number of Jacob's family said to have entered Egypt, in Exodus; misreading of the early Canaanitish-Hebrew characters when rendering into the "square" script of Ezra is blamed for much of this. There are detailed lists of such differences, and, too, quite substantial bodies of text absent from the modern Hebrew Bible especially in Numbers, omitted by later copyists either by accident or design.

AOH

Gone from us



Bro. Bernard White (Yeovil)
Sis. Adelaide Forsythe (Belfast)



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

B. J. Drinkwater

"BLESS YE THE LORD"*A call to true worship*

Alone of all creatures on the earth man is gifted with the faculty of veneration. Grouped along with this faculty are others - conscientiousness, hope, spirituality, and benevolence - from the exercise of which spring the qualities of reverence and respect, and in co-ordination with the intellect enables man to understand and appreciate his relationship to the Higher Powers. Though linked at many points to the lower orders of creation, he yet enjoys a place apart in the realm of mental and moral values. On these higher planes he shares mutual kinship with the angelic world, in which thought and conduct is regulated and conditioned by righteousness, truth and purity. Not only do these faculties enable him to understand moral values, they also predispose him to show respect toward such values, to accept them as a rule of life, and yield reverence to the Higher Power, which, in its government and control, can superimpose these values upon its domain.

In this appreciation of moral values lies man's likeness to God. Even now, after thousands of years of decay and degradation, they who respond most readily to the claims of such values are esteemed to be the most like God. Many noble minds can render respect to God, by reviewing Nature's laws and ordinances. Here, Paul says, they can find the evidence of his eternal power and Deity. (Rom. 1. 20). But Scripture brings to view another field beyond the range of reason and creation, a field of revelation and providential oversight. Within this further field God claims from men a reverential response as his unchallenged right. Herein, it is his undoubted prerogative to command silence in his holy Presence as when, by inspiration, the Psalmist says, "*Be still and know that I am God*" (Psa. 46. 10), or again, through Habakkuk, "*The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him*". When breaking through into the range of man's consciousness, He can command the beholder to stand reverently before his heavenly majesty. Even his deputies, charged with his omnipotent commission, can command the same respect "*Put off thy shoe from thy foot*", was the imperative command to Joshua from the heavenly visitor, "*for the place whereon thou standest is holy*" (Josh. 5. 13-15).

For the example *par excellence* of this reverential respect we must betake ourselves to God's picture gallery, the place of ceremonial worship within

the Holy Place of the Tabernacle. Without, on the Brasen Altar, the tokens of the people's worship were consumed by fire, but within that Holy Place an exclusive act of reverential devotion for the priestly house was undertaken by a white-robed priest. There, the hour of incense being come, the Priest appointed brought his censer filled with fire, and depositing it upon the golden surface of the Altar of the Presence, crumbled small the finely powdered incense in his hands, and let it gently fall upon the glowing flame, from whence, in rising wreaths of scented smoke, a cloud of fragrance ascended up into the Presence of the Holiest of all. Day by day this procedure was carried through, an act of ceremonial observance oft repeated! In this simple act the illustration of devotion lies enshrined. Here, more than in any other sphere of Israelitish worship or experience, man drew nearer to God, and pledged him more in service than in any other place.

In the Holy Place this item of its furnishings stood nearer to the inner sanctum than any other article within its walls. The writer to the Hebrews places the altar as though it actually stood in the Most Holy. Undoubtedly its location was in the Holy Place, and had that writer been describing only the fixation of the furnishings he would most likely have located it there. But its relationship to the specific service for which it was used undoubtedly connects it to the furnishings of the Most Holy. Thus, for this act of devotion, the Incense Altar was coupled with the Ark, the Mercy-Seat and the Cherubim within the Most Holy. When God instructed Moses concerning the service of the Priests, He had said, "*thou ... shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them that they may minister unto Me in the Priest's office*" (Ex. 28. 41). The other items of furniture in the Holy Place were intended for the Priest's own needs; the Candlestick for his illumination, the Table for his sustenance. Only the Altar was installed and fixed with a Godward intent; only by this could the Priest perform his ministry towards his God. That this service at the Altar was the most distinctive and important of the Priestly duties may be deduced from a comparison of two episodes in the experiences of Israel's kings. The first relates to David, who, as a fugitive, arrived with his little company, famished and weary, at Nob, to ask for bread. Other supplies being unavailable, neither Ahimelech

the High Priest, nor David, as God's King-elect, entertained the least scruple at their partaking of the Presence Bread, though as Jesus said, it was lawful only for Priests to eat. No dire consequences followed this irregular act, nor was the least displeasure of Heaven indicated against the course pursued. (1 Sam. 21. 1-6). The other episode is that of King Uzziah, who, flushed with pride in an hour of victory presumptuously forced his way into the Holy Place intending to burn incense there. Thereupon Azariah the High Priest withstood him to the face, reminding him that, *"It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron that are consecrated to burn incense; go out of the Sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honour from the Lord God"* (2 Chron. 26. 17-18). Hereupon Uzziah became exceeding wroth against the priests; then, as he proposed in utter disregard of their reproof and warning to continue with his presumptuous act, the anger of the Lord fell heavily upon him. Then and there, in the presence of the priests, and still within the sacred precincts of the Holy Place, the terrible scourge of leprosy smote him - a visitation so unmistakably from the Lord that he hasted himself to go out of the Holy Place, to bear the stigma for the rest of his days.

That the presentation of incense was an act of service watched over by the Lord with intense care is demonstrated, too, by the tragic end befalling Nadab and Abihu. So superlatively important was this phase of Priestly ministration that no man, even though of Aaronic line, could be permitted to trifle with his duties carelessly or presumptuously. (Lev. 10. 1-7). In further proof of Heaven's estimation of this Altar-service reference may be made to Ezek. 44. 10-16. This Scripture indicates that God reserves to himself the right to withdraw the privilege of service in the Holy Place, with its special ministry "unto Me", from any former consecrated priest guilty of participating with the people in idolatry. Only such as had faithfully kept the charge of his Sanctuary could be allowed *"to come near to Me to minister unto me"*.

Now it is fully conceded that all these things were typical, "shadows" of "good things to come", imposed upon and observed by Israel until a time of reformation. Even so, every shadow pre-supposes its corresponding reality, to which, in some sense, it bears resemblance. Thus Heaven itself is the counterpart of the Most Holy; our Heavenly Place and

standing in Christ, of the Holy Place; a better Priesthood with Jesus as its great High Priest, of the Aaronic House; and our "better sacrifice", of the blood of bulls and goats. Imagine then the situation in the Holy Place, the hour of incense being come. Here at the Altar stands the Priest, silent and alone. Here on the Altar stands the brazier filled with glowing coals. Carefully he begins to crush and drop the finely powdered incense into the living flame, from which arises clouds of fragrant smoke which fill the Holy where he stands, and penetrate also into the holier Sanctuary beyond. In this he has performed the most distinctive and important service to which he and his companions were called. And this solemn service was repeated every day save one! Just fire, and incense and fragrant smoke - a white robed priest, and God.

What did the everlasting God, the God of Israel, think of all this ceremonial particularity? Why must it be done "just so"? Why must that fragrant incense be reserved for him alone? Had He not caused that white-robed ministrant to know that in the strict observance of all this meticulous ceremonialism he was ministering to his God; that truly, really and actually it was a service "unto Me"? Was it really true that the fragrant smoke was a pleasant odour unto him? Most surely He had taught that son of Aaron to believe it so - but why? Behind that son of Aaron, but on a higher plane, stands the Head of a better Priesthood, of which Jesus is the High Priest! Can it be that something of that special privilege was intended to be carried up from that lowlier to that higher plane, and thus to cause the spiritually-minded son of God to know that something in his private approach to these holy things would be as fragrant and acceptable to Almighty God as that incense-smoke had been to Israel's God? Can it also be that in these prayerful worshipful approaches there is again, on this higher plane, a ministry "unto Me"? Does the New Testament have any word to say of "odours of sweet smell" unto God? Does the New Testament have any word to say about "drawing near" to the highest and the holiest things, on the higher plane? Has it any word to say about a reverential *"boldness to enter the Holy Place"*, there to stand before a Throne of Grace? While the right of entry to the Holy Place was a privilege common to all the Priesthood at any time, yet, when the hour of incense was come the Priest appointed must approach alone, and remain alone at the Altar till the presentation was

complete. We see an instance of this in the case of Zacharias, into whose presence came the Angel Gabriel to announce the birth of a son. (Luke 1. 8-11). At such a time one dominating thought must have possessed the priestly mind. While face to face with God he must relegate all other claims pertaining to the Camp to the subconscious stratum of his mind. His time and service must now be devoted exclusively to God. Woe betide him if at such a time the sorrows of the people should take first place! A rebellious and stiff-necked people may be dwelling in the Camp, but what of that? Here at this Altar he must constrain himself to quietness and attentiveness to the higher claims of his God!

Is there anything like this in the Christian's way of life? Is there a rebellious world surrounding him on every hand, pressing, by its groans, its needs upon his sensitive and compassionate heart? Even so, he cannot give primary attention to that - his first response must be to the claims of God. It must be God first - other things will be righted in due time. The need and value of the private approach to the Holiest is beyond appraisal. What would we not give to have more detail of the solitary hours of our Lord away there on the mountain top? What would He have to say to fill the long night hours with prayer so frequently? If we take our cue from the few snatches of submissive and thanksgiving prayer put on record for us by his hearers we can be sure his hours of isolation were filled with prayers of the utmost devotion. If that intercessory prayer in the Upper Room be our guide, what sincere devotion, coupled with filial boldness was ever the keynote of his life. "*Holy Father*" - "*Righteous Father*" were the terms which sprang spontaneously from his lips. Perhaps some day, when angelic tongues are unloosed, we may come to know and understand how Jesus dropped his incense into the consuming fires and how his attestations to full devotion to his Father's Will rose up to God as incense sweet.

What then is true devotion to God? Is it to be found in the isolation of the monastic cell, or the Cathedral's cloistered chambers? Is it to be found in entire separation from the company of men? By no means. Jesus lived no monastic or separated life away from men, yet, in the minds of men He was separated unto God. Perhaps the old-time Quaker came near to understanding this, when, seated along with men, he could yet commune with God, without ceremony or words. "Retire-thou to the Light that is

within thee" was his guiding thought. Does devotion not express itself in singing hymns, in making public prayer, in the delivery of expositions or exhortations, by lecture or address? No, not necessarily so! Devotion must abound ere yet the hymn is sung, the prayer framed, or the address constructed! Each and all may be the expression of a devoted life, exactly as mental effort or muscular movement may be the expression of a life-power within our bodies, but the life-power and these are not the same thing. True devotion, veneration, reverence, is the sequel to a life lived unto God, a life that takes a delight in ministering unto him, a life that brings its choicest things to be absorbed, as incense, in the accepting fire of his love.

Devotion of this kind does not express itself, first and foremost in activities towards the Camp - it knows that the world's day is yet to come. Instead devotion of this deeper kind pays its main attention to the claims of God and to the needs of the deeper hidden life within - to the life that is "hid with Christ in God"! Its motto first and foremost is "God first" ~~It~~ It says, "I delight to do Thy Will, O my God"; its purpose is "this one thing I do"; its realisation is "*I am crucified with Christ, yet I live, and yet it is no longer I that live, but Christ who liveth in me*".

Is then devotion of this kind a practicable possibility in this present day? Ought this experience to be a characteristic of the Fellowship? All who appreciate the calling of the Lord must say, "Yes, surely, it ought so to be". It could be and would be, if each one brought a spiritually-charged heart to the gathering. In this case the spirit of the whole depends upon the spirit of its individual parts.

The great desideratum is that it should be realised in the life of the individual; for as Paul reminds us, our bodies, individually, are as temples of the Lord our God. We each carry within us the structure of the Tabernacle brought down to a fine focus. We have our point of contact with the Camp - our wider work-a-day world; our contact with the "Court" - with those of religious mind; our contacts with the Holy Place - with those who walk with spiritual illumination and feed on the more deeply spiritual food; and that deeper inner Sanctum of the soul in which we feel the promise of the Saviour come true. "*We will come unto him and make our abode with him*" (John 14. 23). Hence every true child of God should be a copy of the Tabernacle in miniature, in the very

heart of which dwells the token of a *Shekinah* Presence, and in which is located also, as it were, an incense altar, to which as opportunity serves, he inwardly retires, there to crumble and present the lov-

ing fragrance of an obedient life. In the words of the old Quaker dictum, it is well to "*retire to that which is within thee and there commune with him that dwelleth in thy soul*".

INTO THE NEW YEAR

Back of us lies the travelled road; before us the uncharted pathway of the New Year. We wish one another a Happy New Year, and happiness should be increasing each year if we know its true meaning and go the right way to secure it.

How should the worth of the passing year be estimated? Surely not in material things, but in spiritual values! Have we grown richer in the fruit of the Spirit? Do we know Christ better than we did a year ago? Does He mean more to us, and things less? What do we plan for this year as the chief end of effort? Are we determined that it shall be a year of closer accord with the Master and the purpose of God in us? Shall life be lifted above self-regard to the joyous plane of living for others? If we have found the real meaning of life then living should be a worth-while thing to the last moment, even though it be marked by pain and disappointment, by loss and sorrow, as for most of us it must be. If we have learned the real values we will not need to hide from ourselves the fact that we are growing older by the count of weeks and months, for the real values are eternal. We are not hurrying toward an hour when everything must be dropped, but rather toward the time when hope will be realised, faith may lay hold of its richest treasures, hope come into its full inheritance. For us, life is not narrowing toward the grave, it is broadening toward eternity. There are songs for

the thoughtful in the passing of the year, remembering God's leading in the old, and laying triumphant hold upon his promises for the new.

The infallible recipe for happiness, then, is to do good, and the infallible recipe for doing good is to abide in Christ. Joy is a fruit, and like all fruits must be grown. The Christian graces come under the law of cause and effect. No one can get joy merely by prayer, although that contributes; it is one of the fruits of Christian life, and must be grown. No man can make things grow; he can arrange circumstances and fulfil conditions, but the growing is done by God. Causes and effects are eternal arrangements, but man can place himself in fulfilling conditions of growth. No violent over-strained exertions are necessary to a noble life, nothing greater than simple faithfulness.

One thing more. If seeking to lose our lives in the service of Christ means practically living for others, let us live by the day. Some of us try to grasp too much of life at a time; we think of it as a whole instead of a day. The only way to make a radiant day is to make each hour bright with the lustre of approved fidelity, keeping the days as they pass pure with useful, holy living. Each day is one white page open before us, to fill in as a record of duty or victory. Let us remember our God, and remember those in need about us, to stretch forth a helping hand, and keep our heart open towards Heaven.

(The "Herald of Christ's Kingdom")

"*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth*". (Rev. 14. 4). Christianity is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations. *It is following a living Christ*; walking as He walked; doing as He did; imitating his example in all things. This is Christian movement - Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of his character imprinted on our new nature, and reproduced in our life and ways.

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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON**1. Exile from Zion***The story of a
great man's faith*

He walks on to the stage a youth, life just opening out before him, an exile from his native country, doomed to attain manhood's estate in an alien land, far from the Temple of God and all that Temple represented. When the curtain drops, we see him still on the stage, an old man and full of days, too aged and infirm to join the procession of rejoicing men and women wending their way back to the land of their fathers, there to rebuild their Temple and worship God in his appointed way. During the long years of a life spent alternately in prominence and seclusion, in honour and neglect, he maintained inflexible faith and a constant passion for the restoration of his people to their own land; when at last the fruition of his hopes appeared he was too old to share in the home-going! Nevertheless he died content, knowing that God would remember him and, in the resurrection life, grant him his heart's desire. For the intervening time he left on record, as his legacy to all who in after times would come to know God, a narrative so thrilling in adventure and so stimulating in sterling faith that it has been the inspiration of thousands who in their own day and generation have endured the fires of persecution and withstood opposition to righteousness.

The Book of Daniel is full of interest to the student of prophecy and the believer who seeks strength and encouragement for faith. Its vivid stories, of heroic deeds dared by stalwart believers in God, and of the mighty arm of God stretched out on their behalf, never grow old and will never die. The revelation of things to come, given to Daniel by means of visions and dreams, have proven themselves to be "visions of God". They have occupied the attention of students through the twenty-four centuries which have elapsed since his day. Less than two hundred years after his death, if the historians are to be believed, Jaddua the High Priest of Israel showed the prophecies of Daniel to the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great, explaining to him how his own career of conquest was foreshadowed in those prophecies. Now in this twentieth century Christian students scan the ancient words to gain some clue to the significance of present-day events, and take assurance from them that the days of the Kingdom cannot be much longer delayed. But what is of greater importance is the insight this remarkable book

gives into the personal lives of men, the stimulus to faith and constancy which is afforded by the stories of loyalty, fortitude and Divine deliverance which have made the book to stand out in the Old Testament as a record of marvellous achievements against a background conspicuous for its gallery of remarkable men. The lad Daniel, making his way, by sheer force of character and unswerving loyalty, to the highest office in an idolatrous and materialistic land; the proud king Nebuchadnezzar, arrogant in his might, at length abased and humbled before God; his effeminate grandson Belshazzar, ignominiously slain in the midst of unheeding revelry; the three servants of God, prepared to suffer a cruel death rather than deny him; Nitocris, the royal daughter of Nebuchadnezzar who grew up with Daniel, never espoused his faith yet turned to him for enlightenment when the mysterious hand wrote the doom of Babylon upon the banqueting room walls; the jealous courtiers who plotted the death of Daniel but themselves fell into the pit of their own contriving; these characters stand out vividly against a background which tells us more about the life and customs of ancient Babylon than any other single book now in existence.

Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, were boys together at the time, about six hundred years before Christ, when the Kingdom of Judah was declining to its fall. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, inhabiting the northern part of the land, had already gone into captivity, over a century earlier. Now it was the turn of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. Jehoahaz, king of Judah, had been deposed by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt, and Jehoiakim placed upon the throne. He had reigned only a little over two years when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, not yet sole king, for his father Nabopolassar was still alive, invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jehoiakim was forced to renounce allegiance to Egypt and become the vassal of Babylon. As surety for his good behaviour, the Babylonians took some of the aristocracy and nobility of Judah back to Babylon as hostages, and these four lads, either of royal blood or related in some way to the royal line of the kings of Judah, were taken among them.

It was common practice of the Babylonians thus

to take into the royal court of their own land selected members of the younger relatives of vassal kings. The idea was to train them in the ways and ideas of the conquerors so that eventually they might become trustworthy rulers over the conquered peoples from whom they had been drawn. Daniel and his companions found themselves thrown into the society of other lads of their own age in the king's court at Babylon, taken from other countries which the Babylonians had overrun and conquered. Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, was a son of the High Priest of the Moon god at Haran, where Terah the father of Abraham died, and he had been taken captive in the same way as Daniel and ultimately rose to become the husband of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, Nitocris, and, by virtue of that marriage, the last but one king of Babylon. Belshazzar, their son, was the last king.

Daniel could hardly have been less than eighteen years of age when he was taken to Babylon. Nabopolassar died in the next year and Nebuchadnezzar became sole king. Two years later Daniel stood before him and interpreted his dream of the great image (Dan. 2. 1). The term "children" (Dan. 1. 4) in the original Hebrew has the meaning of youths or young men, a different word being employed when the meaning is limited to a child; the word used allows for any age up to twenty-four or so.

Jeremiah was living at Jerusalem at that time and had been for twenty years past. He was well known in Court circles and the lad Daniel must have been well acquainted with him. Ezekiel, too, was a lad of seventeen at this same time but since his home was, in all probability, by the Dead Sea he and Daniel may not have met. It was not until eight years later that Ezekiel in his turn was taken captive to Babylon. Two other prophets who also lived and prophesied at this same time were Obadiah and Habakkuk, but there is no evidence to indicate whether or not they and Daniel ever came into contact. It would seem, however, that Daniel kept in touch with the older prophet, Jeremiah, and had obtained copies of his writings as the years passed by, for when in Dan. 9. 2 we are told that Daniel understood by the books of Jeremiah that seventy years were to mark the limit of the Exile he refers to a prophecy that Jeremiah uttered in the first year of Zedekiah (Jer. 29. 10) by which time Daniel had been in Babylon eight years.

So it came about that one day a little procession could have been seen making its way out of the Damascus Gate on the northern side of Jerusalem. First, a detachment of Babylonian soldiers, stepping smartly along the highway, their coats of mail gleaming in the sunlight. Behind them, a line of chariots, each containing five or six passengers, chiefly bearded Babylonians, but in some of them Jewish youths. After these came heavy waggons, lumbering along with their loads of treasure, of gold and silver vessels, taken from the Palace and the Temple. Finally, another detachment of soldiers. Daniel and his friends were leaving their native home for perpetual exile in a strange and idolatrous land. Never again were their eyes to look upon that Temple which Solomon had built more than three centuries earlier. They could not have known, at that moment, that only another nineteen years were to elapse before that glorious edifice was to sink down in the destroying flames and lie, a desolate mass of rubble, while Israel expiated her national sin in a foreign land.

So the land of Judah was left behind, and for something like thirty days the little party travelled, through Samaria and Syria, along the great high road that led to the Euphrates, and then, turning southward, and following the course of the river as it flowed across the flat Babylonian plain, come at last in sight of the great city Babylon.

Daniel could not have failed to reflect that he was retracing the steps of his forefather Abraham, in the reverse direction. This was the road by which Abraham had come from Ur of the Chaldees, following the river Euphrates past Babylon and up to Haran, and, when his father Terah was dead, down through Syria into Canaan. Abraham, obeying God's call, had left the luxury and glitter of that pagan land for the simplicity and purity of a pastoral life in the place to which God had led him. Here had he lived and died, his son Isaac lived and died, and the twelve tribes of Israel grown into a nation. Now this young lad was called upon to leave the hills and valleys, the tree-clad mountains and rushing streams, the vineyards and olive-yards, the orange groves and pomegranates, of this hallowed country where God had put his name and planted his chosen people, for a land of great and luxurious cities, gigantic temples and magnificent palaces, wide rivers and straight-cut canals, busy with the trade and commerce of many nations. Instead of the chaste and dignified

worship of God Most High he was to witness every form of idolatry, the reverence of the people given freely to images of gold and silver and wood and stone - objects that could neither see, nor hear, nor speak. Like his friend and teacher, Jeremiah (10. 4-5) he might say of their idols, *"They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers that it move not. They are upright as the palm tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good"*. Abraham was called to come away from

this place and be separate from the unclean things: Daniel was called to go back among them. Surely the ways of God are mysterious and past finding out! Daniel must have wondered what purpose God could have in sending him to such a place, what usefulness a life spent in these surroundings could have for him. And as the towering walls of the world's greatest city loomed up before him the lad's young heart must have been lifted to God in supplication that, in the unknown life which he must now face, his faith and loyalty might never give way.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson

FADING LIGHT

Food for thought

"And he lighted the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses" (Exod. 40. 25).

That was a great day in Israel's history - and momentous for the later history of the Church - when Moses set the first light to the first lamps in the Holy of the first Tabernacle. For God had sent a light into the world, a light that was destined to burn brightly at times, anon to flicker uncertainly and all but go out, yet blaze up at last into the full brilliance of the Millennial Day. But there were to be many times of darkness before that.

Moses had made the Tabernacle in accordance with the instructions he had received in the Mount. "Take heed" the Divine oracle had warned him, "that thou make all things after the pattern". And Moses, ably aided by Bezaleel and Aholiab, the skilful craftsmen whom the Lord called, had faithfully followed that injunction and prepared a sanctuary for the Lord that was true to his plans in every detail. Now for the first time lights appeared and their radiance spread out and touched with their brightness the gleaming gold of furnishings in the Holy, and ran up the lines of the tall posts that supported the roof. For many years were those typical lights to burn, until in the fulness of time their brilliance would fade in the greater glory of that spiritual Light that should come into the world, Jesus Christ, the true Light. But that great event was as yet fourteen hundred years in the future.

Evening by evening, throughout all Israel's generations, that light in the Holy was to be renewed and kept alive through all the hours of darkness. Although the Scriptures do not definitely say so,

some think that it burned day and night and was indeed the only source of light in the Holy. Unless daylight filtered through the linen veil that closed the entrance, there could have been no other source of light; but in the intense sunlight of Sinai and Canaan it is quite conceivable that sufficient of daylight did pass through the veil to lighten the interior. That fact need not alter the typical picture. Day by day continually the priests performed their duty of cleaning the lamps, refilling them with oil, renewing the wicks, and seeing to it that never for a moment was the Holy in darkness. Those lamps were to burn before the Lord continuously.

That was the ideal. It was hardly ever realised in practice. Time and time again did Israel relapse into apostasy and idolatry, and neglect the sanctuary of God and the observance of his behests. The undying flame was not an undying one after all. It burned low and flickered and at times went out, and in its flickering cast grotesque shadows on the walls of the sacred apartment so that the negligent and inattentive priests formed strange impressions of what the furnishings of the Holy really did look like, and in their half-hearted ministrations often stumbled and performed the service of the Lord in an imperfect way. Because there was no clear and steady light, they themselves lost the power to see, and the vision of the sanctuary became to them as a thing that is sealed, and their eyes became blinded, and they stumbled and fell.

Thus it was in the days of Samuel, when as a child he ministered before Eli, *"Ere the lamp of God went out in the Temple of God, where the Ark of God was"*

(1 Sam. 3. 1-3). How eloquent the words, how sad the picture! Eli, the aged priest, weak, indolent, no longer imbued with the fiery zeal of his earlier years, content now to minister the duties of the priest's office in a more or less perfunctory manner and heedless of the solemn responsibilities of his exalted position. His sons were openly and avowedly apostate, using their privileges as priests for purposes of material gain and fleshly indulgence, indifferent to their duties as ministers of the sanctuary; the people as sheep without a shepherd, fast losing both their understanding of and their faith in God; the entire nation drifting away from its covenant and its high calling to be a chosen nation, a peculiar people to show forth God's praises and to be a means in his hand of world-wide blessing. And there, in the dimness of the sanctuary, the neglected lamps guttered shakily in the seven-branched lampstand, draining the last drops of oil from the burnt-out wicks before the light, at last, went completely out in the temple of God while as yet there were many hours to go before dawn.

It was in that darkness that the voice of God came to a new instrument lying ready to his hand, and the child Samuel, growing up in the fear and reverence of his God, and mighty in faith and vision, lighted a light in Israel that shed glory on their ways and illuminated the plans of God for many years to come.

The word of the Lord, it is said, was "precious" - rare - in those days. There was no open vision. That word "open" is significant. It has the meaning of bursting open or breaking forth. The vision of the prophets was always a breaking forth, the release of an irrespressible inward urge that could not be satisfied until it had leaped out and spent all its impetus on the deliverance of its message. Jeremiah felt like that. *"His word"* he says, *"was as a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay"* (Jer. 20. 9). Israel had known that kind of thing in past days but there was nothing of it in the days of Eli. The impetus of past faith and enthusiasm had spent itself, and now the priesthood, the leaders and teachers of the people, had become an established institution, performing routine duties in a purely mechanical manner, and with none of that spontaneity which is the hallmark of the work of the Spirit. The loss of their first fiery zeal, their evangelistic fervour, their wholehearted and confident reliance upon the Lord, had left them a purely human organisation, having its basis

and interest in material things, but bereft of any ability to transmit the light and power that comes from God.

Now this fading light within the priesthood had its repercussions of the people of Israel - the peasants, the farmers, the vine-dressers, the keepers of sheep, the craftsmen and house builders in the cities, those who built aqueducts and reservoirs for water and those who felled trees, and dressed timber for palaces and temples. All in Israel were profoundly affected and influenced by this drift into apathy on the part of those who should have been their spiritual instructors. For they followed after the same example of unbelief. Blind guides led the blind, and in consequence both fell into the ditch. The light faded out for the people as a whole, and to such an extent that they became at length manifestly unworthy of any longer being called God's representatives, and their national polity God's kingdom, even in name, and so they lost both their place and nation and went into captivity to Assyria and Babylonia for their sins. Their national attitude at that time was well expressed in the plaint of the people in the days of Ezekiel. *"The days are prolonged and every vision faileth"* to which the Spirit-inspired preacher made reply, *"the days are at hand, and the effect of every vision"* (Ezek. 12. 21-28). Ezekiel's day, the time of the Babylonian captivity, was a day of fulfilling prophecy, a day when mighty works were being wrought and mighty signs seen by the saintly Daniel, a time when the deeper thinkers in Israel might have been expected to discern the significance of the times in which they lived, and to look for early deliverance. But the fading of the light had in its turn induced a fading of hope and expectation, and now the people in the main no longer really expected deliverance, or believed in the word of promise at all. They gave themselves up instead to the interests and pursuits of the present, and cared little or nothing of the future.

The result of that was that Israel rejected the Lord when He came; and the Lord rejected Israel. *"The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you"* He said, *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt. 21. 43). That "nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" is the Church of the Gospel Age. The failure of Israel has provided the opportunity for the Church.

That is where the typical teaching of the lighted lamps has its value to us to-day. We, no less than Israel of old, are prone to let our light go out through

indolence, apathy and satisfaction with the condition of things as they are. And the result to us is the same as to them. Of us also will it be said in such case, "The Kingdom of heaven is taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof". For the Lord's arm is not shortened, and He can well find other instruments for his work should those He has chosen prove unfitted to his use.

It is so fatally easy to allow the light to fade. The long history of denominationalism through the centuries, of reformation by sects, is witness to that. From the days of the Early Church right down to our own day there is constant repetition of this same story, of a Christian group or community taking its stand upon the truth of the Scriptures and prosecuting its mission with ardour and zeal, only to become stereotyped and lifeless when the first impetus of its reforming force has been spent. All this has been said so many times, and now it must be said again, and then again and again, for no generation will learn the lesson from its predecessors, and individuals in every century must still emulate Samuel and minister faithfully before the Lord in a day when the light is going out and there is no open vision.

"If we walk in the light, as he is in the light" come the words of the beloved disciple, "*we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin*". Here is the guidance for which our souls are seeking. To walk in the light guarantees to us an entrance into the fellowship of the brethren and a standing in justification. To walk in the light means a making use of the talents and the pounds with which our Lord has entrusted us, instead of burying them in a napkin and hiding them in the earth. To walk in the light means to view the world around us, its condition and its needs, from the same standpoint as did Jesus, and proceed to lay down our lives on behalf of the world's need just as did Jesus during the three and a half years of his ministry. We cannot be practical Christians without walking in the light and we cannot walk in the light without being practical Christians. The surest corrective for fading light, therefore, is to make

of our faith a practical thing and to work out in the opportunities of daily life the principles of the belief that is in us.

In his message to the Laodicean Church our Lord spoke of the eye-salve of his providing, the acceptance of which would enable the disciple to see, not only clearly, but into another world. The light of this world cannot shine into spiritual things. The light that is of God can illuminate spiritual things but even then the natural man cannot see them. It is only by the power of the Spirit that the glories of the spiritual can be made known to us. So then the one who would guard himself against the effects of fading light must needs take to himself the eye-salve of the Lord's providing and so behold, no longer dimly as in a vision, but clearly and distinctly, the conditions of his calling and the truths by which his faith is defined and the principles by which his faith is regulated. *"Open my eyes, Lord, that I may see"* must needs be the continual prayer of every consecrated follower of the Lord Jesus, for only by such a continual straining to see more and more clearly may we have our spiritual vision exercised so that it may, at last, take in the whole vast landscape of that celestial realm which is to be the eternal inheritance of the faithful. *"Like Job of old, we may say, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee'"*; but that can only be if, again like Job, we have retained our integrity and firm confidence in *God from the beginning even unto the end*. The duty of the priests of old was to keep the lamps burning throughout the hours of darkness; they were never to be suffered to go out. *"We, each one of us, have our own little lamp to guard and keep. An abundant supply of oil - God's Holy Spirit - is always at our service."* It is our part to keep the vessel clean and ready, the wick trimmed, and the flame burning clear and steady. Thus we shall both be lights in the world and have light within ourselves, a light that will never fade, but will at the end expand into a radiance that is to lighten all the world, in that day when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.

Names of authors appear in this issue of the "Monthly" for the first time for nearly forty years. The custom has been revived after repeated requests from readers. In earlier days of the B.S.M. it was

also the practice to use author's initials. For some older readers the ministry of half a century ago will be recalled.

T. Holmes

THE SUPREME GRACE

A study in 1 Cor. 13

1. "Agapao" and "Phileo"

LOVE

"Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1. Cor. 13. 13).

So run the closing verses of the matchless chapter in which the master-mind of the great Apostle splits up the pure white beam of Love into its component rays of service and experience, as these things befall us in the common round of life.

It scarcely needs to be said that nearly every version, other than the A.V. has substituted the word "love" for charity, and made the statement of Paul to say that "Love" is the greatest of these; as one gifted pen has written, it is indeed the greatest thing in the world. In the usage of today, charity does not mean what once it did. In an earlier day it stood for kindness, sympathy, tolerance towards a less favoured comrade in the strife - an attitude greatly resembling that of which Paul speaks in the former verses of this Chapter. "A favour, sir, of your charity" carried with it no such sting as it would today. In these more commercialised days it speaks too strongly of the stigma of pauperism, the processes of "Social Security"; or the whining cry of the ragged mendicant. It reminds too vividly of lost self-respect and bedraggled dignity; of an indigence that unmans a man and makes of him a cringing fawn. Yet it is a pity that this once noble word has lost its savour, for though in some senses our word Love may today stand nearer to the Greek original, and may be much the better word to express desirable relationship between man and man, even the word Love must take on the sense of charity in all relationships between God and man. "*Charis*" - from which comes charity - in the Greek really means grace, favour, beneficence. All God's relationships towards human-kind, even to the best of men, are based on grace unmerited. That refreshing grace comes to us all in so many ways and under so many circumstances, that in each differing circumstance it needs a different term to describe it. Sometimes it reaches us as compassion, sometimes as pity, again as mercy, as succour, as relief, and so many other forms of Divine goodwill that it becomes as many-hued and as diversified as Love itself. Indeed it really is Love itself, Love en clothed in compassionate tenderness.

In the sphere of human experience every expres-

sion of this Love - when shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit - may require, according to the circumstance, a different name by which to define it, for, as Paul says, it will show itself at times as forbearance, at others as longsuffering, at still others as tolerance, as hopefulness, as kindness, in word and deed. Each occasion of loving word and deed is a "grace" - a gracious word, a gracious act - in its own self, yet, winsome as it is, it is nothing more than one constituent element of the all-embracing master-grace - of the supreme grace of Love itself.

A beam of light, passed through a crystal prism, will come out, separated into its component hues, red, yellow, orange, etc. - all the colours of the spectrum or the rainbow arch. So, in like manner, Love in its passage through a human heart into the sphere of human experience will come through separated out into a wide array of human qualities, of both natural and spiritual kind. It may range, on the one hand, from a mere forbearance to exact due recompense from an enemy, to the most intense and reverential esteem, on the other, for the sacredness of the blessed and Holy Name. with all the wide range of sanctified experience that lies between these two extremes.

To illustrate it another way, Love could be likened to the indefinable fragrance wafted from the exotic heart of an old-world garden, where every one of a hundred floral gems contributes its quota to the fragrant ensemble, yet finding, as one wind's one's way along its paths, each one, in turn, standing out a little from the rest. While we know that the enchanting bouquet of the whole is made up of the aroma of every single bloom, yet we also know that a nearer proximity to this or that separates its own particular odour from all the rest. We could thus in-breathe and appreciate the distinctive fragrance of the humble mignonette, or of the lowly violet, with as much delight as we would find that each floral gem was needed to contribute its own quota to the fragrant "whole". So in the same way we will find that it requires every gracious and considerate act or word, expressed to either friend or foe, to add its own aroma to the delightful bouquet of Love. It is because the daily round and common task in the garden of our

life covers such wide ranges of circumstances that it is so essential for us to know and understand that the all-embracing attribute must be separated into its many constituents and elements. Only thus can we hope to comprehend this master-grace for what it is.

It is a great disadvantage to the English-speaking student of Scripture that the word charity has been substituted for the older word which has to stand as equivalent for two Greek words, of very dissimilar meaning. These two words, *phileo* and *agape*, were used to express two very different emotions, the natures of which are almost entirely obscured by our general use of the word "love" as the equivalent of both. While it is true that a few translators sometimes use the word "affection" as the equivalent of *phileo*, the small number of students having access to these more precise translations robs them of any special influence they might bring to bear upon the general conceptions clustering around the word "Love". To the general reader all affection is Love, and all Love is affection, the one thing being identical with the other, while the warmer word "affection" is accounted only a milder synonym for the more robust word "Love". But such was not the case with the Greek Christian reader in older days.

The word *agape* is almost entirely a Christian word. It did not emanate from classical Greek sources. It was first coined by the translators of the Septuagint, and from that source passed into the Church's vocabulary, but in its passing from the old people to the new it took on depths and shades of meaning it never had before. Under the Holy Spirit's influence the writers of the Apostolic Church (Peter, John and Paul especially) used this inherited word to describe some of the deeper verities of Christian life and experience. In their Master's life and death they had seen an expression of something which this sordid world had never seen before. Martyrs unto death had been seen over and over again in the annals of their ancestry, but in the case of Jesus there had been more than mere heroic faithfulness. There had been an influence that gripped, yet did not excite to combativeness or warlikeness. It laid hold on their "spirits" and tamed and sobered them so that they became different men. It inspired them with a mighty urge which made them dare and do great things, yet withdrew or curbed their inborn retaliatoriness and made them ready to suffer with meekness and without complaint when reviled or persecuted. Seeking to explain the amazing condescension of

He who had been rich, and for our sakes had become poor, they said, "He did it all because He 'loved' so amazingly" - amazing because it was so disinterested and void of self-gratification. In their strivings to give expression to these newer hard-to-be-defined conceptions running through their minds, the ancient word was laid under tribute, but in the usage its boundaries were stretched both in width and depth, so that it came to stand for wider things and deeper things than their fathers knew. It spoke to them of a Great Cause - a Redemptive Plan - and of the Holy One Who had devised that Plan. Hence they said God had "*agapao*" for this sinful sordid world. This was the ocean-wide and ocean-deep thing which Apostolic writers tried to compress into the limits of a word. They did their best - but what a task they undertook! Taking that older word, they stretched and stretched it again, and filled and filled it yet again, with these newer thoughts and values that were filtering through from the higher world into their consciousness. For them it came to stand for "Love of the Cause" - "Love for the Plan" - "Love for the prospect and means of eliminating sin and sorrow and death". Yes, indeed, *agape* is a Christian word, for not until much later times did classic Greek absorb it into its vocabulary, and with much less depth and width of meaning than its Christian foster-fathers had infused into it.

The other word (*phileo*) was the noblest word which classic Greek possessed to describe regard for the highest things. This is seen in some of its combinations, as for instance "*Philadelphos*" (lover of a brother), "*Philanthropia*" (lover of men), "*Philosophos*" (lover of wisdom). But it can also be linked with baser things, as for instance "*Philarguroi*" (lover of money), "*Philautoi*" (lover of self) (2 Tim. 3. 2). For the baser sort of love Greek literature had another word - or series of words - *Eros*, *Erastes* and *Erastin*. But these were words which neither Jewish nor Christian writer ever adopted; they were too steeped in carnality and tainted with vice for their purposes. Because of this they let them all severely alone. But they made the nobler word *phileo* more noble still. To the Greek who wrote and spoke of Philanthropy, the only men for whom he had any love to spare were those of his own kith and kin - blood brotherhood in some town or city-state. For the whole world of men of other blood or faith he had no love. To him Philanthropy was just family-love - the love of the national or city-

family and that of his own domestic circle. The Christian Church made this noble word leap over all national or racial barriers, and incorporate in its ample folds men of every nation who, by faith, had found entry into the Divine family. It could still represent the close natural attachment which a James could bear towards his brother John, but it could also expand itself sufficiently to permit Paul to link Rufus or even Onesimus, a runaway slave, with himself in a holy brotherhood. Truly they made it a nobler word after adopting it.

It is around these two words, with all that they denote, that the heart-gripping appeal of the Scriptures revolve. It began in the heart of God in bygone times; He wanted a family upon which He could lavish his grace and generosity. The invasion of sin did not alter the gracious desire; He devised ways and means to bring the wanderers home. He sent his Son to earth to tell wayward men of that desire, and to begin the work of drawing them with the magnetism of a Father's Love. God's own Spirit laid its firm grip, first of all upon the worthy Son - and then through him it laid firm hold upon "those that thou hast given Me" and then, through them, moved on to a wider field, drawing others to his appealing arms.

The Alexandrian Fathers coined a word to record the love of "the chiefest among ten thousand" for his "Dove" - "His fair One" in translating the Song of Songs. Of this word, which was created to translate the Hebrew word "*Ahahah*" (Song of Solomon 4. 10). Thayer's Lexicon says: "*It is noticeable that the word (agapao) first makes its appearance as a current term in the Song of Solomon; certainly no un-designed evidence respecting the idea which the Alexandrian translators had of the 'love' in this Song*". That in itself gave the word a noble birth - and as a mode of expression for the young lovers in Israel it stands on a pinnacle above all the love-literature of all lands in that early day; still, even with

all that unparalleled glory at its birth it pales into a mere shadow before the splendour that shines through it as it is later taken up and made the vehicle of expression between the altogether Lovely One and the beloved of his heart.

Only when we can assess the depths of love which Jesus bears for his Church, and which the faithful in that Church bear to him, can we even begin to realise what the Divine Spirit has compressed into the comprehensive word. Truly it stands for the binding-link of the whole Redemptive Plan, and has caught up into it first one here, another there, and has constrained each and all to yield himself, with all that he is and has, to the furtherance of that Plan. And then, towards each one thus caught up, an appreciative affection has come forth from the heart of God.

Of himself Jesus said, "*The Father loveth the Son*" - (*agapao* love) because of what He is in the Redemptive Plan (John 3. 35), but He also said, "*The Father loveth (phileo love) the Son*" (John 5. 20). Of his followers Jesus said, "*If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love (agapesai) him*" (John 14. 23). Yet He also said, "*The Father himself loveth (phileo) you, because you have loved me*" (John 16. 27). Thus to the universal love to the Plan, God had intertwined affectionate love for the faithful contributor to the interests of that Plan. And this inter-twining act of God has been made the pattern and example for all the rest who came into that Plan. Love of the brethren - loving affection for those that serve faithfully and well, is enjoined upon the whole Household of God. Around these two words revolves the sacred mysteries of the great Plan of God - the mighty energising force that moves all Redemptive action, warm-hearted affection, each for each, which binds each to other in the ties of the greatest family which time or eternity will ever know.

D. Nadal

"GIVE TO CAESAR WHAT IS CAESAR'S"

"*He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'.*" Luke 20. 25 (RSV).

Jesus spoke these words in the Temple during the last week before his death. During those days he spent a lot of time teaching the people and answer-

ing the religious leaders' questions. It is clear that they were not seeking enlightenment concerning his message but trying to catch him out and undermine his authority among ordinary Jewish people. Perhaps even more importantly they tried to obtain some means of accusing him before the Roman authori-

ties and that is why they asked Jesus the question, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar?". The priests and teachers of the law had already tried to trip him with a question and been answered. Now two groups, which normally opposed each other, Pharisees and Herodians formed a strange coalition to question Jesus about a subject which was a sore point with the Jews. They paid their Temples dues with reasonable good will but loathed giving any money, however small, to the hated pagan Romans. They were the occupying power in Israel and were regarded as the enemies of God. The question was intended to place Jesus in a dilemma for if he said, "Yes" the Jewish people would be upset and he would lose his popularity. If he said, "No" there would be an excuse for tale bearing to the Roman governor, which could result in Jesus' death. While they desperately wanted to destroy Jesus they had no authority or power to do so.

Jesus was careful how he replied to this question and first asked to be shown the appropriate coin, one denarius. It was a working man's pay for one day and also the amount paid to the Romans as a kind of poll tax. The coin bore the image and inscription of Tiberius Caesar, son of the 'divine Augustus'. The Roman emperor had minted the money therefore ultimately it belonged to him. It was customary that if a ruler gained such a position of power that he could issue currency, then he had authority to demand taxes. This Roman coinage was in common use among first century Jews and undoubtedly they would take all they could get of it. Jesus had made his point; if the coins were Caesar's property, they should be returned to him when demanded. He went no further than giving them a principle to live by and later teachers in the Church were to enlarge on the benefits of Roman rule. Some subject peoples acknowledged their debt to Rome but others complained and even rebelled against the occupying forces. Further expansion upon Jesus' basic teaching was given by Paul in Romans 13.

From time to time one hears of Christians who grumble about paying taxes to the government of the day. The teachings of the Apostles of the Lord Jesus give no grounds for such grumbling, much less for tax evasion which would add theft to dishonour. In the later chapters of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul raises a number of very important moral issues. In Romans 13 he discusses the payment of taxes. In verses 1-7 of that chapter Paul makes it

clear that this concerns an attitude towards God's purpose in the world. Rulers and governments hold positions of authority given by God and it is a Christian duty to accept their authority. Paul began the previous chapter by addressing those believers who had committed their lives to God and to him they owed everything they possessed. Now Paul says in chapter 13 that God had appointed the Roman emperor and his many representatives. Nero ruled the Roman empire because God had woven Caesar into the fabric of his plan for all mankind therefore he must be obeyed. He was not the first ruler to play a part in the divine scheme of things. Not many years before, Augustus decreed that everyone should be enrolled for taxing and so was instrumental in arranging for Messiah to be born in Bethlehem. Five hundred years before, Cyrus had directed the return of the Jews to the land of Israel. The whole history of God's people through Old and New Testament bears witness to him ordering the pattern of events which carried forward his purpose. Paul once said to an audience of Gentiles, "*In him we live and move and have our being*". Some day our loving Father in Heaven will be able to demonstrate that he permitted the suffering and misery at the hands of sinful rulers according to a wise and compassionate purpose. That does not mean those who follow Jesus can perpetuate the violence and corruption of wicked leaders nor can they wish to judge and destroy them. Jesus did not support the murderous intentions of the 'zealots' of his day who carried daggers to stab Roman soldiers in the back.

When the people of Judah were taken captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar they were unlikely to have had very charitable thoughts about the great king. To them he was an enemy who had caused them terrible distress and they would not care too much about his welfare. Yet when at last they were in Babylon, much against the wishes of the leaders in Jerusalem, Jeremiah wrote to the exiles and strictly warned them to behave themselves properly towards their captors. He went further and told them to settle in the land, build houses and produce families. Strangest of all he told them to, "*seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare*". (Jer. 29. 7). Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was the head of gold which the king had seen in a dream and which Daniel had interpreted for him. Babylon was part of a purpose to be worked out until

the "kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ..." (Rev. 11. 15).

In a way, that exhortation of Jeremiah, for Jews to pray for their enemies was a precursor of Jesus teaching in the 'Beatitudes' recorded in Matt. 5. 44 "pray for those who persecute you". It also finds an echo in Paul's first letter to Timothy (2. 1-6) where the apostle instructs the elder at Ephesus to pray for everyone; and in particular for those who hold high civil office. Paul's reason for this attitude is not just a matter of patriotism. He was glad of his privileged Roman citizenship at times, but the main reason for his strong words in this matter concern the well being of the people of God. They are to be subject to those who maintain law and order because our God is a God of law and order. Christians were urged to maintain good relationships with the civil powers for in this way they could most effectively preach the Gospel to all peoples. Co-operation with the rulers of this world was intended to promote the interests of the kingdom of God. We live in a very different world in some respects, from the days of the Roman Empire. Democracy has overtaken western society and the Scriptures do not specifically demonstrate how a Christian is to act concerning the increased responsibilities within such a society. But the principles of right living and the prospect of the advent of the kingdom of God remain unchanged. Rebellion against earthly rulers is nowhere condoned in Scripture and those who trust God are exhorted to co-operate and respect those in authority. The prayerful attitude of a Christian citizen is not wasted because many of the world's statesmen do not become committed followers of Christ now. Paul has the long term in view, when all mankind will be saved and come to know Christ. Everything that we do that is right now, accumulates to the glory of God in his Kingdom to come.

Similarly, the Apostle Peter writes in his first letter (2. 13-17 NIV), "submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king". The attitude of submission which characterises Peter's words about relationships reflects the mind of Christ. It also expresses Jesus' thought when he said, "if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two

miles". This was pressed service for the Roman army. Unwillingness to be submissive is due to arrogance which is the way of the world and the Devil. It is proud and wilful human nature which rears itself against authority. There is a place for non-conformity and a time when wrong laws must be resisted, solely for the principles of Jesus' teaching. Perhaps this can best be illustrated by Peter's own experience soon after Pentecost, when he was arraigned before the rulers of the Jews in Jerusalem. The disciples were warned not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, and Peter with John replied, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4. 19, 20). Later the persecution, of which Peter wrote (1 Pet. 3. 13ff and 4. 12ff) was to come upon the church with great violence during the second and third century.

Not long after the apostles fell asleep the Christian believers were in all kinds of trouble, notably because they refused to worship the emperor. There came a point where 'Caesar' wanted God's share as well as his own. Nevertheless, there are records which show that Christians during those troubled days, were often better citizens of the empire than those who followed pagan religions. As the centuries went by the spiritual and moral decline of the Church came about because worldliness entered the lives of God's people. Devout followers of Christ found themselves in opposition to churches which wielded civil power, and they could not do or believe some things which religious leaders made compulsory by law. They suffered much persecution for their loyalty to Christ and his teaching. Later, reformers sought to change the Church but real success came by passive means for those who did not resort to Satan's violent methods. The spirit of the world has affected reformers as well as those needing reform. The Lord taught his disciples that they were the salt of the Earth to influence society for good but there is no suggestion that the salt should take on an explosive nature. Christian men and women have continued the reforms until our own day. Each must do that which he believes God is directing his people to do through conscience without judging Christian brethren who may feel led to do something differently.

The writer to the Hebrews said that God would shake Heaven and Earth so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. How much of our life will be shaken and how much is part of this

world? "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and

awe for our God is a consuming fire". (Heb. 12. 26-29 RSV).

WATCHNIGHT

Dear Father, share with us this midnight hour,
Reveal to us Your tender, quickening power,
And in the silence make us more aware
Of Your compassion, overarching care
That will go with us through the coming year.

O Father, on this year's departing day,
Forgive our failures, stacked in bleak array,
Blot out our sins - O wash them clean away,
And let Your Spirit overflow, we pray,
Hearts that would truly serve You and obey.

Dear Lord, watch over all the days to come -
May hearts beat high with hope, and hands be strong,
May lives be filled with prayer, and lips with song,
May each day see some inner victory won,
And draw us nearer to our heavenly home.

So, Lord, go with us through each changing year -
With You to guide us, dangers hold no fear,
However dark the night, Your arms are near -
Dear Friend and Father, daily still more dear,
Be with us always till the Dawn appear.

Margot King-Smith from 'The Quest'

'Watchnight' is taken from 'The Quest' - a collection of poems by Margot King-Smith, published after her death in 1985.

Copies of the book are available from:

Beresford King-Smith, 8 South Parade,

Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B72 1QY.

The cost (including UK postage) is £2.00. Please make cheques payable to CART; (Christian African Relief Trust).

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Gifts of clean used clothing, (suitable for all ages), dried or canned foodstuffs, bibles, school-books, manual typewriters, sports kit, toys, etc. will be much appreciated. So also will donations towards the heavy cost of transporting the containers from Huddersfield to Africa. Cheques should be made payable to CART. These and further enquiries should be addressed to: *The Secretary, Guildford G. Tompkins, 'Whitegates', Lepton, Huddersfield HD8 0LR.*

D. Nadal

THREE STORIES OF SALVATION

1. The Good Shepherd

"*Never man spake like this man*" was the verdict of the Temple guard upon Jesus of Nazareth, when they returned to the Jewish authorities without having arrested Him. (John 7. 46). The same testimony is given by Luke and is recorded of those who heard the Lord preach in the synagogue at Nazareth; "*All bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*". (Luke 4. 22). When we read over again the lovely illustrations which he used for His preaching we too are thrilled by the simple stories which so powerfully convey deep truths. They must have contrasted strongly against the current trend of First Century teaching by the Jewish leaders. Their chief concern was for superficial religion and interpretations of Mosaic Law which the ordinary folk could not understand. Their sermons were directed toward those who had already made some confession of religious faith and who were outwardly righteous. Jesus had a message of hope and comfort for the outcasts and social misfits, spoken in language which all could understand and apply to their own lives. Such was the parable of the "Lost Sheep". A mixed audience heard him convey a lesson of salvation in a setting which was familiar to them all.

The shepherd has been out all day leading his flock and now returns to the fold for the night. As the sheep file past, the shepherd counts them one by one, noting perhaps their condition and needs. At last they have all slipped beneath his searching gaze but one is discovered to be missing. Normally, his day's work would be almost complete and he, along with his flock, could settle down for rest and repose. But within the shepherd's breast there surges a compassion for the poor, lonely sheep, which has been left out on the cold, cheerless hillside. Without thought of his own comfort or safety, the master of the flock quickly turns towards the path along which he has so recently come. His thoughts are centred on that bleating sheep, away from the protection and shelter of its home. It would be an easy prey for wild beasts and readily succumb to inclement weather.

The account in Luke 15. 4-7 includes these words "*until he find it*". This is not the whim of an hireling or the curiosity of a stranger, but the love of a tender heart which spares no effort to reclaim that which has been lost. No obstacle or personal injury

was to be allowed to thwart the shepherd's effort. It might mean a long walk or a difficult climb, perhaps beset by hindrances and frustration, but these would only serve to spur the shepherd on "*until he find it*".

When at last the wayward sheep is found the shepherd places it on his shoulders for the triumphant return homeward. There is an absence of scolding or grumbling in this shepherd's voice, only pleasure and rejoicing. With the strength of a father and the tenderness of a mother the precious burden is borne towards the security and provision of the fold. Then the shepherd calls together his friends and neighbours that they may join with him in his happiness.

Jesus had drawn a picture of himself. Before coming to earth, He had enjoyed ceaseless fellowship in heaven with His Father. He had executed His Father's purpose in the creation of the Universe. His life before coming to earth had been one of unparalleled bliss, untouched by sin and its consequent misery. He willingly forsook it all that He might recover that which had been lost in men's rebellion against God. He saw not only the broken law against God's inflexible justice but the tragedy of man's condition. He saw that little children were born in sin and shapen in iniquity, with no hope of rescue from their plight. He saw too that the best intentioned leaders among men, however high their moral standards, and however brilliant their intellects, found it impossible to save the human race from its plight. Men were like the helpless little sheep out on the mountain-side. Leaving the splendour and peace of his heavenly abode, the beloved Son of God came to make His home on earth. He grew up among sinful men and women, and lived in most difficult circumstances in order that he might fully understand the creation which he came to restore to harmony and peace with God. He became in the fullest sense of the word, the Good Shepherd.

Reiterated in every Gospel story is the great compassionate love which inspired his preaching and work among men. Unlike any other "saviour of the world", Jesus' sole purpose was to restore that which had been lost. There was no self gratification nor desire for the esteem of men. Because of this he was able to speak freely to all types of people irrespective of their social background. Differences of

education and nationality are human barriers which could not hinder his message. His penetrating sermons contained food for thought valuable to professor and peasant alike. His life was devoted to the work of delivering men from their sins and showing them the way back to God. His days were spent in labouring among and preaching to ordinary folk of city and village. His nights were spent alone on the mountain top with his Father, receiving strength and guidance for his ministry of reconciliation. Besides all this, he spared time to instruct his little band of followers in His work, so that when he departed from their sight he could still reach men through them.

How different was his manner from any other leader among men. The religious leaders were too proud to hold out the hand of friendship to any except their own self-righteous set. The people of Israel were accustomed rather to the rough handling of Roman soldiers and to the unjust behaviour of the wealthy classes. As for the misfits in society such as the common thief or national traitor like the tax-collector, there was no one to give them a helping hand out of their unhappy condition. Yet Jesus came looking for people like that and was prepared to give His life in order to restore them to an upright and happy life. As we watch Him at work through the eyes of the evangelists, we see a man toiling to recover broken bodies and labouring to heal broken hearts. He was repeatedly touched by the pathetic sights of suffering and frustration which He saw. On one occasion Matthew tells us, "*he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*". (Matt. 9. 36). His words of tenderness and peace echo down the centuries to all humanity; "*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls*". (Matt. 11. 28, 29).

What lesson has this parable for us apart from its message of salvation? Perhaps the Good Shepherd sought us out and brought us to his fold many years ago, and today we have no need of being found again. We have rejoiced in the reality of the "Shepherd Psalm" and have experienced the wonderful care of our Saviour in supplying our every need. When we are wayward he restores our soul, and when we pass through trials and suffering he "anoints our heads with oil". Since He found us we have learned to love the shepherd very much. We know the touch of his gentle hand and recognise the tone in his sympha-

thetic voice. But are we to enjoy this protection and provision without it stirring our souls and inspiring us to follow the Shepherd's noble example.

The work which Jesus commenced by the shores of Galilee and in the thoroughfares of Jerusalem did not end when the Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep. He has imparted His resurrection power to His Church whereby they have continued in His purpose to reconcile all men unto God. Immediately following the baptism of the spirit at Pentecost the apostles began to obey the Master's command "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*". (Mark 16. 15). Peter, who led the Early Church in the first flush of obedience and power, wrote in later years, "*for even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps ... for ye were as sheep going astray but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*". (1 Peter 2. 21-25).

If in fact we are following in His steps we shall be doing the same work which He did while on earth. He is still the good shepherd and He operates today through those of His followers who have been in close fellowship with Him. We who fully surrender our lives to Jesus become His instruments of blessing others by reaching out to those who are lost. Twentieth century life with all its inventions and refinements has not changed human nature. Adoration at the shrine of Science and Progress has not uprooted sin from the hearts of men. Only Jesus can do that, and He does do it through us, just so far as we yield our hands and our feet, our lips and our pens to His command.

Each day we rub shoulders with some who so far have not responded to the call of the Good Shepherd. Do they hear the voice of the Saviour as we speak to them? Does our behaviour towards our colleagues or neighbours denote the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd? Or does our biting tongue and rough handling towards other folk indicate that we are no more than a hireling? Sheep are timid creatures and are easily repulsed, yet when in need and danger they are readily assured by the skill of the shepherd. We have in the Word of God that food and drink, and that comfort and balm, which the world needs today. It is our privilege and our duty to see that we are not selfish with God's gifts but distribute them gladly according to His Word. If we fail to do so, we shall not be gaining the experience

required by those who will be associated in the work of reconciling all men to God in the age to come.

The life of the Good Shepherd was not given in vain. Jesus died in order that the lost everywhere, including those in their graves, might hear his voice and be brought home to the fold. It is the privilege of those who give themselves in complete self-surrender to Christ now, to be fitted for the work of reconciling and rehabilitating all men to the finished creation as God intended this earth to be. But association with Jesus in that work can only become a reality if our very natures are transformed by the renewing of our mind into the likeness of our Saviour. We must have His compassion and patience; our hands and voice must become gentle like His, in order that even the most wayward sheep shall have fullest opportunity to be brought back into harmony

with the Creator and His creation.

The work of that time when the violent shall no more prosper and all shall learn the way of peace, is described most beautifully by Isaiah in chapter 40, vv. 10, 11. The feeding of the flock, the gathering of the lambs, and the leading of those with young, is the work of shepherds who by reason of their uprightness and sweetness of character have gained the confidence of the sheep who depend upon them. They are principles by which the Kingdom of God upon earth is to be established and they are the qualities to be found in all who will have the oversight of that Kingdom. May those same principles dominate our lives now, so shaping our characters for God's service in this world and the world that is to come.

C. T. Ward

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

A Devotional Study

"That I may know him ... and the fellowship of his sufferings". (Phil. 3. 10). A friendship grows with the passing years. As two people learn more about each other and share each other's experiences their love for each other deepens. Paul discovered this in his fellowship with Jesus, as he followed in his Master's steps. James calls attention to the example of suffering which the prophets gave us, and in Hebrews 11 we have a list of Old Testament heroes who suffered for their faith. The prophets declared that Messiah would suffer shame and death and he is thus spoken of in Isaiah 53. 3, *"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"*. All who associate with Jesus in his mission to the world must share the same conditions of humiliation and sacrifice. This is not just a willingness to deny oneself a few luxuries and be patient with the normal troubles and ailments of life. Suffering for Christ may include those things, but it must ultimately mean much more.

Jesus was born into the hard Roman world and often the peasant folk had a lean time making ends meet. From his earliest years our Lord must have been familiar with the grief of his fellowmen. His ministry of healing would bring him into greater touch with the weakness and frailties of humanity, and the Gospel records reflect his mingling with and

sympathy for the sorrowful and outcast members of society. He was contradicted, ostracised and hunted. The agony of the garden, the hypocrisy and humiliation of the trial, the fatigue and rough handling on the way to Calvary, were all part of a bitter cup which He drank to the dregs. Not only did He suffer physical pain and mental anguish for himself, but his pure and sympathetic heart grieved for the suffering and sin of the whole world.

The witness which the disciples gave after Pentecost rapidly brought persecution from the religious leaders who had been responsible for the death of Jesus. The power of the Gospel message caused many Jews to repent and believe in the Lord. The priests and lawyers soon realised that instead of crushing the new sect by putting its leader to death, it had suddenly obtained new life and influence. Not only were the members of the early Church willing to suffer for their Master but they did it with joy as reflected in Luke's words, *"They departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name"* (Acts 5. 41). This spirit of joy, derived from sharing their Lord's sufferings, continued with the Christian church as it spread to Gentile lands, as shown by the experience of Paul and Silas in the gaol at Philippi, where they sang praises to God during the night. Paul knew

the cost of the witness of the early Church before he became a Christian, but the visions he had received from his crucified Saviour were too strong a call and he followed the path of martyrdom. Eventually he turned his back on the comfort and serenity of his home town of Tarsus and set out along the great highways which led to Rome, stopping only to tell the tidings of great joy which must be told to all people.

The joy of the early disciples was a feature of the Christian life which neither the Jews nor the Gentiles could understand. They cheerfully faced torture and death for Christ's sake, and nothing would make them forsake their trust in him. They knew that their Master was with them during the actual experiences, they knew that He sympathised with their afflictions because He had trodden the same thorny path, and they were able to say with Paul, "*our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of glory*" (2 Cor. 4. 17).

What is the purpose of it all? The prophet in Isaiah 53. 5 gives us the foremost reason, because, as the Saviour of the world, he was, "*wounded for our transgression; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed*". He was announced by John the Baptist as, "*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1. 29). Jesus spoke of himself as the good shepherd who was to give his life for the sheep (John 10. 11). Soon after Pentecost Peter addressed a large crowd in the Temple area and told them that there was no other name given among men whereby they could be saved (Acts 4. 12). Later Peter wrote, "*For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit*" (1 Pet. 3. 18, R.S.V.). In his long discussion of the resurrection Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15. 3). The writer to the Hebrews speaks of him suffering without the gate in order to sanctify the people with his blood (Heb. 13. 12). The New Testament writers bear united testimony to the purpose of Christ's suffering and death, that it was for the redemption of mankind from death.

The experiences through which our Lord passed as Saviour prepared him for his work as mediator, reconciling men to God. The writer to the Hebrews

describes him as, "*learning obedience through what he suffered*" and being made, "*perfect through suffering*". (Heb. 5. 8; 2. 10, R.S.V.). Jesus was perfect in that He was sinless and obedient before He came to earth, but until He came to live among men He had no personal contact with the conditions in which men lived. He had not felt the consequences of sin. "*For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning*" (Heb. 4. 15, R.S.V.). Those who follow Jesus, share his suffering, and by so doing become like him in his compassion and patience for a sinful world. It will mean betrayal, scourging and contradiction, but it will prepare them for a place beside him in his work as earth's future King. Any denial or retreat from this aspect of our fellowship with Christ must necessarily find us unready for his priestly work in healing and rehabilitating a broken and sinful human race (2 Tim. 2. 11, 12).

In the economy of God's purpose, He has used the wrath of man to perfect his workmanship and He restrains that which would cause harm (Psa. 76. 10). So it is that our experiences in the world, although they may seem bitter, are part of our chastisement and are a mark of our sonship to God (Heb. 12. 5, 6 and Prov. 3. 11, 12). The same thought is conveyed in another way by Jesus in the parable of the vine, when He said, "*every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*". The fiery trials cause our faith to strengthen, and we emerge stronger and purified, thereby making us more fitted for his service.

Just before his death, Jesus asked the sons of Zebedee whether they were able to drink of the cup which He was about to drink. That question to James and John is reiterated to every Christian through the words of the Gospel. Our answer to that question gives evidence of our allegiance and love for him. It is in the trial of our faith that we learn to trust him and depend upon his guidance and strength. It is after we have been through the valley of tears and humiliation, when we have felt the biting sting of this world's scorn and rejection, that we draw closer in fellowship to the "lover of our soul". "*If we are his children we share his treasures, and all that Christ claims as his will belong to all of us as well! Yes, if we share in his sufferings we shall certainly share in his glory*". (Romans 8. 17 Phillips).

A. O. Hudson

THE ARCHANGELS

*Study in an
unusual subject*

There is a very general impression that the Bible asserts the real existence of two chief angelic beings - archangels - named respectively Michael and Gabriel. It may come as something of a surprise therefore to learn that the word "archangel" - chief angel - occurs only twice in the New Testament and not at all in the Old. In point of fact very little is said about these two personalities, the only two members of the celestial world identified by name, although what little is said is full of significance.

Much more is related about these two in the apocryphal Book of 1 Enoch; although it must be remembered that this only enshrines Jewish tradition of the 2nd century B.C., when that book was written, and its value assessed accordingly. In that book - which does not use the term archangel, this being confined to the New Testament - Gabriel is pictured as the messenger of God, standing in his presence continually to receive his commissions and hasting then to carry them out. Michael is the warrior and guardian of Israel, always at hand, when danger threatens the chosen nation, to defend and deliver. The Bible, for all its brevity on the subject, supports these positions so that to this extent at least the old Jewish traditions appear to be well founded.

Of the two, only Gabriel is recorded as having actually intervened in human history and held converse with certain human beings, and that on three occasions only. He is said to have appeared to Daniel (Dan. 8. 16 & 9. 21) to convey information to the prophet regarding God's future plans for mankind and the manner in which future world history would be affected; to Zacharias (Luke 1. 19) to apprise him of the forthcoming birth of his son, John the Baptist, with details of the mission for which John was destined; and to Mary of Nazareth (Luke 1. 26) to tell her that she was to be the mother of Jesus. The veracity of the latter two instances rest on the reliability of that very sober historian, Luke, and the truthfulness of his informants, and on one other factor. That factor is the overriding power of the Holy Spirit superintending the composition of the Book which is the Divine revelation to man. It is unthinkable that God would have allowed two such vital happenings as the birth of Jesus and his herald John to be associated with alleged circumstances which never really happened and it is essential

therefore to believe that the conversations related by Luke really did take place and that the messenger really did come from the celestial world and really is known - so far as humankind at any rate is concerned - as the angel Gabriel.

The fact that nobody in modern times can vouch for having been visited by an angel from heaven and the possibility should be denied therefore is irrelevant. No one in Europe in the Fifteenth Century believed that there was another world of intelligent beings on the other side of the Atlantic but it was there all the same and eventually Columbus reached it. The Bible is a very reliable authority on a great many things which lie completely outside the range of present human experience but are not necessarily untrue on that account.

Gabriel is nowhere referred to as an archangel. The reference in 2 Thess. 4. 16 to the "voice of the archangel and the trump of God", which heralds the Second Advent of our Lord, is very generally accredited to Gabriel - from which is derived the expression "Gabriel's trumpet" as applied to the Last Day - but the only foundation for this impression is the general belief that Gabriel is the Divine messenger to men on earth. It may be a true impression; it may well be that there is one particular celestial being high in honour in the courts of God, whose specific duty is the discharge of special commissions to mankind in connection with the onward progress of the Divine Plan. If such be indeed the case it might well be that other occasions of angelic visitation recorded in the Scriptures, such as those to Paul and Peter, to Abraham, Balaam, Gideon, Manoah, and so on, were examples of the coming of this Gabriel to earth to discharge some specific duty. His appearing in the form of a human being upon such occasions is consistent with the necessity of the case; Gabriel in his normal state would be impossible of perception by human senses, and he must needs temporarily assume a body of human flesh in order to communicate.

Gabriel's most spectacular appearances, to use the term, were to the prophet Daniel. It has long been recognised that of all the Biblical writers Daniel received the most detailed and comprehensive view of the manner in which human history would develop and culminate in the collapse of earthly power

and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom upon earth. Fourteen years before the fall of Babylon at the hands of Cyrus of Persia Daniel was the recipient of a Divine revelation relating to the yet future clash between the empires of Persia and Greece, with the triumph of the latter (Dan. 8). Gabriel stood beside him and explained the whole matter. Fifteen years later, in answer to Daniel's earnest prayer that the Babylonian captivity be ended and the Jewish people allowed to return to their own land, Gabriel again visited the prophet and extended the foreview of "things to come" to include the coming of Christ, at that time still five centuries future (Dan. 9). Two years after that he came again, for the third and last time, to carry the story still farther to the consummation of all things at the Second Advent and the Messianic reign (Dan. 10-12).

It was at the time of this last visit that Gabriel passed a remark which represents one of the most intriguing problems of the Old Testament. Daniel had been in prayer session with God for three full weeks, interceding for his people and awaiting the reply. Gabriel now explains the reason for the delay. *"The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the kings of Persia"* (ch. 10. 13). Who was this "prince of the kingdom of Persia" possessing power to withstand the archangel of God on his way to execute his Divine commission? Who or what is it that can obstruct the answer of God to the sincere prayer of one of his children? This whole subject is so momentous as to require separate treatment; suffice here to say that the general conclusion is that Gabriel was referring to some conflict with unknown spiritual powers behind the scenes of the political stage of Persia and that his involvement in this conflict - which might well have been one for the influencing of the mind of Cyrus king of Persia for or against Israel - had to take precedence over his coming to Daniel. The impasse, he says, was resolved by the coming of Michael, "one of the chief princes", to his aid so that he was able to proceed to the execution of his mission.

Michael was looked upon as the great warrior-champion of Israel, working behind the scenes to defend and deliver the nation from its enemies whenever by reason of loyalty to the Covenant they had merited such deliverance. As with Gabriel, he is mentioned by name only a few times, three times in

the book of Daniel and twice in the N. T. Here in Daniel he is pictured in ch. 10 as holding off the enemy forces which would forbid the restoration of Israel after the Babylonian captivity, and then again in ch. 12. 1 as "standing up" to overthrow the world forces of evil at the end of this Age which would oppose the incoming Messianic Kingdom. Whilst in ch. 9. 13 there is no doubt that Michael is as literally real a personage as is Gabriel, it may be that in the metaphorical narrative of ch. 12 his name is a nom-de-plume for the Person of the Lord Christ who is to take his great power at his Second Advent and bring to an end the powers of this world - unless, of course one can envisage this celestial warrior for righteousness being appointed to some active duty in the whole catalogue of events which are to comprise the end of this world and the beginning of the next.

An unknown incident involving Michael is alluded to in Jude 9. *"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee"*. No book now extant includes any reference to this incident; according to Origen (De Princip 3. 2. 1) it was derived from a work called the Assumption of Moses but that book is not now known to be in existence. The Targum of Jonathan, commenting on Deut. 34. 6, says that Michael was appointed to be guardian of Moses' grave but this is most certainly a Jewish fable. Since, according to the Bible account, no man knew the place of Moses' burial there would seem singularly little point in detaching a celestial dignitary of high rank from his normal duties to look after it. The reason for Michael's reputed dispute with the devil in Jude does not emerge; it has been suggested that the Devil wanted the body to make it an object of idolatry but this looks like another story invented to fit the case. Jude may have had access to some historical document since lost; on the other hand he may merely have been alluding to some popular First Century tradition familiar to his readers without necessarily endorsing it as true history, to illustrate the point he was making.

There is another possible explanation, which involves the conclusion that Jude was not talking about the death of Moses at all.

Moses, on the way back to Egypt to deliver Israel, accompanied by his wife and child, met with some unexplained threat to his life. The narrative runs

(Exod. 4. 24) that "*in the way to the inn, the Lord met him, and sought to kill him*". His wife took a knife and circumcised their son - apparently the rite had not been carried out - whereupon the threat was removed and the Lord "*let him go*". Why the Lord should thus seek the death of the man upon whom he had just conferred the responsibility of leading the people of Israel out of Egypt does not appear and is difficult to understand. It so happens, however, that the apocryphal "Book of Jubilees", written about 250 B.C. and from internal evidence believed to be based upon a Hebrew text of the Old Testament differing somewhat from both the Masoretic and the Septuagint, says that it was Satan who thus sought to kill Moses. (It is not unknown in the Old Testament for deeds inspired by Satan to be accredited to the Lord in recognition of his overruling responsibility for all that He permits - compare 2 Sam. 24. 1 with 1 Chron. 21. 1). It is usually thought that Moses was seized with some sudden illness which threatened his life. Now if it be surmised that Satan, in the endeavour to frustrate the plan for Israel's deliverance, was the one who sought thus to kill Moses, and was withstood by Michael the archangel "behind the scenes", as it were, maybe this rather perplexing incident would be better understood and Jude's allusion with it. The word in Jude for "body" - *soma* - means equally well a living body and does not necessarily imply a corpse.

The only other allusion to Michael is in Rev. 12. 7 where it is clearly metaphorical. After the "catching up to heaven" of the "man child", away from the grasp of the "dragon", we are told that "Michael and his angels" fought the dragon and his angels, who were in consequence expelled from heaven. The dragon is symbolic of a strong earthly power - Pagan Rome; this much at least is agreed by most expositors - and Michael, with his angels, must by symbolic of the power which engages the dragon in combat and expels him from his position of rule and authority. A complete exposition of Rev. 12 would be out of place here; let it suffice to say that here, as in Dan. 12, the name of Michael is used as a symbol to convey a definite idea - the uprising of a righteous power to challenge and overthrow the forces of evil at a time of great need.

It is often stated that the meaning of the name "Michael" is "One who is like God" and on this rather slender basis it is sometimes suggested that "Michael the archangel" is in fact identical in person with our Lord Jesus Christ in his pre-human state. This is really not justified. Assuming that the name is of Hebrew origin - which is not necessarily the case - the meaning is an interrogative expression "Who is like God?" the implication being, of course, that no creature can be like God. The prefix "*micha*" is derived from the interrogative personal pronoun "*mi*", and appears in other names such as "Micah" and "Micaiah", meaning "who is like Jehovah?".

Jewish tradition held that there were seven archangels. In addition to Gabriel, the messenger of God, and Michael, whose special care was Israel, there were Raphael, who looked after the remainder of mankind, Saraquel, who had authority over the fallen angels, Uriel, who looked after the terrestrial earth and the nether regions (tartarus), Remiel, the sun and moon, and Raquel, custodian of the five planets. All of this was probably derived from Babylonian mythology. The Babylonians have seven "Watchers" who were the intermediaries between the gods and the human race. These "watchers" are referred to in Dan. 4. 17 in connection with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree. No trace of this is found prior to the Babylonian captivity, neither are the angelic visitants to earth then distinguished by specific names. The early Israelites were content to recognise the fact that when the occasion so demanded an emissary from heaven would come to earth for some specific purpose. The names first appear in Daniel; perhaps it was from that time that it began to be recognised that there are in the courts of heaven two greatly honoured personal beings, Michael and Gabriel, chief angels among the angels, who have intimate connection with earthly affairs. They may even take a much greater part in the supervision and direction of events in our own day than we realise. The brief glimpses that the Scriptures afford us do at least indicate that there must be great activity going on "behind the veil" in respect to the forces which are working together to achieve mankind's deliverance from sin and death.

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

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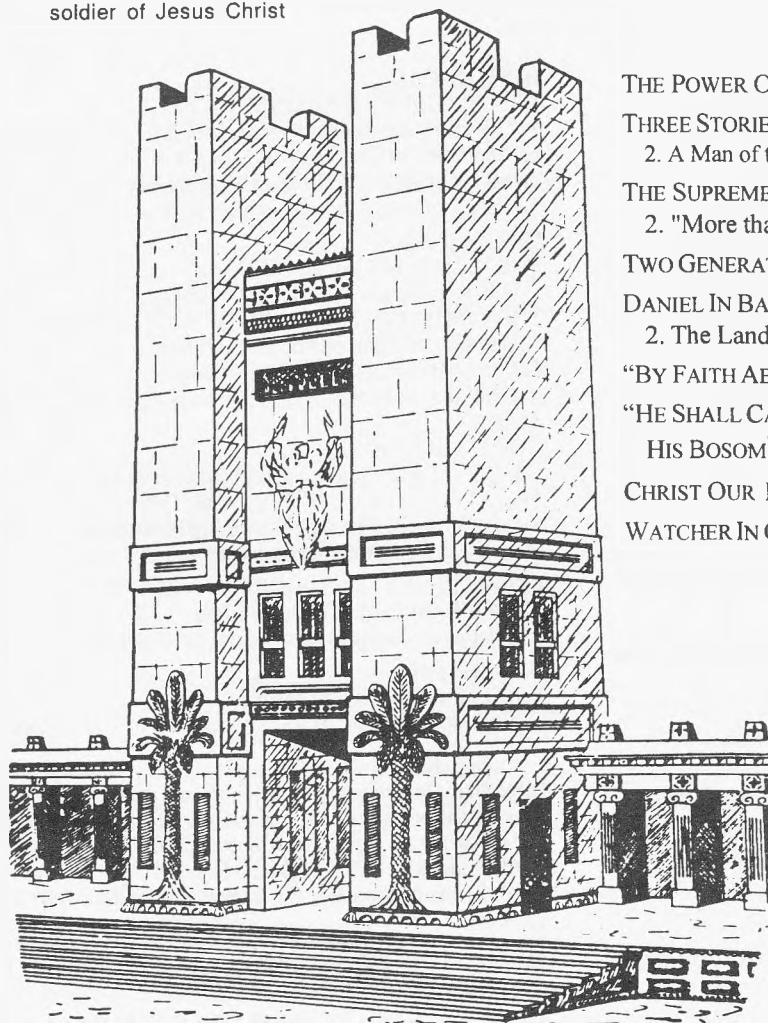
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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Gone from us



Bro. Bill McIntyre (Warrington)
Bro. Cyril Child (Yeovil)
Bro. George Jennings (Minehead)



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

A. Spain

THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8. 11). The resurrection of Jesus brought strength and unity to the Early Church. Following the crucifixion, the disciples were as dead men. All that they had toiled and hoped for had suddenly vanished and they were plunged into gloom and despair. He whom they had trusted to restore the glories of Israel, lay dead in the tomb, crucified as a criminal.

When Christ rose from the dead, He gave to his followers new life which they had never known before. From being frightened, ignorant and powerless, they became happy, full of spiritual vitality and imbued with a faith which weathered many a storm of persecution. They were, in the words of Peter in Acts 1. 22, witnesses of his resurrection. The change which took place in the early disciples is perhaps the strongest historical evidence for the resurrection. The power which had wrought so great a miracle as the raising from the dead of the Son of God became available for the spread of the Gospel by his followers. As we trace the story of the Church, as recorded by Luke in Acts of the Apostles, the effect of the power upon individual disciples and the Christian communion as a whole is often quite striking. There had not been or ever could be a "religious faith" anything like that which surrounded the Gospel of Christ. It was quite different from the philosophies of men and religions of the east. They were based upon intellectual knowledge, argument and ethics. Even the members of Jewish religion never enjoyed the personal relationship with God which they should have done. In the church of Jesus Christ, however, there was a faith based on revelation and power from God. Whence came these things and why? What was it that was so different in these men and women that the eternal Creator of the Universe should confer so great a privilege?

God was able to work in and through the early Christians because they had learned from Jesus the doctrine of self-denial and complete dependence upon God. The teachings of men, whether scientific, philosophical or religious, have always advanced the doctrine of "self". Self-culture, self-esteem and self-expression are the modern counterparts of the same idea. Jesus had taught his disciples to be meek and

contrite in heart, trusting God for everything, whether it was their daily bodily needs or the virtues to be developed by their characters.

Such a condition of mind is the result of a new relationship to God, based on redemption through Jesus, and maintained by constant prayer with God. By these things the resurrection power of Jesus Christ was given to his first followers, and to every true disciple from then until now. Prayer played a very big part in the Master's life, and He frequently resorted to communion with his Father in order that He might know God's will. When faced with a crisis, He resorted to fellowship with his Father and therein lay the success of his ministry. (Luke 6. 12; 9. 29; Mark 9. 29).

The history of the activities of the Early Church reveals a group of people who had learned to apply the lessons of prayer taught by Jesus. From the first chapter we learn that they, *"all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication...."* (v. 14). After Pentecost the same attitude is reflected in chapter two, *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (v. 42). In chapter three we catch a glimpse of Peter and John going up to worship at the Temple at "the hour of prayer". In chapter four we are given considerable information about a prayer meeting in the Early Church, and so great was their intercession that the very building where they met was shaken. The passage concludes with these words, *"The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all"* (Acts 4. 32, 33). Later, deacons were chosen in order that the apostles might give themselves "to prayer and to the ministry of the word". Still further, Luke relates how Peter was released from prison as the result of a prayer meeting in John Mark's home.

All these examples of the early Christians at prayer, after the Holy Spirit was out-poured at Pentecost, were accompanied by a display of Divine power operating through God's people. On some occasions it was the power of the Gospel unto salvation and at others, the ministry of healing. It was not the educated, wealthy and influential in Israel through whom

God worked, although He did not despise their gifts. Thus when men of learning like Paul and Luke gave themselves to his service, God used their abilities to the furtherance of his Kingdom. Throughout his epistles Paul repeatedly exhorted those to whom he wrote to "pray without ceasing".

Coupled with this power through prayer came a unity of purpose and action hitherto unknown among the disciples. They were men of different upbringing and outlook; some were rugged, others polished but God had not looked at the outward appearance when selecting the foundation stones of the Church. Rapidly these men and women from all walks of life were welded into a united band by a common purpose and energised by a single source of power. They preached the same gospel of Jesus, crucified and resurrected. This was the "oneness" for which Jesus had so earnestly prayed before his death recorded in John 17. It was an exhibition of the love in action about which he had so often taught them. It was the love which showed that they had passed "from death unto life" (1 John 3. 14).

The unity of the early Christians broke down sectarian and social cliques; it ignored national and racial barriers. Within the community of the first believers were Jews and Gentiles, rulers and slaves, scholars and peasants. They regarded each other not by their former associations but as fellow disciples, and thereby received strength through their common bond. Repeated exhortations to love each other as brethren in Christ were necessary and even then occasional failure in their unity is reflected by such passages as 1 Corinthians 1. In his second letter to the same church Paul wrote, "*For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view;*" (2 Cor. 5. 14-16 R.S.V.). To-day, that lesson in the Christian Church still needs to be learned. The spirit of Christ, given free course in the lives of his brethren must completely abolish all feelings of hurt pride and retaliation. Personal opinion and ambition must be subordinate to the common good, "in honour preferring one another". Natural interests are crucified in order that Christ might live within us. Such an attitude towards other Christians and our fellow men in the world, is not developed by trying

to be virtuous, for that just cannot be done. Human nature breaks down under the strain of inner selfishness and outward circumstances. It is only as Christ is given control of our hearts, to provide us with the guidance and strength for each daily experience, that we can be "more than conquerors" over our weaknesses and desires. So the apostle Paul learned from the Lord, "*My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness*". Therefore was Paul able to say, "*Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me*". (2 Cor. 12. 9). Our bodily weakness should not hinder us from obeying the Divine will, for we have a reservoir of energy in Heaven which is sufficient for every service for God.

Perhaps there are few more outstanding examples of this than Peter on the day of Pentecost when he stood up as spokesman on behalf of the rest of the disciples. He had been a coward, thrice denying his Master on the day of the Trial. However in the power of the Spirit, he became a new man who many times faced persecution and death for Jesus. The outward manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the first disciples was in their witness to the world. By their preaching and healing they continued the work which Jesus began. That power has never changed, and, "*the God that lived in the apostles' day is still the same to-day*". The only alteration has been in the faith of the believers. It still requires men and women to venture forth, with implicit trust, so that the Lord will honour his promises "even until the end of the world" (Matt. 28. 20).

"Christian"; the name bespeaks of one who follows the Lord Jesus. Jesus trod a pathway wherein He preached the Gospel. He did not just do it now and again in the convenient phrase "as He had opportunity". His whole life was bound up in the announcement of the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven. The first Christian community did the same thing. The apostles were hardly eager to go to the Samaritans and Gentiles, but by various means the Lord led them forth from Jerusalem unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Generation after generation through the ages their labours have continued often at the cost of martyrdom. Many have been inspired to leave the comfort and security of their homes in order to blaze the trail overseas. No less have been those remaining in their normal home and work who have sought to let their light shine. We, of this generation, must ask ourselves,

what are we doing to maintain the faithful witness of the ages? Are we exempt from this service in this day and age? Can we run for the prize according to a new set of rules?

The power of his resurrection is at present confined to the immediate associates of Jesus, those who long to know him and share his sufferings. Their resurrection now is pictured for us in the words of the father in the parable of the prodigal son when that son returned to his family, *"this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found"*. Such is the love of God for those who repent from their sin and become his children. The same thought was expressed by Jesus as recorded in John 5. 25, *"The hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live;"*. He went on to speak of an age yet to come when the power which was to bring him from death,

and which was to empower his disciples, would bring everyone back from death; for He said, *".... the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth;"*. It was a wonderful moment to which Jesus looked forward, to the day when all the conditions brought about by sin, through accident, disease and war would be removed for ever, and the mighty power of God would be exerted to give life to all who had ever fallen asleep. So writes the apostle once more, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"*. (Eph. 2. 4-7 R.S.V.).

D. Nadal

THREE STORIES OF SALVATION

2. A Man of the Pharisees

A man walked quickly through the dark, narrow streets of Jerusalem, with his cloak pulled tightly around him to obscure his identity. He was evidently a wealthy man, of noble birth and an important citizen of this ancient town. He was anxious to pass unnoticed for his mission was not a public engagement and he was apparently rather retiring by nature in spite of his office. He stopped at a house and requested to speak to the prophet of Nazareth who was lodging there during the Passover festival. Jesus' ear was ever open to those who genuinely needed His help, and sympathetically He listened to the ruler's enquiry. Nicodemus, a leader of the Pharisees' party and member of the Sanhedrin, had been interested in the work and preaching which Jesus had been doing. Perhaps he was already somewhat persuaded concerning the claims of the Man from Nazareth but was rather disturbed by the Temple incident which had resulted in considerable animosity among some of the religious dignitaries (John 2. 13-17). He may have been anxious for Jesus' welfare and certainly for the maintenance of order in Jerusalem. The normal population of the city would be swollen by many thousands during the period of the feast and the Jewish rulers would not want the religious fervour of the masses to rise too high and thus endanger the peace.

There may be some significance in the word "we" used in John 3. 2. It could be that the sect of the Pharisees or just a part of it were determined to discover the true nature and purpose of Jesus' work. Unlike the Sadducees, there were periods during the Master's ministry when their bitter opposition abated, particularly when their rival party was thrown up in its true light by Jesus. Whatever brought the Pharisee to the house where Jesus lodged that night, the man in high office preferred not to be seen there in the broad light of day.

Nicodemus opened the conversation in the true style of a diplomat, paying Jesus the compliment of being a teacher sent from God. Our Master, also true to form, cut right across the flattery and went to the point on the basic issues of religion. Nicodemus was a highly religious man. He could not have maintained his place in the religious sect without scrupulous attention to ritual. He would have an accurate knowledge of Hebrew history and be well versed in the Mosaic Law. His ability to quote the Jewish Scriptures would put many a modern minister to shame. Undoubtedly he had kept the law well and was a fine, upright son of Abraham in the eyes of his fellows. His sound judgment would be very beneficial to the Jewish people and his pure speech and conduct would contrast strongly against the

background of hypocrisy and immorality of his day. Any personal reasons for coming to Jesus were obviously to improve his already well matured religious life.

Jesus showed him that his present standing before men, as a ruler and respectable religious man, meant absolutely nothing in the sight of God. All who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven would have to become as little babies, making a fresh start in life, with a re-valuation of spiritual things. However good they may have appeared to be according to earthly standards, that was a matter of the past to be forgotten. Those who were citizens of God's kingdom must enter it not on the basis of their own virtue and knowledge, but through new life, founded upon Jesus Christ.

The teaching which the Lord explained to Nicodemus is one of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. Like the ruler in Israel it is possible to belong to a religious sect or movement, and thereby participate in its ritual and to understand its teachings, and yet not become a child of God. There are many like Nicodemus today and not all such are wealthy and influential leaders. Like the Pharisees they enjoy an outward respectability of religious belief, many going so far as to dedicate their lives to the service of God, shunning the attractions of this world. Yet all of these valuable aspects of discipleship to Jesus do not in themselves constitute a gateway to heaven. Only as we are prepared to die to self and our former sinful life, and yield ourselves wholly to the will and purpose of God, can He implant within us "new life" by His spirit and through the blood of His dear Son.

Paul had passed through this experience from very much the same position that Nicodemus occupied when he visited Jesus. Before his conversion to the Christian faith, Paul had stood as one of the most worthy and most promising young men in all Israel. He must have been the hope and inspiration of the Pharisees. In every respect he had the qualities of a great and good leader in their faith. Judging from his ability to expound the Gospel and relate it to the Hebrew Scriptures, he had remarkable ability as a teacher. But after meeting with Jesus on the Damascus road, and finding new life in Christ, Saul of Tarsus discovered that all the old glories faded, his pride and zeal wilted and that everything of the past was utterly worthless. In their place grew up a humble faith and radiant power. Instead of boasting in his own knowledge and abilities, he found fellowship

with Christ to be the great absorbing interest of his life.

Paul, like many another before him, and many another who has lived since, found the way of Christ somewhat bewildering at first, in the light of his upbringing and education. He may well have echoed the words of Nicodemus during those days of blindness in Damascus and have asked, "How can these things be?". Suddenly to find out that all of life's past achievements are worthless is no light thing to men of the stature and quality of Paul and Nicodemus. Yet whether we be great or small in the eyes of our fellows, the issue must be squarely faced, as we weigh up the ambitions and rewards of this world against the spiritual wealth of eternity.

God does not rush into these things however. Time for prayer and reflection is given, in order that matters can be seen in their true perspective. Both of these men of Israel must have spent a long time counting the cost. Nicodemus does not seem to have made up his mind immediately, for a little further on in the Gospel of John we catch another glimpse of him, this time not sitting chatting with Jesus about entry into the Kingdom of Heaven, but among his brethren of the Sanhedrin (John 7. 46-53). The officers of the Temple guard had borne witness that "Never man spake like this man". Perhaps Nicodemus agreed with them as he pondered his evening visit to the prophet of Galilee. Anyway, by this time he had summoned sufficient courage to question the fairness of the accusations made against Jesus. He may not have thrown in his lot with the disciples, but his conscience impelled him to be just.

We have one final look at Nicodemus before he disappears completely from the New Testament story. It is at the tragic scene of the crucifixion. The disciples, who have stood close to Jesus' side during His life and even at His arrest, have now fled. Two men, gentlemen of high rank, who previously have remained in the shadows, afraid lest they should be ostracised because of their sympathies with the Nazarene, step forward. Publicly they do a last service to Him who in His lifetime they held in secret regard. It is no small task which they undertake (John 19. 38-42) in the burial of the Galilean prophet who has died as a criminal. Yet in the face of previous fears and possible excommunication from public life, Joseph and Nicodemus express their love for Jesus in a most beautiful manner.

The conversation which took place when

Nicodemus visited Jesus by night had slowly but surely borne its fruit. Perhaps the days which followed would give further evidence of this. How remarkable were the individual contacts which Jesus had with people in different walks of life. On occasions He preached to a vast crowd and many followed Him, but just as readily they turned away in their numbers too, when He did not speak and act as it pleased them. Our Saviour was more, much more, than a mere demagogue who could turn the hearts of the masses. He loved men and women as individuals and preached some of his most searching sermons to one person here or a handful of followers there. Salvation is like that, not a matter of mass production. Jesus still speaks to the heart of each individual, calling them to repentance and discipleship. His voice may be heard through the lips of His servants. He may call us while engaged on some noble work or high office, and may speak to us in humbler circumstances and in the midst of our selfish and sinful life. But there has been no change in the principle behind his remarks, nor any lessening of the need to hearken to His warning, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God". This is not just the pursuit of some good moral cause nor the imitation of the fine example of living which Jesus gave to us. He asks for no less than death to all our high ambitions, and a new life begun within us which is inspired and empowered from above. Then, and only then, shall we attain the moral and spiritual characteristics of the Master, for by His grace and through day-to-day fellowship with Him, can we be like Him.

Whether or not the remainder of the third chapter of John's Gospel from verse 14 is a continuation of Jesus' remarks to Nicodemus is not clear from the record. It may constitute Jesus' teaching at some other time which the writer found helpful to include under the same heading. There is in those later verses and in the chapters which follow a clearly defined principle regarding salvation, which the writers of the New Testament enlarged upon after Pentecost. Jesus speaks of it as "belief on the Son of God". Further on He illustrates what he means by saying, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you*" (John 6. 53).

It is a strange thing that a people whose national language was so pictorial and who were brought up on literature steeped in imagery and figures of speech should find Jesus' words so difficult to understand.

What stubbornness of comprehension made Nicodemus interpret literally the words, "*Except a man be born again*"? It is difficult to realise how thoroughly materialistic were the teachers of God's holy people Israel. They were blind and most of them had no desire to see the light of the Gospel. As expressed at the time of the ascension by the disciples, the one hope of all Jewry was upon the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Somehow the idea of a new spiritual life, of fellowship with God and development of characteristics like His, was to them an utterly foreign thought and cut right across the longings of their fleshly craving and patriotic zeal.

The principle enunciated in Jesus' words to Nicodemus is true of every age. That is why, in part at least, the Jewish leaders should have understood their meaning. There is a time in the life of every one who turns to God, when there is a "right about turn" and a definite refusal of the things of this world and its god. They look instead to their Creator in faith for life and guidance. Abraham's departure from Ur and Moses' rejection of Egyptian princely life are perhaps the clearest Old Testament examples.

We, who live nineteen centuries from the time Jesus spoke the word to Nicodemus, can so easily take for granted the ideas which stumbled Jewish leaders, that we may miss their practical application to our own lives. We ought to ask ourselves the searching questions which must inevitably spring from a study of John 3. Were we in fact "born again" of the spirit or did we consecrate to a sect, a service or a doctrine?

The same law will operate in the earthly Kingdom. Not until the former way of life under the conditions prevalent today, amid the kingdom of this world, has been genuinely repented of, and an approach has been made toward God through their Saviour Jesus, can men really expect to "live" in the Kingdom. Their former loyalties to selfishness which controls the kingdom of Satan, must be fully surrendered before citizenship in Christ's Kingdom can be granted.

As men and women rise from the tomb, they will enjoy perfect physical and mental power. The moral characteristics, however, of their former lives will remain until they consciously reject their sins. Jesus said that, "*No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it*

up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse" (Matt. 9. 16). Here again our Lord was stating an eternal truth which applies equally well to this age and the age to come. The loyalties to a materialistic age will have to be repudiated and self-

ishness must give place to a heart devoted to the will of God, acceptable in the Saviour. Thus, with life fully born anew, they will be able to live for and by the One who gave them life. To them He will become "The Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace".

T. Holmes

THE SUPREME GRACE

A study in 1 Cor. 13

2. "More than these"

In order to lay emphasis upon the difference between the two words (*agape* and *phileo*) which, in our Authorised Version, are translated by the one word Love, attention is directed to two episodes from the life of our Lord. In these incidents the differences come out very markedly and help to fix these in their proper relationship.

The first incident comes from the story of Lazarus who was sick. His sisters, realising that all efforts to restore him were without effect, sent, in their desperation, a messenger to Jesus to say, "*He whom thou lovest is sick*". To this urgent invitation Jesus replied, "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified thereby*" (John 11. 1-4). Then follows the specific statement that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus". The word here is derived from *agape*. Now this strange answer of Jesus to the messenger - seeing that Lazarus did actually die and that He himself delayed his journey to his friends in Bethany long enough to permit him to die - shows that this incident had some relation to the work and Plan of God. It was permitted to happen "for the glory of God" - that is to say, it was intended thereby to draw attention to the work and honour of God. It was to focus attention on a notable display of the mighty power of God, and bring honour to Jesus as the Son of God. We find this incident set forth by John as the last of a series of seven signs, taken from the many mighty things that Jesus did, by means of which Jesus' Messiahship was intended to be established and set forth unmistakably before the Jewish priesthood and people. (John 20. 30).

Amid the whole Jewish community there was no other family, in Jerusalem or outside, through which this most emphatic sign could be sent forth. Jesus, in his own person (and God, acting through his Son), had such well-founded confidence in these three pious souls, that Heaven had no hesitation in using them - and Lazarus in particular - to enact this

arresting sign, so that the blame-worthiness of the faithless nation should be established beyond doubt. Only in this light can we explain the two days delay, and the unusual prayer of Jesus at the door of the tomb - "*Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me*" He had prayed about this episode previously and here He was putting the subject of his prayer to an open test.

An episode like this was absolutely in line with the tenor of the universal Plan, because, in the first place, it furnished testimony to the claim of Jesus to be Messiah; in the second place, it provided a stone of stumbling to the Jews, and so contributed to their fall from grace; and thirdly, it bore testimony to the mighty power of God and his ability to raise the dead. Hence the precision of the statement that, "Jesus loved (with the *agape* Love) Martha and her sister and Lazarus". This love was "plan-Love" - "Love because of the Cause" - because of the part they were to play in advancing that Cause.

But the sisters knew that there was more than this between Jesus and Lazarus. Hence, in their message they said to Jesus, "He whom Thou lovest is sick". Here the word is "*phileis*" - (from *phileo*). Again, when the watching Jews saw his grief as He approached the tomb, they said among themselves, "*Behold how he loved him*" (v. 36). Here the word is "*ephilei*" - again from *phileo*. The sisters already knew that Jesus loved Lazarus very tenderly, with an affection of great warmth and depth. Without doubt Jesus had sounded the depths of that pious heart, and had been drawn to Lazarus because of his fidelity to God, and undoubtedly there was great kinship of spirit between them in things pertaining to God. Thus, when Jesus saw and felt what death had meant to the stricken sisters, and what it had done for his dearly-beloved friend, He could no longer restrain his sympathetic tears, even though He knew what He was about to do.

Here the ties of mutual friendship linked together

Jesus and Lazarus, each loving other because of mutual affinity. Because both loved the way of God, and sought to walk therein, each in his own sphere and capacity, their "*phileo*" affection was of a sanctified nature. But it was an affection for each other as man to man. Yet it was just because of this that Jesus considered Lazarus worthy of the part he would be called upon to play in the universal Plan as it then applied to that people at that particular time. On the part of Jesus, this confidence and trust in his friend's integrity was love of the *agape* variety. It is a principle of Scripture that brotherly affection should serve the interests of the *agape* relationship, as Peter says, "*Seeing that you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently*" (1. Pet. 1. 22). Here, because "*philadelphoi*" love is unfeigned it is to apply itself to the task implied in the word "seeing" - that is, to the girding up of the loins of their minds, and to exhorting all who call upon God as Father to be holy because He is holy. (v. 13-17).

The second illustration of the difference between *agape* and *phileo* is taken from an experience beside the Sea of Galilee. Just before this episode occurred, Peter and his brethren had come to Galilee in obedience to the Lord's command, there to await his further instructions for future days. But waiting was proving tedious, and patience was wearing thin. Anticipating great events as Kingdom authority was established by their risen Lord, these days of waiting and frustration were tensing nerves almost to breaking point, and Peter, with his brethren, felt that they must find something to do, or nerves would crack. "I go fishing", said Peter, "I can't stand this any longer". "We come with thee" they replied. And to the old task they returned.

In the splash of oars, and throw of nets, they thought to find relief from the inertia that kills. But an observant eye was watching them. He saw them toil the long night through unsuccessfully, and then as they drew inshore a voice called through the morning gloom, "Children, have you any meat?". Hearing of their ill-success the Stranger bade them cast again on the right of the ship and they should find. They did as He suggested, and the net was filled. Thus did the watchful Lord reveal himself to the tired and disheartened crew.

A simple meal awaited them as they stepped ashore. When hunger was appeased, Jesus turned

to Peter, as leader of the little band, and pointing to the ship, the nets, the fish, said searchingly, "*Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*" Instantly the ready tongue replied, "*Yea Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee*". According to the A.V. rendering (John 20) Jesus addressed this same question three times, with some slight variation, to the conscience-smitten Peter, and three times Peter is stated to have protested his love. But in the Greek original the colloquy is not quite so simple as that. Peter did not answer his Master's questions - instead he evaded them. He substituted the personal for the universal form of love in his replies. And then when Jesus came down to his own level of thought, poor Peter was deeply cut to the heart.

When Jesus put the question "Lovest thou me more than these" to Peter, the very lay-out of the circumstances added emphasis to the questioning. Peter had been called in an earlier day to become a fisher of men - a task in line with the Divine Plan of the Ages. Now, in a moment of frustration he had gone back to win the harvest of the sea. "Simon, son of Jonas, to whom or what do you propose to dedicate your life? Do you wish to have part in my Father's Plan with me? Do you desire to share with me in the work that I have come to do?". Such was the gist of Jesus' questioning. To show "*agape*" for Jesus meant so much more merely than showing affection for his Person. Naturally one such as Jesus could easily arouse affection in the heart of a follower, but to arouse determination to follow him in the steps that God had outlined for him in the Plan was another matter altogether. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me (*agapas* me) more than these?" asked Jesus. "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I (*philoo*) dearly love thee" was the reply. He says to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, (*agapas*) me?" And Peter again makes reply, "Yes, Lord, THOU knowest that I '*philoo*' Thee". Coming down to Peter's level now He says to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, dost thou '*phileis*' me - affectionately love me?" Did Jesus really doubt Peter on that point after all? Perhaps this was masterly psychology on Jesus' part, for three times Peter had denied and now three times he had confessed. It cut him to the heart. But even though Jesus had come down to the more lowly and personal level of Peter's mind, the resultant mandate was the same. "Feed my lambs" (vs. 15). "Tend my sheep" (vs. 16). "Feed my sheep" (vs. 17). "You say you love me, Peter, then love also

what is mine. I and my sheep are inseparable, therefore if you have love for me, you must also have love for what is mine, for that which has been placed by my Father in my care". Can we then wonder that it was Peter who gave us the phrase, "*Ye are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls*" (I Pet. 2. 25). That conception had been cut into his very soul on the shores of the Galilean sea.

Once more we have the distinction brought out that *phileo* is the love-link that binds the individuals together as brethren (or children) of a great family, while *agape* is the tie that unites them all to the service of a great Cause - the great objective that lies out and beyond even the calling and formation of the love-tied family.

To emphasise this distinction a little more we quote a parallel illustration given by Archbishop Trench in the Latin language. In his valuable book "*Synonyms of the New Testament*", Trench quotes from Cicero - a writer of classic Latin prose - to emphasise this distinction between "*agapao*" and "*phileo*". Writing to one acquaintance about the

deep affection he entertained for another friend, Cicero says (where "*diligi*" is equivalent to "*agapao*", and "*amari*" corresponds to "*phileo*"); (English translation as given by Trench) "I do not merely *esteem* (*diligi* - *agapao*) the man, but I *love* (*amari* - *phileo*) him". The quotation in its English form continues, "there is something of passionate warmth in the feeling with which I regard him". This illustration and quotation is found also in Thayer's Lexicon p. 653, and so also is a supplementary illustration of the same thing where Trench cites an extract from the funeral oration of Antony over the body of the murdered Caesar; "I *loved* him (*ephilastate* - *phileo*) as a father; and I *esteemed* (*agapesate* - *agapao*) him as a benefactor".

So the same distinction is found in Latin as in Greek; it is greatly to our loss that we have but one word in our Authorised Version to translate these two potent words, expressing in the Greek original the two phases of that mighty moving force which, proceeding from the heart of God, will yet win sinful men to obey and love his Will. (To be continued)

TWO GENERATIONS

"*A generation goes, and a generation comes....*" (Eccl. 1. 4. R.S.V.).

If one generation comes, another passes away but the earth remains; and what is more, God remains, supreme over all the wonders of his creation. In each generation He has his servants, who, as they grow and mature, are brought to realise their place in his developing purpose. From generation to generation the outward forms will differ: Paul spoke in the synagogue, Wesley in the open air; our times see a progression from the photo-drama and the public meeting to the radio or the cassette or the video in the home. But the heart of the matter is still the same: a realisation of God, of his love, and a response of love and obedience to him.

Not only do circumstances change from generation to generation, there is also the progression of God's purpose. Its details are hidden from us. When crises press upon us, public life degenerates, the 'old order changeth', we are apt to think that the end of all things is at hand. It may be so. But all human history is a story of crisis and change. When it is his time, God acts - Jesus came once, and will come again. But our security does not rest in the immi-

nence of his kingdom: it rests rather in the certainty of what has been promised by the supreme God, who has power, and, marvellously, cares for us! Secure, then, in this knowledge, we go on. No power in life, not destruction, not death, can separate us from God's love. If called to suffer, we suffer; if to endure, we endure; if to go forth and serve, we do so. This has been the way for countless saints throughout the age: and while the age lasts, we serve the Lord in our generation.

It is for us in prayer to wait upon the will of God, seeking to understand his will in our particular circumstances. Ours is the day of the house meeting, the small group, the faithful few: of children growing up in a non-Christian world, who, against a background of modern speech and modern ideas must find the meaning of the age-old gospel. Ours is the day of gadgets, television, films, computers; of mass instruction, of methods of teaching which are potent for good or ill; of opportunity. The history of the coming years remains to be written: what will it have to say concerning our stewardship of God's truth?

Gordon Chilvers - Midland Newsletter

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON**2. The Land of Shinar***The story of a great man's faith*

When, in later years, Daniel committed to writing his recollection of how the treasures of the House of God in Jerusalem had been carried into the land of Shinar and deposited in the treasure house of Babylon's idol-temple his heart must have been heavy with the recollection of that sad day. He began his narrative with that incident; it stood out to him as the commencement of a life spent away from Judah and all its hallowed memories, a life given to serving God in a strange land, yet, because he was serving God and because he had no other will in life but to serve God in his way and at his bidding, a life of supreme content. The golden vessels of the Lord were in pagan hands and defiled by their residence in a heathen temple, but he remembered the words of the prophet Isaiah and took comfort in the sure knowledge that one day those vessels would come forth again and be restored to their own place. *"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing"* the elder prophet had cried in the ecstasy of his vision. *"Go ye out of the midst of her. Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord"* (Isa. 52. 11). That had been nearly two hundred years before Daniel's time, but the lad knew that the words would surely come to pass, and the bitterness of seeing the sacred vessels profaned by the sacrilegious touch of unbelievers was mitigated by his realisation that God had not cast off his people forever; He would surely come to deliver. And before Daniel died he was to see that faith vindicated.

It was probably not without design that Daniel used the ancient term "land of Shinar" to describe the country of his captors rather than "land of Babylon" by which it was more familiarly known in his own day. "Shinar" was the name it bore in those early days soon after the Flood when Nimrod established the first empire there, and impious men built a great tower "whose top should reach unto heaven". The tower was still there and Daniel probably saw it as he entered into the city. The name "Shinar" was associated in his mind with rebellion against God and apostasy from God and defiance of God, and in the book he was to write he would have all the world to know that this land and city which had been the scene of his life's work was one that stood for everything that God hates. Neither its wealth nor its magnificence blinded him for one moment to the

fact that it was under Divine condemnation - the city of God's curse.

That thought might have been of some comfort to him as he watched the treasure-waggons turn aside at their journey's end and pass through the gateway into the courtyard of the great Temple in the treasury of which the sacred Temple vessels were to repose for seventy long years, until a then far-off day when the impious Belshazzar was to lay careless hands upon them to grace his drunken revels, and so doing to lose his kingdom and his life. But Daniel could not foresee that at this time. Now he gazed from his chariot at the stately Temple of Marduk, the god of Babylon, set in the midst of wide gardens and paved terraces. He saw the four massive gateways, each flanked by two huge bronze dragon-serpents gleaming red in the sunlight, and must have remembered how that it was by means of a serpent that sin came into the world and man apostasised from God, and that here he was in the very midst of a worship that perpetuated that apostasy. His eyes followed the tremendous seven-staged building which towered into the heavens behind the Temple. He knew what that building was without being told. It was the famous Tower which men had commenced to build in the days when the world was young and the memory of the great Flood had scarcely faded from men's minds. *"Go to" they had said, "let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, that we be not scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth"*. (Gen. 11. 4). God had come down to see the city and tower which those men were building, and he had frustrated their design and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. But later generations had gone on building the city, and their kings had each added his contribution to the tower, and now as Daniel gazed upon it he saw it, soaring six hundred feet into the sky, the highest building men had ever built or would ever build until this modern day of sky-scrapers. He saw the staircases hugging the sides of each successive stage and the terraces surrounding the top of each stage. The scintillating light at its summit held his attention and right up there he could see the solid gold sanctuary to Marduk, the god to whose honour this great tower was dedicated...The chariot rolled on and Daniel

could see the Tower no more. "E-Temenanki" the Babylonians called it, "The House of the Foundation of Heaven and Earth", and they claimed that it was going to stand as long as the world endures; but into the lad's mind there must have come something of the words of Isaiah, *"And Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged"* (Isa. 13. 19, 22). He was travelling now along the royal road which led from the Temple and the Tower to Nebuchnadezzar's palace, "Ai-ibursabu", it was called, a name meaning the "Processional Way" and along that road the idolatrous processions of the worship of Babylon's false gods often passed. The lad looked down upon a gleaming white limestone road with pavements of white and red veined stone slabs on each side, flanked by high walls of glazed enamelled coloured bricks, sculptured in the form of lions, white lions with yellow manes and yellow lions with red manes, on alternate light and dark blue backgrounds, all seeming as if themselves marching toward the great palace which could be clearly seen in the distance. From his elevated position in the chariot Daniel could see over those ornate walls into the straight streets and small houses of Merkes, the artisans' and industrial part of the city, and then, looking forward, the place which was to be his own home and that of his three companions, the palace of the great king himself.

Judged by modern standards, the palace of King Nebuchnadezzar was colossal. Only about one third of it has been excavated as yet, but enough is revealed to show that the building, or rather range of buildings, was something like a quarter of a mile square, flanked on one side by the river Euphrates and surrounded on the three other sides by wide canals so that it was virtually a fortress. Here lived the king and his family, the officers of his Court, many of the priests and wise men of Babylon, distinguished captives taken as hostages in similar fashion to Daniel and his companions, and a host of servants, guards and soldiers, anxious, in abject obedience, to carry out the wishes of this great king who was rapidly making himself master of the world.

The chariot rumbled over the bridge that spanned the Libilhigalla Canal, sped a hundred yards, turned left and passed through a lofty double archway into the East Court of the palace. The horses came to a standstill and a group of soldiers stepped briskly

towards the travellers. Thus the four Hebrew captives reached the end of their journey.

It was the intention of the king that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah should receive three years' schooling in the ways and the learning of the Babylonians and then become personal attendants on his wishes in his court. They were not the only ones to be thus treated; Nebuchnadezzar had taken lads from other conquered countries for a similar purpose, and therein lay the first trial of faith that was to befall the four Hebrews. Cast daily into the company of youths of their own age but brought up in different and idolatrous surroundings, their impressionable young minds could very easily be diverted from the faith and the code of conduct they had learned, sullied with the standards and the outlook of the pagans, and so spoiled in great degree for the life of usefulness for God which would in other circumstances be theirs.

It speaks well for the unknown teachers who instructed these four boys in their earlier years in Judah that they showed not the slightest trace of being influenced by their surroundings. It was the order of the king that they should be given the rich foods and wines habitually used at court; this doubtless included refinements and luxuries of all kinds normally enjoyed by those upon whom the king's favours were bestowed. *"But Daniel purposed within himself that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank"*. (Dan. 1. 8). So he made request, on behalf of his three companions beside himself, that they might be permitted to refuse these rich viands and subsist upon plain fare. Pulse and water is specified in verse 12, but this might very reasonably be extended to include any kind of vegetarian food and non-intoxicating drinks. The principal thing in Daniel's mind appears to be the fact that to partake of foods and drinks from the king's table might well involve eating and drinking that which had been offered to idols, or poured out as a libation, or in some way associated with idolatrous ceremonies, and Daniel was determined to have nothing to do with such things.

The official to whose care the four lads had been entrusted was, not unnaturally, rather dubious about assenting to this request. If the thing became known, and the lads appeared to suffer in health in consequence of this rather Spartan diet of their own choosing, his own head would be endangered. Royal justice was administered in an arbitrary and summary

fashion in the Court of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel showed considerable tact in proposing a ten days' trial on the understanding that he would abide by Melzar's judgment of the results at the end of that time. The bargain was struck, and at the end of the ten days the four Hebrews were manifestly so superior in general health and appearance to their companions - who anyway had probably been making full and not too wise use of the royal favours so freely granted, with the obvious result - that no further objection to their preferences in the matter of food was raised.

This was the first stand for principle and the first victory. It might seem to revolve around a comparatively trivial matter, and from one point of view so it did. But it was the starting point from which much greater things were to proceed. The lads who obeyed their consciences, not fearing the wrath of the king, in so trivial a thing as daily food, were as grown men to withstand a more vital assault upon their faith, to the extent of facing, without fear, what seemed to be the prospect of certain death in a fiery furnace.

So their education in the "*learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans*" (ch. 1. 4) was commenced, a course of study that was to last three years. What that learning was has been revealed to us in these latter days by the multitudes of inscribed clay tablets, treating of almost every conceivable subject, which are now in the possession of scholars and distributed through the world's museums. The term "Chaldeans" in every book of the Bible except Daniel refers in a general sense to the people inhabiting Babylonia, but in the Book of Daniel it is used to denote a certain class of men within the nation, men who formed a kind of quasi-religious society which preserved the ancient lore and traditions of the past. The priests, the historians, the archaeologists - for there were archaeologists even in Babylon, delving into the relics of civilisations as much older than their own as is theirs than ours - all were members of this caste of the Chaldeans. They held the highest positions in the land and wielded immense power. The priesthood's possession of the national records, extending over many thousands of years, enabled them to construct an elaborate system of omens and portents by means of which they claimed the ability to forecast future events. The art of astrology played a large part in their practices, and their knowledge of astronomy was by no means inconsiderable. The Tower of Babel had been used as an observatory for

thousands of years - when Alexander the Great captured Babylon in 324 B.C., the scientist Callisthenes, who was with him, found records of astronomical observations in the library of the Tower going back to the year 2200 B.C. During all those centuries the priests had kept watch on the stars and planets from the top of the six hundred foot high Tower, and recorded all that they had seen.

These were the men under whose supervision Daniel and his companions pursued their studies. One of the leading subjects was sure to be history and Daniel would have been taken back to the early days of the empire, long before Abram left Ur or the Chaldees. It is almost certain that he perused the Babylonian accounts of the Flood and Creation, and compared them with the more accurate accounts of the same events in the Book of Genesis. He must have spent much time learning the five hundred signs of the Babylonian alphabet, and gradually become expert at reading the literary treasures in the great library of the Temple of Marduk - a library which still lies sixty feet below the sand and has so far defied all the archaeologists' efforts to penetrate into it. It is fascinating to reflect that he may have come across records which had been written by his own ancestors when they lived in this land, Abram, Terah, Nahor, Serug, Reu. More than one record from their days, though not from their hands, now reposes in one or another of the world's museums.

Many of these tablets could be understood only by a few scholars among the Babylonians themselves. The spoken and written language of Babylon in Daniel's day was not that of ancient Babylon; in saying that Daniel was to learn the "tongue" of the Chaldeans it is plain that he was to study the ancient languages, Sumerian and Akkadian, which were spoken in the days of Abram, and in the dim centuries before Abram's day when the first descendants of the three sons of Noah were peopling this land, building its cities and creating the civilisation which endured for something like three thousand years. Probably no Hebrew since Moses had been able to read those ancient languages, the mother tongues of the sons of Ham and the sons of Shem, and in learning them Daniel probably found entry to a written revelation of the deeds of his nation's remote ancestors which coloured his future outlook. Much of the later Jewish stories of early days, not derived from the historical books of the Bible, may have had their origin in Daniel's researches in Babylon.

Daniel's interest in the ancient history of this land which had been the birthplace of his own race would probably be equalled by that which he manifested in its religion. Not that Daniel was in the least degree likely to anticipate the example of some modern Christian leaders and proclaim that "there is good in all religions", and on that - measurably true - statement proceed to admit the world's false gods to a place of equality with the only true God. Daniel knew that the gods of Babylon were sham, the creations of men's minds, but he must nevertheless have reflected on the manner in which the originally pure faith possessed by Noah and his sons had become corrupted into an *"image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things"* (Rom. 1. 23). It is perfectly obvious to those who accept the Biblical story of the Flood that there was a clear and accurate knowledge of God amongst men immediately following that event, and that the faith which Daniel found when he came to Babylon must have been corrupted through the centuries from that one-time pure faith. Joshua is authority for the statement that Israel's fathers dwelt in old time beyond the flood (i.e. the river Euphrates) and served other gods (Josh. 24. 2) so that even at that early day the falling away had extended to the Abrahamic line. And we also know that the worship of the "Most High God" prevailed in Canaan at the same time, and evidence of this is to be found not only in the story of Melchisedek in Gen. 14. 18-20, but in that of Abimelech king of Gerar, between Canaan and Egypt, who was also a true worshipper (Gen. 20. 1-10) and in the discoveries made at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria in 1930, when a whole

library of tablets was found that gave testimony to this worship.

So, at the end of three years, their education was complete, and they were brought in before the king. But that education was not only, and not even principally, in the "learning and tongue of the Chaldeans". During those same three years, we are told in ch. 1. 17, *"God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams"*. What a vivid picture that simple sentence paints for us; four earnest young men giving themselves in all sincerity to the reception, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of the wisdom that is from above. How God taught we are not told, but can there be much doubt that it was in the communing and reasoning together of four young hearts, poring over the sacred Scriptures which were to them the guide of life, the Old Testament as we have it as far as the Book of Isaiah earnestly seeking enlightenment from above? In all their enforced studies in the ancient lore of Babylon they found time to devote to the wisdom from on high which is the noblest science and the best instruction. Now in their early twenties they stood forth equipped as few men ever have been equipped to spend a life in useful service for God at a time when the needs of the Divine Plan called for such consecrated service in the face of opposition and ruthless persecution.

So they stood before the king; *"and in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm"*.

(To be continued)

K. L. Guard **"BY FAITH ABRAHAM... OFFERED UP ISAAC"**

The Bible not only tells us what men believed, it also tells us what men did - what they did because of what they believed. So the record of what men did becomes for us a sort of visual-aid, enabling us to see, and to understand better, what they believed. We can make use of this sort of visual-aid as we consider the account of Abraham's offering up of his son, Isaac.

Here it was that Abraham, who was no stranger to suffering, met his supreme test. The whole story is told in Genesis 22 with touching sympathy, and is characterised by a restrained emotion which

(Hebrews 11. 17) demonstrates how fully the narrator had entered into the tragic horror of the situation. Abraham must take the child of his old age, the child of promise, and offer him up as a sacrifice. The patriach was to learn, as indeed we must, that all love must be subordinated to love for God. This was a test concerning whether Abraham loved God sincerely and supremely.

The time of the trial is described in Genesis 22. 1 as being *"After these things..."*. For several years Abraham had been the recipient of great and uninterrupted prosperity (e.g. Genesis 21. 22). He had

just called upon God in Genesis 21.33 as "*...the Everlasting God*". We do not learn that he had ever regarded God in this light before. Abraham saw God as the One Who is eternal and unchangeable. Life was flowing smoothly. "After these things....".

Is it not true of our lives that our highest blessings can bring our greatest trials? Do we not find also that severe tests follow times of great blessing? And so it is that we are tested or proved concerning whether our spiritual experiences have really become part of our character or have merely been a temporary enjoyment and luxury.

The opening verse of Genesis 22 tells of the nature of the trial; it is recorded that, "*...God tested Abraham...*" This rendering in the Revised Standard Version is more helpful than that in the Authorised Version, where we read, "*...God did tempt Abraham...*". The word "tempt" always conveys the idea of appealing to the worst part of a man or woman that he or she may yield to do wrong. The devil tempts us to bring out the evil; whereas God tests or proves us to develop the good.

But what should be said of the morality of the incident? How could God command a father to kill his son? If a man were to do such a thing today in a civilised country and plead that he had a Divine warrant for it, he would either be imprisoned, certified insane or even hanged. And understandably so, for such a thing entirely discards the standards of today. Judged by our present standards, Abraham's willingness to slay Isaac is inexplicable. But Abraham did not live in our day. The whole idea was one with which Abraham was most familiar, and he had yet to learn that it was abhorrent to the mind of God. One of the first principles of the religions of many of the surrounding nations demanded that men should give their firstborn for their transgressions - the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. It was the common custom. Abraham was entirely familiar with the whole idea of human sacrifices, and so his own conscience did not clash with God's command. There would be the conflict of affection, but not of conscience. For Abraham, the test was, would he do for his God what the heathen were doing for their idols. The command to do so did not appear strange, though it was hard.

Thus was brought about the conflict of fatherly love and obedience to God. Any father worthy of the name would appreciate the intensity of Abraham's

trial. God had said in Genesis 22. 2, "*Take your son, your **only** son Isaac whom you love....*". And so Abraham was reminded of what was perhaps the dearest possession of his life and asked to give it to God.

But the trial was even more severe. It appeared to be the contradiction of God against God. How could Abraham reconcile the command of God to slay his son with God's previous promise that through Isaac the promised seed was to be born, and that through that promised seed the world was to be blessed? Isaac was indeed the child upon whom the future hung. What now of all the hopes Abraham had entertained through the years? How could God keep his word and let Isaac die? And how could Abraham tell Isaac that which would contradict all he had ever told him? The indications are that he could not find it in his heart to do so. But our God who knew the end from the beginning never intended that Isaac should be offered literally.

Furthermore it was an experience that isolated Abraham to utter loneliness. Our greatest trials can do that for us. There was no one to whom Abraham could speak a word about this overwhelming sorrow. Could he speak to Sarah of his intention? What might she have done or said to hinder the execution of the plan? It was not too much to say that one half of Abraham's sacrifice is frequently forgotten. It is not merely the father surrendering his son; it would have meant the husband become severed from the wife, for the same weapon that slew the child would inevitably divide asunder the parents. Thus Abraham was called upon to pierce one heart and break another.

Abraham's reaction to the trial is recorded in Genesis 22. 3-10. We are at once impressed by his readiness to obey. It would appear that the command came to him in the visions of the night; yet early next morning he was on his way (v. 3). No other hand was permitted to saddle the ass or cleave the wood. Action was prompt; God had spoken. Perhaps had Abraham not been so prompt the obedience would never have been rendered. No one who witnessed him start on his fateful journey that morning would have guessed the melancholy nature of his errand.

What must those three days of travelling have meant to Abraham? Surely, they would increase the sharpness of the test. The whole business was not

over and done with in a moment. There is not a word recorded about the feeling of father or son, and the silence is more pathetic than any words.

Near journey's end, words were spoken which demonstrated an unwavering faith. Genesis 22. 5, "*Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you'.*" That was more than an unconscious prophecy; it was the assurance of an unwavering faith that somehow or other God would interpose. Abraham fully expected that Isaac would come back with him. The New Testament certainly leads us to such a conclusion in Heb. 11. 19 which says, "*He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.*" What faith was this! There had never been such an event as a resurrection; no previous example to encourage his faith. But Abraham had proved that God could give life where all was as good as dead. Why then should He not raise his son?

In looking at Abraham we must not lose sight of Isaac. How deserving he is of our sympathies! Although he had reached manhood's estate, it is evident he was trained in perfect obedience to his father. Twice over in Gen. 22. 6 and then again at v. 8, the narrative says, "*So they went both of them together.*" What a solemn picture: surely the most memorable day of Isaac's life. He had known that on all previous occasions Abraham had taken with him a lamb. But here was an omission: and to this omission he attracted Abraham's attention. Someone has said, "There is nothing in literature sacred or fiction, poetry or prose, more touching than the innocent curiosity of Isaac's boyish question and the yearning self-restraint of the father's desperate and yet calm answer. Gen. 22. 7, 8 says, "*And Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here am I, my son'. He said, 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son'. So they went both of them together.*"

Not much longer could the terrible truth be hidden from Isaac. At last the altar was prepared and the wood laid ready. Isaac learned that he was not to sacrifice, but to be sacrificed. Genesis 22.9, "*When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the*

altar, upon the wood." What submission! No trace of wild outburst. Ishmael would have fought. Isaac could have. One blow from the son's arm and the old man could have rolled helplessly down the side of that mountain in the land of Moriah. As Abraham stood above him with upraised knife, Isaac submitted. Someone has said this was a spectacle to arrest the attention of heaven itself. And it did.

Genesis 22. 11 says, "*...the angel of the Lord called....from heaven, and said 'Abraham, Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.'*" What a blessing it was that Abraham was listening for God! Abraham heard the angel of God, and he was quick to respond. Had he not been listening he could not have responded. Are we listening for what God has to say to us? Are we listening when God's Holy Spirit puts a finger on some part of our life where we are falling short? How shall we be able to respond to God's will for us if we are not listening?

As we consider the deliverance from the trial, we learn that Abraham's extremity became God's opportunity. Abraham stood, knife in hand, but it was not permitted to fall. The inward surrender was complete, therefore the outward act was not necessary. God meant Abraham to sacrifice his son, but not in the material sense. It was the surrender of Abraham's heart which God desired. And Isaac had already been offered up on the altar of a father's heart.

God seldom provides deliverance touching the great issues of life, until we have reached the point of utmost extremity. And so the Divine solution was kept back until the last moment. Genesis 22. 13, "*And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.*"

Little wonder that Abraham gave to that place a new name - a name which has become immortalised, 'Jehovah-jireh'. Note that the name was not to commemorate Abraham's faith, but God's provision. Abraham did not wish it to be remembered because of what he had done for God, but because of what God had done for him. And so it passed into the proverb among the people of later days, "*On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.*" (Genesis 22. 14).

Let us return briefly to the matter of the morality of the incident considered earlier. The whole incident becomes unmistakable testimony to the error of

human sacrifice. What was it that Abraham learned in that great hour? He had gone up that mountain in the land of Moriah with the conviction that God demanded the slaying of his son. When he came down again he knew that it was not by human sacrifice that God is delighted, but by the yielding up of the will. With those words in Genesis 22. 12, "*Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him....*", we have the final decree. Whilst God demanded as much love as ever the heathen gave their imaginary deities, yet heaven would not permit human sacrifices or offered sons. From that time forward, the Jews never adopted the practice of human sacrifices until they had sunk to the level of the heathen around them.

As we ponder this story, our thoughts turn to the place called Calvary. In Genesis 22. 13, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw a ram provided, God's provision. In the New Testament, John the Baptist in the wilderness called upon men and women to lift up their eyes that they might see God's final and complete provision - "*Behold, the Lamb of God....*" - "*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*" (John 1. 29). And the Apostle Paul in Romans 8. 32 spoke of the Father's sacrifice as "*He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all....*"

The sequel to Abraham's trial is told in Genesis

22. 15-19. In v. 16, God regarded the sacrifice as actually offered, "*because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son....*" The will was taken for the deed. So Isaac became doubly the child of wonder; first, born by a miracle; now, delivered by a miracle. With what joy they could look into each other's faces; how much dearer was Isaac to Abraham as they journeyed back to Beersheba.

And so there was given to Abraham a renewal of the promises. God said in Genesis 22. 17-18, "*I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves because you have obeyed my voice*". Abraham had lost nothing and gained much as a result of his obedience to God.

What is the prime lesson we can take for ourselves from this true story of long ago? It is this. We learn afresh that the friend of God must hold all other loves as less than love for God and must be ready to yield up the dearest at God's bidding. Abraham's test required of him what true Christianity demands of us all. It is that nothing and no one shall be allowed to usurp God's place in our hearts.

M. Warren **"HE SHALL CARRY THE LAMBS IN HIS BOSOM"**

How often in the Bible we find reference to lambs! Jesus told Peter to feed his lambs and his sheep. What is the difference between lambs and sheep? As always we need only to compare things spiritual with things material for the answer, for is not this the way our Heavenly Father stoops to our need?

Instinctively we connect lambs with the innocence of children and rightly so, for they represent innocence. Jesus said, "*Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of God*" and this means that we have to become innocent as they. Some will ask how this is possible, and like Nicodemus say, "*How can these things be*"?

The first thing our Father requires is implicit trust. Every little child who has loving parents trusts them implicitly, goes where they send him, and if he is obedient, does what they tell him. He knows that they will only tell him to do what is good for him,

and that they love him and that any discipline he receives is for his own good. When he comes to manhood he is able to look back and thank them for training him to become a good citizen and is grateful for all their love and care and forethought for his well-being. So it is with our Heavenly Father. He is seeking to bring us always to our highest good, and He guides by his Holy Spirit and, even though we do not in the least know to what He is guiding us, we can safely trust in him, looking to him for everything, instruction, guidance, dependence on him alone. For does the psalmist not say, "*It is vain to put confidence in man*".

This then is the only attitude which opens the door of heaven to us. We have accepted his "free gift" of grace, his full salvation, and we allow ourselves to be led "whithersoever the spirit leadeth". What rest and tranquillity of peace will be ours when we thus

allow ourselves to lean confidently on the Saviour's bosom. Yet, how often we forget to trust our dear Saviour and instead of confiding in him and trusting in his salvation for us, his "all-sufficient merits" we try and do the works ourselves. Then, alas, as we must always do when we drop back into the "Covenant of Works" we stumble and fall. It is only in complete surrender, by realising our own helplessness of our case, that we can go forward. For Jesus himself said, "*Without me ye can do nothing*" (John 15. 5).

We will do well then if we continually recall that our salvation is by grace alone. St. Paul reminds us of this in his epistle to the Ephesians, for he says - "*For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast*". (Eph. 2. 8, 9). This is to "enter into rest"; to cease from the fret and worry of striving to do what we cannot possibly do, and what Jesus came to do for us. Oh let us be thankful and rejoice in our salvation. Let us accept with outstretched, eager hands, that most precious gift which He suffered so much to give us his children, for "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life*". Then, as we realise our own utter worthlessness, we shall long to bring others to him. When the full realisation of this breaks in on our souls we grasp the wonder of St. Paul's words that, "*He became sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him*". (2 Cor. 5. 21). Oh the wonder of it, to know He has done it all for us!

How anxious should we be to "rest in His love" and be glad to accept willingly the "free gift" which He won for us by great sacrifice and, with the Psalmist, joyfully cry:- "*I will go in the strength of*

the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only". (Psa. 71. 16).

This is to rest confidently on Jesus' bosom and like David again, let us acknowledge that, "*All things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee*". (1 Chron. 29. 14).

All love, all wisdom, virtue, goodness, whatever of these there be in us is of him alone, and to realise and acknowledge this, and that we have nothing of ourselves, and to be glad that it should be so, this is Innocence. This is to be "gathered in his arms, and carried in his bosom". Jesus said, "*My sheep know my voice and follow me*", and it is good to be a sheep, but how much more lovely to be one of his lambs, and as He - the spotless Lamb - ever sought the glory of his Father, and who said that "*My meat is to do the will of him who sent me*" let us endeavour to do his Will also.

Let us seek his honour and glory, who alone won the victory, and remember that, as we started on our journey relying upon his help alone, only thus can we complete the journey and reach our goal.

Then, just as our earthly parents desire all good things for their children, let us remember that so does our Heavenly Father desire - far more than earthly parents could do - to give us good things. For did not Jesus say:- "*If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*"

"And Thou hast brought to me
Down from Thy throne above
Salvation full and free,
Thy pardon and Thy love;
Great gifts Thou broughtest me;
What have I brought to Thee?"

D. Nadal

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

*Thoughts on Passover
Exodus 12.*

"*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed*". 1 Cor 5. 7 (R.S.V.).

The Church of Corinth was a community of Christian believers who reached the heights of spirituality and depths of moral depravity. Their heights could be seen in the discussions which Paul was able to

have with them concerning their calling, in two letters which we have in the New Testament today. The examples of this in the first letter are the thirteenth and fifteenth chapters. Yet there was behaviour in the Church and within the lives of individuals within the Church which brought them to the lowest of the low. They boasted of the highest spiritual wisdom and power yet they badly needed Paul's correction.

In the middle of this Paul introduced the idea of the Passover lamb and of the need to get rid of the leaven from Hebrew houses. Let us then turn back to Ex. 12. 7, 8 for glimpses of that night of destiny in Israel's history.

Moses had left his last audience with Pharaoh. The die was cast, Israel were to leave Egypt, which had been the home of Jacob's descendants for 400 years. The news would rattle through the bush telegraph, so that every tribe was clearly informed of their part in the great exodus. Every Israelite family was affected; so were their Egyptian neighbours. Through the years friendly relationships had developed. As the Israelites moved out the Egyptians readily loaded their wealth on to their slaves. There would be sorrowful farewells as children realised that they would see their playmates no more. They may have been aware that some of the Egyptian young folk would not wake in the morning.

No one but the arrogant and heartless can rejoice in death. Not all Egyptians were as callous as their king. But Egyptians faced the consequences of their behaviour as a nation. One people totally corrupt in idolatry and the other cleansed because they were God's people so that they might become a holy nation. Death is the consequence of rebellion against the laws of the Creator and Israel were to find that out in the years of wandering in the desert and in the centuries which followed in the Land of the Promise.

At the moment of leaving Egypt the great eternal principles might be lost on the ordinary Israelite as they set about the task of preparing for a long journey. For the children it was exciting, especially for the eldest son in the family. They, more than any others, would be affected by how the rules laid down for the Passover were kept. Would he not search the house with his mother to be absolutely sure that not the tiniest bit of leaven was to be found in the house. Into the nooks and crannies he would search, perhaps with a candle, just as Jews have done for centuries, even to this day. They would not be looking for yeast as we know it today, sold in shops for the making of bread. More often than not it was a piece of old dough left over from the previous baking and allowed to go sour. This was their raising agent for bread in ancient times. It had the qualities of fermentation which to the people of Israel implied corruption and disintegration. This is apparent in Greek literature as well as Jewish rabbinical writing around the time of Christ by which time it had come to rep-

resent sin or disobedience to God's law.

Returning for a moment to the family in Egypt preparing wagons and animals for the journey, the first-born child would be interested in another aspect of the passover meal. He would see to it that his father obtained the best unblemished lamb for the sacrifice and that when it was killed, the blood was splashed on the door posts and lintel. For him it was a matter of life and death in a very real sense. There could be no mistakes or he would not see the light of day on the morrow.

Let us now turn back to the New Testament to consider how Jesus used the word leaven. There was an occasion when he and the close disciples were crossing Lake Galilee from Dalmanutha (Magadan in Matthew) on the western coast of the lake to Bethsaida, when Jesus said to them, "*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees*". (Mark 8. 11-21). Surprisingly, they interpreted his remarks literally. Surprising because Jewish teaching regarded leaven symbolically as the work of corruption. It was not long since they had been involved with the feeding of the five thousand and then the four thousand. Now, as they crossed the lake they had failed to bring enough bread with them and they tried to connect Jesus' use of the word 'leaven' with their failure to provide adequate food. The Master, however had warned them of the hypocrisy of the pharisees because of their request for a sign. He had given many signs to show that he had come from God with a message for them but the religious leaders chose to ignore those signs and ask for another. Their request was not made because they wanted to know more about God but because they were determined to find something by which they could falsely accuse Jesus. Outwardly they appeared to be devout followers of Moses and to be obedient to God's law. Inwardly, they knew nothing of God and the spirit of his law. There were few characteristics of human nature which were so severely condemned as hypocrisy.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in writing to Corinth Paul makes a similar indictment against the church at Corinth. Some commentators suggest that Paul used leaven as an illustration because of the approach of Passover. Later, in this same first letter, Paul will correct attitudes towards the keeping of the Lord's supper (11. 17-34) and he may have had this in mind. This is a time of the year when believers take stock of their spiritual lives, both as communities

and as individuals. So Paul writes, "*Let a man so examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup*". The Apostle was instructing the members of that Church to look into their lives carefully to see if there was anything in their lives at all which would make their participation in the Lord's supper an act of hypocrisy. Contamination with worldly practices permits what appear to be harmless distractions from total surrender to the Lord to become major disasters. There are times in the life of the church and in the lives of the individuals who go to make up that church, when they must deal severely with the corrupting power of sin. In the Corinthian assembly this was a matter of church discipline. Paul was applying the principle which Jesus discussed briefly in Matt. 18. 15-20. It is not an expression of love to allow behaviour to continue which in itself destroys the fellowship of Christ's brethren. Either the sin must be rooted out of the individual or the individual must leave the community of believers. If this is not done the influence of the corrupting behaviour will spread through the life of the whole person or group. Nevertheless, discipline is never a vengeful action but must always be done for the ultimate blessing of the one disciplined; and so it was in Corinth. Paul uses the same injunction in Gal. 5. 9 where 'leaven' describes a form of Judaism. If the world has taken hold of God's people so that the work of the spirit of God can no longer go on in the sweetness of the Lord's purity and peace, there will be no spiritual fruitage.

"*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump*" urges the apostle and the exhortations to cleansing and purifying in Scripture are numerous. Early in his ministry the Lord said (recorded in the Sermon on the Mount) "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*" (Matt. 5. 8). In his commentary Barclay amplifies that beatitude thus, "*O the bliss of the man whose motives are absolutely pure, for that man will some day be able to see God*". This is a warning to all, concerning every word and action, that the reason for what we do and say must come under the closest scrutiny. The basic meaning of the greek word used for cleansing is "unmixed, unadulterated, unalloyed". Here lies the foundation

of the believers life in Christ for without that holiness, progress in the Christian way is impossible. Hypocrisy, corruption of motives, superficial religion brought from the lips of Jesus the greatest condemnation and perhaps brought him the greatest grief.

The other side of the coin is found in the second part of Paul's warning in 1 Cor. 5. 6-8. The purity, the total sincerity of every aspect of the Christian life can only occur in the lives of those who have Jesus as their Passover Lamb. It was John the Baptist who first recognised in human terms what God had known since before creation, that this was the "*lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*". Escape from Egypt was accomplished through the obedience to God's command not by anything which the Israelites could do for themselves. Our escape from the law of sin and death into the liberty and purity of the sons of God can only be accomplished by obedient belief in Christ our Passover. So writes Peter in his first letter (1. 2, 18, 19 R.S.V.) "*You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot*". Like the lamb of old, slain to provide the blood which marked the door of the Israelites, so Jesus is unblemished. His very holiness and purity has inspired his followers to be completely free from the taint of sin. (Eph. 5. 27; 1 John 5. 6).

Much more, this Passover lamb which was essentially "Christ our Passover" for the church of the firstborn (Heb. 12. 23), is also the Passover lamb which removes the sin of the whole world. If that is to be done, then that same world must be resurrected and given a real and true opportunity to believe in him - for that is the way by which life everlasting is obtained. The focus of our spiritual sight is not upon our failures, nor the failures of others. Our whole attention is upon the Saviour of the world. By so looking unto Jesus, turning our eyes upon him, the things of Earth are left behind in 'Egypt' and we shall begin to experience the joys of the new batch of dough and ultimately drink the wine anew with the Lord in the Kingdom.

"Shew my thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths." Psal. 25. 4.

Study the psalm until your heart is filled with the two thoughts - the absolute need, the absolute

certainty of divine guidance. And notice, then, how entirely it is this connection that he speaks, "On Thee do I wait all the day".

F. B. Meyer

A. O. Hudson

WATCHER IN GETHSEMANE*A Memorial Meditation*

The boy shivered slightly in the cold night wind, crouching behind the tree. The tall cypresses rustled softly and the gnarled arms of the olives threw fantastic shadows across the grass. Beyond the valley to the right twinkled the lights of the city, and the great white and gold mass of the Temple gleamed pallid under the moon. But the boy was gazing ahead where an abyss of darkness in the valley marked the deep gorge through which the Kedron rushed, foaming, to the sea. He could hear its tumultuous waters now, as they sluiced over the rocks, the sound coming to his ears faintly in the silence of the night.

His lip quivered as he waited, oppressed by a sense of impending tragedy. He did not understand all that was happening; he did know that things were going terribly wrong for the One he loved with all the ardour of his boyish heart. When they had come downstairs from the upper room in his mother's house half-an-hour ago he had seen in their faces that which frightened him. These tense, tight-lipped men were not the happy, enthusiastic companions he had known, always ready to talk with him about their leader. And the Master Himself was changed. Glancing neither to left nor right, features rigidly set, a strange look of triumph in His eyes, He had set straight off along the road to Siloam and the others had followed Him.

With quick intuition the boy guessed where they were going, and as quickly had put his own plan into execution. He knew that something terrible was about to happen, and he knew, too, that Judas was at the bottom of it. He had seen him leave the house an hour ago and climb the hill toward Zion Gate. He had told his mother, but Mary had taken no notice. And so, saying nothing to anyone, he had crept into the little cave near the house, and there had stripped himself of his clothes, rubbed his body all over with thick grease, and, casting a single linen sheet around him, waited until the footsteps of the little party had died away in the distance. He could afford to give them five minutes' start, for whilst they were making their leisurely way along the high road that skirted the south and east of the city, he could run across the rocky ground below the city wall, wade through the river Kedron and be up the opposite slope and safely in the Garden before they had emerged from the little village of Siloam.

So it was that he lay now, ensconced behind his

olive tree - waiting. If they did come to take the Master, they might arrest the others as well, but they would not take notice of him, and even if they did, the precautions he had taken would enable him easily to slip out of their grasp. Two things he would do. He would protect his mother, and the mother of the Master, and Mary of Magdala, and Joanna and Salome. That was one thing. And if the Master was put to death he would, one day, write a book that should tell the world all that his Master had said and done. He knew what he would call it, too. He would use the words the Master was so fond of using, "good tidings", and he would call his book "The Good Tidings according to Mark".

From lower down the hillside there came a quiet murmur, shaping itself into men's voices as the fitful wind died away and was still. They had arrived at the Garden and were making their way up the slope. He could see Jesus leading the way, and hear His quiet voice as He turned to the little band of disciples and said, "Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder". He could almost follow the quiet movements of the hand as Jesus motioned for Peter, and James, and John, to follow Him further. The trees hid them from view now but he could hear them groping their way, and then, presently, the same quiet voice saying - and how it struck at the heart of the listening boy - "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch".

Now there was silence, silence for a long time. The lights in the city had gone out, one after another, and only one remained, piercing the darkness like the eye of some beast of prey. Mark knew whence that light came; it was from the house of Caiaphas the High Priest; and he found himself wondering dully if there was any connection between that steady, unwinking light and the stealthy departure of Judas from his mother's house earlier in the evening.

The beloved voice broke the stillness. Mark turned swiftly to peer into the darkness higher up the hill. Was it his fancy, or could he really discern a vague shape, a form, against one of the rocky outcrops on the hillside. "O my Father" came the low tones borne upon the breeze "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt". A pause, and he could see Jesus, plainly, standing erect in the moonlight. He watched Him as He went back down the slope and behind the trees to the spot

where He had left the three devoted disciples. He was out of sight now, but Mark heard the words, infinitely sad but infinitely tender, "Simon, sleepest thou? Could ye not watch with me one hour?" followed by tones of greater urgency "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak".

Mark knew what had happened. They had failed to watch; had gone to sleep; had disappointed their Master in His hour of need. The boy braced himself against the tree-trunk. He would watch; he would not fail the One he loved. Jesus knew he was there, for nothing could be hidden from Him; and He would understand.

Again that long silence. Jesus was communing with His Father, Mark knew, and he stood quietly at his post, like a little sentinel, eyes fixed on the dark patch which was the Kedron valley, and beyond which lay his home. There was nothing he could do, no way in which he could help, but he must keep watch, if needs be until dawn flamed over the top-most ridges of the Mount of Olives and the time for watching was over.

Again that quiet voice, and again those heartfelt words "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done". Again the erect posture, the long gaze across the valley in the direction of Jerusalem, and then the quick, decisive steps toward the disciples. The lad waited, sick with apprehension. Would they have failed in their watch again? He heard the tender, regretful words, and the confused voices of the three, as of men freshly awakened out of sleep; Peter's deep, quick voice in impassioned explanation, and the slower, softer voices of his two companions. Then all was quiet again, and the boy watched his Lord pacing slowly up the slope, head bent, in deep thought - pacing slowly - slowly....

Mark stiffened suddenly. Had he also slept, leaning there against the tree? He looked up the hill toward the place where at last he had seen Jesus. He was still there, kneeling by the rock. His form picked out in silver by the brilliant moon, His face looking up to heaven, a vivid patch of moonlight playing on the rock just above His head, moving, taking shape, almost like a reflection of Jesus Himself standing beside Him - Mark drew in his breath sharply and tried to blink the sleep from his eyes; it was as if that other form had bent down toward Jesus in the attitude of strengthening and encouraging Him. Was it

- could it be - an *angel*? The boy's mind raced swiftly through the stories of olden time that he had learned at the feet of the doctors; he thought of Samuel, to whom the voice of God had come in audible tones. But that had been in times gone by, in his own day it had not been known for a man's eyes to behold an angel. He bent his head in awe, and when he looked again the bright vision was gone and he could see Jesus walking with firm step back to His disciples. "Sleep on" he heard him say: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners". He was silent, and in that pause Mark became conscious of a flashing of lights in the road below. Men were approaching, a large party of men, and they were coming into the garden, their torches moving hither and thither like fire-flies among the trees. Jesus must have perceived those torches, too, for His voice, calm as ever but with a new note of urgency, came clearly to the lad "Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand"; and at that John Mark leaped from his position behind the tree and began running towards Jesus as fast as his legs would carry him.

Already the disciples were on their feet, thoroughly awake at last and altogether conscious of the danger that threatened their Master. This was no party of enquiring villagers come to listen to His message. These men came with angry shouts - the more angry because of a certain quality of fear which possessed their minds, for they all knew the marvellous powers of the Nazarene, and they were all for the most part quite uncertain as to whether they would be able to take Him at all. More than one of them hung back timidly at the rear of the crowd, apprehensive that this One Whom they knew to be at least on a level with the prophets of old might imitate the example of His predecessor Elijah and call down fire from heaven to consume them in a moment. So for the most part the crowd kept its distance; just a few bold spirits advanced toward the One Who stood so serenely in the moonlight, waiting. "Whom seek ye?" "We seek Jesus of Nazareth", came the sullen reply. "I am He".

And at that quiet avowal a nameless panic seized those men and they retreated hurriedly, falling to the ground and remaining prone, as though they expected immediate Divine judgement upon them for their temerity.

Again that calm, unruffled voice: "I have told you

that I am He. If ye seek me, let these go their way”.

The men got to their feet and looked about them uncertainly. The disciples, gathering courage, crowded round the Master. Peter, the first shock of surprise over, drew his sword and stood menacingly in front of his Leader. John Mark edged his way toward the little band of would-be defenders.

It was Judas who resolved the situation, Judas, who had staged this whole affair in order to force Jesus' hand and make Him declare Himself King of Jewry and the avowed opponent of the Roman and the Jewish leaders. Full well did he know that awe in which all men stood of Jesus. The Temple guard, sent out to effect the arrest, might very well lose their nerve and return without having accomplished their purpose. The mixed rabble, drawn from the dregs of the city and armed only with sticks, would quickly melt away in the face of such a defection, and the whole of Judas' plan would come to nothing. It was necessary to act, and act quickly. He fervently hoped Jesus would understand. Glancing dubiously at Peter's threatening sword, he walked quickly up to Jesus and embraced Him. “Hail, Master” he cried. The words of the answer fell upon the still night air like the slow dropping of heavy rain drops from trees. “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?”

But the spell was broken, and the Temple guard advanced toward their intended prisoner. Peter aimed a wild blow at the leader, but the action was misdirected and the sword glanced by the man's head and sliced off his ear. He cried out, and his followers halted in their tracks. James drew his sword - the only other the little band possessed - and Peter made ready to follow up his advantage; but Jesus stopped them both with an imperious gesture.

“Put up thy sword again into its place, Peter, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword!” Stepping forward toward the stricken man, Jesus lightly touched him on the side of his head, and, lo! the severed ear was restored, whole and healthy.

Peter's nerve broke. Staring, first at the sword in his hand, and then at the serene, dignified figure of his Master, an expression of bewilderment and utter despair slowly overspread his countenance. In another moment the sword was lying on the ground and Peter was gone, crashing his way through the trees. They heard his stumbling run as the twigs cracked under his feet; sudden panic seized the other disciples and they ran, too, scrambling up the hill-

side and over the top of the Mount to get away toward Bethany, away from the city and all its dangers, away from the Master Who had so unaccountably frustrated His own mission by submitting to willing arrest at the hands of His enemies.

They had not gone unhindered. At the precipitate flight of Peter the guard had closed in and attempted to seize the unarmed disciples. For a few minutes it was difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Three men surrounded Jesus and tied his hands behind His back. At a word of command the others, pursuing the fugitives, came back into the little clearing in which stood Jesus, heavily guarded. As they trooped back one of them stumbled over a white-clad figure crouching behind a tree. In a moment John Mark was struggling in the grip of two powerful men. As he struggled he could see that Jesus was already being led down the hill toward the city, and his heart died within him. He slipped out of his linen robe, leaving it in the hands of the man who held him, wriggled like an eel in the grasp of another who found his well-greased body too slippery to hold, and, darting like a hunted animal across the clearing, was gone.

For a few minutes he lay quiet, the while the flickering torches marked the progress of the arrest party down the hill and out of the Garden across the road and up the ascent leading to the city. Then he picked himself up and ran, ran as he had never run before, sobbing as he went, down the slope, turning to the left at its foot, then along the road, into Siloam half-a-mile away. He walked stealthily through the village street, but the villagers were all asleep and the little lights burned low. A dog barked at his passing, and then he was in the open country again, the noise of the turbulent Kedron sounding in his ears. Splashing through the water, he climbed the opposite bank and soon was making way through the Valley of Hinnom, where the perpetual fires were burning, casting their eerie shadows and weird reflections upon the lurid scene.

How often had he heard Jesus liken the utter end of the wicked to the consuming action of those same fires. “Fear God” He had said “Who is able to kill both body and soul in Gehenna” - *Gay-Hinnom*, the Valley of Hinnom. Now those same wicked men had taken Him, and would slay Him, and all the glorious promises of the coming Kingdom on earth had come to naught, and life would not be worth living any more. So he told himself, sobbingly, as he ran

on, bending his steps back now toward the city, the moonlight showing him his own home with the light that always shone so clearly from the window. He darted into his little cave, retrieved a cloak, and hastily wrapping it around himself, was in the house. "They have taken the Master," he burst out as the women turned at his entry. Mary the mother of Jesus went suddenly white. The others started up in alarm. "What do you mean, boy?" And where are the menfolk?" "They all forsook him and fled. I was in the garden, behind the trees, and I saw them come, and men with torches came with Judas and He is betrayed, and the others have fled away, and He is taken into the city". The boy poured out the words incoherently. "But did they not defend him?" asked Joanna quickly. "He forbade them; and Peter, when he could not use his sword, threw it away and fled". "And did the Master not destroy His enemies before they could touch him?" demanded Joanna. "He stood silent, and neither resisted them Himself nor suffered others to resist them". "Then all our hopes are perished - What will become of us?" cried Salome.

Mary the mother of Jesus stopped her with a quiet gesture. "The time has come" she said dully, "He will surely die. I know that He will not resist, even in the face of death. He is led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He will not open His mouth. Simeon told me that a sword should pierce through my soul also; now I know what he meant". She buried her face in her hands, and sat, still and immovable.

Joanna rose and put her arm round the stricken woman's shoulders. "Courage, dear heart" she said, "Even though He die, and all that He has promised fail to come to pass, yet has He wrought great deliverance in Israel. Many there are who thank God for healing and for happiness, who beforetime sat in darkness and in the shadow of death".

"We must find Nicodemus and Joseph" declared Mark's mother. "Perhaps they can influence the Sanhedrin to set the Master free".

The mother of Jesus shook her head sadly "It is so written" she said. "I see now what I have never seen until this day. The Son of Man is come to give His life a ransom for all men, and it must be that He die. How He will bring the blessings He has promised to the men for whom He dies, I know not, but I know that He must die". She dropped her head into her hands again. "If only the men had not fled" sighed

Salome. "They will come back" announced Mary Magdalene decisively. The others looked up in surprise. This was a new Magdalene. They had known by repute the proud, imperious Mary of Magdala and the life she had lived, but during the whole time of her discipleship Mary's gratitude and love toward the One Who had changed her life had manifested itself in a gentle, docile disposition which almost belied the firmness of character that lay beneath. She stood up now, the unconscious leader of the little band of women. "They will come back" she repeated. "John will come first, and then Peter. After that the others will come". "What makes you think so, Mary?" asked Salome doubtfully. "I know men" replied Mary. "I know their weaknesses, and I know their strength. They do not understand Jesus as we women understand Him. They think only of swords and crowns and a kingdom that is sustained by force. They know nothing - yet - of a kingdom that is built upon love and conversion, that only upon such foundation can God win fallen man to Himself. They think of Jesus as a leader to go before them and fight their battles, to exalt them to be rulers with Himself that they might be seated at His right hand and His left hand in the glory of His Kingdom. They strive among themselves, who shall be greatest. They do not understand why He should minister to the poor, the simple, the unlearned. When He talked with the Samaritan woman at the well and spoke to her heart, they marvelled. Would a woman have marvelled? When the little children came to Him, because He smiled at them, they drove them away. Would a woman have driven them away? They do not understand - yet. But they will. And they will come back". "But if the Master is put to death" moaned Salome, "of what avail is their coming back? Are not our hopes destroyed?"

Mary's eyes clouded over. She hesitated for a moment. Then, "I do not know" she said. "But this I do know. Abraham our father held his son, his only son, in whom all the promises centred, at the point of death, obedient to God's command. And it was only when hope seemed gone that God delivered. I know" - the soft voice spoke in low tones - "what He had done for me. How can I lose faith in Him now?"

There was silence for a little while. Joanna looked across at Mary Magdalene. In that look there was acknowledgment of leadership. "What shall we do, Mary?" she asked. "We must wait" said Mary firmly. "Wait until the men come back".



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

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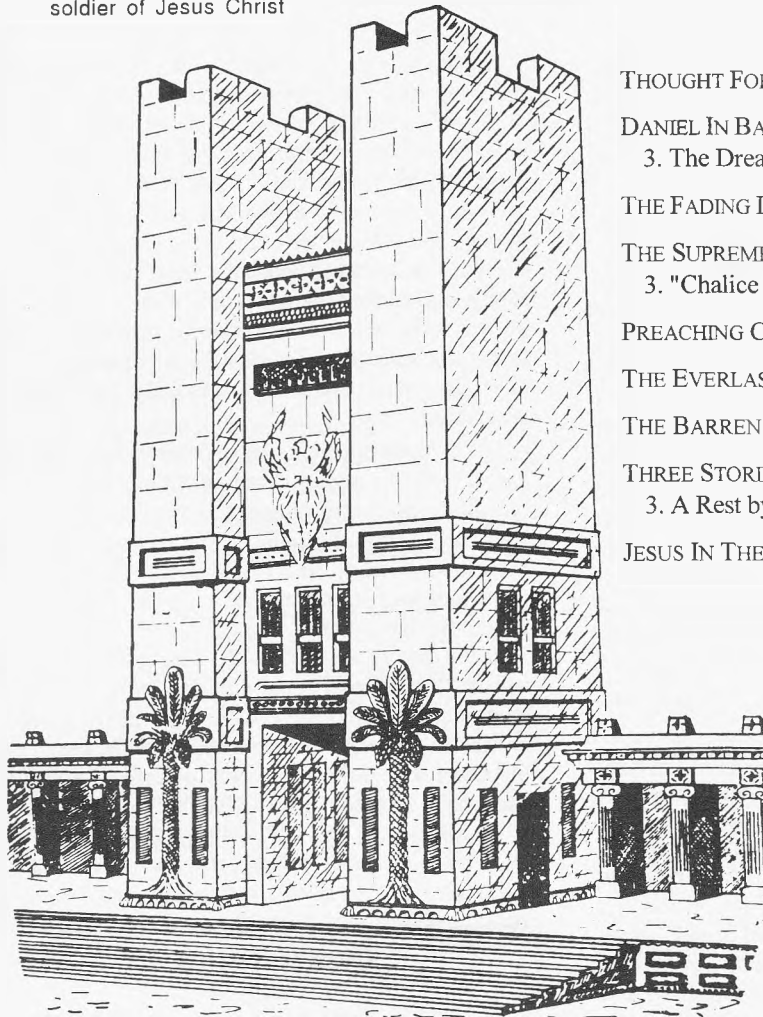
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures...when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things". (Psa. 104. 24. 28).

When God had completed the work of creation He pronounced it to be *"very good"*. What a wonderful world, full of good things which express his own character of love. Our God is not mean; he doesn't do things by halves. There is almost a sense of extravagance as we look upon the beauty of the hills or watch the mighty rolling sea. The Earth is more than a place to provide daily needs. It is a spacious home with a plentiful supply for all. Its profusion of beauty and interest make it an attractive planet. The fullness of joy experienced by the human ear and eye gives us a splendid environment.

We catch something of these thoughts in the preparation of a meal. It may just supply bodily needs and satisfy hunger to give adequate nourishment and sustain normal health. How much more delightful is a setting of charm and beauty enhanced by music and flowers. A preacher described such a scene and then observed how important it is that spiritual food from the Word of God should be attractively served.

The spirit of overflowing goodness is reflected in God's Word. Well might David describe the Shepherd's provision as *"my cup runneth over"*. In the New Testament parallel to Psalm 23 Jesus described himself as *"the Good Shepherd"* (John 10. 11. 14). While this contrasts with the bad shepherds who showed no concern for God's flock, much more does the word *'good'* speak of one who goes far beyond the call of duty, who gives himself for the comfort and well being of the sheep and who sacrifices himself entirely for the protection of the flock. The Greek word used for *'good'* to describe the shepherd has a variety of settings in the New Testament and is difficult to translate into any one English word. We find it used again in John 10. 31 when Jesus asked the question, *"I have shown you many good works from the*

Father; for which of these do you stone me?" Temple translated this as *"beautiful works"*. Barrett says the meaning here *"suggests deeds of power and moral excellence resulting in health and well being"*. Jesus had spent three years demonstrating the Father's love. In his sermon (Matt. 5) he told his disciples that they must let their light shine before men that their *good* works might be seen and glory given to the Father in heaven. Later in that chapter, Jesus explained that good works meant doing things as God does them. If someone needed a coat, then he was to be given a cloak also; if he asked for help in going one mile, then he must be accompanied for two. Christians must love the loveless and truly forgive those who abuse them.

The extravagant anointing of Jesus by Mary at Bethany called forth the highest commendation ever recorded of him during his earthly ministry. While sinful men criticised the lovely action, he said, *"...she has done a beautiful thing to me"* (Matt. 26. 10 RSV; NIV). Those who follow the example of Jesus, must develop that winsomeness of action which makes the gospel attractive to the unbeliever. Here is a quality of character to be included in the Master's words, *"for of such is the kingdom of heaven"*. It is a characteristic unknown in the fast moving world of economic progress and the scramble for the best positions of power and influence. This quality of nobility and excellence asks not *"must I give, but may I sacrifice"*.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever".

D.N.

Gone from us

Sis. Annie Rutherford (Harpenden)
Bro. Gaetano Boccaccio (Hartford, Conn., U.S.A.)
Bro. Brian Roberts (Northampton)
Sis. Rosalie Dunkley (Coventry)

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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON**3. The Dream of the Image***The story of a
great man's faith*

King Nebuchadnezzar was in thoughtful mood. His deeply religious turn of mind and almost passionate yearning for the approval and blessing of the gods rendered him singularly receptive to dreams, considering them, as was the custom in those days, messages from the other world, revelations of the powers of heaven. There are sufficient examples in the Old Testament to make it abundantly clear that God has from time to time revealed himself to his servants the prophets and patriarchs in this fashion. Many of the ancients - idolators - firmly believed that their own deities communicated their wishes in the same manner so that the idea was by no means confined to the relative few who served the true God. Additionally, the Scriptures give several instances in which God disclosed his purposes to men who were not his avowed followers, so that there is no reason for rejecting the idea that certain noteworthy dreams of unbelievers may have been inspired directly by God for his purpose.

Such was the case in this present instance. The King, awaking from his sleep, recalled an impressive dream, and the more he thought about it the more he felt that it was no ordinary dream. That it held a message for him he felt sure; but who would interpret the symbolism of the dream and reveal to him its message? That was the problem which occupied the king's mind.

A colossal, towering image, of a man; almost certainly a warrior dressed in the style of a Babylonian soldier. King Nebuchadnezzar was himself a soldier; as a young man he had led the armies of Babylon into the field against Egypt, Elam, Assyria - all the traditional foes of Babylon - whilst his father, Nabopolassar, rested from his own military exploits and administered as king the affairs of the country which he had successfully freed from the Assyrian yoke. Now in his own turn, although his military career was by no means over, Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying a brief respite of peace, and it was while he was at home in Babylon planning the great building works for which he is famous that the dream of the image came to him.

No ordinary image this - the head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver; the body and thighs of copper; the lower legs of iron; the feet iron mingled with soft, yielding, wet clay. An impressive sight,

but built upon a foundation which threatened to go to pieces at any moment; nevertheless while it stood, the image proudly surveyed its surroundings as though commanding reverence and allegiance from all who beheld.

Then came action. A mass of rock, rugged and massive as if torn out from its parent mountain by the hand of God, came bearing down on the image. No human hands guided it; the power by which it travelled was invisible and irresistible. Even as the king watched, the mass of rock struck the image on its feet - the feet of iron and clay. The colossus trembled, swayed, and crashed to earth with a fall that smashed it to pieces. Fragments of gold, silver, copper and iron lay in confusion over the plain. With the strange inconsequence of dreams the fragments went on breaking up, dividing into smaller and ever smaller pieces, until as fine dust they were caught up by the wind and blown away. Soon there was nothing left of the image, nothing to show where it had stood or give any evidence that it had ever existed - nothing but the dry sandy plain of Babylonia.

Now the rock itself started to grow. Before the king's amazed eyes it steadily increased in size until it filled his whole field of vision, covering the plain in every direction as far as the eye could see. He saw it encircle and swallow up his own capital city of Babylon; he saw it reach southward to the sea, and northward to Assyria. He watched it as it extended its spread over the lands of his old enemies, Hittites and Amorites, the Great Sea in the west and the empire of Egypt in the south-west. His gaze followed it as it covered lands and peoples he had never heard of and did not know existed, and when it had finished growing he saw that it had become a great mountain that filled the whole earth. All peoples, nations and languages had their homes and their lives on its slopes and under its shadow. No wonder the king was in a thoughtful mood.

It is highly probable that Nebuchadnezzar had been cogitating seriously on the possible fate of his empire after his own death. He was now a man of between thirty and forty years of age, married to a wife he loved, and the father of three small children. He was firmly established as monarch of the world's leading nation and he had great plans for that nation's advancement. He had made Babylon the strongest

power in the Middle East and although vigilance was still needed there was no real danger from the only other great power, that of Egypt. Nineveh had been destroyed a few years previously and the power of Assyria was broken for ever. Persia as a rival had not yet emerged on the scene. He was busy organising and administering the empire his father and he had created and initiating ambitious schemes of building, irrigation and road-making. He was an Oriental despot and given to violent bursts of temper, but he was an educated man and a wise and enlightened ruler. He must have known how many times in past history individual men had built up just such edifices only for them to crash in ruins after the builder had gone the way of all flesh. Perhaps the great king had been thinking about the future of all that his hands were fashioning and in that frame of mind was receptive to this dream that God sent.

So in the morning the king did the expected thing; he summoned his professional interpreters of dreams to his presence to demand an interpretation of the dream. According to ch. 2. 2 they constituted a formidable assortment; there were "*the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers and the Chaldeans*". They all came in and stood before the king.

Later on Daniel was to find himself at the head of this motley collection and it will be necessary presently to examine their credentials a little more closely. For the moment, however, suffice it to say that the "magicians" were exorcists of evil spirits, the "sorcerers" utterers of incantations which constrained gods to do things for men which in the ordinary way they would have declined to do, the "astrologers" were occultists who professed to have communication with the spirit world, and the "Chaldeans" a senior caste of wise men who specialised in both astrology and astronomy, issuing predictions something after the style of the present-day "Old Moore's Almanac". It was from this heterogeneous assemblage of the "wisdom of this world" that the king expected to obtain the interpretation of his dream.

He started off by demanding that his advisers give him first a detailed account of the dream itself, and afterwards proceed to the explanation. The company was thrown into considerable confusion. The great king was certainly in a difficult mood this morning. They had come into the royal presence with their usual serene confidence and glibly recited

the customary formula. "*Oh king, live for ever; tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation*". That would be easy enough; it was merely a matter of applying the rules of the art and the king was generally perfectly satisfied.

On this occasion he was not going to be so easily satisfied. Perhaps he had an instinctive feeling that this would prove to be a most important dream and he ought to be sure that he got the correct explanation. Perhaps - for king Nebuchadnezzar was a long-headed man - he already suspected the veracity of his counsellors and determined to put them to the test. If they really did get their interpretations from the gods, who knew all things and saw into the depths of men's minds, then logically they should be able to get the details of the dream as well. Their ability to do the one would convince him of their authority to do the other.

Rather helplessly, they made their plea a second time. "*Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it*". This was worldly wisdom in its extremity; faced with a problem the solution of which was vested only in the power of God they must needs admit defeat. Despite the royal anger and the threat of an immediate and ignominious death they could do nothing but admit that there was none on earth who could meet the king's wishes; none but the gods, "*whose dwelling is not with flesh*".

So in the last resort these men had to confess that they were not messengers of the other world at all; they had no Divine authority and no other-worldly enlightenments. Presented with the demand that they prove their claims, they stood before the king and the world, admitted imposters, and in his rage and fury at having been tricked the king commanded that the entire fraternity be put to death.

This might be the right place in which to correct a common misconception to the effect that the king himself had forgotten his dream and wanted the wise men to recall it to his memory. The idea is based on Nebuchadnezzar's words in ch. 2. 5, "*The thing is gone from me,*" but the king did not mean that at all. He was talking to the wise men and after their first refusal to repeat to him the dream he used a phrase which was common to autocratic potentates asserting the irrevocable nature of their dictum. The full text is, "*The thing is gone from me; if ye will not make known to me the dream with the interpretation hereof, ye shall be cut in pieces and your houses*

shall be made a dunghill". The first sentence is equivalent to saying, "The decree is gone out from me and will not be revoked". It was the fixity of his purpose to slay the wise men to which he was referring. From that moment their doom was sealed unless the dream was told. There is little doubt that the king remembered the dream all right; he wanted to find out if the wise men could discover it independently.

At this point Daniel comes into the limelight. He is still only a youth, in his early twenties, but already he has attracted the favourable notice of the king by his bearing, discretion and knowledge. Unfortunately that same learning has put him and his three companions into one of the categories involved in the arbitrary sentence of death just uttered by the king, so that Arioch the captain of the palace guard was soon on the spot to arrest the four youths in order to carry out the royal command. In response to Daniel's enquiry he unfolded the whole story, and Daniel knew immediately that the time had come for his life's work to begin. He knew instinctively that God was in this thing and that he was the agent of God and must needs be ready for service. He went straight to the king and declared that given a little time, he would tell to the king his dream and its interpretation.

It is not likely that he literally walked into the king's presence with his request. It was not usually so easy to obtain an audience with the great man, and vs. 26, describing the entry of Daniel with the interpretation, does not read as if the king had held previous personal conversation with him on the matter. It is more likely that the request was made, and the permission obtained, through a third party, probably the captain of the palace guard, who was already intimately involved in the progress of this matter.

Daniel's next action is of interest. He gathered his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and bade them join him in prayer before God for the revelation of this secret. There is something very significant here. Daniel was already confident that God would reveal the truth to him; his request just made to the king shows that. Why then did he not make personal supplication to God; why deem it necessary to bring his three friends into the prayer circle? Did he realise that the greater degree of solemnity and urgency induced by the fact of a number praying together, and the feeling of joint-participation, itself constituted a further factor bringing his

own spirit more in tune with the Divine Spirit? The clarity of the message he expected to receive from God must depend upon the degree to which he himself was able to shake off the trammels of earthly-mindedness and enter into the "secret place of the Most High". That must have been helped in no small degree by the fact of corporate prayer in unison together, and so the co-operation of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah was a definite factor in Daniel's attainment of a mind so opened to the Holy Spirit that he could understand the details of the interpretation he was presently to repeat to king Nebuchadnezzar.

It was now Daniel's turn to dream. "*Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision*" (2. 19). The details of the dream are not related, but it is evident that they were sufficiently explicit to give Daniel the knowledge he desired. But there was no immediate running off to the king with the answer, even though the threat of death was still hanging over his head. There was something much more important to be done first. He solemnly and reverently returned thanks to God. It is a wonderful prayer, this pæan of praise whereby Daniel ascribed all might and power to the giver of the revelation. "*He changeth times and seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings; and revealeth the deep and secret things*". Only after he had thus acknowledged the source of his enlightenment did he proceed to the palace to impart the information for which the great man was waiting.

Thus it came about that a probably greatly relieved captain of the palace guard came bustling into the royal presence with the welcome news that he had ready a man who would comply with the king's conditions and give the interpretation of the dream. Arioch almost certainly would be feeling that this was a most fortunate ending to the whole episode; the character of his royal master was so unpredictable that it was quite on the cards he himself might, later on, be blamed for the too literal execution of the command; possibly, too, the friends of the condemned men would find some way, eventually, of taking their revenge on the servant where they had small chance of doing so on the master. In the meantime he did his best to divert a little of the credit to himself; "*I have found a man of the captives of Judah*" he told the King, "*who can make known to the king the interpretation*". He must himself have had confidence in Daniel's ability, to have risked his

own reputation in so confident a statement. Good it is for any of us if the unbelievers among whom our daily lives are spent come to have confidence in the veracity of our words and soberness of our judgment even though they will not accept and share our beliefs.

Now brought into the king's presence, Daniel hastened to disclaim any superior wisdom inherent in himself. "*Art thou able to declare the dream, and make known the interpretation?*" demanded the great man. The youth before him, in a speech which is a model of restraint and dignity, first reminded him that the soothsayers, the astrologers, the wise men of Babylon, with all the boasted powers of the gods behind them, had been quite unable to interpret the dream. Then with a modesty which must have sounded strange in that Babylonian court, he proceeded to disown any claim to superior wisdom of his own in the matter. But there is a God in heaven, he went on, and that God is directly interested in the affairs of this empire of Babylon, and wields overall control of its destinies, and in his inscrutable wisdom has now intervened to instruct thee, King Nebuchadnezzar, what shall befall this empire in the last days. It was a masterly approach; no wonder the king was interested; and the quiet ring of authority in the voice of this youngster could not but have impressed a man who himself knew what authority meant.

So Daniel told the dream, and as he recounted the details his listener knew that he was speaking the truth. This young man before him could only have obtained this knowledge from the God he worshipped. The king had revealed to no one his dream and it could have come to Daniel from no other source than above. He settled himself more comfortably on his throne to hear the explanation.

That explanation is common knowledge to every Christian student of prophetic matters. To the king it was completely new. The head of gold pictured he himself and his empire, ruling over the nations and supreme over all. The empire of Babylon was founded long before, and suffered many vicissitudes and disasters through intervening years, but it was Nebuchadnezzar who raised it to the zenith of power and extended the city of Babylon to its widest extent. We speak of Babylon as the first "universal" empire; the expression is true only in a limited sense in that Babylon exercised sovereignty only over the lands of the Middle East, the Bible lands. The far extent

of the wider world was only dimly known to the Babylonians and no thought of suzerainty over the great civilisations that then existed in China, North-west India and Southern Arabia ever entered their heads. Trade with those lands was transacted by Babylon but Nebuchadnezzar's armies never pursued their career of conquest to such places. Greece and Rome both flourished in the days of Nebuchadnezzar but neither were ever subject to him. The "head of gold" ruled over the peoples known to the Old Testament and that was all that was intended.

This empire must one day come to an end. How long it was to endure Daniel did not say and it is certain that he did not at that time know, but one day it would fall and be superseded by another empire, one symbolised by silver. We know that empire to be that of Persia; Daniel lived to see that part of the prophecy come to pass. He himself eventually served the kings of Persia. In point of fact the "head of gold" was destined to survive only twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Cyrus the Persian in 539 B.C. captured Babylon and added it to the rapidly growing Persian empire. Then in 332 B.C. Alexander the Great of Greece in turn overthrew the power of Persia and the copper part of the image took the centre of the stage. Finally in 66 B.C. Greece fell before the might of the iron kingdom, Rome, and potential world domination left the Middle East and settled in Western Europe, there to remain until the "Time of the End".

Thus Daniel led up to the climax of the dream, the coming of the Messianic kingdom upon earth. These four empires, all built by fallible men, were destined each to have its day and pass away, The fifth kingdom, built not by man but by God, shall endure for ever. After it has broken down and ground to pieces every vestige of the earlier empires, it will extend its sway until all peoples everywhere shall acknowledge its power and live contentedly under its jurisdiction. God had admittedly given the kingdoms of the world and their subjects into the hands of one great king after another but all this was only for a limited time. A day is to dawn when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever. There had been many earlier prophets to speak of the glories of "that day" when God turns to speak peace to the nations and effect the reconciliation to himself of "whosoever will"; when the graves open to yield up their dead and the whole human race be

called to walk the "highway of holiness" to perfection of life. Daniel was the first to relate this blessed time to the earthly kingdoms of history, to give a sequence whereby the "watchers" and the students might place it in connection with history as it is known. Wherefore we in our day, beholding with our own eyes the progressive collapsing and inevitable end of the present development of the feet of iron and clay, the last vestiges of that political system which once was Rome, have this confidence and evidence that the days of the Kingdom are at hand and cannot be much longer delayed.

These words had the ring of truth, and an astute man like Nebuchadnezzar could not fail to realise the fact. He fell down and worshipped Daniel - probably much to the surprise of his assembled Court. Of course he did it in symbol of homage and reverence to the God whom Daniel represented. The king's conversion was sudden but wholehearted, like most of his actions. *"Your God is a God of gods and a lord of kings"*. In those few words he elevated

Daniel's God, over all the gods of Babylon. There is no evidence that Nebuchadnezzar had lost faith in his own gods, only in the wise men who claimed to represent them. In fact, the extant inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar show without a doubt that he was faithful to Marduck the god of Babylon for at least the greater portion of his life; but here he evidently acknowledged the power of Daniel's God and also the integrity of Daniel's credentials as a representative of that God. In token of that recognition he bestowed high honour upon the man who had interpreted his dream. Daniel was made a chief ruler in affairs of State; his three companions also were promoted to high office. Honour and wealth were at their command, the plaudits and flatteries of men, and every attraction the luxurious world of Babylon had to offer. The time had now come when the value of the earlier training and self-discipline to which these young men had been subjected was to be put to the test.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson

THE FADING LIGHT OF LAODICEA

*A picture of
the past*

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me".

The reading finished and the little company sat silent, almost as if expecting the Master himself to come into their assembly. Thus had they sat, for more years now than some of them cared to remember, at each Memorial celebration, recollection going back over the years past, hopes rising as they thought of the future. That passage in the Book of Revelation had an especial significance for them and they read it every year at their Memorial service; always did it grip them with its solemn expectation of the Coming One. They were but a small company, meeting in a small house on the outskirts of the city, but they knew that when their Lord did come, He would come to them. The wealthy and fashionable congregation whose magnificent building was one of the sights of Laodicea would have none of him; they had ignored John's message and cast out the faithful few who reproved their increasing worldliness and carelessness in spiritual things.

There were now two companies in Laodicea that

claimed the name of Christ, but in only one of them was his voice heard.

It had not always been thus. Although none of them were old enough to remember it, they all knew of the time when the Church at Laodicea had its humble beginning in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4. 15). He had been at Ephesus, eighty miles away, on business, and whilst there had heard the preaching of Paul the Apostle. *Jesus Christ, and him crucified! Repentance, remission of sins, justification by faith, consecration to God and holiness of life! Times of Restitution, life for all by a resurrection from the dead!* Nymphas had long sought the meaning of the sin and distress in the world; he was a business man and Laodicea was a business man's city; but he had sometimes gone the six miles across to Hierapolis (Col. 4. 13) the holy city of the Greek Nature gods and goddesses, to seek inspiration and enlightenment, and as often returned home dissatisfied. But here was a message which satisfied his longings as nothing else had ever done. It answered all his questions and fired his imagination; now he was agog to finish his business and get back home to Laodicea to tell

his friends of the glorious news he had heard.

So it came about that he found himself on the great Roman road that, running inland from Ephesus across Asia, passed through Laodicea and Colosse on its way. He had companions, too, for at the Ephesus meetings he had met Philemon of Colosse and his son Archippus, and as they travelled back together the long road seemed but an hour's journey, so much there was to discuss, so much of recalling the words of the great Apostle and his no less fervent fellow labourers at Ephesus. Epaphras, already a tower of strength to the Ephesian church, had exhorted them to return to Ephesus and hear more of the words of life, and had promised to come to Laodicea and Colosse to help them with their converts and minister to them the things of Christ. Arrived at Laodicea, Philemon stayed one night at the house of Nymphas and then went the remaining twenty miles to his own town of Colosse, where his wife Apphia heard the word from his lips, and believed too.

Thus grew up, first in Laodicea, and then in Colosse and Hierapolis, (Col. 4.13) three little companies of believers who were themselves never to see the great Apostle in the flesh, but nevertheless were to make rapid progress in the knowledge of the Truth as they studied the Scriptures and read together the fragments of the sayings of Jesus that began to come their way. Paul's own journeyings took him to many places but never to these three towns. Timothy came sometimes; but Epaphras was their most frequent visitor and he was to them an ever welcome and a faithful minister in Christ (Col. 1. 7).

There had been one memorable event in those early days. Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, had returned to Colosse bearing with him two - perhaps three - precious letters, letters written by the great Apostle himself. The one was a personal letter to Philemon, written jointly from Paul and Timothy. "*Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved and fellow labourer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in thy house*", it began (Philem. 1. 2), and in it Paul the aged besought his brother Philemon for the errant slave who had now himself become a brother in Christ, in Whom there is neither slave nor free, but all are brethren. The other letter was particularly to the church, a letter full of fatherly counsel and doctrinal instruction. Paul had heard that already in these Greek cities there were some coming among the believers seeking to

take away the liberty that was theirs in Christ, and graft upon their simple Christian faith, on the one hand Jewish ordinances born of the Law, and on the other hand Greek mysticism and Eastern philosophies. These would reduce the living Christ who had become the inner power of their lives to a meaningless theological figure, a shadowy emanation that could neither sustain nor save. The trading markets of Laodicea brought many such Eastern doctrines to the ears of the Christians there, and the false worship of Hierapolis added its quota of Greek mythology, and Colosse received the impact of both. So the Epistle to the Colossians, carried to his master by Onesimus, was read, as was Paul's wish, both at Colosse and at Laodicea, and treasured up in the archives of the Church.

Perhaps there was a third, an Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans. It seems to be indicated in Col. 4.16 but it is not in the New Testament and it has never been found. (There is a so-called "*Epistle to the Laodiceans*" but it is known to be a forgery of much later times). So that, if Paul really did write such an epistle, it was not preserved by the Holy Spirit as necessary to the later edification of the Christian Church. The loving brotherliness that so clearly existed between the ecclesias at Colosse and Laodicea and Hierapolis makes it evident that the one epistle to the Colossians was shared by them all, and all were edified.

Then came the news of Paul's death. Far away in Rome, he had suffered under the sword of the executioner, and Philemon and Nymphas were conscious of a new responsibility in their respective pastoral charges. Persecution was breaking out; Ephesus, more in the public eye than the inland cities, bore the brunt of it, and Laodicea and Colosse were left to a greater extent than formerly to their own devices.

And now the first generation of Christian Laodiceans and Colossians was passing away. Epaphras had gone, Nymphas had gone, Philemon had gone, and Archippus, after perhaps a season of service at Ephesus, had been called, if tradition be correct to become the "presbyter" or "bishop" - the elder, as we would say today - of the now flourishing church at Laodicea. It would seem that the sister assemblies at Colosse and Hierapolis were declining, or at most remaining stationary. Laodicea flourished. That was not surprising. Laodicea was an important city, the capital of the province of Phrygia, and a

trading centre. It occupied a prominent place on the great road, situated in the midst of beautiful country and splendid scenery, and boasted the finest architecture in all Asia; hence it attracted many visitors. Its citizens were prosperous, well-read and well-educated. Insensibly at first perhaps, but none the less surely, the church at Laodicea, bereft of the personal presence and direct influence of its first fathers in God, subject to the persuasive arguments of newcomers who knew nothing of that early missionary zeal and simple faith which had characterised its first members, began to conform itself more and more to the fashions and ways of the city. As it did so the Spirit began to depart. They had not repudiated the Truth; they held still to the main doctrines of the Faith, perhaps more closely than had the brethren of Colosse. But there was a lukewarmness about their service, a formality about their worship, a self-satisfaction with their Church organisation and a smugness in their study and ministry. These things caused perplexity and sadness of heart to the few of their number who loved their Lord sincerely and waited still for his appearing. Those faithful ones wanted to preach the Kingdom; they believed that to be the only hope of the world; but now so many of their fellowship, professing the same Lord and the same faith, seemed to be indifferent or sceptical regarding that appearing and that Kingdom. They were so much more interested in business and the social life of the city.....

Until, one day, when the church was assembled in its magnificent building for formal worship, there came a grave, dignified presbyter, his clothes stained with travel-dust, and the congregation sat still as he mounted the rostrum, for ambassadors from the important sister-church at Ephesus were treated with ceremony and honour. His eyes swept the audience, resting sternly upon the self-satisfied, well-dressed men and women seated in the front rows, softening as he surveyed the eager faces of the company at the back. He spoke slowly and sadly. "My brethren, I come with news. Our beloved brother John, the last of the Twelve who followed our Lord in the days of his flesh, has finished his course. Henceforth there is laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give him in the day of his appearing". He paused. "He sends you a farewell message, given him in vision in the Isle of Patmos, a message from the all-seeing One, the Master himself. Give heed, my brethren, for the

message is for you". He drew a roll of parchment from the recesses of his robe and began to read in a firm voice that resounded through the building.

"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent".....

They never went back to the great building. The scene at that night's meeting was too vivid, too painful, for any of them to wish so to do. They never went back, and when next the emissaries from Ephesus came to Laodicea, they came to a little house on the outskirts, where a few true-hearted believers in the risen Lord met to encourage one another in the faith and to wait for his appearing.

* * *

The simple ceremony was over. The aged elder looked at his brethren affectionately. There were not many left who had been present, with him, at that service when the message to Laodicea had been read in the great Church. It was a long time ago - he was beginning to realise that now - and most of these were of the third generation and knew nothing at first hand of the events that forced him and his out of the church which had left its first love. He looked at them again, and thought to himself "The time is prolonged - surely He must come soon". In quiet assurance of faith he raised his hand in benediction. "Little children" he said, "ye are members one another, brethren beloved in the Lord. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.....The bread that we have broken, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup we have shared, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And we are all partakers thereof... Let us therefore who are thus minded esteem one another

alike, building up one another on our most holy faith, waiting together for the glorious appearing of our Lord from heaven, for, He will surely come!"

He made a gesture of dismissal, and they went out, quietly, as always after the Memorial Service. Through the darkened streets of the city they made their way, one and another turning off here and there as the parting of each several way was reached. The last half-dozen of the little company came thus to a building ablaze with light and gay with music. People were coming down the steps; rich, well-dressed men

and bejewelled, lavishly attired women, to slaves awaiting them, carrying litters in which to bear them home, and torchbearers holding flaming torches to guide them on their way. Behind the tall Grecian columns which graced the vestibule the pilgrims caught sight of a brilliant lighted interior, costly furnishings, and amid an admiring crowd, a proud dignitary, clad in purple vestments. And the little party moved on, away from the wealth and the show, out of the circle of light, into the darkness, into the unknown - to God.

T. Holmes

THE SUPREME GRACE

3. "Chalice Vessels of Truth"

*A study in
1 Cor. 13*

At the beginning of New Testament history the two words "*agape*" and "*phileo*" were in common use, but with very restricted meanings. Taking them as they received them, linked as they were to certain modes of Greek and Jewish life, both our Lord and the Apostles used them conformably to the common use, but began to infuse into them shades of meaning hitherto unknown - a process which went on unceasingly until even these exalted words were found to be inadequate to express the resultant conception of the Love of God - and the Apostle of Love himself was compelled to adopt a circumlocution to state what he had to say. "*Behold what manner of Love the Father has bestowed upon us!*" Precise explanation had, at last, become impossible, and John, the last survivor of the little band, could only speak of the "*agape*" as he spake of God.

"*Phileo*" came into the early Church's usage permeated with the spirit of the clan-life of ancient Greece. So many of these small communities, linked as they were by common descent - often by actual blood relationship - joined themselves together for each other's good, in matters of defence and husbandry. This feeling of communal brotherhood gave to each member of the community the sense of belonging to one family. It was to them as though the kinship of the domestic family had been extended outward far enough to embrace the community. This kinship attitude, both to the domestic and communal family, was what they called the "*Phileo*". Greeks were not unique in this clan-membership, for colonies and communities of this sort were scattered throughout the earth, actuated by the same kind of friendship for those within the pale, and a like hostile attitude to those without. The special advantage

in separating out the Greek clan-states arises from the fact that they had the precise word for this kinship that is now engaging us. Though "*phileo*" was the term, descriptive in Grecian thought, of the kinship bond that knit together their own communal or city-state, it also served quite well to define the bond of the Roman "*civitas*", the Jewish Diaspora, or the roving barbarians, for each alike, in its own little field, had the same kindred love for those within, and the same antipathy towards those without. This attitude of exclusiveness, so acceptable and praiseworthy to those within, tends to stamp the word "*phileo*" - or its equivalent in other tongues - with that spirit of aloofness and narrowness, which as seen from without can only be defined as communal selfishness. This self-centredness, this willingness to live though all else should die, was the keynote of the pre-Christian "*phileo*". The Grecian classics spake of "*Philanthropy*" - the love of man - but it was not a love embracing every man, in every place of which they spoke, but only love for every man within the pale; the clan would only love its own!

This exclusiveness, then, was the sense which pervaded that word when it was adopted for use by Jesus and the infant Church. Jesus early showed how much of this self-seeking, self-gratifying spirit it contained when He said, arraigning the Pharisees, "*they love to pray standing in the synagogue or in the corners of the streets*" (Matt. 6. 5). This was no attitude of love for other men, but of a love that turned inwards upon themselves. Again He said they loved "*the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues*" (Matt. 23. 6) thus revealing gross disrespect towards another of more honourable es-

tate than they, and of selfish indifference to other interests than their own. The Master placed his finger on the spot when reminding his followers that, since they had linked their lives with his, the world would treat them as it treated him. Said He, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his (its) own"*. (John 15. 19). Here is the exact definition of *phileo* - and from the Master's lips. On another searching day, when about to send them into the harvest field, Jesus advised them that their direst foes would appear among their own kith and kin, who would seek to dissuade them from the work. But *"he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me....."* (Matt. 10. 37) - whoso would permit his love to turn inwards and homewards more strongly than it turned outwards and "fieldwards" with him was not worthy of his trust or Name.

How marvellously the grace of God transformed the word in later days! And how amazing the change of attitude for which that changed word stood. From every tongue and nation men had been drawn together in a fellowship which had cut through all communal barriers - Jew, Greek, Roman, barbarian, patrician, slave - all brought near into one mutual brotherhood, each and all depending on the Lamb of God for his way of approach to the holiest Name. Even so, the tie that bound them in this new community was still the *"phileo"*. Let us note the words of Paul to men who hitherto had been members of that exclusive Greek nationality *".....as touching brotherly love ye have no need that I write unto you, for ye are taught of God to love one another"* (1. Thess. 4. 9). Here, by the grace of God, a former Jew can overstep the boundaries of his own nationality to greet and encourage men who hitherto were Gentile dogs, "without God in the world". And they, in turn, Gentiles though they were by blood, could extend a brother's hand in fellowship to him. To co-believers in Imperial Rome, Paul could also say, *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love"*. (Rom. 12. 10). Even into the chambers of that metropolis the spirit of another *phileo* had won its way and not all the might and majesty of Cæsar's throne could uproot this nobler thing. Within its walls sojourning Jews and men "free-born" joined hands in Jesus' Name, in holy brotherhood. Again, to Hebrews of some city now unknown, the same appealing exhortation goes forth. *"Let brotherly love continue"*. (Heb. 13. 1). "Let brotherly love be firmly established among you" is

another translation. And why? Because they had known the power of that mutual love so markedly in former days! *"Call to remembrance the former days, in which ye endured a great fight of afflictions"*. (Heb. 10. 32-34). Here indeed had been the "outward" turning of their hearts to others of like faith - let it now not cease so to do! How transcendently different was this attitude of "sharing together in suffering" from that more ancient Pharisaic "turning inwards upon one's self". And Peter also has a word to say, *"seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto the unfeigned love of the brethren see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently"*. (1 Pet. 1. 22). Here is a wonderful development indeed, for an unfeigned love of brethren had already been attained, and the exhortation now is that this sincere love should become the servant of a wider Love - the *agape*.

Thus, to the Greeks, the Romans and the Hebrews of that day the Word of Grace had been sent forth, and had wooed and won from their ancient faiths these varied companies of men and brought them, against all the deadweight of prejudice, into another fellowship! Men of alien birth were now closely knit together with a nobler *"phileo"* - still the old, old, word, but a new brotherhood! still the older vessel, but a new wine! It still stands as the symbol of family affection, but a different family - a community whose life and love were on a higher plane.

It is when we come to the Apostolic conception of this deeper, wider word, *agape*, that we can see how greatly the life of Jesus influenced the change. That sacrificial life was the pattern for their own, and led them ever deeper into the mysteries of sacrifice. With that example before him and that same spirit in his heart Paul said to the ungrateful Corinthians, *"I will gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved"*. (2 Cor. 12. 15). Here "spending" and "being spent" is the self-less expression of the *"agape"*. Not what he could receive from them but rather what he could do for them was the guiding motive of his heart! To give one's self by "spending and being spent" in sacrifice and service had now become the essence, if not also the substance of *"agape"*. How well this agrees with Gal. 2. 20, *"...the Son of God...loved me and gave himself for me"*. And also with Eph. 5. 25, *"He loved the Church and gave himself for it"*. How full this accords with John 3. 16, *"God so loved the*

world that He gave his only begotten Son..." Further still, it was God who, "*Commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*". (Rom 5. 8). Here we find the Love of God turning outward toward another's need in overflowing measure - and this henceforth became the standard for defining the word *agape*! For Paul, as well as for his Lord, it meant "to spend and be spent".

Another aspect of the word is the universal width it has assumed. Not only has it depth in keeping with the character of God, it has width as wide as the needs of man. It was "the world" that God so greatly loved. It was the "all" of Adam's fallen sons for whom Jesus gave himself. When the love that carried Jesus to his death lays its magnetic power upon our hearts, it constrains us to see things in the same universal way. "*For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead*" (2 Cor. 5. 14). The love of God moved manwards to meet his deepest need on so vast a scale that not one single soul was left outside its field. That has ever been the character of that compassionate gesture of God which Apostolic men designate the "*agape*". From being a word therefore that could at first be harnessed up to evil things as well as good it became in time so greatly amplified that it accounted equal to the unplumbed deeps of the Grace of God. And in becoming deep it also grew in breadth, till it stood as emblematic of the Universal Plan.

The Love that prompted God to undertake the redemption of the world is the very self same thing which He sheds abroad in our hearts today - part and parcel of that mighty moving force that will win a world from sin into the ways of righteousness and truth. How did the first Apostolic men react to its energising influence? Let us remember that for the most part they were humble fishermen, altogether inexperienced in the craft of moving men by polished phrase, but even so their sense of the sublime was so intensified that they had to call upon the superlative to express what they wished to say. We cannot but stand amazed at the change wrought upon these simple men as they sought to grasp and set forth the magnitude of the "*agape*"! "Behold what manner of *agape* the Father has bestowed upon us", says John in ecstasy, "What manner of man is this" that can speak to wind and waves, said the awe-stricken witnesses, as wind and wave obeyed his word! What manner of man is this!...What manner of love is

this!...Here the Apostle of love himself lacks power to define or explain the greatness of this heavenly thing that has come through from the beyond into his finite consciousness. Can we wonder then, that at last, completely overpowered by his conception of the devotion-inspiring, wonder-working thing, he elevates it to the high pinnacle of the Divine and says, "God is *agape*" - *agape* is of God, yes indeed; but God himself is *agape* from everlasting to everlasting!

The time has now come to consider the relationship of "*phileo*" in "*agape*" as they find expression in the day-to-day experience of the man of God, in whose life these two higher phases of love have become an actuality. To bring this relationship pointedly before our minds, an illustration, drawn from the lives of ordinary men in their domestic and communal relationships, will be used. In the lives of most ordinary men there are two circles of attachment between them and those who live around. First, there is a nearer circle where his domestic bonds and his friendship's ties abound. Here the links that bind him to "his own" are found - his parents, wife, children, brothers and his sisters, while in a slightly wider range, the ties with bosom friends and intimate confidants, with whom his life is linked at many points, may also be found. To each of these relationships he will bear a love varying in degree, which he cannot show to those without. To each he will accord right of entry, also varying in degree, into his private life.

This nearer circle of domestic ties constitutes the pattern of our "*phileo*" attachments, on the higher plane. But those who are thus linked together by this "*phileo*" attachment are not of necessity also linked by blood relationship. Only those who are linked by kindred ties as children of the one Divine Father can find entrance there-into. Here, in spiritual association, and on a higher plane, we would have the sphere where in a special sense the "*phileo*" counterpart to the "domestic-friendship" love would operate. Here, in this exclusively spiritual circle, the love of brethren - the *philadelphos* love - should be found in exercise.

Outside this "domestic-friendship" circle is the wider sphere in which most men's lives touch other lives as fellow citizens of one community. Here the contacts have wider purposes affecting more or less the mutual well-being of the whole community (or nation) at large. A link of an entirely different kind

cements the members of this community together both in times of peace and war.

In times of peace the well-being of the community prompts each member to accept both limitations of rights for himself and obligations of duty towards each other member thereof. Thus, in this way, a rule of established law and public order is accepted and observed, while the supervision of the magistrate (meaning for our purpose, anything from that of the king down to the lowest deputy) is assented to. In this wider public circle every member of the community is included. Even the members of the smaller domestic circle are included in this, for husband and wife in the one are fellow-citizens with all the rest in the other. The special feature of the domestic circle is its exclusiveness; that of the communal sphere is its comprehensiveness.

This civic sphere of the natural man forms the exact correspondency to that of the *agape* attachment on the higher plane, while the consenting attitude and the consequent submission to both king and law forms the precise counterpart to the true Christian attitude of submission to the sovereign Will of God. In his "*Synonyms of the New Testament*" Archbishop Trench shows that the Latin equivalent (*diligi*) to the Greek word *agape* belongs to the sphere of the magistrate and the reign of law, in its fullest sense, and as such, is capable of universal (or communal) application. And since "*agape*" is the true equivalent of "*diligi*", this statement will hold good also of "*agape*".

In this wider circle of civic life an illustration of the Christian association on the higher plane is brought to view; but on this higher plane the circle that is introduced is not less extensive in its scope than the whole wide Plan of God. The love of God that is shed abroad in the Christian's heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5. 5) not only constitutes him a citizen of the Kingdom of God, but also brings his whole life into alignment with the universal Plan. He has freely shown a consenting attitude to the claims of its Kings, its laws, its objects, and to his fellow-citizens, and has pledged himself to work together with them all for their common good, both for immediate and coming days. In this way, the love of God - the love that prompted God to frame the Plan, with all its love, its duties, and its obligations - will have taken a controlling hold upon the life, in its every phase, and will thenceforth be shaping it into accord with the great design. Seen from

this point of view, all that Jesus did, by way of sacrifice and likewise all that we are called to do, as we seek to follow Him, can be reduced to the single matter of becoming permeated and saturated with the love of God.

Now it is most essential that the man of God should look outside the small sphere of the local congregation for the exemplification of the love of God. Should he concentrate his vision only upon that small community, he may find himself uttering only the merest platitudes as he exhorts and is exhorted to have love for one another. He must look outside the fellowship if he is to know and understand something of the measure of that mighty moving force that planned a world's redemption and has competence to carry it through. The love that he is called upon to exemplify in his association with others of like faith is no more than a mere chip from the universal block, a scant reflection from an all-illuminating Sun. Were there nothing more in the love of God than that which at times he sees exemplified in the life of the fellowship, he may be excused if he comes to think that love's energy has waned, and that its heat has cooled. But there is more to it than that; there is an energy of love that springs from God, and remains constant throughout the passing years, seeking entry into every receptive heart, and a passage through it to the wider world beyond. Love is like water in a reservoir; it is in great abundance, but awaits the opening of the spigot or tap. Opened just a little way and a little only will come through, but opened wide there can be a mighty flow. It is indeed a "shedding abroad" in our hearts (Rom. 5. 5) of a power that comes in from without. And, if this energising love does enter every heart in such measure as it ought, every ecclesia's life would be intense, and every one of its members would be alive with the spirit of the great Divine Plan. The *agape* residing in every heart should really be a tiny drop from the mighty ocean that has set itself the task of winning unto righteousness every sinful heart.

What would that mean in the lives of all true saints? It would instil an ever-deepening reverence in the heart for the holy Name. Having learned so much of his good intents toward man would lead us more and more to say, "Hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done in earth as it is in Heaven". It would deepen our gratitude to our beloved Lord for all that He has done to set us free from sin, and bring us into this grace wherein we

stand. That would be the "drop" of our love answering back to the "ocean" of his! Towards our brethren there would be the response of a grateful heart reaching out to mingle with their own grateful hearts, one and all seeking to hold each other in high esteem for the Kingdom's sake, of which we are a part. That would be true spiritual patriotism; a spirit of loyalty and devotion to the Cause, as well as to the King. To our enemies or opponents it would reveal itself as an attitude of tolerance and goodwill; an attitude that would leave all recompense for God to administer in his own time and way; while seeking for ourselves to requite their evil with our good.

The spirit of Divine Love extends the right hand of kinship and fellowship to every other member of the flock. Even if in person they are unknown to us, the attitude of kinship is there. Should they live beyond the seas, and unlikely to cross our path, still the attitude that reaches out and prays for them is there. And even if they have passed to their "Rest" from this vale of tears, we feel that the link has not thereby been snapped, for the "Love" that grips us today, is a love that would not let them go. Sometimes these faithful souls of days gone by, though dead, yet speak, and bring an influence to bear upon our lives, as truly as they whom we see and hear.

Thus the *agape* that comes to us from God is an all comprehensive thing - it is the link that binds the whole community of God into "one" as truly as the spirit of patriotism in the civic sphere binds all the members of the community into one people or nation.

But the "*phileo*" is different from this. There is no "*phileo*" expended on those whom we do not know. It is only in the sphere where lives are in close touch that the "*phileo*" spirit can abound. This is based upon affinity - a something in the spirit and outlook of one that draws and binds another to his heart, and in consequence a deeper friendship comes to exist - akin to that of David and Jonathan, but on a higher plane. It is not wrong to cement a friendship of that kind; had it been so, surely our Lord would not have had his special friends. But friendship should always be directed to the fostering of the wider *agape*. The "philadelphian love" should always be the handmaid of that wider love, whether in the ecclesia, or in the more private sphere of one's life. To brotherly love, *agape* should be super-added. (2 Per. 1. 7). Having purified one's heart by attaining to an unfeigned love of the brethren (the *phileo*) we are to use it to promote the wider love (*agape*) purely and fervently. (1 Pet. 1. 22).

D. Nadal

"PREACHING CHRIST"

"...Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them...Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus". (Acts 8. 5, 35).

Early in his public ministry Jesus made it clear that his mission was to preach the good news of salvation (Luke 4. 18-21). He taught his disciples that they were the light of the world (Matt. 5. 14). his parting words to them were explicit instructions to be His witnesses to the uttermost part of the Earth (Acts 1. 7, 8). Could they ever forget his instruction, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation?*" (Mark 16. 15 RSV). Could there ever have been any doubt in their minds as to the task before them? So long as there are unbelievers upon the Earth, followers of Jesus must obey his command.

Some would deny the need to preach the Gospel to this generation yet there are those who are being converted to Christ now. Perhaps there are doubts

about how the Gospel should be preached but Paul wrote, "*...some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry...out of selfish ambition....But what does it matter? The important thing is....Christ is preached*". (Phil. 1. 15-18 NIV). It appears that some in the early church were ashamed to preach the cross of Christ. Paul was not and he urged Timothy to follow his example (Rom. 1. 16; 2 Tim. 1. 8). Human ideas and human weakness can hide from us the examples of the apostles but we must discover afresh the message which they felt compelled to preach.

What was the Gospel which Jesus preached? He called men to repentance for the Kingdom of heaven was at hand. Was he thinking at that moment of the time when all would turn and believe on him? When that time comes He will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; "*...that the rest of men may seek the Lord*". (Acts 15. 16, 17). Meanwhile Jesus made it clear that He did not know the "day nor the hour" when that work would begin. At his depar-

ture from the disciples on the Mount of Olives he deliberately diverted their attention from times and seasons to the preaching of the Gospel (Acts 1. 7, 8). The preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God being at hand was a reference to the initial stage of that kingdom, when it was 'among them' and 'within them' and came not with observation, while he was among them (Luke 17. 20, 21). It came with power at Pentecost.

Our Lord's ministry was concerned with the conquest of sin and the reconciliation of sinners to their Creator. The parables of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son illustrate that great work which began in Galilee and which will go on till everyone has had an opportunity to repent. During this age of the Good News in which God has been preparing the "kings and priests" of his Kingdom, the preaching of some has been influenced by the world to which they preach. The modernist's gospel has lost faith in the miracles by which Jesus demonstrated the compassionate saving power of the Kingdom. The social gospel seeks to change the behaviour of the world from within itself rather than accept new birth which comes from God. The prophetic gospel sometimes seems to have little concern for the immediate needs of mankind as it struggles with poverty, hunger, disease and a ruined environment. Yet God does influence the world through the lives of his people for they are the salt of the Earth. He alone can stop the conflicts between rival political factions which cause human distress. He alone can bring about the repentance of all humanity through the gospel of the cross of Christ.

So we must turn to the fellowship and message of Jesus' first disciples. We cannot preach a social gospel just because it is fashionable. We cannot preach a modernist gospel just because modern man cannot accept the idea of miracles. We cannot preach a gospel solely on the grounds that it is different from all other Christians. Human need has not changed since the Lord's first advent, nor has the gospel which wins their hearts for him. Yet within the message of the Church today, there is scope for preaching repentance from sin, bringing men and women into the right relationship with their God and for demonstrating that He is concerned about all who have ever lived, enjoying the beauty and wonder of their home on Earth.

Primarily the theme of the witness of the Church from its beginning was Christ, crucified and resur-

rected. On the day of the Pentecost, Peter's aim was to show that Jesus is Messiah. Philip's message in Samaria and later to the Ethiopian official was much the same (Acts 8. 5, 35). After Paul's conversion he entered the synagogue at Damascus and, "*immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying 'He is the Son of God'.*" In his second letter to the Corinthian Church Paul wrote, "*For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.*" These statements show us the life and work of the early Christians.

Before anyone can accept Christ as their Saviour they must repent of their sin. So when Peter addressed the crowds in the Temple at Jerusalem they were told, "*Repent...and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.*" Paul said much the same at Athens, "*God...now...commands all people everywhere to repent.*" (Acts 17. 30). Interestingly enough both apostles had something to say about a future day. Peter, speaking of Jesus, went on to say, "*He must be received into heaven until the time comes for the universal restoration of which God had spoken through his holy prophets from the beginning.*" In a similar manner Paul declared on Mars Hill, "*God...has fixed the day on which He will have the world judged...*" (Acts 17. 31 REV). Clearly there were and still are different aspects of the 'message of Christ'.

The various preaching messages of the first Christians recorded in the New Testament show a distinct pattern with several elements. Firstly they frequently had references to the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. They showed that those prophecies had been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus at his first advent. They then went on to discuss Jesus' baptism, life and teachings, which reached a climax in his death and resurrection. To this they had been witnesses. Now the consequences of that ministry of Jesus were being demonstrated through a Spirit-filled Church. The presence and power of the living God was in this new community. Finally, in view of these things, the preachers appealed to their audiences to repent and be baptised because Jesus, the Messiah, was to come again. The discourse of Peter to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) is an example of the pattern of this preaching. Into these sermons were woven Old Testament texts which occur more than once and an example of this is the reference to Jesus as the rejected 'corner stone' (Acts 4. 11).

Men and women at the end of the twentieth cen-

ture stand in need of Jesus Christ as much as those who lived in the first century. As then, Christ can only reach them through his Church. Ordinary folk are frustrated by the wild, unrealised claims of scientists and politicians. Two world wars and many others since, have a left legacy of sorrow, disease and immorality. Broken families are not mended by the assurance of 'a good time coming' nor are broken lives restored by intellectual dogma. These things need the personal touch of the Saviour who walked the Earth healing sick hearts and sick bodies. He gave people then a message embodied in simple lessons from nature which if accepted changed the very lives of his hearers. It is to him that we must point and we can only do so if we really know him ourselves. We can only direct men and women to the cross of Jesus if we have felt its power in our own lives. If we have been broken and humbled at the foot of the cross and left our burden of sin there, then we shall have a testimony for our neighbours which will turn their eyes towards Jesus. If we walk each day in the light of the cross, with our own lives exposed to the penetrating gaze

of the Saviour, we shall reflect light upon the pathway of some lost soul who seeks the way to God.

There is no witness of the Christian Church better than its own unity. Jesus, knowing this, and realising how divided his followers were, prayed 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 has sent me*". (John 17. 21). However accurate our interpretation of Scripture or brilliant our oratory, we shall not win those around us for Christ unless our message is prompted by his spirit. Yet a 'good life' in itself does not fulfil the command of the Master. A positive declaration is needed that Christ alone can save humanity - each individual human person. We need to be stripped of ambition and personal glory, of clever ideas and lofty motives. Christians must stand shoulder to shoulder, accepting brothers and sisters in Christ as co-workers together with God. Then, and only then, will our service be an acceptable offering. So we shall be able to say with Paul, "*For I was resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified*". (1 Cor. 2 2 REV).

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

"The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms:" (Deut. 33 27).

Wonderful consolation for the saints of God! How very appropriate and beautiful is the Apostle's reference to our God, as "*the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation*" (2 Cor. 1 3. 4).

To the "great cloud of witnesses" tested and approved in former ages, God was faithful in giving needed consolation to the end that they should not be discouraged. The stern requirements of the Law, with its inevitable condemnation, did not make up the sum of Divine revelation even in those days before "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". To Patriarchs and Prophets, and to all who were "Israelites indeed", this word of comforting assurance was spoken - "*For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones*". (Isa. 57. 15).

The warmth of his love, therefore, could not be hidden entirely from view behind the inflexible demand of a law which said, "This do and thou shalt

live". His character is such that He must and would remember that even those who delighted in his law and trembled at his unalterable Word were but dust, incapable of perfect goodness, because evil was so painfully present with them. As we are privileged to know him today revealed in Christ, so He has always been in character, the same unchangeable God.

The revelation that came with the light of the Gospel, that "God is love," was marvellously anticipated in repeated assurances of that fact given to men and women of other ages "of whom the world was not worthy," who, notwithstanding the impossibility of gaining life through the law, "had this testimony, that they pleased God." Thus it is that we find constant reiterations of this love given to faithful Ancient Worthies long before the Gospel's "exceeding great and precious promises" shed their rays of light upon the path of the Church. To them God gave ample assurance that in all their trials and difficulties He was near with his grace to sustain and his comfort to cheer.

When servants of God's household enjoyed such assurances of his abiding presence and protection as was given to this "great cloud of witnesses," how

very near then should He seem to the sons of his family now. If to servants He would say, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," what tender consolations He must speak to his own spirit-begotten children. If to obedient, loyal servants encouragement was given in the knowledge that "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms", what measure of protection and grace will be the present portion of the children of his love? For these, his sons, "some better thing" has been reserved in God's appointment, embracing present privileges and future rewards. Surely then such must be encouraged as they hear this "voice behind" them, testifying to the faithfulness of God. Plainly this voice must give strength as they hear it directing them in the way they should walk, and establishing their faith in the promised grace sufficient for every time of need; yea, that God *"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."* (Eph. 3. 20).

*"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said?
You, who unto Jesus for refuge hath fled"*

And what more can He say than to us He has said? Could He say more than He has said in giving us so many "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the Divine nature" - promises which meet our every experience and need, and promises which can never be broken, for they are the promises of One who cannot lie? These pledges of God, how dependable they are! Behind us lie long centuries of his care over his people, and the testimony of all who have preceded us comes with the assurance that *"there hath not failed one word of all his good promise."* (1 Kings 8. 56). Thousands of years of unflinching faithfulness through every emergency that could test it - and He has been all this to his people, though none have been wholly perfect in their faithfulness to him. What more indeed can He say to us then, than we have in these promises?

It may thrill our hearts to recall the love of Christ for his Church collectively, and to remember that the saints composing that Body are his peculiar charge. But He wants us to realise a more intimate and personal place in that special care He exercises over his own. "He calleth his own sheep by name". This is the picture Jesus gives us of the shepherd's intimacy which He has established with the sheep.

What can He mean by this illustration if it be not to teach us that each one of us may enjoy so close and personal a relationship as this? Beyond question He is "a good Shepherd" and by God's appointment He is the "great Shepherd of the sheep"; but more precious still, and best of all is the fact that each one of the true sheep may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd". "He is mine, and I am his forever"; his love is an individualising love, and his attentions are blessedly individual and personal too. The attention I individually need is in no danger of being overlooked in his care for all. By his rod and staff I personally am both comforted and corrected. He is my very faithful Shepherd when He leads me beside the quiet waters and into the green pastures, and He is just as faithful and loving when He lays the rod to my back when my feet wander out of the way, or when I follow other voices than his. O how short would have been my enjoyment of those quiet waters and verdant pastures if He had not been a Shepherd of whom I could say, "He restoreth my soul" or, as a better rendering gives it, "He restores me when wandering".

Acknowledging then our need of discipline lest we run to wood-making rather than fruit-bearing, and confessing our repeated failures, we cannot but love him for giving us the corrections we so much need, and especially so when we know that all the while those Everlasting Arms are underneath us. We could not be otherwise than grateful, for *"We have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness"*. (Heb. 12. 9. 10). Underneath all our weaknesses, strong to bear up, loving and wise to chastise and scourge us, constant and unwearyed to keep us from being castaways, are the Everlasting Arms. Therefore, *"Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him"*. (Heb. 12. 5).

*Faithful, O Lord, Thy mercies are,
A Rock that cannot move,
A thousand promises declare,
Thy constancy of love.*

And how great is his mercy and compassion! What pains He has taken to make it clear that He is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities". If in contrition of heart we are constantly humiliated by our failures, what then? Just when it would seem that there is

defeat and failure, we discover anew that "The eternal God is thy refuge; and underneath are the Everlasting Arms". He has anticipated our well-nigh abandoned hope of being continued in his love. He therefore does not come to us and add to our discouragement by saying, "What man of you having an hundred sheep, if one of the best and most faithful of them wanders away, will he not go out and search for it until he find it?" Not so, our need is to have One "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way," and such He has assured us He is. No matter how weak and frail we are, if the heart be true, He abideth faithful, and for us He tells it thus: "*What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them (any one of them) doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.... Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*" (Luke 15. 4. 5. 7). Truly "the goodness of God leadeth to repentance" and the knowledge of the Everlasting Arms underneath constrains our hearts to more watchful diligence.

But even if we have not wandered so far afield as this, but have remained within the fold, zealously intent on obeying the Shepherd's voice, even then how constantly we are made to realise the debt of love we owe. Dwelling here where faith may rest in his provision for us, what joy there is in remembering that though knowing us as we really are, He loves us just the same. He sees and knows us as we really want to be. No one knows better than He that in attempting to live, we are often spoiling our own work by incongruous temper, or incongruous conduct. We misrepresent ourselves oftener than others misrepresent us. Our foibles, our blemishes of temper, our false steps, help to make our lives an enigma to others. These are tremendous discouragements, silencing discouragements. They sometimes shake courage to its foundations; they fill the heart with bitterness and agitation; they scatter the tender uprisings of holy purpose, and throw us back in confusion and sorrow. We feel that others doubt us, look askance at us, point at us behind our backs, or smile with scepticism over our confession of faith in Jesus Christ and our vows of discipleship. And the sting of this bitterness is in the thought that we are discrediting a deeper selfhood which, beneath these variabilities of temper, these inconsistencies of speech and conduct, these futile attempts at self-

expression, is after all the greatest and truest part of us. We know that we are sound at the core; we know that when, through all the shadows of fault and deficiency, Christ's great question, "Lovest thou Me?" searches down into our depths, there is that which gives back the unfaltering answer "Yes". But can we demonstrate this love so that it will be believed? Can we find anywhere a basis for new beginning in which our confidence, shaken by failure and misunderstanding, can once more lift itself up into joy? Blessed is he who realises in such an hour that he still has left love's last and greatest refuge. Christ's knowledge of our sincerity; "Thou knowest that I love thee". Whatever my own poor faulty words and ways may say to others, awakening in their minds doubts of my sincerity; whatever the verdicts of others may be concerning me; whatever my own memory holds up before me of inconsistency and error - "Thou knowest that I love Thee".

In every new experience, in every new temptation, in hours of strength, in hours of contrition, still we say to him those same words of the deeper, holier fellowship, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee".

*"Thou knowest, not alone as Lord, all knowing;
As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast proved;
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
O Saviour, Thou hast wept and Thou hast loved:
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home".*

"Thou knowest that I love Thee." That speaks to us of Christ's knowledge of our better selves. Day by day we struggle to explain ourselves, to live intelligibly, to utter the best that is in us. Short successes alternate with swift failures. The very words and deeds by which we would explain ourselves become in our faulty hands like masks and disguises. The unreality of living grows insupportable. Sometimes it seems as if lives were simply stumbling against one another in the dark, so few understand us, so few do we understand. We appear at our worst in perverse hours when we would have shown our best; we talk common-places when we would have spoken the very secrets of God; we grieve the life we sought to cheer. We weep with vexation over days that are mere comedies of errors, or deserts of dullness. The eternal, the glorious relief from all this is Christ's knowledge of our better self. Jesus knows. He sees the glorious purpose which by some flash of temper or by some maladroitness

we nullified this very morning. He realises and accepts the heaven-soaring prayer which potentially filled our spirit when, under the drowning surge of weariness, we could pant forth but one ejaculation. He measures the celestial idea of living, which, like a city of gold flashes continually before our ambitions, and fails continually before our blundering life. He knows us not only as we are, but as we mean to be.

*"All I could never be,
All men ignored in me
This I was worth to God,
Whose hand the pitcher shaped".*

My beloved Master, "Thou knowest all things". All power in heaven and earth has been given to thee. Thou knowest the great secrets of the Father's purposes. To thee it has been given to know all the contents of the scroll within and without. But of all thy boundless knowledge this only gives me courage to come to thee, and offer thee this day my faulty life: O blessed Saviour, "Thou knowest that I love thee". Here then is the saint's rest, for here our faith may drop its anchor in the calm sure haven of the comforting assurance that "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms".

With such immutable promises to cheer us on our way, how earnestly we should seek to emulate the spirit of David, and vow with him that, *"Now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me; therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord"* (Psa. 27. 6). This was the experience of Paul and Silas when their songs of deliverance were sung while as yet their feet were fast in the stocks. Their songs made possible a defeat of the enemy that could never have been accomplished if they had failed in their faith in God. This also was the experience of Israel in one of their memorable battles with the enemy recorded in 2 Chron. 20. King Jehoshaphat had received word of an invasion that

at first looked like sure and terrible destruction; a great multitude from beyond the sea. But on going to the Lord in prayer, and confessing, *"We have no might against this great company...but our eyes are upon thee"*, confidence was quickly established. On the morrow they went forth to battle, but how? *"He (Jehoshaphat) appointed singers unto the Lord that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth forever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir; which were come against Judah....And they were three days in gathering of the spoil, it was so much."* They had more than victory over an enemy driven out before them, they had riches and jewels "more than they could carry away".

There are two songs connected with this battle, one of praise inspired by faith in the presence and power of God when face to face with seeming defeat, the other a song of thanksgiving after the victory had been gained, in acknowledgment of the faithfulness of the One in whom they had trusted. Both of these songs should be in our experience also. Songs in the night are gloriously possible to faithful saints - songs of praise and thanksgiving. Confidence, singing its assurance of victory through Christ, will drive away doubt and fear. We, too will have our triumphant song by and by in the valley of Berachah (blessing), glorifying God for his faithfulness to us, but it is more precious just now to know that we are singing the first song - praising God, yes, and seeing him set his ambushments against the enemy, and driving him out. Shall we not have both songs in our completed experience? We will indeed, if we constantly remember, in the house of our present pilgrimage, that "The Eternal God is Thy refuge, and underneath are the Everlasting Arms".

*From "Peoples Paper and Herald of Christ's Kingdom",
Melbourne, Australia; abbreviated.*

"Love thinketh no evil." (1 Cor. 13. 5).

The word used here for "thinketh" (*logizetai*) is a mathematical word meaning to compute, calculate, or reckon, hence to count or credit to one's account. A number of other texts illustrate its use, as 2 Tim. 4. 16: "All men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be *laid to their charge*", and a double occurrence in Rom. 4. 3-4: "Abraham believed God and it was

counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not *reckoned* of grace, but of debt". The thought is that love does not keep account of evil so as to hold it against the evil-doer. It is not that, as one translation has it, love "takes no account" of evil, i.e., ignores it, but that love will not record evil done to it with a view to holding it against the evil-doer responsible. Love is forgiving "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you".

A. O. Hudson

THE BARREN FIG TREE

Most of Jesus' parables were spoken ones; one or two were acted, and this incident of the fruitless fig tree was one of them. On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem one morning, Jesus hungered, and went to a wayside fig tree hoping to find some figs thereon. Failing to find any - Mark says, "*for the time of figs was not yet*" - Jesus condemned the tree to perpetual sterility, and shortly afterwards it withered away. The story is recounted by Matthew (21. 19-21) and Mark (11. 12-14; 20-25) and on the surface seems quite out of accord with the usual character of Jesus. That at least is sufficient justification for looking at it a little more closely.

First of all, a comparison of the two accounts. The crucial remark differs a little between them. Matthew has it, "*Let no fruit grow on thee for ever*" which is expressed as a prohibition, and Mark, "*No man eat fruit of thee for ever*" which is more like a statement of fact than a prohibition. In Matthew the tree "withered away" immediately; in Mark it was twenty-four hours later that it was observed to have "dried up from the roots". Matthew's account makes the incident appear a miracle; Mark's is more matter-of-fact and descriptive, and yields more material for visualising what happened. It is probable though that both were eye-witnesses.

The tree was evidently a wild fig, growing, as is stated, by the roadside, although even if it was a cultivated one and owned by someone, any passer-by had the right to help himself to the fruit. This was a feature of the Mosaic Law (Deut. 23. 24-25; although this clause refers to grapes and wheat only, Josephus in Ant. 4. 8. 21. states that it was applied to all fruits and crops indiscriminately). Jesus therefore acted quite in accordance with custom in approaching it.

The tree was full of leaves, but Jesus found no figs thereon. Says Mark, "the time of figs was not yet". The incident occurred just before Passover, probably in February or March. This is too early for the normal crop of figs, but young green figs would be forming. Besides these, however, it was normal for a few of the previous year's crop to remain on the tree throughout the winter and into the spring. Had the tree been a normal one Jesus could have expected to find something edible thereon even though the time for the real crop was still several months away. But He found nothing. The tree was hopelessly barren. Had it fruited the previous year there would

have been a few of that crop on its branches; had it been going to fruit this year there would have been some early green ones visible. There was nothing; only a mass of green leaves that belied the sterility of the tree.

It is important to notice that it was not Jesus who made the tree fruitless for the future. It was already barren, uncultivated, with no husbandman to look after it, a mere useless cumberer of the ground. The Lord's words only confirmed what was an obvious fact. The A.V. of Matthew is unnecessarily prohibitive; the literal Greek is, in Matthew, "no more - of thee - fruit may be produced - for ever" and in Mark "no more - of thee - for ever - no one - fruit may eat". The tree was already doomed and Jesus formally pronounced its condemnation.

Passing that way the next morning, the disciples found that the rich show of leaves had wilted and the tree was "dried up from the roots". The disciples, wondering, asked of Jesus "*how did the fig tree wither away?*" (Matt. 21. 20 RV; not "how soon" as in the A.V.) Peter, more impetuous, came in with "*Master, behold, the tree which thou cursedst is withered away*" (Mark 11. 21). He associated Jesus' words of the previous day with this sudden withering away. The word he used, rendered by the English "curse" means to doom or condemn a thing to destruction, in a case like this a giving up to perpetual sterility, as in its usage in Heb. 6. 8, speaking of Christians backsliding into Judaism, "*that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned*". That in turn is based upon the story of Eden and the unprepared outer earth in Gen. 3. 17-18; "*cursed is the ground for thy sake...thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*". It may well be that Jesus did use his power to accelerate the end of this tree, an end which was inevitable any way; this at least might have been intended to use the incident as a parable in action for the instruction of the disciples and all who witnessed it. If they were reflective and observant, they would recall that only a few months earlier Jesus had uttered a parable which bore a striking resemblance to this incident. He spoke of a man who had a fruitless fig tree in his vineyard, and after three years thus he told his gardener to "*cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*" (Luke 13. 6-9). The gardener begged for one more year's reprieve for the

tree and he would dig around it and fertilise it anew, and if after that it was still barren, he would cut it down. To all who heard the parable it was obvious that Jesus was speaking of the Jewish nation which for three years past had refused his message and brought forth no fruit to God and must inevitably suffer the penalty of that failure. They had produced plenty of leaves of profession but no fruit of faith. For fifteen centuries they had been the chosen peo-

ple of God, given every facility and encouragement to recognise and accept their Messiah when He should appear, and when He did appear they neither recognised nor accepted him. So they were cast off, rejected and destroyed. "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground". Now these same disciples saw that parable re-enacted in real life. The tree which should have born fruit was barren; of no further use, it was cast off and rejected.

THREE STORIES OF SALVATION

3. A Rest by a Well

The message of salvation which Jesus brought from God was for all people. The barriers which men erect between peoples of different class and colour make no difference to the ultimate course of the Gospel. Therefore Jesus was friendly towards those who would have been avoided by an orthodox Jew who kept his religious ritual very carefully.

Jesus and his disciples were travelling northward from Judea to Galilee, and one of the roads by which they could journey passed through Samaria, close to the ancient city of Shechem. While the disciples had gone off to purchase food, Jesus sat resting by a roadside well. It was an ancient watering place, having been used by the patriarch Jacob many hundreds of years before. As He sat there a woman of the city came to draw water, and having nothing with which to draw water He asked her for a drink. The woman was obviously greatly surprised by the request. It was unusual for a Jew to speak to a respectable Jewess without proper introduction. The Jews were not friendly toward their Samaritan neighbours and sometimes open hostility occurred. Yet Jesus spoke to this foreign stranger who He knew to be an outcast among her own people. He did so without fear of contamination and confident that among such He could find genuine followers.

The woman's curious nature proved to be a useful means of conveying a simple but valuable message and before long the woman was tasting "living water". As they pursued their conversation she tried to divert attention from her own sinful condition and to focus it upon general ideas about religious ritual. That was the kind of worship which was now common among Jews and Samaritans, in that they were far more concerned with unimportant details of ceremony as to when and where and how they should pray and praise God than in the heartfelt communion between God and His people. Their

sermons and services were as dry as dust, with little or nothing in them to promote the spiritual health of the participants. Hence their religion was dead and their faith bound up in places and things rather than in the living Creator. Jesus directed the woman's attention back to the realities of true worship and the individual relationship with God. He showed her that outward form and appearance are negligible compared to inner holiness and aspirations. In those few recorded sentences of our Lord on this subject in John 4, we have the radical cause of Israel's failure as a nation towards the Almighty God of Abraham, who meant little more to them than the lifeless idols and mythical gods of the surrounding nations. In stating the basis of real worship, our Master also revealed the heart of God in the words "for the Father seeketh such".

Jesus needed no vast auditorium nor flocking crowd in order to preach a sermon. He was as happy speaking to one as to a hundred. How important are the words He spoke to one here and one there. They were words which could pierce the cloaks of self-righteousness or the thick coverings of utter sinfulness. The power of his message reached down into the hearts of those to whom He spoke, and then out into a wider world. The woman was so affected by the Lord's remarks to her, that on returning to the city she succeeded in persuading some of her countrymen to listen to the "prophet of Galilee". What was there about the woman that compelled others to go to see for themselves this man who she said had "told me all that I ever did?" The immediate result of that quiet meeting by the well was that "many believed" and came to understand that "this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the World". It would be impossible to assess the complete result of Jesus' talk to the woman but it would have seemed to have laid the foundations of the great missionary enter-

prise led by Philip the evangelist and recorded in Acts 8. The Lord's word of command was that the witness should be given in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria... The cities of Samaria and Shechem were not so very far from each other that the good tidings could not easily have spread among the neighbouring citizens.

This woman of Samaria, like many another, had an unquenched thirst of heart which only Jesus could satisfy. In the creation of man, God had given him a yearning to seek his Creator for life and fellowship. Although much of that original stimulus has been lost through sin, it nevertheless remains in the souls of men and women, and during their lives exerts itself. Because of ignorance, the longings of the soul are smothered by worldly pleasure and selfishness. Natural passions are given free rein and the human physique and intellect become slaves to sin in the worst form. The woman who met Jesus at Jacob's well was much such a person as that. The more respectable forms of satisfying the cravings of human nature, to excess and without restraint, are no less sinful and dominated by the Adversary of God and men.

All of these passions may be summed up in the one word "self". Where God has been forgotten, ignored and often purposely rebuffed, the dominating factor of life becomes the satisfying of one's own selfish ambition. It may be in greed for material wealth and power and then many others suffer as a result. Sometimes gluttony or drunkardness become the obsession wherein one's own kinsfolk are distressed, and sometimes the weakness is as with this poor creature who lived on the fringe of Samaritan society. All the children of Adam suffer from this malady to a greater or lesser extent and many who name the name of Christ have not been freed from its bondage through not yielding their lives completely to him.

Whatever the manifestation of the selfishness, there is only one remedy for the disease and that too was discovered by the woman of Samaria as she came to the well that day. It is to meet the "Great Physician" face to face, and to accept Him as the only Saviour from all sin. Undoubtedly the woman bore the marks of her shame in her face. Fear and anxiety, mingled with a sour expression, denote those who have yet to find the true source of happiness and peace. And like so many more who have come to the Saviour, she went away transformed. She must have been changed or those in the city of Shechem who went to Jesus as a result of hearing her message would

have given no heed to the harlot. Instead they would have thought her mad, and in fact it is remarkable that they did not. John records for us that she "*left her waterpot and went her way...*" Why was she in such a hurry? After years of struggle and wretchedness she had found new life and peace and was determined to share her joy. This she did to such effect that many went to Jesus personally and claimed him as their Saviour.

The disciples seem to have been rather left out of all this. Their understanding of the Kingdom of Heaven had not yet reached beyond the borders of their own land. Their Master seemed to be doing some strange things and appeared to speak in riddles. They did not realise that the meat and drink of which He spoke was a food for a spiritual life. As yet their minds were centred on maintaining their human life. They were still more interested in the signs and seasons of the natural world than Jesus' remarks about the fields being already white unto harvest.

Where does our chief interest lie? Have we met with Jesus and tasted the water "which was not in the well?" If so, did we leave our "water-pots" and hurry off to tell our neighbours and friends in order that they too might share with us the gift of life? Have we not found that the water which the Lord has given has not only quenched our thirst but has been a well of water springing up into eternal life? It is a solemn thought that in desert lands where water is at a premium, it is regarded as criminal to withhold information as to the whereabouts of an oasis.

Thus in this day and generation we have a foretaste of what the prophets foresaw would occur in the Kingdom of God... "*Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...*" (Isa. 55. 1) and again in John's vision of the New Jerusalem "*and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely*". Wonderful days they will be when all men everywhere are able to drink deeply of the life-giving waters in Christ. In order that we may share with Christ as fountains springing up into eternal life, we must receive now from the great Divine reservoir and already have become channels for quenching the thirst of those parched and dry in their sins.

The Lord still calls to men as He did on that last day of the Great Feast when He cried to the throngs in Jerusalem "*If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink*". (John 7. 37). And to such as truly believe on him, out of them shall "flow rivers of living water".

A. O. Hudson

JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE*A story of the First Advent*

One of the early incidents of our Lord's ministry was his discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, a discourse which both set the pattern of his future work and would, had Jesus been no more than an ordinary man, have terminated that ministry before it fairly began. Received at first with approbation, his concluding words so incensed the worshippers that they rushed him to the top of a precipice outside the town, intending to cast him down. By the exercise of that mystic power which was his, He turned and made his way through the crowd and defeated their intention.

It is a little difficult to piece together the four accounts of Jesus' movements immediately after his baptism. It seems certain that he made his way to Galilee but not at first to his home town of Nazareth. For a little while He visited other places in Galilee, arousing some interest in his message and performing some miracles. During this short time came the wedding at Cana with its turning of water into wine. Then he went to Nazareth and attended the synagogue there on the first Sabbath of his stay. Following the sequel to his discourse he went down to Capernaum on the lakeside and never went back to Nazareth.

On that memorable Sabbath Jesus entered into the synagogue and was apparently received as a well-known and respected member of the community. He must of course have been accepted for many years as a young man singularly proficient in the knowledge and exposition of the Scriptures and he had probably officiated as reader many times before. It is possible that none of the local townspeople had heard anything about his recent baptism in Jordan and they would have received him on exactly the same basis as in the past. And when, being called to read, he repeated to them the well-known words of the prophet Isaiah, words which spoke in glowing terms of Israel's coming glory, there would be much nodding of heads in approval.

"*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me*", he read, "*because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord*". (Luke 4. 18-19). Familiar words; they had heard them many times before, but today there was a difference. An air of expectancy pervaded the

synagogue. "*The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him*".

"*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears*".

That announcement must have caused a good many to sit up. Accustomed as they were to hearing the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah expounded in public, this must have been the first time they had been told that the prophecy was even then in process of fulfilment. The customary exegesis looked forward to a future day when the Roman occupation of Judea would be ended by the victorious advent of Messiah, a king ruling in righteousness and riding to victory in the majesty of his power, crushing all opposition and exalting Israel to the head of the nations. The rest of the chapter and the succeeding chapters, are eloquent on this theme, how that the Gentiles would become tributary to Israel and bring gifts, how the old desolations would be restored and the favour of God be turned toward his people as in the days of old. Here was a theme with which any preacher could always command the attention of his audience, present woes being temporarily forgotten in the anticipation of that which was to come. The idea that the fond expectation was to be realised in their own day and time must have awakened instant interest just as the same kind of declaration has done in every generation since that day.

Details of the sermon which Jesus preached have not been recorded. All that is known is that "*all bear him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*" (Luke 4. 22). Up to this point his words could be unanimously approved, as they always are when a congregation has its own particular beliefs, prejudices and outlook endorsed from the pulpit. But Jesus had no intention of finishing on that note. He intended to complete the vision of Isaiah, to show how the glory of the Lord is to be revealed to all flesh, and all men all over the earth have the opportunity of covenant relationship with the God of Israel. The Jews of our Lord's day never failed to remember that their nation one day was to be exalted above the nations and become the blessed people of God but they had long since forgotten the expressed purpose of that destiny, that they might be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. In that they become the prototype of practically every reform movement in the Christian church, starting off in genuine evangelical fervour to deepen individual

spiritual life in close conjunction with intensive missionary endeavour in the promulgation of the Gospel to those who are still unreconciled to God. Invariably, before many generations have passed, the missionary spirit has largely died out and the movement crystallised into the unreasoning dogmatism of a sectarian club in which little possibility of further progress in the light remains.

It would seem as though the interest and enthusiasm of Jesus' hearers was not altogether without an ulterior motive. He himself anticipated a demand for the performance of some miracles. Whether this emerged from their fulsome praise of his discourse or was manifest in their attitude does not appear, but Jesus told them of his expectation that they were going to ask him some such thing. And as always, he had nothing but the stern word of reproof for those who thus manifested their lack of desire for the fundamentals of his mission. Jesus wrought many wonderful works but He did not come to earth for that purpose. He came to die for man's sin and by his life and death show to man the way by which man can be reconciled to God and ultimately fill his destined place in God's creation. The miracles of healing and other wonderful works were intended as examples, illustrations, of the wholesale work of healing and blessing He will conduct when his kingdom is set up at his Second Advent, when the glories of Isaiah's prophecies which He was then and there expounding should become realities. Jesus never refused a plea for healing, but He did not set out on a systematic campaign to heal all the diseased and crippled in Israel. He felt it necessary to stress this fact at the outset. There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, he said, all suffering from the famine, but Elijah was only commissioned to relieve one and she was not even of the chosen people; she was a Gentile of Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha but the prophet was not sent to heal any of them but only Naaman, a Syrian. And when the good people in the synagogue heard these things, they were filled with wrath.

Why the sudden change of feeling? There was probably a dual reason. Disappointment and vexation that Jesus was not going to work any miracles to satisfy their curiosity, and rage that He should dare to suggest that God would bestow blessings on the hated Gentiles. These were incidents in their sacred writings which they preferred to forget. An all-Jewish Messiah who would pander to the

national pride and use his powers exclusively for the benefit of Israel they would accept, but one who proposed to include the Gentiles and all nations in the scope of his benevolence they would not have. The meeting broke up in disorder as the congregation seized the one whom they had so lately been eulogising and rushed him outside the town to a place where in their senseless fury they would have hurled him to death from the precipice.

It seems that Jesus suffered them, unresistingly, until they came to the cliff. The record runs, "*but he, passing through the midst of them, went his way*" (vs. 30). There is something here that is very similar to the incident in Gethsemane at the close of his life when his would-be captors fell back from him upon his declaration of identity, and fell to the ground. There must have been such when the majesty of his Divine origin shone out through the veil of his flesh and caused men to realise that they had to do with one who was more than a son of Adam. So here, the maddened crowd must have fallen suddenly quiet, the rough hands loose their grip, the cries of anger lapse into silence, as the crowd looked upon the young man they had known from childhood, and beheld something in him they had never seen before. Perhaps in that moment conviction came to some of them that the words they had just listened to were words of truth, unwelcome though they had been.

So far as is known, Jesus never went back to Nazareth. His rejection by the townspeople was utter and complete. According to Mark's account, he could do no mighty works in Nazareth because of their unbelief, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk, and healed them. Capernaum became his headquarters for a while and that town probably became the home of Mary and the rest of the family. James, the eldest son of both Joseph and Mary, was grown up by now and probably assumed the duties of head of the family, so leaving Jesus free to pursue his ministry wherever it might take him. It is significant that none of his disciples came from Nazareth. None of his old time friends, the companions of his youth, believed in him enough to throw in their lot with him. It was chiefly from among the fishermen of the lakeside that he found the men who were to labour and suffer with him. Pride, and prejudice, and bigotry and national arrogance, blinded the men of Nazareth so that they missed the opportunity they and their nation had been anticipating for centuries. They rejected their most illustrious citizen, and the opportunity never came their way again.

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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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BOOK REVIEW

Musical Instruments of the Bible

This is the title of a book (ISBN: 0 9527606 0 6) by Jeremy Montagu, who is Curator of the important Bate Collection of Historical Instruments in Oxford. It is published by the Montagu Collection of Musical Instruments, 171 Iffley Road, Oxford OX4 1EL, price £3.00 + 50p p&p.

Though only 21 pages long, this little monograph makes fascinating reading for anyone interested either in old instruments or in the Bible, and Montagu brings an unrivalled authority to his approach to both topics. Drawing on the original Aramaic/Hebrew texts - *Targum*, *Talmud*, *Mishnah* - he is able to compare them not only with the Greek (*Septuagint*), Latin (*Vulgate*) and English (*King James*) versions, but with our current knowledge of ancient instruments throughout the Near East, acquired through archaeology and other disciplines.

He begins with those instruments of which we have some fairly definite knowledge. Starting with Jubal, 'the father of all such as handle the harp (*kinnor*) and organ (*'ugav*)' (Gen 4:21, KJV), he continues by describing the *shofar* ('the one biblical instrument still in use'), then Moses' silver trumpets (*chatzotz'rah*) and finally the cymbals (*tzil*), drum (*tof*) and the little bells (*pa'amon*) that hung from the hem of the High Priest's robe (Ex. 28: 34).

Next Montagu deals in meticulous detail with the two main lists of musical instruments which the Bible offers us: those used to praise God, in Psalm 150, and to praise King Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 3. Finally, he deals with one or two less definable instruments (putting forward plausible suggestions for them), ending with a useful 'Further Reading' list (in which I would echo his cautionary words about either the readability or the reliability of Alfred Sendrey's well-known *Music in Ancient Israel*).

At this very reasonable price, this book can be warmly recommended, even to non-specialist readers.

B.K.S.

NOTICES

Gainsborough House, Milborne Port.

The Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust, a parallel organisation to the Bible Fellowship Union runs this Christian retirement centre, primarily for those sympathetic with the view expressed in this journal. It now has several vacancies.

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).

* * * *

"Yahweh - the Sacred Name" — a reprint to help clarify a subject which still causes misunderstanding among some Christians.

"Wedding of the Ages" — takes its inspiration from the Parable of the Ten Virgins and is a three-part series commencing in this issue. It is based upon actual observation of wedding customs in the Holy Land by an erstwhile reader during the early part of this century. Modern times have probably very largely extinguished these customs but this record well illustrates quite a number of Scripture allusions and will therefore be of interest.

"A Living Soul" — is printed in response to a reader's enquiry concerning the current debate in theological circles. We believe this article makes a useful contribution to the discussion.

Out of Print — "The Mission of Jonah" and "God of All Space" are not available from stock now, but both booklets are being reviewed for reprinting.

Omission — we regret that the title "Land of Beginning Again" did not appear in the list of publications in the March/April issue. Stocks are available and copies will be sent on request, as with other literature.

Envelopes — a change of size and style has been possible due to new International Postal regulations. This will help to reduce our ever rising costs. Please let us know if there is any problem in the arrival of your copy of the "Monthly".

Printing — we believe that readers will appreciate the efforts of the printer of the last four issues. We are grateful for his helpful co-operation. We apologise for editorial errors and inconsistencies and will endeavour to maintain the Monthly's reputation for high quality in all respects.

Gone from us



Sis. Daisy Walton (Milborne Port formerly Coventry)



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

F. H. Guard

"WHERE THERE IS NO VISION..."

Prov. 29. 18

We live in a very material world. Concerned with the present, the here and now, we must earn our living, care for our families, perform our duties in the Church and to our brethren. It is right to give time and attention to these things. The apostle Paul gives a wonderful exposition on the fact that we are seated with Christ in the Heavenlies (Eph. 2. 6) and then proceeds to show that as a result of that amazing fact we will be better husbands and wives and fathers and children, recognising our responsibilities as members of our family, Church, place of work and even of the secular State in which we live. But if we are too concerned with these material things we shall soon lose our vision and "perish", or as one translation has it, "act wildly". What an apt description of the world today!

God has given man a truly wonderful brain to cope with all the problems of everyday life. But this brain has also two other marvellous functions. It provides a memory to bring back to the consciousness the things of the past and an imagination which can envisage the things of the future. The memory and the imagination, like most of our abilities, can be used for good or evil. We are told of those living in the time of Noah whose imagination was "*only evil continually*" (Gen. 6. 5). We can dwell upon things of the past which would depress or worry, and we can look forward to real or fancied events which might have a similar effect.

For the Christian, the memory and the imagination will both be included in those things which are consecrated to the Lord and they can be of great importance in spiritual development. Imagination, as the word is here used, is not the practice of day dreaming, of vague desires and fancies which can never be realised, but that "*faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11. 1). These images of future events, far from being unrealistic, are more substantial than the ever changing and collapsing world around us, for "*the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Cor. 4. 18).

In quiet moments we can ponder on the memory of the Lord's great goodness, as the Israelites were many times exhorted to "remember" how God had brought them out of Egypt and led them safely through the wilderness and had overcome their

enemies in Canaan. So we can continually remember our great deliverance from the power of Satan and the many providences in our lives ever since. How often we have told the Lord of our difficulties and always He has heard the petitions. As we recognise and give thanks for each answer to prayers we go forward in renewed strength and trust, learning by blessed experience that He never leaves nor forsakes us.

But what of imagination? Does faith rise as often or as high as it might, to consider the things hoped for but as yet unseen? Do we really have a vision?

Isaiah had a vision — a splendid vision of the Lord, high and lifted up. He saw the seraphim and heard them proclaiming "*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*" (Isa. 6. 3). As always when men are confronted with the holiness of God, Isaiah was immediately conscious of his sin and of the sin of Israel. Nevertheless, in spite of this sense of utter worthiness, he heard the cry "*Whom shall I send and who will go for us?*" and because of that glorious vision he at once responded "*Here am I, send me*" (Isa. 6. 8). His name means "Yaweh is salvation" and this was to be the theme of that wonderful message to Israel, although as part of the message he would have many hard and critical things to say to them, many dire prophecies of the Lord's disciplines. He would warn of invading armies, of the land laid waste, of years of captivity. He would also tell them truths which, in spite of their years of training in the law and the offerings, they would not really understand, and he would give foregleams of a salvation extended to Jew and to Gentile and of the earth restored as the Garden of Eden. Much of the message would be unpopular and the world has a cruel way with those whose prophecies are not acceptable. If tradition is to be believed Isaiah was among those faithful ones described in Heb. 11 as "sawn asunder".

But he had had his lips touched with coals of fire and his sin forgiven and he was activated by the zeal to serve the Lord which always follows the true appreciation of forgiveness. He volunteered before he knew what was entailed, with a faith like that of Abraham who went out not knowing whither he went. His task was made doubly hard because he was told beforehand that much of it would be fruitless labour, that they would not understand, that they

would not hear with their ears or see with their eyes. Yet Isaiah went forth and in the strength of that great vision. He was given the support of the knowledge that a remnant would be saved and that the stumbling of the nation would not be final.

What an amazingly important message was his! By his words, from time to time, the dormant Messianic hopes of Israel were revived and the influence of these words can be traced in the writings of later prophets, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Surely, from the writings of Isaiah Jesus himself learned much of how the Lord God would lead him. He would read of the terrible sufferings to be endured for the transgressions of his people, but He would know also that eventually He would "*see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied*" (Isa. 53). From the same book He was strengthened with the promise of the Kingdom which should never end, of which He would be the King, so that Paul could say of this suffering Servant, "*for the joy that was set before him He endured the Cross*" (Heb. 12. 2).

In Isaiah John the Baptist found that which defined his position as the "voice of one crying in the wilderness", preparing the way for the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world and with words from this book Jesus himself encouraged John when, imprisoned by Herod, he felt forsaken.

Many are the quotations in the New Testament which show how the apostles read and loved and by the power of the Holy Spirit understood this prophecy. It confirmed their identification of Jesus as the Messiah and encouraged them to look for that new heaven and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. So too have faithful Christians throughout the Gospel age been encouraged by the precious promises recorded in Isaiah.

But it was the vision so graciously given by the Lord to Isaiah which enabled him to give forth his message so courageously. How many times when he tried to warn the people and found them so slow to understand would he remind himself "I saw the Lord, high and lifted up!" and when the people continued in their faithlessness and the enemies swarmed over the land, he would rejoice in his heart at the memory of the words, "The whole earth is full of his glory". Because of the vision he even endured martyrdom, surely remembering the words of Isaiah 25. 8, "*He will swallow up death in victory*".

The record of Hebrews 11 suggests that many of that list of faithful witnesses qualified for inclusion

therein because they had a vision. Abraham looked for a "city which has foundations, whose builder, and maker is God". Through all his varied experiences Abraham could look beyond the present and see, in imagination, the day of Christ. Moses counted the sufferings of Christ of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Surely he had a glimpse of the Messianic reign when he said, "*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet...like unto me; unto him thou shalt hearken*". Without his vision on the Damascus road, would Saul of Tarsus ever have become the apostle Paul? Not only did he have this wonderful experience but he was able to say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision". Visions are not given simply for man's joy and wonderment. They bring the power to do great things and also a tremendous responsibility. Those who are granted great visions are often called upon to suffer greatly.

We have seen the martyrdom of Isaiah. Moses suffered much from the rebellion of the Israelites. Abraham was called upon to show his willingness to sacrifice his only son and Paul was shown how great things he must suffer for Christ's sake.

Great experiences come in the quiet times, not in those snatched moments of prayer and study which give the Spirit no time to breathe the air of heaven. Noah must have spent much time in communion with God to enable him to become a preacher of righteousness in the midst of that wicked generation. He was saved out of the world because he had proved that he did not belong to it. He and his family were the only ones who did not merit the terrible condemnation "It repented the Lord that He had made man". Moses was alone in the wilderness when God revealed himself in the burning bush and gave him his great commission. As Noah kept himself apart from the evil world around him, so Moses had to come out of the court of Pharaoh. Abraham did not receive his vision until he left the heathen city of Ur. Then God gave him a promise of wonderful blessings for himself, his descendants and through one special Descendant, all the families of the earth. It was not until Paul was in the desert of Arabia that he was taken up to the third Heaven and shown things not lawful to be uttered. Our Lord himself found it necessary to leave the city and go alone into the hills to commune with his Father, spending all night in prayer. We can imagine this was a frequent occurrence. John was alone on Patmos when his great Revelation came, at the end of a long life of loving service.

In different ages and with different individuals God uses different methods. We do not, as a rule, have miraculous encounters with the Almighty, although there are moments when we feel He is so near we could almost say, "I saw the Lord". But these times are rare, perhaps more rare than they should be. Of course we know we are on unsafe ground when we depend too much upon our emotions, but our faith always gains great impetus when we can form some mental conception of the power and love of God.

We do not have a wilderness, a desert, a Patmos, a Judean Hill. Perhaps we cannot often withdraw from physical contact with those around us, but if we take advantage of what opportunities we have for meditation, we can cultivate a quietness within ourselves which can lead to an ever growing awareness of fellowship with our Father and the Lord Jesus.

How very much there is in God's word to teach of his power and love. See him as the Mighty One, revealed in thunder and lightning on Sinai, while Israel trembled. In all the minutæ of the Law, appreciate how He instructed the nation as to his holiness and their sinfulness. See how He provided for their every need in the wilderness and how, in many varied expressions, types and pictures, he gave them promises of the coming Saviour. He himself said, *"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"* (Isa. 5. 4). Read of the mighty works He accomplished through Elijah. The faith of this prophet leaves us gasping, but we are glad that a record has been kept of his despondency under the juniper tree, for it shows the loving tenderness of God when He met his depression with comforting words and necessary food.

What scope there is for meditation in the Book of Revelation, as we ponder on the greatness of the One walking in the midst of the candlesticks. We have proved in our own experience that He is faithful and true as we remember that He is the Lamb Who died

for us and also the One who encourages every true ecclesia and every individual member. He is the One Who will take the Church to himself as his Bride and to her will be granted all the special blessings referred to in this book. We too, like God's people of old, can have a vision which will enable us to do all things through Christ.

The poet was right when he said, "The world is too much with us". We can have, not only the memory of God's great love in the past and a bright hope of a glorious future, but a vision of that other world which surrounds us even now. Surely the Secret of the serenity of Jesus was that the spirit world was to him more real than the material one. He was always aware of his Father's presence; He knew He was surrounded by legions of angels.

Can we not give more thought to the eternal realities? God is on his throne; the great High Priest ever lives to make intercession for us; our angels always behold the face of the Father. God's word declares all this to be true. Most thinking Christians are agreed that the time must be short before the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ, and as his children we are already translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. So by faith we can use our God-given imagination to bring into present experience the mercies of the past, the hope of the future and the unseen but eternal things of the Spirit which even now are ours if we but claim them. As these things become more and more part of daily life we shall be spurred on to greater faithfulness so that we shall be able to say, humbly and gratefully, *"Mine eyes have seen the King in his beauty and I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"*.

*"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful Face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of his glory and grace"*.

From vintage of sorrow
Are deepest joys distill'd
And the cup outstretched for healing
Is oft at Marah filled.
God leads to joy through weeping.
To quietness through strife;
Through yielding unto conquest,
Through death to endless life.

Back of the loaf is the snowy flour
And back of the flour, the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and the sower
And the sun and the Father's will

Every day is crowded with minutes, and every minute with seconds, and every second with opportunities to develop fruitage.

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON

*The story of a
great man's faith*

4. Master of the Magicians

Something like twenty years elapsed between the respective events of the second and third chapters of Daniel, the king's dream of the image and the casting of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah into the fiery furnace, twenty years of which the Book of Daniel says not a word, but a period crowded with important happenings and incidents in the story of Israel. During that time Judah became finally free from the dominion of Egypt and subject to Babylon, Jehoiakim king of Judah died and after the short three months' reign of Jehochin was replaced by Zedekiah. The king of Babylon besieged and captured Jerusalem, laid the land desolate and took the bulk of the people captive, thus completing the "carrying away into Babylon" which marked the end of the Jewish monarchy. Ezekiel the priestly prophet commenced his ministry amongst the exiles and saw the first of those glorious visions which culminated many years later in his wonderful foreview of the Millennial Temple that is yet to be. Obadiah and Habakkuk both gave voice to their prophecies in Judea. Jeremiah continued his work and was finally taken into Egypt after the fall of Jerusalem, and died there. Cyrus the Persian, before whom the might of Babylon was eventually to crumble away, was born. All these things happened during this twenty years which lie between Chap. 2, and Chap. 3, and Daniel does not so much as mention any one of them.

He was about twenty-one years of age when he stood before King Nebuchadnezzar and interpreted the dream of the image. At the time of the burning fiery furnace incident he was probably just entering his forties. During the interim he steadily advanced in favour with the king and in power, honour and influence. According to Chap. 2. 48, in consequence of his interpreting the king's dream, "*the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon*". Later on, in Chap. 4. 9, Daniel is referred to by the title "Master of the Magicians". These expressions indicate that the Jewish youth had become, next to the king himself, the most important and influential person in the land. Such sudden accession to a position of power from a humble origin may appear strange and improbable to our Western minds but it was by no means an uncommon thing

in the court of an Eastern King. Joseph was summarily exalted by the Pharaoh of Egypt in just the same way; Haman was deposed and Mordecai raised to take his place by Ahasuerus of Persia, as related in the Book of Esther. Classical historians record plenty of similar instances in ancient times, and there is no reason to question the integrity of the story on this account.

The titles used make it clear that Daniel had been elevated to the position of what we would call Prime Minister of the land, and in addition constituted titular head of all the Babylonian priest-hoods and learned men. It is as though he combined the offices of Prime Minister, Archbishop of Canterbury and President of the Royal Society all in his own person. At twenty-one years of age it was a situation calling for a most unusual degree of wisdom and discretion. The sequel to the story shows that Daniel possessed both in ample measure.

This is an aspect of the Babylonian captivity which is not always appreciated. It is customary to think of the hapless Jews going to servitude and slavery in a strange land, at the mercy of ruthless captors and bereft of the consolations of their own religion.. "*By the waters of Babylon we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered thee, O Zion*". "*How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?*" That may well have been the heart attitude of those to whom Jerusalem and Judea and the worship which could only be offered in the hallowed land meant more than anything else in the world. But it is not likely that the captive Jews were badly treated. The story before us shows that God, although He had fulfilled His word and removed them from their own land in punishment for their apostasy, nevertheless marvellously provided for their wellbeing in the land of their captivity. Daniel was virtual ruler over all domestic concerns in the whole realm, and he had as his lieutenants three others of his own countrymen. Surely this quartette, able to decree more or less as they pleased, saw to it that their own people were at least fairly treated compared with the rest of the population. The term "province" in Chap. 2. 48 means "realm" or "empire"; the "whole province of Babylon" denotes the entire realm over which King Nebuchadnezzar had control, and the fact that during the major part of his reign he

personally led his armies in the field and was necessarily absent from his capital city for long periods makes it fairly certain that Daniel was to administer on his behalf and watch for his interests in his absence.

The first use that Daniel made of his new appointment was to urge upon the king the advisability of some delegation of authority. The import of verse 49 is that his three friends, now known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, were put in charge of the detailed administration of day-by-day matters, "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon," whilst Daniel himself remained in daily attendance on the king himself for the discussion of important matters. "Daniel sat in the gate of the king".

So for a span — probably for a large part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign — the empire was ruled by a "cabinet" of which at least the four leading members were Jews. It was during these forty years that the empire expanded to its greatest extent and its wealth and magnificence reached their peak. Secular historians ascribe the honours for this to King Nebuchadnezzar, on the strength of his many inscriptions, in which he takes all the credit to himself. One wonders how much of this prosperity was in fact due to the wise and just administration of the four Jews who must of necessity have borne a large share of the responsibility for what was achieved.

That fact poses a question. What were these men doing, helping to build up a system which God had already condemned and against which the prophet Jeremiah, still in the homeland of Judea, was pouring forth his most passionate denunciations? What kind of service to God was this which resulted in the establishment, more firmly than ever before, of an utterly idolatrous and corrupt system which God intended to destroy?

Was it, that like Jonah at Nineveh, God gave Babylon a last chance to repent? True enough it is that Babylon became a means in the Lord's hand for the chastisement of Israel but Babylonians as well as Israelites were the creation of God's hands and even with that debased nation it must have been true that God "*hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn you from your evil ways, and live ye*". Nineveh had forty days grace by the preaching of Jonah — and by reason of her repentance earned a remission of the threatened

overthrow for something like two hundred and fifty years, for Jonah preached about B.C. 850 and Nineveh was not overthrown until B.C. 612. So in Daniel's day Babylon had forty years' opportunity to profit by the righteous administration of men of God, and mend its ways. There is a cryptic word in Jeremiah's prophecy which can only be understood if something like this was indeed the case. "*We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every man into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven.*" (Jer. 51. 9). It is a historical fact that during Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when according to the Bible Daniel and his friends administered affairs of state, Babylon prospered and ruled the nations unchallenged. It is also a historical fact that directly Nebuchadnezzar was dead, and they were ousted from their positions, the decline and fall of Babylon set in. A succession of five kings over a period of only twenty three years, the Persian enemy hammering at the gates; then the dramatic fall of Babylon so eloquently portrayed by Jeremiah fifty years before and Isaiah nearly two centuries before. These are facts of history which cannot be disputed, and the logical conclusion is that Daniel and his friends were in the positions they occupied by the will and providence of God. Having been thus appointed they did right in exercising to the fullest extent, in harmony with the principles of Divine law, the earthly powers with which they had been entrusted. The fact that they served a pagan king and ruled an idolatrous people made no difference to that. They let their personal light shine, they did not at any time compromise their own principles or beliefs, and they did with their might what their hands found to do.

In all that there may well be a lesson for us today. All too often the argument is advanced that because of the inherent corruption of the world around us, Christians should withdraw from all participation in its affairs, especially in regard to the occupation of positions of influence or authority. It does not always follow; it may be that the inscrutable decrees of God require that we or at least some amongst us, take up some such position and administer it as did Daniel in his time, and Joseph before him "*Ye are the salt of the earth*", said Jesus, but He surely never intended us to assume the salt was not to be used. We can only be the salt of the earth if we are fulfilling, in society, the function which salt fulfils in food. "*In the world, but not of it*", says the Apostle. Some

Christians are neither of the world nor in it, and that fact is not likely to stand them in good stead when the time comes for our Lord to determine who, by intimate acquaintance and experience with the needs and failings of fallen humanity are to be appointed to the work of leading men back to God.

As "*chief of the governors of the wise men*" (Ch. 2. 48) and "*master of the magicians*" (Ch. 4. 9) Daniel became the official head of the entire Babylonian priestly system, which itself controlled every branch of knowledge and learning practised in the land. He was supreme High Priest of the nation. Religious worship, education, the compilation and care of the national records, were all under his control. The temples, the schools, the libraries, all were his responsibility. All this, too, whilst he was still in his twenties. It was in the third year of Jehoiakim that he was taken to Babylon at probably about eighteen or nineteen years of age. He received three years' training before appearing before the king early in the sixth year. Nebuchadnezzar's father died at the time of the Battle of Carchemish, which was in Jehoiakim's fourth year, and this was the commencement of Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign (Jer. 25. 1). That must have been towards the end of Jehoiakim's fourth year so that Nebuchadnezzar's "second year" (Dan. 2. 1) in which he dreamed of the image, would extend nearly to the end of Jehoiakim's sixth year. Hence there is time for Daniel's three years training to have been completed and several more months to elapse before he again stood before the king and interpreted the dream. There is no need to imagine, as some do, that "second year" in Dan. 2. 1 is an error and casts doubts upon the accuracy of Daniel's account. (Some commentators on this account suggest that Ch. 2. 1 is a copyists error for "twelfth year" but there is no evidence whatever for this). The incidents of Daniel's life and all the events connected therewith can only be made to fit together on the basis that, as the Book of Daniel indicates, he attained his eminent position before the king thus early in life.

Daniel was now Supreme Pontiff — official Babylonian title "Rab-Mag" — of all the religious systems of Babylon. This is the title which was afterwards taken over by the Popes of Rome and Latinised into "Pontifex Maximus". As such he controlled the magicians, sorcerers, soothsayers, astrologers, wise men and Chaldeans, in addition to the priests of the various and many gods of Babylon.

Each of these orders had distinct and separate functions; thanks to modern research and the discovery of abundant written records it is possible today to form a tolerably correct picture of what these men were and what they professed to accomplish.

The "magicians" (*khartumin*) were men whose office was to repulse and exorcise demons and evil spirits by means of spells and incantations. They carried wands of office and were popularly supposed to have the power of working miracles. If the crops failed, a man's cattle died, or a whirlwind blew a house down, the magician was called in to exorcise the demon who was thus venting his spite against the unfortunate family concerned.

Closely allied to these were the sorcerers (*kashaphim*) who were utterers of magic words having the mystic power of persuading the gods to grant favours to their devotees. The man who desired some natural advantage, such as the gift of children, or the removal of an offending neighbour, sought the services of the sorcerer, who would know just what secret magical words to utter to constrain the appropriate god to perform the required service.

The "soothsayers" (*gazrim*) of Dan. 2. 27 were diviners who professed ability to pronounce upon the probable outcome of any human circumstance by the aid of laws which they alone understood. If a new venture was to be undertaken or the king proposed to launch a new war, the soothsayer was consulted in much the same way as some people go to fortune-tellers today. The selected dignitary had several means of arriving at his conclusions, a favourite one being the inspection of the liver of an animal sacrificed for the purpose. (An example of one of these soothsayer's "stock-in-trade" is now in the British Museum. It is a baked clay model of a sheep's liver marked out in fifty squares. In each square is inscribed the portent for that particular spot). In the divining ceremony, the liver from the sacrificed animal was examined and if any spot was diseased or showed some abnormality the portent for that particular spot was pronounced as an omen for the venture or project under review. Reference to this form of soothsaying in Daniel's own time is made in Ezek. 21. 21, where we are told that the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) uncertain which of two ways to take, "looked in the liver".

Next come avowed occultists, the "astrologers" (*"assaphim"*) of Dan. 1. 20. The term is a mis-translation. These men held communion with evil

spirits with the object of gaining information not obtainable in any other way. Their methods and practices were the same as those of spiritists in every age.

The "wise men" ("*khakamin*") of Dan. 2. 18 and elsewhere were really the medical fraternity. Disease and sickness was popularly considered to be the work of demons and hence magical practices to drive out the evil spirit responsible was a large part of a physician's stock-in-trade. Prayers and incantations to the gods also came in for attention. Nevertheless true medical knowledge was not altogether lacking, and the medical works which have survived show that a very fair understanding of many diseases was the rule; the names of over five hundred medicinal drugs have been identified in the Babylonian pharmacopeia. Their more intimate contact with the common people brought them into more immediate touch with many everyday problems and hence, as is often the case with medical men today, the local medical man was considered an important and knowledgeable member of the community whose standing and authority in any matter of civic or social interest was undisputed.

Chaldeans ("*kasdim*") was the name originally given to the primitive people of the land and in any other part of the Bible preserves this sense. In the Book of Daniel, however it is limited to a certain class of men within the nation; men who formed a kind of quasi-secret society which preserved the lore and traditions of the past, and exercised power and influence behind the scenes — a kind of "Hidden Hand". This caste of Chaldeans was the senior of all the orders of society which have just been described.

On the purely religious side Daniel must have had a bewildering array of gods and goddesses, each with their temples and priests, with which to contend. First of all came the Babylonian trinity, Ea, god of the sea and supreme god; Anu, god of heaven; Bel or Marduk (one is the Semitic and one the Sumerian name for the same god) god of the earth. Marduk was the son of Ea, was known as the "Wisdom of Ea", and was supposed to have created the earth and man upon it — a notable anticipation of the later Scriptural presentation of the Son of God Who is also the Word of Wisdom of God and by Whom all things were made. The chief goddess was Ishtar, Queen of Heaven (Ashtaroth to the Syrians and Venus in classical mythology). Another important deity was Sin the

Moon-god, patron deity of Ur, Abraham's birthplace, and incidentally the source of the name Mount Sinai and the Wilderness of Sin through which Israel travelled at the time of the Exodus. Both mountain and wilderness were named in honour of the Moon-god.

Then came a number of lesser gods, seven messenger-gods or "archangels", an indeterminate number of "Watchers", three hundred spirits of the heavens, three hundred spirits of the earth, then angels and demons, good and evil, innumerable. One can imagine Daniel at times in earnest conversation with King Nebuchadnezzar, telling him of the hollowness and falsity of all this mass of superstition and corruption, and endeavouring to turn his mind to the glory of the one incorruptible God, in whom all men live, and move, and have their being. (Acts 17. 28).

Why did Daniel accept such a position, when every instinct of his being must have risen in protest at the sights he would inevitably witness and the ceremonies he must needs allow. The answer is simple. God had called him to this position, and he was able to discern enough of God's purpose to know that God is all-wise and that some definite reason lay behind that call.

The very fact of this high position was sufficient to release him from any necessity to condone or attend the idolatrous ceremonies. There were many faiths in Babylon — one for every god — but Daniel, as chief, was above them all. Who can doubt that, in all the majesty and dignity of his exalted position, he prayed with his windows open towards Jerusalem daily, as is recorded of him at a later time in his life (Dan. 6. 10). Who can doubt that he assembled for worship with his fellow-countrymen of like faith in some plain, dignified building where God was worshipped in spirit and in truth. The known character of Daniel is sufficient guarantee to us that his official position only served to show up the more prominently to all men the faith that was in him and to give glory to the God he served.

Nebuchadnezzar had already admitted Daniel's God to a place among the gods of Babylon. Moreover, he later on publicly proclaimed Him as being the greatest and most powerful of all gods (Dan. 3. 29 and 4. 34-35). Hence Daniel could with perfect propriety profess the worship of the God of heaven just as other notables might select Bel, or Nebo, or Nergal, as their own deity. The officials of the court,

and the common people too, would not be likely to quarrel with the personal views of a man so high in favour with the king as was Daniel; and neither would the priests of the various temples, while the king lived. They would of course bide their time until a king more favourable to the native priesthood should ascend the throne.

It might have been, then, for twenty years or more, that the lad, now grown to middle age, administered his charge with loyalty both to his God and to his king. Beholding, as he did, every day, the sensuousness and idolatry of the God-dishonouring system

in which his life was being spent, he must often have cried out in his heart "*How long, O Lord, how long?*".

But the ways of God require slow ages for their full accomplishment, and it must needs be that for many weary years more the mystery of iniquity would and still continues to work, until in God's own time comes the day when "*the law of the Lord shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*" and the Lord as it were arousing Himself at long last, shall "*take away the veil that is spread over all nations*".

(To be continued)

T. W. Watson

THE SHINING ONES

A quiet
meditation

"Though ye have lien among the pots yet shall you be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold". (Psa. 68. 13)

This little gem appears to be out of place in a song of David which seems full of superlatives ascribing to God power and salvation on behalf of a nation, even a world, held in captivity. From among its stirring sentiments peeps this homely vignette of the dove among the pots, those broken fragments of earthenware flung carelessly upon the flat house-top after the Eastern fashion.

The poet-king may have been sitting upon his own royal roof, thoughtfully plucking the strings of his instrument while seeking inspired words in which to express his unbounded confidence and praise to "him that rideth upon the heavens". His mind may suddenly have been arrested by a flight of doves from some humbler roof, a common enough sight, their wings gleaming in the sunlight. If so, he was led to include it in the colourful imagery by which he described God's ways with man.

It is the theme of the obscure brought to beauty from unlikely places by unlikely methods. As David's eye followed the track of the gentle, domesticated dove, the flashing wings became a flash of insight. Although the bird of peace had made her nest and reared her brood among discarded household rubbish, yet she and her young ones spread wings of silver and gold as they soared untrammelled into the clear air.

Some of the world's finest and most useful people have come from obscure corners and humble homes to shine in the affairs of men like knights in silver armour with breastplates of gold presented to all the

fiery darts of a malicious opposition. David himself was one chosen from the sheepcote to be anointed king of Israel. Sallying forth in his shepherd's tunic, armed with sling and pebbles, he was the knight of God, battling with giant opposition, planting a victorious foot on a loud-voiced, bragging foe.

God's choice of men, women and circumstances rarely coincide with those of human choice. History has proved how wise and fitting are his arrangements, far above and infinitely better than those thought out by man's wisdom.

*God nothing does, nor suffers to be done
But thou thyself would'st do
Could'st thou but see,
The end of all events, as well as He.*

As Jesus remarked, "They that wear soft clothing live in king's houses". When God was preparing a herald for his Son he did not choose a prince from a royal court but a young man bred in the solitude of the wilderness, clad in a coat of camel's hair. John the Baptist is a far more arresting figure than the cunning, self-indulgent Herod who put him to death. His place in history is assured for all time as a hero of faith, a prophet of God and much more than a prophet; he prepared the way for the Son of the Highest.

Had human wisdom chosen the birthplace of that Son, nothing less than a golden crib in the palace of earth's mightiest ruler would have satisfied a fastidious choice. But God chose a stable with the manger of the tired donkeys for a cot and that lowly place of birth has captured the imagination of the world. Pilgrims of all nations find their way to Bethlehem, there to bend the knee, to bow head and heart upon that unlikely spot from which emerged

the Light of the World. Artists have employed their finest talents. Endeavouring to depict the scene, when men and angels adored the birth of One who has left an indelible mark upon the history of mankind. Yearly the scene of that humble nativity is enacted in song and story, the theme vaguely understood but closely connected with the life and hopes of humanity.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee...Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. ...Thy light shall rise in obscurity". (Isa. 60. 1, 3).

The prophets of Israel understood the mind of God. They had grasped his purpose. That He was no respecter of persons, that he passed by the pomps and vanities of this world, seeking and finding his gems, his shining ones, where no one else would look for them, was a facet of Divine character with which they became familiar. There were proud matrons in Israel who would have been prouder still to have mothered their long awaited Messiah, but the choice fell on an obscure village maiden, descendant of an obscure branch of David's royal line. Humility, meekness, tenderness and affection, qualities seen in the little dove of the house tops, shone radiantly in her as they did in all fullness in Jesus who exhorted his hearers to *"learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart"*. On his way to Calvary women cried out their envy of the woman who had borne him, who had nourished his childhood and cherished his youth, who had stored in her heart so many unspeakable memories as yet untold. But it was she who stood at the foot of his cross, the sword of anguish through her soul, her sorrow like that of the mourning, forsaken dove.

From the obscurity of a despised Galilean village, from a humble carpenter's bench, emerged that light which shone upon the darkness of the world, a light men would not or could not accept, *"because men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil"*.

The Gentiles saw and recognised that light. Many in the western world in turn rose from obscurity, sending out a light where none had been expected. David foresaw his own small nation, emerging from the obscurity of Egyptian bondage, rising again and yet again as did the dove, from the shattered remnants of other civilisations, educated, disciplined, humbled, but covered with the silver and gold of a dearly bought wisdom, to become the head instead of the

tail of many nations; an agent of blessing according to an ancient oath-bound promise.

The Apostles followed the prophets with the vision of a still higher creation, a still brighter light risen from the obscurity of human weakness to shine with the bright glory of God. Still following this theme in his letter to the Corinthians, the inspired apostle says, *"Not many mighty, not many noble are called but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are"*. (1 Cor. 1. 26-28).

Indeed God's ways and thoughts are not as man's. When finally the curtain rises on a new Age with a great burst of light from the ascending Sun of Righteousness in the new Heavens, seen shining with him in that bright firmament will be some of those humble, foolish, weak, despised outsiders, who in their lifetime wore neither crown nor mitre, who occupied no important office, who played no central role in any assembly, who were not clever enough to be scholars, but who were wise and loving enough to be saints. *"Though ye have lien among the pots"* applies to goodness, wisdom and beauty in whatever form they have been shrugged off and neglected by the short-sightedness of the policies of self-seeking peoples.

The dove is the emblem of peace. With her olive branch she is part of the pictorial language of nations. Fidelity, purity, gentleness are essential parts of her nature. This home loving bird was used to carry messages to convey love from one absent friend to another. The tame, leaf-carrying, letter-carrying gentle-eyed creature who readily came to rest on an outstretched hand, stirs in the responsive heart a sense of affection. When God would identify himself at Jordan with the well-beloved Son, the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon him. The bird of the house-tops became the bird of heaven, its wings clad in the radiant silver and gold of the Divine Spirit.

Nations in their heraldry have chosen the eagle, the lion, the leopard, the bear, to carry upon their shields or emblazon upon their standards. These fearsome creatures, equipped with talons, beaks, claws and fangs, whose only function is the rending and tearing of flesh, *"Nature red in tooth and claw"*, have in their way expressed the war-like tendencies

of man, the savagery by which men have exterminated men from time to time. There is something proud, arrogant and ruthless about these emblems of national pomp. The dove of peace, so gentle by comparison, has fallen victim to the birds of prey. To fight is not her nature. Flight is her only weapon, nor will she feed on flesh. Her food is the clean grain, the wholesome fruit of the earth. The undefiled dove is the emblem of purity, quick to forgive and forget injuries, affectionate, faithful, mourning with deep sadness when forsaken, yet joyous in company, loving the haunts of men. So has peace haunted the minds of men, with a longing, a deep desire to be at rest, to be free, not only from the carnage of war but from the tumults and quarrels of social, political and domestic life. Forever seeking peace and forever losing it in the brittle divisions of opinions, it remains only a name, an unattainable ideal, except to those rare few who have allied themselves in mystic union with Jesus, the Prince of Peace. The world can neither give peace nor get peace, nor will it ever know peace until that same Jesus rebukes its angry roar and nations bow in submission to his rule of love and justice.

"He will lift up an ensign to the nations from far". An ensign for the people, for the nations, is a rallying place, a standard, a banner, enlisting and uniting them in a common cause. It is a sign of challenge and of victory over opposing forces. When the King of kings and Lord of lords goes out to make final war against the forces of evil which have so long riddled society and destroyed the happiness of mankind, his banner will be unfurled above the fallen standards of this world. Not on his breastplate will leap the quartered leopards or the staff-hugging bear; not on his spotless flag the lion rampant or the double-headed eagle. If there is a natural emblem at all it will be the dove of peace, the emblem of love and goodwill, whose harmlessness he recommended to his followers. God's ways are the opposite of man's. In the new heavens and new earth where all things will be created new, the differences between his kingdom and those of this world will be in strong

contrast. Righteousness, right living, right thinking, justice and love will dominate and permeate the earth, for *"He shall speak peace to the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth"* (Zech. 9.10).

Neither the lion of the tribe of Judah, the star of David or the lamb bearing the cross, commendable though these emblems are, will so emphasise the spirit of the reigning Prince of peace, as that form of the dove which descended upon him at Jordan. When Jesus cleared the bustling merchandise out of the Temple he forebore to overturn the cages of the doves. Sheep and oxen he drove before him with a hastily made whip of rushes; the tables of the money-lenders he threw to the floor, caring nothing for the coinage rolling in all directions, but at the seats of those who sold doves he issued a command and that they should be carried out. The gentle emblems of purity received his gentle consideration.

The will of God, the law of God, the word of God, the person of Jesus Christ and his gospel of peace and love, which have for so long lain among the broken pots of creeds, systems and vain philosophies, of stubborn rebellion, of doubts and careless rejection, will at last emerge in their truth and beauty, too evident to be denied and too bright to be unobserved.

"Not by might, nor by power, but my spirit, saith the Lord". Not by fire, storm or earthquake, but by the still, small voice, will the human race be gentled into peace. Its evil regime may perish from its own violence but its reformation will be achieved under the shining banner of peace. As the early Christian religion overthrew the gods of the pagan world so will the peace of God under its Divine emblem subdue the nations, tame their savage impulses and create in man a new and clean heart.

*Then shall all shackles fall; the stormy clangour
Of wild war music o'er all the earth shall cease
Love shall tread out the baleful fires of anger
And in its ashes plant the tree of peace.*

(J. G. Whittier)

Kepler, the great astronomer, said, when turning his telescope to the stars: "I am thinking over again the first thoughts of God". But we can think earlier thoughts than have been written by the finger of God on the heavens and earth. We are able to think of

some of the thoughts that filled the heart of Jesus, when, before the fountain of the world, he stood forth as the Lamb slain.

F. B. Meyer

T. Holmes

YAHWEH - THE SACRED NAME

1. The Revelation of the Name

"The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...." (Exod. 34. 6).

If we would appreciate aright the deep significance of the Name under which the Almighty revealed Himself to Moses, both at the bush and on the mountain top, we must probe beneath the surfaces both of the language used and the occasions on which the language was used. No part of Scripture invites more serious reflection than does this enunciation by God of his holy Name, and it well becomes the investigator to proceed with reverent care in the elucidation of the profound truths which lie buried therein.

There is no need for the reverent student to adopt the Jewish attitude when meeting the Name in his studies. For centuries the Hebrew reader has substituted some other word, such as "lord", or "god" for the "tetragrammaton" (the Hebrew word of four consonants, YHVH, given to Moses as the Name of God) when reading his sacred Scriptures. Jewry's most respected writers have called this "the uncommunicable Name" — too sacred to be communicated by one to another — too holy to be taken upon the most devout lips. This reluctance to utter or use the holy Name was adopted in order to avoid the possibility of taking it in vain. Out of deep respect for the command *"thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain"* they preferred not to speak it at all, neither in reverence nor in levity. Thus the danger of using it lightly or in anger was avoided. A severe penalty was appointed for any rash or vain usage of the Name (Lev. 24. 10-16). Commenting upon the commandment (Ex. 20. 7) the Jewish translator, Isaac Leeser, says, *"This means that we shall not utter, 'bear on our lips' the blessed Name"*.

The English reader will note in his Bible that this sacred Name is printed in small capital characters. In the A.V. it reads *"THE LORD, THE LORD GOD...."* This is the vital part of this Scripture. The word "LORD" in these capital letters is used as a substitute for the actual word which could be transferred to our tongue from the Hebrew language. It is used in our Bible as a substitute some seven thousand times for the word "Jehovah", but this word Jehovah is a hybrid compound combining the four consonant letters of the "tetragrammaton". (J.H.V.H., where the English J replaces the Hebrew letter Yod)

with the vowel sounds of another Hebrew word meaning "lord" (*Adonai*). It is not at all of ancient usage, having been introduced into Christian literature so recently as the Reformation, around 1520 A.D. In 1611 A.D. it was introduced into the English Bible, thus giving us a word unknown to our Lord and the Early Church, and unknown to the Christian Church for about fifteen centuries. Rotherham (*Introduction to Old Testament* p. 25), says it is about as hybrid a combination as it would be to spell the name "Germany" with the vowels in the word "Portugal" — viz., "Gormuna". Jewish writers therefore are by no means responsible for the introduction of this hybrid word. They *did* use substitute words for the Holy Name, but they did not graft other letters on to it, as Christian theologians have done. Rotherham says further: *"They intentionally wrote down alien vowels — NOT FOR COMBINATION WITH THE SACRED CONSONANTS, but for the purpose of cautioning the Jewish reader to enunciate a totally different word, viz., some other familiar name of the Most High"*.

The use of the word Jehovah in some versions, and the practice of printing the word LORD in place of it in nearly all occurrences in the A.V., has hidden from the view of the ordinary Bible reader some of the most profound and beautiful thoughts which the Word of God affords. The one who comes to know the beauties of this sacred Name will never need nor desire to bury these beauties under other names, nor will he ever use 'the ineffable Name' irreverently or 'in vain'.

This Name, represented in its four essential letters Y.H.V.H., should (according to the suggestions of the most eminent scholars) have two syllables only, the first two letters being joined by an 'a' or an 'e' thus forming the syllable 'YaH' or 'YeH'; the two latter being joined by an 'e' thus forming the second syllable 'WeH' — the whole word thus compounded being 'YaHWeH' or 'YeHWeH'. Scholarly preference is generally for the first of these words, 'YaHWeH'. This is the word in Rotherham's translation without exception. To quote Rotherham *"This word is almost always regarded as the third person, singular, masculine, imperfect tense, from the root 'hawah', an old form of the root 'hayah'. The one meaning of 'hawah' is 'become'. Thus the force of the word 'yahweh' (used as a verb) would be 'He becometh'"*

or 'He will become'. When the word is used as a name (a noun) its meaning is 'He who becometh' or 'the Becoming One'.

A companion form of this word, but in the first person, singular, is found in the word 'ehyeh'. This is the word used by God at the Burning Bush when commissioning Moses to become the agent of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. In this Scripture our A.V. translation has the remarkable phrase, "I AM THAT I AM". The Hebrew text has the word (see Rotherham's introduction to the Old Testament) "ehyeh" "asher" "ehyeh" and should be translated "I will be what I will be" or "I will become what I please to become". Thus the word "Yahweh" is the word another would use when speaking to third parties about the Most High; as for instance in Ps. 91. 2 'I will say of Yahweh, He is my refuge and fortress'. "Ehyeh" is the word God would use when speaking for himself and of himself, assuring his hearers that He would become this or that, or do this or that as the occasion required.

When God introduced himself to Moses at the Bush (Exod. 3), the descendants of Abraham were in bondage. The four hundred years period which was to terminate with Abraham's seed in bondage was drawing to its close. The iniquity of the Amorites was almost full (Gen. 15. 13-16), and the due time was near when Israel should be delivered. God was proposing their deliverance to Moses, and the promise and pledge of that deliverance was the wonderful Name which the Most High used to commission and encourage Moses to undertake that task. When Moses demurred to undertake the task, God said, "*certainly I will be with thee*". To this Moses replied, "*Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say, 'What is his Name?' what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses 'I AM THAT I AM'; and He said 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you'. And God said moreover unto Moses (as he further remonstrated) 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YAHWEH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you....'*" (Exod. 3. 13-15). Thus the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were in grievous bondage, crying day and night for release, and God was preparing a great deliverance for them. "*Go and tell them, that 'I Who will be what I will be' have sent thee unto them*". Thus God

related his ability and intention to their great need, and promised to become to them all that they needed. "*I have seen their affliction; I have heard their cry; and I come down to deliver*". Such was the assurance God gave to Moses. In their dire need God promised by his holy Name to supply that need.

Passing over Moses' repeated remonstrances, and God's promise to be with them, and be unto Moses what he needed him to be (Exod. 4 and 5), we proceed to consider the second revelation of the holy Name on the mountaintop. (Exod. 34). This people had reached a crisis in their lives. For their idolatrous sin the blood-sealed Covenant had been abrogated. They had broken the solemn pact and taken another god in the place of their fathers' God. In strict justice God could have cast them off and left them to fend for themselves, even had He not destroyed them out of hand. To the greatly distressed plea of Moses, repeated again and yet again, God re-affirmed his gracious intention to be to this erring people all that He was pleased to be, and in such a way, and in such conditions, that Moses could assure that people for all time that "He will become (to you) what He will become".

"*And Yahweh passed by before him and proclaimed, I AM YAHWEH, YAHWEH ELOHIM, Merciful and gracious: longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth*". (Exod. 34. 6). Never before since the dawn of time had such words been heard by mortal man. Men had known of Yahweh before Moses came, but not in this light. Here, at last, God Most High proclaimed his compassion and pity for fallen man, in terms of touching tenderness and indescribable beauty. The heart of God was aflame with love for a rebel race, and on this mountain top it broke through its restraining bonds and began to send its rays to earth. From that time on, prophet and psalmist took up this uplifting song, and wove these assuring words into prophecy and psalm. Scores of passages of later date pulsate with the sublime promise enshrined in that holy Name. It was put forth as a promise — a most gracious promise — assuring one and all that Divine power and capacity were adaptable to any circumstance, to any difficulty, to any necessity. It becomes a veritable bank of faith to such as love God and keep his commandments, no less to us of Christian faith than to Israel of earlier days...

(To be continued)

F. A. Shuttleworth

WEDDING OF THE AGES

1. Call of the Bride

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his wife hath made herself ready". (Rev. 19. 7).

The love of romance is as old as the ages. Never has there been a time when a tale of romance failed to excite the interest of normal, rational human beings. A marriage is hailed as a truly happy event by people of every rank and race. In the Bible, the oldest and most sacred of books, more than one bright page is devoted to some love-idyll, some sweet love lyric, delighting the senses, shedding a sweetness and beauty upon the more arid and sombre experience of human history.

The Apostle tells us that *"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"*. (Rom. 15. 4). The nation of Israel was a company of people chosen and separated from the world for a special purpose; not the least part of that purpose was the use of their customs as well as their experiences to illustrate, foreshadow, enact or dramatise things which were to be part of the life of a spiritual House of Israel, another class of people also chosen and separated from the world for a Divine purpose.

Most fascinating among the customs of these eastern peoples are the betrothal and marriage customs. Eastern customs are almost opposite to those of the west, a fact which brings to mind a verse of the Word; *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord"* (Isa. 55. 8). Without doubt there are lessons for us to learn by observation of these customs and the experiences which have been recorded, not only that we may have a strong hope for the future, but that our own lives may be influenced for good by them.

When the Apostle wrote, *"All these things happened unto them for examples, and were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are met"* (1 Cor. 10. 11), we cannot afford to neglect any of them, either the failures, the successes, or the joys. In the west a man chooses his own bride and marries whom and when he pleases. In the east a bride is chosen for him and the time of the marriage fixed by the parents of the couple. It was the custom for the mother to seek out a bride for her son while still a boy. When he was grown to manhood she

then fixed the time of his marriage in consultation with the bride's parents, and the young pair dutifully accepted their choice. Nor did a son fear his mother's choice, for, like mothers the world over, only the best is good enough.

In the case of a son bereaved of his mother before a betrothal could be arranged, the father had to do the seeking. As a man was not allowed into the apartments or social of gatherings of women, he had to employ a reliable woman agent. This agent was known as a *Waakeel*. It was her special business to go about the homes and meeting places of eligible women looking for the qualities desired by a father for his son. She was plainly dressed and heavily veiled so that she attracted no personal attention. Whenever she entered the social gatherings of the young women they knew at once her errand. Each would hastily veil her face. The *Waakeel* however, with gentle firmness, would draw aside each veil, closely scanning every face. Having mentally noted looks, deportment and disposition, she next inquired of her parents her capabilities, her dower, and their consent, should the qualities of father and son meet with their approval. Everything being mutually satisfactory the marriage contract was made and in due time the wedding took place.

The contract was not made in writing. The agent, acting on behalf of the bridegroom's father, placed fingers and thumbs tip to tip with those of the bride's father, each swearing solemnly to do their part in bringing the desired union to a successful conclusion. This form of making a covenant was highly honourable, the form no doubt used by David and Jonathan when making their pact of friendship before the Lord. It was the custom of this people, when defeating a treacherous foe, to cut off the thumbs and big toes, so that never again could he pursue a foe or sign a contract. In other words he was disgraced and dishonoured as one not to be trusted. To be called "the breaker of a trust" was to give a man a bad character. This form of contract was therefore as binding as any signed document.

The agent and the father having now made all secure, the son is next informed of the plans made on his behalf. The agent sings the praises of the bride-to-be, acting as go-between, carrying gifts and messages from one to the other, who are not allowed

to meet until the wedding day. The bride adorns herself with jewels sent to her by her unseen lover, cherishing his messages, eager to learn from the agent all she can of her future home, position, and the husband with whom she will share them. A wise agent can, by faithful ministries, so enamour the pair with each other that they look forward with as much eagerness to the marriage as though they had been in personal contact throughout the waiting period. The friends of the bride gather with her as much as possible, assisting her in the making of the bridal garments. Together they sing the wedding song in anticipation of the forthcoming event, not merely because there is going to be this joyous event but because the bride is making herself ready.

The day having been decided upon, preparations are made to honour the marriage. The ceremonial is colourful, the preparations long and lavish. The marriage takes place at the bride's home, but the wedding feast is spread at the home of the bridegroom. Should the father be a man of wealth, the banquet will be a full scale full dress affair. Many guests of all ranks and classes will be bidden to attend the festivities, which often last several days according to the wealth of the father.

With each invitation goes a wedding garment, so none may excuse himself on the grounds of having no proper dress for the grand occasion. This garment is by no means a uniform. Each dress is chosen to suit the individuality of the wearer. In the case of a rich man or a King's son the dresses would be costly, of fine fabrics, often ornamented with pearls or precious stones. The dress is a wedding gift from the bridegroom to the invited guests. The non-appearance of an invited guest is an offence to the host, for hospitality is regarded in the East as the highest asset of a household, while to appear without the wedding dress, attired for preference in his own garments, is publicly to insult the host. Such a one is considered totally unfit to mingle with other guests. Not only is he forcibly ejected, he is locked up until the ceremonies are over, so that he cannot again offend by his conceited self-esteem.

All preparations being completed, the joyful households await the actual marriage and the arrival of the bridal pair with their retinue of attendants. The bride waits in readiness at her father's house, choicely attired in a dress of fine white linen, embroidered by her own hands and those of her friends who have assisted her in her getting ready.

Over this she wears a loose, short coat of red or purple silk richly embroidered in thread of gold, often sewn with jewels which have been her bridegroom's gifts to her during the period of betrothal. The richness of *her* attire is always in accord with *his* wealth. On her feet she will have silver shoes, round her waist a girdle of chased silver; while rings, bracelets, long pendant ear-rings and other adornments add to the beauty of her appearance. Thus arrayed she sits patiently upon a pile of bright silk cushions, eagerly awaiting the coming of the bridegroom. Her virgin companions are gathered about her in the same state of glad expectation. As the Eastern wedding takes place at night anytime between sundown and midnight, her watchers carry with them lamps, small oilburning clay vessels, with a cruse of replenishment oil tucked into the waist girdle, for the lights may be required for hours if the bridegroom is long in arriving. The hour is never fixed. It is just a case of waiting, all in readiness for whatever time he may arrive.

And the bridegroom, what of him? He is in a state of no less happy excitement. Suitably attired for the important event, the feast all in readiness, he sets out with a band of his men friends for the home of his bride. He does not take a direct route, for while on the way he and his followers stop to publish to all and sundry the good news of the marriage about to take place. With songs and joyful music he and his friends go up and down the highways and byways. If the bridal pair are well-known this may take some time. The virgin friends of the bride watching, alert and intent from the porch or housetop, may discern lights which herald his approach. At once the cry is raised; "*He comes! Behold the bridegroom*", but before they are on their way to escort him in, the lights recede, the sounds of song and music die away. Disappointed they return to their post while the bride within, her hopes having been raised by their shouts of joy, sinks again into an attitude of patient waiting. The bridegroom tarries; almost he had been at the door when his friends drew his attention to some group as yet out of hearing of the proclamation. As this is an important event of interest to all the neighbourhood, none must be overlooked. They may not be bidden to the feast but at least they are to hear that a marriage is to take place, and who are the participants. They may be nobody of note but so great is the joy of the bridegroom that all must be made aware of the long anticipated event.

Within and about the house an air of weariness creeps over the watchers. It grows late. The bridegroom tarries long, it seems to them, yet in reality he is coming; every moment of time he is on his way to the appointed place and union with his beloved. Once more the drowsy virgins hear the songs in the night. Getting closer now, they leap to their feet with the glad cry "*Behold the bridegroom! Go out and meet him*". It is midnight. The wait has been long. Half the bride's attendants have fallen asleep. While they pull themselves together they discover that their lamps are going out. Some have gone out, and there is no oil in their cruse for filling up the vessels. In the smoke of smouldering wicks and the darkness of lamps gone out, the bewildered virgins cry in panic to the wide-awake for oil, but this they refuse to give. They are already on their way with the lights, on the path of the bridegroom, eager and determined to go in with him to the marriage. Bustling the careless go to the oilmerchants to buy fresh supplies so they may join the glad chorus of welcome. It is difficult to buy anything at midnight, and while the unready are on their fruitless errand, the bridegroom and all the attendants have gone in to the marriage and the door is shut, barred with the stout wooden bar which locks an Eastern door. When the master of the house has once shut the door in this fashion he opens again for none. The unfortunate latecomers arrive to find their knocking for admittance all in vain. They are left in the dark, out of the honours which are going on inside.

The bride with veiled face stands before her husband, while their friends are grouped around them with their musical instruments ready to break out into the rapturous wedding song which the bride and her maidens have so often sung in anticipation of

this event. The bride's father holds above her head a drawn sword, signifying she is still under his filial protection. Her father gives her into the care and keeping of her bridegroom and the sword is lowered and sheathed, its purpose finished. Now the bridegroom lifts the veil from the face of his betrothed, draping it over his left shoulder. For the first time these two meet face to face. No distance separates them. The veil is not only removed but by placing it upon his own shoulder the bridegroom has now assumed the full responsibility of a husband. The bride has now become a wife with all a wife's responsibilities and the sharer of her husband's name, wealth and position.

There is no wedding ring in the East, but the bride's dowry, the gift of her father, in gold or silver coins, is fashioned into a tiara. This is now placed upon her head, giving her the regal aspect of a queen. The long pendants of silver chains which meet artistically below the throat is the ornament which distinguished a married woman of the East. Her wealth and position were noted by the crown. When Jesus told of the woman who lost a piece of silver and searched diligently till she found it, he was no doubt speaking of a coin lost from the head-dress of a married woman. The loss not only spoiled the symmetry of her crown, it lost a part of her wealth.

Here we take leave of the queenly bride and her proud husband as they stand side by side, radiantly happy, their friends grouped about them, the rapturous wedding song filling the night with music. Presently they will all leave for his father's house, making melody all the way. There the feast is spread, and there a father waits to welcome home a son's bride, presented to him in all her spotless loveliness with pride and exceeding joy.

(To be continued)

Social work is no substitute for evangelism. Zechariah does not say that the Kingdom of God will have come when all the frying-pans are made of gold, or even when everyone in Jerusalem had a frying-pan of their own; but when all the existing pots and pans are dedicated to the Lord. What about our fountain pens and typewriters, the symbols of our business life; our pots and pans, the symbols of our home life; our books or musical instruments, the symbols of our intellectual gifts or social attainments? Do these belong to him? Is Monday just as

much the Lord's day for us, in the sense that it belongs to him, as Sunday? If it is true that social work is no substitute for evangelism, it is equally true that evangelism not backed up by honest Christian living is of little avail. The preaching of the Gospel by the life does not absolve us from the responsibility of witness by lip, but the two must go together.

(Brian Aldis, 1942)

A. O. Hudson

A LIVING SOUL

Speculation and discussion upon the nature of the soul has always abounded. The instinctive feeling that some part of man's being must survive death and live again, in some way, at some time, provides a theme for the debates and philosophies of every age. Twentieth Century Christian thought has been determined to a considerable extent by the theology of the early Christian Fathers. Most of these venerable men had been educated in Greek philosophy and influenced by Plato, the Greek philosopher of the 4th century B.C., so that it is not surprising to find the latter's teachings occupying a more prominent place than they really deserve. Plato's theory of the soul's immortality was based upon academic reasoning and did not take into account the Divine revelation in the Bible, and for this reason much of the simple directness of the Biblical presentation is lost to orthodox Christian belief in recent times.

Fortunately for the enquirer, the Bible gives a clear and unambiguous definition of the soul. Speaking of the creation of man — an instance of direct Divine intervention in mundane affairs — the record runs "*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*" (Gen. 2. 7). The Hebrew word is *nephesh*, translated "soul" over 400 times, "life" over 100 times, and person, self, heart, mind, beast, body, creature, thing, mortal, fish, all conveying the thought of a living personality or creature, a great many more times. According to this definition the soul is the result of the spirit of life operating in, and manifested through, a living, breathing creature. Thus Gen. 46. 18 tells us that Leah bore sixteen souls to Jacob, Exod. 1. 5 that seventy souls came from his loins, and Num. 31. 28 that animals are "living souls". In Lev. 24. 18 the word is applied to beasts and in Gen. 1. 21, 24; 2. 19; 9. 10, 15, 16 to creatures. It is used for "person" about 30 times, of which Gen. 14. 21, Num. 5. 6, Deut. 10. 22, Prov. 28. 17, Jer. 52. 30 and Ezek. 27. 13 are examples, "men" in 1 Chron. 5. 21, "body" in Lev. 21. 11 and Hag. 2. 13, "thing" in Ezek. 47. 9, "one" in Lev. 4. 27, and "mortally" in Deut. 19. 11. Scores of other examples can be found upon referring to an analytical concordance.

In the New Testament the word "soul" is translated from the Greek *psuche*, which occurs about one

hundred times, of which about one half are rendered "soul" and the remainder, with few exceptions, "life". *Psuche* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *nephesh* and has the same meaning, this fact being demonstrated by the connections in which the word is used. Thus in Rev. 16. 3 the creatures in the sea are referred to as "living souls" and in Rev. 8. 9 as having "life", the same word *psuche* being used in each case. It occurs also in the sayings of Jesus: "The Son of Man...came to give his *life* (*psuche*) a ransom for many". "The good shepherd giveth his *life* (*psuche*) for the sheep". (Matt. 20. 28, John 10. 11). In quotations from the Old Testament *psuche* is used to translate *nephesh*, as for instance, 1 Cor. 15. 45 "*The first man Adam was made a living soul*" (*psuche*) and Rom. 11. 3 "*I am left alone, and they seek my life*" (*psuche*) — quoted from Gen. 2. 7 and 1 Kings 19. 10 respectively.

These are only some of the texts which show that the word is used to denote the living man in whom the Divinely-bestowed spirit of life is operating. The Book of Acts tells us that three thousand "souls" were added to the church, Jacob's kindred numbered seventy five "souls", and the ship in which Paul voyaged carried two hundred and seventy six "souls" (Acts 2. 41, 7. 14, 27. 37). Peter, likewise, says that eight "souls" were saved in the deluge (1 Pet. 3. 20). A very telling word in Heb. 4. 12 speaks of the "*dividing asunder of soul and spirit*", a clear intimation that the New Testament definition of the soul is one that identifies it very closely with the physical body. This was evidently in the mind of Paul when he used the same Greek word in its adjectival form to describe the difference between the physical human life and that spiritual life which belongs to the unseen world. In these instances *psuchikos* is translated "natural" — "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor. 2. 14); "*It is sown a natural body...there is a natural body*" (1 Cor. 15. 44). In an even more intensely physical manner the word is translated "sensual" in two places (Jas. 3. 15 and Jude 19) where the seventeenth century meaning of "sensual" — pertaining to the physical organism — is intended.

When it is understood that there can be no "soul" without the body it becomes easier to perceive the necessity of a resurrection from the dead in order to attain the future life. The Church recognises this

fundamental truth in the creeds, but it is stated more clearly and logically in the New Testament. The great theme of the apostles was that life after death comes by means of a resurrection from the dead (Acts 4. 2; 17. 18, 32; 24. 15, 21) and Paul in his famous "resurrection" chapter (1 Cor. 15) showed that God will, in the resurrection, give to every person an appropriate body, to some a natural (earthly) body, and to others a spiritual (heavenly) body. This is only one of the many indications in the Scriptures that the Divine purpose includes for a restored and purified earth on which human beings endowed with everlasting life will give eternal glory to God's Name, a phase of his plans quite separate and distinct from the "heavenly home" which awaits the "spiritually minded in Christ Jesus".

The philosophy of Plato, which coloured Jewish thought at the time of the First Advent, and which insists that the soul has existed consciously from all eternity and will exist to all eternity, being carried into Christian theology, greatly obscured another important aspect of the Scriptural presentation. Jesus declared that God can, and will under certain circumstances, destroy the soul. "*Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna*" (Matt. 10. 28). That the destruction of the soul is the inevitable consequence of deliberate, wilful sin, after full opportunity for reformation has been given, and rejected, is clear from Jas. 5. 20 and Ezek. Chapters 13, 14 and 18. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" is as definite a pronouncement as Paul's parallel statement in Rom. 6. 23 "The wages of sin is death". If, as Gen. 2. 7 indicates, the combining the spirit of life with a suitable bodily organism constitutes a living soul, then the withdrawal of that spirit of life with the consequent death of the body means the end of that soul. Hence it is only as the spirit of life

is safe in Divine keeping that a resurrection of the individual is assured, and this is the Biblical position (see Eccl. 3. 21).

It is probably true, however, to say that in our day the expression "soul" is taken to refer, not so much to the physical living being as such, which is the Bible usage, but rather to mean the seat of consciousness, desires, intellect; that permanent part of man which endures throughout life as distinct from the flesh, which is constantly undergoing change and renewal. (It is said that each part of the human body is renewed every seven years). It might be justly said that what the normal Christian regards as the "soul" is that to which the Scriptures refer as the "spirit" or "spirit of life", and as Eccl. 3. 21 declares, it is this spirit of life which, at death, returns to God Who gave it.

The infusing of the spirit of life into a bodily organism constitutes a sentient creature, or in Bible language, a living soul. In the case of man, there is intelligence, reason, powers of reflection and anticipation, etc., (which men to-day, following Greek philosophy, are in the habit of calling "the soul"). At death, this combination ceases and there is no more a "living soul", but the "spirit", having returned to God Who gave it, is safe in Divine keeping until God breathes it into a new body — heavenly or earthly — in the resurrection.

The impressing of that spirit, upon a *newly created* physical organism will have the effect of reproducing the former identity. Such an one, awaking to consciousness, will pick up the thread of memory and experience at the point where it was broken by death. Thus it is that the doctrine of the resurrection is so important a part of the Christian faith; without a resurrection there can be no future life.

Never forget that the Almighty is a great deal bigger than our experience of him; that the Lord Jesus Christ is a great deal bigger than our experience of him. People won't go through the labour of thinking, consequently snares get hold of them, and remember, thinking is a tremendous labour. We have to labour to 'bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ'.

Oswald Chambers

To give praise is very becoming for the believer. It comes 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*".

D. Nadal

"IN CHRIST"

An essay

In the course of his writing Paul used the expression "in Christ" more than two hundred times. He also used similar ideas such as "in the Lord" and "in him". He extended the concept further in the phrases "Christ in you" and the "indwelling Christ". So what did Paul mean when he used such words and where did they originate? Paul was a Hebrew and his understanding of God and his ways lay deeply in the Old Testament. We may dismiss at once any connection with the Greek mystery religions, against which Paul argued in more than one letter.

The people of Israel thought of their great founder and patriarch Abraham, as a friend of God. He appeared to be on intimate terms with his Maker. This became established still further in the records of the life of Moses from the time of the Burning Bush and especially in the experience on Mount Sinai recorded in Exodus 33 and 34. The relationship of God with his people was gently revealed through the Psalms and prophets in such thoughts as those of Isaiah 57. 15 *"I dwell in the high and holy place and also with him who is of a contrite spirit"* (RSV). It reached new heights in the experiences and writings of Hosea and Jeremiah who showed that God looked upon Israel as his bride whom he would love and care for even in their moments of rebellion and disobedience. This was a faithfulness and tenderness, a forgiveness and patience from the great Creator of the Universe that was difficult to comprehend.

These ideas were readily developed by Jesus, firstly in childhood when he quite naturally referred to God as his Father, until just before his death, when John's record speaks of the oneness with that Father which would begin to embrace those who followed him (John 14-17). It is interesting to note the way in which the relationship between Master and disciples grows through the Lord's ministry. Jesus transferred the various parabolic pictures of the Old Testament into his own teaching showing the closeness of the sheep to the Good Shepherd and the union of the vine to the branches. Thoughts of dependence, protection and growth were the kind which made it possible for Paul to build further concepts concerning the relationship with Christ. This he did so effectively in Ephesians 5. when he showed how the ideal marriage illustrates the love between Christ and his church.

From the days of his conversion and baptism, Paul

must have begun to realise how different was the formal and superficial religion in which he had been reared, from the living faith of the followers of Jesus. The Lord's words to Saul on the Damascus road had been *"Why do you persecute me?"* (Acts 9. 4 RSV). Jesus was identifying himself with his followers in their sufferings. Whatever happened to them, happened to him. The conversation which followed between the Lord and Ananias (Acts 9. 10-16) is in a way more startling. The Lord of glory and his faithful servant in Damascus were on intimate terms. Fear of the aggressive Pharisee from Jerusalem who approached Damascus with a view to throwing 'followers of the way' into prison was broken down by the close friendship of Jesus to his disciple.

During the course of his tremendous ministry in which he suffered so much for the Lord, and in which he had fantastic experiences, Paul needed an inner support and comfort, which no person on Earth could have given. This he received directly from Jesus in visions, dreams and personal contact. Towards the end of his life, as a prisoner of the Romans for Christ's sake, when others had forsaken him, he was able to write to Timothy *"But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the message fully...."* (2 Timothy 4. 17 RSV). In the words of one writer, Paul doesn't write about unproven theories "but out of the depths of his personal experience".

In Romans 5. 11 and 2 Cor. 5. 18-19 Paul shows that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Here the Apostle relates how God bridged the gap between himself and mankind through the work of Jesus. Thus he wrote (1 Timothy 2. 5 NIV) *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus who gave himself as a ransom for all men — the testimony given in its proper time"*. That work accomplished, Paul goes on to demonstrate in Romans (chapters 6-8) how Christ did what the Law had been powerless to do, subdue the power of sin. Christ's ability to do this sprang from the relationship which he established with his followers, collectively and individually.

Israel had a special relationship with God based on their descent from Abraham. They thought that they could satisfy God's requirements by ritual and animal sacrifices but neglect upright ethical standards. The Lord showed Paul that eternal life came through the resurrection power of Jesus and

that alone could defeat the power of sin. Paul argued this in Romans 6 and 7 from his personal experience and showed that freedom from sin provided the opportunity for new life to begin here and now. Nor is this relationship one which is confined to those who saw the Lord during his earthly ministry as Paul writes in 2 Cor. 5: 16-17, "...even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer, therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation".

Jesus himself had spoken to the Father about this eternal life when he said, "this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17: 3 NIV). This became the absorbing theme of Paul's letters and the goal of his life, for he considered "everything as loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3: 8 NIV). In that same passage Paul writes of sharing the sufferings and resurrection power of Jesus. Being in Christ is a present, practical experience. It is a consciousness of Jesus operating in our lives, in our attitudes and gestures, in our conversation and decisions, towards our Christian brethren and to those who do not know Christ. How do we respond to those who make fun of us or not understand the standards and values of our faith?

Particularly is this bond felt in our relationship with others who are 'in Christ' because we can recognise that He is actually living in their hearts by faith as He is in ours (Eph. 3: 17). How does this shape the tone of our voice or the expression on our face? There is a kinship among the brethren of Christ. The permanence of their relationships is shown by Paul in Eph. 2: 19-22 (RSV) when he writes "you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God; built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined

together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit". The barriers of former years were of no consequence in the Church for the baptised into Christ have "put on the family likeness" (2 Cor. 5: 16 Phillips) and discarded the natural barriers of race, gender and class, "*for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3: 27-28). His practical application of this family relationship is shown in Romans 16 by such greetings as "Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus". Paul uses another picture in Romans 12: 3-8 and 1 Cor. 12: 12-26 where the church of Jesus Christ is shown to be his body, and disciples are members or parts of that body. Our relationship to Christ has two distinct but related aspects. There is the individual relationship of Jesus living in each follower personal and precious and where each can say "I know he's mine". There is also the relationship where each follower is in Christ, as part of the corporate body of believers and therefore the relationship between each member of the church is very special.

These bonds of love to and within Christ are stronger than death and Paul longs to see his Master in heaven. To him Christ was the "hope of glory" (Cor. 1: 27) and he was assured that "the dead in Christ" would rise first (1 Thess. 4: 16). From his early ministry until the story ends in Rome, Paul's life was directed by his fellowship with Christ. As a slave, as a member of the body of Christ, as a "joint heir", Paul was confident of his place in his Master's affection. The Christ he met on the Damascus road led him through bitter sufferings for his name's sake (Acts 9: 16) but these only served to draw him closer to his Lord, to transform his character into His likeness (2 Cor. 3: 18) and to enable him to write at the end "*if we have died with him, we shall also live with him*" and he was sure of that reward which the Lord would reserve for him (2 Tim. 3: 1; 4: 8).

H. F. Lyte's famous hymn has it: 'Change and decay in all around I see', but in point of fact that line might well be rewritten 'Change *or* decay in all around I see'. Unless a living organism changes, it necessarily dies. The one thing which does not change is a fossil — and a fossil has been dead for a very long time.

William Barclay

Who finds God in his love finds everything. He seeks but one, it is true; but that one is of universal content. Oh rare compendium of wealth miraculous! Why run we after variety? Let us hasten to lay hold of him, who being held, holds all.

Origen

The women were too late with their spices; Mary was not with her ointment.

A. O. Hudson

THRUST OUT OF THE KINGDOM

*A lesson from
past history*

"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out". (Luke 13. 28).

In those words Jesus closed the door of Kingdom power in the faces of confident men who had fondly imagined themselves certain of its privileges. How came it that He could so definitely pass that judgement and deny them a position to which they claimed to be the rightful heirs?

The Pharisees were the degenerate spiritual descendants of a once noble and influential reform movement. When the children of Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity, five hundred years before Christ, there arose in their midst a body of men known as the "Hasidim", distinguished for self-sacrificing consecration of God, insistence upon holiness of life and separation from the people of the land, and fervent expectation of God's Kingdom on earth when the righteous would be exalted and the wicked punished. During the dark days of Greek oppression the Hasidim, or Pharisees as they were afterwards called, became bulwarks of strength to the people, and many of them suffered martyrdom in defence of their faith. It was largely in consequence of their efforts that knowledge of the prophets' teachings regarding the Kingdom was recovered and proclaimed.

As time went on the Pharisees gradually came to a position of power and leadership in the nation, and then, like the Christian Church in the days of Constantine, they forsook their primitive simplicity and singleheartedness, failed to continue in progressive understanding of Divine revelation, and began to count as of supreme importance the letter of the Law and the "traditions of the fathers". Blinded by their own refusal to "walk in the light" they failed to recognise the evidences of the developing Plan of God revealed in Christ, and so, although so sure of their place in the Kingdom, that Kingdom was taken from them *"and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"*. (Matt. 21. 43). They lost that position, and did not know they had lost it. They had once been God's honoured instruments in the ministry of his Plan; they now became broken vessels, and God could find no further use for them. They opposed and denied the truth due to be understood, persecuted and put to death the men who proclaimed that truth,

and lost for ever any further share in either the understanding or the execution of the Divine Plan, then, or in the future. Instead of becoming rulers in the Kingdom, they will take their place among the subjects and learn, in that day, the lessons they might have learned in their lifetime.

What was the cause of their failure? To what must we attribute that blindness which led them to know not the time of their visitation? It was largely the fault of overconfidence! Confidence is accounted a virtue, and for those who would serve God it is a virtue when the confidence is in God and in his power. But the Pharisees' confidence was in themselves, their own wisdom, their own power, their own righteousness, and they knew not that their wisdom was foolishness in God's sight, their power was weakness and their righteousness as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64. 6). It was the wrong kind of confidence. They *"trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others"* (Luke 18. 9-10). They relied on their relationship to Abraham. *"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man"* (John 8. 33) and their knowledge of doctrine: *"whence hath this man letters, having never learned?"* (John 7. 15). And that attitude of mind led them to the terrible position where, like one of their number in Jesus' story, they stood each before God and addressed him in tones of irreverent familiarity: *"God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are"* (Matt. 18. 11).

It was that presumptuous self-confidence, leading on to overwhelming pride, that begat in them the second great cause of their failure — uncharitableness. Secure in positions of worldly honour and often possessed of worldly affluence and wealth, they cared nothing for the material or the spiritual welfare of the people. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath day they were more concerned with the affront to their traditions regarding Sabbath keeping than the relief and happiness brought to some suffering soul. When the opening of the eyes of one born blind, on the Sabbath, made it imperative that the rulers take some official notice of this new prophet who had arisen, they sought by every means in their power to entrap the once-sightless man into an admission that would deny the Divine power that was in Christ (John 9. 1-41). It was this determined uncharitableness of the Pharisees that led them

openly to deny the manifest power of the Holy Spirit and caused Jesus to utter those terrible words of denunciation: "*He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of age-abiding judgment*" (Mark 3. 29).

These two failings — over-confidence and uncharitableness — produced in them a frame of mind which rendered them incapable of receiving new ideas. It was not merely that they *would* not receive Christ and his message; the condition into which their minds had set made it that they *could* not receive him and accept his words. "*This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should...be converted, and I should heal them*". (Matt. 13. 15). In their early years they had believed in the progressiveness of doctrinal understanding, but not now. Their position and organisation could only be maintained by holding rigidly to the outworn creeds of the past and stifling every attempt to introduce new wine into old bottles. Jesus drew attention to the impossibility of their receiving his message within the framework of their old system when He employed that very illustration (Matt. 9. 17). Once they had been "in the truth" but now the clearer truth of the Kingdom at hand, and the King in their midst, had gone past them and left them behind. True, they held still to Moses and the prophets, and were faithful to the form of words which those men had spoken; but Moses and the prophets had spoken of Christ, and the Pharisees knew it not. True, they had the right foundation, the foundation of the Divine Plan as it had been revealed in earlier years. The doctrine they did have was good, so far as it went, but in Jesus' day it did not go far enough, for there was a deeper and a more spiritual revelation to be made to those who had hearing ears. They looked for another Moses and another David, and in their looking failed to see Christ, the One of Whom Moses and David both had spoken.

It was not so with the "Ancient Worthies", the men who, said Jesus, would step into the places which these Pharisees had failed to attain. The patriarchs of old had confidence, but it was a confidence born of living faith in God and a humble dependence upon him. Abraham showed that confidence when he offered Isaac, "*accounting that God was able to raise him up*". (Heb. 11. 19) and Isaac manifested the same confidence in allowing himself to be bound for the offering. (Gen. 22. 9) — for the strong young man

could easily have overpowered his aged father and made his escape from the scene of sacrifice had he so desired. Isaac's faith, no less than Abraham's, was pleasing to God on that fateful day. Jacob's dying words manifested his own confidence in God's promise even although he had twice had to leave his native land and was to die in a foreign country and see the Land of Promise no more; nevertheless "*Behold, I die, but God shall be with you, and bring you again into the land of your fathers*" (Gen. 48. 21). Joshua, dying, revealed the calm maturity of a one-time violently zealous character when he told his followers "*Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you*" (Josh. 23. 14). Perhaps one of the grandest exhibitions of confidence on record is that of Job, who lost family, health, possessions, friends, all that makes life worth living, and then was able to say, "*Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God*" (Job. 19. 26). Through all his troubles — and there were many — he never lost faith. At last he received the reward of faith, for he was able to make that grandest of all declarations "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee*" (Job 42. 5). It is by experience that we come to really know God, and therein is our confidence.

This confidence in God and in his good purposes begets the true spirit of charity towards others. If the love of God dwells in our own hearts it is impossible for us to do other than reflect some of that love to those around us. The uncharitableness of the Pharisees was because they had not love in their own hearts, and if we are uncharitable toward others the reason is the same. Abraham was kindly and hospitable to the three men who came to him — and he received a blessing, the promise of the Seed (Gen. 18. 10). The widow of Zarephath shared what she had with the man of God although she was at the point of death — and she received sustenance throughout the famine and at its end the raising of her only son from the dead (1 Kings 17. 10-14). Boaz was kindly and considerate towards the foreign maiden who sought his protection — and of him came Christ (Ruth 2. 12). These are but a few examples of the many cases where kindness, charity and love, built upon a foundation of complete confidence in God and a deep appreciation of his

Plan of salvation, has led the individual into a very close connection with the outworking of that Plan, and assured for him a place in the administration of the Kingdom "at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13).

Finally, this outlook upon our walk with God and its application to daily life leads to true progressiveness in understanding. "New light" does not consist necessarily in the production of original and startling interpretations of Scripture requiring the immediate and total abandonment of all that has previously been believed. It does involve, very often, a modification of previous conclusions in the light of greater and more accurate knowledge, or an amplifying of what has been seen in the past, so that it reveals more deeply and more gloriously the hidden mystery "now made known to the saints". Our progressiveness so far as matters doctrinal are concerned usually lies in the direction of re-stating the old truths in terms more easily understood by us to-day; in reasoning more logically and accurately than we have in the past on the basis of the fundamental principles which always stand without change. And the real progressiveness so far as we are concerned is not along lines of doctrine at all; it is along lines of Christian experience and growth. "God hath showed me", said Peter, "that I should not call any man common or unclean". (Acts 10. 28). That is the progressiveness of understanding, of the head. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear", said Job, "but now mine eye seeth thee". (Job 42. 5). That is the progressiveness of experience, of the life. "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine" cried Habakkuk in

fervency of spirit "*the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will joy in the God of my salvation*". (Hab. 3. 17-18). *THAT IS THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF FAITH*, of the heart, and that is the condition to which we must all attain if we, too, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are to sit down in the Kingdom of God and serve with Christ in the bestowment of Divine blessings to all mankind. "Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth", said Paul (1 Cor. 8. 1). "Love never faileth...but knowledge...shall vanish away" (1 Cor. 13. 8). Of all men in the early days of the Church's history Paul was most qualified to place these things in their proper relation to each other, and without hesitation at all he declared "*The greatest of these is love*".

Let us therefore, in our walk with God, endeavour to model our lives on the confidence, the charity and the progressiveness of the Ancient Worthies, men who "received a good report through faith". So doing, we shall inherit the Kingdom. We may, if we choose, ignore these things and rely upon our head knowledge, our outward influence and power, our good works and our much speaking, but if we do, and if these things occupy our lives and our thoughts to the exclusion of the kindly, beneficent, revealing, inspiring Holy Spirit of God, then the day will surely come, as it came to those Pharisees of old, that we hear the infinitely terrible — and, who can doubt it, infinitely regretful — words of our Lord "Ye shall see others sit down in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves — *thrust out*".

In Psalm 55. 22 there is a word which is full of rich suggestion. We are bidden to "*Cast thy burden upon the Lord*". In the margin, however, is the word gift — thus reading "*Cast thy gift upon the Lord*". So our burden is God's gift to us. This is true whatever the burden may be — duty, sorrow, pain, loss, care. Being God's gift, there must be a blessing in it, something good, something we could not miss without sore loss. It may be for others — in the garden it was the blessing of the world's redemption in the cup that was pressed to the lips of our Lord. In every case, our burden is God's gift, and it would not be a kindness to us if He were to lift it away.

But there is more of the promise. We are to cast our burden upon the Lord and He will sustain us. That is, He will give us the strength to carry our

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

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

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

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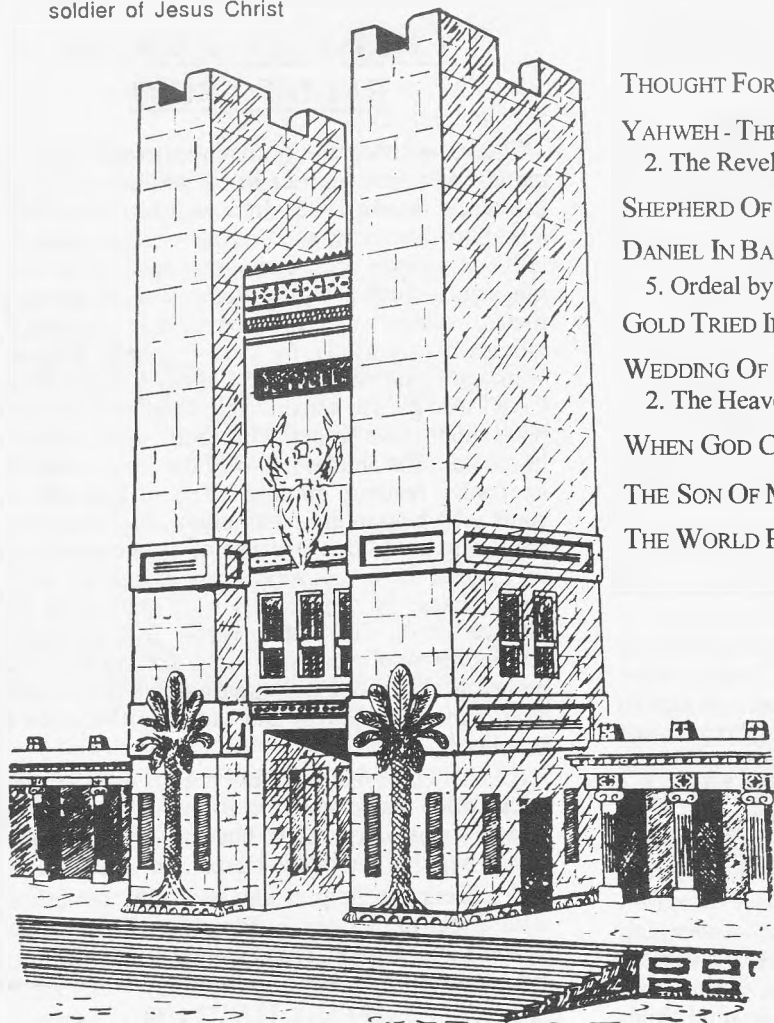
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Even to hoar hairs will I carry you." (Isa. 46. 4).

Old age could be called one of the tragedies of life. The beauty of youth, the vigour and action of the mature years, fade and fall as the petals of the fairest flower. Inevitably time steals both strength and treasure. Friends depart, household ranks are thinned, many cherished hopes remain unrealised and the rushing torrent of new thought sweeps away old landmarks, with long cherished customs.

Enthusiasm sinks as the sap falls in the tree, shedding daily the autumn gold. A sober look at the problems of these last decades of life could be disquieting were it not for the caring, carrying power of Omnipotence. Days were when we ran and jumped and danced and sang with the best, when the glory of life irradiated every fibre of our being with a seemingly quenchless flame. But the days come when tired feet no longer run and tired eyes no longer see the road or the faces about them as once they saw.

Even the heart grows tired after its long labours, scarred maybe with sorrow, with well-fought battles and the pain of unshed tears. How good it is then to be lifted in the eternal Arms and carried over the last few laps of the road. This carrying power of God is the tender expression of love. It is God taking the load, bearing between his shoulders these who have grown old and grey in his service, fending for them when they are no longer able to fend for themselves.

Those who have fought a good fight have no reason to fear the tedium, the solitariness, the weakness which often attends the time when the frosts of many winters whiten and thin the once luxurious locks. He has said, "I will carry you." As a father picks up a tired child, carrying it home in triumph upon his shoulders, so will watchful love provide for saints going home, for God never yet forsook the heart which trusted him.

*"I read from the past what the future shall be
Far better than all my fears."*

A. O. H.

CHRISTIAN AFRICAN RELIEF TRUST

This remarkable charity continues to expand its work among African countries in the sending of 19 huge containers during 1995. Into each container Brother Guildford Tompkins and his many helpers load about 600 apple boxes each containing food, soap, books, magazines, medicines and clothing nicely sorted into men's, women's and children's. It is amazing how efficiently organised is the voluntary help. Registered with and responsible to the Charity Commissioners, CART also goes to considerable lengths to see that the relief supplies are properly distributed when they arrive in Africa. The annual report of the trust makes most interesting reading, quoting letters of gratitude from some who help in the distribution. In Tanzania they are facing hard times because of an economic crisis. In Uganda there was special joy at helping widows and orphans. In Zambia they were grateful for being involved in the distributing work. In Cameroon the medicines sent were just right for serious health problems. In Liberia they have a distribution problem due to the civil unrest and the long distances that supplies must be carried.

CART helps with distribution costs even sending a truck which was donated in Britain. Transit costs to Africa are also very high, but only a fraction of the cost of sending the 'apple boxes' individually.

If readers can help in any way they are asked to send direct to: Mr G. G. Tompkins, 'White Gates', Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield HD8 0LR

Gone from us

Sis. Elsie Bignall (West Wicombe)

Bro. Stephen A. Couling (Northampton)

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

T. Holmes

YAHWEH - THE SACRED NAME

2. The Revelation in the Name

The disclosure that the Divine purposes were embodied in the holy Name was made to Moses by way of revelation. No one, of his own observation or intuition, could have wrested these intentions of God from the rocks or the stars, for they were not hidden there. Even the early friends of God, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, needed to be told by God about the great things He purposed to do. Otherwise they could not have known or understood how God's great love would one day measure itself against man's great need, and overcome that need.

In some aspects of his nature the Most High is the 'Great Unknown'. Occasion to reveal the tenderer side of his disposition had not previously occurred. Originally, men had known of his power and Deity (Rom. 1. 20), but even these attributes they had chosen to neglect and forget, so that when God gave them over to follow their own vain way, knowledge of God almost became extinct. Willingly men had chosen to become ignorant of God.

As the dense clouds of superstition darkened man's understanding of the Divine being, the light of heaven became overcast and hidden from men's view. Black night descended and spread its sable wings over all the earth.

Into this dark scene, God, at all times, sent forth some rays of light, to be a source of guidance and comfort for such as loved the better way. They could never have been deduced or discovered by man. Restoration of such knowledge depended essentially upon revelation - revelation **from** God, revelation **to** man. Various stages in this process of Divine self-revelation may be noted, as when, for instance, the Most High revealed himself to Abraham as 'God Almighty' - *El Shaddai* (Gen. 17. 1) and then again to Israel as *Yahweh Elohim* (Exod 34. 6) or *Yahweh Nissi* (Yahweh, my banner, Exod. 17. 15), or *Yahweh Sabaoth* (Yahweh of Hosts - 1 Sam. 15. 2), or *Yahweh Ra'ah* (Yahweh, my shepherd, Psa. 23. 1). Each such disclosure of the Divine attributes was occasioned by some tremendous need among God's chosen people, whether few in number or many. God revealed himself as 'the God who is able' (God Almighty) to Abraham and Sarah when hope was dead and Nature's forces spent. They were but two; their need however was overwhelmingly great, and the promise enshrined in the new-given Name was

the Divine answer to that need. Numbers will be exceeding great when *Yahweh Tsidkenu* is revealed (Yahweh our righteousness). But when the revelation is made it will meet universal need. (Jer. 33. 16). The 'eyes of God' run to and fro in all the earth, to witness and observe the extent of man's need. When the need of man becomes exceeding great, God comes near again to meet that need, and enshrines his purpose in some new Name. Thus Name and Need appear together — the promise embosomed in the Name being ever great enough to fully satisfy need.

'Name' and 'Need' sprang forth together at the Bush (Exod. 3. 7-18) when Moses was informed that Israel's need had mounted high as heaven and that now, at last, (because the time was ripe) High Heaven would come down to earth to meet that 'Need'. Out of the darkness God flashed another beam of light to illuminate the unknown future of his chosen race, and through them, of the whole world.

What was that 'Need' which occasioned Israel in Egypt both groans and tears? And what was to be found in that Divinely-given 'Name' to meet that need?

First, Israel was enslaved by Egypt's king and people. The men of Israel slaved agonisingly in the kilns. Their groans were to echo to the lash. Day in, day out the tyrant swung his spite into each stinging blow, with none to stay or assuage. Israel's huts were filled with offspring born only to bear the same hateful load. The parent's day was dark — the children's would be darker still. No help was near, no helper seemed at hand. Days, months and years, on into generations to come and only toil and groans and death awaited sire and son!

Into this hopeless night God sent the pledge and promise of his Name. But would that avail? What good could the Name of an almost unknown God provide Israel? If that God were indeed their father's God, why had He forgotten their father's children — themselves and their households? Let us try to put tongue into the needs of this crushed and hopeless people to learn what that holy Name could promise them. Let us ask the questions we think they might ask when the messenger from God arrived, and found them in their dire distress. "Are You able to fulfil the promise you made to us and to our children in

generations yet unborn? Are You likely to live on to care for our sons, when we have died, and have been gathered to our fathers?" And the answer that would come back would be, "**I AM** — *I am the Ever-living One, inhabiting Eternity — I am He who was your father Abraham's God — and I WILL BE your children's God to the end of time. I AM the fountain of all life, and my years shall know no end.*" Let NEED now ask again, "If You are the Ever-living One, by whose permission do You live? Is your life dependent upon another's will, or to circumstances subject to another's will, or are You fully independent of every will and circumstance? Are You existent solely of Your own will and volition?" To this answer would come, "**I AM** — *I am entirely self-existent! I can exist and will exist above and apart from every circumstance. No enemy or circumstance can interfere with Me or My purposes by threat of death or incapacity. I AM the only self-existent one, — I live by my own power and volition, and I WILL continue so to live forever more!*"

NEED asks yet again, "Will You be to our children as You are proposing to be to us? Will You change with every passing mood as we poor mortals change? Will our children find You as we find You to-day? Are You unchanging and steadfast? Will your Word stand fast, as long as You are alive? And the answer would come, "**I AM changeless — I change not! My Word is not mutable, it will stand forever! I WILL keep my promise for evermore!**" Again NEED asks, "Are you liable to sin, in any wise, as we mortals are? Can You become defiled by unholy thought and act? Will your promise to us, and to our children become invalidated by your lapse from rectitude? Or are You impeccable and sinless beyond the possibility of defilement?" And again the answer would come, "**I am holy, incorruptible, impeccable! 'I will' maintain my holiness forever!**"

Again NEED asks, "Will you ever leave us, or our children untended and undefended? Or are You able to be ever present with us and ours in every change of life? Are You ever engaged too far away to hear our cry, or are You able to watch over us in our little world, and supervise Your wide heavens too?" And the answer comes, "**I AM able to be present with you everywhere, at every time, in every condition. I dwell in my Heavenly Place, but I will walk with all who love my Name through every path in life. I WILL both attend and defend mine own sheep for evermore.**"

Again NEED asks, "Are You able to see and understand our needs in every dark hour, or will You forget or fail to understand. You are God we are but men; is Your understanding too lofty to comprehend the sorrows of mere men or are you able to **know** us as fully as You know your angels of light" And the answer comes, "**I AM able to do all my pleasure! I speak and it is done! I build worlds and clothe them in their verdant beauty — I stretch my line across the skies. I bring the sunshine and the rain! I clothe the fields with living grain, and paint every glorious tint and hue! I am omnipotent! All power in heaven and earth is mine! I can and will fulfil all my good pleasure!**"

Let NEED now ask its last and most searching question. "You have great and many attributes, O God Most High! — You are ever-living, self-existent, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, but are You kind and compassionate? Are you, like heathen gods, hard, austere, exacting, giving little but requiring much? Do you ask the last farthing from frail sinful man? Do you look down with cold, unpitying official gaze, and tell the sufferer his suffering is but just? Have You no pity in Your eyes, nor kindness in Your heart? Or are you touched by man's distress? Are You compassionate and merciful to all who call upon You?" And the answer comes loud and deep and strong, "**I am Yahweh! Yahweh Elohim, merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sin — I am Everliving that I may be gracious to all generations; I exist of my own volition that none may ever hold my kindness in fee; I am unchanging that I may attend the last generations as I did the first; I am impeccable, so that I may rebuke wilful sin in small or great; I am ever-present with all, all the time, that I may hear the faintest cry from the tiniest child; I am omniscient, that I may solve every difficulty of life; and I am omnipotent that I may bring all my power to their relief. But all these things are necessary only to a greater thing. These things are contributory to my love and to my great regard for men. It is my delight to bring all I AM into service for my earthly sons, and I will ever find my joy in being unto them as they need Me to be. Even the present distress I will yet turn into joy — all the baser passions I will transmute into the pure gold of perfect character. And I will rid the world of all that would**

defile and destroy, for I will not clear the guilty man who delights in his sin, now, or in the future days. For I am what I am" and "I will be what I will be" for the sake of fallen man. That is My Name for ever and this is My memorial to all generations." (Exodus 3. 15). The scenic setting of the Revelation of the Ineffable Name was partly in the wilderness of Midian, and partly on the crest of Horeb, in the long-ago days of Moses; but it was revealed there for all time. That holy Name contained the germ of the whole plan of redemption — for the execution of the complete intention was embodied in that peculiar sacred Name. Later generations and latter prophets amplified the great theme, as its immensities and implications came to be understood. It set the tongues and hearts of Israel's saintliest men singing with hope and expectation, and inspired the most sublime literature the world has ever seen. That holy Name was Israel's richest heritage. 'Yahweh' was Israel's God exclusively for a time. For a whole age 'Yahweh' had neither blessing nor favour for any

people save Israel. But that exclusive favour to Israel was a means to an end, for through them, when they were refined and purified, God's love, like a mighty flood, was intended to flow to all nations. The people whom Yahweh gathered around his holy Name were to be vessels of his mercy to all. Thus that blessed Name — too holy for Jewish lips — stands both as pledge and promise for a wide reaching Plan to bless all nations through Abraham's earthly seed. God's great purpose is outlined in a promise — the promise is concentrated in a Name. There was a revelation of the Name; there was revelation in the Name. This Name is God's Name, to which Name He will ever be faithful. He revealed that Name to Israel, to hold in trust for a long time but its pledge and promise was for all. The need which Yahweh pledged himself to meet in Israel, was the need of all men everywhere.

"Praise ye Yah, for good is Yahweh, Sing praises to His name, for it is full of delight." (Psa. 135. 3 Roth).

(To be concluded)

D. Nadal

SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

A Study in Relationships

When Jesus used illustrations about shepherds and sheep the expressions were very familiar to his Jewish listeners. These ideas had been with Israel since its history began as the psalmist's words demonstrate, *"Thou didst lead thy people Israel like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron"* (Psalm 77. 20) and again *"...he remembered the days of old, of Moses, his servant. Where is he who brought up out of the sea the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his holy Spirit...?"* (Isaiah 63. 11).

The southern part of Canaan where Abraham and his family settled was not the best land for growing crops. The limestone hills which later became Judea were ideal for grazing sheep and this kind of farming was to be seen around Hebron and Bethlehem for thousands of years. Travellers who have recorded their observations make it clear that shepherding customs did not change through the centuries and they were somewhat different from those with which we are familiar in the west. Even the shepherd's tools and dress did not change until well into the twentieth century.

Sheep were kept for their wool and milk and not for meat so, they tended to live eight or nine years.

During that time a warm relationship grew between sheep and shepherd. They spent many hours together, by day and by night, through winter and summer. They faced the hardships of ravine and hillside together, as well as the dangers of predators and poachers. The shepherd spent much time leading his sheep, talking to them and even playing with them. He identified them individually and they recognised his voice when he spoke or called. The shepherd knew all his sheep by name. When it was necessary to confine them to a pen, the only door or gate of the fold was the shepherd himself and intruders had to pass him before they got at the sheep. One of the most important aspects of shepherding was the unity of the flock which lay not in the walls of the fold but in the individual relationship between shepherd and sheep. It is this fact more than any other which makes the analogy of shepherd and sheep so important in describing the relationship between God and his people of old and that between Christ and his Church. This is a picture of the covenant.

Perhaps the most well known passage of Scripture is the twenty third Psalm. It describes many experiences of sheep with which God's people and others can identify. Sheep are so dependant on those

who tend them for finding adequate fresh grass and clean water. They depend on the shepherd also for protection and shelter and they are animals which seem to be readily wayward and confused. From these characteristics many lessons can be drawn.

Looking forward to the days of Israel's release from captivity, the later chapters of Isaiah's prophecy graphically proclaim the uniqueness of Israel's God. At once He is the Almighty Creator, sovereign Lord over the nations and their history, controller and sustainer of the Universe but these are in contrast to the tenderness of a shepherd feeding the flock, carrying the lambs and protecting the vulnerable ewes with young (Isaiah 40. 11). It is a picture of infinitely affectionate compassion. How wonderfully the prophet knew his God!

Jeremiah, having passed through the dreadful period of Israel's apostasy and spiritual depravity, saw how the under-shepherds of God's people had abused their privilege of service. These were the ones who had scattered and destroyed God's flock but God was aware of their sin and did not intend that the sheep should suffer for ever. He takes responsibility for his flock having been driven away and declares, *"I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the LORD."* (Jer. 23. 3,4). This theme continues in Ezekiel 34 where the picture is enlarged. Firstly it is a story of how badly the weak, the sick and lost had been treated. The prophet describes how the leaders of God's people had prospered at the expense of the flock and how at last they were scattered to become *"food for all the wild animals."* (v. 5).

This was the sad history of Israel. Those who had authority; kings and priests, prophets and leaders, became rich and powerful at the expense of the ordinary descendants of Jacob. They were selfish and arrogant wanting only comfort and luxury for themselves. This had led to the destruction of the nation and the exile in Babylon. This was the consequence of horrible pagan worship and utterly depraved behaviour. But it would not be like this forever. The ever faithful and loving God was to gather the flock for himself and place a new shepherd over it who would feed and care for sheep and lambs.

In this peaceful rural setting God is seen to re-make his covenant with his people and restore everything as it should be.

Thus does the Old Testament set the scene for Jesus' parables concerning shepherds and sheep contained in the gospels; in particular John 10. Jesus says, *"I am the good shepherd"* and this describes much more than an efficient and hygienic technician who might be excellent at producing animals for exhibition at agricultural shows. This shepherd was willing to sacrifice his own well being; his food and shelter, his comfort and life itself, for every member of the flock. He did not calculate the risks of saving a lost sheep nor did he compute his pay against the hours of vigilance to protect the sheep from beast or robber. He is excellent and praiseworthy and in every possible respect the attractive shepherd to whom the lambs come running because they know he is utterly trustworthy.

Travellers in Bible lands, such as H. V. Morton tell how two or more flocks of sheep may be mixed up in a cave or in a 'Damur' or fold. In the morning a shepherd will walk some distance from the sheep and begin to call. The sheep recognise the voice of the shepherd as he calls their own names. William Thomson in 'The Land and the Book' recounts a similar situation saying how 'they know his voice and follow on' but, if a stranger calls, they stop short, lift up their heads in alarm, and, if it is repeated, they turn and flee *"for they know not the voice of strangers."*

Many of the folds used overnight are just four walls with an opening. George Adam Smith relates how he spoke to a shepherd about the lack of a gate to the enclosure and at once the answer came back, *"Oh, I am the door."* When Jesus used the expression *"I am the door"* his words were authentic. None can get at the sheep of his fold with him there. The thieves and robbers to whom he refers were the teachers and leaders of his day and not Moses and the prophets. They who were now attacking him and those who sought to stop his work were God's enemies and desired to destroy shepherd and sheep. Jesus was clear that no one could *"snatch them out of his hand"* (vv. 28,29). This is the assurance which each child of God has, and in this confidence the early church went about its business of preaching the Gospel. Jesus had made it very clear that he would be with them always and this was emphasised in the parable of the vine, illustrating the dependence

of the disciple on Christ and the inseparable nature of the relationship.

The implication of Jesus' words in John 10. 9 when for a second time he describes himself as the door or gate is that "*there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*" (Acts 4. 12). It may be part of modern thinking to believe that there are many paths of faith to God but that is not the declaration of New Testament Christianity. The early church knew that Christ has the only solution to the problems of sin and death and he alone can mediate between God and man (1 Tim. 2. 5, 6). It is he alone who can call forth the dead from their graves (John 5. 25). The only way to become part of God's flock and to become one of his people is through Jesus: there is no other way and no other 'door'.

On warm summer nights the shepherd sleeps out on the open hillside with his flock guarding them from wild animals and robbers. It is then more than ever that he places his life at risk for the sheep. Travellers bear testimony that a shepherd has been known to fight to the death against those who would steal the sheep and lambs that he loves. Jesus however has an even higher motive in the laying down of his life for his own. He has done it for his people in particular but he has also done it for the whole world (John 3. 16). The battle of Calvary having been won, he then calls upon his disciples to lay down their lives and to place themselves totally at God's service as under shepherds. This is the implication of 1 Peter 4. 12 — 5. 4.

The sad part of the shepherd picture is that sheep can be wayward for they find grass so much greener on the other side of the fence. Just as the natural sheep tend to wander and become prey to the wild beasts, so do Christian believers. The good shepherd is equal to whatever ill befalls the sheep and there are times when he must take strong action in dealing with those animals who wander away and disobey his voice. It is just so with the sheep of Christ's pasture and there are times when hard lessons must be learned. It is love for the sheep which prompts the heavenly shepherd to teach lessons to his sheep,

which are not always comfortable (Heb. 12 7-11). Good discipline is part of the shepherd's protection for the flock. Wandering sheep are soon at the mercy of the enemy. Paul warned the elders from Ephesus of this at Miletus (Acts 20. 29). Even from among their own ranks within the early church, Paul foresaw that men would behave like wolves and tear the sheep apart. So he says, "Be on your guard". It is those who stay close to the shepherd who are safe. Their knowledge and skill and strength will not save the sheep but their utter devotion to the Good Shepherd will. They must come to recognise him clearly by spending much time in his presence. There will be thorns and rocks on the pathway with him but the apparent smooth way without the shepherd will end in disaster. Jesus said, "*I know my own and my own know me.*" So how do we answer the telling challenge "How well do I know my Master?" This is the only test of discipleship which he demands of us. He asks for none of the kind of qualifications for entry into his community which a worldly institution demands. No great deeds nor fine words nor even support from powerful people can give us entry into the heavenly flock. The saddest words in Scripture were spoken by Jesus when he said, "*I never knew you.*" (Matt. 7. 23).

When Jesus spoke this parable, it was to members of natural Israel, descendants of Abraham. On a number of occasions he made it clear that his flock would some day take in "other sheep". Here in John 10 the point is made that Gentiles and Jews would be part of one flock. During his ministry he was frequently very encouraging to those outside the "lost sheep of the House of Israel". That morning in the synagogue at Nazareth he made the point (Luke 4). When the early church began its work he said they must bear witness to him to "*the uttermost part of the Earth.*" So the way was clear, first for Peter to go to Cornelius and later for the Apostle to the Gentiles to take the Gospel right across the Roman Empire. The flock is still being gathered. There remains but one shepherd and with him alone we must walk.

The terrible truth is that anyone who does not wish to be disturbed necessarily wishes to eliminate Jesus Christ.

William Barclay

Lord we pray that the thought of the country towards which we are travelling may make us forget of the weariness of the journey.

Jeremy Taylor

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a
great man's faith***5. Ordeal by Fire**

The story of the three Hebrews who were cast alive into a fiery furnace on account of their refusal to fall down before a pagan idol is one of the classics of Biblical literature. The miracle is so apparently marvellous that men have not hesitated to put the story down as a figurative presentation of Israel's faithfulness to the one true God in all the afflictions suffered at the hands of her Greek and Roman oppressors. But the story in Daniel is older by far than the empires of Greece and Rome. It bears within itself the evidence of its own authenticity. This thing really did happen. These men really were cast into a burning fiery furnace, and did come out unscathed.

The third chapter of Daniel records the story. It does not give any indication as to when it happened. It is probable, however, that this was after Nebuchadnezzar had ended his wars with Egypt and turned to the city-building and other peaceful pursuits which occupied the last twenty years of his reign. In that case it would be after the dream of the great image which had been the means of Daniel's advancement, but before the king's madness. It must have been after Daniel had been elevated to the position of Chief of the Magicians, for only so could he have been exempt himself from the obligation to do homage to the Image.

A great many stirring things had happened since the previous event, the dream of the image, recorded by Daniel. Between chapters 2 and 3 lie some twenty momentous years. About five years after the dream came the death of Jehoiakim and the carrying away of many Israelite into Babylon, as described in 2 Kings 24, Jer. 22. 18 and Jer. 36. It was at this time that Ezekiel, a young man of twenty-five, was taken there and lived among the Jewish captives at Tel-Abib. Jehoiachin began his three month's reign and because of disloyalty to the king of Babylon was taken to that city and imprisoned until the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Eleven years later came the final catastrophe. Zedekiah, also disloyal to his suzerain, who all this time had, as the "head of gold", held the Divine commission of rulership over the nations, saw the Babylonian armies lay siege to Jerusalem for the last time. This was the final taking into captivity; the city was taken and the Temple demolished. The Book of Lamentations was written to commemorate this disaster in Israel's history. Obadiah and

Habakkuk prophesied at this time, both in Judea. Jeremiah was in Judea also, and in disgrace with king Zedekiah and his court for his continued insistence that God required them to submit to the Babylonian conqueror. Jeremiah's loyalty to God brought him recognition from an unexpected quarter. According to Jer. 39. 11, when the city was at last captured, "*Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do to him even as he shall say to thee.*" Jeremiah eventually went to Egypt and died there (so far as is known. The thesis advanced by some to the effect that he afterwards made his way to Ireland and ended his days in the Emerald Isles rests upon arguments which have no place in this treatise). One wonders if Nebuchadnezzar's concern for Jeremiah was inspired in the first place by Daniel, who, away in Babylon, must have remembered his old friend and teacher and used his influence with the king to ensure his safety.

This third chapter is written in a style quite unlike that of the rest of the book. There is a fulsomeness and exaggeration in the use of the words, a grandiloquent and somewhat monotonous repetition of phrases, which is not at all characteristic of the reverent, straightforward literary style of Daniel. This story reads for all the world like the native Babylonian literature of which so many examples are still in existence. It might be that here we have the Babylonian official record of the happening, originally written in cuneiform characters on a clay tablet, and copied from the official archives by Daniel for incorporation in his book. There is a strong argument here against the assertion of those critics who brand the book as a kind of "historical fiction" written several centuries after Nebuchadnezzar's time.

We do not know the precise nature of this image of gold which the king set up in the plain of Dura. It has been suggested that it was a replica of the metallic image seen previously in the dream which Daniel interpreted. That is improbable — had it been so, the king would have been much more likely to have constructed it of the four metals he saw in that dream, gold, silver, bronze and iron. There is greater reason

for thinking that it was an image of Nebuchadnezzar's favourite deity Bel. The Greek historian Diodorus Siculus says that there was a golden image of Bel forty feet high in the Temple at Babylon, and Herodotus also mentions a similar image. Such images were usually hollow, for the ancients were expert at casting hollow statues in metal. The sixty cubits height of the Biblical image is equivalent to an English measure of fifty-five feet, all objects of gold being measured by a special cubit of a little under eleven inches, and since the width is given as six cubits, or five feet six, and the height of a human figure of that width could not exceed about twenty-five feet, it would seem that the figure was placed upon a lofty pedestal so that it could be seen at a distance, and Daniel records the full height.

It is thought that the Plain of Dura was on the south side of the city, alongside the river. Such a site for this colossal statue would render it a prominent object to be seen by seamen and travellers as they came up the river from the sea, creating an impression something like that now afforded by the sight of the statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York Harbour. In this fashion Bel, the patron deity of Babylon, would be honoured in the eyes of all men in front of his own city. The proclamation to "all peoples, nations and languages" to fall down and worship at the sound of the music must be understood, of course, as applying only to the vast concourse of people attending the ceremony. Since Babylon always held numbers of people from other nations, gathered there in connection with their trading enterprises, the proclamation was literally true.

The sun blazed down from the clear sky upon a vast crowd embracing members of almost every known nationality on earth. Native Babylonians, city dwellers and country labourers, rubbed shoulders with captives from other lands, Jews and Syrians and Elamites, free-roving sons of the desert, Arabs and Sabeans, traders and merchants from Phoenicia and India; an assemblage of black and brown, yellow and white skins, the whole making a colourful mass of humanity. Near the image stood governmental officials and the various orders of priesthoods, amongst the former being the three Hebrew men who, according to Dan. 2. 49, had been appointed to positions of authority in the realm of Babylon. In all that vast concourse there were two, and two only, who were not expected to bow down when the signal

was given. One was Nebuchadnezzar, the Head of the State, and the other was Daniel, the Chief of all the priesthoods and wise men. According to the Babylon mythology, these two men between them represented the heavenly powers, and would not be called upon to participate in an act of obeisance which was incumbent upon all others.

The dedication ceremony proceeded; the herald cried his announcement and, doubtless after a long succession of prayers and incantations in which the priests of all the leading gods had their part, the climax of the ritual was reached. Music rose upon the air and the whole vast concourse, taking its cue from the officials near the image, prostrated in adoration. It must have been a peculiarly gratifying moment for the king, for Nebuchadnezzar is known to have been especially interested in the introduction of public congregational worship amongst his subjects — a thing unknown in previous times.

Three remained standing — three men, who although high in rank in the national government, would neither serve that country's gods nor worship the image the king had set up. It is evident that their defection had passed unnoticed by the king — three men in that vast assembly could easily have gone unperceived — but others were on the watch. Some of the Chaldeans, men of the priestly caste, jealous of these three Jews' position and resentful of their scorn of the Chaldean gods, saw their opportunity and quickly acquainted the king with the facts. It is noteworthy that they added a crime which was not included in the herald's announcement. "*They serve not thy gods...*". It is here that we perceive evidence of the king's growing pride and arrogance, which later was to plunge him into such terrible humiliation. He would brook no opposition to his demands, and, we read, "*the form of his visage was changed*" against these three who had dared to flout his will.

It is not necessary to assume that the dedication ceremony was broken off whilst the three men were being dealt with. Probably the complaint itself was made when the ceremony was over and the crowds were beginning to disperse. The complainants could hardly have left their places to accost the king at a time when he was the central figure in an important religious ritual. We can imagine, therefore, the subsequent scenes being enacted within a smaller circle composed of Court officials, priests and the military guards.

The option was brutal. The three Hebrews could

either bow down and worship at the sound of music, or be cast alive into the furnace: *"And who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?"* (vs. 15). The passionate and ungovernable nature of the king is well displayed in these few verses. By contrast the calm declaration of the threatened men is inspiring. *"We are not careful* (i.e. we are not possessed by anxiety) *to answer thee over this matter"*. If God wills to deliver us, He will do so; and if He wills not to deliver, we are his servants. We will not worship.

So they were bound in all their official robes and insignia of office and cast immediately into the burning fiery furnace; and the heat thereof was so great that the men who cast them in themselves died from the flames and heat to which they had perforce exposed themselves.

The furnace was probably one that was normally used for the smelting of iron or copper from crude ore. The extraction and working of metal goes back very far in the history of man, the Bible telling us that it was practised by the ante-diluvians, for Tubal-cain, of the race of Cain, in the eighth generation from Adam was the first man to work in copper and iron (Gen. 4. 22). The blast furnace, in which metallic ore is smelted by intense heat in order to extract the pure metal, is a very old invention and relics of such furnaces dating back two, three or four thousand years have been found in Mesopotamia and India, and were evidently in use in Egypt, for they are depicted on certain tomb wall paintings there. Reference to Egyptian blast furnaces is made in three places in the Old Testament (Deut. 4. 20, 1 Kings 8. 51, Jer. 11. 4). They were built of thick brick walls faced with clay treated so as to withstand the intense heat, with an opening at the top through which the flames and heat escaped, and another opening at the bottom closed by a door, through which the molten metal ran out into prepared moulds, and the clinker and refuse could be periodically removed. Huge bellows worked by a number of men provided a forced air draught to maintain the high temperature. The fuel used was charcoal, or more probably coal, for timber was not plentiful in the Euphrates plains, whilst coal was, and is still, easily worked from surface seams in the northern mountains.

An indication of the extent to which such furnaces were then in use is afforded by the fact that when Khorsabad, a suburb of Nineveh, was excavated during the nineteenth century, a stock of one hundred

and fifty tons of iron ingots ready for working up into articles of commerce was discovered. They had lain there since the destruction of Nineveh in Nebuchadnezzar's own day. There is in existence also a clay tablet invoice from an unknown Babylonian blacksmith of several centuries before Abraham, setting out his account for the forging of certain bronze weapons.

The accuracy of the narrative is very striking here. The furnace was heated to seven times its usual heat. One can picture the bellows of men straining at their levers and blowing up the white-hot mass to temperature far exceeding the usual. From the top of the furnace, probably fifteen or twenty feet above the ground, the flames streamed out with a deafening blast. The Scripture says, *"they fell down bound into the midst of the furnace"*. They were carried up to the platform around the top and thrown into the yawning opening, falling down to the bed of burning fuel beneath. But, say our translators rather quaintly, *"because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men"* who cast them in. Either they were overcome by the excessive heat at the furnace mouth, and fell in after their victims and were destroyed, or, what is perhaps more likely, the flames streaming out ignited their clothing and they were burned to death before help could be brought.

The lower door had evidently been opened and the king had stationed himself at a respectful distance in order to observe the execution of his sentence. What he did see gravely disturbed him and he rose up from his seat in some agitation. He had expected to watch three bound bodies fall into the fire from above and be quickly consumed. He saw, instead, four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire — and, said he in a hushed tone to his courtiers, who evidently were not placed so that they too could see into the furnace, *"the form of the fourth is like to a son of the gods"*.

It is a pity that our translators rebelled at this piece of unadulterated paganism and rendered this phrase "the son of God", using capital letters into the bargain, so that the English reader instinctively thinks of our Lord Jesus Christ, and pictures His presence with the three Hebrews in the fire. Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing of Jesus Christ — and, at that time, very little of the true God. The Hebrew phrase is "a son of the gods" and by this term the king meant one of those guardian spirits in Babylonian mythology

who were thought to be the special messengers of the gods in their dealings with men. No wonder that he was awe-stricken. The very action by which he had sought to demonstrate his personal loyalty to the gods had been reproved by them, and a special messenger sent to preserve alive the three men he had condemned to a cruel death. That was the interpretation King Nebuchadnezzar must have placed upon this amazing happening. And in a swift revulsion of feeling he called to the three men to come forth from the furnace. So they came forth, climbing out through the open door as though no furnace raged within, and stepped up to where the king stood, without so much as the hair of their heads singed, or the smell of fire upon them (vs. 27).

How the story must have run like wildfire through the Jewish communities in Babylon and at Tel-Abib, fifty miles to the south, where the prophet Ezekiel was conducting his own mission. What a wave of renewed confidence must have swept over the exiles as this great manifestation of the power of their God was added to the signs and wonders which had gone before. The king's decree must have followed very quickly, proclaiming penalties upon any who spoke against the Most High God, the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, for, said the decree somewhat wonderingly, *"there is no other God that can deliver after this sort!"* (vs. 29).

Some twenty years after this stirring happening, Ezekiel, by the river of Chebar fifty miles away, saw that glorious vision of the Millennial Kingdom so wonderfully symbolised in the description of the great Temple with its river and trees of life (Ezek. chaps. 40-48). There is something very fitting in this contrast between the massive image, symbolic of the pomp and majesty of this world and its false gods, with all men bowed down before it in abject homage, and the saintly prophet of God, quietly sitting upon his mountain, viewing the calm beauty of that coming kingdom which shall never pass away or be destroyed. The image of Bel has long since crumbled into dust and been forgotten and no man now knows what it was like, but the glowing words of the prophet live on, and before our mental vision there stands out plainly the vista of that fair city whose name shall be *"The Lord is there"* (Ezek. 48. 35). *"So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, but the name of the righteous shall endure for ever."*

There is a New Testament parallel to this story. It is enshrined in the imagery of the Book of Revelation,

where the seer tells of the whole world united in the worship of another image, the "Image of the Beast". All who do not worship the image, he hears, are to be put to death. The only ones to refrain from such worship are the "servants of God", who have been "sealed in their foreheads". In the outcome, as in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, there is intervention from Heaven. A Rider upon a white horse comes forth and gives battle to all the powers of evil, and the Image, now branded a False Prophet in the eyes of all men (compare Rev. 13. 14-18 with Rev. 19. 20) is cast into the fiery lake and destroyed. There are various detailed interpretations of all this symbolism but the main tenor of the vision is commonly agreed. In the end of the Age there will arise to challenge the incoming Kingdom of God a final and supreme system of power to which nearly all the world will ignorantly give support, the only exceptions being those who are earnest and devoted disciples of the Master. These will pass through fiery experiences and may suffer loss and even death but even so will emerge unscathed. And in the next scene they are shown as riding forth behind their Leader and Captain to establish upon the ruins of that system of which the image has been the head a new one based upon love and righteousness, speaking peace to the people and ruling the nations with a shepherding rod. The final defeat of the enemies of righteousness at the end of this Age is shown here, and we can as readily accept the assurance of Divine intervention in the world's extremity at this time as the fact of Divine intervention on that momentous day in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar.

"At that time", says Daniel (12. 1) "shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation...and at that time thy people shall be delivered." Daniel's reference is to Israel's expected King Messiah, standing up for the overthrow of all evil and the restoration of Daniel's people, and finds its fulfilment in the long promised Second Advent of Jesus Christ, in the midst of a great time of trouble "such as was not since there was a nation". Jesus used the same expression when talking about his Second Coming. There may be some very definite prophetic truth, therefore, in the sight which met the startled eyes of the Babylonian king. There may — nay, will — come a time in the final phase of this great distress which is now upon all nations when

the great men of the world, the kings, politicians, financiers, industrialists, confident that they have given the death blow to the forces which are heralding the New Order of Christ's Kingdom, will say, "Did not we cast *three men bound* into the midst of the fire?" And the multitudes submissive as ever, will reply, "True, O King." Then will those kings and politicians and financiers and industrialists tremble exceedingly as they look into that fiery furnace of

the world's trouble and they will say, "*Lo, we see four men, loose,...and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.*"

And at that breathless moment in the world's history the kingdoms of this world will pass under the sovereignty "*of our Lord, and of his Christ,*" and men will know without any possibility of dispute that the Son of God has returned in the glory of his Kingdom.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson

GOLD, TRIED IN THE FIRE

An exhortation

"When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold". (Job 23. 10).

The patriarchs of early times saw in gold an emblem of purity and nobility. Job looked upon the trials which befell him as the equivalent process by which gold receives its bright lustre. To rid man of much that is coarse and gross in his nature, to refine him in spirit, to bring out a latent splendour of being was a Divine purpose which that venerable philosopher understood and appreciated.

Without that understanding he could not have said, "*Though He slay me yet I will I trust Him*". The words were more than a stubborn declaration of faith. They were an acquiescence to the refining forces of suffering and adversity as a necessary element by which the spirit of man is enabled to rise from a state of blind complacency to an exaltation of conquest. To endure pain and disaster, to vanquish sorrow and trouble, to come out of some gruelling bout of affliction feeling a sense of betterness and strength, of greater wisdom and deeper humanity, is to know an affinity with all that is truly heroic. It is to understand more clearly the words that have an old familiar ring, "*Whom the Lord loves he chastens.*"

It is to have fellowship with the prince of sufferers, the Man of Sorrows who was acquainted with grief, who, though without sin, received through his anguish of mind and body a perfection of spirit not previously his. The radiant Alpha and Omega which the Revelator saw walking among the seven golden candlesticks was that same Jesus Christ who once walked on the earth among men, tested and tried at all points of human nature in the crucible of sorrow, temptation, weakness and pain. The highest and best endured the pangs of Gethsemane, the desertion of

his friends, the betrayal of his trust, the mockery of a professional priesthood, and the physical anguish of the cross. If he, the faultless, was not spared the tears, the blows, the pain of this world's perfidy, his humble followers with all their faults and failures can hardly expect to escape those refining experiences which reduce crude nature to something of a finer quality.

Any commodity "worth its weight in gold" or any person known to be "as good as gold" has received highest praise. The words are compliments passed into everyday use which rate the best in terms of gold. The very word has a ring about it of splendour, glory, radiance and richness. When men would give their best they gave gold. After Job's troubles were over every man brought him an earring of gold.

When the work began on Israel's Tabernacle, apart from all other gifts, every man offered an offering of gold. King David later bequeathed to the temple of God three thousand talents of the gold of Ophir. The chief men of the nation added yet another five thousand talents. Both secular and sacred history record a lavish use of gold. Vessels of solid gold, of pure gold, of fine gold, furniture overlaid with gold, were an essential part of the pomp and pride of life. The image of gold set up by Nebuchadnezzar for all to worship typifies man's age-long worship of wealth, as the golden calf made by Aaron portrays the careless, wanton world obsessed by all the things money can buy, but blindly indifferent to those free gifts of God which money cannot buy.

The wealth and craftsmanship of bygone Eastern civilisations offered to God's pen men both illustration and contrast. The gold of palaces began to pall on men who saw the treachery of princes. Even the splendid vessels of the Temple became

baubles in the sight of those who saw a great want of wisdom, justice, mercy and humility on the part of those from whom much was expected, but from whom little was forthcoming. If God wanted gold could he not take it? All the gold was his, laid in the coffers of the earth long before man appeared to find and use it so cleverly and often so selfishly.

Job had a first rate knowledge of the treasures of the earth. He knew where they were to be found. But where, he mused, shall wisdom be found or understanding? Gold would buy neither one nor the other, for wisdom is beyond price. Gold has bought many a king's ransom but it cannot buy the free gifts of God.

Man has not been redeemed with gold but with the life of the Lamb of God. Salvation is free. Life is the gift of God. Peter at the gate Beautiful had no gold to give to the lame man asking alms but he gave him a gift gold could not buy. He gave him faith, set him on his feet and sent him away to live a free and independent life. The trial of faith is more precious than gold, for it is the conditioning of human character for a prize worth more than its weight in gold; an eternal glory, not comparable with the transitory treasures of this world. Nor can the testing time be considered, however fiery, as anything but "a light affliction" for so great an end.

Poets as well as prophets have put into inspired words the lesson to be drawn from the refiner's fire. The peculiarity of gold is its necessary subjection to tremendous heat to rid the ore of its gritting impurities. The hotter the furnace, the finer the gold. The hotter the furnace, the brighter the lustre and the better the quality of the precious metal.

Once a liquid fire in the veins of the earth, cooled and solidified by time, between stratas of rock, it is not at its shining best when it first sees the light of day. Rough and shapeless, mixed with the dross of its earthly origins, it must undergo great tribulation before it becomes the crown of a king, the sacred vessels of a temple, the banqueting plate of a great house or the currency of nations. Purified of its scum, plunged unto the sizzling water of the cooling trough, hammered and beaten, stretched and pulled, shaped and designed by the goldsmith's art, at last it emerges a thing of beauty: a treasure for all time.

History and biography record that all great, worthwhile people have been born out of the fires of adversity, for *"Life is not an idle ore, but metal dug from central gloom and heated hot with burning fears*

and dipped in baths of hissing tears and battered with the shocks of doom, to shape and use."

The heirs of the future are not called to pleasant dalliance down the primrose paths of easy living. "Changed from glory into glory" is not a state achieved by mere idle contemplation, of past events or future visions. There is little of the mystic about the true practising Christian surrounded by the clamour of the world set on going its own way, utterly regardless of Divine advice. Life is an everyday battle with weakness within and buffetings without, designed and permitted by Divine wisdom for a higher purpose than the temporary satisfaction of the human nature for happiness, honour or wealth in a world which is clearly not God's world.

The life intelligently and unreservedly put into the hands of God is in for a hard time. No doubt the end will be glorious but how few can stand the process. "Are ye able?" Christ asked his ambitious disciples. Kings of the East brought him gold at his birth but they also brought him myrrh to mingle with those bitter experiences which transformed even his faultless nature into the supernal glory of the King of Kings. Men crowned him not with spun gold but with woven thorns. The curse of Adam drew blood from the brow that had already endured the terrible sweat of Gethsemane. The sting of that circlet, the tormenting fear of failure in that garden, the loneliness, the grief, the desertion by his friends, the denial, the rejection, the consequent suffering, the mockery and the apparent triumph of evil and death were a forecast, a guarantee that those who truly sought to follow in his steps should have also something of his experiences. Only metal that could stand such tests would endure to the end.

"Oh, 'tis a pathway hard to choose, a struggle rough to share,

For human pride would still refuse the nameless trials there."

Not only human pride, loving the adulation of men, but human frailty, shrinking from the heat and the hammer, weak when it should be strong, failing when the pressures of life and the powers of darkness seem in league to crush out hope, assurance and fortitude. "Gold tried in the fire" is not too exaggerated a description of that human metal which God passes through the furnace of affliction that it may come forth a shining product ready for high service. Freed from the dross of intolerance, ignorance, self-

seeking and all those vanities to which flesh is heir, a metal which has stood the test will be found worthy to become the justification of the eternal purpose.

"A crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Of whom was the prophet speaking? What company of people did he foresee at some distant time occupying such a position of grandeur in relationship to the Lord that he would exhibit them as the crowning splendour of his own supreme universal authority?

The crown or cap of gold worn on the head of kings and princes signified honour, glory, dignity and rulership. Gold and jewels have been the prerogative of kings. The crown was rarely a simple circlet but a thing which shone in the eyes of the beholder, rivetting an awed attention by its brilliance and beauty upon the wearer as one appointed to reign over lesser mortals. When King David of Israel took the crown from the fallen king of Ammon he "found it to weigh a talent of gold and there were precious stones in it". Yet this age-long symbol of royalty once lay in the earth, a trapped element of primeval fires, needing the slow, laborious struggle of years to bring it to that perfection which exalts a monarch. The gold had no say in its shape or use. It did not exist for its own ends but for the purpose and design of its creator.

It follows then, that the dedicated life is no longer its own. It is chosen and offered for a purpose and place scarcely discerned in a life and a world which resembles the workshop of the Divine craftsman. Daily the old nature perishes while the spirit expands. As the remarkable pliability of gold yields to the fine designs of the smith so the willing obedience of a saint yields to him who fashions a new creation for his own purpose. Without discipline there is no destiny and without destiny there is no future.

"There is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will."

While some appear to have the superfine quality of fine gold dug from Ophir or Havilah, undergoing in this age those trials of faith which fit them for the next, mankind in general is not overlooked. The human metal is still there awaiting the time, the opportunity and the discipline of a benign reign of justice and love which will bring out the hidden best of all that obscure, neglected, undiscovered mass which has not yet had a chance to shine. For a long time human life has been cheap, grossly

undervalued and enormously underestimated. The human race is a massive mine of potential worth, its collective resources still hidden in the moral chaos and dark labyrinths of a world in which evil, ignorance and selfishness have predominated. Individually man is a restless dissatisfied being, craving to be something he is not.

"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even than the golden wedge of Ophir."

Gold is the Divine yardstick, the highest measure of nature. Money and education have produced in some respects civilised man, but God intends to produce regenerated man, man reformed, remade, reshaped after his own image. When the dross of wickedness and arrogance is purged from the earth and from human nature, man will become, by the grace of God, the precious creature he was meant to be, capable of greatness, of moral purity and deep happiness, far more valuable than the literal gold which the covetous have gone to any lengths to obtain.

As nations in their descent through time have dropped from the head of gold to the feet of iron and the toes mixed with clay, the kingdom of God must bring them back to the gold standard. *"The street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."* Here the Revelator depicts the future state of society, broad and spacious, full of light and beauty, golden and true in all its relationships. No longer crooked and perverse, violent and impure, in its dealings with others, but clear as glass, its ascendant virtues reflected in the mirror-like lustre of pure gold.

Whatever men and women may think of their present riches and attainments, whether they be saints or sinners, the counsel of Christ to "buy of Me gold tried in the fire" is timely and Divine. The imperfection of human nature, the unsatisfying quality of all earth's transitory riches and pleasures, grow pale beside that gold of intelligent character, the pure in heart who have passed through the fires, willingly losing their dross, sacrificing self and counting it nothing, that they might win through to the ultimate goal.

For the crown and the glory of life is character. It is a grand possession, a great influence and a unique power. The kingdom of God belongs to the pure in heart.

"We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God." If the means are rough and the methods hard, the future will be found infinitely worth them all for those who endure to the end.

"When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold."

F. A. Shuttleworth

WEDDING OF THE AGES

2. The Heavenly *Waakeel*

Part 1 described traditional wedding ceremonies and customs in the Holy Land in Biblical days and as they were observed in comparatively recent times; this part draws an analogy with the Call of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and Scripture symbolism connected therewith.

* * * *

Students of the Scriptures see in Eastern marriage customs a deep significance with regard to that mystical class of called out people variously known as the Church, the body of Christ, the Bride, and the Lamb's wife. All spiritually enlightened will call to mind many sayings of the prophets, Apostles and of the Lord which reveal to them an added meaning. Some of the parables of Jesus can be viewed with greater discernment of the deeper truths. Some special points in these customs are worthy of note as they relate to the experiences of individual Christians who have been called to a place in this elect, bridal class. The *Waakeel* or matrimonial agent is a wonderful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit sent out by God to seek a bride for his beloved Son. Eliezer's choice, one of great importance in the furtherance of God's purpose with man, was directed by him. Throughout the Gospel Dispensation, God has called and chosen members of the race of man, by means of his own Divine agency, for membership in the royal house through which He intends to bless all families of the earth.

As in the old custom the agent made no personal demonstration, but quickly drew aside the veil from each face for scrutiny, so the Spirit of God silently, unobtrusively draws aside the veil of the flesh, readily reading the mind, discerning the very thoughts and motives, paying no heed to natural protests, but choosing, drawing those possessed of faith, and such qualities as are likely to develop under the tuition to be given through this same agency of the Spirit.

"Man looketh upon the outward appearance but I the Lord read the heart." As Eliezer and the *Waakeel* did not talk of themselves but of their master's wealth and position so the Holy Spirit reveals to each called one the beauties of character of God the Father and of his Son, making known the riches of the heavenly life and inheritance. *"Ye see your calling brethren."* It could not be seen unless revealed to each individual

by this faithful and enlightening agency of the Spirit. Others may preach, may talk about the love of God and the gospel of Jesus, but unless the Spirit touches the mind, the hearer remains unmoved and unenlightened. *"No man cometh unto the Father but by me,"* and again, *"No man cometh unto Me unless the Father which hath sent me draw him."* Here is the agency at work on the individual, by the Father and through the Son, for a specific purpose. By the Spirit's agency the love gifts and messages are conveyed; the Scriptures yield unending joy, strength, encouragement and hope to the mind once charmed by the invitation to union with the King of Kings.

Prayer becomes the medium of correspondence by which love is expressed, desired and received. In this interchange of thought the bonds of love and loyalty are deepened, strengthened, and made ever more desirable because it is by prayer that the unseen Bridegroom and the unseen Father are more clearly revealed, understood and loved more truly. By such means the individual heart is allured, won and kept in the care of him *"whom not having seen we love, in whom, though ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1. 8).

"I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11. 2). Here is the betrothal covenant made by the Spirit through the inspired apostolic words. Such assurance is more than sweet; it is energising, uplifting. Those who receive it know at once the life-giving effects of this inner conviction. It loosens the tongue to songs of praise and wherever a few of like mind are met together there the wedding songs are sung in anticipation just as they were by the eastern bride and her companions as they got ready the wedding array. As every prospective bride delights to tell of her beloved to whoever will listen, singing his praises, lingering over his name as on a thing of beauty, so these bride members delight to talk of him who is their chief joy. To them there is no sweeter name in heaven or earth than one before whom every knee shall bow and confess him Lord of all.

*"Sweet is the vision of thy face
And kindness o'er thy lips is shed
Lovely art thou full of grace
And glory beams around thy head."*

The love and joy is mutual. The prophetic Scriptures abound with expressions of love and longing on the part of the heavenly Lover for his espoused partner. Because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of all this faithful company, with that deep desire to be pleasing and acceptable to him, He sees them as without spot. *"Thou art all fair; my love. There is no spot in thee...Thou hast taken away mine heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love."* (Cant. 4. 7,9). This single minded devotion wins more than approval. It brings joy to one who emptied himself of his riches, of life itself that she might be made rich and inherit eternity with him.

Alas! that any should prove unfaithful to such a love, that any could become luke-warm, forgetful; taken up, engrossed with any other theme, person or thing than that of Jesus and his redeeming love. Yet this love which is to endure forever must be tested and tried. Only the choice qualities can stand side by side with the Son of God. These qualities are not those of scholarship, knowledge, natural assets, for not many noble or learned according to worldly estimates have been called. The thing that make them dear to God is the same quality of unquestioning obedience, loyalty, meekness, unselfish love, willingness to spend and be spent, as were so grandly exemplified in Jesus during his earthly life. It is likeness to these things, affinity, strong desire, earnest striving, faith, hope, love, which will win the coveted position of bridal honours. "Many are called but few are chosen", qualify enough to be chosen. It is the heart and not the head, the life lived, the things done for his sake, that binds the willing soul to the Lord, the one who loves truly, loves the person, character, ways and manners of the loved one. The interests and affairs of that one are followed with devoted interest. Should a cloud of misunderstanding arise, the light of life is temporarily blotted out until complete love and trust are restored. Reconciliation brings with it an overwhelming joy. It is this kind of personal love to Jesus which is the real force behind all genuine Christian living. Devotion to causes, assents to creeds, formulas of religious doctrines, membership of some church, sect, society, or religious cult, does not make a person eligible for the inheritance that cannot fade. "Consider Him" is the appeal of the Spirit, and He can never be considered overmuch or overloved, for his own full measure of love is one that is beyond the grasp of

human knowledge or capacity. Human nature is weak, limited, frail, faulty, forgetful. At its best, with its most earnest efforts, its most diligent consideration, its warmest devotion, its deepest desires, it will still fall far short of that love of Jesus which was to man the sublime expression and revelation of the love of God. Yet there He stands at the apex and centre of all our affairs, and of the entire universe, the King of love. He is the pattern, and God intends us to keep looking to Jesus, *"the author and finisher of our faith"* if we would be "complete in him". Any knowledge which leads to a greater knowledge of the beloved, to a greater desire to imitate him, to share and to express his love in daily living, is the knowledge God wants us to have. Much of the confusion which darkens the world of religious thought is caused by too great a concentration on non-essential or secondary matters, intellectual problems which do not warm the heart. Lukewarm love results, with an easy turning away of the affections to other causes, interests and things, which gradually absorb the mind until the first rapture of love is lost. It is possible, alarmingly so, that the very Book itself, through which comes so much for the longing heart, can become such a bitter bone of contention that love wilts before the onslaughts of argument and the stubborn pride of contenders.

The world is ever ready with its enticing allurements to win away the love of hearts bound to Christ, and the flesh, deceitful and weak, is ever ready to listen to the myriad siren voices calling to other loves, while Satan, that malicious and crafty foe of God and man, is more than ready to destroy the "royal seed" through whose agency his own evil shackles are finally to be broken from the necks of mankind. Error, selfishness and pride, ambition, doubt, despair are some of the dangerous factors which cause love to grow cold while the Bride is making herself ready. Only a sterling, top-quality love will spurn all other inducements, will remain loyal, steadfast and true under every possible condition, enduring all the assaults of time and circumstance with unflinching and unwearied devotion. These are they which have a passion for life more than mere learning, to whom Jesus means life. The desire to be true in not just for the joy of endless association with him, but that of bringing life to a dying race, beset with sin and all its consequences; helpless to deliver themselves from its awful grip. This joy of deliverance took Jesus to the cross; it will urge his true lovers on to faithfulness.

It is by love that God purposes to save man, to give life to the race, and it is through the love of Christ and the love of his chosen and faithful Bride that his purpose will be carried out.

The faithful of all centuries since the advent of Jesus have considered themselves so bound in love and service, their lives a period of discipline and tuition, and in close co-operation with the glorious Christ, a time of testing and preparation for a future life of nobler proportions to be shared with all the faithful in the presence of God the Father. With this authorised picture before us we can look again at the Bride intent upon her preparations.

She is first and foremost radiantly happy. Doubt and mistrust do not cloud her brow, for she rejoices in the certainty, the security of her Bridegroom's love for her, which she not only desires but reciprocates. "My beloved is mine and I am his." She is his treasure. To her he is the "altogether lovely one, the fairest among ten thousand". The Scriptures convey his delight and assurances. The hymns of saints, the music, the prayers, the beauty which has been wrought into sacred edifices, the valiant efforts to follow his example, the triumphs of faith and spirit over the adversities of life, are some of the expressions, some of the proofs of love, given back by hearts wholly given to God and Christ. The love and interest of the Father cannot be excluded from the pact any more than that of the Eastern parent. Indeed it was the parent who arranged and made possible the match. The father was honoured in the son, the bride being as eagerly sought and as lovingly awaited. In the greater marriage it is no less the fact that all has been made possible, supervised, and provided by the richness of the love of God. He it is who awaits with equal joy the presentation before him of the Bride made glorious, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

The eastern provision of a wedding garment for each guest bidden to the marriage teaches a deep truth which cannot be ignored. In the grand event of the marriage of a king's son, the robes are of royal splendour. The beneficence of the king is at once recognised in the bestowal of rich garments upon

the bidden guests, which properly fit them for their place at the great banquet, but which they would be unable to provide for themselves. None need be ashamed to walk in the royal house or mingle with the distinguished company while clad in the princely attire of the king's providing. When one, through pride of heart, says in effect, "My own dress is good enough, I will go in my own dress", he is flouting the generosity of the king. When he lays aside the king's gift, appearing in his own attire, he is immediately conspicuous and out of place. He is not choice, either in garment or character. His dress does not grace the royal assembly and his conduct is an affront to the king, the outcome of some deep-rooted pride or self-love. Such vanity and lack of appreciation is swiftly dealt with by the royal officers of the feast. When questioned as to how he got in without the wedding garment which is the passport of entry, the offender is silent, having no legitimate excuse. Not only is he forcibly removed, but restrained until the feast is over so that he cannot again offend either the host or the guests. What a bold and striking picture our Lord used here to teach a searching truth, that of meekness, obedience, and a thankful recognition of God's great condescension to men of low estate, his provision for their lifting up to fellowship with himself, yet maintaining his supremacy; for "no flesh shall glory in his presence."

"Many are called but few are choice." Unbelievable as it may seem, out of the many, only the few are going to be found on the great day clothed upon with the king's robe, the robe of righteousness. Many will come at that day boasting of great and good works done in his name but He does not acknowledge them, for works have no merit by themselves. There must be the complete realisation that the best human talents and endeavours are nothing in the sight of God, who has given to man in the first place everything that he has or is.

The "Church of the Firstborn" is all choice, beautifully clad in the king's gift according to the king's wish, fitted by him to sit down with him in the kingdom of heaven.

(To be continued)

Now all is safely gathered in,
The Church is like a bower
With golden corn and harvest loaf,
With scent of fruit and flower.

Lord, all is safely gathered in;
Now show us how to share
These precious fruits of harvest with
Your children everywhere.

Ivy Russell

A. O. Hudson

WHEN GOD CALLS

*A discussion on the
call to discipleship*

"No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (Jno. 6. 44).

At first sight this looks a rather exclusive kind of situation, as though God selects some to receive his bounty on a basis known only to himself, and rejects all others.. In fact this is the foundation on which was built the old Calvinistic doctrine of Divine election; a few were pre-destined to heavenly felicity and all the rest equally irrevocably to the torments of hell. Happily very few still view the workings of God in that light even although far too many still restrict the scope of God's purpose to man within far too narrow a compass. Nevertheless there are several texts such as this one which at first sight appear to forbid the approach of man to God until he receives a Divine call or invitation, and since this stands in direct opposition to the universal appeal of the gospel which is open to all of humankind wherever they are or whoever they may be it demands a little quiet thought.

There certainly have been selective callings of God in the past. Paul was called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles, Mary the mother of Messiah and John the herald of Messiah. All such instances — and there are many in Scripture — rest upon the particular fitness of the individuals concerned for the duty or commission to be laid upon them; that is why they were thus called. Israel as a nation was definitely selected and called to become a witness to the One God, to manifest his laws and purposes in the sight of all mankind, and ultimately — this part of the calling has not yet materialised into reality — to be a light to the nations, to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth. The reason for the selection of this particular nation is not immediately apparent — from some points of view that proverbially hard-hearted and stiff-necked people might be said to have been a singularly unfortunate choice — but God makes no mistakes. Some quality in the line of descent from Abraham through Jacob to the twelve tribes must have been present to make this people peculiarly suitable for the Divine purpose; their remarkable survival as an identifiable racial entity through more than three thousand years despite unparalleled attempts at their extermination points to something unusual and, shall we say, indestructible, in their national make-up.

All these callings were to purposes connected with

the work of God in the world and none may question the choice of the Almighty when He appoints his agents. In no instance was the eternal destiny of the individuals concerned involved, nor yet the degree of approach to, or communion with, God achieved by any of them. When it comes to the relation of each one of us to the Most High there is no question of waiting for a "call" before we come to him. The reverse is the case; from earliest times the Father in heaven has been urging and entreating 'whosoever will' to come to him in devotion and faith and yield themselves to his will in complete surrender of self. *"Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways"* comes the appeal from the Heavenly Throne to God's wayward children of old *"for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezek. 33. 11). A later generation heard the same heart-felt invitation *"Come unto me...and I will give you rest."* (Matt. 11. 28). One of the basic principles of Divine revelation is that the salvation of God is freely offered to all who will accept it.

When, then, Jesus said that no man could come to him except the Father draw him, He was stating the profound truth that the power of the Holy Spirit of God was abroad in the earth, actively working in the hearts of any who had the slightest leaning toward him, encouraging, influencing, "drawing", such an one to the Master. *"Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me"* continued Jesus in the same discourse (Jno. 6. 45). He employed a similar theme later on when He said, *"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me"* (Jno. 12. 32). Thayer's paraphrase of that declaration is very telling: "I, by my moral, my spiritual, influence will win myself the hearts of all". The act of coming to Jesus is not just a cold-blooded business transaction or intellectual exercise, inspired by the human mind and put into practice by decision of the human will. It is a process in which the Holy Spirit has a part to play and the man who hears the appeal of the gospel and feels within himself the desire and urge to respond to that appeal becomes immediately a subject of Holy Spirit power, leading him on to the object of his quest. In such a way, it may be, it is true that the journey to the foot of the Cross is made possible only by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

The returning prodigal, in the parable of the Prodigal son, took the first step on his return journey

to his father's home, but after that his father went out to meet him and hastened the repentant one's progress by his own love and welcome. The same truth is expressed by the writer to the Hebrews when he says "*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11. 6). The first impulse of faith or belief must be there and then God by the Holy Spirit progressively enlightens the seeker as fast as he is able to receive and bear the Divine light, and in this way draws the seeker to himself.

Something like this would appear to be intended by the Lord's words to his disciples recorded in Matt. 13. 11-15, "*It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...because they seeing see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand...for this peoples' heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*" All too often this passage is taken to mean that Jesus deliberately veiled his message in "dark sayings" so that the people in general would not be able to understand, whereas the precise opposite is really the case. What Jesus had to say was comprehensible to his own followers, who wanted to hear the message and profit by it, but incomprehensible to those who did not want it and did not want to repent and be converted. This new teaching of love and sacrifice, of service and non-violence, was alien to their way of thinking and they wanted none of it. They knew not their loss; the disciples had chosen the better part and were enlightened thereby. Because of their realisation of need, and their faith in God, and their decisiveness in accepting the opportunity of discipleship when it was offered, they entered into an enlightenment which the others utterly failed to grasp and did not realise even existed. So it could be said that it was given to the disciples to receive this knowledge whereas to the others it was not given. It is in this sense that the Lord's words in Jno. 6. 65 are to be understood: "*no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father*". The fullest expression of "coming unto me" is the coming "into Christ" which implies the full and unconditional consecration of life and abilities and possessions to the service of God, the being baptised into Christ's

death and rising again to walk with him in newness of life, to use the language of Rom. 6. This coming into Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit acting upon the individual's first steps of faith and belief and it is only because that initial faith and belief is there that the Holy Spirit is able thus to act. The Apostle in Rom. 8. 28 speaks of those who are "*the called according to his purpose*"; and is writing of the Church of this Age, the members of which are called out from the general mass of humanity, that by reason of a consecrated life and utter devotion to God they might be fitted for the task of effecting world conversion in the next Age. It is true that only those thus called can aspire to be of that Church but the point to notice is that the opportunity is there for whosoever manifests the first essentials of belief in God and faith in his promise and desire to serve him. To the one who goes thus far along the way there comes the Divine leading by the Holy Spirit into a deeper understanding of what is offered and what is involved, until at length in full realisation of the meaning of the appeal "My son, give me thine heart" the believer dedicates himself wholly to his Lord. This is the call and those who answer it and enter into this "life in Christ" are the called according to his purpose; the ones to whom the power to come into Christ had been given by the Father.

John the Baptist used a similar expression upon one occasion but in a different connection. The third chapter of John's Gospel records an occasion when the Baptist's disciples brought him news of Jesus' increasing ministry and influence, to which John replied, "*a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.*" (Jno. 3. 27). The context shows unmistakably that he referred to Jesus as the one who had been given a Divine commission to do as He was doing and his ministry would have been fruitless unless it had been given thus from heaven.

There is one text involving a Divine call which is frequently sadly misapplied. Heb. 5. 4. has the statement "*No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*" A careful reading of the chapter shows that this has no reference whatever to the Christian calling, termed by Paul the "High Calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here in Heb. 5 the writer is stressing the fact that Christ is constituted the world's Saviour, the world's High Priest, by ordinance of God who said, "*Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee,*" who "*so loved the world that He gave his only-begotten son*

that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." To illustrate this truth he points out that the High Priests of Israel, of whom Aaron was the first, held office by ordinance of God. No ordinary man could aspire to the office; the succession was laid down by Divine edict. No man could take the honour, only he whose right it was in any generation according to that edict. *"So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest;"* it was the Father who conferred upon him the honour and dignity of the office.

It was when Jesus talked like this that *"from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* (Jno. 6. 66). The tragedy is not that God fails to call, but that some who have taken the first steps toward the Saviour of their own volition

falter and hang back when the voice of the Spirit sounds in their ears and they begin to perceive what discipleship is going to involve. It is not that God will not call them but rather that they hasten to put themselves into a position where they cannot hear the call, choosing to maintain their standing of faith in Christ as Saviour without accepting the leading of the Spirit into that fuller life in Christ which would constitute them of the community of called ones. Not lost, not castaways, their faith will one day gain them a place in God's purpose but not that for which this Age is primarily intended — the development and completion of the Church of Christ. That is why Jesus said on one occasion, *"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."*

Gordon Chilvers

THE SON OF MAN

Some discoveries about the use of Our Lord's chosen title

When Jesus during his time on earth wished to say something important about himself, he very often used the term 'the Son of Man'.

This is an expression which is used in the Old Testament, where very often 'son of man' means 'human being'. For example, Psalm 146. 3-4: "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no help. When his breath departs he returns to his earth; on that very day his plans perish." The psalm contrasts human help with the Lord's help — this would hardly be the thought Jesus had in mind.

Closer would be Psalm 8. 3-6: "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honour. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet..." This is quoted in Hebrews 2, where it is taken to mean a world completely under human control. We do not see complete human domination of the world — yet — nor did the writer of Hebrews. But he did see Jesus, as distinct from humankind in general, who was made 'a little lower than the angels'. He is now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of

God he might taste death for everyone. He was made perfect through his suffering. He calls human beings his brothers. He was a 'son of man'.

This phrase is also used in the Prophets. Ezekiel is called 'son of man' repeatedly. As such he was the representative of his people, entrusted with God's message to them. Could this be said of Jesus? But most notable is the passage in Daniel, chapter 7. Daniel had a dream of four great, fearsome beasts. Then, in his dream, v. 9, "As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was Ancient of Days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool....the court sat in judgment and the books were opened." In consequence the beasts were destroyed or restrained. Then Daniel saw in his night visions, "Behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; this dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." The fearful power of kings and their armies was to be destroyed. The authority given to the one 'like a son of man' meant the victory of 'the saints of the Most High' (v. 27). These words find an echo in what

Jesus told the Jewish Council when he was on trial.

'Son of man' is not what other people called Jesus. He might be called 'the son of the carpenter' — Joseph had been his father in the legal sense. The other members, brothers and sisters, of the Nazareth family were locally well known. 'Son of David', on the other hand, was a title which had problematic implication — David had been a warrior king. For his descendant to use the title could mean that he too would be a warrior — a fighting Messiah. Not until the end, and especially at his entrance to Jerusalem a week before he died, did Jesus publicly accept that name. An equally dangerous title to accept was 'Son of God'. To claim this was the ultimate blasphemy, as Caiaphas knew when he challenged Christ directly at his trial. Jesus rarely used the title, however correct it might be. Others did: Mark, when he began his gospel, used it to identify the one he was writing about; the angel at the annunciation, to identify the child to be born. For Peter, days before the Transfiguration, it was putting his conviction about Jesus in a nutshell; Martha, when Lazarus was dead, used it because she accepted Jesus had power to give life. He had actually stated that the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God.

As the Son, Jesus did often speak of 'the Father' — 'our Father' — 'my Father and your Father'. To his Father he prayed. He declared (Matthew 11. 25ff), "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes.... All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

'The Son of Man' was the title he commonly used, however. In so doing he accepted the limitation of being human described in Psalm 146, and he assumed the implicit authority in being a man, of Psalm 8. He took on the function, like Ezekiel, of being God's spokesman, and he claimed the Divine recognition and acceptance seen in Daniel's dream. But what did he himself say, when he spoke in the role of 'son of man'?

When John begins his gospel he too speaks of Jesus

as the son — the only Son whom God begat — who in living among human beings revealed his Father's glory, grace and truth. "No man has seen God...the only Son declared him." It was what Jesus had himself said, which we saw recorded in Matthew 11. As Jesus told Nicodemus, his home is heaven. Only the Son of Man can tell of heavenly things at first hand. Later, speaking to Jews who could not understand him, and would not accept him, Jesus said, "...I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him". (John 8. 28-9). The Son of Man had clearly come to show what his Father is like. So when we read of actions or consider his motives, note his attitudes to people — whether of encouragement or disapproval — we seeing how our God and Father likewise thinks, feels, acts and judges.

Jesus said, "I am come that they may have life, and have it to the full". That is part of his work as The Man. Seeking and saving the lost means much more than reinstating Zaccheus in Jewish society: much, much more for Zaccheus. And in order to be a ransom for many, Jesus had to give his life completely. The Son of Man must be 'lifted up'. The consequence for those who believe in him is eternal life, in contrast to perishing. God sent the Son into the world with the intention that through him the world should be saved. Jesus told the crowds, "while you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light" — and he, the Son of Man who would be lifted up, is light to us all. But we must believe. Just as food is useless unless we eat it, so the Son of Man must be believed, accepted, for eternal life to result. His words must become part of us. "This is the will of my Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in him may have eternal life: and I myself will raise him up on the last day."

We can picture something of how the Son of Man saw himself, as he went about doing good, and thus gave people the opportunity to believe in him. To the messengers that John the Baptist sent, he said, "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them." As Son of Man he came eating and drinking, sharing in social life, which drew from some the response, "Behold, a glutton and a

drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” It was to his actions that Jesus pointed when people were making up their minds about him. Not that he went out of his way to make easy disciples: foxes have holes, he pointed out, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere of his own to rest. He pointed out that he had come to be in the giving end, not the receiving end of life. His very life itself was to be given — in order to set many people free. He shared bread among the crowds, a sign that his life was given as ‘bread’ for others. But to make it their own, they had to work: the work is believing. This austere way of making disciples was how the Son of Man ‘sowed good seed in the field’. Later he would look for a harvest. In the meantime, he must die like grain dies that is sown in the ground, not only as an example for his disciples but truly as a way to multiply, to produce much fruit.

As Son of Man Jesus claimed to have authority (authority, to judge by Daniel’s dream, was implicit in the title). He went on a kind of circuit around the towns and villages, his disciples going in advance. Although he refused to arbitrate in disputes, he was a judge on circuit in a different way. He was Lord of the Sabbath, claiming authority to do good whenever he liked — the better the day, the better the deed. The rules which officialdom had set up in God’s name could be ignored. Even more shocking to officialdom was his claim to forgive sins, and in so doing release people from the consequences of their guilt. He placed a discipline upon his followers, even if it was an ‘easy’ yoke. He said that in virtue of the fact that he was son of man — The Man — one of mankind, his Father had given him authority as the judge of mankind.

And he was not only the judge, but himself demonstrated what is the standard by which we are judged. He is not just like the law — a straight edge to show how crooked we are. He is the perfect example of what to be a human being means, in practical living: and so our reactions to him demonstrate what sort of people we are. These reactions we make in our environment which is potentially hostile, where it can be easier to deny Christ than to confess that we believe him — as Peter found to his cost. Jesus said that those who are persecuted for the sake of the Son of Man are blessed; but on the other hand that he would be publicly ashamed of those who were publicly ashamed of him. Yet he took pains to forgive Peter, and reinstate him,

and give him a work to do. To speak against Jesus was not, is not, in the long term unforgivable. We human beings can be mistaken about other human beings, even about Jesus. It is a rejection of the goodness of the Holy Spirit inspiring him which is incompatible with eternal life. There were enemies who by coming into contact with Jesus were shown to be enemies: if Judas Iscariot had never met the Son of Man he might have passed for a very decent sort of person. As it was, Jesus in deep sadness remarked, “Better that he had never been born.” Those who met Jesus were challenged to repent, just as the people of Nineveh repented when they met Jonah, or the Queen of Sheba was challenged when she encountered the wisdom of King Solomon. It was a cheerful encounter that Jesus had with the man born blind — that perky protagonist of a straightforward faith — yet even this ended with a warning. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” “You have seen him, it is he who is speaking to you” “Lord, I believe!” And he worshipped him. Jesus said, “For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” This is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. But he who does what is true comes to the light...that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. Attracted by Jesus? Or repelled?

Travelling about to Jerusalem or in Galilee, Jesus spoke to his disciples about what would be his future. Conditioned as they were to the hope of his reign in glory, they found it hard to grasp what he said about his suffering. What did Nicodemus make of it when told the Son of Man must be set up like Moses’ fiery serpent on a pole, so that those who saw it might live? Those bitten by serpents were cured at the sight of a serpent on a pole: those involved in human sin cured at the sight of the Man on a cross. His enemies would do it to him, not understanding, but...“when you have lifted up the Son of Man you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority but speak thus as the Father taught me.” Quite specifically, the disciples were told, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him;

and after three days he will rise.” (Mark 10. 33-4). ‘And after three days he will rise’ was as beyond grasping as the preceding prophecy of suffering. Jesus told them again, and again. It may not sometimes have seemed too clear, for he also described his death as “being glorified”. It was the glory of completed self-giving, of full obedience to the mission which the Father trusted him with, of the dying which begins the process of growth and multiplication. How could they understand, at this stage. But it was written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt. Jesus saw all this coming, even as he was descending the mountain where he had been transfigured, even as he saw it when Peter was calling him “the Christ”. Yet the glory was not only in the completed self-giving, but also in the rising to life after death. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him God *will* also glorify him in himself...at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you...Love one another.”

This glory is not quite the same as the disciples might have expected from other words of Jesus, which would call Daniel’s dream to mind. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations...” These words begin the parable of the sheep and goats, a picture of judgement: the basis of the verdict is, did men obey the way of kindly love, which Jesus taught. Matthew 24. 44 speaks of his unexpected coming: vv. 29-31 tell of the nations’ mourning, and his chosen ones being called together world wide: v. 27 shows a coming visible as lightning. Matthew 13. 41 — “The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers.” When he comes, finding a questionable amount of faith in earth’s population, it will be the vindication of those who keep on praying and do not lose heart. Pressures, distractions, fears and forebodings can so easily steal the mind away from Christ, amid the upheavals before he comes. “Watch at all times, praying you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

To expect glory like this did not make Jesus acceptable to those in authority. “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” demanded the High Priest. Jesus said, “I am. And you will see the Son of Man

seated at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven”....and some began to spit on him and strike him.

Or Stephen....“Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” — that same Jesus whom they had put to death. But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed upon him.

We might try to summarise what Jesus said about Himself as Son of Man. He came to reveal what his Father is like. He came to bring eternal life to human beings. He came to give himself, to serve his fellow human beings and to save them. This he did with authority, and by virtue of his human experience he is equipped the better to be our judge. He taught love and self-sacrifice, and himself set the standard for all human life. He came in the deliberate expectation of being subject to a brutal public death: but this has value to save men and women, and to change them. He expected to return to the Father, being raised from death, and to be revealed in power and glory, ruling according to the principles he taught.

In fulfilling these claims he originated the community of those who believe in the Son of Man, which we call the church. The members of this community who wrote about him did not in general refer to him as the Son of Man. It was enough to say ‘the Son’, which equally identified him as the Son of God. We may note, according to their statements, that God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. We note that those He has chosen to become like the Son (the firstborn among many brethren) He has called, justified and glorified. We may have the utmost confidence in him who did not spare his Son but gave him up for us all, sure in that in our relationship with Christ he will ‘give us all things’. For we are delivered from the power of darkness, transferred into the kingdom of the beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. This Son, our pattern, learned obedience through his suffering. He is made perfect. He is the source of eternal salvation to all who obey. If we do not possess the Son we do not have life — but if Jesus is ours, whom we claim by believing, we have life indeed.

In scripture there are two last references to the Son of Man, both in Revelation. There, someone ‘like a son of man’ is seen with a sickle, reaping the harvest

of the earth. And there, too, one like a son of man is seen, in the midst of his churches — caring for us all — “clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle around his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven

stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died, and behold I am for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades...’”

THE WORLD PASSETH AWAY

Among the principal necessities of life upon earth is oxygen. Nearly everyone knows oxygen as that constituent of the air we breathe which sustains our living processes. Human beings, like all living creatures, breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Where does the oxygen come from? It comes entirely from the vegetable world! All plant life, from the tiniest plankton to the mightiest tree, takes in water vapour and carbon dioxide, and breathes out oxygen which has been manufactured by the plant. Thus the animal and vegetable worlds are interdependent; each lives on what the other provides and provides what the other needs. And these processes have been going on for untold ages of time without the balance being upset. There has always been enough carbon dioxide for the plants and always enough oxygen for man and the animals. This is only one of the many instances of Divine planning in the practicalities of material creation.

But now someone thinks the balance is in danger of being upset — and of course it is man and not God who is doing the upsetting. Nearly thirty years ago scientists stated that the increasing dumping of man-made refuse and chemicals in the oceans, and the burning of increasing quantities of coal, oil and gas, may conceivably reach a point in the not too distant future when there will be a catastrophic shortage of oxygen in the atmosphere, and life on the earth in consequence become impossible. There are now, it was said, over half a million different kinds of pesticides, detergents and radio-active waste materials reaching or being dumped in the seas of the world. The toxic effect of this increasing pollution might well commence to kill off the myriad forms of floating plant life — as it has already done in some areas near industrialised coasts — and this plant life in the sea produces 70% of the world’s continuing supply of oxygen. It was pointed out that whenever any kind of fuel is burnt oxygen is consumed and although in past ages the quantity was insignificant, modern industry is making such huge demands

that this becomes another potential source of shortage.

When one reflects upon the immensity of the earth and its surrounding atmosphere a warning such as the above seems a little too fantastic to be taken seriously. But is it so fantastic after all? A few hasty — and approximate — calculations based upon a variety of independent research findings come up with some startling figures. A full grown man uses up about ten tons of oxygen in a year, and all of this comes from the plant world. But the construction of modern buildings, roads, airports, and so on, obliterates over fifteen hundred square miles of the earth’s surface each year, and this involves a permanent loss of the oxygen needed to keep ten million human beings alive. There is, at any one time, over a thousand millions of millions of tons of the stuff in existence so there appears to be an ample store, but it would seem that the many processes for which Nature requires oxygen would exhaust this vast accumulation in less than ten years if production by the plant world ceased, so that the American professor may well be uttering a timely warning.

That it will be heeded is too much to expect. The powers and vested interests of this world will continue to pour the filth from their industrial processes, the poisonous pesticides from their “scientific” agriculture, the radio-active wastes from their nuclear power stations, and their sewage, into the oceans, killing off the creatures that live therein and threatening the orderly continuance of life on this planet. It seems that the process will only be halted when the sovereignty of Christ is asserted and the kingdoms of this world become his kingdom. Under his administration we can look for the restoration of that orderly harmony and co-operation between man and Nature which characterised the beginning of things. The apparent urgency of the position is another evidence that the time of that Kingdom is close at hand — *“even at the doors!”*.

A.O.H.

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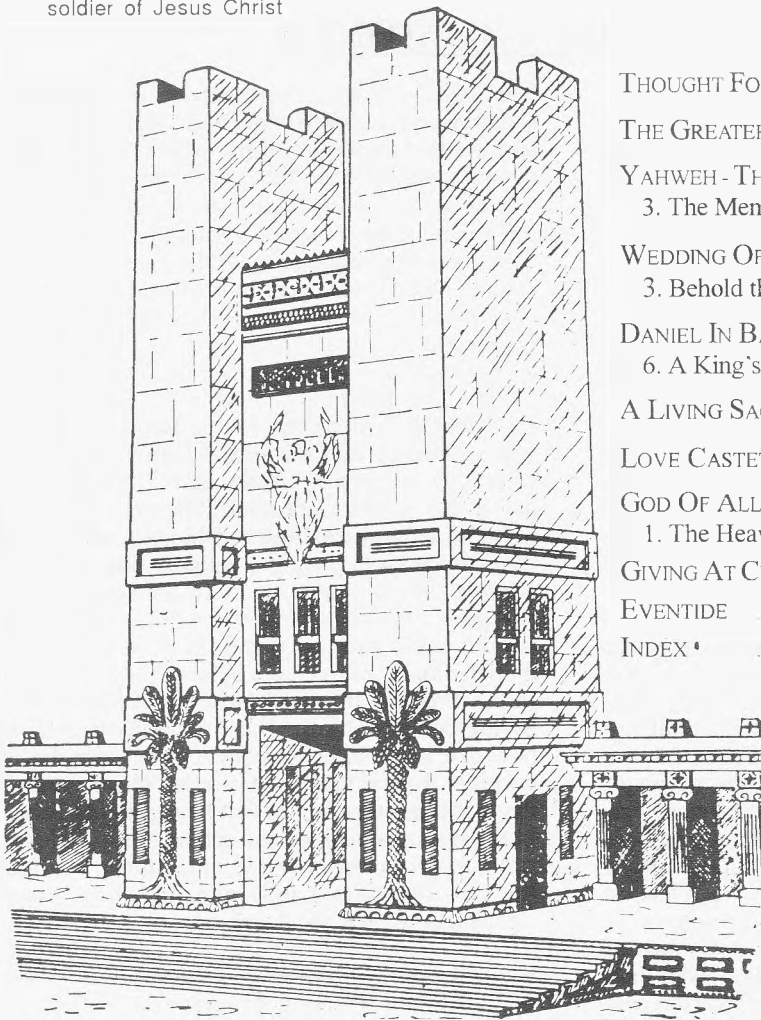
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Thou, therefore, endure
hardness as a good
soldier of Jesus Christ

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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

Christmas is imminent and with it the usual blatant commercial exploitation of what for nearly fifteen hundred years has been regarded as a purely Christian festival. Traditionally the date of the birth of Jesus, present-day research has established the fact that the true date was in early October, but the old tradition still lingers and, for Christians will probably never die. Neither is there any real reason why it should; the end of the old year, the beginning of the new, the point at which the nights begin to get shorter and the days longer, is surely the time of all times for the good fellowship and merrymaking, the forming of good resolutions for the future, which really makes Christmas what it is.

All the same, say a few worthy folk who are sticklers for that which is correct: Christmas is originally a pagan festival adopted into the Church. Let us away with it and refuse to recognise it! Let us take a stand for truth and cleanliness by refusing to subscribe to the honouring of a day which had its origin in the uncleanness of paganism! Sounds logical, put like that: "be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing" as Isaiah said in another connection. It is certainly true that December 25th has been a Christian festival only since the 3rd Century. Prior to that it was a Roman holiday devoted to pagan rituals. There is no doubt that the organised Christian church took over the occasion together with the general stock-in-trade of paganism when it became the State religion of the Empire at that time. But the story is even earlier. Long before Abraham, the same feast on the same date was a feature of the idolatrous faiths of Babylon and Sumeria, in honour of the Babylonian god Marduk, and much of what is claimed for Christ in these days was then attributed to him. The Yule log, the Christmas tree, the roast boar, many of the trappings of modern Christmas were present even then, a striking example of the persistence of tradition. And always there was in evidence the spirit of gladness that the dark winter was coming to an end, the tide had turned, and summer days would soon be here again. It is this fact, that Christmas

comes precisely at the winter solstice, when the receding sun turns and begins to come back, that has led some to surmise that the origin of the whole thing is just this natural change for the better in the annual seasons.

But before going on with the iconoclasts and repudiating Christmas as a pagan festival improper for Christians let us enquire more deeply into its probable origin. What great event in the dim and archaic past gave occasion for this annual celebration which has lingered so long under so many forms? It is not difficult to find such an event; it is enshrined in the story of the Flood. The dated indications in the Genesis account show that the Flood commenced forty days before the winter solstice and the initial cataclysm continued solidly for forty days. At the end of that time, on the day which is now December 25th, the surging waters from the sea ceased to flow, and the colossal atmospheric disturbance created by the gigantic tidal waves from the south which caused the Flood died away, and there was great calm. Noah knew that the crisis had passed, the old world had ended and the new begun — even though months must elapse before the water was gone; just as three months must elapse after Christmas before Spring comes. But the tide had turned and he knew now that he would assuredly step out into the world cleansed from sin and start afresh. There, surely, was the first Christmas, and if that be so, we can forget the later pagan associations and celebrate it as did Noah, a symbol of the close of an old sinful dying world and of the certainty that a new one, in which dwelleth righteousness, is at the door.

A.O.H.

Come from us

—✻—

Sis. Olive Appleton (Billinge)

—✻—

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

A. O. Hudson

THE GREATER BLESSEDNESS

*A reflection on some
unwritten words of Jesus*

Admonishing the Elders whom he called from Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, the Apostle Paul sought to impress upon them the wonderful privilege they had of doing for the Lord's people a service very much akin to the service of the Lord Jesus himself. Pointing to his own faithful life also as an incentive to them, he quotes one of the unrecorded utterances of our Lord to give emphasis to his admonition, to show them that the essence of the Christian's course (and especially the Christian Elder's course) in his relations with others was much more a matter of "giving" than receiving. *"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"* The nearest that any recorded words of Jesus come to this utterance is in Matt. 10. 8. *"Freely ye have received, freely give."* None of the evangelists place on record the words of Jesus in the particular form here expressed, but evidently He had said them; some one or other of his immediate hearers had remembered them and passed them onto Paul, who treasured them up in his heart, and now made use of them to incite his brethren, sharers with himself in the ministry of grace, to be ready to lay down their lives for the brethren — not serving with any idea of recompense, but of a ready mind.

Paul's quotation of these words leads us to realise that there must have been many of the sayings of Jesus left unrecorded. It is not for a moment thinkable that the few chapters of incidents given from his busy life was anything like a full chronicle of his sayings and doings. As John says (John 20. 30-31) *"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name."* Just a few episodes from his activities, and just a few excerpts from his many and varied utterances are given, but, under the Holy Spirit's guiding care enough to enable the believer to understand and appreciate the "way that leadeth unto life".

As with the Lord, so with many of the prophets who preceded Jesus. Even though the book of Isaiah has sixty-six chapters and Jeremiah fifty-two and Ezekiel forty-eight, it is hardly likely that these records contain all their warnings and pleadings and chidings as they sought to turn a wayward people back unto the ways of the Lord, and one feels very

sure that some of the minor prophets spoke much more fully in the name of the Lord than has been left on record to come down to us. Part of our difficulty of understanding them lies in the fact that only a resumé of their appeals were written for our learning, but of one thing we may be sure, the Holy Spirit of God has given us the essence of all they said. No essential point has been omitted of their many and varied utterances. The sweet fragrance of their self-sacrificing lives has been concentrated, and the sweet aroma of God's tender watch care over his chosen people was distilled by them into a very few inspiring promises of a rare charm and beauty.

Let us think of these things in the same way that we do of the "scents of Araby". Those skilled craftsmen who knew the secrets of the perfumer's art would gather every flower that grew and lay it under tribute so that nothing of its matured blooming fragrance would be lost. The petals and stamens of millions of blooms were collected and the precious odours they contained extracted from them, reduced to a form in which they could be stored up and easily transported from place to place. Compacted into small compass and to last for long periods, they were capable of being expanded and dispersed again at pleasure by all who joy and delight in the fragrance of flowers.

In the same way the Heavenly alchemist had concentrated the Divine Principles enunciated by his prophets into small compass, like the precious spikenard of Mary, into the brief restricted utterances put on record for us in his Holy Word. Distilled by the Spirit of God and sealed up within his beautiful flask, the God of the Holy Book has stored up fragrance ravishing beyond words, and when the seals are broken and the alluring fragrance is unstopped, the odours fill the house. Like a casket of Attar of Roses, the concentrated essence of thousands of beautifully tinted rose leaves, full grown and mature, put into that form with a view to its subsequent expansion and distribution as and when required, so fact and truths and principles of the profoundest importance to man are laid up and enshrined in the Scriptures in comparatively few words with a view to their being, in God's providence, and as He sees fit from time to time, expanded and distributed to the delight and profit of those who diligently and humbly give themselves to the study of his Holy Word.

T. Holmes

YAHWEH — THE SACRED NAME

3. The Memorials of the Name

Subsequent to the Revelation of the Holy Name (Exod. 3. 14) the most pious souls in Israel instituted Memorials of that Name, in connection with some crisis of their personal or national experiences. Some word, descriptive of the locality or circumstance, was attached to the Name, and bore its testimony to the fulfilment of the Promise enshrined in the Name. On these occasions "He who becometh" did become what a tempted and tried people needed him to become, and received from him the help and succour for which the occasion called. To commemorate this display of Divine assistance, compound names were coined, so that they might tell later generations how He who bore 'the Name' had helped them in their need. Thus Moses on one occasion raised the Memorial Name of "*Yahweh Ropheka*" — "Yahweh thy Healer"; on other occasions Moses built an altar in remembrance of a victory, and called it "*Yahweh Nissi*" — "Yahweh, my Banner," (Exod. 17. 15). In later times Gideon built an altar, and called it "*Yahweh Shalom*" — 'Yahweh gave peace,' because after seeing the Angel of Yahweh face to face, he was spared from death. (Jud. 6. 21-24). Still later, Israel's God was called "*Yahweh Zebaoth*" — 'Yahweh of hosts' (2 Sam. 7. 26,27). And God himself on one occasion gave them the compound name "*Yahweh Makaddishken*" — 'Yahweh doth sanctify you' (Lev. 20. 8). In that sweetest pastoral song of all time David calls God "*Yahweh Ra'ah*" — 'Yahweh my Shepherd' (Psa. 23. 1). Looking forward far down the stream of time Jeremiah sees Israel and Judah cleansed from all defilement and sin and made worthy to bear the name of their God. He calls them "*Yahweh Tsidkenu*" — 'Yahweh's Righteousness'. (Jer. 23. 6; 33. 16). Ezekiel also, describing a future apportionment of the Holy Land, and of a city in its midst, declares its name "*Yahweh Shammah*" — 'Yahweh is there' (Ezek. 48. 35).

In all these circumstances some wonderful manifestation of Divine care is called to mind, and kept on record for later generations to see how God of 'the Ineffable Name' had become what his people needed him to become, and had brought them through to the higher and better state of victory over self and sin. Most of these occur in late Jewish history, but there is one notable instance, where the 'Name' is compounded, which pre-dates the scene at 'the Bush'

when Moses was commissioned to become Israel's deliverer and leader. This occasion arose when a heavy-hearted but faithful old man had taken his long-awaited son up a mountain side, and had laid him on an altar for sacrifice. The old father's faith was tested right up to the point where the knife was raised to strike the fatal blow. When the crucial moment had demonstrated that, in intent, the deed was done, the hand was arrested and the blow stayed. The lad was lifted from the altar and unbound, while the Angel of God directed where a substitutionary sacrifice would be found.

Can anyone wonder that that faithful old father, and his restored son, should call that sacred spot "*Yahweh Yireh*" — 'Yahweh will see and provide?' Would they not remember all their days how near to the brink of sacrifice they stood, and yet how, betimes, the Angel interposed, and provided a ram to die in Isaac's place? To all ages will the remembrance stand of a faithful father, and a submissive son, and a providential God. Abraham's test was severe — as grievous as mortal man could bear — but in that epochal hour, God saw what was in the grand old man, and became to him all that that patriarchal soul needed him to be. To every zeal-warm soul in Israel, or in the Church, 'Yahweh Yireh' is the token of an eye which sees, and of an arm that provides. (Gen. 22. 14).

Israel had journeyed but three days from the Red Sea (Exod. 15. 22) when their murmurings began. Coming to Marah, they found the waters bitter there. "What shall we drink?" they asked. Moses cried unto God, and God showed him a tree, which, cast into the waters, made them sweet. To commemorate the healing of the waters God set himself before them as '*Yahweh Ropheka*' — 'Yahweh that healeth thee' — 'Yahweh thy Healer'. Behind this was a lesson of deeper import, for there "*God made for them a statute and an ordinance...if thou wilt do what is right in My sight . . . I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians*" (Ex. 15. 25-26). The healing of the waters was a symbol of the healing of the nation — as a community and as individuals. Israel needed pure refreshing drink, and God gave it to them. He became to them what they needed him to become, —

"*Yahweh Ropheka*" — 'Yahweh, their Healer.' The Psalmist caught up this refrain and sang "*Bless Yahweh, O my soul,....and forget not all his benefits. Who....healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction....*" (Psa. 103. 2-4). Thus the holy Name stood for a symbol of health and deliverance, softened and tempered by the goodness of God.

Israel had left the Red Sea borders but a few weeks when another trouble befell the wandering people. Encamped at Rephidim (Exod. 17. 8, 15) at which place God had provided water from the flinty rock, the hosts of Amalek fell upon and would have destroyed them, but for Yahweh's intervention. Israel was an untrained, undisciplined host, handicapped by the presence of women and children. Thus they could have become an easy prey to Amalek's warriors. But while the men of Israel fought, Moses played his part by holding up his arms. While his arms were up Israel prevailed; when his arms were down Amalek prevailed. On perceiving this Aaron and Hur "stayed up his hands", standing one on each side of Moses. This unusual procedure shows Divine supervision of the event, and when "Joshua discomfited Amalek" the victory was the gift of Yahweh. Moses built an altar and called it "*Yahweh Nissi*" — 'Yahweh my Banner.' Israel had been in danger, and God became unto her what she needed him to be — 'a deliverer in war'. Yet in that deliverance God required them to co-operate — the menfolk to fight, and Moses to intercede. This was intended to teach them a two-fold lesson — first, confidence in themselves; second, confidence in their God. God made up for them that which they lacked in themselves.

When the people of Israel were setting forth from Egypt, they went forth as "the hosts of Yahweh" (Exod. 12. 41). In course of time, the two nouns in this phrase became transposed. It would be an easy change from 'the hosts of Yahweh' to 'Yahweh of Hosts' — This change of emphasis had taken place well before the period of the Judges ended, for before Samuel's birth, his pious mother had prayed to the 'Lord of Hosts' to take away her reproach and give her a son (1 Sam. 1. 3, 11) whom she would dedicate to Yahweh throughout his days. This transposition of nouns would have come about when Israel found Yahweh fighting her numerous foes, and giving her the victory — Yahweh thus becoming the advance guard of the 'host'. From this time on, in

Israel, because Israel was so often at war, this Name '*Yahweh Sabaoth*' — Yahweh of hosts — was frequently employed by both Prophet and Psalmist. David celebrates in song the return in triumph of the glorious King (Psa. 24) — and admonishes the gates and doors of the great city to be opened and uplifted to admit his victorious train. "*Who is this King of Glory*" he asks. He then makes answer, "*Yahweh, strong and mighty, Yahweh, mighty in battle....Yahweh of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.*" Throughout the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and some of the minor prophets this 'Name' is in constant use, always with the same import. Israel and Judah were frequently at war with neighbours, and to the saintly minds in Israel "the God of Israel was Yahweh of Hosts" all the time, no matter how the fortunes of war fell out.

A deep and wonderful field of study lies in these three words, revealing the strange doings of Israel's God as He stepped along the highways of history, sometimes assisting, sometimes chastising the hosts who had gathered to his Name. But all the time the meaning of that Name ran true — 'I will be what I will be' in every circumstance. 'I will bless you, when faithful, I will chastise you when faithless,' was always the tenor of his attitude to the wayward sons of those stiff-necked fathers, to whom his Name was first made both pledge and promise.

Space will not permit much to be said about the prophetic foreviews of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, on this occasion. When Israel and Judah are gathered home again, cleansed from all their sin, and living only for their God, that once stubborn people will be a wonder in the earth before the eyes of all nations. "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely and this is the Name wherewith she shall be called, "*Yahweh Tsidkenu*" — 'Yahweh's Righteousness.' (Jer. 33. 16). And this city and people shall have a glorious king who will bear this illustrious Name "*And in his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, 'Yahweh Tsidkenu*' — Yahweh's Righteousness or *Yahweh our Righteousness*" (Jer. 23. 6). Now at long last Yahweh, the nation's king, and the nation itself are all at one, and the 'Holy Name' is on them all. "*Yahweh Elohim*" the God of Israel, by his goodness and long-suffering has won the affection of the wayward sons of Israel, and they are now worthy to be his people. "He has become to them all that He wanted to become." "He who becomes" has, in ways, strange and wonderful, become their God..

And so, in that last final 'City of Peace' 'Yahweh is there.' (Ezekiel 48. 35).

Just one word more, as we turn back to Israel's shepherd King. "Yahweh my Shepherd," sings David. Memories of his own youthful days would fill the mind of the sweet Singer of Israel, as he gave utterance to this delightful phrase. Lion and bear had fought to rob him of his charges, but at risk to himself he had been their defence. He had sought out the luscious grass and quietly flowing waters for his flock, and stood guardian while they fed. He had been to them what they needed him to be. — provider, defender, and healer. The pious mind of the shepherd boy, now king in Israel, catches at the larger thought, and sees himself (with all his people) as the sheep of Yahweh's pasture. A gracious bountiful keeper of his flock was Israel's God — 'Yahweh Ra'ah' —

Yahweh my Shepherd! In other words David had embraced the promise 'at the Bush', and adapted it to the shepherd life, and had drawn sweet comfort for himself (and for millions since) because 'He who becometh' had become a Shepherd to his flock. David had taken the promise "I will be what I will be" and had inserted the words "as a shepherd" within them, and made them to read "He will be, as a Shepherd, what He will be."

To-day that promise stands sure. "I will be all you need me to be" — protector, provider, healer, God and Father. Oh, wonderful Name! and wonderful privileges vouchsafed by that Name! "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be THY NAME," yea, hallowed and esteemed by every child who knows its worth. May God help us to hallow his Name to-day and forever.

The End

F. A. Shuttleworth

WEDDING OF THE AGES

3. Behold the Bridegroom

This final section concludes the application of Biblical wedding customs to the Scriptural poetic presentation of the meeting between the Lord and His Church at the time of His coming.

* * * *

Our Lord's parable of the virgins was simply but forcefully drawn from the marriage customs about him. The virgins seated in readiness, waiting and watching for the arrival of the royal groom, picture the attitude of faithful Christians all through the Age of grace or invitation. The lights and music heralding his approach have for long been seen and heard in the multiplying signs of the times which warn of a change in human affairs. It has become plain to many thinking people that great changes are imminent, that the time clock of the ages approaches what scientists are fond of describing as "zero hour", the midnight hour of the parable when the cry is made "Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out and meet him". The watchers who have looked and longed for his coming, straining eyes and ears through the increasing darkness of infidelity, sin and death, have been alerted many times by what seemed the nearness of his arrival, only to have those hopes dashed and recede into the distance, "The end is not yet; see that ye be not troubled"; the Lord's words have seemed to come reassuringly out of the gloom and the faithful have settled down again to wait patiently

while they carried out the glad task of publishing abroad the good news of impending change.

The Bride waits in readiness. Some of the eager expectancy dies as the night hours wear on towards midnight. There is an undercurrent of murmurs. "My Lord delayeth his coming". He only seems to delay. This is the happiest event of the ages, "the day for which creation and all its tribes were made". He, the Lord of life, has waited long for it, expectant, eager, busy with his own preparations, alert to set out on his triumphant mission whenever the Father gave the word, for the times and seasons have ever been, admittedly, in the Father's hand. He comes, not at an appointed hour, for there is no stated hour, but at the hour when everything that had to be done has been done. But he does come. He will come.

*"He comes, for O his yearning heart
No more can bear delay
To scenes of pure, unmingled joy,
To bear his bride away."*

When He comes, the darkness of midnight shrouds the land. Though He may not find faith in the earth among the children of Mammon, He will find ready and waiting the mystical Bride, the church which is his Body; that other half, without which the Christ will not function in giving life to the human family. There will be watchers beside the patiently waiting

church; religious groups deeply desirous of this great event, believing it to be the only solution to the perils and troubles of mankind, yet themselves not among the chosen, royally attired Bride. Where the faith of many of these watchers has dwindled, worn out with the unexpected long wait or overwhelmed by the deep darkness of infidelity covering society, when their vision is dimmed and their ears are dulled in weariness or indifference, then the cry will sound sharp and clear through the midnight hour of the parable when the cry is made "*Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out and meet him*".

Amid the confusion of minds dazed by slumberous indifference, the acrid smoke of lamps going out for want of attention, the cries, half despairing, "*Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*", and the firm remonstrance of the more vigorous, "*Go buy for yourselves*", the Son of the great King of heaven is at last on the threshold, ready to take to himself his Bride. The ready watchers, the Bride's faithful companions, enter in with him and the door is shut. All the knocking in the world will not gain admission for the tardy souls who have gone on their fruitless errand to find that oil of the Spirit which will enlighten their darkness. The time has gone for oil-buying, for light-bearing. If they stumble back to the door at all in the overwhelming blackness of the hour after midnight, it is only to find themselves forever shut out of the brilliant splendour of the marriage and its joyous supper. When God shuts a door none can open. For upwards of twenty centuries the door has stood open for the free access of the Bride, her friends and the agency of the Spirit. Now the work is all complete. The Bride is ready, the watchers were ready and the Bridegroom is come: they are all together and the door is shut.

"*The marriage of the Lamb is come and His bride hath made herself ready.*" "*Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*"

The birth of our Lord was the most wonderful event in history. Then Divine love came down to dwell with men. His death upon the cross was the most tragic, for there the sin and ignorance of man slew the King of love, nailing him to a cross. His resurrection was the most stupendous event, for there Divine power conquered death, that life in due time might flow again to a dying race. The marriage of this same Jesus, the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, will mean that the time has come to put into operation all the benefits obtained by these

previous events. It will therefore be the most joyous event in time or eternity.

The whole creation groans and travails in pain together, waiting, though they know it not, for this blessed event, for the revealing, the manifesting, the full showing forth of the glorious new ruling house, through and by whom all the nations are to be blessed with life in fullest measure. The gladness and rejoicing of heaven over this union is past comprehension. Angels have been interested spectators of this drama of the ages, heralding his birth, announcing his resurrection, ministering to his wellbeloved down the centuries, desiring to know more about the plans of their almighty Creator with these people of his choice and care. Now, as this spectacle of a reigning monarch united to a partner chosen from among men, yet qualified in every way to share that high position, emerges from the long chaotic period of man's history, there is to be heard a voice like that of many waters. It is simply as though all the multitudes of all creation joined in a universal anthem of festival rejoicing, singing "*Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come.*". Then He will see of the travail of his soul and begin to be satisfied. His full satisfaction can come only when He hath put all enemies under his feet, when death is finally vanquished and earth is one glorious orb of life, peace, and full harmony with God.

But now, the Church for which he cheerfully endured the cross stands before him, adorned as a bride for her husband. The centre of all eyes at a wedding are on the bridal pair. On the bride because of her beauty of form, her radiance of face, the loveliness of her attire, arrests the attention of the spectators. "*The king's daughter is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework; with gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter the king's palace.*" (Psa. 45. 13-15).

Upon her head rests the crown of life, her dowry, her Father's gift. While she has worked upon the beautiful raiment in her preparations, all the richness of her apparel in the bridegroom's gift. The Father of mercies is parent of both bride and groom, for does the groom not look upon her as "*My sister, my spouse!*" So the heaven-sent gifts have enriched, beautified, raised up from the lowly stratas of earth those called ones to highest honours. Not thrones,

not crowns not noble titles, but the pure in heart, the meek, the faithful, have won and kept the Divine Lover.

"So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord and worship thou him." As yet her face is veiled, the sword of filial protection is held above her head. The Bridegroom lifts away the shrouding veil, placing it upon his shoulder. The Father lowers the sword, places upon her head the crown, and bride and groom are face to face for the first time with no veil, no distance, no agency between.

*"Face to face with Christ my Saviour
Face to face, what will it be"*

Now the question is answered. They who have been transformed by that Spirit while yet in the flesh now behold him with unveiled face in all his beauty, seeing him as He is and being like him. Could anything in feeling eclipse that first long scrutiny of love, as two of one mind and one heart, look deeply into one another, knowing that they two shall be forever one?

Now the proud titles become the right of the King of Kings. *"The government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"* (Isa. 9. 6.).

That time has come to take his great power and reign, and He will not reign alone, but He will reign forever. *"Of the increase of his government there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth and forever."* *"He is heir of all things — upholding all things by the word of his power"* (Heb. 1. 3).

Not only is he a king forever but also a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec. Nor will his reign be confined to earth. The whole vast universe is his dominion. He is the great heir of God, the Lord of Worlds, the Potentate of Time, and beside him, chosen out of the earth, stands the greatest miracle of all, the Divine creation of love, formed to share these honours and this companionship for all eternity. *"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom which stands and*

hears him, greatly rejoices because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled." Those words were spoken by John the herald of Christ, who, with his sense of prophetic mission, recognised, not merely the world's Saviour in him whom he baptised in the Jordan, but a bridegroom embarked upon the mission of preparing himself a bride, before going on to complete the salvation of man, with a continuance of government through all worlds and ages.

The long foreseen event is now become reality. The Bride is presented at the throne of God, to the Father, *"faultless and with exceeding joy"*.

"What rush of Alleluias fills all the earth and sky,

What ringing of a thousand harps bespeaks the triumph nigh,

At the Lamb's high feast we sing, praise to our beloved King,

The Lamb's great banquet called to share, clad in royal garments fair

Saints his praises ever sing — Jesus, their triumphant King".

"Like the sound of many waters

Rolling on through ages long

In a tide of rapture breaking

Hark the mighty choral song,

Alleluia, Alleluia

Let the heavenly portals ring....."

* * * *

The heavenly melodies obliterate all memories of the toilsome past, the long night, the weary waiting. It is the morning of joy, soon to overflow to the shadowed world with healing, love and life.

When the Spirit and the bride say Come, then, whosoever will, may come and take of the water of life freely.

"And God shall wipe all the tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."

The End

What is faith? Not an opinion, neither any number of opinions put together, be they ever so true. It is the vision of the soul, the power by which spiritual things are apprehended, just as material things are

ascertained by the physical senses. It is the eye of the soul whereby the believer sees Him Who is invisible. It is a perpetual revelation...passing directly from God into the believer's soul.

John Wesley

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON**6. A King's Madness***The story of a
great man's faith*

King Nebuchadnezzar was now at the zenith of his glory. The "head of gold" had become the conqueror of the nations. He had seen three successive Pharaohs of Egypt, the rival nation, pass into death — two of them struck down by his own hand. Pharaoh-Necho died at the time of Jerusalem's downfall in Zedekiah's day. His successor, Psamatik II (not mentioned by name in the Bible) was slain when the Babylonians invaded Egypt in Nebuchadnezzar's twenty-third year (Jer. 52. 30 and 43. 1-13). Pharaoh-Hophra had just perished, also at the hands of the victorious king, and his successor, Amasis, held the throne of the Pharaohs only as a tributary to Babylon. Egypt had become, as Ezekiel said it would become (Ezek. 29. 14) a "base kingdom" — and in actual fact it never regained its former greatness. The proud city of Tyre, after a siege of thirteen years, had been forced to capitulate. The Assyrians were no more, and their mighty city of Nineveh was a mass of broken down ruins. The Ten Tribes were scattered in the wilds of Armenia, spreading slowly outwards, and the remnants of Judah dwelt to the south of Babylon. The Holy Land lay a desolate waste.

For seven or eight years now the great king, having measurably pacified his widely spread empire, had been devoting himself to the erection and adornment of the wonderful buildings for which both he and the city became famous. Temples and palaces, roads and canals, parks and gardens, all grew quickly under the inspiration of his fiery enthusiasm. It is to be feared that the cost in terms of human suffering was great, for all these huge works were executed by hordes of labourers little better than slaves. Every street corner and public square boasted statues and sculptures executed in stone or bronze; the temples and public buildings were adorned with richly painted representations of historic events in Babylonian history and mythology; the libraries were replete with books dealing with every conceivable subject — inscribed clay tablets which have proved to be the most imperishable of all written records. The king's own passion for recording all his actions and his feelings toward his gods, taken together with the vivid intimate pictures given us by Daniel, make Nebuchadnezzar better known to us than any other king of antiquity.

Picture him now, a little above sixty years of age, in his own domestic circle, with the Median wife whom the historian says he dearly loved, and their family. Avil-Marduk (who succeeded him as king — the Evil-Merodach of Jer. 52. 31), Nitocris, the mother of Belshazzar (Dan. 5. 10) and another daughter whose name is not recorded. Daniel on his frequent visits to the great palace beside the river must have often talked with the queen and her children, and as he talked he would notice with growing apprehension the changing disposition of the king — feverish exultation and pride in his achievements, forgetfulness of the great miracles wrought by the God of Heaven Whom he had once been so ready to acknowledge, his increasing devotion to the service of Bel, the deity of Babylon. The incident of the fiery furnace was some ten years in the past; the dream of the great image more than thirty years; and the visible evidence of his work, crowned by the mighty temple which his own enthusiasm had done so much to complete, was steadily driving the nobler impulses from his mind. Daniel knew what the inevitable end must be, and without doubt he talked to his sovereign upon many occasions with warnings of the inevitable fall that follows great pride.

Megomania, they call it nowadays. In Nebuchadnezzar's case the disordered condition of his mind brought on a fearful malady of the brain in which he imagined himself to be a wild beast. Yet the blow did not fall until in the providence of God a marked opportunity for repentance was given.

It must have been in the very year that his last enemy, Pharaoh-Hophra of Egypt, had been overthrown and slain, that the strange and terrible dream came to the king. The account is to be found in Dan. 4. It is related by the king himself, and bears every mark of having been written under the king's direction in recognition of the lesson he had been taught. He was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace — fitting description of his cessation from active warfare and devotion to the adornment of his city. He saw in his dream a great tree, the greatest that the earth had ever seen, and it gave shelter to all the birds and beasts of the earth. There came a "watcher" down from heaven. In Babylonian mythology there were seven "watchers" who were the messengers of the gods, corresponding somewhat to the seven

archangels of Jewish traditional thought. The watcher decreed the cutting down of the tree and the scattering of its fruit, and the binding of the forlorn stump with a covering of bronze, fixed with iron clamping rings, to protect it from further damage, until seven times should pass over it, and the living should know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.

In the days of Babylon dreams were considered to have great significance, and it would be a comparatively frequent occurrence for the interpreters to be called before the king to explain the visions he had seen during the previous night. Once the dream was related, and explanation could easily be given in such words that, whatever the outcome, the interpreters would be tolerably sure to preserve their reputation. It is therefore a little surprising to find that in this instance the wise men declined to interpret the dream. A possible reason for this refusal is hinted at in verse 7 of chapter 4, which contains a significant statement by the king. He says, not that they *could* not, but that they *did* not, make known to him the interpretation. It is true that in verse 18, when repeating the matter to Daniel, he says that they were not *able* to make it known, but the impression one has is that this very shrewd judge of men had formed the opinion that the interpreters could have hazarded an interpretation if they wanted to but abstained from doing so for reasons of their own and pleaded ignorance as excuse.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably right in his surmise. The change in his disposition was becoming manifest, and others beside Daniel would be perceiving the impending disaster. Daniel was still chief of the wise men: it might well be that these officials, shirking the duty themselves, left it to their chief to tell the king the truth.

So in the ordinary way, his subordinates having retired, Daniel came in before the king to hear the dream. One can sense the king's relief of mind, in verses 8 and 9, confident that Daniel could and would give him the truth of the matter. The king's own religious views were still warm towards the gods of Babylon and he still credited Daniel with possessing the "spirit of the holy gods". Daniel, when he heard the details of the dream, was silent and dejected for a long time. It could not have been that he had not foreseen this; he must have known the meaning of the dream as soon it was related; what oppressed Daniel was his realisation that the blow

had fallen. The decree had gone forth, and all the glory of a man whom he respected and admired was to be humbled to the dust.

It is in the 19th verse that we have evidence of something almost approaching affection in Nebuchadnezzar's feeling for Daniel. Observing his faithful Minister's distress, he exclaimed "*Belthshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee*". He was prepared to forego the explanation in order to save his friend distress of mind. This is a very different aspect of the man from that displayed when as a ruthless autocrat he ordered three men to be cast into the burning fiery furnace, and signed an order for the execution of the wise men of Babylon on a momentary impulse. Even in the midst of that haughtiness and pride which was rapidly driving him to madness, this proud monarch cherished feelings of respect and concern for Daniel. How profound must the influence have been which the latter's integrity and loyalty had exerted upon the heart of this pagan king through the years!

The words gave Daniel his opening. Gently, but firmly, he told the king the import of the dream, and added his own earnest counsel "*Wherefore, O king, let my reason be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*". Perhaps he had in mind the story of Nineveh of nearly three centuries before, how that they repented at the preaching of the prophet Jonah, and how God repented of the evil which He thought to do, and did it not. Long and earnestly must Daniel have pleaded with the great man, recalling those days in his early life when he had acknowledged the power of the God of heaven, and seen His hand outstretched to save Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego from the fiery furnace. Daniel would have recalled the king's dream of the great image, and reminded him how that dream had been fulfilled in his rapid conquest of the then known world. But it was all quite evidently of no avail; the sequel shows us that the king remained unrepentant. And so the blow fell.

"*All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking upon (see margin) the great palace.*" It would seem from the use of that word "upon" that this scene took place in the park which has become known as the "Hanging Gardens of Babylon", one of the Seven Wonders of

the ancient world. Because Nebuchadnezzar's queen missed the forests and mountains of her native Media, the king had caused to be built within the palace precincts a miniature stretch of wooded hills. Three successive tiers of brick arches, built like three great viaducts piled one on top of another, were erected and covered with earth, so disposed as to make hills and valleys. Upon this foundation the park was laid out, with grass, shrubs and trees, pathways and terraces, and artificial streams which were supplied from the River Euphrates far below by means of some kind of water-raising device. Reared up high above the roof of the palace, commanding a magnificent view of the city, this park with its tree-clad hills appeared from a distance to be suspended between heaven and earth, from which fact it has become known as the "Hanging Gardens". There was no more likely place than this in which the king might be walking when the dread calamity came upon him.

"And as he walked, he spake, saying 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the Kingdom by the might of my power and for the honour of my majesty?'" (vs. 30).

The words were spoken, and they could not be recalled. Retribution, swift and sure, came out from the outraged holiness of God. *"While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee . . . The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws."*

Vivid, life-like words — the testimony of an eyewitness! Who wrote them? Who walked with that magnificent man in those beautiful gardens, looked down with him upon the glorious buildings stretching far below for miles towards the horizon, followed with the eye the silver ribbon of the river as it entered the city precincts, skirted the palace, passed through the dock basin with its ships from Arabia and India, and beyond the massive ramparts to lose itself in the distant fields? Who gazed with him upon the scintillating golden sanctuary at the summit of the great Tower, set like another sun against the blue heavens, six hundred feet above the city; and then, horror-stricken, saw the light suddenly go out of those piercing eyes, the fine, intelligent face reshape its lineaments to the form of an imbecile, the upstanding

figure drop down upon hands and knees, the commanding voice at which kings and warriors had trembled begin to utter strange sounds, grotesquely imitating the beasts of the forest? Who was it sought in vain to restrain those strong hands as they tore the princely raiment to shreds and began grubbing at the roots and herbs of the soil; and then, failing, ran in frantic haste to summon assistance?

It might have been Daniel. It might have been Queen Amytis. There is a familiarity about the usage of the king's name in verse 33 which seems more fitting coming from the queen than from Daniel. It might well be that this most interesting document enshrines the testimony of three people, and that verses 28 to 33 are from the hand of the Babylonian queen.

In any case Daniel would be very quickly on the spot. There was very little that could be done. The physicians would doubtless be trying their cures and the magicians busy attempting to exorcise the demon that had taken possession of the king's person. The sorcerers would be feverishly uttering and muttering their incantations to the same end. Daniel would not interfere. The king's family and his ministers would expect the customary treatment to be given. All was of no avail. Finally the soothsayers would come forward and pronounce the verdict of the omens they had examined; and probably, being wise after the event, would hazard the opinion that the gods had afflicted the king in consequence of some great offence, perhaps insufficient attention to the service of the gods, or even — if Daniel happened to be out of earshot — in displeasure at the king's interest in a foreign god and a foreign Chief Minister. It is hardly likely that the native priesthood would let slip such a golden opportunity of impressing upon the king's family the significance of this act of the great god Bel!

Nebuchadnezzar continued in this state for seven years. It is true that secular historians do not make any reference to this happening. Berosus, the Babylonian historian who was a priest in the Temple of Bel at Babylon some two and a half centuries later, and who had access to all the records when writing his history, does refer vaguely to some strange mystery connected with the end of Nebuchadnezzar's life. One or two other cryptic allusions are met with in the words of other writers, but nothing that can reasonably be said to confirm the Bible account. Nor is this surprising. Nebuchadnezzar was himself a

member of the secret caste, the Chaldeans. The whole episode, if generally known, was likely to bring the fraternity into disrepute. Even although the priests may have exploited it within the king's family circle to warn the youthful Avil-Marduk against his father's predilection for the Hebrew's God, they would be anxious to suppress the general circulation of the story, and since the historical records of the nation were in the charge of the priests, it is tolerably certain that they took good care to keep private anything of a derogatory nature.

The story as we have it in Daniel 4 bears all the evidences of truth. There is the king's own account of the dream which predicted the disaster, vs. 1-18, to which is added the testimony of his Minister as to their subsequent conversation. Next to this comes the account of the actual happenings, by an eye-witness (28-33) probably Queen Amytis, and finally the king's own acknowledgement of the justice of the infliction and of the omnipotence of God (34-37). It is highly probable that we have here an official document, prepared by the king after his recovery, and intended to place on record for all time his consciousness of his great sin and the mercy of God.

So far as history goes, the last eight or nine years of this king's life are blank. There is nothing recorded concerning him. It would seem that he did not live long after his recovery, probably no more than a year. During his affliction he would be well guarded from harm — in all probability those same Hanging Gardens which he had built in the day of his pride became the place of his wanderings. There he could roam at will, dwelling with the animals and birds with which it had been stocked, drinking at its streams, sleeping at night in its arbours or on its grassy slopes, free to indulge his disordered fancy but in no danger from wild beast or human enemy. And then, one morning, as the rays of the rising sun lightened the sky and the birds gave their voice in chorus, that unkempt figure crawled forth from its lair with eyes a little less wild; perhaps with face turned up to heaven in mute entreaty; and in a little while "*I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever*" (vs. 34). "*At the same time my reason returned unto me, and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned to me; and my counsellors and my lords*

sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me" (vs. 36).

So long as the king lived, even although imbecile, no move could be made to replace him. The queen probably governed as regent, with the aid of Daniel as Chief Minister. Berosus plainly states that in fact she did do so, assisted by her counsellors. The affliction was looked upon as from the gods and their will must not be interfered with. The kingdom must needs wait, either for the king's recovery or his death. Upon the return of his reason, therefore, he was quickly re-established in his accustomed place, restored to the circle of his family, presiding once again over affairs of state, wielding once more the majestic power of the "head of gold".

But this time there was a difference. The last verse of chapter 4 shows us an utterly humbled and chastened man. The words are majestic and striking. "*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgement, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.*"

They are his last recorded words. The Scriptures tell us no more about King Nebuchadnezzar. They leave him where we would fain have him left, in humble submission to the One eternal God, a better man for the experience.

Was this conversion a lasting one? We do not know. It is worthy of note, however, that these words of his are not only the last the Scripture records; they are also the last words of his in any records so far discovered. The extensive and voluminous inscriptions written by the king or at his instigation concerning himself and his works stop short about ten years or so before his death. At that time he is still a devoted adherent of gods of Babylon and a faithful servant of Bel. But this word in Daniel 4, coming from the pen of the king himself, is by ten years the latest personal testimony history can offer. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary we may perhaps be justified in concluding that at the very end of his life Nebuchadnezzar came to see something of the glory of the One true God, the emptiness and vanity of the idols of Babylon, closing an eventful life with more of true peace than perhaps he had ever known.

(To be continued)

T. Holmes

THE LIVING SACRIFICE

*A Consideration of
the Consecrated Life*

Many are the Scriptures which speak of God's prerogative to call and choose whom He wills for this or that part of his eternal purpose. Even Christ "*glorified not himself to be made an High Priest*" (Heb. 5. 5) but responded to his Father's invitation and call. Thus, there is a limit to what man, by the free swing of his own will, can aspire to accomplish in the plans of God. No man can find himself a "place" or thrust himself unbidden into the ranks of those whom God chooses for special specific places in the outworking of his purposes (Mark 10. 40).

In the higher Christian life every member of the body of Christ must be "called according to his purpose". The present requirement in the consecrated response is that of self-sacrifice and self-denial — the voluntary yielding and surrender of something which no feature of either Divine or human law can compel, but which can be yielded only at the invitation of One who can solicit a degree of surrender and propose a degree of reward not incorporated in the general laws of his dominion. It was thus in God's dealing with his well-beloved Son. He who had been with God from times eternal was not compelled to leave that glorious estate to come to earth and die for man. He was a willing volunteer. He accepted with ready heart the commission God set before him, and bowed to death so that his Father's purposes might be accomplished. Because he did willingly humble himself unto death, God hath highly exalted him above every name or authority, now and for all time.

The same treatment is held out by promise to those who willingly follow in his steps, and lay themselves down before God in whole-hearted surrender. "*If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me*" was Jesus' invitation to his little band of followers. "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God . . .*" is the way the Apostle continues and presses home the same invitation. "Let him deny himself". Let him deny his self-hood — his self-choice, his self-desire, his self-effort — clasp himself to a cross, willingly and voluntarily. A cross is the symbol of death. This is a call and invitation greater far and more exacting than the do-good-to-my-neighbour standard which will be operative and imperative in the age to come.

A singular thing about the New Testament writers is that they do not once describe this deeper response to God as "consecration". In fact, the word occurs in our Authorised Version but twice, and both cases are in connection with our Lord. One of these is in Heb. 7. 28, where we read that the word of the Oath made the Son a Priest, "*who is consecrated for evermore*". This word, however, would be better translated (as in the margin) "perfected". It reveals the fact that the Exalted Son had been fitted and prepared for his Priestly work according to the ideal which God had in his own omniscient mind; and the "perfecting" had accomplished its designed end, for the Son was "perfected" for ever. The other occurrence is in Heb. 10. 20 "*. . . a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us . . .*" This word means "to make anew — to renew". An old "way" into the presence of God had been found faulty, because of the frailty of man. Through Jesus' sacrificial death that way to God was renewed on a better, surer basis.

There is no other actual occurrence of the word "consecration", but there are many instances where the idea embodied in the Old Testament sense of the word occur. Rom. 12. 1 is a case in point. The sacrifice that does not terminate in a few moments of time, but yields itself up just as fully, yet in constantly repeated acts of surrender and self-denial, over a life-time's span, is the thought connected with the Old Testament act of consecration. The same thing is set out in Peter's words (1 Pet. 1. 15-22). He exhorts his brethren to purify their souls, even more than they had done, and enjoy their freedom from their old "vain conversation" (or manner of life) obtained for them by the precious blood of Christ, and in doing so, become more holy, even as He that called them was holy.

In order to understand the life of consecration it is necessary to go back to Old Testament days. Then, with the circumstances governing both the word and the attitude it stands for before our minds, it will be possible to trace these passages from Old Testament to New Testament times, and to realise what they mean in the higher Christian life.

The origin of the idea is found in Lev. 8, though prior to this particular day of ceremonies God had given to Moses, on the summit of Sinai, the outlines and details of all this ceremonial. The idea of

consecration originates with God himself. God set the standard of life, which He was pleased to call "Consecration" — and He outlined the installation ceremony to express the idea He wanted to teach. "... *thou shalt gird . . . Aaron and his sons, and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons*" (Ex. 29. 9). Then (verses 19-37) the instruction is given to Moses how to proceed with the consecration ceremony. Then in Lev. 8, we have the record of this consecration ceremony, based on the instruction given to Moses. Reading the account carefully, it will be seen that the consecration ceremony was one ceremony among others which led to a certain definite conclusion at the end of the day. "*As He hath done to this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you*" (Lev. 8. 34). On account of being thus brought into relationship with God, Aaron and his sons must abide at the door of the Tabernacle for seven days, to keep the charge of the Lord. The tabernacle had just been erected, and everything set in its place. This was done on their New Year's day, exactly one year after leaving Egypt (Exod. 40. 1-17). No sacrifices of the required kind had therefore been previously offered, for there had been no Priest to make them.

The story of the washing and robing of Aaron and his sons, of their anointing with oil, of the slaying of a bullock for a sin-offering, of one ram for a burnt-offering and another for the consecration offering, is set out in length, culminating with the reminder by Moses that all that had taken place was to make "an atonement" for them. The ceremony of consecration thus brought them into relationship with God. That investiture is proof that God accounted them as separated from Israel, and enjoying a special relationship with himself. But, though thus separated, they were not sufficiently at "one" with the Holy One of Israel to enter into his purposes. They were not yet fitted and prepared to represent him, nor co-operate with him before their fellow-men. He required proof of their fidelity to him, and of their obedience to the "charge of the Lord" which he was laying upon them. Hence their participation in all these ceremonies constituted a test of obedience. They would then be accounted to have reached the "end" God had in view. They would be "at-one" with him. In New Testament language they would be (Heb. 5. 9) "made perfect", having reached the end or consummation of the sanctifying experience, the standard (on the typical

plane) which God set before them, to express and exemplify his own Spirit to Israel, and to the fundamental principles of holiness and sin.

The form of the ceremonies revealed the primary object of their call. First, Moses was to bring a bullock to be slain in the manner prescribed for a sin-offering. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on its head. Then Moses was to slay it. The act of Aaron and his sons represented their identification with the bullock. This principle of identification by laying on of hands was practised in all cases where a man presented his offering to the Lord, and its language was intended to say "This represents me". When Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the bullock's head it was as though they said "This represents us — what happens to this, is accounted as happening to us". In this sacrifice, slain by the Law-Giver, Moses, the Holy One of Israel showed most unmistakably what the Divine Law required of those who had previously been called and appointed to the Priesthood in Israel. It was a pictorial representation that God — after accepting them into the Priesthood — required of them the full and total surrender of their lives, not singly, but as a whole, as a united company of priests without distinction as to which was most important or least important.

Next followed the burnt-offering. Again Aaron and his sons placed their hands on the victim's head. Every vestige was burnt in the fire on the Court Altar, this taught them that everything must be surrendered to God — without reservation. Then came the ceremony which represented consecration. Again Aaron and his sons placed their hands upon the victim's head. Then after Moses had killed it, he took some of its blood, and with it touched the tip of Aaron's right ear, the thumb of his right hand, and the great toe of his right foot, and exactly the same to each of Aaron's sons. The remainder of the blood he sprinkled round the altar. He took certain parts of the animal, and all its fat, one unleavened cake, a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer, and placed all these together into Aaron's hands, who waved them before the Lord. Taking them from Aaron, Moses placed the whole pile upon each of Aaron's sons' hands in turn, who likewise waved them before the Lord. That accomplished, Moses burnt all these things together upon the altar-fire, a sacrifice of consecration, a sacrifice of sweet savour. Thus the essential meaning of consecration is brought out. It means a "filling of the hands".

Now, let these ceremonial details be considered

relatively to each other. First, the ram was set before the Lord and "devoted" to him. The object of its life and existence was thus, once for all, determined. The ram may not henceforth be set to mingle with its fellows, nor to feed its fill in the meadows, not to become the sire of frolicsome lambs. It was separated from its kind to be "devoted" to the furtherance of God's designs. Here we find correspondence with the commonly accepted definition of consecration, i.e. it was devoted to a holy purpose. Aaron and his sons placed their hands on its head, thus associating themselves with its object and destiny in life. This act placed them before God in the same light.

The ram represented themselves, or rather, they were represented in the ram. Its death represented their death sacrificially — yet under such conditions that it could be represented as a "living sacrifice" held up and waved to and fro before the Lord for a requisite time. Something was accounted dead, yet in some sense they who were accounted dead in the limbs and inward parts of the victim were also accounted alive in the persons of the Priests, and able to present their members to God, by waving them to and fro. They were the custodians of their sacrifice, which filled their hands to the full. Of the sacrificed victim a portion was returned to them, so that by it, they might "wave" it in the presence of their God. This was representative of an acceptable sacrificial service before God, until the time came for their mutually-concerned sacrifice to be burned.

This is the germ, and at the same time, the basis of all truth underlying consecration. Its primary thought is "the hands full" — the hands filled full by God with the very thing sacrificed to him! The application of the blood to ear-tip, thumb and great toe, indicates the members particularly involved in the sacrificed and subsequent stewardship. The ear represents hearing, the thumb, service, the toe, the "walk" and deportment through life. Thus Aaron and his sons were devoted to hearing the instruction of God, to engaging in the service of God, to walking in the way of God. Consecration, then, means the yielding up to God the devoted life in tiny dribblets; day by

day and hour by hour, through a right understanding of his will, and a right exercise of service, through a right walk in life.

That stewardship which He returns to his anointed ones as a sacred charge, when they first surrender themselves to his will, is yielded up bit by bit.

But to have all this unique experience true in their lives, they must first have been called of God, and having been called they must have been anointed with holy oil, and thus separated from their brethren: thus separated unto God. They are therefore represented as dual identities — one represented in the sacrificial animal, the other represented in the anointed white-robed priest.

Herein are the germs of fundamental principles true only of those who are "New Creatures in Christ Jesus". None else stand before God as having made sacrifice of themselves, and yet as being alive. None else have received from God their "two hands" full as a sacred charge to be returned and yielded up to him bit by bit in kindly act and loving deed, in sanctified hearing, in holy service, and in a consecrated walk through life. None else are yet being thoroughly attuned with God, with his loving spirit, with his wide gracious purposes, and with his unsullied holiness. None else are yet being made perfect by sufferings. None else are yet being developed so as to attain the end which God had in view.

How beautifully Paul catches up all these ancient things in his mighty appeal to the brethren to live the consecrated life. *"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice (as dead, yet alive) holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed (made over to God's design) by the renewing of your mind (the blood-tipped hearing) that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (that ye may be attuned to him in perfect measure, and not only know but be ready to express the spirit of his great eternal designs).*

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.

C. T. Ward

LOVE CASTETH OUT FEAR

A short study

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment" (1 John 4. 18).

Better expressed would have been the text by saying, "There is no *dread* in love". We do not dread that which we love. In one sense, however, the more we love, the more we fear. We would not be so careful about pleasing a person whom we do not thus love. This is not the kind of fear, however, that the Apostle wishes us to cast out. On the contrary, it should be much enhanced. Consequently, the word dread would more accurately express the thought. The Scriptures speak of some who have "*no fear of God before their eyes*" (Rom. 3. 18). Evidently these are unregenerate. Often, among men, there is a thoughtlessness in respect to God and the future. The Apostle in this text does not intimate that all hearts have fear; but that if any heart has fear, perfect love will cast it out. As knowledge and love increase fear diminishes. We may say that those who have a reverential fear are in a preferable attitude of mind; they are in better condition than the thoughtless. In life, certain conditions which surround us call for reverence; a man's brain is so constituted that reverence will be a part of his mental attitude if he be not depraved. Hence, the Scriptures say that "*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*" (Prov. 9. 10). The fear of the Lord, the reverence of the Lord, will bring a blessing. This fear of the Lord increases as the child of God comes to know his Maker but it is a gradual process.

There is a certain fear which comes as the result of imperfect knowledge. We do not credit the adversary with producing all the evil thoughts of the human mind, yet he had very much to do with the evil influences which surround our race. People may be without fear of God, and even after they have come to the Lord, and are learning to reverence him and to know him, they may lack the right kind of fear. Then the Adversary's plan will be to plant dread in their minds. "*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*" (2 Cor. 4. 4).

This evil influence is accountable for many of the things which seem so remarkable. It explains the fact that the heathen have devilish doctrines mingled with dread of God, and that the worldly who have knowledge of God, both Jews and Christians, have fear also — dread. Yet Christians have much greater light upon God's character than have others, and so should have correspondingly less fear than the heathen.

Our text is not intended to signify that a Christian should have no sense of fear. This fact is shown by the experience of our Lord himself in the Garden of Gethsemane. He there feared, as the Apostle tells us in speaking of this occasion, and He was heard in that He feared. He offered up strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him out of death (Heb. 5. 7). If the Master feared, so should his followers. The Apostle says "*Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*" (Heb. 4. 1). How shall we harmonise these fears with our text? The text is, evidently, not intended to contradict the great lesson otherwise taught. Our Lord Jesus appealed to the Father who, He knew, loved him: So with us, let us know that "*God is Love*" (1 John 4. 8), but let us fear respecting ourselves, and have such a carefulness, such a desire to please God, that we feel fearful lest in any degree we come short. Ignorance begets fear but love for God enables us to cast out that fear, and also enables us to come to God with confidence. So let us "*draw nigh unto God*" (James 4. 8), with full confidence that He will bless us. This thought is the very opposite to that of the heathen mind. Their conception of a god is that of a demon. The Christian, on the other hand who is walking in the footsteps of the Master learns to love his God and to wish to do the Father's will only. Nothing is acceptable in the nature of a sacrifice that is not prompted by that love. "*The Father seeketh such to worship him. . . as worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4. 23, 24).

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

A. O. Hudson

GOD OF ALL SPACE

1. The Heavens are the Lord's

*Impact of space science
upon Christian belief*

Only during this twentieth century have men come to realise what an insignificant little speck of dust is our earth in the immensity of God's creation. The achievement of modern astronomers and physicists, probing the secrets of distant stars, discovering strange objects in outer space which no one previously suspected were there, have given almost everyone a completely new outlook upon man's place in the universe, and led some to wonder just how this new knowledge fits in with traditional ideas about God and the Christian faith. There are not wanting those who declare that it spells the doom of belief in Christianity, that the idea of Christ coming down to this little earth to save this puny human race is quite irreconcilable with the fact — which, incidentally, is quite unproven — that there must be many other worlds having intelligent creatures living thereon. The scientific journal *"Nature"* as far back as 1944, said that the new discoveries were *"ticking like a time bomb at the foundation of Christian belief"*; the discoveries which have been made since then render the knowledge of 1944 by comparison almost like that of the Dark Ages. One noted space expert said in 1965, *"One of the results of space travel will be the end of the old religions"*.

It is because these things are said by men possessing various academic qualifications which are thought to confer upon them wisdom greater than their fellows, and because in consequence ordinary people do not know the answers or do not perceive the fallacies in such statements and are liable therefore to be misled, it is very desirable that this question of the relation of Christian belief to the new knowledge of "space science" be examined in the light of the Scriptures. If the Bible is indeed God's revelation to mankind it has nothing to fear from such examination and in fact may be found to have much to contribute. It is not always remembered that Twentieth Century scientists are not the world's first scientists and some of the men whose words and writings are preserved in the Bible were pretty acute observers in their own day; moreover they had the advantage of a much closer association with God than most of their modern counterparts.

The universe, vast as it is, is the work of God. The Christian faith is able to include in its philosophy the effect of every astronomical discovery man has

made and every one he will yet make. That men heretofore have associated it only with this earth and with mankind is because they had no idea that any other sphere of life is possible. Primitive peoples pictured the earth as an island floating on a circular sea covered by a curved vault in which moved the sun, moon and stars. God, or the gods, as the case might be, dwelt somewhere on the earth although in a place inaccessible to man. Then there developed the idea that God's dwelling was in an aerial heaven outside the curved vault but still quite near the earth. Even when, not much more than two thousand years ago, it was realised that the earth is a globe, it was still considered the centre of the universe with the sun circling it at a respectful distance and this was the accepted scientific belief until the seventeenth century when Galileo and Kepler showed that the sun is the centre of the solar system. As late as the year 1920, it was still held by astronomers generally that the solar system is in the centre of the universe, due to its apparent position amongst all the visible stars in the heavens. (An earlier astronomer, Thomas Wright, in 1750 had claimed this same honour for the constellation Pleiades.) All of this tended to preserve the idea that there could be only two abodes of life, heaven, the place of God's throne and the home of the angels, and earth, the home of man. God speaks to men in the language of earth and so He became, to them, a God of the earth and of mankind, having no other conceivable interests. The spiritual insight of Solomon King of Israel at the dedication of his temple a thousand years before Christ was appreciated and heeded only by a relative few. *"But will God dwell indeed with man on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built!"* (2 Chron. 6. 13-19). Only within this present century have men realised that God is intrinsically independent of the physical universe; because He is its creator and sustainer He must of necessity exist outside its limits.

Since 1920 knowledge of the universe has increased enormously, particularly so during the last sixty years. It is known now that our solar system is one component member of a vast conglomeration of stars, estimated by competent astronomers to number anything between ten thousand millions and

thirty thousand millions, generally known by the term "Galaxy". The Galaxy has the shape of a gigantic cartwheel, revolving slowly in space, taking something like two or three hundred million years to complete one revolution. When we look up at the "Milky Way", the dense band of stars which arches over the heavens, we are looking straight into the "rim" of the "cartwheel"; but of all those millions of stars the naked eye can pick out only about six hundred at most. This, then, thought the observers, is the universe, a cloud of stars most of which are at such colossal distances that, although expressed in figures, the imagination cannot visualise them. But this is not the end; in more recent years it has found that far beyond the bounds of our Galaxy there are other galaxies, millions of them, each comprising more millions of stars, extending as far as men's measuring instruments can reach. There seems to be no end to it all, and although one expert, Hubble, has calculated the size of the universe from certain theoretical considerations, another, Hoyle, declares that there is no end — it goes on into infinity. And now since 1950 there have been new and mysterious objects discovered in deep space, radio stars, pulsars and quasars, not stars in the conventional sense but certainly storehouses of tremendous energy and no one is quite sure exactly what they are and what they do. It is still true that the only One who knows what the universe is all about is — God!

The prophet Isaiah was aware of this, so was King David. *"He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is infinite"* (Psa. 147. 4-5). *"Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these. He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by names by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing"* (Isa. 40. 26). Of course these declarations were made by men, but they were men attuned to the Holy Spirit of God, and what they said and wrote was the word of God. Vast as is this creation, it is all of God. Range as far as men might range in the most sophisticated of space ships, they will never get away from God. The Psalmist knew that! *"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol" (the under-world, the grave, the death state) "thou art there! If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there*

thy hand shall lead me" (Psa. 139. 7-10). A modern application of that last phrase might well in principle be applied to man's ambition to wing his flight to the distant recesses of outer space; if he does succeed in doing so he will still be within the sphere of Divine power. As the old hymn has it *"God is present everywhere"*.

At the moment, however, man is still limited to this earth. It is true several astronauts have landed on the Moon for a few hours but the Moon is only just outside our front door, so to speak, and can be reached in two or three days, less that the time it takes an ocean liner to cross the Atlantic. But the Moon is not habitable. Neither are our neighbour planets, Mars and Venus, which men hope to visit some day although the journey will take several years. Amongst the nine planets and their many moons which together constitute the solar system this earth is still man's only practicable home. That fact is in itself remarkable. This one planet of the nine is so admirably adapted for our needs that it gives every evidence of having been especially designed for creatures like ourselves. . Isaiah says as much. *"The Lord . . . formed the earth and made it. He did not create it a chaos, he formed it to be inhabited"* (Isa. 45. 18). The Apostle Paul told the philosophers of Athens that God *"made from one every nation of men to live on the face of the earth, having determined . . . the boundaries of their habitation"* (Acts 17. 26) which seems almost to hint that the practical limit of man's normal habitat is on and around this planet. At a much earlier date David said much the same thing. *"The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth hath he given to the sons of men"*. (Psa. 115. 16).

Now all this of itself does not dogmatically assert that men will never, in the eternal ages of the future, find their way to distant planets. It only requires that there is no Scriptural warrant for supposing that they will. It is true that one group from amongst mankind, the Christian church of this Age, dedicated believers in Christ, are promised a resurrection to another sphere of life away from the earth, and in fact outside this material universe altogether. More will be said about that later in this treatise. But so far as the Bible tells of the destiny of mankind in general, apart from the Church, it pictures them ultimately attaining a state of sinless perfection upon this earth; what might conceivably happen in the future ages of eternity can only be speculation.

Neither do the texts above quoted or any other direct Scripture statement forbid the possibility of the existence of intelligent beings in other parts of the universe. It neither affirms nor denies, and the likelihood or otherwise of such forms of life existing can only be considered in the light of the relation of that possibility to the basic principles of God's purpose in creation; that too is the subject of a following chapter.

It is well established that the same physical laws operate throughout the universe and all the heavenly bodies are built up substantially from the same substances. Most of the stars, it is believed, are accompanied by planets in the same fashion as the star which is our sun, and although most of such planets are unsuitable for human life, it is calculated by competent authorities that our own "Galaxy", the cloud of stars of which our solar system is a member, must contain between one hundred million and six hundred million planets — the latter staggering figure being the latest and most favoured — so similar to this earth that human beings could live on them comfortably. And this is in our own Galaxy only; Asimov says that there are more than one hundred million galaxies! There would appear to be plenty of room for living creatures in God's universe.

It is not to be expected, though, that an astronaut of the future can land on the first piece of solid ground he encounters and expect to make himself at home. For a human being to survive there must be air and water. If the planet is less than six thousand miles in diameter it cannot retain enough breathable atmosphere for life; if greater than ten thousand the heavier force of gravity would render movement well nigh impossible. The earth at eight thousand is nicely between these limits. The "sunlight" from the parent star or "sun" must be within certain limits if plant and animal life is to flourish. The seasons, the length of day and night, the length of the year, and many other factors, determine whether a planet is habitable or not. In addition to the six hundred millions which could conceivably support beings like ourselves there is inevitably a much greater number which could not.

Could such planets support forms of life unknown to us? Some authorities think so. Genesis tells us that God made man of the "*dust of the ground*" (Gen. 2: 7); in other words, the elements of which the earth itself is made. More than 98% of the human body is composed of three elements, carbon, oxygen and

hydrogen, and human beings can live only on a planet where these three elements are plentiful, so that water and air are essential. It is believed by some investigators that life processes could proceed in creatures constituted of certain other elements when placed in an appropriate environment. Thus a world might be possible in which ammonia replaced water and nitrogen replaced oxygen. Such creatures could stand intense cold intolerable to human beings. Another form of life is envisaged in which the physical body is made of sulphur, silicon and phosphorus and all the seas and rivers are of sulphuric acid instead of water; such beings could live in intense heat sufficient to burn everything on this earth to a cinder. These deductions are not at present greatly favoured because for a number of reasons it would appear, in the present state of knowledge, that the presence of carbon is essential to any kind of living creature. The knowledge of tomorrow may well upset this position but so far as science goes today the dictum is that if there are intelligent beings elsewhere in the universe they must be men like ourselves.

Now before considering the effect upon the Christian faith if life should indeed exist elsewhere in the universe it may be well to take a look at the state of current scientific thought on the subject. The search for signs of what is called, in the best circles, "extra-terrestrial life", has been going on for forty years past. The most spectacular element in the search was "Project Ozma", the setting up of radio receivers at an American observatory in 1960, to listen for possible man-made signals from possible planets surrounding two relatively near-by stars. Observations were continued without success for two years and then the project was abandoned. Five years later Russian astronomers believed they had detected such signals from another part of the universe, but it was later established that the "signals" were natural radio waves emanating from a particular kind of star known as a "quasar". The emphasis nowadays therefore is directed to investigating the physical conditions necessary for life and the type of life that could conceivably exist, and the probability of suitable centres for such life existing in other parts of space. A very comprehensive investigation into this subject a few years ago produced the conclusion that the average distance between any two "habitable" planets would not be less than 24 light years. A "light year" is the distance light travels in

one year at its speed of 186,000 miles a second; that does not convey much to the average reader but if we say that a moon rocket ship which could cross the Atlantic from Britain to America in ten minutes would take one million years to travel to the nearest habitable planet, it might give a better idea of the enormous distances involved. Our nearest neighbours, if they exist, are not so very near after all. And there is another difficulty. Shklovskh, of the State Astronomical Institute at Moscow, reputed one of the world's foremost astronomers, has made calculations leading to the supposition that whilst there could be as many as three hundred thousand planets on which life has at some time appeared, the birth and death of any two such civilisations could well be separated in time by up to a million years! One is led to reflect what a disappointment it would be to some future space travellers, or, rather, to their descendants in the space ship, after spending several million years making their way to an inhabited planet, to find upon arrival that all the inhabitants had died a million years earlier. One feels that the Bible message is both more helpful, more logical and more rational than some pronouncements based upon earthly wisdom. At any rate, the Scriptures do promise the solution of all human problems, and the attainment of God's purpose with man, at the end of another thousand years, which is a lot better than the astronomer's millions.

It is this vast universe, with all its possibilities, that we have to picture in our minds when we talk

about the relevance of the Christian faith today. Man, in all sincerity but with great arrogance, looks out at the vastness of it all and aspires to conquer it for himself. He does not realise, or does not believe, that it is God's universe and that God created it for his own purposes, which though they may be unrevealed to us, will certainly be accomplished. Man's view is well expressed in words spoken at an astronomical conference some years ago: *"Unrestrained expansion of human activity throughout the entire near-solar space is an inevitability . . . various criteria seem to suggest that humanity will conquer and transform the solar system in a few thousand years . . . there can be no limit to the abilities of that highly organised form of existence of matter which we call life"*.

Long years ago the Creator of the universe and of man, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, said, *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth and its inhabitants are like grass-hoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in, who brings princes to nought and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble"* (Isa. 40, 21-24).

For, after all, the heavens are the Lord's.

(To be continued)

The Golden Candlestick (or lampstand)

The form of its workmanship was beautiful — a fruit and a flower, a fruit and a flower following successively, representing the true church as both beautiful and fruitful from first to last.... The light from this lamp was from olive oil, beaten or refined; and the lamps were kept always lighted. This oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit, and its light represented holy enlightenment, the spirit of the truth.... The lights were to be trimmed and replenished every morning and evening by the High Priest. So our High Priest is daily filling us more and more with the mind of Jesus, and trimming off the dross of the old nature — the wick through which the Holy spirit operates.

(Tabernacle Shadows)

"The outward features of our life may not be all that we would choose them to be; there may be things we wish for that never come to us; there may be much we wish away that we cannot part from. The persons with whom we live, the circumstances by which we are surrounded, the duties we have to perform, the burdens we have to bear, may not only be other than what we should have selected for ourselves, but may even seem inconsistent with the formation and discipline of character which we honestly wish to promote. Knowing us better than we know ourselves, fully understanding how greatly we are affected by the outward events and conditions of life, He has ordered them with a view to our *entire and final*, — *not only our immediate happiness*: and whenever we can be safely trusted with pastures that are green and waters that are still, in the way of earthly blessing — the Good Shepherd leads us there".

D. Nadal

GIVING AT CHRISTMAS TIME

As Christmas approaches the interest in buying gifts for relatives and friends increases until for some it reaches a panic situation by Christmas Eve. Many Christians are aware that Jesus was probably born in October and not December. Nevertheless we continue to celebrate and give presents and so remember that Jesus came into the world because God gave the greatest gift of all. Lovingly He had provided mankind with a lovely home and in it, all that could make for a happy life. When men and women got their lives into a mess, He did more than look down from Heaven and feel sorry for them. He personally intervened with the most costly of gifts, his only son. In a sense there is nothing which we could give him but he gladly receives the joy and thankfulness and fellowship from those who appreciate his goodness. He also gladly receives the surrendered life and places it in his great plan of salvation. Believers are therefore bound to examine the reasons for all generous action, for what they can give is held in trust as stewards for God.

At this time of year charitable causes benefit a great deal by the popular upsurge of generosity. Children become the centre of a great deal of the interest in the giving of gifts. Can we not approve activity which bears something of the image of a generous God which remains in men and women, boys and girls, even though it has been somewhat tarnished and defaced by selfishness and commercialism? So what is our motive for giving? Jesus once said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20. 35). He also said "... give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Luke 6. 38). There are similar sentiments in the proverb "*There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.*" In more modern idiom that reads "*One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty*" (Prov. 11. 24 NIV). Some might suggest that this is more a matter of getting rather than giving but it is all to do with the quality of love expressed in one of the most well known of texts "*For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son . . .*" The motive for our giving is plainly love, unselfish concern for others without thought of getting anything back.

Love has its own reward, the more we express God's love in action, the more we find ourselves loved.

This attitude of kindness was enshrined in Israel's law. In Exodus 23. 11 the rich are told to harvest their crops in a manner which would allow the poor to benefit from gleaning. In Deut. 15. 7 Moses exhorts the people of Israel not to be hard hearted or tight-fisted to a poor brother. This spirit is caught up in the words of the wise man when he wrote "*He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord.*" and later the prophet Jeremiah said of Josiah "*He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord*" (Jer. 22. 16).

Taking their cue from great father Abraham, the people of Israel were expected to be hospitable to their own people and to strangers alike. Among the records of Israel's history examples of this kind of generosity is seen in the lives of Boaz and the welcome he gave to Ruth; Abigail and the kindness she showed to David and the Shunamite who was hospitable to Elisha. Records are not lacking concerning foreigners who showed the same traits of character. Rahab who entertained and cared for the two Israelites reconnoitring the land and the widow of Zarephath who took in Elijah during the famine were given very honourable mention. God's ancient people were expected to give, not for duty or grudgingly, but with the sense of generosity which God demonstrated when he gave them a lovely land.

In 2 Cor. 8. 9 Paul draws attention to *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*" This is the true spirit of Christmas. He was rich in his heavenly home with his Father, beyond our imagination. He was prepared to sacrifice that blissful environment and to share our life, stricken with poverty because of sin, in order that we might eventually share with him the glories of his home above. More than that, even now we can begin to experience the beauty of that place by living in his presence every day. His provision and protecting love make us rich already. His impoverishment provides for our eternal wealth.

By worldly standards Jesus may have been rich for a short time after the visit of the magi presenting their gifts. What became of that extravagant wealth we have no record. Only we know that for most of his life he appears to have been associated with the

poor of the world. Glimpses of generosity in the Gospels are seen in his 'banquet' for more than five thousand men, women and children on a hill side in Galilee. Jesus loving attitude calls forth the best in others, and the women believers took care of his material wants. Most noteworthy was the generous outpouring of the anointing oil by Mary at Bethany.

It is clear that this same spirit was rapidly developed in the early Christians. The records in Acts 2. 42-47; 4. 32-37; chapters 5 and 6. show that the whole company of believers shared their material possessions just as they shared the things of their faith. No one was left destitute. This principle was particularly important throughout any period of persecution when families could readily be left without a 'bread-winner' and their possessions could be vandalised. Such an attitude transcends human boundaries of class and background. The outstanding example among them was Barnabas of Cyprus who sold his own property and gave the proceeds to the Church. Just how long the system worked in the history of the Church is not clear but the teaching of generosity continued to flourish throughout the Gentile churches. In Ephesus while Timothy was there, widows were being cared for and Paul told him to admonish the rich to be generous and to share with those in need.

Surprising acts of kindness were shown in Antioch by the new converts among the Gentiles. The prophet Agabus spoke, through the Spirit, of the famine about to "spread over the entire Roman world" (Acts 11. 27-30). Spontaneously, members of the church decided to send gifts to their brethren in Judea. They were poor and would be among the first to feel the pangs of food shortages. Here again the love of brethren surmounted national and racial barriers. It is a surprising gesture because this kind of relief aid was unknown in the ancient world. Perhaps it was not so surprising in the light of the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' and in the fullness of the Spirit which those early churches experienced. Jesus was at work in a very real way among his people. One of the most touching stories of hospitality is found in Paul's

visit to Philippi when the rich Lydia humbly begged Paul and Barnabas to stay in her home.

Perhaps the most forceful teachings about generosity are to be found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to which reference has already been made. The apostle believed that the churches in Europe should co-operate in sharing their material wealth with the poorer churches in Judea. He wrote to say that the churches in Macedonia not only gave liberally for the benefit of other Christians but first "*gave of themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God*" (2 Cor. 8. 5). This is the outworking of Paul's words in Rom. 12. 1 when he urged the brotherhood in Rome to offer their "*bodies as living sacrifices*". He wanted the Gentile brethren, among whom he had laboured so long and arduously, to excel in this quantity of generosity, not by coercion but as a willing offering to the Lord for their brethren. The fruitage of Paul's example and teaching was seen in the gifts that were sent by him and those who journeyed with him, to the church in Jerusalem. When Paul eventually arrived in Judea for the last time (on record) he was brutally treated by those he had come to help. When he stood before the governor Felix to defend his action, he spoke of how he had brought to his "*nation alms and offerings*". (Acts 24. 17).

Violence in city streets and famine in desert wastelands in east and west, north and south, testify to the terrible need of our time. It is a day when the wealth and resources of the Earth have been exploited to the point of ruining our fragile planet. Yet on an international scale rich nations give with one hand and grab back even more with the other. How concerned are we with our giving this Christmastide? Will it make the giants of the commercial world richer or will our brethren and neighbours benefit? There is only one way to discover how to give. It is to live in the very presence of God, acting by his spirit. Jesus said, "*Bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*" (Luke 11. 13 GNB).

"*These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*" (Rev. 14. 4).

Christianity is not acting according to the letter of certain rules and regulations. *It is following a living Christ*; walking as He walked; doing as He did;

imitating his example in all things. This is Christian movement — Christian action. It is keeping the eye fixed upon Jesus, and having the features, traits, and lineaments of his character imprinted on our new nature, and reproduced in our life and ways.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE*"So he bringeth them
unto their desired haven"*

One facet of the Apostle Paul's many-sided character shows him, like the Man of Sorrows, one acquainted with grief. Beneath the stern and rugged exterior of the untiring zealot and intrepid evangelist lay a heart, tender as a woman's, patient as a nursing mother's. Without the ardent enthusiast's fire, the work entrusted to his care would have chilled and killed his very soul; without the ready tears and burning words, the work would have failed. The convert won at laborious cost must needs be watered and admonished day and night; hence, be the cost to himself what it may, the tender lamb must be guarded and guided to the protection of the heavenly fold.

Citing words descriptive of his sufferings, he nearly came to the laying down of life for some unruly members of the flock. "... *we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. . . we felt that we had received the sentence of death*". (2 Cor. 1. 8-9; New Revised Version — for "we" read "I" throughout this touching passage).

Of what does Paul speak in this paragraph? Attention to the context discovers an excess of mental strain reacting upon an enfeebled body, producing a state of nervous and physical ill-health bordering on collapse. "We despaired of life itself" — so near had he come to passing out! "But that", says he, "was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raised the dead; He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us . . ." The decline had been arrested; the turn for the better begun; now He who had so far intervened would supervise till recovery was complete!

But why had this occurred? What had brought him thus nigh to death? It was the state of the Corinthian Church, the multitude of evils in their midst which had so pressed heart and mind that anxiety on their behalf had led to excessive tension, and had made him ill — very ill indeed!

After Paul's unfruitful attempt to proclaim the truth to the Athenians (Acts. 17 16-34), he had gone forward to the seaport metropolis of Corinth. The Lord "had many people in this city" and Paul was counselled by his Lord to be not silent, but speak out and not be afraid. (Acts 18. 5-10). Here he laboured for a year and a half, and gathered together the

nucleus of a much diversified church, consisting of both Gentile and Jew. Opposing Jews eventually drove him forth and left the infant Church open to attack from without and defection within. Subsequent to his departure an itinerant Jew, Apollos, an eloquent and learned man, mighty in the Scriptures, arrived in Corinth. Disputing with the Jews in public places, he powerfully confuted them and showed by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. (Acts. 18. 24-28). Apollos thus ingratiated himself into the affections of a part of this Church, and unwittingly lent his name as a rival to that of Paul! Thus faction arose in the little company. Nor was that the only rupture in their midst. A more terrible thing also appeared among them, which was not only unproved, but actually tolerated by those in charge. (1 Cor. 5). Brethren were also seeking process of law against brethren, thus exposing to unbelievers' eyes the scandals in their midst. (1 Cor. 6). Drunkenness and other intemperance were vitiating their supposed "agape" (1. Cor. 11), and riotous disorderly scenes marked their public gatherings. (1 Cor. 12.).

On hearing of this state of things, Paul dispatched Timothy on a roundabout journey with Corinth as its final stage. "*I sent Timothy to you, my beloved and faithful child, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church*". (1 Cor. 4. 17). But before Timothy arrived, Paul learned through certain of the household of Chloe that things were worse than was at first reported to him. Additionally, he had received a letter of enquiry, covering many points of doctrine and practice, from those loyal to his name and person in Corinth (1 Cor. 7. 1), hence Paul wrote again — the first of the two epistles which we have — and sent it by the hand of Stephanas to the Corinthian Church, at the same time sending Titus to visit them, in order to report back to Paul concerning the response of the Church. He had intended following the letter, to complete in person the cleansing work which he hoped his letters and his messengers would initiate, but this he was unable, at any early date, to do.

Of the agony of mind which afflicted him he tells in 2 Cor. 2. 13. "*My mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there*". Of the same intense strain we read again 2 Cor. 2. 4. "*I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with*

many tears...." Unable to rest, he plodded on to Macedonia — to Philippi, perhaps, and to Luke, his kind physician — and there, it seems the strain proved too much, and there for the name of Christ, and the welfare of ungrateful saints, the faithful under-shepherd of the flock collapsed and came nigh unto death.

Was all this anxious care necessary on his part? Could not God look after them without this anxiety unto death on the part of Paul? Ought not Paul to have bidden his restless heart to "rest in the Lord"? Queries of this kind misunderstand the spirit of an under-shepherd's care! Paul could not but be anxious concerning the wayward members of the flock. To have shown himself unconcerned about the state of things in the Corinthian Church would have been proof that the spirit of his Master did not dwell richly in his heart. The more grievous the extent of the suffering in his soul, the greater the measure of Christ-

likeness there.

*"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine;
Are they not enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer: This sheep of mine
Has wandered away from Me;
And although the road be rough and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep".*

Paul had many faithful sheep beneath his care elsewhere — at Ephesus, at Antioch, at Philippi — and these were resting in the fold; but some were astray at Corinth, and because circumstance claimed his willing feet, he must wait, and pray, and suffer for their sake!

And the consequence, "... the God of all comfort comforted us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God". Blessed be God! Comforted, to become comforters!

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