



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rains from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end." (Deut. 11. 11, 12 NIV).

Has the journey of the last year been through the wilderness or in the dark valleys? Have we experienced some really hard trials or stumbled amid temptations? We have left that behind. Sin confessed is cast into the ocean depths. Each experience has brought us new lessons. Perhaps some have brought tears but maybe some have brought laughter. We go forward into the New Year with the good land lying before us. Each experience is part of our life with the Lord. Each experience is part of our education for our Heavenly Home.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip –
The lesson was done –

"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said
"I have spoiled this one."

In place of the leaf, so stained and blotted
I gave him a new one, all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled
"Do better now, my child."

I went to the throne with a quivering soul –
The old year was done –

"Dear Father, hast Thou a new leaf for me?
"I have spoiled this one."

He took the old leaf, stained and blotted
And gave me a new one, all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled –

"Do better now, My child." (Poems of Dawn)

DN

NOTICES

"Good News for All"

The article appearing under this title in this issue might possibly be used as the text for a leaflet. For some readers of the BSM have asked to have a leaflet or pamphlet which could be handed to a friend, containing just the simple outline of our belief in an opportunity in life after death, clearly identifying the Bible references. We hope that this might be a step toward fulfilling that wish. We are open to suggestions to improve the text.

Data Protection Act, 1984

Bible Fellowship Union uses computer files to record the names and addresses of all readers of the Bible Study Monthly. This is done simply because it is the quickest and most reliable way of keeping records. This method saves us many hours of work each month. The only information kept on those files is to be found on the label of each magazine sent out. This information, including readers' names and addresses, is confidential to the Bible Fellowship Union and is never passed to any other organisation.

If any reader objects to his/her name and address being recorded in this way, will he/she please write to us or mention it on their renewal form. Such a reader would still be able to receive the Bible Study Monthly regularly with their records kept manually.

Gone from us

—*—
Sister Joan Chorlton (*Billinge*)

Brother Michael Heaton (*Eire*)

Brother Alex Charcharos (*Tring*)

Brother Gordon Griffiths (*Liverpool*)

—*—

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

C.T. Ward

WORDS OF LIFE

Part 2

Part 1 of this essay took as its theme "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (Jno. 6. 63), dwelling first upon the words of Jesus during his earthly ministry, leading to consideration of Jesus as the Living Word, the Alpha and the Omega, the Saviour of the world, at which point this concluding part takes up the thread.

* * *

When John in his vision saw the Son of Man in all the risen glory of white raiment, eyes of flame and burnished feet, he saw also the sharp two-edged sword in his mouth. That weapon of authority he recognised as a fitting symbol for the Word of God (Rev. 19. 15). He who refused the offices of the literal sword during his arrest is Divinely equipped with the spiritual sword by which to subdue and instruct the nations. It is a sword which lays wide open the corruptions of the heart, strikes at the sinews and muscles of long-established evil practices, searching and probing to the very root and core of all human maladies. He is even now the Great Physician, revealing men to themselves when they look at him and listen to him through the written word, but then his name will be "King of kings and Lord of lords" with power unlimited. His sword will smite and heal, subdue and conquer, cut from man's race the deadly canker of its sins and break down every obstacle that would keep it from truth and life. As the Word in the beginning created, the Word in the end will recreate. What beside this Word and the words He spoke on earth are all the words of man, his everyday words, his written words, his eloquent high-flown words, his oratory, sophistries and bombast which are often so much chaff blown before every wind, so much crackling thorns and snapping twigs and sounding brass?

When God writes, men pause to see what He has written. When God speaks, the earth trembles and men are forced to listen. At Sinai not only Moses and the people trembled at the voice of God issuing his commandments from its smoking summit, the mountains also trembled. "*The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness*" (Psalm 29). In the picturesque imagery of eastern words the Old Testament writers leave none in doubt of the powerful effects of the spoken word of God. The earth obeys his every

behest, trembles at the presence of her Maker and a "Thus saith the Lord" is an end of all argument. The engraven commandments may be mocked, ignored or intensely disliked but they are still there; they will always be there, the safe conduct for human society, written on rock by the finger of God.

When Belshazzar at his great banquet drank wine from the golden vessels looted from the House of God, he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing on the wall, and the sight caused his royal knees to knock together with terror. He knew before the interpretation of the words that the Owner of the Temple vessels was spelling out his doom. "Weighed in the balances and found wanting," has been the brief and pungent summing up of many a nation, many an institution grown stale and effete and many a life which has not fulfilled its golden promise through moral weaknesses. The words are few but they are enough. They have about them the clean, decisive thrust of the two-edged sword. They cannot be gainsaid. These and many others like them have so penetrated the minds of men that in any dramatic situation they leap readily to the tongue or the pen. Nathan's words accusing David, "Thou art the man!" were God's words to all who deal crookedly and hope to get away with it, as his words to the slayer of the priests of Baal, "What doest thou here Elijah?" were a rebuke to all who run away from their place, their task and the circumstances which are their own peculiar challenge.

The story of the woman taken in adultery, avoided by some early copyists as too controversial or too pointed for comfort, has all the ring of truth about it. John, with his instruction to write, was not likely to miss the drama of Jesus writing with his finger in the dust, ignoring the sly cunning of the self-righteous men who rushed into the very Temple, dragging into his presence the poor, dishevelled victim of unlawful behaviour. Looking up from his writing He spoke words as few and pointed as those written for the ruler of the Chaldeans. "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her." Jesus resumed his writing. What he wrote and what he said silenced the accusers. One by one they silently stole away, abashed as must all be who dare to affront the presence of God with their own righteousness. "Thy word is truth", and truth has a sterilising effect upon the germs of selfishness, the seeds of evil responsible

for the fevers, deliriums and illusions by which the world deceives and is deceived.

"Every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matt. 12. 36-37). This is a sobering thought, one which might well stem the torrent of words spilled out by every human creature except the dumb. Jesus took those words seriously as indicating the true state of the heart and mind. Frivolous, flippant, unkind, disloyal, unjust, cruel, pernicious, double-sided, malicious, sly, slanderous, crafty, unprofitable, unkind, unthankful, unholy, impure, etc., etc. This long catalogue of injurious words of which the tongue and pen are capable all spring from the poisoned fountain of the mind. How easily these damaging words leap out, fluent and glib, yet how slow, how halting the words of apology, if they come at all; how few the words of affection and praise, so rare their sincerity is often suspected as empty flattery. How damaging the words of violence, slander and lies.

How discouraging is the word of the critic snapping at flaws, how vain the gibberish that poses as knowledge, how tiring the din of a gabbling throng, how inane the gossip, how silly the chatter where more than two or three are met together to discuss the affairs of friends and acquaintances. Around many a conference table there hangs the strange futility of words vainly beating the air, of councillors taking council together to bring everything to nothing. The shouting demagogue, the screaming mob, the frenzied fanatics literally foaming out words which daily beat about the revolving earth like a sandstorm.

If the scientific theory is correct that all sound is trapped somewhere in the airy bag of the earth's atmosphere, someday to be captured and reproduced, then how accurate will be the words of the Lord in the day of judgment and how poetic the justice when all that has been said in secret will be shouted from the house tops (Luke 12. 2-3). *"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee"* (Luke 19. 22). Then, if ever, all tongues will be silenced, for all tongues have sinned and fallen short with respect to words. Job, that near perfect man, said *"If I justify myself my own words shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse"* (Job. 9. 20). At a later date both James and John dwelt on the evil of words from the untameable tongue, of the impossibility of perfection in this respect, regardless

of the finest ideals and the best intentions.

There were times when even the poet king of Israel was dumb with silence, not because he, a master of words, experienced a shortage but because he realised the futility of even fine words in the presence of God who reads the heart. God does not need man's words but man needs the words of God because they are spirit and life. The words of God are much more than guidance. They are energising words which put new life into those whose hearts and ears are attuned to the ring of truth. If the earth is ever to become a perfect home for a perfect society according to the promise of God and the inspired visions of the poets and prophets, it must first become a silent earth. *"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him"* (Hab. 2. 20). The words are both a rebuke and a command. A silent earth means a cessation of uproar, of war and commotion, of vociferation, of tumult and the strife of tongues. When events have finally destroyed a misplaced trust in machines, money and men, a chastened race will be put in a mood to listen in a new atmosphere of quiet.

It is in periods of silent meditation that the voice of God is heard, that men come to their senses and learn what they have to do. *"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind"* (Isa. 65. 17.) These are God's words, words of assurance and hope, words of life. Man's endeavours at peace and quality fail for obvious reasons, the spiritual and social elements dissolve in the fiery heat of troubled times, but *"the word of the Lord endureth forever"* (1 Pet. 1. 25). *"Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away"* (Matt. 24. 35).

A new earth, a new social climate of love and goodwill in which all the natural virtues of courage, truth, kindness and justice will prevail, will require new words. *"Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord to serve with one consent"* (Zeph. 3. 9). In the final vision of the new civilisation which is poetically known as Paradise Restored, John heard a mighty thunder of praise bursting from the hearts of eager, thankful multitudes. This new and glorious sound he recognised as a great pæan of triumph, a hymn of rejoicing. Hymns have been a choice medium of praise for Christian people since the angels sang their sublime chorus at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace". Poets have

conjured their finest sentiments to fit that vision, to extend that praise to every corner of the earth, so that somewhere, every hour, a more worthy set of words might be heard ascending to the ear of the high and holy One sitting upon the rainbow-circled throne.

Vulgar, coarse, inferior and common words have been somewhat offset by uncommon words, by beautiful words of prayer and praise.

*Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words, beautiful words,
Wonderful words of life.*

Above the torrent of profanity and worldly words the sweet chorus of praise and the solemn words of prayer rise unceasingly, an offering and an incense to heavenly places. *"A word fitly spoken, how good it is, like apples of gold in pictures of silver"* (Prov. 25. 11).

The spoken word is powerful, swaying multitudes, changing lives by its spell-binding tongue. Unless the words are recorded much of their power is lost, their eloquence blown like the spray from the surface of the sea. When God would have his words impressed into the minds and lives of men He either wrote with his own finger or commanded his servants to write. "It is written" is the sharp reminder to those who would plead ignorance or loss of memory. The man with the writer's ink-horn in his belt was the man who went about making notes for future reference, setting down what he saw and heard. The immortal, essence of words is the truth they contain. "They are spirit and they are life." They are eventually to

be written into the very fabric of man's nature. *"I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts"* (Jer. 31. 33). This will be the greatest feat of writing ever achieved, the finest words put to the best use. No longer will men need to consult books, with their mixed ideas and varied advice, their complicated rules and complex explanations. The written instructions for the new man will not be something he can lose or misunderstand. They will be so plain, so much a part of himself that even a simpleton could not go wrong.

Imagination alone can visualise what sort of words will issue from the regenerated hearts and minds of these new days. The arts of the past will fade into insignificance before those which the inspired talents of the men and women of the future will give to a golden age of peace and life.

*These things shall be; a loftier race
Than e'er the earth hath known shall rise
With flame of freedom in their souls
And light of knowledge in their eyes.
New arts shall bloom of finer mould
And lovelier music thrill the skies.*

The harmony of the times will require new and finer words. Whatever their form they will be beautiful words to gladden the heart, to ennoble the mind, to carry the spirit of man into hitherto unexplored realms of thought and happiness. Coming from him whose words were always gracious, who spoke as no one else had ever spoken, they must be and will be words of peace, spirit and life.

UNIVERSAL LAW IN NATURE

"Everything that occurs in Nature is the result of some law instituted to bring it to pass. No phenomena are in opposition to the laws of Nature, nor are the laws of Nature ever set aside in order to bring about conditions or circumstances that would be more conducive to men's welfare, than the operation of the original laws themselves. Even "miracles" are, no doubt, in strict conformity with the primitive and immutable scheme of Divine government, which has maintained the universe in its integrity and sublime order ever since the time of that sweet aurora when the *"morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy"*; we call them "supernatural," simply because they are effected, not by suspending the laws, but by exhibiting the unaccus-

tomed powers of Nature. For there is a spiritual law within, and thus above, every natural law, which, being necessarily in perfect harmony with it, may dignify and expand its operation, but can never contradict it. If we feel disposed to regard miracles as works requiring the suspension of the laws of Nature, it is again simply because we do not understand — and in this, our present life, probably cannot so understand — the immensity and fullness of the laws of Nature, nor see how occurrences, apparently quite at variance one with another, may yet be in harmony and be quite compatible when viewed by the light of some grand and omnipotent principle which originates and includes both.

L. H. Grindon c. 1890

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith***13. The Den of Lions**

It was during the seven months' short reign of Darius the Mede that Daniel's enemies made one more — unavailing — attempt to get rid of him. The stalwart old man had survived many such plots in the course of his long life; perhaps by now he was getting used to them. At any rate there is no indication that his faith wavered in the slightest. As an example of the strength of character a firm faith in God can develop in a man's life the story of Daniel stands supreme. Never did he concede one jot or tittle to the forces of the enemy; at no time were his principles compromised. Fearless before kings, humble before God, his life reveals that combination of iron strength and dependent pliancy which made him so useful an instrument in the hand of God. We can look for no better instance among the records of faithful men upon which to model our own Christian lives. Some there were, following Jesus for a time, who turned back and "walked no more with him." The same sad sequel writes "*finis*" across the pages of many believers' lives when the discouragements of the way, the opposition of God's enemies, the attractions of other things, prove too strong for the faith and hope which alone will enable any disciple to "endure to the end." Like Israel of old, who "could not enter in because of unbelief," so do many Christians falter and fall in the wilderness instead of marching onward to enter the Promised Land. The example of Daniel's life shows what inflexible devotion to the things of God and unshakeable faith in his power and providence can do to a man who builds those things into his life's experience.

Nothing of this was in the minds of those presidents and princes who at this time were conspiring against Daniel. Unscrupulous men of the world, determined to dispose once and for all of the man who by his rectitude and uprightness was a constant threat to their nefarious ways, they hatched a plot which seemed certain of success. No ordinary methods would do; this was a man incorruptible, proof against either threats or bribes, influenced neither by fear nor greed. None of the ordinary methods of achieving their object would serve. They could not accuse him of disloyalty to the king or State, for he was manifestly the soul of integrity. They could not insinuate that he was guilty of personal enrichment from the public purse, or of taking bribes to pervert the

course of justice; his private life was open for all to see. They could not impugn or malign his character, for all men knew him to be blameless and irreproachable. And in desperation at last these men said "*We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God*" (ch. 6. vs. 5). They could only hope to bring about the downfall of Daniel by making his loyalty to God a crime in itself.

So the plot was hatched. It was a simple enough scheme once the bare idea had crossed someone's mind. From its very nature it could not fail to work. Daniel's very firmness of character would be the sure guarantee of his undoing. As the details were unfolded and discussed there would be many nodding heads and covert smiles. The Jew was as good as dead already. Probably the principal contestants for Daniel's soon-to-be vacant office began to eye one another speculatively and under the cover of a spurious heartiness in discussion, began to take each others' measure for the further scramble for power which would follow immediately Daniel had been disposed of.

Agreement reached, the band of rogues sought audience with the king, and outlined their proposal. Briefly put, it provided that for a period of thirty days supplicatory prayer should be offered to no god or man save the king. The brief account in the sixth chapter of Daniel gives no supporting reasons for this apparently pointless piece of authoritarianism, no argument to justify what must have appeared to be a particularly foolish and vapid decree. Nevertheless the litigants may well have made out a case for their request, and that without revealing the true purpose behind the scheme. The Babylonians were worshippers of many gods, spirits and demons, but the Persians were monotheists, worshippers of one god, Ahura-Mazda, the god of light. The argument may well have been that this thirty days' decree would have the effect of suspending temporarily the native people's customary worship and introducing them to the idea of monotheistic worship, the worship of one god. But since the god of the Persians was not well known in Babylon, why not let him be worshipped in the person of the king as his representative? Thus the vanity of Darius would be flattered and his ear lent more willingly to the proposal. The Roman em-

perors had Divine honours paid to them while yet living and the early Christians suffered for refusing to give homage to them as gods; here at a much earlier date it seems that the same situation was to face the saintly Daniel.

The manner in which the conspirators put the decree before the king and practically demanded his signature seems as though he was brow-beaten into signing. It might well have been that, faced with a united front of all his principal men except Daniel, he yielded against his own better judgment. It might not have occurred to him that Daniel would object to the decree; after all, Daniel himself was a monotheist, worshipping one God, and might reasonably be expected to support the general idea. Darius probably saw little difference between the one god of the Persians and the one God of Daniel, and perhaps reasoned that at any rate Daniel could not seriously object. At any rate he signed.

Of course Daniel behaved in the manner expected by the plotters. The habit of over sixty years was not going to be abrogated on account of the king's decree. Three times a day, from his earliest youth in Babylon, he had prayed with his face towards Jerusalem, no wall or door intervening, giving open testimony to his faith that one day the House of God would be re-established in that present desolate city. He must have done that when a lad in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in full view of his pagan companions. At first they would have mocked and derided him; later they perhaps came to respect him. There may have been an occasion when an imperious summons to the presence of his royal master came to him when thus engaged, as happened once to a British Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, in the days of Queen Victoria. He would most surely have behaved as Mr. Gladstone did on that occasion, continuing with his prayers unhurriedly, and if then faced with an angry demand for an explanation, as was the case with that Christian statesman, returned the same answer: "I was engaged in audience with the King of kings." Daniel's enemies probably knew his history and judged rightly his behaviour. Assembling at the appropriate time, as expected, they found Daniel with his windows wide open, praying to his God, in flat defiance of the royal decree.

With what glee and triumph must the plotters have hastened to the royal palace and sought audience with King Darius. They were careful, however, to get the king irrevocably committed and to that end

they first had him confirm his earlier concurrence. "*Hast thou not signed a decree . . . ?*" and so on. True enough, agreed the unsuspecting king; a decree which, once signed, cannot be revoked. That was the law of the Medes and Persians and the king confirmed his upholding of the law. Then the mask was thrown off. "*That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree which thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day*" (vs. 13).

Too late, the king perceived the trap into which he had fallen. Verse 14 says that he was "*displeased with himself.*" He must have realised that the one man he could really trust was now, by his own stupid action, condemned to death. He might also have reflected that he himself, deprived of Daniel's loyalty and integrity, would be more at the mercy of these scheming conspirators than ever before. So he "*laboured until the going down of the sun to deliver him.*"

The presidents and princes were ready for this. They knew it would come. Before long they were back again, reminding the king of his obligations under the State Constitution. The king realised that there was no way out; the sentence would have to be executed. It must have been with a heavy heart that he gave the necessary orders, and the Palace guards went off to arrest the nation's Chief Minister and bring him to the place of execution.

Verse 16 is a little puzzling. It reads as though Darius assured Daniel that his God, whom he served continually, would certainly deliver him. Whether this was an expression of faith or merely a soothing last assurance to a man he regarded as good as dead, is not clear; when he came to the den next morning he was not half so sure about it. But it was now too late for further talk. The entire company came to the den, usually a large round pit in which the animals could roam freely but from which they could not escape, approached by means of a steeply sloping tunnel from the surface. The unresisting victim was pushed down the tunnel and slid helplessly to the floor of the pit where the lions awaited him. The iron grille at the entrance to the tunnel was shut and locked and sealed with the king's seal and those of the conspirators so that there need be no suspicion next morning that any attempt to deliver the condemned man had been made. There would, of course, be guards posted at the gate, just in case any of Daniel's own friends

should attempt a rescue during the night. These precautions taken, the party dispersed; the king, to a miserable evening and a sleepless couch, the others, to a sound night's sleep in the satisfaction of a job well done.

Next morning "*the king arose very early*" — much earlier apparently, than the men whose scheming had created this situation. The account says that he "*went in haste to the den of lions.*" He must at least have had some glimmer of hope that Daniel's God had been able to deliver him, or he would not have made such an early morning expedition. His faith was only very rudimentary, however; we are told that he "*cried with a lamentable voice, O Daniel . . . is thy God . . . able to deliver thee?*" He was by no means over sanguine, but he evidently thought that there was at least a chance.

Calm and unruffled came the familiar voice from the depths below. "*O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me . . .*"

Our God does not treat all his saints in the same fashion. Plenty of Christians were thrown to the lions in the days of pagan Rome, but God did not intervene to save them. He did intervene to save Daniel. That deliverance was for a definite purpose in the Divine Plan. Daniel yet had more work to do. The death of those many Christians in the Roman arena was for a definite purpose also, for "*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*" Whether in life or in death, we are the Lord's, and He will dispose of our earthly lives in the way that is good in his sight, and in the interests of his fulfilling purpose for all mankind. Only when we are all united together in the "General Assembly of the Church of the First-born" beyond the Vail, will we fully understand just how our apparently dissimilar experiences and varied fortunes in this life have been wrought together by our all-wise Father to effect the great end He has in view.

As far as Darius was concerned, Daniel's reassuring words brought about a swift revulsion of feeling. "*Then was the king exceeding glad.*" Not only was he glad for Daniel's sake, but also for his own. Here was a golden opportunity to rid himself of the men whom he now realised to be a menace to his own security. Probably some of them at least were Persians, and more disposed to favour Cyrus than Darius. This was the psychological moment, while the wonder of the miracle was fresh upon the minds

of the king's soldiers and servants. The king was not slow to take advantage of the chance. In the first place Daniel could legitimately be freed, since the decree merely stipulated that he should be cast into the den of lions without defining the consequences. The plotters had hardly thought that necessary. The law had been fulfilled and now Daniel could be released. The king saw to it that he was so freed without further delay. The same guards who cast him in now had the somewhat more ticklish task of getting him out. They doubtless hoped as they did so that the restored Chief Minister would not hold their action of the previous night against them when he resumed his administrative duties. With the same thought in mind they were probably only too pleased to show diligence in executing the king's next order, to the effect that they should arrest the men who were responsible for the plot against Daniel and cast them without further ado to the lions from which Daniel had so recently escaped. The summary nature of this arbitrary command would support the idea that the men concerned were taken from their beds before they had the time to realise what had happened, were hurried to the pit and without further ceremony flung in. Their unhappy wives and families were treated in similar fashion — a piece of Oriental barbarity which was quite the usual thing in those days, the idea being to ensure that no descendant of the criminal should live or be born to perpetuate his name. This ferocious act is quite in keeping with what might be expected of Darius; his father Astyages was one of the most inhuman monsters of antiquity.

The story ends with another decree, this time without any prompting. Darius sent a command to all parts of the empire requiring that worship and reverence be paid to the God of Daniel. It need not be thought that this implied the conversion of Darius or the establishment of Judaism as the State religion. It need only mean that Darius was sufficiently impressed by the manifest power of the God of Daniel that he gave the seal of his royal approval upon the worship of that God, wheresoever and by whomsoever performed. It might well be that this incident provided the starting point for that tolerance with which the Medo-Persian rulers regarded the Jewish religion, leading only a year after this happening to the decree of Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and build their Temple, and later on for the favour they enjoyed, in the days Nehemiah, when the city of Jerusalem itself was rebuilt.

To Christians it is just one of the many examples in history where God shows us all his power to deliver, when deliverance is in accord with his will and his Plan. This story shows us that God *can* deliver; whether in any given case, or in our own case,

He *will* deliver, rests again upon the needs of his Plan and his designs for us personally. Those of us whose lives are given over completely to serve him and be used by him would not have it otherwise; for He knoweth best.

(To be continued)

M. Warren

DESPISE NOT THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS

There are musical notes too high for the human ear to hear. There are places too remote for the human eye to see and concepts too majestic for the human mind to grasp. Our senses are strictly limited. The figures quoted by astronomers have little meaning for the man in the street. The sheer immensity of the universe confounds those who try to comprehend it. At the other end of the scale man fails to understand the minuteness of God's creation. An atom! Yes even less than an atom is the basic unit of our world. On television, aided by the use of modern microscopes and cameras are revealed millions of tiny plants and creatures, beautifully made, all different, fantastically adapted to their environment, each one created by and known of God. As the Psalmist viewing the skies without the use of a telescope, exclaimed in awe, "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained*", he was constrained to add "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*" (Psalm 8. 3-4). Meditating on all the marvels of creation, how can man fail to be "lost in wonder, love, and praise"?

But the Psalmist goes on to reveal that God is mindful of man, and the wonder of it is that generally speaking it is not the greatest and wisest of men who most evoke his interest, but rather, as Paul says, "*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*" (1 Cor. 1. 27). As God uses something smaller than the atom to work his will, nothing else is too small for his purpose.

"*A small round thing.*" It lay on the ground like a hoar frost. So small, so insignificant that its very name means "What is it?" and yet it provided food for all the Children of Israel throughout their forty years' wandering and was a wonderful picture of the Heavenly Manna which sustains the Christian in his pilgrimage through this world.

There were five pebbles in a brook, small and round; a boy, younger than his brothers, and a boy's sling, yet these were all used to defeat the giant enemy of Israel when the king in his armour and all his army were powerless to do so.

There was a little maid in Syria, taken captive from Israel. She had two fine characteristics, faith in the prophet of the Lord and love for her earthly master, although she was a slave. So God used her, little as she was. Her master was cured of his leprosy and acknowledged the God of Israel.

Gideon had an army to fight the Midianites but the army was too great for the Lord's use. God told Gideon so, adding, "*lest Israel say 'Mine own hand hath saved me'*" (Jud. 7. 2.). So the numbers were reduced from a somewhat mixed company of 32,000 to 300 who were devoted to the cause, and the Lord delivered Israel from the Midianites. This lesson seems to be one which Israel has yet to learn in our day. Not until she is prepared to give God the glory will her final deliverance come. The principle on which the Lord always works is "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit".

God says of Bethlehem, "*Thou, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that shall be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*". (Micah 5. 2). What an honour for that little town! Jerusalem might have been chosen — perhaps it might have seemed to us more appropriate — but Jerusalem is remembered as the city where our Lord was crucified. Perhaps the people of Bethlehem had a more humble spirit than those of Jerusalem over whom Jesus wept with the words "*How often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matt. 23. 37).

The manna lay on the ground. David was content

to mind the sheep. The little slave girl had faith in God. Gideon gave up his army without question to put his trust in the power of God. Bethlehem must have recognised its humble position.

Does not the manna remind one of the five loaves and two small fishes? Only a boy's lunch, but the lunch of a boy who was willing to give it to Jesus for his use, and the multitude was fed. This was a wonderful demonstration of the power of God, of the compassion of Jesus and of the bread which represented his body which He would give for the life of the world. Such a little in the hand of the Lord can mean so much.

Unlike the little slave of Naaman, the slave Onesimus, who is the subject of Paul's letter to Philemon, ran away from his master. But he knew where to run. Obviously, even at that stage, "a lover of good men", he went to the apostle Paul. He was only a slave and even good slaves in those days were of less account than the animals. Onesimus apparently was an unprofitable slave. But evidently God was "mindful" of him and it is wonderful to know from the letter to the Colossians that Paul can later say "*Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you*" (Col. 4. 9).

Jesus had much to say about the little ones in the Kingdom. Such are in God's sight greater than the prophets. His warnings are grave against causing them to stumble in the way.

So it is evident that the things and the people regarded by men as of little account are precious to God and can be used by him to his glory.

But there are warnings too about some small things, "the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vine". Are these the so-called "small" sins, the slips, which with a greater devotion to the Lord could be avoided? Are they the careless thoughts and words and deeds which do not bring honour to God? Are they the little ways in which we neglect the needs of others, or perhaps the small anxieties which show our lack of trust?

James reminds us of one little fox which causes a great deal of trouble. He says "*The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth*" (Jas. 3. 5-6).

But, praise God, that same member can be used as a real evidence of consecration to the Lord, as the word of love, of encouragement, of humble witness to the Lord's faithfulness is expressed. It is through

the power of the tongue that the Gospel is preached and every Christian can play a small part in this. The tongue is in use when "confession is made unto salvation" and by this same little member the people of God can "offer the sacrifice of praise, giving thanks to his name".

Paul points out how all the members of the human body can be yielded to God as instruments of righteousness.

So it is with the spiritual reality of which the human body is but a picture. Every member of the "Church which is his Body" not only may but must play a significant rôle if the Body is to be healthy and growing. The way Paul expresses it is, "*The whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the Body unto the edifying of itself in love*" (Eph. 4. 16).

One may consider that one has no talent at all and therefore no part to play. In our Lord's parable all had at least one talent and the owner of the one was severely reprimanded for not making good use of it in the master's service. When it is remembered, too, that the Christian's service does not relate only to his relationship with his brethren but to every aspect of daily life, a little thought on this might reveal many hidden talents which could be cheerfully devoted to the praise of God. As the hymn says: —

*"The daily round, the common task
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."*

The called ones are still members of the Body even when not actually in contact with the other members and in each one a character is being formed which will affect the whole. So the small, the least member, like the little slave girl, may glorify God. How true are the poet's words "On the strength of one link in the cable, dependeth the might of the chain". God's values are so different from those of men.

How important is such a small thing as a moment! Every decision ever taken is arrived at in a moment. It is true that one may ponder an idea for days or weeks or years, but a single moment only is needed for the final decision, sometimes irrevocable. The first decision to yield to Satan was the work of a moment. Abraham, called of God, immediately went forth in obedience. Daniel determined once for all to serve

the God of Israel. In one moment Pilate gave up Jesus to crucifixion. In one moment each of the apostles decided to dedicate his all to God. For each Christian, though the work of preparation and the actual working out of his consecration may span many years, there is surely one moment when a definite decision is made for the Lord. One moment only is necessary for a resolution which can have results reaching to eternity.

An atom, a pebble, a young boy, a little girl, a boy's lunch, a runaway slave, a part of the body as small as the tongue, one talent, a moment of time, the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. How insignificant in the

eyes of men, how important in the eyes of God!

"Who hath despised the day of small things?" says the Lord by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 4. 10). The foundations of the Temple being laid after the captivity seemed to give no promise of the great and glorious building to come, but if the building is the Lord's the grand result is never in doubt.

So, to those who in the eyes of the world and perhaps in their own opinion are small and unimportant, but who nevertheless are willing to commit their way to the Lord, came the words of Jesus, *"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom"*.

Strong Delusion (1 Thess. 2. 11)

The words about a "strong delusion," or "working of error" are an example of what is taught as clearly in the New Testament as in the Old — that judicial hardening follows wilful blindness and persistent sin. God will never send any delusion upon those who have not first deluded themselves. Thus Pharaoh hardened his own heart before it was ever said that the Lord hardened his heart. God has so ordered things that sin brings its own judgment in this way, and the Hebrew writers were so greatly impressed with the basic fact of the sovereignty of God that they expressed themselves in the most direct language about it. The conviction that all things were under the divine ordering and control saved them from a pagan dualism such as would regard evil as existing under separate authority, beyond Divine control. In this conviction, they represent everything as directly within the sphere of Divine

action — not that God is the author of evil or desires evil for anyone, but that human action out of harmony with the Divine ordering inevitably brings its own judgment; and it is a real judgment of God, because God has so ordered things as to involve this inevitable consequence.

For our consolation, it appears to be indicated that delusions of this kind cannot affect believers (Matt. 24. 24; Mark 13. 22). But persistent rejection on the part of those who will not welcome "the love of *the truth*" (2 Thess. 2. 10) results in the terrible "working of error" that leads them to "believe *the lie*" (v. 11); the Greek involves just that arresting contrast, more emphatically than appears in our versions — "the lie" as the opposite of "the truth"; not merely "a lie", but "the lie", as thus opposed. May we not link this thought with our Lord's own declaration, "I am . . . the Truth," and say that He has his antagonist "the Lie"?

(*"Life of Faith"*)

Divine Guidance

A very great mistake which some have made, in view of conflicting ideas as to what is truth, has been to discard every human instrumentality and expect God's guidance through the Bible alone. Such forget that God gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ; that we are exhorted to build one another up in the holy faith and to esteem the servants of God for their

work's sake. Ever since the Church has had an existence, God has raised up from its midst, as special servants of the body, some who have special teaching ability. Blessed is that servant who at the Master's appearing is found giving the meat in due season to the household of faith (Matt. 24. 46), and no less blessed are they of the faithful household, who, like the "noble Bereans" of old, search the Scriptures daily to see if these things be so — who prove all things, as the apostle exhorts, and hold fast that which is good.

(*selected*)

F. A. Shuttleworth

THE DEBT WE OWE

Part 7. St. Paul : Conclusion

One portrait remains in the gallery of faith, worthy of our attention before we quietly close the door and pass out into the mad whirl of the last years of the twentieth century. It is that of the man who opened up the West to Christianity, with whose words we began our viewing of so many great ancestors. (Eph. 2.19).

Hitherto the Gentile nations had been considered outsiders, the unclean and the unchosen who might now and again pick up a few crumbs from the rich man's table. Now all that is changed. The four dimensional love of God is revealed to every nation, kindred and tongue. Those who were once far off, strangers and foreigners, are invited to become "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God". The man chosen to carry this invitation was the man Saul of Tarsus, to be known to the Christian world as Paul the Apostle.

As a man of outstanding qualities, of fine intelligence, of superb courage, of unwavering faith and loyalty, he claims kinship with all who went before him. As the bond-slave of Christ he carried on the great tradition of the past, widening the bounds of faith, deepening the depths of love, elevating the spiritual life of man, overthrowing the beggarly gods of this world, and dying, bequeathed to every generation of truth seekers a vision of the whole race of man eventually united in peace under the righteous reign of that One whom God has appointed, Jesus Christ, before whom every knee shall yet bend in glad obedience.

"I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4-7). These are the last words of a great man, a much hated, a much criticised man. He had spent the greater part of his life preaching an unpopular gospel which was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. The rewards of his office had been partial blindness, shipwrecks, stonings, beatings and imprisonment. At the end of his day, conscious that his work was finished, he had little outward evidence of success. A few books and an old cloak were all his possessions. An old man, he sits a prisoner in Nero's dungeon, awaiting execution. His friends are few, his enemies many. Of all his perils that of false brethren must have been the hardest to endure. The

churches he had founded fell victims to the fear and harshness of persecution, or to the false doctrines of heady high-minded men who got inside the little groups to control them for their own ends. Like his Lord before him, he left the treasure of his teaching in the hands of a faithful few. Looking back over the years he saw himself as a runner who had held aloft the torch of truth under all conditions and over all obstacles, until the time had come to hand it over to a younger man whose fresh energies would preach the word to the same mixed multitudes, with the same mixed results.

There are no complaints about the hardness of the way, the fickleness of human nature, or the ways of his Divine Master. He has learned contentment under all conditions, to give thanks on dark days as well as fair. He has kept the steadfast, unwavering faith through all his chequered road, and now at the last it shines the brightest. Confidence for himself, confidence for all faith-keeping hearts of the victor's crown is his last declaration to those who will continue the fight and run the race. For fading laurels and earthly trophies men have endured much; for a crown, an inheritance that cannot be lost or withered, the Apostle to the Gentiles had endured all the loss, the sorrow and the afflictions of the way in which his faith had led him, counting it but a light thing compared with the eternal glory of an unending life in the company of Christ and the saintly members of his House.

Against all that would have destroyed him or undermined his faith in Christ, in the resurrection of the dead, in the future of his people and in the love of God, he had fought a good fight. In spite of all the distractions, the persuasions of city life and social position, he had held firmly on his course, the bond-slave of Christ, instant in season and out of season, preaching this gospel to all classes of men. Through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, he had pressed forward towards his goal, holding aloft, for all to see, the pure name of the knowledge of God and of his Christ.

Now the long race was over, the work was finished, the coveted prize of life, the priceless privilege of knowing Jesus face to face, was at hand. The last words of advice had been written to Timothy, words to infuse courage and patience into a young man's

heart, when an old man was no longer there to speak the words of wisdom, or set the undaunted example.

"I am now ready to be offered." In his lifetime he had often faced death and been delivered, preserved to continue the work for which he had been chosen. Now the work was finished. He has come to terms with life, with God and man, with the last enemy. Neither preaching nor deeds nor suffering will plead for him at the last hour. Only faith and the scars of faith are his passport to eternity. His epitaph is as bright as his crown is glorious; the testimony and reward of all the people of God.

"Firm as his throne his promise stands and he can well secure,

What I've committed to his hands till the decisive hour."

* * *

It is a far cry now from the days of Christ and the selected band of apostles, further still to the prophets of Israel and to Moses when the faith of earlier men was expressed and compressed into rules of conduct which would keep human life in a sound state. Although centuries have rolled over generations of people, expanding the nations and shrinking the globe they inhabit, the inflexible law is still the standard for those people. It has needed no alteration nor will it ever be lowered to suit man's fancy. When man himself lowers or ignores that standard he does so at his peril. The results are lamentable.

A thoughtful poet once wrote "The mills of God grind slowly". How slowly, history relates in the nineteen centuries which have rolled away since the stone was rolled from the tomb in a rich man's garden and the disciples of Jesus went joyfully forth on their appointed mission to preach the gospel to all nations, to give hope to a dying race of the resurrection of the dead. In their enthusiasm they probably expected an immediate realisation of all the blessings which the life and death of Jesus could release to mankind. He had said he would come again and they looked for his coming with the earnest longing of lovers for the beloved. Like their predecessors they died in faith, not having seen that for which they looked. One generation succeeded another, repeating all the old mistakes, blundering on through bigotry, schism, cruelty, intolerance, ignorance and formality, until students of this long history or religion may well wonder what have been its benefits. The mind shudders at the awful crimes committed in its name. Considering all the

hopes and promises of long ago, even the best informed in hard-pressed moments must ask the eternal question, "Why?" In this scientific, space, jet-propelled age, it is not the bells of heaven but the music of hell which beats about the ears of earth's seething millions, in constant violence, in bomb-blast, gun-fire, roaring roads, screaming skies, industrial clangour and the threatening voices of unrest and discontent. As the spectres of world famine, world domination, world bankruptcies and world destruction stretch out grisly hands across the moral chaos whose mounting problems have no solution, the voice of the cynic may be heard in the land, "What price religion now and where are all the promises, since all things continue as they were, only worse, for the other side is winning?"

Failure, disappointment, uncertainty, perplexity and materialism have led in these latter days to a serious decline in the faith. Many prime beliefs for which our forefathers suffered have been abandoned, jettisoned in the interests of science, fallen before the pens and tongues of the higher critics, who, in the name of culture, have reasoned away the word of God. Evolution became the gospel of the industrial revolution and in the end Mammon has taken all — but not quite. At the end of the long oppressive, blood-stained centuries, as all the way through them, there are the few, the comparative handful who yet understand the faith once delivered to the saints, who have remained loyal to its highest principles and true to the great vision of the Kingdom of God on earth as the sure and only solution of the many evils which bedevil man's world and destroy his life and peace.

Faith and hope are twin sisters, two of the three graces which form the backbone of all true religion. Without faith it is impossible to accept God or try to please him; without hope it is impossible to visualise a nobler future for mankind. Without vision people perish. The target, the aim, the life of the future is the star of hope which draws life's pilgrims onwards, which buoys them up above the waves of adversity.

To hope for a whole lifetime, to die without the fulfilment of hope, must be the acid test of faith, the demonstration to God and man that it is the genuine quality. The early heroes of faith who walked with God were all men of hope and vision, looking forward with confidence to a time when all wrong things would be righted under the just government of God. They received certain great and precious promises of world wide blessing, of a Kingdom of God on earth which would bring joy to all its peoples, yet one by

one this great household of faith, too numerous to recount, died without having seen this new government in action. Abraham was the prince of the faith who had personally received the promise, bound by the oath of God, yet his biographers state that he died without receiving one foot of the land promised to him, or seeing any of the world-wide blessings, which had been to him an incentive, the splendid vision of the future. *"He looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* This faith and hope and vision shared by thousands since the world began has not in their lifetime become a reality. Sceptics have jeered and critics have found fault with the faith, but the faith lives on. These men and women of God have been strangers and pilgrims in the earth, out of tune with its varied aspirations and activities, strongly convinced that it is not God's world, not his kingdom of heavenly peace, of just judgment, of abounding life and light and vitality, but a crooked and perverse system of things which must some day be removed to make way for a finer, more beneficent rule which will never pass away. So they died in faith, having believed in and accepted the promises. They saw the vision afar off, hoped for it, died undaunted while the vision tarried, knowing that God cannot and will not break his word. The living God, the God of all the faithful, is the God of the living. For his family of faith, honoured and loved, he has prepared a city, a kingdom, a new day, a new life which will abundantly justify all the faith and hope that has been placed in it. Its reality will outshine the vision which has delighted the eyes and thoughts of those who have believed and kept the faith.

Death does not have the last word. The faith of saints will taste the victory of God over this last great enemy of man. *"O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?"* These immortal words are faith's reply to all defeat, to all doubt, to all stony indifference. The promises of God concern all that concerns man. They remain unmoved by the turmoil of the centuries, by the theories and agitation of men. The brevity of life, the destruction of death, cannot annul the eternal Word. Every detail will be fulfilled

at the appointed time. In the book of remembrance the names of the faithful glow before God. *"They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels"*. Those who were given the title deeds of the land, the keys of the kingdom, and the promises of everlasting life and dominion, will be there to receive them.

So to those still fighting the good fight of faith in these last days of an old world, which has been allowed to run its full course that evil may plant an imperishable lesson in the heart of man, and the wisdom of God be justified, there comes a clarion call from that great Cloud of Witnesses whose illustrious portraits have looked down upon these latest members of the house of God, — *"Be strong and of a good courage. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee"*.

"Hear you not the voices ringing down the ages,

*Echoing still the message, though their task
be done:*

*Voices, born of heroes, monarchs, poets,
sages,*

*Yearning still to share the wisdom they have
won?"*

The thronging, deafening, clamorous world with its vain delusions, its mockeries, its glamorous attractions, must beat and call in vain against that faith in the justice and love of God and to those who stand by its insistent Word to bless man's race, to restore a pillaged and polluted earth and fill it with the glory of God.

A place in the house of God with such knowledge and conviction is not only the greatest possible honour and privilege; it is Divine armour-plating and heavenly peace of mind. For this great inheritance we owe an inestimable debt to all who have lived before us who have fought the good fight and kept the faith. Let us, like them, walk worthily before God, holding fast the same faith, that we may in God's good time gain the crown of life.

The End

"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; imi-

tating 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
into their desired haven"*

How dispiritingly few were the interludes of satisfaction and delight during the Saviour's last year on earth! He was increasingly becoming a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief". A deepening consciousness that the "end" for which He had come to earth was already looming darkly ahead drove him repeatedly to mountain-top or solitude for prayer. From the time of his transfiguration this consciousness of approaching death prompted him to make reference to the *"decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem"*. The outward circumstances of life changed greatly. The period of successful work in Galilee had drawn to its end, mainly because of his refusal to be made a bread-and-fish-providing king. Jerusalem had not, from the start, opened hand or heart to him, deeming him of too lowly birth, and of too inadequate education to satisfy her needs. But Galilee had drunk deeply of blessing from his hands. And now even Galilee had "hid as it were its face from him", no longer finding beauty in him that it should desire his company Despised and rejected of men, knowing that the door in Galilee was closed, the Man of Sorrows set his face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, knowing that she who slew the prophets would have no compunction about slaying him. A state of internal strain had gripped him, mind and body alike, revealing itself in those tense words of censure upon Capernaum and the cities by the sea. It also shows itself in the exacting terms put upon discipleship — such terms as "let him take up his cross". — "can ye drink of the Cup that I shall drink".

Arriving in Jerusalem, the web of malice and intrigue began to weave its strands about his Person. First the cold and calculating Pharisees came, asking by what authority He drove the money-changers from his Father's House. Then the Scribes and Chief Priests sought to enmesh him in their tribute-money trap: after them the unbelieving Sadducees, hoping to succeed where others failed, propounded a petty quibble — each and all a token of the icy atmosphere into which He had thrust himself. Everything denoted that the end was drawing near — the snarling pack of hungry wolves were closing in upon their prey! He, the worthy Lamb of God, had presented himself at Jerusalem as a sheep for the impending slaughter!

On one of those closing days, over against the

Treasury, Jesus watched the string of well-to-do home and foreign-born visitors place their costly gifts in the great chest, in open view of all who might care to see. Edging her way into that ostentatious file a widow, poorly-clad and meanly-fed, cast in to the spacious coffer her trivial gift — two mites, in value less than one twentieth of the English penny, not even the price of a single sparrow (Matt. 10. 29) — but, it was "all her living"! What a grim contrast to behold.

One watchful eye observed, — and approved. With a throb of pleasure the near-to-breaking tension was released as the beholder made comparison. More than they all! — two mites . . . more than they all. The austere sternness of the Voice was gone, and for one brief moment in those crucial days pleasure and satisfaction filled his soul. After all, mammon-ridden though the nation might be, there were still those in Israel who would consecrate their all, one little ray of sunshine, cleaving the ever darkening sky; one tiny gush of joy to lighten sorrow's burdening load!

So it is with the humblest brother or sister in the Lord, the least of the thousands in Israel. Not in the eloquence that sways the responsive crowd nor to stir them with ready pen. Not in costly gift of gold nor sparkling gem! Only the two mites, so small in value, so unassuming in appearance, but the watching Eye will see, and assess it at heavenly valuation. The smile of Heaven rests on the little things — the one hair requiring a Father's permit to fall; the one sparrow which the Father deigns to know; the one cup of cold water offered in his Name, and . . . the two mites which constitute one's all!

But what can mites do? Perhaps speak only little word.

*Only a little word, softly and kindly,
Breathed in the ear of the sad and oppressed.
Oh how it tenderly steals like a melody
Over life's billows, and lulls them to rest.
Only a little word, softly and kindly
Dropped in a heart that is blighted and
chilled,
Oh how its gentle strain tunes every chord
again
Waking the echoes that sorrow has stilled.*

If that one little word be the token of your two mites, then cast it into the treasury of your Lord, and He will accept it as your "all".

DISCIPLESHIP

A call to surrender all

Discipleship! How little has this been in consideration during the great doctrinal disputes which have marred the history of the visible Church! Rather it has been orthodoxy, measured by strictness of adherence to a creed or system of interpretation. But, no matter how correct views might be regarding the teaching of the Bible, simply holding correct views is not being a follower of Jesus, — is not discipleship.

The word disciple as used in the New Testament is not an exact synonym for pupil, or student, or scholar. It implies not only an adherence to the teachings of Jesus, but also an attachment to the personal Jesus himself. Being simply students of the Bible in no way implies discipleship; the word carries with it the idea of being disciplined, being trained and developed by instruction and exercise in godliness.

There are many Scriptural illustrations of the relationship existing between Christ and the Church, but this one of discipleship is that by which our lives and conduct are being measured by God, the Father; and, whether we are aware of it or not, by those with whom we come in contact day by day. When Jesus was on earth He could say, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"*; but knowing that He was not to remain here He said to his disciples, *"You are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5. 14-16; John 9. 5). Disciples have no light of themselves; whatever of the light of truth the world may see in them has to be that much of Christ that is reflected.

There is a tendency to put outward activity in place of the inward work of grace, transformation of life and character, sanctification.. In the closing portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7. 21-23) Jesus warns against this, saying *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven"*, for many will come presenting their works, to whom Jesus will say, *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"*. In astonishment they might ask, Workers of iniquity? what was wrong about preaching in your name? casting out demons? doing wonderful works? They were doing this on their own, having their own programme and activities, disregarding the Divine instructions, not being "co-labourers with God".

In Romans 12. 1-2, the Apostle beseeches his readers to present their bodies living sacrifices. He urges them to be transformed, not merely to become informed as to God's will and purposes, not to reform in the sense of becoming moral, but to be transformed by the renewal of their minds in order to demonstrate that God's will is a good will, a perfect will, a most acceptable will. How often the will of God is disassociated from the idea of sacrifice, and sacrifice from the expressed will of God. This is well illustrated in the presumptuous presentation of the burnt offering by King Saul and the prophet Samuel's rebuke *"to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (1. Sam. 15. 22).

In the Beatitudes, as arranged in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives a series of qualities that would characterise his followers, and distinguish them. It has been said that the Sermon on the Mount does not fit this world. Jesus never said that it did. It is said by some that these teachings of Jesus are for the Kingdom Age; they are not practical in this Age. But *"do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"* (1 Cor. 6. 2). The saints could never teach the world the righteous laws of the kingdom if they had never applied these rules to themselves in this life. The teachings of Jesus are for disciples, now; their moral and spiritual excellency is not attractive to fallen human nature.

Consider some of the conditions of discipleship: forbidding even a word of contempt; having no impure desires; loving and praying for those who spitefully use one; rendering good for evil; warning against hypocrisy; warning against being over concerned about daily sustenance; warning against judging, and, at the same time showing the necessity of judging between a true and a false prophet: exhorting to build on a rock. The question arises, "Who is sufficient for these things?". Jesus foresees the difficulty, and prescribes, *"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"*. (Luke 11. 9).

Many a professed Christian has taken false comfort in these words, thinking that this is of general application, that here is a blank cheque which needs only to be filled in and presented for payment. And we, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, are often overtaken in this same fault, as writes James, *"You*

ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your own lusts" (Jas. 4. 3). Self-interest dominates fallen man, and still clings even to disciples.

The first requisite to discipleship is, as expressed by Jesus, to be "poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" — that is, blessed are the self-renounced. And this agrees with the oft reported words of Jesus, "Unless a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple". Self and self-will must be warred against in order that God's will may have its way. Self-will and God's will cannot peacefully co-exist in the mind of the would-be disciple. Faith is necessary for this, because the natural man can see only the natural; and the naturally unseen must become the most real in order for one to put implicit trust in, and obedience to, the teachings of Jesus, confident that He is what the Scriptures say He is, "the Son of the living God", the exact representation of God to man (Heb. 1. 1-3; John 1. 1-18; 1 John 1. 1-4).

There are three laws which have to do with self: self-preservation; self interest; self-denial. The first of these is good, for "self-preservation is the law of Nature". That is why God has woven the quality of fear in the composition of man's make-up. Fear, of itself, is a good thing; it guards against a discontinuation of existence. This law of self-preservation is seen even in the vegetable world as each blade of grass, each shrub, each tree, seeks to maintain its existence in its environment. But the second of these laws, that pertaining to self-interest, characterises all of Adam's posterity, inherited from him who introduced self-will in opposition to God's will. Self-interest elevates the individual self as important above all else; it makes self that around which all in its world revolves; and the more self-centred, the more miserable and loveless is the individual. But the third of these laws, that of self-denial, is basic to the Kingdom of God. It was enunciated time and again by Jesus, "Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple".

To deny self is no easy matter, for it is not denying self of something, but denying the very selfhood, the ego. Necessarily, there has to be an adequate motive to induce this submerging of self, and that motive is declared to be "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus". Labouring under deep conviction of sin, and finding that struggling for personal righteousness accomplishes little but a deeper awareness of this

enslavement, the divine Spirit directs to the grace and mercy of God, to "*the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation*" (Rom. 1. 16).

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to "convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment", so the one coming under conviction is already being dealt with by God for the purpose of leading to repentance and eventual discipleship. As Jesus said, "*No one can come unto me, except it is given unto him of my Father*" (John 6. 65). But even though one has come to God for forgiveness, and has heard the call, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me", yet the response must be entirely voluntary. There is no coercion. This was so even in the case of Jesus, who was "*called of God*" (Heb. 5. 4). His response was, "*I delight to do thy will*" (Psa. 40. 6-8; Heb. 10-5-7), and again, "*I lay down my life for the sheep . . . Therefore does my Father love me, because I lay down my life. No man takes it from me, I lay it down of myself*" (in accordance with God's will, Heb. 10. 10). "*I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again*". Even in Gethsemane He could have had twelve legions of angels at his command to deliver him from the impending ordeal of trial, crucifixion, and death. Hear his prayer to the father: "*If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt*". Here we see Jesus crushing out of himself every possibility of his own will being exercised contrary to his Father's will.

Self-denial and cross bearing must coexist. This idea of cross bearing is much misunderstood, as it is mostly thought of as being the enduring of that about which nothing can be done anyway. Although it is said of Jesus that He "endured the cross; despising the shame", yet it is also written, "*What shall I say? Father, deliver me from this hour: but this for cause came I unto this hour*" (John 12. 27). It was not the enduring of that which could not be escaped; it was his delight to be an instrument in the outworking of the Father's plan in putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself (2 Cor. 5. 21).

Cross bearing was spoken of by the Lord before He was taken to be crucified; therefore it must have had significance which would be recognised by his hearers, else Jesus would not have used it as a figure of speech. What is its meaning? Crucifixion was the Roman method of execution for cases of extreme lawlessness; in showing contempt for the condemned, as well as making a public example of Rome's ruth-

lessness in punishment, the condemned was compelled to carry to the place of execution the wooden beams that were to be the material for his cross. Thus, this custom became the source of the figure of speech which Jesus used; and it meant, as He used it, that the faithful continuance in doing God's will might be that which would lead to murderous hatred by earthly powers and associates of whatever degree. And so we read in Rev. 2. 10: "*Be thou faithful unto death*" for it is the degree of faithfulness that is expressed. It is obedience to the Father's will as it becomes known, no matter what the outcome may be. Such it was with Jesus who not only (a) "*made himself of no reputation*", but also (b) "*was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*" (Phil. 2. 5-11). "*He learned obedience by the things which he suffered*" (experienced), and became the "*author of eternal salvation to all who obey him*"; follow him as his disciples, hearkening submissively to him. (Heb. 5. 8, 9).

In Luke 14. 16-24 one of the lessons illustrated is the reluctance of the human heart to enter into God's Kingdom, to partake of the feast of favours offered to faith, to have fellowship with Christ in things that are of heavenly origin. Whenever there is set before us God's blessed will, always along with it is a logical reason why we should be doing something else, as in the parable: "*I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go see it*"; "*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them*"; "*I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come*". All of these are only excuses; the real reason for declining the invitation is that earthly ties and interests, all real and good, are given priority over interest in the things of the Spirit.

But there is the inability of the natural mind to grasp and understand the significance and wholesomeness of the things of God (1 Cor. 2. 14). This is well seen as recorded in Matt. 16. 21-24 when, after Peter's confession of Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God', Jesus began to show to his immediate followers that "*he must go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed . . . Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*". Then Jesus continued "*If any will*

come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me".

As intimated in the above passage, Satan will see to it that the way of self-denial and cross bearing, instead of being a delight in doing the will of God, will be presented as an offence, while to him who is dedicated to the will of God, to suggest otherwise is an offence. We read of the 144,000 in Rev. 14. 4: "*These are they who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth*". Another has well said, "There is no such thing as easy discipleship". Why should there be? Think of the magnitude of the reward for following Christ. To be confessed before the Father and all the holy angels; "to be like him, to see him as he is"; to be a partaker of his glory; to sit with him in his throne, and reign with him in bringing the covenanted blessings to all the families of the earth! It is still a "strait gate, and a narrow way", but it leads to life — eternal life, the Divine nature.

"*As great multitudes followed Jesus, he turned and said unto them, If any come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*" Then He explained why not in two parables — parables which have been much misunderstood: the parable of the building of a tower without sufficient funds to finish it; and that of a king going to make war against another king with superior forces (Luke 14. 25-35). What Jesus is teaching in these is that half-heartedness will not do, nor insincerity, for unless there is wholehearted devotedness to the will of God, there will eventually be compromise. The intimation is clear in verse 26 that opposition may come from one's own household, family, friends. If there is any compromise it has to be on the part of the would-be disciple, for the world has nothing to compromise! "Count the cost" does not or rather, should not, convey the thought of discouraging discipleship; instead, it is a warning that it must be sincere, or there will be compromise, defeat, and confusion. Earthly ties, altogether fitting and human, will challenge our love and faithfulness, our devotion to Christ and his teachings. And then, Jesus adds, "*Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?*". This, the salt that has lost its savour, is the once professed disciple who has conceded to the prejudices of those who find the way of Christ — the way of righteousness and godliness

—objectionable. Such a one is no longer able to bring conviction and witness to the reality of eternal life and eternal judgment.

Let us then, *"lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking*

unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". (Hebrews 12: 1, 2).

(From the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom")

C.T. Ward

TIMOTHY MY SON

A character study

Perhaps the most human aspect of the Apostle Paul's complex character was the affection he felt for the young man he had converted during his first visit to Lystra in Roman Asia at almost the beginning of his evangelical life-work. "My dearly beloved son", "my own son in the faith" he called him. The depth of feeling he felt for the youth who became one of his most loyal co-labourers is manifest by many an allusion. The association between Paul and Timothy lasted only some twenty years but during that twenty years there was forged a bond that led to one of the most pathetic pleas in history — Paul's letter from the condemned cell at Rome to Timothy at Ephesus, urging him to come quickly that he might see him once more before he died.

Timothy was evidently quite young, probably in his teens, when Paul visited Lystra for the first time during the course of his first missionary journey. The time, about A.D. 47 about fourteen years after the Crucifixion. He was of mixed parentage, his father being a Greek and his mother, Eunice, a Jewess. Despite this fact the lad was evidently brought up in the Jewish faith and when Paul came to Lystra with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Timothy, as well as his mother and his grandmother Lois, at once accepted the faith and declared themselves for Christ. Together with other converts, they formed a Christian community, a local church there in Lystra, and in these surroundings the boy Timothy rapidly grew in knowledge and grace. Thus when Paul again visited the town some six years later during his second missionary journey, his attention was taken by the zealous young man, who by now was *"well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium"* (Acts 16: 1). The consequence was that Paul invited Timothy to join him in his journeys and work, an invitation which was enthusiastically accepted. When Paul and Silas left Lystra to continue their journeying, Timothy went with them.

From then on, Timothy became a kind of representative for Paul, often being sent on missions which Paul was unable to execute himself, in consequence of which he speedily became well known to the Christian congregations in Asia and Greece. Unlike Luke, who was the constant companion of Paul and never left his side, Timothy was away in some distant place carrying out some special commission as much as he was in attendance on the Apostle. He became, in short, a trusted and trusty right hand man whom Paul could send anywhere knowing that whatever it was he had been commissioned to do would be well and truly carried out.

Upon Timothy's acceptance of this offer of service with Paul, the three made their way through Roman Asia to the seaport of Troas, where they made the acquaintance of Luke, who then joined them. Here Paul had the dream of the man from Macedonia, beseeching him to cross the sea to Greece and preach his message there. So the four found themselves at Phillipi, where Paul and Silas were thrown into prison as a result of the affair of the demon-obsessed slave-girl. Luke and Timothy appear to have escaped involvement in the incident. Then on to Thessalonica and Berea — where Timothy and Silas remained while Paul went on alone to Athens and Corinth. Rejoining Paul at Corinth they laboured together for eighteen months in the establishment and nurturing of the Corinthian church, then to Ephesus, Jerusalem and finally the home church at Antioch which had sent out the two missionaries in the first place. Timothy must have made himself quite at home at Antioch and speedily won a place in the service of the church.

This state of affairs was not to last long. Paul's restless spirit demanded renewed travels in the interests of the Gospel, and before a year was out he embarked on his third missionary journey, through Asia and Macedonia.

This time he headed quite a party; besides Timo-

thy and Luke, his two closest companions, there were Erastus of Corinth, a little later Gaius and Aristarchus of Macedonia, and at a still later stage on his route an additional five stalwarts. All this indicates a very extensive evangelical campaign, including as it did a two year sojourn in Ephesus which evidently became the headquarters for a vigorous extension of the Gospel message throughout Western Asia. Obviously under these conditions Timothy must have been busily employed over the period of some five years as a trusted auxiliary, continuing work that Paul had started in various cities or going on ahead to prepare the ground for the Apostle's visits. Some such are recorded; whilst at Ephesus he preceded Paul to Macedonia for that purpose and in so doing escaped becoming involved in the riot instigated by Demetrius in the matter of the images of Diana (Acts. 19. 22). Later, when the party was working in Greece, he with others went off in front to Troas to organise arrangements for Paul's later arrival (Acts. 20. 4). These must have been days of intense activity and soul satisfying experiences. It involved much hard work but for a young man like Timothy — he was probably still in his late twenties — it was a richly rewarding service.

At this point Paul commenced the journey to Jerusalem which culminated in his arrest and despatch to Rome. There is no further mention of Timothy in the narrative and what happened to him afterwards has to be deduced from occasional references in the Pauline Epistles. It is probable that he stayed at Ephesus while Luke and others went forward with Paul to Jerusalem. Timothy's later connection with Ephesus and the fact that he became the first presiding elder or "bishop" of Ephesus, according to Church tradition, lends colour to this hypothesis. Quite possibly, and under Paul's appointment, he assumed the direction of the evangelical work which was still being prosecuted in Western Asia and had much to do with the nurturing and building-up of the "seven churches in Asia" afterwards made noteworthy by St. John in the Book of Revelation. It does seem fairly certain, however, that not very long after Paul's arrival in Rome and during the two years that the Apostle "*dwelt in his own hired house*" (Acts. 28. 30) Timothy joined him there for a short while. Paul's letters to the Colossians and Philippians, both written at this time, include greetings from Timothy, indicating that he was with Paul at the time. Paul also told the Philippians (Phil. 2. 19) that he hoped to

send Timothy to them in a short while, to take news of his welfare and bring back to the Apostle news of their progress. Whether this hope was fulfilled is not known; probably it was, for there is no further hint of Timothy being at Rome and within another year Paul was acquitted and free, and had set out with Luke and Aristarchus on the "unknown" journey which lasted about six years and culminated in his second arrest and second trial at Rome, and his condemnation and death. It was then, sitting in his cell awaiting execution, that Paul wrote his last letter, the second Epistle to Timothy. "*Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me*" urged the aged Apostle. "*Only Luke is with me.*" All the others had gone, some sent by the Apostle to various fields of labour, others returning to their own home churches. Luke was the only one to stay with him until the last. Whether Timothy got to Rome in time is not known. He would certainly have made the attempt. "*Do thy diligence to come before winter*" wrote Paul. That must have been the winter of A.D. 67 and Paul was executed in the early part or Spring of A.D. 68, during the reign of Nero, who died in June A.D. 68. There might have been just time for the letter to reach Timothy at Ephesus and he to make the journey to Rome before it was too late. If he did do so there is no doubt he would have left Rome immediately afterwards and returned to Ephesus; and there he passes off the Biblical stage and is seen no more. According to tradition he served the church at Ephesus as Bishop for another thirty years and was martyred in A.D. 97.

There is one enigmatic reference to Timothy in Heb. 13. 23 "*Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come soon, I will see you.*" Since the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the people to whom it was sent, and the place from which it was written, are all in considerable doubt, it is difficult to establish a satisfactory explanation of this remark. The usual assumption is that Timothy had been imprisoned whilst in Rome with the Apostle Paul and then released, but this is founded on the assumption that Paul was the author of the epistle and this is by no means certain. The expression "set at liberty" does not necessarily imply a release from prison; the word can equally well imply a being made free to engage in some service or a being sent away to undertake some service. In any case nothing is known of such an occasion in the recorded life of Timothy and it contributes nothing to our knowledge of his career. This verse remains one

of the minor unsolved mysteries of the Bible.

We are left then with the picture of a quiet and industrious young man, fully dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ and prepared to express that dedication in a life of service for the Apostle to the Gentiles, willing to go anywhere or do anything in the interests of the work to which the Apostle himself was dedicated. There is no saying of his recorded; he never opens his mouth to speak, but is always there in attendance on the Apostle and ready to be sent anywhere to undertake some commission of duty in furtherance of the work of the Gospel. He was apparently not physically strong — the Apostle refers in one place to his “often infirmities” and recommends that he take a little wine “for thy stomach’s sake”. He was loyal, he was self-sacrificing. He left his mother and his home at an early age and there is no indication that he ever returned. His service, taking him all over the Roman world could not have left time or opportunity for more than perhaps a very occasional brief visit to the old home and what happened to his mother Eunice we have no means of knowing. Like Hannah and the boy Samuel in Old Testament times, Eunice must have given her son to the Lord for as long as he should live, and found consolation for the parting in the knowledge that he was being used mightily in the work of the Gospel. Perhaps during his later life as Bishop of Ephesus, he was better able to re-visit the scenes of his boyhood, for Lystra was only three hundred miles away, and if his mother still lived she might then have had the joy of reunion with the son who, so willingly given to the Lord, had proved so stalwart a pillar of faith

and strength to the Church.

He must have worked side by side with the Apostle John during the later years of that Apostle’s life, and the two died at about the same time. Luke had breathed his last some ten years earlier. With the passing of these three none were left who had known the struggles and the triumphs of those early evangelical days, of the founding of the little communities of first-generation Christians in the towns and villages of Asia and Greece. Younger men, who had not known the earlier days, were now picking up the torch and leading the Church into a new era of experience and progress, men like the famous Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who as a young man must have been well known to the ageing Timothy. But the fact that Ephesus survived as a church and was noted among the churches of Asia for its spirituality and its influence is a silent testimony to the young man whom Paul converted at Lystra and afterwards used so effectively in helping to lay the foundations of the Christian church. His own admonitions, addressed to his beloved adopted son when he himself lay under the shadow of the executioner, were fully and grandly heeded by the one to whom they were addressed: “*continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them . . . watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*” The few references to Timothy and his work, brief as they are, fully support the assurance that he did indeed heed and fulfil these admonitions of his father in Christ.

A. O. Hudson

THE FLOATING AXE-HEAD

An Old Testament
Story

One of the minor incidents of the Old Testament has been elevated to the position of a miracle largely on account of inadequate translation in the A.V. The prophet Elisha, about eight hundred years before Christ, living with his students at Gilgal, north of Jerusalem, was induced by them to seek a more commodious living space near the River Jordan. The account in Kings 6 tells how they went together to the chosen place and commenced to fell timber wherewith to build themselves a house. During this

operation one of them, apparently working close to the river’s brink, had the misfortune to lose the head of his axe in the water. In some distress he sought his tutor, Elisha, for help. “*Alas, master*” he said “*it was borrowed*”. For that reason, obviously, the question of its recovery was doubtly urgent.

“*And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he showed him the place.*” Then, says the narrative, Elisha “*cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim*”.

Ever ready to seize upon the miraculous, past generations of commentators have called this the miracle of the swimming axe-head; more than one volume of Bible Study helps lists this incident under the heading of "Old Testament Miracles". There seems singularly little purpose in such a miracle. No great lesson is expounded or public demonstration of divine sovereignty given. A careless youth had his lost axe-head returned to him in the sight of half a dozen companions and that is all. The incident is related in a casual, matter-of-fact fashion as though it was not a matter of any great importance and then the historian goes on to talk of something else.

The Jordan near Gilgal is between sixty and a hundred feet wide and varies in depth between four and six feet, with a well defined channel flanked by level terraces on which, more particularly in ancient times, there grew an abundance of trees, canes, shrubs and reeds. The water was too deep to retrieve the axe-head easily and yet not so deep that a little ingenuity would not solve the problem. Elisha "cut down a stick" according to the A.V. "Cut down" — "*qatsab*" — means to form or shape, as with a tool of some kind. An example is 1 Kings 6. 25 and 7. 37 "... cherubims of one measure and *size*" where "*size*" stands for "*shape*". The two olive wood cherubims in the Temple were both of the same sculptured shape. Another example is Cant. 4. 2. "Like a flock of sheep that are *shorn*"; the paring of the wool from the sheep is likened to the paring down of wood that is shaped. "Stick" in the text is "*ets*" which denotes a tree, a branch or any piece of wood, shaped or unshaped, indiscriminately. Elisha took a piece of growing timber and shaped it to his purpose; probably made it into the form of a flat plank. He then "cast it in . . . and the iron did swim". "Cast" can mean equally cast, throw, thrust or put, and "swim" denotes the ideas either of swimming or floating. This latter word is in the Hebrew grammatical form known as Hiphil, signifying the causative "*he caused it to float*", giving a different slant on the matter than that indicated by the A.V., which has it as though the iron did swim of its own volition. The true rendering is shown in several translations such as RSV "*and made the iron float*", Fenton "... *thrust it (the stick) there and floated the iron*", and the Septuagint "... *threw (the stick) in there and the iron came to the surface*".

The axe-head was evidently five or six feet down

in the water and too far from the bank to be fished out easily. Elisha seems to have shaped a long pole to a roughly flat form and thrust the pole into the water in such a fashion as to insert its end underneath the axe-head as it lay on the river bed. He had only to let go his own end of the pole to have it rise to the surface, bearing upon its farther extremity the lost implement. The relieved youth had then only to reach out for the floating timber, bring it carefully to the bank, and recover his axe-head. This is precisely what the narrative says "*And he put out his hand, and took it*".

Why so trivial an incident is recorded at all is a bit of a puzzle. The historical books of the kingdom of Israel were compiled by many generations of historians over a period of five hundred years or so and this little interlude, 2 Kings 6. 1-7, might well have been written down in the first place by the youth who lost the axe, a memory of the manner in which the great prophet of Israel came to his aid in a relatively trivial personal problem. Those responsible later on for compiling this part of the Book of Kings might have considered the incident worthy of record as illustrating how Elisha in all his greatness did not abstain from quite minor deeds of helpfulness when the occasion came before him. But we need not only ask why the compilers included such a narrative; they were guided by the Holy Spirit and we also have to ask why the Holy Spirit saw to it that this story was included. There must be a reason, for "*all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2 Tim. 3. 16). Maybe it is that an admittedly learned and devoted man of God who might easily be charged with being a mystic and out of touch with the affairs of daily life is here shown, despite his piety and "other-worldliness", to be of a practical mind and definitely aware of the troubles and needs of his fellows. When the lad was in trouble Elisha came to the rescue with a business-like application of elementary mechanics and his pupil was duly grateful. We too, with all our knowledge of and insight into the things of the next world, do well if we can, when occasion arises, render practical assistance to those of our fellows who have become involved in some everyday trouble. To that extent the story has certainly been given for our example and instruction in righteousness.

D. Nadal

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL

When Jesus came to preach the Gospel, the Jews generally thought that God's purpose and blessing was designed exclusively for them. They received a shock when he preached in the synagogue in his home town of Nazareth and made it clear that his Father had always been ready to express his love for 'the nations' (Luke 4. 16-30). This was also shown in God's promise to Abraham that "... *all peoples on earth will be blessed through you*" (Genesis 12. 3 NIV). The promise is echoed in Psalm 22 which after describing Jesus' sufferings, ends on the triumphant note "*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord and all families of the nations will bow down before him.*"

This theme was continued by the prophet Isaiah when he said "*Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other . . . before me every knee shall bow, by me every tongue will swear.*" (Isa. 45. 22, 23). Paul uses these words in his letter to the Philippian church (2. 10, 11). Jesus demonstrated his statement at Nazareth by showing his love for Gentiles in healing the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15) and the slave of the Roman centurion (Luke 7).

Jewish belief that they, as a select few, would be saved was continued by the Christian church from the third century onwards as bishops decided that only those who obtained church membership would go to heaven. The rest would burn in hell. The reformation brought little change except that God's favourites were 'protestant'. As denominations and sects multiplied each thought of its own supporters as the ones most worthy of everlasting life.

On one occasion Jesus said that "*all the dead will hear his voice and come out.*" (John 5. 27-29). He went on to say that those who had done good will live and those who had done evil will be judged. The 'good' seems to refer to those who have already 'crossed over from death to life' (v. 24). The rest will be 'judged' but not condemned. They will be judged by their behaviour after they have risen from the dead just as Jesus' followers are being judged now by the way they live (1 Peter 4. 17).

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey through what is now Turkey, they were accused by Jews in Jerusalem of denying the Jewish faith. It was said that they offered God's

friendship to Gentiles who did not obey the Jewish religion. Some Jews although converted to Christianity wanted to keep Jesus' message to a 'select few'. In the Council meeting which followed, James in summing up recalling how Peter had said that "*God first showed his care for the Gentiles by taking from among them a people to belong to him.*" He then quoted from the prophet Amos, "*After this I will return, says the Lord, and restore the kingdom of David, I will rebuild its ruins, and make it strong again. And so the rest of mankind will come to me and all Gentiles whom I have called to be by my own.*" (Acts 15. 14-17 GNB). In this text Gentiles are mentioned twice; those who belong to God now and those (the rest mankind) who will seek God later through Israel. Here we have a planned sequence in the salvation of all mankind.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, writing about the resurrection, he uses these words, "*As in Adam all die — so also in Christ shall all be made alive*". The implications of this chapter are clear; some will be restored to life with a physical body and some with a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15. 22, 35-41). The statement is made that all will be made alive. Would God restore all humanity and then to condemn most of them to some form of eternal punishment without real opportunity to discover his mercy? A Creator who is full of love would be more likely to give those whom He had created a full and happy life and that is what Paul wrote to the church at Rome "*All creation waits with eager longing for God to reveal his sons . . . there was hope that creation itself would one day be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of the children of God.*" (Romans 8. 19-21 GNB). That text only makes sense if all humanity as part of God's creation is going to share in the endless joy which God has prepared for it.

In chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the church in Rome he refers three times to mankind being 'given over' by God to the ways of sin; (given over literally means *shut up* as in prison). In Roman 11. 32 Paul again refers to this '*shut up*' condition of mankind but this time he states that God made all people prisoners . . .

"*that he might show mercy to them all*". Clearly God intends to express his love to all who will receive it.

The most well known text in the Bible tells us that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." It is reasonable to suppose that God who loves the world would give that world a fair opportunity to believe in him and so far the vast majority of mankind have not had that opportunity. It is not a question of a 'second chance' but rather the possibility of an opportunity to accept Christ as saviour not previously enjoyed. Paul, writing to Timothy says that Christian believers should pray for those in authority for God "wants all men to be saved" and then he goes on to show how Jesus died as a 'ransom for all', the benefits of which in the course of time, will become freely available to all. (1 Timothy 2. 5, 6). When the Jews grumbled about Jesus going to a tax collector's for a meal, he replied, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" and at the tomb of Lazarus he told the onlookers that "When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw everyone to me." (John 12. 32 GNB).

Jesus came to this earth to share with mankind the consequences of sin. Those terrible consequences are still with us. He was very different in his life from us in that he did no wrong. He showed men and women, boys and girls how to express God's love. It cost him his life but because he had done as God wanted he was given a place in creation above everyone and everything else. As Paul expressed it, again in the letter to the Roman church (14. 9) "*For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living*". At Jesus' trial before the Jewish Court, the presiding judge, high priest Caiaphas insisted that Jesus tell them whether or not he was Messiah, son of God, "'Yes, it is as you say.' Jesus replied, 'But I say to all of you: In future you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'." Those words of Jesus recall the words of the prophet Zechariah who said "*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look*

on me, the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child . . ." Zech. 12. 10. Then Chapter 13 opens with the remarkable words "*On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from their impurity.*" This is the work of restoring the house and kingdom of David already mentioned from Acts 15. It is to be followed by God restoring all things from the beginning. (Acts 3. 21).

In his letter to the Church at Colosse, Paul takes the restoration one step further, when he explains that just as the Son of God was the one through whom all created things were made, just so is it through him that all things shall "be reconciled to himself". In the beginning human rebellion had broken the relationship between God and his creation. Man had been given charge of the physical creation on earth and the consequences of his failure had 'dislocated' the rest of the natural world. Slowly, the results have become apparent to us all. Jesus, by his life and death, has been given the commission to reverse that situation and restore this earth and all that is on it to the wonderful place God originally intended.

Scriptures are sometimes high-lighted which seem to speak of the destruction of humanity and its civilisation as though it were the end of all things. Firstly, these parts of the Bible are invariably records of parable and vision neither of which can be interpreted literally. It must be apparent that to re-make the human race and its home there will be a need to clean up the mess which sin and evil have brought just as there must be a scheme to re-educate those who have never learned the ways of God. But that does not cancel the original purpose of God expressed in the words of Psalm 145. 8-12 "*The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. All you have made will praise you, O Lord, your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.*"

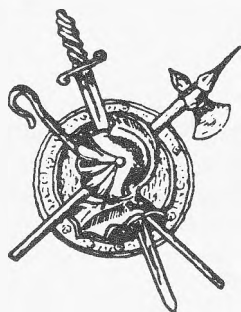
There is indeed strength in being quiet before God. Man is so prone to do and say, and to attend to things himself rather than to allow God to work out things for him, while he patiently and humbly waits before him. It is one thing to talk about this, and quite an

other thing to actually be quiet before God. It never pays to act hastily. We can always afford to wait until we truly know the mind of the Lord.

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Isa. 30. 15.

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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

"This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11. 24).

He has been remembered ever since. Considering that Jesus of Nazareth was born in an obscure village in a remote eastern province of the Roman Empire two thousand years ago, never travelled more than a hundred miles from his birthplace, never wrote a book, and was in the public eye only three and a half years before an ignominious death, it might be thought a remarkable thing that He has ever been remembered at all. Other men of his day are remembered; Nero the bloodthirsty emperor, Vespasian the successful soldier, Cicero the impassioned orator, Tacitus the sober historian, Strabo the meticulous geographer. But these men are remembered for what they have done or what they have written; Jesus is remembered for what He was — and is! The power and influence of each of these men ceased with his death; that of Jesus in a very real sense began with his. The empire of Rome has long since given place to other empires built by other men; history has outrun Tacitus; the geography of Strabo is sadly out of date. But all that Jesus said lives on, in the hearts and minds of men in this generation as it has done in every generation since He lived. And the power that He promised to send from above to vitalise the hearts and hands of all who give themselves to him and his service has been manifested in the many and varied fruits of Christianity in the world of men. Whether it is the knowledge of God's plan for humankind imparting a clear and heartening vision of the world to come, or the energy and determination which leads to service and self-sacrifice and caring for the suffering, the deprived and the hopeless, all are evidences that He is remembered and what has been done is in remembrance of him.

There is a deeper aspect of this remembrance. It is to be *"as oft as ye drink it"*. Those few men gathered around that table in the upper room had just shared with their Lord in the drinking from a common cup. In that action

they pledged themselves to eternal association with their Lord in whatever He stood for and whatever He did. In a figurative sense they were to be crucified with him and rise again from the dead with him to a new life. In sober truth every one, of whatever generation or time, who yields self in dedication of life to Christ has become God's man, consecrated to his eternal purpose, for all time. The day has yet to come when the active expression of that purpose so far as the human race is concerned is to come into operation; the Second Coming of Christ will signal the commencement of a work of God in the world which will abolish evil and institute everlasting peace. Every true follower of Christ is to be associated with him in the execution of that work. In the meantime those followers must needs remember all this, continue figuratively to drink that Cup with him and constantly affirm their intent of faithful association with him. At this time of year it is more than usually appropriate to think of these things, and, perhaps, to meet together in the significant ritual of sharing the cup, reminding each participant of the transcendent truth which lies behind the action. In partaking of the broken bread, and drinking from the communal cup, there is being manifested not only the depth and sincerity of personal dedication to Christ, but also a witness to the veracity of his own promise: *"I will come again"*.

A. O. H.

Gone from us



Sister Olive Clarke (*Bury St. Edmunds*)

Sister Clarke (*Sudbury*)



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

A. Spain

"WHEN YE COME TOGETHER"

The "coming together" for fellowship of the Corinthian Church was frequently the occasion for the most disorderly conduct and unseemly behaviour. Even so, when the worst has been said that can be said, they were perhaps but little worse than many others of the congregations scattered up and down the land. Only, in their case, we are treated to an eye-witness point of view of their sad condition by one who had their best interests so much at heart. One commentator has called this Corinthian church "the Church with the lid off". Because of Paul's letter to this Church its congregation stands stripped of all personal pretensions; only their repulsive realities remain. Sectarian divisions separated them, each with its own intense preference and hatred; undisguised sin had raised its head, sin such as was not to be found among the heathen at their door. Personal disputes, which found their way before the heathen magistrates, had arisen in their midst, making the sad scene within the Church most pitiable. Moreover, when the hour of fellowship had come, and they had "come together" to the appointed place, undisciplined individuals, possessing the gift of tongues, would turn the hour appointed for prayer and praise into a babel of confusing sights and sounds, several being engaged in speech simultaneously, babbling in unknown tongues, throwing the session into hopeless confusion, and laying the assembly open in the eyes of "the unlearned" to be accounted mad (1 Cor. 14. 23).

Again, in the "*Agape*" — the Love-feast with which some of these sessions closed — scenes of gluttony and intoxication were sometimes seen, scenes in which the poor and indigent were put to shame by brethren who had wealth (1 Cor. 11. 22). These indictments present to our view an unsatisfactory picture of a Christian Church; were it not that some true saints were hidden among so much that was corrupt it would be difficult to characterise it as a Church of Christ in any sense.

The Church in Apostolic days has sometimes been styled "the Church of the first Love" — a Church kept pure and unspotted by Apostolic care and oversight. But such a description scarcely tallies with the facts. Censure and reproof is found in every Apostolic writing — not even excepting the letters to Ephesus and Philippi — a sure token that the human material within the Church was still rough and raw, and still had much of the way of life brought over

from heathen days or from Jewish insularity incorporated in it. Jewish aloofness and touchiness, Grecian licentiousness and pride, and barbarian brutishness and callousness made a motley mixture of perversity, which to all human appearance was impossible of amalgamation or unity.

Ostensibly, this patchwork of humanity came together for the purpose of presenting worship to God, of reminding themselves what they owed to his Son, who had redeemed them, and for whose return from heaven they had been taught to long and wait. "*Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven*", Paul told the Thessalonians, and what was true of them was true of their neighbours in the Corinthian metropolis.

To some degree the God of heaven had superseded their former gods of gold and stone, but unfortunately, the old things had been so deeply impressed that complete change was most difficult. Their worship at the idol shrine had been sensuous and visible — sights and sounds presented to eye and ear that made strong and deep appeal. Worship in an upper room, or in some school (Acts 19. 9) was shorn of all that sensuous appeal which the wild music of the chant, the gorgeous drapery of the priest and the stately pile of masonry could produce in them. Lacking thus the awe-and-passion-provoking influences which these visible ceremonial things produced, these companies of "called saints" found it difficult to enter into the spirit of the "Spiritual" and "Unseen". Inability to visualise the Presence of the Invisible led to unbecoming levity and laxity, seeing the atmosphere of the gathering on a purely human plane. Their association was mainly after the flesh — that is, in the common things of this earth-life. Paul spoke of it as "carnal" — not of necessity vile, or voluptuous, but of a flesh-life lived on the level of a man; eating, drinking, working, thinking within the range of the five senses common to man.

Then, further, though they were professing followers and disciples of Christ, they seemed to think of him as a man who once trod this earth, and started this selective organisation into which they had been invited — this Church fellowship — and had then gone away, but who, at some future time, was expected to return to take it to himself, but, for the time now present was away in the far distance of heaven, a place far remote from this earth. That He was

now possessed of such super-human Personality that, though seated at God's right hand, He could be present in their midst unseen, was a thought they seemed too earth-bound to grasp. Even those among them possessed of some spiritual gift seemed to have accounted it to be for phenomenal display, and not as a means to deepen reverence, or intensify adoration. The spirit of true devotion is a state of heart and mind difficult to apprehend at all times, among any people, and we need not wonder that the brethren at Corinth, that most carnal and commercial city of ancient Greece, failed so grievously to attain thereunto. Even in our own times, among Bible-respecting peoples, and after nineteen centuries of Christian influence, it is a frame of heart and mind most difficult to apprehend. When little companies "come together" in the appointed place there are very many factors that may block the way of approach to the holiest things. If one coming thereunto has the "artistic gift", heightened at times with a sense of the lofty and sublime, yet finds in his coming that he is ushered into a bare room, unadorned, and without softened lights, the chord of true reverence may, for him, be hard to strike. Or if another, of cultured refinement himself, hears ill-chosen words spoken in rough husky tones, it may be a thing impossible for him to respond becomingly in reverential praise. Who of us in these Christian lands knows not the power of some stately Church to subdue the soul, or the throb of some deep-toned harmonies to hush the senses, and make one step more lightly to some quiet seat and there lay ones inner self prostrate before the Lofty and the Divine?

Church authorities have traded on this fact in human responsiveness, and have built their stately piles accordingly. But in a cold bare room, or in some public hall, devoted, at other times, to many secularities, it is not an easy thing to respond from the depths.

The sense of worship has suffered, perhaps, too often from these things, while the attitude towards such occasions may have become merely casual — just a case of being "there"; just a matter of being one of a company possessing mutual views, and for whom there is some degree of pleasure in hearing or exchanging those views. Or it could be that the subject for consideration has become well-trodden ground, and one feels so well-footed therein, that it fails to arouse enthusiastic gratitude to God, and no sense of loss had one not been present at the gathering.

It needs here no emphasis to say, both first and last, that our "coming together in the church" should be to worship God. Never should it be to while an hour away, nor to be entertained by lofty phrase or cultured utterance. Nor should it be a time exclusively set apart for intensive study, or analytical research. Nor an occasion given over to harmonic or melodic song. It is no sin to tell the story of Love Divine in words of rare charm or satisfying beauty, nor to find "heart's delight" in the cultured voice as it sets forth the loftier things. Neither is it a crime to analyse the subject with minute care, or make our definitions with exactitude. Indeed, it should be to our mutual pleasure, not less than to our common profit, so to do. The story of Divine Love is worthy, at all times, of our best endeavour. But these things, at their best, are matters of but secondary import — a noble means to a worthier end, and should ever be seen in that secondary light.

An Unseen Presence is in attendance wheresoever God's consecrated saints have come together in the church. That Unseen Presence alters everything. We do not need to ask how Divinity can project "Itself" into all the assemblies here and everywhere. Spiritual sensibility and experience activated by a living faith assures repeatedly that the "Unseen Presence" is there "in the midst". To the spiritually sensitive the "Presence" brings and sets the atmosphere for the holy hour. It casts a sense of sacred calm over the gathering, and in the quiet hush the keen susceptibility can feel "It" there. To such, "It" seems to lift the hanging folds of a veil, beneath which comes, from the other side, a sanctifying influence, or, from another point of view, it thins the curtain which divides this sensuous world from the ever-brightening realities of that beyond. It makes the place of meeting the very vestibule of heaven itself; the ante-room of the very Presence-chamber of God, spite of the bare coldness of the room. To the alert and hungry heart this over-powering sense of the Unseen can mean so much more — so extremely and incomparably much more — than lofty dome or intoned chant, or cultured voice or ornate vestments; it can subdue that heart to rest, and hush it down in reverence more than all other things beside.

And, standing thus invisibly revealed in the midst "It" stands there waiting for the upward reaching of the soul, for the heavenward glancing of the inner eye; and, within the quiet of that hallowed atmosphere, though words be few, or unspoken altogether,

communion becomes complete. The yearning spirit, rising from this world of sense, meets and unites with that hallowed Spirit descending from that purer sphere, and in the sanctifying mingling of desire — He with us; we with him — we feel ourselves encouraged, enriched, and enlarged. We take from him new strength and satisfaction for our needs; He takes from us our sacrifice of praise, and presents it enriched with his own righteousness to him who dwells in Light unapproachable.

How easy it is to fall short of this “other-worldly” contact in such seasons of “coming together”. How easy to fail to sense the atmosphere which that Presence brings; how lightly gravitate to earthly things, and mar the hallowed influence proceeding from the “Sanctifier” himself. It needs but little more than the thrust and parry of the “keen” debate, the too keen intensity of question and reply, then as passions rise, and the intellect takes control, a canopy of earthborn things spreads itself above the scene, and the link between is snapped, and communion with him is at an end. Thenceforth the study may proceed, but the worship be at an end; the discussion may be prolonged, but communion has ceased. We may, to our best understanding, have defended our abstract truth, but our very exuberance may have dammed the flow of Living Truth. We may have stood defensively for “It”, but have overlooked our need for “HIM”! We may have called upon our memories in defending or defining long established doctrine, and have forgotten that our needs can be supplied by him alone.

In the study atmosphere one may, by long experience, become established; in the atmosphere of communion the memories are of the heart, and may often be quite outside the range of tabulated doctrine in the realm of living experience wherein the Great Dispenser makes provision for the daily needs of every moment of the day — of all who live their lives warmly unto him; and from which, of his own accord, no child of God can afford to absent himself when opportunity presents.

What more can be said? Surely it will be admitted on every hand that every time we “come together”

in the Church it should be an occasion for the most devout worship of God; an occasion when the veil between earth and heaven becomes thin and the Light from the other side filters through into the soul. Ought we not to be more ready to come together, if we were more surely blessed with the eye that can see and sense the Blessed Presence in the midst, and if we had a keener hunger of the soul which none but He can satisfy? Could we ever come to think that we were so well-established in the Truth that we could live without this Spirit-knit communion with our Father and our Lord, and that our need for the coming together was not so great or urgent now? Or, if our eye and heart has learned to see him ever present, could we ever meet our brethren just to become engaged in the thrust and parry of debate, and then depart thinking we had experienced all there was to have?

If, on the other hand, we have learned the secret of finding him behind and above every gathering, then we shall find that lovely thoughts and well chosen words will add fragrance to the atmosphere, and bring enchantment to the inner man, and make the occasion sweet as an oasis on a desert road. Lacking the secret of finding him, even beautiful words and lovely thoughts can diffuse only an odour of the flesh — mere intellectuality, or gleanings from philosophy.

This ability to see and sense the Blessed One at all such times is part and parcel of a larger thing. It is only when this sensitivity is part of the whole life that it becomes easy and natural when in the Church. To those who cultivate and practice the Presence of the Lord everywhere, all the time, this is the obvious thing when the hour of fellowship arrives. It is not for them an experience that needs to be conjured up, by effort of the will, but is one that rises spontaneously out of a life of unbroken companionship, by day and night, with the dearest object of the desire. If we seek for him behind doctrine, behind experience, behind Providence, behind everything, then we shall find rest to our souls, and salve for every sore. The highest truth is “Him”. To know this is to know the secret of the Lord in the art and act of fellowship.

“We must try to find out, not just what the Bible means in general, but what it means for us.

If we are to do this, there is one thing which, perhaps above all we must try to avoid.

We must try to avoid going to the Bible in order to find in it material to support ideas and theories which are in fact our own

When we study the Bible we must sit down in humility before it and listen, not to our voices extracting our own meaning from the Bible, but to the voice of God as it speaks to us in his book. It will be an exercise in humility, but it will also be a path to truth.”

William Barclay

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great
man's faith***14. The Seventy Weeks**

The Persian conquest of Babylon made very little difference to the normal life of the city. The comparative ease with which the capital had fallen, with little destruction or loss of life, meant that the citizens merely exchanged a Babylonian ruler for a Persian, Cyrus. The commercial life of the city went on as usual; merchant vessels from Africa and India still came up the river to the quays of Babylon; caravans of goods still traversed the high roads from Syria and Egypt. The government was in the hands of the Persians, but the life of the nation went on much as before. It was not at the capture of Babylon by Cyrus that the vivid prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah relating to the doom of the wicked city had their fulfilment, but twenty years later, when Darius Hystaspes the Persian king laid siege again to the city and demolished its walls. In the meantime Daniel was faced with the situation that the power of Babylon was broken, apparently for ever; Cyrus the Persian was quite evidently the coming man, and Cyrus was the name of the man in Isaiah's prophecy who should let the captives and restore the worship of God at Jerusalem. Small wonder that Daniel went to the sacred books to discern what he could of the purposes of God.

"In the first year of his reign (Darius) I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereby the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (ch. 9 vs. 2).

An old man of ninety sat reading, as he had read hundreds of times before, words that were penned when he was a lad of sixteen or so. His whole life had been lived in expectation of an event which, even as a boy, he knew could not come until he himself was ninety years of age; whatever may have been the hopes and beliefs of his fellows as to their deliverance, Daniel himself had known all along that he was destined to spend the rest of his life in Babylon. That Return from Exile which he so ardently desired for his people would not come until he himself would be too old to share in it.

Nearly seventy years previously, in the third year of Jehoiakim King of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Jerusalem, made Jehoiakim tributary, taken the sacred vessels from the Temple and carried them, with Daniel and his fellows, into Babylon. In the fol-

lowing year the Babylonian king broke the power of Egypt at Carchemish and thenceforth was the undisputed master of Western Asia. In that year Jeremiah uttered the message against Judah recorded in his twenty-fifth chapter, and it is that message to which Daniel referred. The Divine sentence had gone forth against the guilty people; from that third year of Jehoiakim when they became tributary to Babylon and their Temple treasures went into an idol sanctuary, they were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years (Jer. 25. 11). At the end of the seventy years the power of Babylon was to be broken. Until then all nations were to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his grandson, *"until the very time of his land come"* (Jer. 27. 7) a prophecy which was fulfilled in a most remarkable way, for his son Evil-Merodach (Jer. 52. 31) and his grandson Belshazzar both reigned and then the kingdom came to an end. Daniel, after the death of Belshazzar and the transfer of sovereignty to the Persians, realised that the time had expired.

What were his thoughts as his eyes scanned the familiar words and his mind went back to those days of long ago? Was there a measure of sadness that so few of his own generation remained to share his realisation of hopes fulfilled? Daniel must have been getting a rather lonely man. His old friend and mentor, Jeremiah, was of course long since gone to his rest, buried somewhere in Egypt. Of his three companions in exile, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, nothing is known since the incident of the fiery furnace, nearly forty-five years in the past. Quite likely they too were dead. Ezekiel the prophet and Jehoiachin the captive king were almost certainly at rest with their fathers. The up-and-coming young men who were marked out as leaders of the nation when the Return to Jerusalem could be effected were two generations later than his own. But there was no jealousy and no repining. Daniel knew he could have no part in the stirring days of the Return himself, but he knew that prayer was vitally necessary before that Return could become a reality and so he betook himself to earnest and urgent prayer on behalf of his beloved people. And the consequence of that prayer was the revelation of a time prophecy so obviously and accurately fulfilled that it set the seal upon Daniel's book and stamped the study of time prophecy

with Divine approval.

It is impossible to read Daniel's ninth chapter without realising just how the saintly old man poured out his heart's longings to God. Here are the hopes and dreams of a lifetime, the faith that knows God is faithful, the insight that perceives the only obstacle to be unbelief, the conviction that God will surely hear, and act, because He *is* God, and God cannot lie. What He has promised, that He will surely perform. Every acknowledgement of God's constancy and faithfulness is made, and with that a full and frank admission of Israel's guilt. There is no evasion of the issue; Israel reaped what she had sown; deserved what she had got. But because God is good, and because, with all their faults, Jerusalem and her people are called by God's name, Daniel besought his liege Lord to return, and relent, and execute his great purpose in delivering Jerusalem. "*We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies.*" Could any of us in these favoured days of spiritual understanding come more closely to the true nature of Divine forgiveness? Could any one of us come any nearer to the heart of the Father? It was to that last heartfelt appeal the Father responded. Once more a heavenly being of high rank and greatly honoured in the courts of heaven was charged with a mission to earth. We know very little about conditions beyond the Veil, the everyday life of the celestial world, but that it is a place and condition of ceaseless activity is evident. Gabriel was no stranger to the world of man and he had visited Daniel before. If one asks the question whether there truly does exist an angelic personality bearing the name Gabriel, entrusted at times with Divine commissions to men, the answer can only be that the Bible gives us no ground for disputing the fact. This "seventy weeks" prophecy could only have been revealed from heaven: Daniel asserts that it was told him by a visitor he knew from former experience to be Gabriel, the messenger of God. Five hundred years later the same personality appeared to Mary the mother of Jesus, again with a message of great import, this time to announce the fulfilment of that which he had predicted to Daniel. Although Gabriel is not mentioned by name anywhere else in Bible history, it is very possible that he is the one concerned in other appearances of an angelic being to men — to the Apostle Peter in prison, perhaps, or to Paul when he was told he would be brought before Caesar.

"*Whiles I was speaking in prayer*", Gabriel

came. "*At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to show thee*" is the assurance of the heavenly visitor. So quickly may prayer be answered; so near to us is that celestial world where God's will is done as one day it will be done on earth. "*Before they call, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear*" says the Lord through Isaiah. Sin is a separating influence which puts God far away from us; prayer is a magnetism which brings us at once very near to God.

So the story of the seventy weeks was unfolded. "Weeks" is, as is usually well known, a mistranslation. The proper rendering is "seventy sevens" where "seven" is "*hepdomad*", a unit, especially a unit of time. There is not much doubt that Daniel was to have his understanding of Jeremiah's seventy years linked up with a greater seventy, — seventy sevens, in fact — leading up to the greater development of God's Plan, which would, eventually, bring to fruition all Daniel's hopes.

The seventy years of Jeremiah were literally fulfilled, several times over. The primary decree was that not only Judah, but the nations round about, were to serve the king of Babylon seventy years and then the power of Babylon would be broken. (Jer. 25. 11-12). During that period the penalty for resistance to the Divine decree of subjection was conquest, destruction, desolation. True to the promise, from the third year of Jehoiakim when Judah passed under Babylonian domination to the Decree of Cyrus was seventy years. Likewise the period from the destruction of the Temple in the eleventh year of Zedekiah to the completion of Zerubbabel's Temple in the sixth year of Darius Hystapes was seventy years. Small wonder that Daniel, having lived through the first-named period, looked now for the restoration of Judah, and hence for Divine enlightenment as to the next development in the outworking of the Divine Plan.

"*Seventy sevens are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city*" (ch. 9 vs 24) to accomplish seven different aspects of our Lord's work at his First Advent. Gabriel recited them in order; while he recited, Daniel must have listened in growing awe as he realised that greater and still unplumbed depths of the Divine purposes were being revealed.

"*To finish the transgression.*" Our Lord's Advent was timed to come when Israel had filled up the measure of their fathers. (Matt. 23. 32). The period

between Daniel and Jesus brought Israel's guilt up to the brim and abundantly demonstrated their unworthiness of the promise.

"To make an end of sins." Jesus did that by yielding his own life an offering for sin, a Ransom for All, to be testified in due time. (Isa. 53. 10. 1 Tim. 2. 5-6).

"To make reconciliation for iniquity." This is the atonement which Christ made, pictured in the Tabernacle ceremonies by the offering the blood of the sin-offering on the "mercy seat" or propitiatory in the inner sanctuary, a "covering" for human sin.

"To bring in everlasting righteousness." The Apostle Paul explained this when he spoke of justification by faith, the gift of God to all who accept Jesus as Saviour and trust in him alone for salvation and reconciliation with God.

"To seal up the vision and prophecy." The more correct rendering is "vision and prophet" and the sealing is in the sense of ratifying. The Father himself ratified both the vision and the prophet who brought the vision, when He declared from Heaven at the time of Jesus baptism *"This is my beloved Son . . . hear ye him."*

"To anoint the Most Holy." This refers to the consecrated things of the temple, especially the altar of burnt-offerings, and can well apply to the final work of the First Advent when Jesus, glorified, anointed his disciples with the Holy Spirit of Power, sending them forth after Pentecost to commence their great work of witness.

Gabriel told Daniel (vs 25-27) that this great period of seventy sevens was to be divided into three sections of seven sevens, sixty-two sevens and one final seven. In that last seven great happenings were to transpire. Most momentous of all, Messiah would be cut off *"but not for himself."* No, He died for others, for men, that they might live. In the middle of that "seven" Messiah would bring to an end the *"sacrifice and oblation,"* those literal offerings and sacrifices demanded by the law to give Israel a ritualistic righteousness. He made an end of that Law, nailing it to his cross. Never again could those offerings have any validity in God's sight, for the reality had come. Then Messiah was also to *"confirm the covenant with many for one seven."* True to that word, the covenant of favour to Israel which precluded Gentiles from entering the *"High Calling of God in Christ Jesus"* was continued throughout three and a half years more until it came to an end with the acceptance of Cornelius, the first Gentile fellow-heir.

Because of *"the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate"* even as Jesus declared, weeping over the city but declaring nevertheless *"your house is left unto you desolate."* Then, finally, *"the people of the prince that should come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary"* and that word was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

Here is a clear outline of the light and shade, the glory and the tragedy, of the First Advent. Daniel must have perceived that all this meant great distress for his people even though it also included the fulfilment at last of the Divine promise. Naturally enough, therefore, the question must have come to his lips as it did to the disciples of Jesus half a millennium later, "How long?"; "When shall these things be?"

Daniel realised at once that the seventy sevens were sevens of years. He was already aware of Jeremiah's period of seventy years, now fulfilled, but this was a greater period, *seventy sevens*. Four hundred and ninety years; that was the vista which now appeared before the prophet's wondering mind.

The starting point is given in terms of an easily recognisable political event. *"From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince . . ."* (ch. 9. 23) were the angel's words. Daniel did not live to see that event. He did come to know of the decree issued by Cyrus king of Persia in the first year of his reign authorising whosoever would of the Jews in Babylon to return to Judea and rebuild the ruined Temple. Some forty-nine thousand returned under Zerubbabel but their initial enthusiasm soon waned and the work languished. The royal edict was reiterated sixteen years later in the second year of Darius Hystaspes, third successor of Cyrus. In consequence of the missionary zeal of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah at that time the work was resumed and in another four years the Temple was completed and dedicated. But the city around it was still desolate, its walls broken down and its gates just as they were left when Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers burned them with fire nearly a century previously. No authority or permission had as yet been given *"to restore and build Jerusalem."* Next came the reign of Xerxes, and then his son and successor Artaxerxes I, who in the seventh year of his reign, some seventy years after the decree of Cyrus, sent Ezra the priest to take offerings and treasure for the rebuilt Temple and to govern

the little Jewish colony, but even then no word or command or intimation regarding the rebuilding of the city and its walls.

Thirteen years later, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, a royal commission was awarded Nehemiah the Jewish patriot to proceed to Jerusalem for the express purpose of rebuilding the city, its houses, walls and gates. At this time Jerusalem was still in ruins; the impulse of Nehemiah to go there sprang from a report on its condition brought to him in this same year. Its walls were still broken down, its gates burned with fire, and the houses not built. Here, it would seem, is the starting point of the prophetic period. Sixty-nine sevens from this point, four hundred and eighty-three years, to the appearance of Messiah, and one more seven for the completion of all that his Advent was to mean to Israel; this was the gist of Gabriel's intimation and Daniel knew then that the consummation of Israel's hopes was still very far away.

Looking back in history, we ought to perceive very clearly the fulfilment of this time prophecy, for Messiah has come and we know when He came. It was in the autumn of A.D. 29 that Jesus of Nazareth stood by the waters of Jordan to be baptised by John as a prelude to his ministry on earth. There, at that time, He became the Messiah the Prince. Three and a half years later "*in the midst of the seven* — the last seven — He caused "*the sacrifice and the oblation to cease*" by his death on the cross. By the end of that seven the special standing before God which Israel had enjoyed since Sinai was abrogated, and the Gospel was extended to all nations. The seventy weeks had ended.

Unfortunately the starting-point cannot be located in history so precisely. The Persians did not produce any reliable historians of their own; the Greek historians of the time are confused and contradictory when it comes to Persian happenings. In consequence there is dispute as to the precise date of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes with a possible variation of sixteen years, 454-438 BC. Herodotus, Ctesias, Thucydides, Ptolemy and Josephus between them have set later historians, chronologists, and commentators alike a problem which has occupied the thoughts and pens of many a writer during the latter part of the Age. But for the present purpose accuracy to a year is quite unnecessary. The important thing is that this "seventy weeks" back from the ministry of Jesus must in any case have commenced within ten years

or so of whatever date eventually turns out to be that of Artaxerxes twentieth year. Ten years in five hundred is a quite close margin of error and as we look back upon this fulfilled prophecy, we can only marvel at its exactitude. Small wonder that modern critics decry the whole thing and endeavour to suggest other and earlier starting points for the prophecy so as to bring its termination in the days of the Maccabean revolt, assigning all these eloquent phrases to the petty doings of a lot of apostate High Priests and princes in Israel. We can only say "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes".

The division, in verse 25, of the sixty-nine sevens into two periods of seven and sixty-two is not further elaborated on by the revealing angel. Seven sevens, forty-nine years, from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes must end at some time between 406-390 BC. This point of time is notable for a number of events momentous to Israel.

Darius II, son of Artaxerxes, died 405 BC. With his death the favour shown by successive Persian kings to Israel since the days of Cyrus came to an end. Upon the accession of Darius' successor, Judea lost its status as a province and was added to the province of Syria; thus commenced the Syrian oppression of Israel which became so terrible an affliction a century or so later.

Nehemiah, the last governor of Judea, died probably between 413 and 405 BC, Ezra a little earlier.

Malachi, the Hebrew prophet, flourished during the last seven years of Nehemiah and died, it is estimated, very soon after the patriot's death.

The canon of the Old Testament was completed.

Thus, at the end of the first "seven sevens", the period of the Restoration, all the favour shown by the Persians to the Jews, all the rebuilding and re-establishment of the nation, all the fervency of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and the reforming zeal of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, all that had been accomplished during that stirring time, came to an end, and the nation entered upon a new and bitter experience which progressively worsened, with only occasional periods of intermission, until the conquest of Judea by Titus in A.D. 70, and the greater Dispersion among all nations began. Even that was foreseen by the heavenly visitant; "*the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary*" he said (ch. 9. 26.) That prediction was fulfilled to the letter.

Daniel must have had much to think about when his visitor had gone. The city of his fathers, and the Temple the glory of the city, were to be rebuilt only to be destroyed again. Would the Lord never fulfil his promise to plant Israel and not pluck them up again? Long and earnestly must the aged prophet have cogitated over the problem; the ways of God are often

dark and mysterious, and men comprehend them not. But for Daniel there was more to come; he was yet to be given the final vision, which assured him that despite all these disasters all would be well at the last.

(To be continued)

D. Nadal

WOMEN WHO WATCHED

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation." (Matt. 26. 41). These are the words of Jesus to his closest disciples while in the garden of Gethsemane where he went to pray on the night he was betrayed. It was not the first time that he had warned them to be on their guard. But what is the reason for this being alert? During his lifetime various people had watched Jesus. From birth his mother had observed and remembered many things. Religious Jews had watched him that they might discover a way by which to accuse him. The soldiers who crucified Jesus sat down to watch and guard him. Others stood sentry duty at the tomb as a 'watch'. The Master had exhorted his disciples to watch for his 'return'. Why should a follower of Jesus watch? Certainly it was not for the same reason that the soldiers and the Pharisees watched. Was it just to stuff their brains with facts?

The women who 'watched' Jesus were in an attitude of learning. When Jesus went to the home at Bethany one of the sisters sat close to Jesus, attentive to what he was saying. As Jesus moved about Galilee several women who had become his disciples watched over him for his personal welfare and comfort. Their response to Jesus' loving concern for others was to serve and provide for him. Luke wrote that *"the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means"* (8. 1-3). Later, in his account of the crucifixion, Luke tells us that among those gathering around the cross were *"all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee . . ."* (23. 49).

Who were these ladies who attended Jesus so faith-

fully as he travelled the roads of Israel and who remained at the last with him even when most of the men folk had fled. To stand by in support of a man hanging on a cross was dangerous and there is no wonder that some ran for their lives but where there is perfect love there is *"no room"* for fear (1 John 4. 18). Of Susanna we know nothing. We have a little more information about Joanna. We know that she was the wife of an official at Herod's court. However, the gospel writers paint for us a picture of this woman of influence and wealth mixing freely with ordinary folk. The magnetism of Jesus' personality had brought together people of very different backgrounds and temperaments. We catch sight of her once more on resurrection morning when the women went to the tomb only to find it empty (Luke 24. 10).

Along with this lady of the court was a carpenter's wife. Mary of Nazareth had many memories stored up from the last thirty-four years. They had begun with the appearance of an angel, drama of a manger and the attention of some shepherds. Then she had gone with Joseph to the Temple in Jerusalem to present her first born son, according to the law. The old prophet Simeon had said to Mary . . . *"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."* Did that memory return as she watched her son dying like a common criminal? The Gospels give the impression that Mary and her other sons, did not accept the challenge of Christ till after his resurrection (Matt. 12. 46-50). Whatever her feelings about the claims of her son before this, Mary stood by Calvary in the company of the ladies who had worked with Jesus during his ministry. Of the 'twelve' only John was present at the cross and to him the Master committed his mother. Whatever Jesus' family

thought about their unusual son and brother, he did not shirk his duty to his mother as her eldest son hanging on a cross. It was a poignant moment in their watch at the cross and in the life of Mary and John. The 'beloved disciple' evidently had connections in Jerusalem (John 18. 15) and was able to take the Lord's mother away from this dreadful scene until she later joined the disciples' meetings just before Pentecost (Acts 1. 14). What an emotional drama this must have been for such a spiritually sensitive person as Mary! With what foreboding had she watched her son through those days and weeks which led up to the crucifixion and which reached a climax of grief when he died! With what ecstasy did she receive the news that he was alive again! We are not told whether in the days which followed the resurrection she ever again came face to face with the one whom she bore. There is a strong tradition that Jesus visited his own natural brother James. We just catch a glimpse of this wonderful woman, with the disciples before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then the veil is drawn so that in seclusion she lives out her life in the quiet joy and radiant faith in which she had begun her life's work in rearing and caring for Jesus. Sadly, the historical press have not observed her privacy.

The lady who seems to have excited most interest among that little party of women at the crucifixion and resurrection was another Mary. She came from the little port of Magdala on the west coast of Lake Galilee. She had come to Jesus because he had exorcised 'seven demons' from her. Demon possession was never linked with immoral behaviour and there is not a shred of evidence that she is the woman who anointed Jesus while he sat at table in Simon the Pharisee's house. The story of forgiveness in Luke 7. 36-50 is a very lovely account of devotion which Jesus' love and forgiveness can inspire. The healing of Mary Magdalene is mentioned to identify her as one of the women who attended the Master. Records of early church history gives no support to the idea that the woman of Luke 7 is the same as that mentioned in Luke 8. 2. It was medieval superstition that suggested that the lady from Magdala was of outstanding beauty and a prostitute. The myth lives on.

As the little group gathered, perhaps somewhat apart from the rowdy crowd of religious and political onlookers, Mary Magdalene appears to have taken something of a leading place among them. She would have been among the women who watched to see

where Joseph of Arimathea had laid him so that they might come later and embalm the body. At the dawning of the resurrection day she was outstanding among all the followers of Jesus. It was dark when she set out and the first rays of dawn were coming up over the city wall by the time she arrived at the tomb. But how were these women to move the stone? Their devotion was rewarded by an open and empty tomb and a vision of angels. They immediately obeyed the heavenly messenger and ran to tell the 'disciples'. But they were greeted by disbelief. These were only women, how could they know about such things? But John and Peter ran to the tomb to find the truth of the story and Mary Magdalene returned with them to discover what had happened to Jesus' body; and she did. In the agony of her mind, she turned to see one whom she does not recognise but addresses as 'the gardener'. For the second time that morning she seeks to do something beyond her natural strength. At first she had wanted to roll away the stone; now she wants to carry the body of her dead Master. She was motivated by strong genuine love. And then comes the moment of ecstatic joy as she hears her own name spoken by the one for whom she has been searching. Gone now are the hope and fears of yesterday. Gone are the tears of grief and pain. Now all that she wants to do is to prevent her Master from ever going away again. She clings to him, perhaps in an effort to stop him disappearing again. Gently he shows her that he must depart but he gives her the most wonderful task in the world, "Go, tell my brothers" and so she is the first to go with the gospel message "the Lord has risen" and that he is soon to ascend to the Father. We best remember Mary of Magdala by no other way than that the Lord committed to her the glorious resurrection message.

In John's record of the crucifixion, one of the ladies standing with Jesus' mother is her sister. By a little deduction with reference to Mark's gospel we see that this is Salome. Taking the detective work a little further into Matthew's gospel we discover that this same person is the mother of the sons of Zebedee. One of them referred to her as the sister of Mary, Jesus' mother. These clues enable us to see that John and James, sons of Zebedee, were cousins of the Lord and John, so often referred to as the beloved disciple, was the best person to take care of his much loved aunt. Salome was the one who went to Jesus not many weeks before this and asked that her two sons, James and John might sit, one each side of him,

in his kingdom (Matt. 20. 20-28). To have made this request was rather presumptuous even by an aunt and it was not a little annoying to the other disciples. Yet the nature of the relationship between Jesus and Salome is shown by the fact that she is still among the 'women from Galilee' by the time of Jesus' death. It speaks well of Jesus' handling of a tricky situation and of Salome, that she could receive a gentle rebuke and not be offended. Finally, as with the others of her little band, she goes to the tomb on the resurrection morning. The faithful love, so marked among these women, was in Salome too. Whether she later returned to her husband, Zebedee, still plying his trade in the casting of nets into the lake, we know not, or whether she stayed on in Jerusalem with the young church as it grew. Soon one of her sons was to die for the cause, a witness to the resurrection of Jesus, for James was martyred at the hands of 'Herod the King', the grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne (Acts 12. 2). Her other son, John, must have outlived his mother by many years and tradition has it that her sister Mary spent some of those later years with him at Ephesus.

Finally, of those named in the gospels who ministered to the needs of Jesus, there is one other, Mary the mother of James (the younger or the less) and Joseph (or Joses). In John 19. 25, this Mary is stated to be the wife of Clopas. Some have thought that this was Cleopas, one of the two who walked with the risen Lord on the Emmaus road and have even gone

so far as to suggest that the second member of the party on that occasion was this Mary. But scholarship and tradition tend to link Clopas with Alphaeus, father of James, one of the twelve (Matt 10. 3) in which case this last of the Marys would be the mother of an apostle.

They were a remarkable band of women who played an important part in the establishment of the early Church. They must have been wonderful mothers. Their loving faithfulness outdistanced the strong intellects and verbal expressions of their men folk. Not for them the hasty declaration of loyalty which was to result in a denial of the Lord. Not for them the protest on behalf of the poor which was to end in betrayal of the Son of God. Not for themselves did they aspire to be the most important people in God's Kingdom, only to run away when the risks became too great. They kept their eyes focussed on him and learnt what he was like. The things of earth grew dim as they watched. Their reward was to watch while the Lamb of God was slain to take away the sin of the whole world. Their reward was to be first in carrying the news of his resurrection to disbelieving men. Their reward was that the Master never rebuked any of them but must have found wonderful consolation in their fellowship. They leave us an example of what true believers should be like; daughters of the Most High God and sisters to the Saviour of the world. Christian women who have come after them should be much comforted and inspired.

A word of caution

"We must not betray the reputation of the 'good News' by puerile mistakes we ought never to make, or by palpable errors which a little reading would prevent. Even when he scorned "enticing words of man's wisdom" in his preaching, as he did at Corinth, Paul's hearers knew that they were listening to an intelligent, educated man. That impression undoubtedly prepared a way for the message. The same thing is at least desirable, if not increasingly essential in those who seek to sow and cherish the seed of the Word in the intellectual climate of our times."

The foregoing quotation, origin unknown, makes good sense. In matters of scientific or general knowledge Christians must accept the findings of the current generation whilst realising that all knowledge is pro-

gressive, and the next generation will render much of to-days' knowledge obsolete. The Christian tendency to be out-of-date on such things is apparently an old trouble, as witness the writings of St. Augustine on the subject in the Fifth Century. He said:

"It very often happens that there is some question as to the earth or the sky or the other elements of this world, respecting which one who is not a Christian has knowledge derived from most certain reasoning or observation, and it is very disgraceful and mischievous, and of all things to be carefully avoided, that a Christian speaking on such matters as being according to the Christian Scriptures should be heard by an unbeliever talking such nonsense that the unbeliever, perceiving him to be as wide from the mark as east from west, can hardly restrain himself from laughing."

B. J. Drinkwater **"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH"***An Easter
Message*

Something like sixty years ago there was a report in a British newspaper concerning an incident that had just occurred in Russia. During the course of the Soviet anti-religious campaign the presiding minister of one of the largest Orthodox (Catholic) churches in Moscow was told that he must allow an official spokesman to put the case for atheism to his congregation and he could afterwards disprove the arguments in his sermon, if he could. At the appointed time the advocate for atheism entered the pulpit and began his lecture. He said that religion had developed out of the unreasoning fears of primitive men faced with the vagaries of Nature — thunder, lightning, earthquakes, typhoons and so on, and they concluded there must be some mighty unseen power causing these disasters and tried to propitiate that power by offerings and sacrifices. From that, he said, came the idea of a God who could send either evil or good to mankind and would reward those who pleased him and punish those who did not. Jesus of Nazareth, he went on, was a young man like any other man but a revolutionary at heart, burning with desire to overthrow the imperialistic Romans and the capitalistic Pharisees, and bring freedom to the oppressed common people. As Jesus' life continued he came to believe that he had been sent by God, that he was inspired by God, and finally that he was the Son of God, but it was all a delusion and when at last his enemies encompassed his death that was the end of him as it is of all men. There never was a Resurrection and the faith that had been built upon that belief was all a myth. He finished his lecture and sat down complacently to see what arguments the minister would bring forward to disprove what he had said.

The old man climbed slowly into the pulpit and stood for a moment surveying his flock. When he began to speak, he uttered just five words. "My brethren" he said, "Christ is risen!" In a moment the whole congregation was on its feet and every one joined in a response that swelled up to the roof of the building; "He is risen indeed!" There was no more said, for there was nothing more to say. The newspaper report commented that the effect was as if a noted scientist had spent an hour proving to a distinguished audience that human flight through the air is impossible and will never be achieved and just as he finished an aeroplane passed overhead. All the arguments and alleged proofs in the world are valueless against

positive knowledge, and those Russian believers had that positive knowledge. They knew within themselves that Christ was risen; their lives' Christian experiences told them that Christ was risen; the illumination of the Holy Spirit in their hearts was proof to them that Christ was risen, and that knowledge was an infallible bulwark against doubt and unbelief.

All have heard the saying "Knowledge is power". Our knowledge of Christ's Resurrection, our belief in his Resurrection, is the power of our faith. This is the driving force which gives us the strength to continue in the Christian way. Solomon declared in Prov. 24. 5 that "*a man of knowledge increaseth strength,*" and again in 11. 9 "*through knowledge shall the just be delivered*". When at the beginning of his reign the Lord asked him what He should give him, what gifts did he desire, Solomon asked not for riches, wealth, honour or power, but for wisdom and knowledge, that he might be a good king. And in consequence he received all things. Said the Lord to him, because he had asked thus, "*wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee: and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that were before thee, neither shall any after thee have the like*" (2 Chron. 1. 7-12). In choosing the better thing Solomon became heir to all things. But on the opposite side of the coin God said regarding Israel "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hos. 4. 6) and Jesus, talking to the Sadducees who by their question regarding the Resurrection betrayed their utter ignorance, said "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*". (Matt. 22. 29). Had they sought after the true knowledge of God instead of the traditions and inventions of men they would have known better than to ask the question they did. The importance of positive knowledge is stressed for us in John's Epistle (1 Jno. 5. 20) "*We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true*". The stress is always laid upon conviction of truth, knowledge of the basis of our faith. If we would be faithful to the end of life, unshaken by doubts or denials, we must know that upon which we have based our life and calling.

This was the inward power which sustained Peter and John at their trial before the Sanhedrin shortly after Pentecost. The story is recorded in Acts 4. They

were commanded not to speak or teach again in the name of Jesus Christ. But they were quite unperturbed. Their judges, they told them, could decide for themselves whether it was right in the sight of God to hearken unto them rather than unto God, but as for us, they said, "*we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*". How was it they were so supremely confident in the face of their accusers and judges? Because they knew! They had seen Jesus after his resurrection. They had heard his voice and received his instruction as to their future life's work. Their eyes beheld his form ascending to the Father the while his promise that at the Last Day He would return to them was sounding in their ears. Nothing and no one could shake their faith in these things thereafter because they had seen and heard them with their own eyes and ears and they knew the truth of all that they had been saying. When their judges saw this boldness in the two disciples, we are told, "*they marvelled*". And they were afraid to do anything about it. They admitted the miracle but did not know what it portended. They accepted the unshakeable determination of the disciples but did not know what was the power that had given birth to that determination. They found themselves quite unable to resolve the situation and they did not know how to silence the testimony of these two to the Resurrection and living power of Jesus Christ. So, weakly, all they could do was "*threaten them and let them go*"; whence Peter and John, filled with the Holy Spirit, went back to their mission and "*with great power gave . . . witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all*" (Acts. 4. 33). Three things always go together; knowledge, power, grace; the imparting of these three is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, and by the possession of these three the Christian warrior is enabled to wage that good warfare which ensures steadfastness through life and victory at the end.

Many years later, Peter, writing his second epistle, went back over his life's experiences and recalled some of the wonderful things he had seen and heard, to the establishment of that faith and confidence which never wavered afterwards. "*We have not followed cunningly devised fables*" he declared triumphantly "*but were eyewitnesses of his majesty*." The R.S.V. renders that allusion "*cleverly devised myths*", a translation that is very apt. A great many contemporary scholars — some of them, unhappily, in the Christian ministry — airily dismiss the historical nar-

atives of the Old Testament as mythical stories and ancient folklore having little or no basis in fact, and the prophetic delineations of the coming Messiah, his office and work, the unassisted product of fertile enthusiastic minds obsessed with the idea of the future greatness of Israel and the triumph of good over evil, owing nothing to Divine inspiration or the illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit. Peter dismisses all such ideas without hesitation; the truth of what he believed was guaranteed by the evidence of his own senses. "*this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount*" (2 Peter 1. 16-19). There, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he saw his Lord arrayed in heavenly splendour; he saw the two great champions of Israel, Moses and Elijah, conversing with him, and he heard the voice of God from heaven, acknowledging his Son. Jesus told him that what he had seen was a vision, but the wonder of the sight, and the reality of the voice, remained with him for ever; he knew that what he had seen and heard was a manifestation of Divine power, and that to him was sterling proof. We saw; we heard; therefore we know! Thirty-five years later his faith was still unshaken, and remained so to the end, even though that end was martyrdom. And Peter had another source of strength which is given to all his brethren also, "*We have also a more sure word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts*". The expression "more sure" means trusty, reliable, more than ever confirmed. N.E.B. has it "*All this only confirms for us the message of the prophets*"; that is, what we have seen and heard is confirmed by the prophets. Remember that Peter only had the Old Testament as the "sure word of prophecy". There was no New Testament in his day. When he found Christ in all the Scriptures it was only in the Old Testament that he found him. But that finding gave him the confidence of knowledge. To that confirmation you do well to take heed, he says, as to a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the day star arises in your hearts. What is this day star that is thus to arise? It is the knowledge of Christ gained by dedication of life to him and Christian experiences through life, the inward illumination which is the result of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God at work in the consecrated heart? An intellectual knowledge of the prophetic and Messianic themes of the Old Testament is one thing;

the heart's appreciation of Jesus and his message in the New Testament is quite another, but only this will keep us unharmed by the enemies of the Christian way. To know about Jesus is a good thing and a necessary thing, but to know Jesus is a greater.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the experience of Job. "*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth*" (Job. 19. 25-27). A marvellous passage! Here is a man who knows God and knows what is God's purpose for him and for all men and rejoices in that he knows. For a moment the burden of misery and torment is lifted from him and he shouts to the heavens the glory of that knowledge which is his. "*Though this body be destroyed, yet in my flesh shall I see God*". Here is faith that transcends the mystery of death and the finality of the grave, and sees beyond both a re-union with God, whom he has always served, who will not let him go even in death. At the time he uttered these words Job's own skin was marred and ulcerated from the terrible disease with which he was afflicted. From the natural point of view he had no hope of remedy and only death awaited him. Now he cried aloud his conviction that notwithstanding this apparently inevitable fate the day would yet come when in the possession of a whole body in a whole skin he would see God. Whence did he have this knowledge and this conviction? There was no Old Testament in his time and we know of no written record of Divine revelation that Job could have had. It can only be concluded that his knowledge of God's purposes had been handed down from father to son through the ages, preserved by godly men who retained something of the primitive faith, which the earliest men must have passed on from the time of the flood or even earlier. It is very possible — even probable — that Job was descended from Uz the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, and we know that Nahor venerated God. But in addition to any knowledge that Job received from Nahor or others, there is no doubt that he also acquired much of his understanding by virtue of direct communion with God. He must have been a man particularly receptive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he was certainly able to learn of God and the things of God in the wonders of creation. By whatever means he acquired it, he did have an understanding of the coming Redeemer who would effect such a wonderful recovery to life and restoration of his flesh and he understood that the scene of his restoration

was to be here upon this earth. It was to be a personal restoration of his own identity. "In my flesh shall I see God . . . whom I shall see for myself, and not another to see him for me . . . though this body of mine be now destroyed." Here is the first avowal of belief in the preservation of identity in the resurrection — I, who must go down into the grave and be totally destroyed so that of my body nothing is left, even I shall live again. Scholars say that the doctrine of the resurrection is not to be found in the Book of Job! One of the finest expositions of the doctrine is here and the more remarkable because it appears in all its fullness long before God began to reveal his purposes to Moses and all Israel.

We in our day have more in common with Job than we have with Peter and John in that, like Job, we have not seen and heard Jesus in the flesh as did Peter and John. On the other hand we are in one direction even more favoured than Peter and John in that we have the benefit of two thousand years' Christian progress in the knowledge of the faith in the light of the complete New Testament. Have we ever thought what a bulwark to faith that is? Men have believed and pondered and advanced in understanding in every generation and nation during all that two thousand years and died for their faith, and we have inherited their knowledge and been encouraged by their example. Other men laboured and we have entered into their labours. And all because they believed in the resurrection of Christ and all that springs from it.

This same knowledge is our strength and our incentive to preach the Gospel. Solomon said "*Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge, that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth . . . to them that enquire of thee?*" (Prov. 22. 20-21). Here is the source of Christian confidence and Christian evangelism. To know the certainty of the words of truth: this is the essential preliminary to effective Gospel witness. Without knowledge we are at best inefficient workers. "*If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?*". The pity of it is that so many evangelically-minded Christians do not know; they can talk only of the simple principle of salvation in Christ but know nothing of the consequent work which must be done in the hearts of men to fit them for eternity or of the Divine purpose working in history to bring all things into one, in Christ.

And so they cannot answer questions.

But at this point we must take care not to pin our faith to intellectual knowledge, to the accumulation of facts, the memorising of data out of a book, the ability to participate in debates upon fine points of theological principles. The true knowledge is that which is an inner enlightenment consequent on the power of God operating in the life, the indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew about this when he spoke (Phil. 3. 8-10) of the *"excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"* when he declared his desire *"that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."* A significant expression, that! There is a power in the resurrection of Christ which is influential towards the Church. Not just the effect of belief in the Resurrection, leading to stimulation of effort and maintenance of confidence. Because Christ rose again, and lives again, there is a power, an energy, flowing from him to his followers which instils into them new life. Someone once said a dead Christ could save nothing and nobody. How true that is! Even though Christ's death on the Cross was a Ransom for All and provided an opportunity for life to "whosoever will" upon their awakening from the dead in the resurrection, it is still true that life eternal to the reconciled can only come through and from Christ, and by union with Christ, a living Christ. A dead Christ can not give life. In his resurrection resides the power that eventually gives life to both the Church and the world. That word power in the Greek is *dunamis* and it means energy. In the world of Nature it is energy that changes things. Sunlight that has travelled the ninety-three million miles from the sun in eight minutes falls upon a living plant and in combination with water and air is changed into plant structure, and builds up the plant. It was invisible energy which reached the plant from the sun but it reappears as leaves, flowers and fruit which can become the food of man. As food it goes into the body processes and reappears as energy which gives heat to the body and powers the muscles for action and the brain for thought. All this is life and it is all the product of what is in the beginning divine power. So it is with the Resurrection. *"Divine energy loosed the bonds of death because it was not possible that Christ should be holden of it"* says Peter in

Acts. 2. 24, alluding to Psalms 13. That word "not possible" means literally "no power to hold". There is no energy in death but there is great energy in life. So death is unable to resist the superabundant energy of Divine power and so soon as God takes action the grave cannot hold its dead. Hence the triumphant word of Christ to John the Revelator — *"I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore."* And here is the connection between the Resurrection of Christ and the call of the Church, dependent upon that Resurrection. Give heed to the majestic words of Paul in Eph. 1. 19-20 (*Diaglott*), when he dwells upon this theme *"the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the energy of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ, having raised him from the dead and having seated him at his own right hand in the heavens."* Behold what intimate relation there is here between the power by which Christ was raised and the power of God in his resurrection operating in us. God's power is surpassingly great: that same power which raised Christ from the dead and set him in the highest heaven supreme over all created things is operative in just the same way to Christ's church, first giving life and resurrection and then exaltation to those same heavens in eternal association with Christ Jesus the Lord.

This then is our confidence. The certainty of our own resurrection is based on the fact of his resurrection. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, says Paul, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and in that rising has become the first fruits of all that sleep. Because He rose again, we shall rise again. Happy are we if, when the shadows begin to close around us, as they must to each of us in turn, we can say with Paul, *"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

Blood is thicker than water, says our familiar adage. Surely grace should be stronger than nature and

should lead us to love our brethren in Christ, not in word or in tongue but in deed and in truth.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE*"So he bringeth them
unto their desired haven"*

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

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

But there was another side to that story. There are some better things to relate. It was not true to say of all "but ye would not". There had been a few who had heard, as it were, the tender call and found shelter beneath his protecting "wings". As a brooding

hen He had gathered them and drawn them close to himself, and when at last the long-threatening storm broke destructively upon the nation, these cherished objects of his care were kept safely nestling close to his loving heart! The hour of opportunity, rightly taken by this few, had brought them to rest beneath the out-spread wings of heavenly love and care, so fitly represented by the golden cherubim above the sprinkled Mercy Seat!

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

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

"Under his wings I am safely abiding,

Though the night deepens and tempests are wild.

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

He has redeemed me, and I am his child.

Under his wings; what a refuge in sorrow,

How the heart yearningly turns to his rest,

Often when earth has no balm for my healing,

There I find comfort and there I am blest.

Under his wings, O, what precious enjoyment,

Here will I hide till life's trials are o'er,

Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me,

Resting in Jesus, I'm safe evermore.

T.W. Watson

ONE BREAD — ONE BODY

A doctrinal
question

"For we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor. 10. 17).

In these words, fraught with deep spiritual meaning, the faithful Apostle strengthens his appeal to the Corinthian Christians and through them to us. We, like them, are so prone to idolatry, so easily led into ways which cannot be reconciled with the fellowship that is ours in Christ. *"Wherefore, my dearly beloved"* Paul pleads *"flee from idolatry"* (vs. 14). That was a very real danger in those days, and to those early Corinthian believers, living in the most notoriously depraved and paganised city of the then known world, it was a very necessary exhortation. But it was not merely that Paul would wean them from the worship and service of false deities, "gods and lords many". He knew that such service and such worship involved, not only fellowship with pagan men and women, but also common-union, joint participation, with demoniac intelligences behind the veil. He understood only too well the corrupting influence of those debased and debasing ceremonies and sacrifices: that they had nothing in common with the things of Christ; and with all his heart he strove to turn his brethren away from them and toward the infinitely purer and nobler faith of which he was himself a minister.

The whole burden of Paul's message in this chapter is comparison between the pagan's fellowship with idols and demons and the Christian's fellowship with Christ. Just as the believers' union in worship and offering was not merely an association together for the mutual acknowledgement of God's supremacy, but in deed and in truth a fellowship and communion with the risen Christ beyond the Veil, and the experiencing of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, so was the worship and sacrificing of the pagans an actual fellowship with demons, "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies". *"The things which the Gentiles sacrifice"* he warned them earnestly *"they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons"*. This danger of being associated with the enemies of Christ was a very real one in the Apostle's mind. Doubtless he saw in mental vision the last great conflict at the end of this Age when these same evil powers are arrayed, with all their human dupes, to give battle against the rider on the white horse,

coming forth from heaven in righteousness to judge and make war (Rev. 19. 11). He knew that the saints must not be hesitant in the slightest degree about their allegiance. They may in no wise have any interest in common with these powers of evil which with all their followers will be overthrown and deprived of all power before the Millennial Kingdom is set up, and so in all earnestness he reminds them *"Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of demons"*.

With what emphasis does this call to separation to the fellowship and communion of Christ come to us at this season! Now, more than at any other time during the year, we are mindful of our Master's willing, steadfast consecration to his Father's Will, even unto death. For him there was no compromise and no hesitancy. Just previously He had "set" his face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that death awaited him there. The people had flattered him, had received him as king; the disciples had pleaded with him to set up his Kingdom there and then and give the world the blessings it so sadly needed. To all their suggestions He had turned a deaf ear, walking resolutely along that path which, even although it led to suffering and death and the apparent failure of all his work, He knew to be the only one that could end in the consummation for which He had come into the world.

This same consciousness of a mission and this same inexplicable resolution in carrying out the terms of that mission is what Paul seeks to impress upon his readers, and now that the season for more than usually earnest thought about these things is upon us we do well to take from his exhortation all that it can give us of inspiration and encouragement.

"Behold Israel after the flesh" he commands, and his command carries a question. *"Are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?"* (vs. 18). Participators with the altar; that is Paul's thought. The priests upon whom fell the obligation to eat of the sacrifices were holy unto the Lord and could never be the same as ordinary men again. In partaking of the sacrifices of the altar they had become holy like the altar and were in a very real sense in fellowship or communion with the altar, and through that with God. And so are we. Because we have eaten of the offering, made it a part of ourselves, we have become identified with the Altar

which is Christ, and have become joint-participants with him, not only in the power of future blessing for which the altar stands — for more than anything else in the typical Tabernacle the Brasen Altar stood for justification by faith, and only through justification by faith in Christ will man receive blessing in the next Age — but also in the power of present suffering which the same altar symbolises. And it is the power of that present suffering, a suffering in which we participate with our Lord, that is going to mean so much to men redeemed from death by the Ransom given once for all at Calvary nineteen centuries ago.

So the Apostle comes to the central feature of his theme when he takes up this question of suffering. *"The bread which we break"* he urges *"is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* There is a vital difference between the cup and the bread. *"This is my blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins"* (Matt. 26. 28), Jesus had told them on the Passover night. Remembering that the first Covenant was itself made legal and binding by the shedding of blood (Heb. 9. 18) the disciples must quickly have realised that this New Covenant which was to succeed where the old one had failed was to be made sure by the death of Jesus himself, by the shed blood of He who *"gave himself a ransom for all"* (1. Tim. 2. 6). His death provided the Ransom and we are redeemed by his blood; the New Testament is positive enough on that central truth. Why such a ransom was necessary; why Divine justice required such an offering before the dead in Adam could be released; in what way Justice is satisfied by the death of Jesus on the Cross; are all questions which have been asked and answered with varying degrees of spiritual insight throughout the Gospel Age. Independent of all the philosophy and theology that has been built up around the doctrine of the Atonement, the one fact stands out that whether we understand it or not, the death of Jesus was essential to man's salvation, and that without faith in him and a definite and personal acceptance of his sacrifice made for us, there can be no release from sin and no entrance into life.

"There is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4. 12).

It has been well said that the Ransom does not give men everlasting life. It does guarantee to every man a full and fair opportunity to attain everlasting life. That "life for the world" which is symbolised by the "poured-out blood" of Christ is life as Adam en-

joyed it before he sinned, a life which would have made it possible for him to enter upon his eternal inheritance provided he observed the conditions. Much the same is true of mankind in the Millennial Age. All, without exception, will come back from the grave, as Jesus foretold (Jno. 5. 28), awaking to conscious life and recollection in bodies free from the effects of inherited sin. Thus will the Ransom become of effect to all men. But unless those awakened ones are persuaded so to order their lives in harmony with Divine principles that they do attain full perfection, morally as well as mentally and physically, the blood of Christ will, so far as such are concerned, be of no avail. If under the favourable conditions of that blessed day the heart of any one of the sons of men remains fully set in him to do evil, his blood-bought life can again only end in death, and this time without remedy. *"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."* Since it is clear that the risen masses will require something more than the gift of conscious life in a new body, great and marvellous as is that gift, it follows that there is another aspect to the doctrine of the Atonement parallel to that which is symbolised by the shed blood.

That aspect is pictured by Jesus as the breaking of his body, a body which, thus broken, becomes food for the life of the world. This eating of the mystic bread which is his body is not the *giving of new life*, which is symbolised by the blood, the cup, but it is the continued *sustenance of a life already given*. The blood is poured out once for all; the bread is to be partaken of into eternity. Jesus died on the Cross, once, and that act is never to be repeated. The one act was sufficient to give all men, Church and world alike, new life. But He "ever lives" to sustain men's everlasting lives by that which He gives them, his body. Is that why the people desired him on one occasion "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" (Jno. 6. 34)? *"The bread that I will give is my flesh"* He had said *"which I will give for the life of the world"* (Jno. 6. 51).

Neither is this bread a free gift in the sense in which the cup is a free gift. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus, the benefits of the ransom, are awarded to all men irrespective of personal merits or personal action. All are to receive freedom from Adamic condemnation and reversal of the Adamic death sentence. All who exercise faith in Christ, whether in this Gospel Age or in the incoming Millennial Age,

whether of the Church or the world, will receive the free gift of justification and have their past sin, no matter how heinous, no longer counted against them. All who received life from the first Adam will receive life again from the Second Adam. But in order to maintain that life they must partake of the mystic bread, and that, translated into plain language, means to live their lives in exactly the same way that Jesus lived his. It means that no man can live everlastingly except he lives in full harmony with God's laws and God's ways. He must, as it were, live "in tune" with God, for as Paul said to the Athenians *"In him we live, and move, and have our being"* (Acts 17. 28). In order that he might learn how to live that life, man must have an example, an exemplar, to show him the way. There has only been one such example, Christ Jesus himself, who came to earth for that purpose. For three and a half years He was the perfect example of how a man should live, and the consequence of his steadfast setting of that example was that his body was broken. He had show mankind that perfection is only attained through suffering. *"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sickness"* (Matt. 8. 17). *"For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2. 18). It is the example of that life that will be man's inspiration in the next Age and in that sense they will *"eat of the flesh of the Son of Man"* and live forever.

In exactly the same way do we, his disciples of this Age, partake of his flesh, this bread. We too, no less than mankind in the Millennial Age, are to order our lives after that perfect example if we would enter into immortality. We too must learn that only by suffering, endurance, the willing laying down of life upon behalf of others, can we ourselves be perfected. *"He that loseth his life shall find it."* And to us is granted a privilege that can never come to the sons

of men in the future Age, for we, who have pledged ourselves to be followers of our Lord to the end of time, who have been *"buried with him by baptism into his death"*, are privileged to have our own lives used as examples for the future Age; our own experience and character-development employed in the instruction and conversion of men in that Day. We too are to be made merciful and faithful priests of the future if we are rightly exercised by our experiences in the Christian life now. But the degree of our fitness for holding forth the word of Life *then*, and in that sense becoming living bread for the world *then*, is entirely dependent upon the degree to which we partake of the living bread ourselves *now*. Unless we eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, we have no life in us; and a lifeless corpse can never become the medium of new life to a resurrected world.

This, then, is our fellowship, a fellowship in Christ which is also a participation with Christ, a communion with him. This is why we cannot have fellowship or union with the world and its demons. We have been *"baptised for the dead"* (1 Cor. 15. 29) and it is only by participation with our risen Lord that we shall make that baptism effective and, in receiving and partaking of the living bread, become the means of giving life to others. *"And the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'. And let him that heareth say 'Come'. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."* That grand climax to God's dealings with men on the earth can only come to pass when we who are the first-fruits unto God have first entered into our privilege and obligation of renouncing the world and all that is in it, and joined in full communion with Christ our Lord and with each other as a family apart. *"The bread which we eat, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* "Lord, evermore give us this bread!"

"In Britain, when summer is at its height, excursions are made to the Arctic Circle, to view the midnight sun. It is a fascinating spectacle. The sun barely dips beneath the horizon, and there in the same heavens it is possible to see on the one hand the dying glory of the evening glow bathing the clouds in the rich hue of sunset, and on the other the pale lustre of the dawn silvering the slight cirrus cloudlets with exquisite beauty. So we who are living today are watching the evening glory of the closing years of "the times of the Gentiles", and in the sky there

are symptoms of the approaching day, the age which Virgil dreamed and which Isaiah foretold.

"It is not within our province to detail the essential features of that age, except to say that He who died as Saviour will come to reign as King, and that the malign spirits who have operated "in the heavenlies" for evil will be replaced by the redeemed who will reign on the earth. Human life will go on then as now, but the invisible forces which will condition it will no longer be malign and evil, but pure and holy.

Dr. F. B. Meyer

The Victory

There is a glory in the cross,
A mystery at the heart of pain,
A force that turns accepted loss
Into the joy of harvest grain.

It is the secret of the seed
That lies forsaken in the cold —
It multiplies as waving wheat,
It dies, to live a thousandfold!

It is the story of a Man
Who died upon a barren hill —
But death could not for long restrain
That radiant Life that feeds us still.

It is His strong affirming power
That lifts our vision as we pray,
And turns each dark defeated hour
Into a resurrection day.

And still the alchemy divine
Revives, renews with living breath,
Transforming water into wine
And bringing triumph out of death.

O what a miracle of grace!
What mighty quickening from above!
It is the victory of the cross,
The resurrection power of love.

'The Victory' 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) a report of which will appear in the next issue.

Rest

Matt. 12. 28

My Saviour, thou has promised rest,
Oh! give it then to me
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee.

This cruel self, oh, how it strives
And works within my breast,
To come between Thee and my soul
And keep me back from rest.

How many subtle forms it takes
Of seeming verity
As if it were not safe to rest
And venture all on Thee.

O Lord, I seek a holy rest
A victory over sin!
I seek that Thou alone should reign
O'er all without, within.

In Thy strong hand I lay me down —
So shall the work be done;
For who can work so wondrously
As the Almighty One?

Work on then Lord till on my soul
Eternal Light shall break
And in Thy likeness perfected,
I 'satisfied' shall wake.

Rev. H. C. G. Moule

"There is a fact that God exists

We cannot prove that by a neat series of logical steps at the end of which you can write Q.E.D. but the final argument for God comes not from logic but from experience. To know God is not to know him as one knows theology, but to know him as one knows a person. And the person who has experience of the help and the love of God needs no other argument."

William Barclay

T. Holmes

LET US KEEP THE FEAST*'Let all examine themselves'*

Once more the hour of remembrance draws near in which those who love the Lord will draw aside from the cares and duties of this life in order to show to each other their deep regard for his death, and all that it stands for in the believer's own life. Another year of Divine watchcare lies behind us — a year of intense strain and conflict, but withal a year of vital contact and communion with the things that make for peace, with God, with Jesus, and with sanctifying truth.

Each and all of us have lived away another measured round of time, and have grown one year older in the way of the Lord. Our days have gone from us never to return; their opportunities have passed away beyond recall, and we stand to-day another year's march nearer home. The wool on the skein is shorter to-day than when we last took the cup; its thread has been woven into the pattern of life, or else clipped off and cast away unused; some of the warp may have run faultily into the woof, but it is too late now to correct the mistakes. The loom passes on — it cannot be stopped. What is done is forever done; if it has been well done we can rejoice; if it has been ill done we may repent, and propose that we will do better in the years to come.

It is no light thing to realise that life's moments are flitting away with every setting sun, and with each evening prayer something has passed right over the stage into our increasing yesterdays. There is an increasing accumulation behind, with a constantly decreasing amount before, and nothing we do can redress the disparity between what has already been and what has yet to be ere the journey's end is reached.

But there is no need to repine because Father Time cuts swathe after swathe of our days and years, if so be we are walking with the Lord. Even though there was smut on the corn, or if it was short in the straw, because our souls were dry, we need not despair. And if, instead of tilling the soil of our hearts purposely, we lazed away our time, allowing weeds and thistles to smother up the grain, even then we need not sink into despondency. And if, moreover, we failed through irresolution to maintain the fancies of our mind, and destructive trespassers broke in and ate up our unripe corn, there is still no need to sink down and drown in the quagmire of distress. And though

all these faults — and many more — were found in every swathe of yesteryear's sowings and growings, the child of God can still take heart and look up to the skies. The God of grace and comfort foreknew and foresaw the handicap of all such frailties and perversities, and made provision to meet them all. Unerring Wisdom understood how extensively sin could sap the morale and determination of the human heart, and made its own plans to meet that need. God knew that weeds could choke the corn, that scorching adversity, and even sunny prosperity, could dry out the soil and that the grain might wither as it grew; and then because He knew and understood all the hindrances, the wealth of grace outflowing from his heart devised the means to counteract them all.

If then the year behind us has such failure to record, the evening of remembrance can open out a clean new page for each and all. As we obey the Master's word, and seek access to the table of the Lord, we can bethink us of that dark night, and that solemn scene, where on the threshold of Gethsemane and Calvary, our beloved Lord told his scarcely-heeding followers what He was about to do. Sincere reflections concerning the price He paid in suffering, pain and death, during those dark hours, surely cannot fail to unlock the flood-gates of the heart and cause the fountain of repentant tears to flow — if so be repentance is the key to restored fellowship. But if instead of such apathy, our conscience has been keen and quick, and every lapse from rectitude at once confessed, even then we need the gifts of grace, and must approach the tokens of his sacrifice with humility and self-abnegation, seeing that with so little to give we have so much to receive at his hand. The very frequency and magnitude of our blunderings, together with the utter stupidity of our occasional waywardness, even for the most alert and conscientious souls in our company, are reasons more than enough for humbling us to the dust, what time we venture forth to seek communion with such unsullied holiness. Even if by his grace there have been days and weeks, and even months of conquest in the good fight of faith, or of unwearied labour when accorded the privilege to serve him and his; and if to our own thinking we have brought armfuls of fair sheaves to show for our husbandry, still have we need to approach humbly to the table of the Lord. We have not

repaid the debt we owe — we are still servants without profit to the “Cause”. Our standing is still a debit one — we still have need to receive a grant of righteousness from him, and realise that were it not for him we would never stand approved before the all-seeing eye. Seeing, then, we all need his righteousness, let us draw near to his special hour of deeper fellowship with keen desire, greatly chastened by our sense of need, yet, always the while deeply assured by a keen sensibility of his power to meet that need, and that in these moments of intense expectation, and of ardent up-reaching desire, He does meet that need; and bestows satisfaction, full and deep upon every seeking soul.

Then, having received the gifts He has to bestow, we may have reached the mood to heed attentively what He then asks us to give up to him. Having surrendered all for us, He asks our “all” for himself, and looks and waits expectantly till we have renewed our vows to be “dead with him”. Can any consecrated child of God, who knows, of old, the sacred hush of this solemn hour (and who, believing that highest Heaven is bending down to this sad earth to bless this trysting hour), not long with strong desire to take again the “remembrance tokens” of his death and be thus linked up again with the unseen things of that higher world? Here the Christian breathes his native air; here he enters the holy place; here he takes the Bread of Life; here he walks in the Spirit’s lights — for him these exclusive things have been prepared, and for the enjoyment of these exclusive things he too has been made.

Here, in this exalted state, spiritual things give vitalising energy to the spiritual man, and they who begin the hour in weakened weariness may go forth therefrom, made strong and resolute to live and walk each coming day with Christ.

Jesus died, and his sacrificial death threw open wide the way to God. His sinless body broken for our sake is to us the token of life-giving Bread — of a new Loaf, to be broken to satisfy our need. His moral excellence (his blood — his life) we take as transferred from him to us, and because of our mystic union the life that was in him we believe is now in us. This is the mainspring and source of a new life for us — our new life, native to a loftier sphere.

But the new life is in a fallen human receptacle, which tends to blunt and dull its sensitivity to its own higher destiny, and leads it, betimes, to neglect and overlook its heavenly interests for those of this lower plane. That is why our field is often but ill cultivated; and why the corn is short in the straw, and parched before it is full grown; and why the weeds abound profusely, and why the fences are broken down, and open to all vagrant intruders.

Of course we see these things in our lives all through the year, and any time is the right time to repent and confess our frailties in the kindly ear of God. This we should do morning, noon or night when the uneasy consciousness of such a state is brought home to our mind. But this one night is a special night because of what it commemorates, and because of the simple ceremonial which the dear Lord himself appointed for a “remembrancer” and because sincere observance of the Lord’s desire brings such satisfaction to the deeper needs of the inner man that they who drink deep thereof can never thereafter forget.

Let us come together again, therefore, to remember him — to remember his unique super-excellence as a man; to think of his incomparable essential sacrifice as the Man of Sorrows — as the “perfect” Man, and as we ponder and reflect say *“He loved me, and gave himself for me”*.

Thomas Chisholm was the writer of the well-known hymn *“Great is Thy Faithfulness”*. He was also a man of prayer. He was once in a desperate financial situation from which he could see no way of escape. That evening he and his wife put their dilemma before the Father in prayer, and left it there.

On the following morning a letter came. It was from a lawyer acting on the request of his client a day or so earlier to send a monetary gift to Thomas

Chisholm; having had his heart touched by the singer’s ministry of song, he had felt a leading to send the gift at that time. It was sufficient to defray the debt.

“Not only the supply of the need” Chisholm wrote later, commenting on the text *“My God shall supply all your need”*, “but the timing of help has signalled his providential care”. In that precise timing resided what some men might call coincidence, but those versed in the ways of God, a miracle.

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

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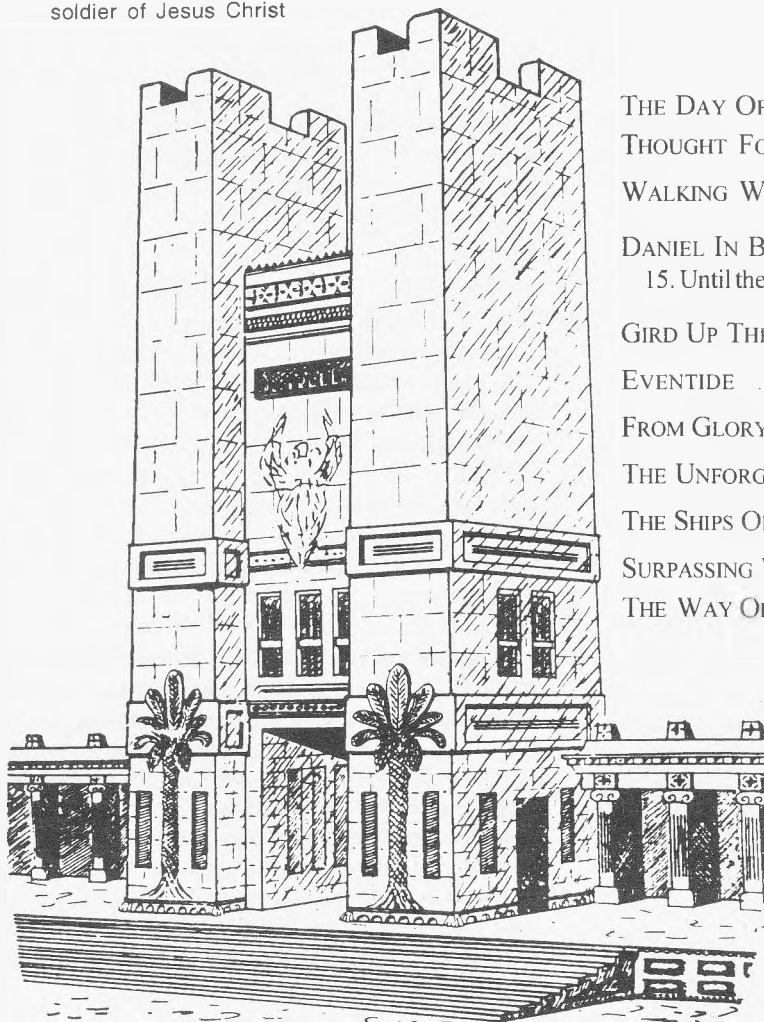
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors.
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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The CART report for 1997 is a remarkable exercise in gratitude by the distributing groups in Africa and thence to those who have supported this work in any way during the year. The Trust ensures that what is sent is imported duty-free and distributed amongst the most needy, by local organisers of proven ability and trustworthiness. The Trust is run entirely by volunteers and all administrative costs are met by the trustees.

Across that vast continent there is extreme poverty due to low income. To meet that need CART sent 19 shipments to 13 countries in 1997. This included nearly 9000 boxes of clothing, 1400 boxes of household goods, 2000 boxes of food, 1200 boxes of

medical supplies and 1500 boxes or items of educational supplies. Books and tables, typewriters and computers, spectacles and toys are among many items sent. Aid is also given to set up self-help schemes.

Every penny donated went towards the transport of goods to Africa which last year was £47,000. May our Father bless the CART team's work and we ask your prayers that it may be upheld. If you can help in any way please write direct to: Mr G. G. Tompkins, 'White Gates, Tinker Lane, Lepton, Huddersfield HD8 0LR England. Cheques should be made payable to 'CART'.

Defective copies of the Bible Study Monthly

Very occasionally readers write to us requesting a replacement copy of a particular issue because the copy they have received is defective in some way, usually blank pages. We, of course, are only too happy to send such replacements, and we trust that any reader who is unfortunate to receive a copy which is not complete, will write to us and make such a request.

Back Numbers

Part issues of the Bible Study Monthly over the last fifteen years are available to any reader upon request. If a large number is required it is helpful to BFU if some help can be given towards postage, but inability to give such help should not deprive any readers from making the request and receiving back numbers.

A Correction

A reader has questioned a statement in the March/April 1986 issue page 30 to the effect that the Vatican State is no longer a sovereign state. This was taken from a newspaper — such reports are not always reliable. We have enquired of the appropriate Catholic public relations authority and have received the following communication. We regret the original misstatement, "Thank you for your letter. I can confirm that, in the Concordat between Italy and the Holy See signed in the 1980's there is now no state religion in Italy. However, the Vatican remains an independent sovereign state, recognised as such by almost all modern countries. Yours etc.

Gone from us

Brother Victor McIlveen (*Belfast*)

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

D. Nadal

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

A seasonal study

"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2. 1).

Pentecost was one of the three great festivals in Israel's law when the people were to present themselves before the Lord. It had been so since the days of Moses when he told Israel to bring the 'firstfruits' of their cereal crop to be presented as a wave offering. It was barley harvest festival, fifty days after the 'wave sheaf' had been presented at the Passover feast. Behind them was the winter weather and toil for the first crops. Before them lay the long hot summer, working in the fields without rest till Feast of Tabernacles at 'ingathering'. The Feast of FirstFruits or Feast of Weeks as it was known because there was a 'week of weeks' between one festival and the other also became known as Pentecost. This happened in the centuries prior to the first advent because it was the Greek for 'fifty' and during this period the festival also became associated with the 'giving of the Law' at Sinai, perhaps based on an inference from Exodus 19. 1. Pentecost was therefore a 'holiday' celebrated with much rejoicing. This was the scene and atmosphere in Jerusalem at the time when Jesus' disciples waited for the 'promise' of the Father (Acts 1. 4).

Jesus had given the disciples much instruction as his crucifixion approached. In the weeks that followed the resurrection the enlightenment continued. It had meant a complete change of viewpoint. The quasi-notion that they were immediately to assume political control in Israel's long hoped for kingdom over the nations had given place to a realisation that they were witnesses of the resurrection. Jesus had made it clear to them that their task was to make disciples from among all nations and that was not going to be a comfortable job. They waited in an atmosphere of unity and prayer. What a wonderful example they were setting before the generations of Christian disciples which were to follow!

They gathered sometimes in an 'upper room'. Perhaps it was the home of John Mark's family and perhaps it was where the 'Last Supper' had been held. We do not know that the 'eleven' were there together with 'the women' and Jesus' mother and brothers. At one meeting there were as many as one hundred and twenty so it was either a very large upper room or else it could have been somewhere in the Temple precincts. There is evidence in Acts 2. 46; and 5. 4 that later

they spent some time in that area. In his great resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15) Paul tells us that the Lord "appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time".

At one of those meetings the disciples felt the need to make up the number of 'the twelve'. The early brethren have been much criticised for their presumption in electing an apostle. In fact they did no such thing but were making up the number of witnesses to the resurrection. Luke wrote this record of the early church which we have in 'Acts' many years later and had access to Paul's comments on the matter. Yet nowhere in the apostle's letter, nor in the records of the church is this action of choosing Matthias condemned. The example of prayer which they left for us in dealing with a matter of church organisation is worthy of note when we remember how often this has caused trouble among God's people. When there is a problem or a decision in the Church, the first and most important action is to pray, sincerely and meaningfully.

So the day of the Pentecost came and they were still 'together in one place'. Again we might ask 'where were they and what were they doing?' They may have been praying about and discussing what Jesus had told them during those forty days. Ordinary people didn't have much access to the written scriptures and much depended on their memories. They were sitting in a house when the excitement began but they didn't stop there long because they were rapidly surrounded by a rather big crowd numbering thousands. But in the house their experience was unique. The place was filled with what sounded like a gale force wind. Acts 2 does not say whether they felt the air pressure on their bodies, but the description in Acts 4. 31 says their meeting place for prayer was 'shaken'. There was an interesting occasion when the resurrected Lord stood among the disciples, gave them instructions and then breathed upon them saying "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20. 22). Jesus had spoken to Nicodemus about the Spirit being like the wind and said "*we speak of what we know and bear witness to what we have seen*" with reference to being born again. Many times in their history the people of God had discovered something of the power of Spirit of God, but this was quite new. The wind and the fire were symbols of the Holy Spirit which was not taking control of their surrendered

lives. This was baptism of the Spirit, of which John the Baptist had spoken. The full implication of this baptism would mean much more to them in the days to come. But now they had the excitement of hundreds turning to Christ and it was the greatest miracle of all time. The day had dawned for which true Israelites had hoped and waited and prayed; the day of salvation which would eventually bring all mankind into God's kingdom. It was unique in the history of the world. A few years later Peter would describe to the church in Jerusalem how Cornelius and his household became disciples of Jesus and the "*Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning.*" Much later Paul was to tell the Athenians, that God now commands "*all men everywhere to repent*". (Acts 11. 15, 16; 17. 30, 31). On that first day of Pentecost, Peter ended his declaration by urging Jews responsible for the death of Messiah to "*Repent and be baptised . . .*".

Jesus had said, while travelling through Samaria "*. . . lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are white for harvest*" (John 4. 35). At other times he had referred to the 'plentiful harvest'. Now the time had come at this Pentecost for the ingathering of first fruits that Jesus had prophesied. Only a few weeks before the disciples had fled from the awful sights of their Master being crucified. Peter had denied that he had ever known his Lord. When Jesus visited them after his resurrection the disciples were meeting behind locked doors. Now something had happened to change all that. They were able to move among the crowds within the city, and speak to them of Israel's Messiah and the prophecies relating to him. What had brought about this change?

The dramatic symbolism of the work of the Spirit may have been unique to each great event described by Luke in the book of Acts. The experience of being filled with the spirit in order to do mighty things for God was most certainly not unique. Pentecost was that day when the marker was put down and subsequent events were to prove the truth of Jesus' words "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth*" (Acts 1. 8). That command began to be obeyed at Pentecost and continues to be the authority of the Church until the Lord gives the word to stop. Obedient disciples of Jesus enjoy the fulness of the indwelling Spirit in order that they carry out his work.

Peter's new found courage to stand up and defend the behaviour of his fellow believers was something of a miracle in itself, and so was the public message which he delivered in Jerusalem that day. During Jesus' ministry, these men of Galilee were frequently slow of heart and mind to comprehend what Jesus was saying. Now the gospel became clear and they knew what God was doing through them. The ancient prophecies sprang to life with new meaning and were fulfilled before their eyes and in their lives. As God had said through the prophet Joel, "*I will pour out my Spirit on all people*" and this was beginning to happen. Peter went on to explain how David had spoken of Jesus being resurrected. David's tomb witnessed that his words did not apply to himself but to one whom God would send. Peter made it clear that Jesus was the Messiah at God's right hand waiting till his enemies should be his footstool. This Messiah was the one they had murdered.

In that sermon on the day of Pentecost Peter covered in one broad sweep the work of reconciliation of all humanity to Almighty God through the work of his Son. A little later, recorded in Acts 3, he gave the same message in a slightly different way. The final appeal of each sermon was "*Repent — turn to God — that sin might be blotted out because that crucified Messiah is now Lord and Judge*".

The picture of that first church in Jerusalem was wonderful. Quite suddenly thousands of Jews were converted to faith in Jesus Christ. There was a fellowship among them which was demonstrated outwardly by the way they shared material possessions. Peace and overflowing joy in their meals and worship were apparent to all. Their prayerful unity brought further proof to the unbelieving Jewish public that the disciples of Jesus were absolutely right in the gospel they preached. The power of their message and the love that bound them together began to move outwards along the route which Jesus had said, into Judea, Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the Earth.

Baptism into Christ through the power of the Holy spirit is still unmistakable in the followers of Jesus. It demands complete surrender in preaching of the Gospel and in the pastoral care of brothers and sisters in Christ. It still brings scoffing and suffering as it did in the early days of the Church. Sharing with Jesus' work of reconciliation now, is preparation for the continuation of that work which will involve all peoples of the Earth in repenting and accepting Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"Hear, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD our one God; and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments which I give you this day are to be remembered and taken to heart; repeat them to your children, and speak of them both indoors and out of doors, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and wear them as a pendant on your forehead; write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates." (Deut. 6. 4-9 REV). This was and is a very important text to the people of Israel.

It is known as the **Shema** because it begins with the Hebrew word for **hear**. It is one of the several texts from Deuteronomy and Exodus which were carried in little leather boxes known as phylacteries, worn on the arms and foreheads of Jews at prayer time. Many Jews still continue the custom and Jewish boys proudly wear them for their Bar Mitzvah coming of age ceremony. They are reminded to obey God in their actions (arms) and their thinking (forehead). The *Shema* is also written on a scroll and placed inside a metal or wooden case and fixed to the doorpost. This is a *Mazuzah* and is touched by the father of the house as he enters or leaves the home. The *Shema* was always used at the beginning of each synagogue service.

The words of this text were very special to Israel. The expression "*Yahweh is our God*" reminded his people of their covenant — "I will be your God and you shall be my people". Loving God provided the only fruitful motive for keeping the Law. This commandment was not just a neat manner of worship but the real matter of daily life in home and work. This was the protection of the family and nation against the various ways of Canaanite religious intrusion.

The words of this text are very special to followers of the Lord Jesus. When asked what the greatest commandment is, he repeated the *Shema* from Deuteronomy with a slight difference — to the usual English version of Deut. 6. 4, 5 he added the word 'mind'; "... *you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.*" Some have suggested that the addition of the word 'mind' expands the word 'heart'. It should be noted that the word 'mind' occurs in the Septuagint instead of 'heart'. In any event Jesus saw in these words the very heart of all piety and faith and to it he added some words from Leviticus 19. 18 as the second greatest commandment. If the whole person is surrendered to God in love it must follow that there will be a right attitude towards the Creator and the whole of his creation.

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ALL ABOUT?

God is cleaning up our lives, not to be exhibition plants in a hot house but to yield a harvest which will bring healing to the nations. When we are fully ripe we shall be ready to feed a starving world — starved of love and goodness; a world that is restless and corrupt. Purity can only come into the world when we are pure.

That cleansing comes through the discipline of the word. Are we allowing the Word to have the cleansing effect? We may think we understand it better than other groups and churches, but has it saturated our lives so that when we come to a difficulty, a challenge, a temptation or hard experience we know instinctively what the Word is telling us to do? We must read our Bibles not to debate or score points but to find within it the passionate, enthralling and thrilling story of God's love that wants nothing more nor less than that the erring child shall be brought back to the Father.

"The longer I live, the more sure do I become that our happiness in life, our comfort in trouble and strength for service, all depend upon our living near to God, nay dwelling in God, as the lilies in the water. To grow on the bank of the river of the water of life is good but to grow in the stream is far better. God's lilies need to be in him who is their life. With all earnestness of my soul, I would entreat all whom I love to cultivate continual communion with the Lord. It may require great watchfulness, but it will well repay the believer for all his care. This river hath golden sands. Fellowship with God is a land with floweth which milk and honey. I would rather spend an hour in the presence of the Lord than a century in prosperity without him. There are secrets of unknown delight, which can never be known to us till we rise above the outward and worldly, and come into the life of God, which is the life of heaven. By faith which brought us life at the first, is the same by which we attain to life more abundantly"

— C. H. Spurgeon

B. J. Drinkwater

WALKING WITH GOD*An Exhortation*

During the dark centuries from Eden to the Flood only three men receive honourable mention in the Bible — Abel, Enoch and Noah — and we might think that the thoughts of other men were evil continually but for the bare hint in Gen. 4. 26 that some began to call upon the name of the Lord. Some hold the opinion that this call upon the Lord was not genuine, though the versions of the text imply that some were seeking the Lord if haply they might find Him. Be that as it may, only these three are of particular mention for they pursued their searching until successful. Each of them is creditably mentioned for his faith in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, but our thoughts will be of Enoch, for while brief details of his life are given they will guide Christians in their walk with God. In fact only three points of his character are referred to — his faith in God, his pleasing God, and his walk with God. We shall not be able to separate these, and we would not wish to, but we know from the Word that the first, his faith, was the foundation of the other two. Let us note how he began his walk of faith which culminated in his walk with his God. Two steps only began his approach, and they are the steps that all must take. This — of God is clearly stated in Heb. 11. 6 *"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him"*. It is most clear from these words that belief in the existence of God does not constitute faith, but that it must be coupled with the assurance of reward. Possibly this shows the difference between Enoch and his contemporaries. Quite probably there were those who believed in his existence, and those who called upon him, and possibly those who wished merely to be called by his name, but there was one truly satisfied that he would be heard and blessed if he appealed in faith. Thus did he prove the veracity of his belief and became an early example of the maxim *"Seek and ye shall find"*. We must assume what was in his mind when in faith he knew that appeal to God would not go unanswered; but it is not flight of fancy to think that as he looked round and saw the world astray from God he, like another of whom no fault is recorded, asked *"What shall be the end of these things?"* (How often that question has led to others seeking the Lord!) There being no prophetic word of which he could enquire, no man of God, no priest and no teacher of God's ways likely to be able to give

inspired answer, he turned to his God; and his request was answered so fully that he was able in turn to prophesy of the coming of the Lord to execute judgement, and thus he became the first of a long line of prophets. The assurance of Divine intervention and of coming judgment has always been the answer to those who seek to know how God will rectify the affairs of men. It is a primary truth and also it leads to another question — stated in various ways by others — it is *"When shall these things be"* or *"How long shall it be . . . ?"* or *"Wilt thou at this time . . ."* and the answer to every Daniel and disciple is still the same, that times and seasons are God's own secret. No rebuke is implied in the negative answer, in fact we may well believe that our Father and his Son are pleased with such enquiries in faith, even though it is not his purpose to reveal all. This leads to the suggestions that the steps of faith of Enoch developed into a walk with God, and as walks lead to conversation and fellowship we would be surprised if Enoch did not ask "When". How much of the plans of God were revealed to him we cannot know; we may however rest assured that the testimony that he pleased God was the result of his faith and righteous life. He stands as an example to us of one who did find the Lord and whose life of fellowship with God was so intense that it is best pictured as being a walk. Let us approach like him believing as he did that we shall be met more than halfway. And since his day, further light has been shed on the pathway by prophets and apostles that we may walk.

We should observe that Enoch walked *with* God. He was not called upon to walk alone and neither is the Christian. Such would be discouraging, but on the other hand he had only one companion, and he needed no other. And never is the Christian pictured in a procession or with a band, for the Bible picture is one of companionship, fellowship. To see two walking together is always the sign of unity even if they do not converse as they journey. *"Can two walk together except they be agreed"* was the call of Amos to Israel; and by the prophet's cry they knew they had failed in their agreement with him who had said that they only had He known of all the families of the earth. In noting that none are expected to walk alone we should remember that if the Bible has to picture solo effort, then running may be used; but then a Forerunner is mentioned (as an example) and

as goal (as an incentive). We note also that Scripture uses a figure as commonplace as walking as one of its figures of fellowship and this is because it is portraying a habit of life, something which is done without consciously thinking about it. We walk by habit, learnt in early life, never forgotten, never thought about. Such is the picture of fellowship with God, and characters are revealed by one's companions. It would be difficult to find a more apt expression to show Enoch's righteous life of faith and fellowship. It is noticeable that it is not recorded that he obeyed or that he served God. This would not be denied, but because the picture is not one of king and subject, nor of master and servant, the figure of walking reveals the companionship which had grown between Enoch and his God. We gain further thoughts by attempting to find an alternative word for "walk" to show the Bible picture of fellowship. The word "live" is good but is not as graceful as walk; the words "abide" and "dwell" are better as showing a habit of life (and 1 John 2. 6 shows the close connection); the word "fellowship" is best of all, though the apostle John seems to use it interchangeably with walk and abide. With these thoughts in mind John would have particular pleasure when recording in his gospel (John 1. 38-39) our Lord's reply to the disciples' question "*Master, where dwellest thou?*" for by the time he recorded the incident he and the other disciples had learned that their apparently simple request had been used by Jesus to mean more than they intended, and they had found that the true answer is only to be found in years of fellowship or walking with God and his Son.

It is to be observed that the exhortations are to "walk" not "march". Marching is no picture of fellowship, but it is suitable for such regiments with a destination in view. When the Bible speaks of walking with God it is not concerned with destination to be reached, but does emphasise *how* and *with* whom we walk. Thus we can be sure that if we walk with God, how we walk will be governed by him. But though the thought of destination is not in this picture, the idea of methodical progress is clearly there for among other things we are urged to walk in the light, and light always spells progress. Nothing in the injunction to walk in the light implies that we have to keep pace with flashes of Bible interpretation that shine more and more unto the perfect day, or from one beacon of truth. It is providential for Christians that they may walk in the light without being called upon to assent

to every notion of truth exposition however true they may be. We have but to look at the apostle John's own words to see that walking in the light is far different; and in fact, it may appear to some that his conception of walking in the light is elementary. John begins his epistle by declaring that he is pursuing no myth, no supposition, no uncertainty (just as Peter had said early in his epistle that they were not just following cunningly devised fables) and on that basis urges his readers to join in fellowship with God and his Son and other believers (v. 3). Having said that much, he announces his great message which as an apostle, he has to declare. It is just this (v. 5) that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. What would be the thoughts of the church today were they to receive a message from an apostle couched in these words, and with that as its dominant message? Some might say that they expected something up-to-date, something about the signs of the times, or some remarkable unveiling of Revelation that only the true people of God would be able to fathom. Let it be said now, that the message from John is up-to-date, for it is one of the truths which are without thought of time, without horizon. It was one of the first truths (if not the first) of creation and will certainly be the last (if there is any last). And hence we meet face to face the purpose of Bible truth. This is the message if we wish to walk in the light (of fellowship), but not the message if we wish to walk in the light (of information). Let us in our minds turn back to the example of Enoch. Did he not turn away from the darkened world believing in faith this very truth — that God is light and in him is no darkness at all? And he found the truth of the words later spoken by James "*Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you*". Being met halfway, he walked with his God in the light of fellowship receiving the reward of those who diligently seek him. The Christian is similarly blessed, and here we may remember the words of Jesus in John 6. 45, 37 "*And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh unto me . . . All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*". But as the Christian approaches in faith he will surely feel himself to be a man of unclean lips; especially if he compares himself with the source of all light. He could then be despondent, but providentially for him the apostle John has foreseen these thoughts within his heart and has given the answer before he speaks.

In the seventh verse he tells that *"the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* There is therefore no hindrance to continual fellowship, the only possible barrier being removed by him with whom we would walk. And so John's message is most appropriate to them in his day and to us — that God is light, and freed by him of all sense of unworthiness we may fellowship with him and his Son. It was true of Enoch, that being justified by faith and therefore judicially free of fault, he could walk with him; and the standing of justification has added blessing now that the darkness is past and the true light shineth. And now that the light of the world has come, as the representative of him who is light, to walk in the light means also to have fellowship with him, in the words of Jesus himself to his disciples *"Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light . . . While ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may be children of the light"*.

We might here notice the difference between Enoch's position and that of the Christian before God. His failings as a son of Adam were covered by the God-provided principle or justification by faith; but he could not receive that standing which in the language of Paul is called "justification by blood" because he lived long before atonement was made. The apostle John is likewise very emphatic in speaking of the cleansing we have by the blood of Christ — the ground-work of our walk with him in the light. To John, walking in the light means having fellowship with God and his Son, and because to him there is no alternative and no half measures, he can say in his downright way *"if we say we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie . . ."*; *"If we say we have no sin . . ."* to him it is an absurdity. To John the conflict of light and darkness is intense: To him he who denies that Jesus is the Christ is a liar. To our modern minds it would seem unparliamentary, or inadvisable, or unnecessary to refer to opponents of the faith in such terms; yet if we had his keen appreciation of the absolute holiness of God and his Son and his detestation of the works of darkness we might even use his frank words.

We may now be assured that in receiving the cleansing from him with whom we walk there can

be no other barrier to our continuing in the light of his countenance. But how shall we travel further in the walk of companionship? We may obtain an answer by recalling the walk to Emmaus. The fellowship of the two disciples was disturbed even to the point of dismay because for them the light had gone out, for they had trusted that it would have been he in whom they believed who would redeem Israel. They were not at that moment walking in the light of assurance; but they were willing enough to tell their woe to the stranger who drew near asking *"What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"* Let us learn from them. They told him all that was in their hearts and He replied with telling them of the Scriptures, the light of truth. And soon the threescore furlongs walk from Jerusalem became a walk in fellowship with him and his Father, who of old had caused holy men to write the Scripture in which they trusted. All that was needed to turn the sad journey into communion was their teacher's reminding them and linking the words of the prophets of God. And it is just there, in the word of God, that we may continually have fellowship with God and his Son. There is revealed his will and plan for all of us; there are the words of comfort and consolation we need; there is the advice to help us to walk in the Spirit, in newness of life, and to walk worthily of our calling, there also is that assistance we need whereby we may pray aright (for prayer is another means of walking with God in fellowship), and there is the story which satisfies our longing as nothing else could do. We shall then rejoice in his word as one that findeth great spoil, and as the years of fellowship go by we shall find how much truer and grander are John's words *"God is light and in him is no darkness at all"*.

Having reached Emmaus with their hearts burning within them, they did not ask the stranger, as did the first disciples, *"Where dwellest thou"*, but asked him *"Abide with us"*, or in other words, dwell with us, fellowship with us. And He did, for though they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem to tell the others, they had not parted from him, for the insight they had gained of him remained for a lifetime's fellowship.

I look for a judgment of nations and churches to wind up our Age, as Paul looked for one to wind up his age. I believe the trumpet of the Archangel has

been sounding in every century of the modern world, that it is sounding now, and will sound more clearly before the end comes.

F. D. Maurice 1853

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON*The story of a great man's faith***15. Until The End Be**

There is something heart-rendingly tragic in the spectacle of an old man deprived, at the last, of the fruits of that for which he has laboured zealously and perseveringly through a long life. It happens in everyday affairs and Christians are not immune; it happened to stalwart men of God in Old Testament days. Moses led the children of Israel forty years through the wilderness toward the promised Land, but he was destined to behold that fair goal only with his eyes and never himself to set foot in it. Samuel, serving his God and his country from childhood to old age, welded a disorganised rabble of tribesmen into a nation, gave them a rule of justice and organised government, and died in obscurity leaving the fruits of his work to be reaped by King David. The aged priest Simeon, leader of the tiny band that in the days just prior to the first Advent "looked for deliverance in Jerusalem" lived just long enough to take the Babe in his old arms; but he was laid aside in death before the glory of the Messiah was revealed to the believing in Israel. So it was with Daniel. Taken from his home in early youth, he lived his whole life in an alien land, passionately looking forward to the day when God would relent and set the captives free, restoring again the glories of the beloved city — but when at last the time did come he must perforce; like Moses, see his fellows go with rejoicing into the promised land, knowing that he could never go with them. Daniel had done them any man to keep alive the knowledge of God and hope in His promise; he had interceded with God on behalf of his people; in political life he probably did much to make the Return possible, but he himself was left out of its restoration. Two years after the Restoration, we find him still in Babylon, quite definitely now waiting for the end. Daniel was one of those of whom the writer to the Hebrews afterwards spoke when he said "these all, having received a good report through faith, received not the promise." Like many another faithful warrior for God, he was laid aside to await his reward in a better day.

Two years after the capture of Babylon by the Medes came the Restoration. The Median dynasty was at an end; in Cyrus the Persian dynasty began. The change was marked by an unexpected toleration of all the subject peoples' native religions; the favour shown the Jewish captives in allowing them

to revive the Judean state and rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem was only one of several such concessions granted by the Persian king to the varied peoples under his rule. Clay tablets of Cyrus have been discovered in which he speaks of his intention to rebuild various of the idolatrous Temples in much the same language that he used in his famous decree to the Jews as recorded in the chapter of Ezra.

Daniel must have seen the jubilant company set off for Judah with mixed feelings. There would have been quiet joy that at last the promise of God was fulfilled and the Captivity was ended; the Temple was to be rebuilt and the worship of God in his own city restored. But there was something lacking; the throne of the Lord was not to be established in Jerusalem and no king of David's line would sit in regal power on Mount Zion. Zerubbabel, of the line of David and legal heir to the throne, was leader of the Restoration only by appointment of Cyrus and he was nothing more than the Persian governor of Jerusalem, responsible to Cyrus for the good behaviour of the people. Joshua of the sons of Aaron was the legitimate High Priest and fully authorised to administer the rites of his sacred office, but even with the Temple rebuilt there was still a vital deficiency; the Ark of the Covenant was not there and the Most Holy was empty. This is not the real triumph of Israel. Daniel must have reflected sadly as the joyous shouts died away and the long procession disappeared in the distance. There was still much to transpire before the good promises of God can be fulfilled. So he betook himself again to study and prayer that he might continue to a faithful vehicle of the Holy Spirit in making known to the sons of men the things that God purposed to do.

Life in Babylon went on much as before. The pioneers away in Jerusalem attacked their task with enthusiasm at first and then drifted away to their own interests and the building of the Temple was neglected. Not much news got back to Babylon for communications were slow and difficult, and in any case most of the Jews who remained in Babylon had done so because they were not greatly interested in the rebuilding of Judea. They had mostly been born in Babylon and the land of Judah was a foreign and unknown country to them. Daniel probably had little in common with the Babylonian Jews; they were not

his kind: but there were almost certainly a few remaining in the city whose hearts were in Judea but whose circumstances for one reason or another forbade their participating in the Return and with these Daniel would have found a common bond of interest and friendship. So for two years more he studied and pondered until at last another and a final revelation of God's future purposes was impressed upon his mind.

He was in the country, on the bank of the River Tigris, when he saw the vision. The Tigris flows at its nearest, some twenty or miles from Babylon and it is evident that for some reason Daniel had either temporarily or permanently left the city. It might be that he possessed a country retreat at that spot and had gone there to meditate quietly during the three weeks of mental stress to which he refers in Chapter 10. Perhaps, on the other hand, he had for the last time retired from the active administration of affairs of state — he was now about ninety years of age — and had secluded himself in some quiet country or river-side spot calmly to await his end. At any rate it was by the swiftly flowing waters of the river which divided Babylonia from Persia that he perceived the glorious angel descending to meet him and was struck speechless and helpless before the magnificence of that glory.

Ezekiel tells of seeing such a vision; so does Isaiah. Saul of Tarsus had the same experience, on the Damascus road. The fact that such manifestations are not the lot of Christians today is no argument against their reality to those faithful men of old time who did see them, nor the verity of their accounts. Something more than the natural sense of sight is necessary and all men do not possess that something more. The men with Saul of Tarsus saw nothing; it is significant though that a nameless fear seized upon them and they ran and hid themselves. The young man with Elisha could not see what the prophet saw; Heavens's forces passing and repassing on the mountains around them for their protection, until Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened. Sights of heavenly things can only be impressed upon the human mind by the Holy Spirit, and only Spirit-filled men can be receptive to spiritual things. *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Cor. 2. 9-10). We in this modern materialistic Age are ourselves so cumbered with material thoughts and preoccupations of all kinds that we cannot so easily, as could Daniel in his quiet retreat and the intensity

of his communion with God, lend ourselves to be vehicles of the Holy Spirit.

It is not uncommon, though, in this our day, for watchers around the bed of a dying Christian to catch a few whispered words or glimpse a sudden look in the failing eyes, as though the departing one had suddenly seen some wonderfully glorious vista of which the watchers had no consciousness. It may well be that as the material things slip rapidly away in the last few moments of earthly life the Holy Spirit finds more abundant entrance into a mind that has always been a sanctuary of that Spirit, and sights such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and even Saul perceived, appear plainly revealed to the inner consciousness.

Gabriel's message covers the whole of Chapter 11 and part of Chapter 12. It is readily recognised as an outline of world events which in Daniel's day were still future but which must be accomplished before the final deliverance of Israel. Very little of it could have been intelligible to Daniel; there is still much of it which, while not unintelligible to us today, is nevertheless so obscure that there are a great variety of interpretations. The first four verses of Chapter 11 are obvious enough to us; they describe briefly the passing of the Persian empire and the coming of the Greeks, the "belly and thighs of brass" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image and the leopard of Daniel's earlier vision. That much was probably plain to him. The remainder goes off into a long catalogue of "wars and rumours of wars" in which the most definite factor is the climax, the coming of Christ at his Second Advent, pictured by the standing up of Michael the Archangel for the salvation of Israel. That, at least, must have been quite understandable to Daniel, but the long record of happenings which had to transpire first must have led him to realise as never before that many years were yet to pass before the great deliverance could come. It might well be that in this message Daniel realised the great truth that God will save Israel and all mankind, "whosoever will" not by patching up this very unsatisfactory present world, but by a resurrection from the dead to a new world, a world in which God himself makes all things new. That is the clear implication of Chapter 12.

One wonders how this detailed and extremely lengthy statement of things to come got recorded. Daniel listened to all that Gabriel had to say but the circumstances of the interview, the grandeur and solemnity of the occasion, entirely preclude any idea

that he wrote it down at the time. We must here allow for the influence of the Holy Spirit, quickening Daniel's mind after the angel had left him, so that he remembered accurately every word and compiled a complete transcript of all that had been said.

So the failing hand of the old man traced the record of his last revelation. That it was to be for the benefit of future generations he no longer had any doubt. "*I am come*" Gabriel had told him "*to make thee understand what shall befall they people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.*" (Ch. 10. vs. 14.). Therein lies a great principle of Divine revelation. Anxious as we may be to witness in our own time the fulfilment of "all things written" we must realise, as Daniel was led to realise, that God's time-scale is not as ours. We can study the prophetic Scriptures and witness the signs of the times with ardent zeal and heart-felt longing, but the best and most scrupulous of our conclusions cannot take into account all that is in the mind of God; only that which He has revealed, and He does not reveal all. Countless earnest Christians in past ages have been persuaded that Bible prophecy and contemporary events have joined together to point unerringly to their own time as the day of Divine intervention in human history for the final battle between good and evil; and none have actually witnessed the climax. But it will not be always thus. The time must surely come when the last generation of watchers has had revealed to it the last hidden secrets of God's design. Then the Clock of Ages will strike twelve.

It behoves us all to be as sure of our faith and as fervent in our expectation as was Daniel, and others like him. To live as though the end will come tomorrow, and yet be prepared to live out the span of natural life to extreme old age, undisturbed in faith and hope whether the outward signs point to the one or the other eventuality; that is the faith of Daniel and the faith God wants in us. "*Though it tarry*" cried Habakkuk "*wait for it for it will surely come; it will not tarry.*" So many in modern times have made shipwreck of their faith because of the failure of expectations. They could wait ten years, twenty years, thirty years, for the Kingdom, but they could not wait a lifetime. But the Creator had waited through the entire span of human history and has never deviated

one iota from that challenging statement of faith both in himself and in man whom He made, uttered more than three thousand years ago "*As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with my glory*". The thoughtful Christian, viewing as dispassionately as he can the insane world in which he must perforce live today, might be pardoned for thinking that the present order cannot possibly survive the next few years. If he is right, and the end of this Age is that much near, all Christians and all right thinking men everywhere have cause, knowingly, for rejoicing, for that climax means the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in manifest power over the nations. It means the end of cruelty and hate and injustice and oppression. It means the fulfilment of the inspired words of Zephaniah "*For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.*" (Zeph. 3. 9.). It means the time when "*The Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.*" (Isa. 40. 10-11). It means the realisation of words spoken to John on Patmos "*Behold, the dwelling-place of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.*" (Rev. 21. 3-4). It means that every faithful Christian will live and reign with Christ for the thousand years, the while the "*ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads . . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*" (Isa. 35. 10.).

That is what it means if the world does perish by its own hand in our own time. And if not, of the evil vitality of this old order of things prolongs its life for a season and time, the end will still be the same and just as sure, for it is written in the purposes of God and will surely come to pass. Like Daniel, we may have to wait longer than we expect and longer than we wish, but "*it will surely come; it will not tarry*".

(To be continued)

It is the loveliest thing in the world to have someone who likes you and loves you and knows you for

what you are, and who never even thinks of the labels and the values the world puts on you. — William Barclay

A. Spain

"GIRD UP THE LOINS OF YOUR MIND"

A note on
1 Pet. 1, 13

Though written so long ago, the above words of exhortation lose none of their force. They were penned for the instruction of the whole Church, to the end of the Age. The introductory, "Wherefore," refers to the glorious hope of the high calling, and of the necessarily severe measures required to fit us for this exalted inheritance. Peter would have all appreciate what it is to be called with such a high calling — *"to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven"* for those who are *"kept by the power of God through faith"* (vv 4, 5). He asserts that, if faithful, we are to be made *"partakers of the Divine nature"*, joint heirs, with Jesus Christ, of all things (2 Pet. 1, 4).

As the Spirit of God draws the heart into closer fellowship and sympathy with the Divine mind, the value of these *"exceeding great and precious promises"* is more and more fully realised, until there glows in the heart the same holy enthusiasm that filled the hearts of the apostles. And only when the heart is thus warmed and the mind thus awakened are we prepared to understand the Apostle's *"Wherefore"*, upon the inspiring comprehension of which depends our ability to heed the earnest exhortation which follows.

If the heart is not duly inspired with this hope — if we have begun to esteem it lightly, or to forget it, or to think of it as an idle tale — to heed the counsel of Peter, here given, will be impossible. If, therefore, it is realised that a spiritual lethargy has to any extent been creeping over us, imperceptibly benumbing the spiritual senses, so that the truth is losing its inspiring power, the first duty is to betake ourselves to prayer and to communion with God and his Word, that its sanctifying power may be realised.

"Wherefore", then, you who discern the prize of the High Calling endeavouring to press along towards the mark, *"gird up the loins of your mind"* — as in the illustration; strengthen and fortify your purposes and efforts; renew your determination; redouble your diligence; cast aside the weights of unnecessary worldly cares; increase your zeal; and, as the Apostle Paul also urges, run with patience the race set before you. Run, like one who is merely beating the air, but like one who has a purpose in view, and who, in desperate earnest, is determined to make his calling and election sure (Heb. 12, 1. 1 Cor. 9, 26).

Having thus girded *"up the loins of your mind"* for a long, steady and determined effort, he further counsels. — *"Be sober:"* do not allow yourself to become excited and under the spur of excitement to exhaust all your spiritual vitality in a very short time, and then to suffer a relapse into coldness or discouragement, but thoughtfully to consider and prepare for a long and patient endurance of all the discipline and trial of faith and patience necessary to prove an overcomer and worthy of the blessed reward promised *"to him that overcometh"*. The race is not one to be run by fits and starts, but by *"patient continuance"* in well doing. Soberly, thoughtfully, weigh and endeavour to realise the import of the exceeding great and precious promises and gather from them their invigorating inspiration; earnestly apply the mind and heart to the instruction of the inspired word of God, availing oneself also of such helps — of "pastors and teachers" and their literary productions — which prove harmonious with, and helpful to, the study of the Scriptures; diligently and patiently submit yourselves to the transforming influences of Divine grace and truth; and then, loyally and faithfully, devote your consecrated talents, however few or many, to the great work of preaching this gospel of the Kingdom to all who will hear.

Such a sober view of the situation fortifies the mind against discouragement, and enables us, as the Apostle suggests, to "hope to the end for the grace which shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ". Such a sober view keeps reason on the throne of our minds. And reason says, the Divine call to joint-heirship with Christ clearly implies eligibility to the exalted office; the Divine promise clearly ensures Divine grace to enable me to fulfil the conditions; the Divine provision for my justification, by faith in the precious blood of Christ, released me from condemnation to death; and the righteousness of Christ fully supplement all my weaknesses, so that before God, I stand approved in him. Sober reason also says the directions given in the Scriptures to those who would run the race are clear and explicit, and make plain every step of the way to those who are truly and fully consecrated to the Lord. The example of the Lord and the Apostles shine on the pathway with a moral lustre and glory that cannot lead astray. By walking in their footprints the goal will assuredly be reached.

Therefore, in this sober view of the High Calling and its privileges, and the abundant resources of Divine grace, do not be discouraged or overcome in

any way, but hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE

*Reflections on the meeting
of Stephen and Saul*

Two men stood almost face to face, one fateful day in old Jerusalem, around whose lives an overruling Providence purposely wove the shuttles of its mysterious Will. One was about to die a cruel and ignominious death; the other, standing by, registered an ill-considered consent thereto. Strange indeed was this state of affairs in Israel — for each man thought verily he did God's service in what he did! A new order stood confronting the old, the spirit contending strongly against the letter, the reality against the shadow; and these men were the symbols of the difference!

That the Spirit of the living God indwelt Stephen there could be no doubt; for life, and words and bearing all gave testimony to that! But what was the directing motive which indwelt Saul, the consenter to a dark and cruel deed? Was this spirit of the consenter also of God, the outcome of a zeal for ancient holy things? Had Stephen been too razor-edged in the clash of ideologies in that over-tense atmosphere, and brought upon himself an unnecessary recompense from an affronted Sanhedrin? Or had that ancient and venerable estate of the Elders been too precipitate and blood-thirsty in their response?

That Stephen's mission and testimony called for zeal and holy courage none can gainsay! Hard-hearted enthusiasm never generates sufficient power for new causes in the earth; and as this was the "cause par excellence", none could ever rise too much for this! Not because there had been too much zeal was Stephen in this pioneer predicament, but because God was moving in a most mysterious way his wonders to perform!

That the Sanhedrin would defend itself with all its might was surely to be expected! Did they not sit in Moses' seat, that most ancient and honourable seat of Authority, and had they not a code of laws and statutes which demanded "death without mercy" for such apostates and renegades as this man they had tried and condemned? Was not the honour of the Law, the authority of the Colleges, the traditions of the Fathers all involved in this attitude of defence?

So thought one ardent mind, to say the least — and he himself should be the sharp spear-point of the defensive attack! Hence the sad catalogue of persecutions and home-breakings which followed that eventful day!

But the same story runs also at a lower depth, at a depth unseen and unperceived save by a high watchful Eye! An arrow from the quiver of Divine Providence had struck home, even as Saul watched faithful Stephen sink down in death! The dying man, far from expiring as an outcast should, possessed a peace of heart, a restfulness of mind, which betokened a soul at rest in God! How could that be, if the extreme Pharisaic claim was true? Ought not his man to have crept out of life abashed, ashamed, and as one meet for Gehenna fires? Instead he passes out triumphant, a song of rejoicing in his heart, a prayer of forgiveness on his lips! And it was this state of peace and confidence which Saul had longed and sought for all his life, without finding it! How could that be? Why should the seeker in the old paths fail, and the turncoat in the new path find?

The probing and provoking thought was as the constantly repeated prick of the goad in the tardy oxen's flank, and forthwith the stubborn creature's will began to "kick against the pricks", to fight and curb and smother the better thought under a more intensive programme of persecution and revolt!

How marvellous and complex were the ways of Providence as it shaped the ends and purposes of these two lives! The one ready, submissive, grounded well in grace; a life already tempered and changed to an image of the Son, yet surrendered up to die as bait to catch a larger fish; a grain of wheat sown deliberately in death to win a larger and fuller return!

Truly, "*God moves in a mysterious way
He ponders to perform
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm*"

God works no injury to those who must die to serve his higher purpose! There was no loss to Stephen because his days were few by comparison with those

of John! The short life and the longer life were all as parts of one great plan, and each was spent to serve the Providential end, not that of each mere man! That Providence should design to use the longer or the short was the all important thing — their times were in his hands; the disposing thereof was therefore in his care. But what an amazing sequel was the outcome of that fateful day's event!

We too are in the same providential hands! We too are dedicated to the same far-reaching Plan; who knows, another Saul may be cruising around, seeking for deeper things of God! And I, or you, may yet play Stephen's part and be the radiant witness of the deeper grace of God! Have I, or you, the "Stephen" heart, the same readiness?

Can we each truly say:

*My times are in thy hand
My God I wish then there,
My life, my friends, my soul I leave
Entirely in thy Care.*

*My times are in thy hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to thee.*

*My times are in thy hand,
Why should I doubt or fear?
My Father's hand will never cause,
His child a needless tear.*

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

A full transformation into a likeness of character to our Heavenly Father should be the constant effort of every true child of God. It is not enough that we gain a knowledge of His plan and a pleasurable realisation of His mercy and grace towards our unworthy race, but that we joyfully tell the good news to others, it is not enough that we exert ourselves with uncommon zeal to bless others with those good tidings of great joy for all people; for we may do all these things and more, and yet, if we do not let our Heavenly Father's goodness and grace have its due effect upon our own hearts, our knowledge, and even our good works, will profit us little.

Our main object, therefore, in studying God's Word and His character, as therein revealed, should always be to bring our own hearts and minds into closer sympathy and likeness and co-operation with His. The apostle says (1 Thess. 4:3) — *"This is the will of god, even your sanctification."* — our full setting apart, or consecration of mind and heart entirely to the Lord, that He may complete the good work of transforming us into His glorious likeness, by the operation of His Spirit through His Word, and thus for us for the enjoyment of His abounding grace in the ages to come.

In the words of the apostle in our text, we notice

particularly that the statement is made of *all* the church — *we all* are being changed from glory to glory. The inference is consequently a strong one, that those who are not being so changed are not of the class addressed. This is a solemn thought and one that claims the most careful consideration of all the consecrated. The question with us is not — Have we made a full consecration of ourselves to the Lord? — but, having made such a consecration, are we, in accordance with that consecration, fully submitting ourselves to the transforming influences of the Spirit of God to be changed daily more and more fully to the glorious likeness of our God?

Like the apostle, then, addressing all the consecrated and faithful, we also today may say — we are all being changed from glory to glory under the moulding, fashioning influences of the Spirit of God. We can see it in each other, thank God! and we glory in it. Yesterday the mallet of divine providence struck a blow upon that member of the Body of Christ, and an unsightly pride fell off; he or she looks so much more beautiful today, because they did not resist the blow, but gracefully submitted to it. The day before, we saw another under the wearing, painful, polishing process, to which he or she patiently submitted, and oh, how they shine today! From day to day we see each other studiously contemplating the divine pattern and striving to copy it; and how we note the softening, refining and beautifying effect upon all such! So the Spirit of God is at work upon all who fully submit themselves to his will.

But while the mallet and chisel and the polishing sand of divine providence do a very necessary part of the transforming work, by relieving us of many of the old and stubborn infirmities of the flesh, which cannot be so fully eradicated by the gentler influences of the Spirit, the apostle points us to the specially appointed means for our transformation in the careful and constant contemplation of the glory of God as revealed in his Word, and also in His blessed Ambassador Jesus Christ, saying — *"We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory."*

"With open face" would signify without any intervening veil of prejudice or fear or superstition, but with simplicity of heart and mind. So we behold the glory (the glorious character) of the Lord — not with actual vision, but as in a glass, as reflected in His Word and as exemplified in His living word, Jesus Christ. To aid us in this study we are promised the blessed influences of the Spirit of the Lord, to guide us into all truth and show us things to come.

As we look into this mirror, what a glorious vision we have of the divine justice, which we promptly recognise as the very foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2), as well as the foundation of all our present and future security. If we could not recognise the justice of God, we could have no assurance that His gracious promises would ever be fulfilled; for we could say — Perhaps He will change His mind. On the contrary, we can say — He changeth not, and whatsoever He saith shall surely come to pass. See with what inflexible justice the sentence upon our sinful race has been executed! Generation after generation, has witnessed it; and no power in heaven or earth could revoke that sentence until the claims of justice had been fully met by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Herein we read not only our rightful condemnation as a race of sinners, but also our final, complete and glorious deliverance, because *"God is just to forgive us our sins"* (1 John 1:9), since the precious blood of Christ redeemed us from the curse of death.

While we thus read justice in the character of God, and, mark with what scrupulous care He regards and respects this principle in all His dealings with His creatures, we see how He would have us respect the same principle in all our dealings. Thus we are led to consider what is the exact line of justice in this and that and the other transaction; and to remember also that this must be the underlying principle in all our

conduct or, in other words, that we must be just before we can be generous. This principle should, therefore, be very marked in the character of every Christian.

Next we mark the love and mercy of God. The death sentence upon our fallen race was a most merciful sentence. It was equivalent to saying — "See, I have of my own free favour granted you life and all its blessings to be enjoyed forever on condition of its proper use; but now, since you have abused my favour, I take it away and you shall return to the dust whence you came. True, in the process of dying and of bringing forth a dying race to share the penalty, the mercy of God is not so manifest to the unthinking; but those who see the plan of God discover in all this, not the decrees of a merciless tyrant, but a merciful wisdom, only faintly disclosed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall in due time crush evil effectually — bruise the serpent's head — and deliver the entire race once generated in sin, by afterwards regenerating all who will to life and its blessed privileges. In this mercy, in all its multiplied forms, we see the verification of the statement that "God is love." Thus we learn to be loving and merciful and kind both to the thankful and also to the unthankful.

We mark also our Heavenly Father's bountiful providence and His tender care for all His creatures, for even the sparrows are clothed and fed and the lilies are arrayed in glory. Here we learn precious lessons of divine benevolence and grace. Thus, through all the catalogue of moral and intellectual graces which go to make up a glorious character, we see in the mirror of the divine Word the model for our imitation; and in contemplation of all that is lovely, as embodies in Him, and of all that is pure and holy and beautiful, we are changed little by little in the course of years to the same blessed likeness — from glory to glory.

So be it; let the good work go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of our imputed righteousness, received by faith in the blessed Son of God; whose earthly life was a perfect illustration of the Father's character, so that He could say — *"He that hath seen hath seen the Father."* Let us, therefore, mark well the love of Christ, the gentleness, the patience, the faithfulness, the zeal, the personal integrity and the self-sacrificing spirit. Mark well, then imitate His example and shine in His likeness.

The apostle adds (2 Cor. 4.7) that the fact we thus

hold this treasure of a transformed mind in these defective vessels proves the excellency of the power of God, and not of us. So, by constant yielding to the influences of the Spirit of God we may show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light (1 Peter 2. 9). Oh, let our efforts and prayers continually be that these poor

earthen vessels may more and more show forth the praised of our God! Let them be clean in body and mind; let no evil communications proceed out of the mouth; and let no actions unworthy of the children of God dishonour these living temples of the Holy Spirit.

People's Paper and Herald of Christ's Kingdom (Australia)

A. O. Hudson

THE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

A doctrinal study

Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Versions unless otherwise stated.

* * * * *

The subject of what is called the sin unto death or the unpardonable sin is not so relevant to Christian thought as it was several generations ago, but from time to time minds are exercised as to the precise meaning of those passages which speak of a sin so heinous that no hope of Divine forgiveness can be entertained; the offender is eternally lost. There are five passages which form the foundation of this impression, and these five can be grouped into three separate cases. It is best to consider each case separately in turn.

The first, recorded by Matthew and Mark, concerns our Lord healing a blind mute, the Pharisees asserting that He did so by the power of Beelzebub, prince of the demons, and Jesus replying that whereas blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not, now or in the future. The second, in John's First Epistle, refers to a "*sin unto death*", for which prayer is not advised to be made. The third occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, alluding to some who fall away from the faith, cannot be restored and for whom there is only certain condemnation. Conclusions have been read into these passages which are not altogether justified but there is obviously something of importance here bearing on the final consequences of sin.

In the first case Jesus reproved the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by saying "*I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whosoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whosoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either in this age or in the age to come.*" (Matt. 12. 22-32). The

parallel passage in Mark's Gospel reads, "*Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin.*" (Mark 3. 28. 29).

The first hasty impression one might take from these words is that blasphemy against the Son is less serious than that against the Spirit, so that the one need be no bar to salvation, whereas the other is, which does not seem very logical. It is to be remembered that Jesus Christ "*is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*" (1 John 2. 2.) There is no suggestion here or anywhere else in the Scriptures that our Lord's offering of himself for human sin was not efficacious for certain classes of sin. In these solemn words Jesus told them how serious was their position. To speak a word against, or to blaspheme him personally was something He could ignore; that kind of sin — for sin it was, the sin of hypocrisy, of malice, of misinterpretation, He could and did forgive. Their attitude He was prepared to put down, in part, to ignorance and prejudice. On the Cross He prayed the Father to forgive his enemies "*for they know not what they do*" But these Pharisees stood in a position of greater danger in that their determined enmity to him was approaching a condition of deliberate sin against the convincing and convicting influence of the Holy Spirit, and this process of hardening their hearts and closing their minds to the evidences of goodness in Christ could lead them at last to a condition in which they destroyed their own capacity for repentance. Jesus told them, in short, that whilst He himself was prepared to overlook and forgive their malicious words, they themselves were on the way to a position in which repentance was impossible, and so they could

never obtain forgiveness. That is the sin against the Holy Spirit.

The expression in Mark "*guilty of an eternal sin*" is a better rendering than the A. V. "*in danger of eternal damnation*", but even so the correct shade of meaning in our Lord's words is not faithfully reproduced. The word rendered "sin" is *hamartema*, which means an act of sin, and "eternal" is *aionian*, the basic meaning of which is "enduring" without stipulation of duration "Never" is *ouk*, which is a simple prohibition better rendered "not" as in the parallel verse in Matt. 12. 32. ("Never" in the N. T. is usually *oudepote*, literally "not even at any time"). The literal meaning of Jesus' words may well be "shall not have forgiveness, for he is guilty of an enduring act of sin". Matthew's version adds an extra qualification "*either in this age or in the age to come*", and this is intended to shew that the same possibility of wilful sin and the same principle will apply in the "age to come", the Messianic Age, as in this. In neither case is forgiveness entirely ruled out, because if there should be repentance even at the eleventh hour then God would forgive. It is out of the question to think otherwise. The point of our Lord's words here is that the Pharisees were perilously near that condition of heart where even a thousand years of opportunity might fail to bring them to a better frame of mind and therefore forgiveness could not come. He was not condemning them; He was warning them.

Words written by Dr. Paterson Smyth many years ago in "*The Gospel of the Hereafter*" are very apt on this matter. "*It is hard to believe that a man knowing Christ and wilfully rejecting him should thereby risk the ruin of his soul? Can we not recognise this awful law of life, that wilful sin against light tends to darkening of the light, that a life of such rejection of the light tends to make one incapable of receiving the light forever? We must believe that through all eternity, if the worst winner felt touched by the love of God and wanted to turn to him, that man would be saved. What we dread is that the man may not want, and so may have rendered himself incapable of doing so. We dread not God's will but man's own will. Character tends to permanence. Free will is a glorious but a dangerous prerogative.*"

Thus seen, our Lord's words were intended as a warning to those Pharisees. He did not, He could not, close the door of salvation to them but He did make it clear that throughout the whole of God's great

Day of grace — which includes both "this Age" and the "Age to come" — the fixed, inviolable principle is that forgiveness and salvation depend upon repentance and conversion, and in their then condition they were blinding themselves to that fact.

Next for consideration come the words of the Apostle John. "*If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal. There is a sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that*" (1 John 5. 16). Here again one might say at first sight that there are two kinds of sin, one not so heinous as the other, but upon reflection this cannot be so. All sin, without qualification, is opposed to the Divine principles of good, and on that account can only result in death, unless it is expunged by repentance and conversion. All sin without qualification can be so expunged. The difference between sin which is not mortal and sin which is mortal, or as the A. V. has it, sin not unto death and sin unto death, is that in the one case there is repentance, and in the other there is not. Hence behind John's words in this passage lies the principle that not until God has as it were put forth every possible effort and been rejected, until the erring one has so steeled his heart and mind against all things good that he has become literally incapable of repentance, can his case be considered hopeless. Now since the Divine day of grace which began at Pentecost does not end until the close of the Millennial reign of Christ there is no question of that kind of "sin unto death" until then; at any time up to that point there is hope that the sinner may turn from his ways, and enter into life. It is more reasonable therefore to consider that John's injunction is intended to refer to those whose present course, if continued unchecked, would eventually bring them into that hopeless condition. Such would then be in the same class as those Pharisees to whom the Lord addressed his allusion respecting sin against the Holy Spirit not having forgiveness. Where the sin is so wilful and deliberate that there is at the moment, no repentance and no sorrow, no regrets, then, says John, he does not insist that we should pray for the offender. There is no suggestion, either, that the case is hopeless even though it be not an appropriate one for prayer at the moment. The corrective judgments of God may yet bring that sinner to an appreciation of his position and his eventual reconciliation. Prayer might very properly be made for the man that such might eventually

be the case; John does not forbid that; what he does insist upon is the impropriety of prayer of God for life, for the gifts of God, to one who is not in a condition of repentance.

Finally there has to be examined the two passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews. *"It is impossible to restore again those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy: since they crucify the son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt."* (Heb. 6. 4-6) From the preceding verses in this chapter it is clear that those referred to are Jewish Christians who have forsaken Judaism and have come into Christ in the fullest sense. They have been enlightened by the Gospel of Christ, the light of the world; they have received the free gift of justification by faith in Christ (Rom. 5. 18); they have received the Holy Spirit (Luke 11. 15 Rom. 8. 25); have entered into an understanding of the word of God, and in all this have entered very largely into the blessings and gifts which will come upon all the world in the Messianic Age, the *"powers of the age to come"*, as the writer here puts it. They are no longer Jews bound to the Mosaic Law; they have become part of Christ's Church. But there is an element of doubt as to their ability to remain faithful to their calling. In the latter part of chapter 5 they are told that many things which they ought to know and understand are *"hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing"*. By now, after the time they had been in the faith and in the way, they should have become teachers of others; instead they still needed someone to teach them again the first principles of God's word able only to assimilate milk and not solid food. So he opens chapter 6 with a stirring call to them to *"leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity. . ."* for he says, if because of such continued immaturity, the erstwhile believer loses his faith and zeal, forgets what he had learned, falls away from the faith, returning to what St. Paul elsewhere called the *"beggarly elements"* of Judaism (Gal. 4. 9) thus becoming an apostate from the faith, then one might as well abandon all hope of his recovery to the faith. By rejecting Christ in favour of Judaism, going back to Moses and the Old Covenant which Christ brought to an end by the Cross, they *"crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold*

him up to contempt." *"It is impossible"* he says *"to restore them again to repentance"* — reformation. This restoration, of course, is to their previous position in the Body of Christ with all its contingent privileges in the future day of Christ's glory. This word *"impossible"* is *adunatos*, which means, literally, to be deficient in the necessary strength or power for the matter involved, to be too weak, impotent. Hence it is often translated correctly *"impossible"*, but its basic meaning must be kept in mind. Thus the cripple at Lystra (Acts 14. 8.) *"could not use (adunatos) his feet"*. *"God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do"* (adunatos) (Rom. 7. 3). *"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak"* (adunatos) (Rom. 15. 1). The obstacle to reformation therefore is not some kind of Divine decree which refuses any subsequent approach to God after the apostasy, but the inability of the one who would reclaim the apostate to do any more than has already been done. The terms of the High Calling have been explained; the process of entry into life in Christ — repentance, conversion, justification, consecration and the commencement of the sanctified life — has been completed, and now repudiated and rejected. There are not further arguments to bring forward, no additional aspects of the Calling to declare; there is nothing anyone can do. It might be better to use the word *"cannot"* as better expressing the underlying sense. The apostate cannot be restored to reformation; he has returned to that bondage of the Law from which he had escaped and there he must stay until the enlightening work of the Lord in the Millennial Age compels him to face up to the implications of life and death. Although he has repudiated the High Calling he may never have lost his basic love for God; if he has, it may be restored under the evangelistic appeal of that Age. But if so, his destiny is with the world of that Age, and not the Church who by then will be with Christ in glory.

Some translations qualify the expression *"once been enlightened"* by rendering *"once for all been enlightened"* and from this it is sometimes suggested that there is a finality about this matter which precludes any further opportunity for the apostate. This is not in accord with the Divine relationship with man which demands that opportunity for repentance is always open until the end of the day of grace. Neither is it logical to think of a *"once for all"* enlightenment during this present Age when it is an accepted fact that the god of this world is blinding

the minds of those that believe not (2 Cor. 4. 4.) so that full enlightenment is just not possible. Even those who are "in Christ" are said by St. Paul to know only "in part". It is true that the Greek word concerned is used at times to denote happenings in time which are never repeated or do not need repetition as for example Heb. 9. 26 and 1 Pet. 3. 18, both referring to the one act of Christ culminating on the Cross, which is never repeated. It is also applied in Heb. 9. 7. to the High Priest offering sacrifices "*once every year*". Having once been offered, there is no repetition for the rest of that year although they had to be repeated in the following year. So here, there is no warrant for assuming that the enlightenment here spoken of was given "once for all", only that the believer-turned-apostate having had the experience of entering into an appreciation of the "truth" as it is in Jesus could never pass through that experience again. He might reject or repudiate or ignore the light and it might become dim in his mind; afterward in the mystic processes of God's ways he regains it again, but it will in such case not be a new enlightenment, it will be a re-acceptance of the original. It is only in the case of one whose fixed and incorrigible opposition to all goodness has destroyed within himself all capability for repentance can we say that there is no hope, that there is nothing more that God can do. This is where the passage in the tenth chapter of Hebrews has its place. Here is stated in all its baldness the position of the incorrigible sinner. "*for if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries . . . the man who has spurned the son of God and profaned the blood of the Covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace*" (Heb. 10. 26-29). This tenth chapter is a remarkable exposition of the principle upon which God is working and like everything in the Book of Hebrews, sharply contrasts the futility of the old Mosaic Law with the adequacy of the deliverance that is in Christ, the penalties imposed under that Law with the final reckoning made at the end of his Millennial reign. Verses 1 to 8 shew how the sacrifices for sin made under the law of Moses were in fact valueless. It is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. So Christ abolished all that arrangement, all the ritual of the Law that He might establish a better and an effective order. Verses 9-14 tell of this new order and

how the offering of himself by Jesus was and is effective. "*By a single offering*" says the writer "*he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified*". Then in verses 15-18 he turns our attention to the Millennial Age of Christ's reign over the nations, with its New Covenant which will write the laws of God on the hearts and minds of men, their sins and misdeeds being remembered no more. Swinging back in thought to the present Age and the position of the Christian Church, in verses 19-25 he exhorts the believers to steadfast faith and assurance in their chosen vocation, the High Calling, increasingly so as they perceive the Millennial Day approaching. Now all this lays down the basis on which any may attain eternal life — whether the church of this Age or the world in the next; the principle is the same. Only by means of the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit will life be attained.

All that has been said up to this point has to do with the removal of sin. That removal implies the consent and desire of the sinner. The offering for sin is there, the life-giving power of Christ; the sustaining grace of the Holy Spirit. All is available for the one who will. But what of the one who does not will, who elects to abide deliberately in sin? This is where verses 26-31 have their place. "*If we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth.*" The Greek has the force of continuous action 'If we be sinning deliberately'. Again it has to be stressed that only in the next Age can it be possible to attain the knowledge of the truth in any genuine sense. There are none, can be more, in this present Age and present life, who cannot claim at least some degree of ignorance, some degree of Adamic imperfection or influence of the Evil One, to hinder and thwart their progress toward, or their desire for, righteousness. In the next Age there will be no such excuse, for God, "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" (1 Tim. 3. 4) and has ordained the characteristics of that Age for that purpose. Only then will it be possible for any man finally to "spurn the Son of God", refuse the life which comes through him and can only come through him, "profane the blood of the Covenant", that New Covenant which was sealed by the death of Christ and promises the recreation of man in the image and likeness of God; "outrage the Spirit of grace", turning away from the manifest power of the Holy Spirit which is in that day to be poured out on all flesh. And if the man thus

flings back in the face of God all that He has done for him and all that He stands ready to give him, what is there left to do? "There no longer remains any sacrifice for sin" says Hebrews. All that the sacrifice for sins has done, all that it can do, has been

offered and rejected. This, and this alone is the unforgivable sin — unforgivable because the sinner steadfastly refuses to be forgiven. God grant that there be not many such!

A. O. Hudson

THE SHIPS OF TARSHISH

*Far away or
close at hand*

One of the minor — and not very important — mysteries of the Old Testament is the location of the land of Tarshish, chiefly notable for the number of occasions "ships of Tarshish" are mentioned. Since these ships are recorded as setting out, alternatively, from the coastal ports of Canaan which meant they headed westward toward Spain, and from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea which implies southward voyages to Africa or India, they cannot all have been going to one single location called Tarshish. The usual — not very illuminating — conclusion has been that Tarshish was somewhere a long way away or perhaps a general name for all the distant places of the earth.

A closer examination of all relevant texts indicates that Tarshish as a place-name seems to refer to some definite land or country to which ships could, and did, go from Canaan, but that the expression "ships of Tarshish" denotes a special kind of ocean-going merchant vessel irrespective of destination.

The most illuminating reference is that in Jonah 1. 3. Jonah *"rose up to fell unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa: and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord"*. This implies that Tarshish was one definite land, that it was reached by sailing westwards through the Mediterranean from Joppa, and that it was a great distance away, so far away that the influence of God did not reach there and Jonah would be beyond his reach. The sea trade in the time of Jonah was in the hands of the Phoenicians, whose central trading city was Tyre, in the coast not far from Israel. Their merchant vessels went regularly to Spain, and out of the Mediterranean in to the Atlantic Ocean and thence to West Africa, to Britain, and to the West Indies and South America — which the Phoenicians had discovered, and with which they had established trading relations, more than two thousand years before Christopher Columbus in turn sailed to America.

The question is, which of these lands in the Tarshish of Jonah?

A clue is afforded by Ezek. 27. 12 which lists the commodities the people of Tyre imported from Tarshish — silver, iron, tin and lead. Of the possible contestants for the title, the only land which produced all four of these metals in ancient times was Britain. Spain could supply silver, iron and lead but not tin. Practically all the tin used in the ancient world came from Cornwall in Britain, for which reason the British Isles were known to the ancients as the Tin Islands. Silvers came from Cornwall, lead from Cornwall and Wales, and iron from Sussex. Jer. 10. 9 says that "silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish" for the manufacture of idols. The reference is to extremely thin sheets of metal made to adhere to the surface of wooden idols by a process which is not now understood and could not be repeated today. Apparently Britain was a manufacturing nation even in those far-off days and British craftsmen found a market for their skill in producing this less than paper-thin silver sheet for the idol constructors of the Middle East.

Ezek. 38. 13 refers to the "merchants of Tarshish and her villages" (mistranslated "young lions" in the A.V.) If Tarshish is Britain the villages would be the outlying islands, the Isles of Scilly, Wight, Man and Thanet (then an island although now joined to Kent) all of which were well known to the Phoenicians, Scilly and Wight being used as landing points and warehouse bases. Napoleon's scornful reference to Britain as a "nation of shopkeepers" has an earlier parallel here; Tarshish was a nation of merchants.

Two other references to Tarshish as a locality are Psa. 72. 10 and Isa. 66. 19. In both cases there is an association with islands or coastlands (the Hebrew word can mean either) and the inference is that the distance is great; Tarshish is a long distance away.

In Isaiah's memorable foreview of the destruction of Tyre at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,

fulfilled some two centuries after that prophet's death (Isa. ch. 23), the inhabitants of Tyre are recommended to flee to Tarshish as the only means of escape from the all-conquering Babylonians (Isa. 23. 6). The "ships of Tarshish" are told that Tyre can no longer receive them and conversely that ships will no longer come to Tyre from Tarshish. All this confirms what is already well known to have been the case, that in pre-Christian times the Phoenicians carried on an active and lucrative trade with the south of Britain.

A final clue is given by the conferring of the name "*tarshish*" to a certain precious stone known to the Israelites. In the A.V. the word is translated "beryl", occurring seven times, twice as one of the stones in the High Priest's breast-plate (Exod. 28. 20; 30. 13), three times in Ezekiel describing the glorious brilliancy of the cherubim and once in Daniel describing the radiance of the visiting angel. The beryl is a green stone and quite inappropriate to the texts in which the word occurs — an angel shining in a green glory is hardly the kind of vision one would expect. It is believed by scholars that "*tarshish*" really refers to amber, which has a translucent golden appearance and was much prized by the ancients; the colour of amber is much more appropriate to the references in Ezekiel and Daniel. (The three instances where "amber" does appear in the O. T., as a translation of *chasmal*, actually refer to brightly polished copper or electrum, a gold-silver alloy). Now the amber used by the ancients in the Middle East came only from one source, Britain. The British obtained it from Scan-

dinavia, where it had and still has its origin. Thus "*Tarshish stone*" obviously meant the precious stone obtained from Tarshish, and this seems to pin-point Britain as the land known by that name.

"Ships of Tarshish" are associated with Tyre, with King Solomon and King Jehoshaphat. It is evident that the name was applied to large ocean-going merchant vessels of the type engaged in the trade with Britain irrespective of the part of the world to which they sailed. Thus in 1 Kings 10. 22 and 2 Chron. 9. 21 Solomon was associated with Hiram king of Tyre in sending a fleet of such ships to Ophir for gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. The round trip occupied three years and Ophir is thought to have been located either in South Africa or in India, probably the former. Again in 1 Kings 22. 48 and 2 Chron. 20. 36 Jehoshaphat essayed to repeat this expedition and had ships built for the purpose but they were wrecked before they set out. Perhaps the Israelites were not such good shipbuilders as the Phoenicians of Tyre! Isaiah 23 and Ezek. 2. 25 associate ships of Tarshish with Tyre, and Psalms 48. 7 speaks of such ships being wrecked by the east wind, which is almost certainly the "Levanter" of the Mediterranean, so that these ships did not belong to the Ophir trade but to that carried on in the west — Spain, Britain, Central America, West Africa. It might well have been that in those far-off days, nearly three thousand years ago, our ancestors in Britain knew something of and had contact with the lands and peoples made familiar to us in the pages of the Old Testament.

D. Nadal

SURPASSING WORTH

*An application
of Phil. 3*

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comfortable unto his death." (Phil. 3. 10).

Our first parents enjoyed fellowship with their Maker before sin entered the world. When they disobeyed God's law, a barrier came between the Creator and his creation upon earth, and the sublime communion was severed. So through the story of mankind the search for God has continued. The Bible reflects much of that quest for truth.

In Gen. 5. 22 it is recorded "Enoch walked with God". Later, Abraham was favoured with God's friendship because of his faith (Jas. 2. 23). Of Mo-

ses the great leader of Israel it is written "... *the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*" (Exod. 33. 11). The kings and statesmen of Israel who followed the example of their law-giver led God's people to victory and prosperity. The prophets and poets urged their fellow countrymen to seek the Lord and cultivate his friendship above everything else. "*Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth: for in these*

things I delight saith the Lord." (Jer. 9. 23-24).

As a nation Israel failed to respond to this great privilege. They treated God in much the same way as their heathen neighbours treated the false gods and worshipped idols. To them he was in a far-distant heaven, unconcerned with the intimate details of daily life. They tried to appease his justice for their wickedness by animal sacrifices and religious ritual instead of the penitent spirit and contrite heart. Thus when Jesus entered the world the majority of Israel knew nothing of true religion nor the right way to approach God.

Through the example and teaching of their Master, the disciples learned to look upon God as a Father who was interested in all men and women and in the whole of his creation. Speaking of sparrows Jesus said, "*... and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father*". (Matt. 10. 29). Jesus preached a God who "so loved that he gave" and of a Father who desired reconciliation with, and the friendship of his children. In life Jesus made this teaching more real, for they could see him with their own eyes and He shared their human lives. Still clearer did the relationship become when Jesus called them brethren and offered them a share in his life above. During the last few hours in the upper room just before his death, the Master spoke of the most profound truth that was ever presented to human hearts and minds. Illustrating with the familiar picture of a vine He showed how their lives were to become completely united to his and they would become fully dependent upon him. In the opening words of his prayer recorded in John 17 Jesus states this teaching in its most simple and most complete form, "*This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*" Jesus died to make this possible and after Pentecost, with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, it became a wonderful reality. Now they understood Jesus' words "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world", for as they went forth to witness and suffer for his sake they knew their Master was with them. No longer were they acting under the impulse to human selfishness as they had been before Pentecost. Nor were their motives and sentiments controlled by what they could get for themselves. They served a risen Lord, who spoke and acted through them. When they left weak He made them strong. When they were downcast and sad He comforted and lifted them up. He brought

them through persecution and martyrdom; in the moment of death Stephen glimpsed the Lord he knew and loved so dearly.

Saul of Tarsus saw Jesus of Nazareth on the Damascus road and from that day forward he learned to walk with him. He no longer took the road of his own choice. Jesus was his guide and companion. Twice in the Acts it is revealed that the Lord appeared to him concerning the course of his life. (Acts 22. 17-18 and 23. 11). Along the dusty highways, amid the throngs of the Mediterranean cities, or in the darkness of a Roman prison, Paul had the same fellowship with his Lord. The young converted graduate of the Temple became tempered and mellowed with passing years of friendship with his unseen companion. Yet even when he had reached Rome and was writing to the Philippian Church he penned these words "*... that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings . . . Not that I have already obtained this . . .*" He had not fully entered into the many aspects of this fellowship but also wrote "*I press on to make it my own; because Christ Jesus has made me his own*" (Phil. 3. 10-12 R.S.V.).

When, during his trial at Rome, his Christian brethren forsook him, Paul wrote to Timothy that the Lord stood by him and strengthened him. (2 Tim. 4. 17). He was reaching the end of his long pilgrimage and the friend with Jesus had ripened into maturity, and was able to testify "*I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*" As he trusted in life, so he was able to trust in death, until the day dawn and he should see his Master face to face.

The secret which Paul learned about our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus is open to every child of God. None who truly seek him are turned away, for "the Father seeketh such". Few are prepared to pay the price of this friendship. To those who yield their whole lives to him, Jesus gives in return an immeasurable love and devotion which has to be experienced to be believed. Only those who have enjoyed his quiet times in the secret place, whether in the lonely room or out on the hillside, can know the joy and peace which his presence can give. The time of personal fellowship each day with the Lord is the key to the victorious life. In the time of quiet prayer and meditation on the Scriptures, He speaks to our hearts and solves the problems of daily

living. It is sad that many who claim to follow Jesus never discover this secret place. Others who once enjoyed its comfort and its power no longer find time to "come apart and rest awhile". They are too busy on active service in Christian work to bother with their Master. Perhaps they become too engrossed in an academic study of the Bible so that their personal knowledge of the Saviour has grown dim and hazy. His friendship brings them no thrill of delights as it once did. While speaking to his followers on conditions of discipleship Jesus made it clear that we must love him more than we love anybody or anything else on earth. There can be nothing half hearted about our attachment to him. Every aspect of daily living became subordinated to his will. The words of Paul in Phil. 3, 12 bear repeating "... because Christ Jesus has made me his own". He made us his own at the cost of his flesh and blood. He does not offer us a philosophy for life or a religious dogma to believe. He offers us himself as a bridegroom longs to share his life with his bride. Can we withhold any part of our lives or fritter away our time on anything else?

Home life receives a new atmosphere when Jesus becomes the head of the household. Frayed tempers are sweetened by the reminder that Jesus is near, and cool relationships are reconciled beneath

the smile of his love. Irksome duties are willingly done "for him" and He shares the family sorrows. It is easier to bear unpleasantness or insult when we remember that Jesus died for our neighbour as well as for us. As we venture forth each day, we do so with our hand clasped by Jesus. We view our daily task differently knowing that He is watching us. Our contacts in office or factory, school or shop become a means of grace whereby our actions if not our words can testify to the life "within". Paul wrote to the Galatians *"I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"* (2, 20). Do our unbelieving relatives, friends and acquaintances ever see Christ living in us? A soul conscious of God's nearness can never act on the assumption that "what the eye doesn't see the heart won't grieve over". His eye sees everything and his heart must be sometimes grieved by our words and actions.

Some day, as with Paul, our earthly pilgrimage will draw to its close; shall we then have the same conviction as Paul? Will our affection and devotion to the Lord be such that there will be only a very thin veil of flesh separating between us? Is it not worth discarding every earthly interest in order that we might win Christ?

A. O. Hudson

THE WAY OF HOLINESS

A Vision of long ago

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called 'The way of holiness'; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there; and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35, 8-10).

Isaiah's first book of prophecy closes on this word. His second book, which starts at chapter 40 and continues to the last chapter of the prophecy, was written at a later period in his life and reflects the clear understanding of the Divine Plan which had come to him in consequence of a life-time spent in pondering the ways of God and submitting to the leading of the

Holy Spirit. In between these two books, there is a little section (chaps. 36 to 39) of history dealing with the wonderful events of the reign of King Hezekiah — the shadow returning on the sundial, the destruction of Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem, and so on. These few verses at the end of chapter 35 therefore are important: they stand as the climax and sequel to all the visions of judgment and of blessing that occupied the thoughts and the pen of the prophet during the first twenty years or so of his ministry.

It is for that reason we apply this 35th chapter to the Messianic Age and the conditions under which life will then be lived. It is that age to which the prophet has been looking all through his prophecy. Now and again, as in the 11th and 12th and 25th and 32nd chapters, Isaiah breaks out into short, glowing descriptions of the reign of blessing, but in the main his burden is that of the disaster to which human misrule will first bring the world, and the retributive

judgment which will come upon it in consequence, culminating in the breakdown of this present world order in Armageddon and the swift action of God in setting up his Kingdom in its place that He might bring the blessings of life and happiness to "whosoever will" of all men. It is not until Isaiah reaches the end of his prophecy here in this 35th chapter that he draws that eloquent pen-picture which because of its appealing beauty has become known as *the Millennial chapter*.

The "Highway of Holiness" is the term that is used to describe the course of mankind in the Age yet to come. It is contrasted with the "Broad Road to Destruction" which is being followed by men in general today, and the "Narrow Way" which symbolises the progress made toward the Heavenly Kingdom by the disciples of Christ in this present Gospel Age. The "Highway of Holiness" is the road of the future.

Isaiah, writing under the guidance of the Holy spirit, evidently had in mind that idea of a straight, level road leading directly up to and into the Holy City, "*whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord*" (Psa. 122. 4). The word itself means a raised-up, built high road as distinct from country lanes or pathways. Our modern arterial roads, driven straight through hills and across valleys, are good illustrations of what Isaiah meant. Along such a high road, pressing forward with all haste, he saw a great company of people, the redeemed of the Lord, travelling towards the Holy City with songs of praise on their lips and everlasting gladness in their faces. Exactly the same picture is given us in the book of Revelation (21. 17) where the ransomed multitudes of humanity have the opportunity of coming up to the gates of the city and passing inside, leaving behind them for ever all their uncleanness and defilement and sin. That is what Isaiah says "*the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those*". It is intended for the unclean, but they will no longer be unclean when they have traversed its length and arrived at the shining portals. The cleansing will be effected as they go forward. It is something like this that is meant by the reference in Rev. 22 to the River of Life proceeding out of the Throne in the city, and "*in the midst of the street of it*" the Trees of Life, the fruit of which was for food and the leaves "*for the healing of the nations*". The River comes out from the City to meet men; the Highway goes up into the city to take men there; and the Trees of Life line both Highway and River so that

the ransomed peoples might receive healing and life as they progress more and more into the Divine likeness.

In later times, after Isaiah had been gathering to his fathers, there was a magnificent high road in the great city of Babylon, a road that may even have existed in Isaiah's own time although it attained its greatest splendour under the famous King Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Daniel. It is possible that Isaiah, who seems to have seen much of the future glories of Babylon in prophetic vision, did see something of Nebuchadnezzar's great "Processional Way", the "*Aibur-shabu*" as it was called, as Daniel saw it in reality over a hundred years later. In fact he did, one can imagine him contrasting that ornate pagan road with the pure holy way crowded with its throng of pilgrims progressing to Zion. Nebuchadnezzar's road, leading from his splendid palace to the mighty Temple of Bel, the god of Babylon, was level and straight, raised up above the streets of the city, a built up causeway just like Isaiah's Highway of Holiness. It was constructed of beautiful white limestone along its centre, with coloured stones on either side, flanked by walls adorned with the figures of lions throughout their length, white lions with yellow manes and yellow lions with red manes, on a background of vivid colour. Could that be one reason why Isaiah said of *his* Highway "No lion shall be there?" On the great feast days colourful processions passed along that road of Nebuchadnezzar's coming, out from the palace which Daniel knew so well, through the Gate of the goddess Ishtar, a structure something like our Marble Arch, but bigger and adorned with six hundred sculptured lions, bulls and dragons, then right across the industrial quarter of the city where perhaps the sad Jewish captives looked on with feelings of revulsion and despair, past the great Tower, whose top seemed to reach unto heaven, one of the tallest of buildings ever erected by man, and so at last into the glittering Temple where Nebuchadnezzar had put the holy vessels from Jerusalem (Dan. 1, 2), where the eight huge bronze serpent-dragons guarded the entry. That was a highway symbolic of the pomp, the materialism and the sin of this world. Of all its pageantry and all its splendour not a vestige now remains — its very site is a ruined and weed-strewn waste, a habitation of jackals and owls. But Isaiah's Highway of Holiness is yet to come. Its glory is one that will endure for ever, and its travellers, pressing on with songs and gladness, will find that it leads them surely and safely home.

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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

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth!" (Rom. 14. 4).

It is so fatally easy to value another brother's or sister's service by one's own bushel measure. We all desire very earnestly to serve our Lord and the interests of His Kingdom. We generally take delight in speaking of Him and of the Divine Plan to any who will listen. And we all have our own ideas of how best the Gospel may be preached. Is it the very intensity of our own earnestness in this direction that makes us want every other bondsman of Jesus Christ to serve in just the same manner that seems good to us? Is it the measure of our own personal talent and success in one particular field of ministry that blinds us to the possibility of effective service being rendered in another manner, *in other hands*?

"There are diversities of gifts . . . there are differences of administrations . . . but it is the same God that worketh" (1 Cor. 12. 4-6). When will we learn that the grandest characteristic of all God's handiwork is variety, and that He has ordained the accomplishment of His service in such a fashion that "every joint" supplieth a contribution fitted to its place in the body?

Says one, loftily, secure in his ability and privilege to address the assemblies as befits the office of an elder in the Church, "there is no doubt that the preaching of the Word is the great means the Lord has ordained for the spiritual growth of His people." All very well — but what discouragement to the brother who is temperamentally quite unable to stand before an audience and deliver a prepared discourse, but in his own quiet way can lead a study circle in leisured discussion of the Scriptures to the very real edification of his fellows

It was teacher's birthday. For weeks beforehand

her pupils had been busy making pretty aprons and tending little plants in pots to give her on the day, for this teacher was greatly beloved. At length lesson time was over and they crowded round with their offerings, stepping back with gratified smiles as the teacher expressed her surprise and delight at each successive gift. Last of all came the "black sheep" of the class, grubby and untidy, half hesitating and half defiant, avoiding the amused looks of his classmates as he extended a tightly clenched fist and deposited into teacher's hand — a hot and sticky piece of butterscotch and three marbles.

But that teacher was wise — wiser than many who have attained eldership in the assemblies. "Oh, how lovely" she cried, smiling down at the anxious little face below her. "It's years since anybody gave me marbles for my birthday; and I just adore butterscotch."

The grubby one made his way back to his desk, head held high and face radiant. He loved his teacher, and he had so feared his gift would be rejected, but she had understood. He had done what he could . .

Brethren in the Lord! Be very careful how you disparage the service another is trying to render, just because you "cannot see what good it will do". You may be the means of dashing the enthusiasm of one who will never be able to serve in the big things, as you are privileged to serve, but is nevertheless trying to contribute some small mite to the work of the Master Whom we all love. *"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."*

AOH

Gone from us

Sister Vera Musk (Bury)

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

A. O. Hudson

DANIEL IN BABYLON**16. At the End of the Days***The story of a great
man's faith*

The old man's task was done. He sat, quietly scanning the little pile of tablets the writing upon which he had just completed. There would be no more to put on record. The revealing angel had said his last word, and departed. The story had been told, ranging far into futurity, into that dim time when God, rising up in judgment, would have abolished evil and brought in everlasting righteousness. And Daniel was old, too old to take in any more, too old to do any more writing. He began to realise that now. He had to accept the fact that his life's work was finished and he must lay down the responsibility and wait for the call. What was it the angel had said? "*Thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*" He began to feel that was what he needed — rest. He had led a full and busy life; survived hazards and dangers; administered great tasks and discharged heavy responsibilities; manifested sterling allegiance to God in the face of opposition and persecution. Now he was ready to yield himself to the care of God whom he had served so faithfully. He prepared himself for the rest of death knowing of a surety that at the end of the days he would stand in the resurrection of the just and see with his own eyes the reality of the visions he had just now recorded. With that he was content.

Daniel's final revelation led him far beyond the political events and foreshadowings of his own time. It spoke, not only of kings following kings, and empires following empires, but also of the gradual emergence, on the stage of world history, of a determined and calculated enemy of all righteousness and goodness, an enemy that would at the last stand up to oppose the power of God come forth to win the world for himself, and be utterly destroyed before that power. It spoke of the kingdom which will never pass away, the world in which God's will shall be done as it is done in heaven; of the resurrection of the dead and the triumph of the righteous; of all those glorious themes which coloured the words of the prophets and inspired their hearers. It set the seal on his work of sixty years and constituted him instructor for the coming twenty-five centuries of prophetic study.

It is probably true that Daniel never understood much of the detailed prophetic meaning inherent in that angelic revelation of world history which consti-

tutes chapters 11 and 12 of his book. Even today there is considerable uncertainty and difference of opinion as to the right interpretation of much of these passages. Admittedly the opening verses of chapter 11 deal with matters which would have been plain enough; he had already learned, eleven years earlier, in the third year of King Belshazzar (Chap. 8) that the Persian power would one day give way to that of Greece. Although that event was still two centuries away the influence of Greece was already being felt in Daniel's time and he would not find it difficult to interpret that part of Chapter 11. But after that the story went into details which must have been completely incomprehensible to the aged prophet. He could only have come to the conclusion which Jesus at a later date had to impress upon his own disciples, that there would be "wars and rumours of wars", that "nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, but the end is not yet". After a lifetime of studious and devoted waiting upon God to know when the golden time of blessing was destined to break upon the world, he eventually had to accept the Divine decree, which those other disciples had in their day and turn also to accept. "*Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but my Father only.*" There is a lesson in that for all Christian students of prophecy. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that, no matter how closely imminent the words of the Book and the signs of the times make the Day of Deliverance appear to be, the day and hour is locked up in the counsels of the Most High. It may be an age hence; it may be tomorrow night. We have to be ready for either eventuality.

Although Daniel would not be able to anticipate the detailed outworking in history of the strange story he had written on the tablets, there were certain embedded principles which he would be able to follow. He was of course by no means the first Hebrew prophet to be used by the Holy Spirit of God to transmit knowledge of God's designs for the end of time. Joel, Isaiah, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Ezekiel, all had spoken and written of those things in previous years and Daniel would assuredly have possessed and been familiar with their writings. He was by no means a stranger to the general tenor of Divine revelation concerning happenings of the End. This crowning revelation, coming to him at the end of his life, was in

considerable degree supplementary to what he already knew from his studies in the books of the earlier prophets. He must have been familiar with the prospect of a day to come when the hosts of the north, the enemies of Israel, would come out of their place to invade and destroy the chosen people, and God would intervene with the powers of heaven to destroy those forces of unrighteousness and deliver them. The factor which was new to Daniel in his own revelation was the delineation on the one hand of a personal figure who would be the Divine Leader and champion in this battle — one like the Son of Man; Michael the archangel — and on the other hand the crystallisation of all those world forces allied against God, the Antichrist, into one figure.

It is to Daniel that we owe the first shadowy silhouette of that dark, dread figure which has so intrigued — one might almost say obsessed — Christian thought through the centuries. "*He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*" That was St. Paul's definition in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians. Who or what is he: man demon, or world system? On what stage does he appear; Greek, Roman, or yet to be: Rome, Babylon, Jerusalem? Christians have bandied these questions to and fro for centuries; only in a planned prophetic study can they be properly discussed, and certainly Daniel had no consciousness of the developments of thought into which his dim picture of a godless and all-conquering king who met his doom at last on the sword of Michael would lead.

Perhaps, though, these last two chapters of Daniel's prophecy do sow the seeds of a prophetic distinction which only comes to full flower in the New Testament, the slow but inexorable heading up of all the various and mutually antagonistic forces of evil in the world into one iron spearhead of resistance which as a single unit meets the powers of righteousness and by them is utterly broken. Daniel saw the development of earthly empires and the rising arrogance of man and the lining up of those powers into two camps — the king of the north and the king of the south. Whether we do or do not understand the extremely detailed narrative of the continuing conflict between these two powers does not alter the fact that quite evidently a long period of time is indicated. But when we come to the end of chapter 11 and the time when Michael stands up to wage final war, there is only one enemy. How it comes about, and when,

may or may not be certainly apparent, but here in Daniel, as in the New Testament, God rises up in judgment at the time of his kingdom to find one united enemy, and one only, standing against him. Perhaps the vision of Revelation 19 where the Rider on the white horse comes forth from heaven to do battle, is more lucid. In that scene the powers of earth are clearly seen united as they have never yet been united in history "*to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army*". (Rev. 19. 19).

It might be, then, that Daniel at the end of his life did see, in shadowy outline, a far future day when all the world and every power in the world save that of the relative few who have retained their allegiance to God, has coalesced into one single, well-disciplined, determined fighting force, drawn up in solid phalanx to resist the coming of the Kingdom of God. That must mean that individual jealousies and national rivalries have been laid aside in the face of what all can see is a greater threat. No longer will it be a question of which type of man-made government is to rule in the earth, but whether man-made government is to survive at all. The standing up of Michael, the opening of the heavens and the emergence therefrom of the Rider on the white horse, is the answer.

From that time onward affairs in the world will take a different course. "*At that time thy people shall be delivered.*". "*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.*" "*They that be wise shall shine as the brightest of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*" (Dan. 12. 1-3). The Rider on the white horse; Michael who stands up; these are none other than our Lord Jesus Christ at his Second Advent, come to overthrow the power of evil and establish the Kingdom of God upon earth under which all men and nations will be instructed and led in the ways of God, and the message of repentance, justification and reconciliation preached as never before.

So the old man closed his eyes in complete confidence that it would surely come. He knew and had proved throughout a long life the faithfulness of God. He knew that, like Peter in a time yet to come, he had not followed "cunningly devised fables," but had been an eye-witness of God's majesty. What was it that the saintly Polycarp said when exhorted by the

pagan magistrate to save his life by forswearing Christ? *"Eighty and six years have I served him, and He has never failed me. How can I deny him now!"* Daniel must have felt like that. Perhaps his mind went back to the early days of boyhood, when he first learned of God and his plans for eventual world deliverance, at the feet of his mentor, Jeremiah the prophet. Maybe he recalled dimly, because it was a long time ago, the journey to Babylon as a youth of eighteen or so, and his companions Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael, who together with him had refused the rich foods of the palace and because of their abstemiousness had eventually found the king's favour and attained high office in the State. That would have brought before his failing eyes the picture of the arrogant king whom he had been able to serve so faithfully, and the king's family which he had known so well, the gentle Queen Amytis, and Nitocris the king's daughter who had remained so staunch a friend through all the vicissitudes of a life time and into old age. They were all dead now and only he was left. He remembered the king's dream of the image, and how God had given him the interpretation and the understanding that four great empires were to rule on earth and then the kingdom of God come. The leaping flames of the fiery furnace flickered before his eyes, and again he heard the awed voice of the king *"I see four men, loose, and the form of the fourth is like a son of the gods."* The thin hands moved restlessly; again he was in spirit endeavouring with Queen Amytris to restrain the mad king as he sought to emulate the beasts of the earth, and once more he knew the thrill of hearing the voice of

Nebuchadnezzar, restored to sanity, professing allegiance to the God of heaven. The days of dreams and visions passed across his mind, the visits of the revealing angel, the years of study and reflection when he lived as a private citizen, waiting in patience for the revelation of God from heaven. The shadows in the room gathered and he entered again into the darkness of Babylon's last night, when the Persians besieged the city; the blaze of light at the palace banquet, the writing on the wall, the end of the empire, his brief time of service under the Median King Darius, his deliverance from the lion's den. Rapidly the pictures passed before his mental vision and at the end of them all, a golden glory in the background, he saw the fair beauty of the world that is yet to be, the world in which he himself was to stand, in his lot, at the end of the days.

He could see them more plainly now, those his friends and companions of days so long ago. They had all gone in front of him; he had not seen them for a long time. They were there, waiting for him. In the land yet to be, in the end of the days, he would take up his task with renewed strength and ability, and once more serve God to whom he had been faithful, and who had been so faithful to him; serve him in that glory transcendent that will never pass away.

The room was getting very dark now, and it was quiet, quieter than Daniel had ever known it. The golden visions flickered on, beckoning him . . . He was going to rest now, as the angel had promised . . . but he would stand in his lot . . . at the end of the days.

The End

The Holiness of God

"Be ye holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11. 44). If God's Holiness is thus the only hope for ours, it is right that we seek to know what that Holiness is. The Holiness of God is that infinite perfection by which He keeps himself free from all that is not Divine, and yet has fellowship with the creature, and takes it up into union with himself, destroying and casting out all that will not yield to him. Holiness is that awful glory by which Divinity is separated from all that is created . . . but where the distance and the difference is not that of the creature only, but of the sinner. Who can express, who can realise the humiliation, the reverence, the shame with which we ought to bow before the voice of the Holy One? The connection between the fear of God and holiness is most intimate. *"O fear the Lord*

ye his holy ones" *"Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord"*.

God's Holiness is his glory that separates him by an infinite distance, not only from sin, but even from the creature, lifting him high, above it. But God's Holiness is also his love, drawing him down to the sinner, that He may lift him into his fellowship and likeness, and make him holy as He is only. Holiness is not so much an attribute of God, as the comprehensive summary of all his perfections. It is not holy on earth, but in heaven too, that the Holiness of God is his chief and most glorious attribute. It is not only on earth, but in heaven too, that the highest inspiration of adoration and praise makes mention of his holiness.

(Andrew Murray 19th Cent.)

T. Holmes

MY GLORY ALL THE CROSS

*A discourse on
Galatians 4. 14.*

The self-conceit of man varies little throughout the run of time. Today, as in the days gone by, men dwell upon what they can “do”, varied only from time to time by appeals concerning what they “ought to do”. The more cultured and civilised the man claims to be, the more he is prone to exalt this sense of “something to do”. And, it must be confessed, it is a good thing in this native sphere that man does have within him the urge to “do”. In man’s relation to his fellow man and to his earthly environment this urge to “do” is a great boon. It is this inborn “urge” that is responsible for all progress and reform that man has achieved. It has carved for him a home out of the forest fastnesses; it has linked his dwelling place with roads (both steel and macadam), it has lit his home with electric light; it has made tools to lighten his toil, and utensils to enhance his pleasure. The measure of advancement under this urge is to be seen if we compare the simple life of the forest folk with the normal standards in a land like ours. A few wild herbs and simple fruits, plus a little fish and flesh, comprise the food of the nomad wanderer in the forest glades. His tastes are simple, his methods primitive, his ambitions nil.

Without this “urge to do” most men might have been the same, though be it said, this lethargic life is not the rule solely of the forest glades. It is seen in the slum — the hidden world — within the city gates. Far better that a man should have the “urge to do” than be useless devoid of will and drive and goal.

It is when the ambitious man looks up to God that the mistake is made. He wants God to take note of his work, and place it to his account. He expects God to accord him credit marks for what he has done, and to give him a place, in moral things, higher up the scale, proportioned to what he has achieved. He desires to win the same rewards, in the moral world, that he finds in his mundane sphere. A “go-getter” here expects to be a “go-getter” there. And therein lies the germ of his mistake. God has ordained things otherwise. Heaven’s blessing of sun and rain may have rewarded the toil and sweat in the harvest field (in measure, more or less, since Eden’s days), but Heaven’s disapproval has had to fall like frost and snow on man’s attempted cultivation of his soul. Man has been slow to learn the ways of God in this higher sphere. God has not asked man to “do” but to “re-

ceive” what He has to give. Man does not understand the defiling power of sin, or that his best is far too poor to win him marks in the scale of righteousness. His best attempts have been too short — too low — to win approval before the Highest Law. As it was with Israel, so it has been with all.

“What good thing shall I do” has been the quest of ambitious man from ancient days. It is the quest of men today. It is the quest of ambitious Christian men. In the world of today — the world of the micro chip — the Christian thinks he has a job to do. He thinks he has to guide the democratic urge to its destiny, and bring in a world of peace and brotherhood. He claims the right to Christianise the consciences of every man, and thus to mould the Universal State.

This outlook is the outcome of a great mistake concerning Jesus Christ. He — the historic Christ — is the grand model to which the eyes of men are to be directed. His are the principles that are to be adopted; His are the acts to be copied; and He — the Man of Nazareth — is to be the inspiration of their scheme.

This may seem right in their own eyes, but it is not accordant with the way of God. God’s estimate of Jesus centred in His Cross. God’s appreciation of Him arose out of His consecration unto death. Not merely because He was the Man of Nazareth; not merely because He taught lofty principles; but because He presented Himself as a sacrifice for sin — that was why God loved Him as a faithful Son.

It is not the Teacher from Nazareth that God has set forth in a primary sense to the eyes of men; it is the Victim on the Cross — it is the dying Lamb of God.

This was arrant foolishness to the worldly-wise in Apostolic days (1 Cor. 1 . 23). It is so today. Today it is mainly educated men and women who spurn the Cross, and count it foolishness; some who stand before their flocks as representatives of Him they so grossly misrepresent! They laud His spotless life to the skies, but good as this appreciation is, it is not enough. Someone was needed who could *die* for man — a voluntary sacrifice, by means of which man could be set free from death. And that is what is meant by His Cross.

As he journeyed here and there the Apostle Paul found men ready to boast of this or that. The Jew would make his boast of the Law and of the Priest-

hood, and the Temple and the Holy City. Some would boast of their fasts and alms, and that they were not quite the same as the other man; others would boast of the family tree and the long line of their showy ancestry. The Greek would boast of his learning and culture, of his art and statuary, of his cities and palaces. Among them all there was none to be found who would boast of his incapacity and insufficiency, who would tell the whole world he could not do what he ought; and stood before heaven and earth as one who "came-short". Paul did all this to the full! Not but that he came of as good stock as they; not but that he had "gifts" as excellent as they! But because he had come to know the way of God towards sin — yes and sinners too! He knew that fallen men could not satisfy God's Law, and that to fail in one point was to fail in the whole. He knew the best work of men was as but "filthy rags", and that the filth of men and spotlessness of Christ could never blend. He knew it must be "all" of each, or "none" — "all of man" and "none of Christ," or "all of Christ" and "none of man". And so he stood and told the whole world he could glory, not in himself, but only in the Cross of Christ; that it was his delight to stand, not on his own pitch, but on the foundation of Christ; that his was no desire to keep the Law, but to find shelter behind another Man!

And Paul was unashamed in all this insufficiency in himself, for he found all he needed in Christ. He knew Christ was enough to meet his needs — his very deepest needs — and he knew Him to satisfy

Heaven's demands, its very highest claims, and he was glad to be enwrapped in another's worthiness, and boast of it before the world.

Others may stand aside to scoff, or drown by their concerted shout his boast of Christ — even thus all was well — for by this act he was crucified by the world, and the world was made dead to him. Even so must it be with all who would be found in Christ, not having on them their own righteousness!

In the tremendous world that lies ahead many will make their boast of Christ, of His matchless words, of his lofty principles, of His tender sympathies; but few indeed, judged by the drift of things, will be disposed to boast of his Cross, or take their stand beneath its outspread beam. Men still want to dare and do, to build and plan, to dig and lay their own foundations; but few will be inclined to say "He did it all — He did it all for me!" And so, some day, the Will of God and the will of man must clash, and the will of man, with all his works and pomps must crash, and lie in broken fragments beneath his bruised feet.

For ourselves we would sing: —

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus
We gladly take our stand,
The shadow of a mighty Rock
Within a weary land."

"Content to let the world go by
To know no gain or loss,
My former life my only shame
My glory all the Cross."

Men and women stand in need of Jesus Christ as they have never done before, yet He can only reach them through his Church. Ordinary folk are frustrated by the wild, unrealised claims of scientists and politicians. Two world wars have left a legacy of sorrow, disease and immorality. Broken homes 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 this earth healing sick hearts and sick bodies. He gave them 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 neighbour which will turn his eyes towards Jesus. If we walk each day in the light of the cross, with our own lives bared to the penetrating gaze of the Saviour, we shall reflect light upon the pathway of some lost soul seeking the way to God.

"There are commonly three stages in work for God; first impossible, then difficult, then done."

(Hudson Taylor, missionary.)

Conscience tells us that we ought to do right, but it does not tell us what right is — that we are taught by God's Word.

Henry Clay Trumbull

A. O. Hudson

AARON — THE MAN BEHIND THE PRIEST

He was elder brother of the nation's military leader and deliverer, he himself its first and greatest High Priest, connected by marriage with the royal tribe — but a very ordinary and undistinguished personage of whom nothing noteworthy is recorded. His life left no permanent impress on later generations and he is remembered only on account of the dignity of his office.

Aaron was born in Egypt three years before his more famous brother Moses. Unlike Moses, who was brought up in the royal court and educated in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, he spent his youth in the family circle in the Hebrew territory of Goshen and almost certainly worked as a slave of the Egyptians. There is not much doubt that Amram and Jochebed, his parents, were a devout couple, loyal to God in faith and hope that one day the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled and the people of Israel be restored to the land from which their forefather Jacob had emigrated three centuries earlier. The first eighty years of his life were probably uneventful, marked only by two events. The first, his marriage, at probably round about thirty to forty years of age, to Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, ruling prince of the tribe of Judah, the designated royal tribe through whom Christ would one day come. This union incidentally constituted him an uncle by marriage of Salmon the father of Boaz, the hero of the story of Ruth. The other event, a more saddening one, not many years later, was when his brother Moses, having incurred the wrath of Pharaoh on account of his slaying the oppressive Egyptian overseer, fled into exile in Midian on the other side of Sinai, three hundred miles away, and any dawning hope that Israel's kinsman in the royal court might prove to be the deliverer for which they looked was extinguished. And so Aaron toiled on, hopelessly, not expecting to see his brother again and wondering if God had indeed forgotten to be gracious.

Came Aaron's eightieth year and a few more and life continued as it had done for as far back as he could remember. He could expect another forty years of life but it could only be continued labour and sorrow. He and Elisheba now had four sons but life held out no different prospect and the Divine promise seemed as far away from fulfilment as ever. Of his brother Moses he had heard nothing for forty years past and he did not know if he was even still alive.

He believed that God would one day deliver, and he knew from the records of his people that the four hundred years God had spoken of to Abraham was just about expired and the promised deliverance was due. But the people were still slaves and there was no champion to espouse their cause and lead them to freedom. The old warrior Pharaoh, Thothmes III, who had held them down with so iron a hand, the one who had sought Moses' life forty years ago, was dead these six or seven years or more, but the new Pharaoh, Amen-hotep II, was even more rigid and merciless than his father and it did not seem that any power could ever deliver Israel. And God did seem to have forgotten . . .

"And the Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses" . . . He sat up, rubbing his eyes. Had it been a dream, that authoritative voice, so unlike anything he had heard before. It had been so long since his brother's name had been uttered in his hearing. Despite his many prayers and his constant waiting in faith, God had never spoken to him before. *"Go into the wilderness to meet Moses!"* The tones still rang in his ears, compelling, commanding. He could not banish them from his mind. Somehow he knew them to be from God. The Most High had spoken to him, given him a command. He could do naught else but obey. Slowly he got to his feet.

It was only then that he realised the enormity of his task. He had never been out of Egypt in his life. The expression "the wilderness" was clear to him. That was the term used by the Semitic peoples in Egypt for the district of the sacred mountain of Sinai, sacred to all the peoples of Syria and Canaan and Arabia and the east but not to the Egyptians. In times before their own it was dedicated to Sin the Moon-god — hence its name — the god worshipped by Terah the father of Abraham, but even so it was revered by every Hebrew as the mountain of God. So Aaron must go to Sinai and there he would meet his long-lost brother. But how to get there? He would only have had a vague idea where the mountain was situated. He went to his labour that day in thoughtful mood.

Aaron probably got his directions from some of the Bedouin merchants who were constantly entering and leaving Egypt with their merchandise, like those who brought Joseph into Egypt four centuries

earlier. They were of Semitic race like himself and had no more love for the Egyptians than he, and would readily tell all he wished to know. Then he had the problem of getting across the frontier into the eastern desert. The only crossing point was at Etham where the caravan route passed through for Canaan. Most of the rest was the impassable Red Sea. And Etham was a strongly guarded military garrison post! Perhaps he slipped across under cover of night; perhaps, disguised as a Bedouin, he persuaded some merchant to take him through with his caravan of men and animals. At all events, he attained the other side, and faced his two hundred mile journey. For the first half he had to be circumspect for he was on the road leading to the Egyptian copper mines at Serabit-Khadem in Sinai and there would be frequent detachments of workers and copper convoys and military guards to avoid. After that the going was safer but more arduous. After about three weeks' journeying the huge mass of the holy mountain loomed before him, and there he met Moses.

The rest of that story is well known, how Moses told him that he too had received a Divine command to await his brother here, of the incident of the burning bush and his commission to return to Egypt, confront Pharaoh and demand the liberation of the people of Israel, then lead them to the Promised Land. So the two returned together and presented themselves to their fellows, meeting only with a mixed reception, for a new generation had arisen since Moses fled, and those of his own generation hardly knew him except as the highly placed court favourite who had fled from Pharaoh's wrath forty years ago. But eventually Aaron and Moses did stand before Pharaoh and did lead Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land.

Moses was the man of vision and the man of action; Aaron, quieter and more hesitant. Moses was born to lead and he dominated every situation in which he was involved; Aaron, more easily led and swayed by others and more likely to accede to the wishes of others. But Moses was physically slow of speech whilst his brother was quick and eloquent, wherefore God made of these two a pair that together were able to outwit the machinations of the Egyptians. "I know" said the Lord "that he can speak well". There must have been something in Aaron's powers of expression and the fixed faith in God which vitalised those powers of expression of which the Lord had taken notice, back there in those past years in Egypt.

The weaker side of Aaron's nature comes out in the only two substantial incidents in which he figures during the subsequent Exodus journeyings. The first is that of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32). Moses had been so long upon the mountain with God that the people concluded some disaster had befallen him and he would not return. They demanded of Aaron that he make a graven image of God, like those they had seen in Egypt, to go before them as guide, "*for as for this Moses, the man that brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him*". This is where Aaron, whose authority as chief in the absence of Moses was unchallenged, should have firmly denied the dissidents their way and reminded them of the law they had so recently enthusiastically accepted "thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image". An uncompromising stand at this point would have stopped the rot — for almost certainly only a section, albeit the most vociferous section, would have been clamouring for this innovation — the better sense of the remainder prevail, and the tragic consequences would not have followed. But, weakly, Aaron gave way and acceded to the demand, even taking the lead in collecting gold and having it fashioned into what the Psalmist later scornfully described as "the similitude of an ox that eateth grass". Moses, coming down at last from the mountain, saw all the depravities of idolatrous worship in full swing, and in his wrath threw down the tablets of the Law and dashed them to pieces. To his violent remonstrance Aaron, weakly, blamed the people and excused himself by saying that he cast the gold into the fire "and there came out this calf" which would be comic were it not so tragic. This episode right at the beginning of the Exodus journeys showed up in sharp relief Aaron's unfitness for leadership.

The other occasion, related in Num. 12, concerned the altercation over Moses' wife. Moses, when in exile in Midian, had married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro the Midianite, by whom he now had two sons. (The A.V. in Num. 12 describes her as an Ethiopian woman from which some have surmised that Zipporah was dead and Moses had married again; the truth is that the Hebrew text has "woman of Cush," the Hebrew word for Ethiopia, and it is likely that this is an early copyist's error for Cushan, the general name for the Sinai area from which Zipporah came; see Hab. 3. 7.) Aaron and Miriam their sister apparently started some kind of vendetta against Zipporah. The reason is not stated but it can be in-

ferred. Sooner or later the question of a successor to Moses would arise. Aaron and Miriam were not prepared to tolerate any possibility of a half-Midianite son of Moses succeeding to the position of leader of Israel. Hence the claim that they held equal shares in the leadership. If the Jewish tradition that Miriam was married to Hur of the tribe of Judah has anything in it then she as well as Aaron was connected with the royal tribe and the argument would be that the succession should come through one of them. The Lord took another view and vindicated Moses' authority by striking Miriam with leprosy which was only removed at Moses' supplication. This seems to indicate that Miriam was the principal actor in this conspiracy and Aaron fell in with her, again revealing his inherent indecision and weakness of character. In any case the Lord eventually appointed Joshua to succeed Moses.

The glory of Aaron is that he was called of God to occupy the position of first High Priest of Israel, to represent the people before God in worship and sacrificial ritual, to institute a succession of priests which was the only permanent institution in Israel's history. The system of rule by Judges in the early days gave place to the monarchy, under which kings reigned at Jerusalem, and that in turn to a tributary province of Persia, Greece and then Rome under appointed governors, but all the way through until the time of Christ there were the sons of Aaron in direct line officiating as High Priests. Aaron was a greater man in his official capacity than in his private life. Perhaps it

was intended; by such means the Lord might be indicating that, despite our own personal failings and shortcomings and weaknesses, He can use us to do great things in his service and the execution of his Plan if we are truly and sincerely consecrated to him. That Aaron, despite his human failings, was thus consecrated to God there can be no doubt. He was something like Peter in that he failed grievously on two notable occasions in his life yet made amends by continued faithfulness to his calling to the end. He is honoured to all time by becoming in Scriptural symbolism the head of the system of sacrifice which prefigured the presentation and giving of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world.

Like Moses, he never entered the land. He died, at the age of one hundred and twenty-three, on a mountain in Edom a few months before the hosts of Israel arrived at the river Jordan where they were to cross and take possession. Miriam had already died, ten or more years previously. Moses also was to come to his end before the actual entry. The children of Amram and Jochebed who in the Lord's hand had been the means of freeing Israel from Egyptian slavery and realising the age-old dream of leading them to the Promised Land did not themselves taste the sweets of success. The people entered in; they themselves await the reward of all their endeavours and all their faithfulness in that day when their Lord and ours "makes up his jewels" and recompenses to all men according to their works.

"Do not toil to acquire wealth; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes to itself wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven." (Prov. 23, 4-5 RSV).

Timely advice today, when fortunes are won and lost by unexpected financial crises. A noticeable factor in contemporary society is the intensive and oft-timed frantic endeavour to make money and still more money. Whether it be the manual worker, demanding higher and ever higher wages in proportion to the success of earlier demands, or the business executive working the stock markets, or the housewife buying her lottery tickets, the dominant motive is the acquiring of wealth. And who can blame them when every aspect of modern industry take measures under the pretext of "efficiency" and "streamlining" to increase its profits, and every national government devises ways and means to extract progressively heavier taxes from its citizens? The acquirement of wealth has be-

come the major preoccupation and few are wise enough to know when to desist.

The Wise Man knew better. He knew how transitory a thing is worldly wealth, even apart from the fact that "you cannot take it with you". And this is the important thing. The life we know is but the beginning of life, a caterpillar stage, as it were. Beyond the traditional three score years and ten lies an infinity of expanding life and increasing achievement, and nothing of this world's wealth is of any value in that world, or those worlds, and the life we shall then experience. Good it is for one to acquire wealth in this world if it is used so to do good, and so to enrich character, that one is better fitted for entry into the next stage of life, but that involves knowing "when to desist"; not good at all, said Jesus, to lay up treasure if one is not rich toward God. To be any use in the next world, treasure must be laid up in heaven.

AOH

D. Nadal

THE ... GENTLENESS OF CHRIST

*A study of an
interesting word*

"By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I Paul . . ." (2 Cor. 10. 1 NIV)

Paul had reason to take the church at Corinth to task for their behaviour. They had a number of problems arising out of spiritual pride. Patiently he had dealt with some of these in his first letter to them. In the second he had opened up the wonders of Christian teaching. He also needed to encourage them about generosity to their Judean brethren. Paul did not bully or 'tear strips off them'; rather he appealed to them in the name of their Master who was meek and **gentle**. Gentle is translated from a Greek word which only appears in the New Testament seven times as either a noun or adjective. In his translation, Moffatt uses six different words. He was not alone in finding it difficult to make a translation that can be understood by ordinary Christian readers. In fact, one English word alone cannot convey the meaning of 'epieikes'. Yet it was to the Master himself that Paul directed the Corinthian brethren to turn, for Jesus had expressed the meaning of this word by what he did and the way he spoke. Strangely, in doing so, He created enemies.

One of the most familiar and fascinating uses of this word is in Paul's letter to the Philippians (4. 5) where he writes "*Let your gentleness be evident to all*" (NIV). In the Authorised Version (KJV) it is "*Let your **moderation** be known unto all men*", and while that is no longer a good translation there is an element of truth in the word 'moderation'. Forbearance is another word which helps to understand the meaning of this unusual word. In his valuable book about New Testament words, Professor Barclay writes that a person who has this quality knows "when to relax the law under the compulsion of a force that is higher and greater than law". He also draws attention to Trench's comment that this word "expresses that moderation which recognises the impossibility that cleaves to formal law".

How then was Jesus 'gentle' to the people he met? It is worth noting that Matthew chapters 5-7 in the Sermon on the Mount he states the Law of the Kingdom. In those sayings, Jesus gives ethical demands which go far beyond the commandment of the old covenant given through Moses. As the Lord left the site of the "Sermon on the Mount" he is confronted with a man with leprosy. The dreaded disease was

one which separated the sufferers from the rest of society. The requirements of Leviticus 13 were strict and brought exclusion from all religious, social and family gatherings. Leprosy was widespread from antiquity according to Rendle Short and Israel had a more sensitive code of hygiene practice than any other nation. Practice of the Levitical law concerning leprosy continued into the Christian era and during the Middle Ages the priests often read the burial service over those suffering from the disease. They were as good as dead! It was therefore astonishing that a man with this disease should approach Jesus without hesitation. He must have been acquainted in some way with Jesus' kindness. The man's attitude was respectful but trusting. He didn't demand attention but was confident that Jesus could heal him. The Lord did not prolong the man's agony any longer but filled with compassion for him, reached out to touch him. This in itself would have a wonderful healing affect on the diseased man's mind, already so injured by the way he had been treated. Some have objected to the idea that Jesus would touch the man while he still had leprosy because that would be breaking the law. It is argued that the disease must have been cured before Jesus made contact with the man's skin. Campbell Morgan supports this view. But to explain away the situation like that loses some of the wonder of Jesus' work among ailing folk. It is parallel to Jesus' assertion that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. It was God's covenant love which gave the Law for human benefit, not just for the sake of making people keep rules. The laws about leprosy had been lovingly prescribed to help Israel's society understand the need for hygiene and the danger of infection, thus preventing the spread of the disease. Leprosy was the result of man's sin, not the desire of an implacable god to cause suffering. Jesus was doing good not harm when he touched the leprous man. He knew the disease had no power over him. Symbolically, he was reaching out to humanity to save them from their wrong doing. By touching the man, Jesus was not defying the law and he demonstrated this by telling the man to go and show himself to the priest. This is one example of how Jesus was able to rise above law. Praise God, there have been those who have followed Jesus, like Paul Brand, who have reached out the hand of love

to the sufferer with leprosy. Here clearly is an example of the 'mind of Christ'. — an attitude which must be in those who follow Him. This was Jesus' gentleness 'epieikes' in action.

Fairly early in Jesus' ministry he reached out in a different way to invite a tax collector to become a disciple (Matt 9). Law abiding Jews were very antagonistic towards their countrymen who became public servants of Roman administration. They regarded them in much the same way as quizzlings were viewed during the Second World War: traitors to Israel. It is doubtful if religious Jews could really make a charge against them stick, on the basis of Moses' Law, except that these men were notorious for cheating by making people pay more taxes than Rome demanded. Thus they were branded thieves and liars. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, admitted this, when Jesus visited the wealthy city of Jericho (Luke 19). Both of these men were descendants of Abraham and in need of help. Such help was not forthcoming from men whose chief aim was to make everyone keep the law in a way they believed they kept it themselves. They were bent on watching whether others would fail in minute detail, and had no intention of reaching out to souls that were sick. Jesus reminded them of Hosea's words as they adversely commented on his eating with 'lawbreakers'. "*I desired mercy and not sacrifice*". The word mercy is the same as in Micah 6. 8 (LXX). Jesus truly fulfilled the law by searching for sinners, to win them to himself by recognising potential repentance and goodness and offering compassion that could forgive and make whole. He was successful in healing minds and bodies because he approached gently rather than critically. The book of Hosea is a commentary on the word 'epieikes'.

As he went on his way in response to Jairus' plea to heal his daughter, Jesus was touched by a woman who had suffered a disease for a long time and which should have excluded her from mingling in such crowds as thronged around Him. Again Jesus' whole approach to this woman was extremely sensitive. He did not upbraid her for being there in her condition, nor did he criticise her for a superstitious act as some might have done. "*Daughter, your faith has healed you,*" he said and so declared to all, that she now had as much right as anyone to be present in that crowd. Jostled by unfeeling people who did not recognise Him, Jesus knew at once when one had reached out in faith to Him and His response was

both tender and comforting.

He went on to the synagogue ruler's house. He was entering the home of one who might have sought to exclude Him from a place of worship. Jairus heard the reassuring words "*Don't be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.*" It would have been impossible to make that intimate moment of restoration to the parents in quietness and peace if the wailing mourners had been present. There is no thought of dramatic demonstration in raising the dead. Only the desire to reunite the family, with a practical suggestion that the little girl was naturally hungry. As with the raising of the Nain widow's son, Jesus had no fear of touching the dead man or that upon which he lay. Every act is characterized by gentleness and humility. (Luke 8).

In John's gospel, chapter 8, there is an account of a woman brought to Jesus, because she had been caught in the act of adultery. While accepting that this story appears to be out of place in John 8 or even in John's gospel at all, most scholars now recognise its value in the Gospel tradition. "Few doubt that it is a genuine incident in Jesus' life" and are "of the opinion its authenticity is stamped upon its character" to quote just two of them. Should any feel that it is wrong to quote John 7.53 — 8.11, the accounts of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan women in John 4 or the woman in Simon the Pharisee's house in Luke 7 adequately reflect the same sensitive manner of dealing with people in that position.

The teachers of the law who brought the woman to Jesus (John 8. 3) probably did so because they were trying to trap him into breaking the Law of Moses by defending the woman or defying Roman law by agreeing to the death penalty. Only Rome could deal with capital crime. As on other occasions Jesus avoided breaking any law and showed that the real 'law breakers' were those 'models' of false piety, the lawyers themselves, who didn't care who they hurt. It has been suggested that the only person present who had the right to throw stones was Jesus himself — the only one there who had totally kept the law in every respect since birth. Jesus addresses the alleged criminal by 'woman' — a name used for his own mother as well as others. This in itself was a mark of respect. He gently warns her to go and sin no more. Jesus does not tell the poor soul that she could do as she liked. He knows the value of good rules. He also knows that "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*"; and that gentle-

ness and patience is the best way of winning such hearts for God. Jesus knew that when religious men stood people in the dock and labelled them guilty, the society those men had created was the real criminal. It was they who must ultimately appear at the bar of their own consciences before the Judge of all the Earth. Those who hope some day to 'judge the world' must take note of the way Jesus handled such cases and follow his example **now**.

Our Lord had been the one who had cried out to the crowds *"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls, For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Not long after he had said this and following one of those sad confrontations about healing on the

Sabbath, Matthew recalls the words of Isaiah *"He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the street. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out till he leads justice to victory."* (Matt. 11. 28, 29; 13. 19, 20). No wonder all peoples of the Earth will put their hope in Him. *"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father"*. All this because He didn't grab equality, allowed others to treat him like a slave and humbled himself in total obedience to death on a cross. To be with Him, we must be like Him, and have his attitude towards everyone.

WAITING

"The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Rom. 8. 14 RSV).

This is one of those statements which can only be understood when it is accepted that God is actively working in history to bring about a desired consummation which is yet future. There is nothing static about such a statement; it does not define a condition of life or society which can be expected to remain the same generation after generation into infinity. Here is a plain indication of *"that far-off Divine event, to which the whole creation moves"*. Man, says Paul in this noteworthy passage, is at present subject to futility. There will be no disagreement or dispute as to that. One day future, he also says, men will be set free from this bondage and obtain liberty. The verse above quoted equates that desirable end with the *"revealing of the sons of God"*. To anyone acquainted with Scripture terminology this can only refer to the manifestation of the Christian Church to all mankind *"in glory"* at the consummation of the Age (*"end of*

the world" in common parlance) in association with the Lord Christ at His Second Advent at which time He puts into operation the second stage of the Divine Plan for human development — the rule of righteousness. This doctrine and expectation finds no favour with quite a few serious Christians who feel more impressed with the claims for orderly evolution of the human society toward Christian ideals than for the catastrophic or authoritarian intervention of God Most High to save men from their own folly, but the doctrine is a true one nevertheless. The fact must be faced, now in this Twentieth Century, that man, after thousands of years on this planet and possessed of marvellous powers of perception and invention, is creating problems of survival far faster than he is solving them, and the end can only be disaster — unless God intervenes. It remains now for the Church of today to rise to its destiny and be worthy of being thus *"revealed"* when the time comes.

AOH

An Apology

We must thank the several readers who have drawn attention to the forty or so mistakes in the printing of the May/June issue of the BSM. The editor must apologise for these and steps have been

taken to try and avoid such a situation arising in the future. We will gladly provide the accurate text if requested of a particular article.

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU

1. A Young Man Speaks

A study in
Job 32 – 37

The discourse of Elihu on the supremacy and character of God occupies six chapters in the Book of Job, six chapters of the most remarkably cogent reasoning. It stands in marked contrast to the materialistic philosophies of Job's other three friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. Twenty-eight chapters of the book are taken up with the debates of these three with Job, hazarding theory after theory to account for the enigma of a righteous man suffering adversity without apparent justification. None of them satisfied Job; "*miserable comforters are ye all*" was his bitter comment. It seems that every possible philosophy had been advanced, every school of thought its thesis put forward, but none furnished the answer. Then did the younger man Elihu, who up to that point had played the part of a silent listener to the discussion, break into the conversation with his contribution. The distinguishing feature of that contribution is that Elihu brings in the relationship of God to Job, and contends for the fixed principle that God is all-wise, all-just, all-loving, all powerful, working to a set purpose, and doeth all things well. His argument is not a fatalistic one, not a plea for passive acceptance because it is impossible to do anything else. It is a call to co-operation with God and a willing participation in what God is doing to the extent that human powers allow, in recognition that even though much of the affairs of life are mysterious and difficult to understand, the fact that God is in control and pursuing his intended course is a guarantee that all will eventually be well.

The importance of this to the Christian lies in the fact that the Book of Job is a dramatic representation of the human race, submerged in suffering, afflicted by the many aspects of sin which exist in the world, despairing in face of the apparent indifference of God and without hope that things will ever be any better. The philosophies of the three friends represent all that human philosophy has to offer by way of explanation or comfort: the insight of Elihu pictures the evangel which comes from God by the ministry of those who are the messengers of God. If only for that reason, these six chapters of the Book of Job constitute a study of absorbing interest.

The setting of the Book is in patriarchal times, somewhere between those of Abraham and Moses. The land of Uz was the terrain, now desert, then fertile,

lying between the Jordan and Euphrates, where Arab peoples, the descendants of Shem, roamed and mingled as nomadic tribes. Eliphaz the Temanite was a descendant of Abraham through Esau; Bildad the Shuhite through Abraham's wife Keturah. Of Job himself no indication of ancestry is given but he was evidently of the same general stock. Elihu could trace his line back to Nahor the brother of Abraham. We are given therefore a picture of Semitic tribesmen at the time the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and therefore somewhere about sixteen centuries before Christ.

There is every reason for thinking that Elihu was an historic personage, that he did live at about the time above indicated and that the conversations recorded in the Book of Job actually took place. It is possible — even probable — that the entire Book was written by Elihu. The only place in which the first person is used, apart from quotation speeches, is in Chapter 32. 16, where Elihu speaks of himself to the reader. Since he was the one who did the most listening throughout the discussions he was probably the best qualified to report what was said. And the fact, asserted by scholars, that the words of Elihu are more strongly marked by Aramaic forms of speech than those of any of the other speakers is strong incidental evidence that the book does describe actual happenings, as Elihu, a descendant of Nahor the ancestor of the Aramaic people would certainly speak a dialect distinctive in that respect from the others.

So Elihu embarks upon his discourse. At first, in chapter 23, he commences by introducing himself and justifying his intervention (verses 1 to 14) then goes on to remark the astonishment of his seniors at his temerity (verses 15 to 22). After this his discourse falls naturally into four sections, each clearly marked by an opening phrase inviting attention. Chapter 33 speaks of the *Wisdom* of God, wisdom exemplified in Creation (verses 1 to 7), revelation of himself to man, (verses 8 to 18), that although the curse of sin must lead to death God has provided a means of escape from death (verses 19 to 28) so that the original Divine ideal and purpose is achieved at last; Job must take heed to this fact (verses 29 to 33), Chapter 34 describes the *Justice* of God, and in verses 1 to 4 Elihu appeals for justice in our thinking, that while Job insisted on his own virtue (5 to 9) Elihu must

insist on the inherent justice of God's ways (10 to 12) governing righteously, judging impartially and swiftly (13-37). From this he passes to the *Love* of God in chapters 35 and 36 up to verse 21. God has infinite patience with men (35. 1-16) men are disciplined now by his love but are ultimately to inherit fullness of joy (36. 1-12), even although those who are impervious to Divine love must suffer the wages of their sin (13-14). Job therefore is exhorted to trust in God's love rather than in his own appeal to God for justice (15-21). Finally comes Elihu's eulogy on the *Power* of God, in chapter 36. 22-33 and chapter 37. He stresses the insignificance of man compared with Divine greatness (22-26) and launches upon a description of the powers of Nature as illustrative of the power of God (37. 10-12). But these agents of his power are themselves agents of his work for mankind and have some direct bearing upon man's relation to God (13-18), so man is speechless before God; he can only bow his head and accept the revelation; for this reason men reverence him (19-24).

So Elihu supersedes all the explanations offered by the three friends with the categorical assertion that there is no explanation. Job's adversity can only be seen against the background of God's eternal purpose and Job must accept the fact that whatever God has permitted is an integral part of that purpose and will eventually be seen in complete harmony with the wisdom, the justice, the love and the power of God. In a very real sense Elihu anticipated the Apostle Paul when he said "*now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known*". Elihu in the Old Testament, just like Paul in the New, had attained a very clear understanding of the "whole counsel of God".

* * *

With scarcely concealed impatience the younger man waited until his elders had finished speaking. The three of them, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, had spent a long time advancing their theories as to the reason for their friend Job's disastrous afflictions, but had succeeded in convincing neither Job nor themselves. "*They had found no answer*" says the narrative "*yet had condemned Job*" (32. 3). Elihu's indignation was kindled against them, but not against him only. His resentment was directed also to Job, because he "*justified himself rather than God*" (32. 2). It is clear that Elihu was profoundly dissatis-

fied with the result of the discussions, and felt that he must put his own point of view before them even although, in that day and age, such intrusion by a young man upon the deliberation of the aged and mature would be considered the height of impertinence.

Elihu nevertheless observed the courtesies. "*Now Elihu had waited until Job had spoken, because they were elder than he. When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, then was his wrath kindled*" (32. 4, 5). He was indignant, finding that these men who by reason of age and experience could reasonably be expected to understand and express the relation of God's purposes to the immediate problem before them should prove woefully ignorant when put to the test. "*I am young*" he said "*and ye are very old; wherefore*" (as the Septuagint has it) "*I was fearing to declare to you my own knowledge. I said 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'*" (32. 6-7); now in a moment he finds that mere accession of years does not of itself confer true wisdom, and length of days is not necessarily a qualification for dispensing the word of life to those who need it. There is something else, something far more vital, that does not depend upon the attainment of a goodly tale of years. "*It is the spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty, which giveth them understanding*" (32. 8 Leeser). Here is a truth which is not fully recognised in many quarters today. All too often it is assumed that the wisdom and understanding which God imparts to men relates exclusively to matters theological. That is simply not true. Just as the life of man depends upon God, so does the whole of man's intellectual power and mental perception derive from God and can only be eternally sustained by the maintenance of a link with God. The wise men of today, exulting in the marvelously rapid increase in scientific achievement characteristic of this century, do not stop to reflect that the discovery and formulation of those physical and mechanical and electrical laws and principles upon which their achievements are based was the work of intellectual giants among men, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who themselves were for the most part sincere and avowed believers in God and followers of Jesus Christ. From Sir Isaac Newton onwards, these men pursued their work in the belief that they were working hand in hand with God, uncovering his secrets for the benefit

of humanity. The impetus of those centuries may carry us forward a few more generations, increasingly without God, but the penalty will ultimately be paid. Already medical men are beginning to remark that despite the apparently greater knowledge and ability of today, the level of average intelligence is beginning to fall. The average man is tending to get less brainy than his forebears, suggest some observers.

So Elihu gives voice to the scathing rebuke which is in his heart. "*Great men are not always wise; neither do the aged (necessarily) understand judgment*" (32. 9). From the dawn of history the aged in years have arrogated to themselves the prerogatives of rulership and direction, claiming that by virtue of their longer experience they are the best fitted to rule and direct; the younger in each generation have chafed and complained, impotent to alter matters, until they in their turn, have behaved in precisely the same fashion toward the next generation following them. So it has been and is; so it will be; until the weak, vacillating rule of man gives place to the administration of our Lord Christ who will not only render to every man according to his deeds but will also give each man, young or old, full scope for the useful employment of the ability and knowledge he possesses. But that lies in the future; Elihu, more than three millenniums before our own time, is left fulminating against the elderly men whose pretensions to wisdom and knowledge of God he had exposed for the hollow shams that they were.

So Elihu takes the situation into his own hands and demands attention. "*Therefore I said, Harken to me; I also will shew mine opinion*" (32. 10). It is evident that Elihu had thought long and earnestly over the problem of Job's adversity. Unlike the three friends, he is in no doubt as to the right answer. There is no pseudo-philosophical reasoning, no sententious discourse, no high-sounding speech, as with them. His words are straightforward and to the point, the utterances of a man who knows whereof he speaks and is not afraid to voice his knowledge. But before doing so he lashes the three older men with words which leave no room for doubt as to the contempt in which he holds their failure to achieve their object. "*Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say*" — one can sense the bitter irony of his voice in that last phrase, eloquently defining the floundering of the would-be comforters as they desperately sought for

a satisfactory exposition of the case from the stores of their own philosophies — "*yea, I attended unto you, and, behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words; (so that ye cannot say) we have found out wisdom; God thrusteth him down, not man*" (32. 11-13). There is the indictment: after all the portentous speeches and flowery language, Elihu's pungent comment brands with failure the entire session. None had explained the mystery, none solved the problem, none satisfied Job. The position remained as it was at the beginning.

The answer was so simple, after all. Expressed in few words, it was, "*God thrusteth him down, not man*". The source and meaning of all Job's adversity was to be found in the inscrutable purpose of God, and it was there that the three wise men had not thought to look. The expression "*lest ye should say*" in verse 13 is based in the Hebrew word "*pen*" which is difficult to translate lucidly but carries the meaning of an opposing alternative. Because the wise men had espoused a philosophy which was a false one, they were automatically precluded from discerning or expounding the true. Elihu tells them that notwithstanding their superior age and claim to consequent wisdom, they simply did not know what they were talking about. So in verse 14 he makes plain that he has no intention of endorsing their standpoint or repeating any of the arguments they have used. "*He (Job) hath not engaged with me in debate; neither will I answer him with your reasonings*" (32. 14).

At this point the narrator passes from speaking in the third person to the first person. Up to verse 14 the writer records the speech of Elihu, referring to him in the third person "*Elihu had waited . . . Elihu saw . . . Elihu said 'I am young'*" etc. But now in verse 15 to 17 there is a change and the writer indicates that he himself is the Elihu of whom he speaks. It is this short passage which seems to mark Elihu himself as the writer of these chapters and probably the entire Book of Job. Having finished the record of introductory speech, which runs from verse 6 to 14, he comments of the three older men, "*they were amazed, they answered no more, they left off speaking*" (32. 12). Astonished at his temerity, the three men abruptly broke off the discussion and, probably, looked at Elihu with some indignation. There must have been more than indignation though; some-

thing of the inward conviction that Elihu possessed, in consequence of his deeper knowledge of God, told them that here was a factor with which they had not reckoned. Here was a man who saw through their shallow reasoning and outworn platitudes and would brook nothing but a clear statement of truth based upon the revelation of the wisdom of God. Where the three had relied upon human intellect and worldly-wise reasoning this man looked for, and experienced, the leading of the Holy Spirit. Like a far more sublime figure yet to come into the world, he spoke as one having authority, and these three who in that ancient world partook much of the character and outlook of the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's day became suddenly conscious that one stood in their midst whom they had not previously known. They were silent, for in the presence of that burning sincerity of conviction they had nothing to say.

"When I had waited" says Elihu "(for they spake not, but stood still, and answered no more) I said, I also will show mine opinion. For I am full of discourse; the spirit in my bosom presseth me in" (32. 16-18). That latter sentence is Rotherham's rendering. It expresses, so much more succinctly than the A.V., the burning vehemence with which Elihu felt he must deliver his message. At all costs he must say those things which God had given him to say. Like Jeremiah a few centuries later, "his word was a burning fire shut up within my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay". Elihu felt like that; he must overthrow all the accepted customs of convention and decorum, outrage the respectability of his elders and cry defiance at all their philosophies, heedless alike of the effect upon them or the consequence to himself, if only he might unburden himself of the word which glowed within him like an imprisoned light. Many a modern evangelistic has felt like that and many a modern evangelist message has battered against surprised society with the same impact.

The crudeness of verse 19 in the A.V., "my belly is as wine which hath no vent", a crudeness to the twentieth century but quite normal English when the A.V. was prepared four hundred years ago, is best softened by adopting Rotherham's translation "Lo! my bosom is like wine not opened. Like new wine-skins it will burst. I will speak, that I may freely breathe. I will open my lips and respond." (32. 19-20). Only by the delivery of his message could the young prophet feel at ease. How he had chafed

against the restraint imposed by his submission to listening to the debate, the frustration of knowing that his own knowledge of God told him better than these men knew, and yet they would not heed. There is no evidence that they ever did heed. The silence which fell upon the company when Elihu made his impassioned outburst was apparently continued after he had finished, for there is no record of any reply or refutation on the part of the three. When Elihu has finished speaking it is the Almighty who intervenes to conclude that discussion. So Elihu was like any other young man who is filled with a consuming desire to put his elders right on matters in which he is certain they grievously err, but with the difference that whereas in many cases the young man is himself inexperienced and immature, and his exhortation is characterised more by zeal than by knowledge, in this instance Elihu was solidly instructed by his deep pondering over the principles of God's government, and when he spoke it was truly the Holy Spirit speaking through him.

Elihu aims his final shaft. With the impassioned sincerity of the man who has but one ideal, to be a messenger and interpreter of God despite the consequences, he takes his stand. "Let me be partial to no man, and unto no son of earth give flattering titles. Surely I know not how to give flattering titles; how soon might my maker take me away" (32. 21, 22). This again is Rotherham's rendering. It is as much a prayer as a declamation, almost as though he prays God for strength to deliver his message without fear or partiality, caring nothing for the praise or blame of men, only that he might speak out loud the word God has given him to speak. He cares not for the opinion his hearers have of him or the attitude they manifest toward him, or presumably the treatment they might afterwards mete out to him. All of this is as nothing to him. He is God's prophet, an instrument in God's hand, and like Paul in later times it is "woe unto me if I preach not the gospel". Overshadowing all he thinks and says and does is the consciousness of his responsibility to God and the power of God over his life. "How soon might my Maker take me away" he says. That is the sublime thought with which he ends this introductory outburst. He has life and ability and a message to which that life and that ability must be devoted while as yet he has the opportunity. His life is in God's hands and in the inscrutable purposes of God he might be taken away at any moment; to Elihu very defi-

nately it was *"now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation"* and he meant to utter his message and discharge his commission there

and then, though in the next instant the heavens fall about him.

(To be continued)

A. O. Hudson

THE RANSOM FOR ALL

A Study Paper on
Christian Doctrine

The human race has been in bondage to sin and death since the Fall. No man has been able to escape. *"We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written 'There is none righteous, no, not one . . . for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God'."* (Rom. 3. 9-23). Our first parents were created perfect and capable of everlasting life so long as they remained in harmony with Divine law (Gen. 1. 27-29; 2. 15-17), but in consequence of their lapse into sin the processes of death commenced to work in them. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground . . . for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* *"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."* (Gen. 3. 19; 2. 17). All human beings subsequently born were born in a dying condition of dying parents. *"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned . . . therefore by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation . . . for by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."* (Rom. 5. 12-19). No man was or is able to redeem any of his fellows from this unhappy condition. *"None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him, that he should still live for ever, and not see corruption."* (Psa. 49. 7-9). But God promised our first parents, at the very time of their fall, that a way of deliverance would be found eventually. Speaking to the instigator of man's sin, He said *"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head . . ."* (Gen. 3. 15). This theme, that the seed of the woman would become the means of recovering man from the power of sin and evil, runs right through the Scriptures. Abraham, several thousands of years later, was told *"I will make of thee a great nation . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12. 2-3) and later *"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."* (Gen. 22. 18). The Apostle Paul

explained the meaning of this when he said *"Christ hath redeemed us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through faith . . . Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made not to 'seeds' as of many; but as of one 'and to thy seed' which is Christ."* (Gal. 3. 13-17).

It will be noted that in the text just quoted there are two things necessary before the blessing can be conferred. One is faith and the other is redemption — and redemption comes first. A Redeemer is necessary to recover mankind from condemnation to death on account of sin. So Elihu the friend of Job says, speaking of man's plight. *"His soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger (ambassador) with him, to shew unto man his uprightness, then he (God) is gracious unto him, and saith 'Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.' His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth."* (Job 33. 22-25). That is a Millennial promise; it is paralleled by the declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things."* (Acts 3. 19-21). That time was spoken of by Isaiah when he cried *"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."* (Isa. 35. 10). That this is to include the abolition of death and mankind's entry into everlasting life is indicated by the emphatic declaration *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."* (Hos. 13. 14).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave the ransom price which achieves this grand purpose. *"The man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be*

testified in due time." (1 Tim. 2. 5-6). Jesus Himself said *"The Son of Man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many."* (Mark 10. 45). This word "ransom" means 'a corresponding price' or more properly "a price to set against" and used in this connection it alludes to the process known in New Testament times as "manumission", by means of which Greek and Roman slaves could obtain their freedom. Someone had to pay into one of the pagan temple treasuries the price of the slave's release. A friend of the slave, willing to make the financial sacrifice, could do this. Then the slave went to the temple and the price was paid over to his former master and the former slave became technically the property of the god. By virtue of that fact he became actually free, for whilst he continued the slave of the god no one could touch him. Adam had forfeited his life because of sin and had become the slave of sin. The price paid for his release was the perfect life which our Lord Jesus gave on the Cross, thereby providing the price which at one and the same time released man from the Adamic condemnation and at the same time made him the property of God. So Paul says *"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived (lived) that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living."* (Rom. 14. 9). *"He that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."* (1 Cor. 7. 22-23). *"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."* (1 Cor. 6. 19-20).

This fact of our having been "bought" by means of a "ransom-price" is therefore a very real thing, and we Christians are in consequence the servants, bond-slaves, of Christ; a servitude which is, paradoxically enough, perfect liberty. The price paid was the human life of Jesus, often referred to in the New Testament as the "blood" of Christ. The Jews had always been taught that *"the life is in the blood"* (Lev. 17. 14) and it was a perfectly natural thing therefore to be told that they had been *"redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ."* (1 Pet. 2. 18-19). Drawing an analogy with the Tabernacle ceremonies of older times, the writer to the Hebrews says *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal deliverance for us."* (Heb. 9. 12). *"Thou wast slain"* rings the heavenly chorus in the "Throne Scene" of the Book

of Revelation *"and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."* (Rev. 5. 9). John himself in his prologue to the same book declares of Christ that He *"washed us from our sins in his own blood."* (Rev. 1. 5). Paul adds his testimony when, writing to the Ephesians, he says of Christ *"In whom we have deliverance through his blood"* (Eph. 1. 7), and to the Colossians that he *"made peace through the blood of his cross"* and would in consequence be the means of reconciling all things to God (Col. 1. 20); finally to the Romans that *"being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."* (Rom. 5. 9).

Justification by faith in Christ is granted by God on the basis of the ransom given by Christ and the faith of the believer in that ransom. But this is a different subject and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to notice that this justification constitutes a "redemption" or "deliverance" from the bondage of sin in this present time and results in actual deliverance from death when the due time has come for that deliverance. Hence the ransom given by Jesus is often referred to as the means of our redemption. (The words rendered "redemption" in the New Testament have the meaning of being set free, and are usually better translated by our English word 'deliverance'.) So Job was able to say with confidence *"I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth"* (Job 19. 25), and the angel to Joseph *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."* (Matt. 1. 21). The Apostles, preaching at Pentecost, made it plain that *"there is none other name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4. 12). Paul, writing to the Galatian Christians, emphasised that *"when the fullness of the times was come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* (Gal. 4. 4-5). The fact that Christ gave his own human life to effect this redemption is stressed in the preceding chapter: *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse (cutting-off) of the Law, being made a curse (being cut off) for us."* (Gal. 3. 13). He came deliberately for that purpose, as He himself testified *"the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost."* (Matt. 18. 11). *"I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."* (John 12. 47). *"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."* (Luke 9. 56). To that is added the emphatic words of His greatest

Apostle, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1. 15) and his reminder to Titus "*our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.*" (Titus 2. 14).

So far we have spoken only of the death of Jesus on the Cross as providing the ransom, but nothing of the outcome. In his instructions to the Christians at home, Paul says "*if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*" (Rom. 5. 10). Something more than the death of the Saviour is involved; there is also His resurrection. "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*" (Rom. 10. 9). Had Jesus been nothing more than a man of Adam's race, even though a perfect man, he must have remained in the grave, his life given for ever on behalf of mankind. But His was a life that came from above; before the world was created, He lived (John 6. 38, 51; 8. 58; Prov. 8. 22) and, on the third day after the human body had been taken down from the Cross and laid in the garden grave, he rose again in the power of an endless life and took again the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, the glory that he had laid aside for the suffering of death. "*His mighty power*" says Paul "*which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand.*" (Eph. 1. 20). The humanity of Jesus remains for ever given as the purchase price for the redeemed, Jesus Himself is forever in possession of His spiritual glory "far above all things in heaven and earth".

Wherein lay the necessity of the death of Jesus? Could not His example, His teaching and His influence do for man what was necessary? He gave the answer to that question Himself. "*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*" (John 12. 24). In God's wisdom He saw that only by taking the sinner's place even unto death would Christ be able to win men from the other side of death. "*I am the good shepherd*" said Jesus "*and I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again.*" (John 10. 15-18). Perhaps Peter explains that cryptic utterance when he says "*Christ also hath once suffered for*

sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) in the spirit." (1 Pet. 3. 18). That at any rate introduces us to one of the deepest themes in the Bible, the redemptive power of suffering. We may not know just how it is that suffering borne on behalf of others creates a power that saves, but the Bible is clear that it is so. The 53rd Chapter of Isaiah is well known for its description of the sufferings of Christ Jesus; "*He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken . . . he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*" (Isa. 53. 3-12). Explaining this very passage to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus told them "*Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day*" (Luke 24. 46), and again "*O . . . slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory.*" (Luke 24. 25, 26). Later on Peter recalled those words when he spoke of the Spirit in the prophets testifying beforehand "*the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*" (1 Pet. 1. 11). The writer to the Hebrews had a clear vision of this matter; he says "*We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels (i.e. made man) for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man . . . forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil . . . for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*" (Heb. 2. 9-18). "*In the days of his flesh . . . though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.*" (Heb. 5. 7-9). Peter again rejoins with confirming testimony "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example . . . who in his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree (the*

Cross) . . . *by whose stripes ye are healed.*" (1 Pet. 2. 21-24). Paul, preaching to the Thessalonians, *"reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead."* (Acts 17. 3).

It is in consequence of this understanding, that the sufferings and death of Jesus constitute the power behind mankind's eventual reconciliation to God, that the Apostle John declares *"He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (1 John 2. 2) and Paul, writing to the Romans *"God hath set forth (Jesus) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past."* (Rom. 3. 25). This word "propitiation" has certain pagan associations which give it the meaning of sacrifice as upon a pagan altar, but the original word used means a covering, and is referred to the covering over of sins so that they no longer

appear in the sight of God. There is no thought here of a kind of blood sacrifice demanded to appease an angry God; that idea is quite inconsistent with the Scriptural presentation of the Father, the God of love, working in complete amity and harmony with the Son. The idea is rather that expressed in Psa. 32. 1 and quoted by Paul in Rom. 4. 7: *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered"* and Psa. 85. 2 *"Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin."* God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, says *"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and . . . thy sins."* (Isa. 44. 22).

Jesus Christ came from above and assumed human form to give Himself a Ransom for All, because only through the avenue of suffering and death could the Divine purpose be effected. Jesus is Lord of all and in His resurrection life He had both authority and power, born of His experiences on earth, to lead whosoever will of all mankind back to reconciliation to God.

A. O. Hudson

AND GOD REPENTED

*Enquiry into a
perplexing subject*

The assertion, some eight times repeated, that God "repented" of something that He had done has often given rise to the question what is implied. Common sense dictates that it is impossible for the Creator of all things, having all knowledge and foresight, to regret his action in some specific instance and wish it had not been so done. *"With him is no variability, neither shadow of turning,"* is James' comment on God's ways (Jas. 1. 17). The fact that we cannot think of this "repentance" of God in just the same way as we understand the term — which nowadays has for the most part a theological significance and signifies repentance for past sin — is evidenced by the words of Ballam in Num. 23 19 *"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"* God is all-wise and omniscient; He is in full control of the creation He has brought into being. It is inconceivable that He can ever be in the position of wishing that He had not done something which He has done.

If this be conceded, it remains to consider what is implied by the several occasions on which it is said that God "repented".

The foremost example — and the first — is at the

time of the Flood, when *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth . . . and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart"* (Gen. 6. 5-6). The common view of this text is that God regretted having created mankind and resolved to destroy them as unfit for further life. That this view cannot possibly be true is evidenced by the fact that at a much earlier period, in the days of Eden, God had told the first human pair that He proposed eventually to undo the harm that had been done by the advent of sin, that there would be a saviour from among those yet to be born of their descendants. This presupposes that God envisaged the presence of mankind on the earth long after the Flood had come and gone.

In these circumstances, the first thing to do is look at the word for which the A.V. (and earlier) translators selected "repent" as the English equivalent. *"Nacham"*, like many Hebrew words, has a variety of meanings, largely determined by the grammatical class, whether passive, active, intensive, and so on, most of which is beyond the comprehension of any but competent Hebrew scholars and will not be enlarged upon here. Suffice to say that the general use of the word in all the Scriptures, with whatever Eng-

lish words it is translated, is the best guide. In this particular case the word is derived from the idea of drawing in the breath in order to contain one's grief. Hence in the O.T. its meaning is to lament or grieve over something that has happened, (48 times), to grieve on account of a person or persons — to pity (twice) to comfort others or oneself (45 times), to be comforted (8 times). Of all these the A.V. translates the word by "repent" 41 times and "comfort" 61 times, and on one occasion (Isa. 1. 24) "I will *ease* me of mine adversaries".

That such divergent ideas as repentance and comfort can be presented as the meaning of the same Hebrew word only underlines the difficulties faced by translators. To some extent, of course, theological beliefs and human standards of conduct must have their influence. It could be very difficult to see how God could take comfort in the state of affairs before the Flood; much more understandable to think that God, in his grief, was sorry He had ever made man and wished He had not done so, which is how the N.E.B. put it "*He was sorry that he had made man on earth I am sorry that I ever made them*". But when in the account of Isaac's marriage to Rebekah, it is said (Gen. 24. 67) that "*Isaac was comforted after his mothers death*", where "comforted" is the same word "**nacham**" it is obviously incongruous to suggest that he repented of his action in marrying Rebekah, so "comfort" was the English word used. Likewise Judah was "comforted" in Gen. 38. 12, David in 2 Sam. 13. 39, Rachel "*refused to be comforted*" for her lost children in Jer. 31. 15. All these and other examples as in the same passive form of the verb as in Gen. 6. 5-6. Many more in the active sense include Gen. 5. 29 where Lamech says of Noah "*this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil*" which hardly includes the idea of repentance; Gen. 37. 35 where Jacob's sons "*rose up to comfort him*" at the loss of Joseph; Job. 2. 11, Job's three friends came "*to mourn with him and to comfort him*"; Psa. 23. 4 "*thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*"; Isa. 61. 2 "*to comfort all that mourn*". Zech. 1. 17 "*the Lord shall yet comfort Zion*". There are many more examples; these are sufficient.

From all this it would appear that the Divine "repentance" at the time of the flood was a deep personal grief at the fact of human sin because He himself was man's Creator and Father. God grieved at the consequence of his making man, not regretting that

He had made man, but regretting the sorry state of affairs which had resulted. The Septuagint says that "God laid it to heart that he had made man on the earth and he pondered it deeply". There is a small grammatical point here; "*chay*" is a relative conjunction "that" and also a relative causal particle "because". The translators have to choose which meaning best fits the sense. If, instead of "that" we say "*God repented because he had made man it repenteth me, because I made them*" the emphasis changes. God grieved for the sinful state of man because He had been responsible for their creation in the first place, and so, to bring in the New Testament, was in the position of the father in the parable of the prodigal son. There was no suggestion of reversing his plans for this earth and destroying it for ever, but there is the plain statement of what God would do to deal with the situation. He declared, in short, that He would alter the course of history, for man's own sake. The human society upon earth was altogether corrupt; if tradition be true, the terse words of Genesis 6 constitute a masterly understatement of the position. Violence and murder were the order of the day; in the expressive words of the Book of Enoch, "*as men perished, they cried, and their cry went up to heaven*" (1 Enoch 8. 4). So God determined to take away all that generation and make a new start.

It was a merciful decision. There is a future for all of them. They will come back in the resurrection to a far happier state of society than the one they knew, and be able to hear of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Much later on, God acted similarly in the case of the perhaps equally corrupt people of Sodom and Gomorrah. "*I took them away as I saw fit*" He said.

On a subsequent occasion God told Samuel "*It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me*" (1 Sam. 15. 110). The decision grieved Samuel "*and he cried unto the Lord all night*". Could it have been a matter of less grief to God himself? He had chosen Saul and presented him to the people, and Saul, at first so full of promise, had defected and shown himself unworthy. Here surely is another case where God was compelled to change the course of events but did so with grief.

A different aspect is presented by a number of texts in which God is said to repent of the "*evil which he thought to do to his people*" (Exod. 32. 14). In

each of these cases, about nine or ten in all, the position is that the people of Israel had violated their covenant and apostasised from God, and in accordance with terms of that covenant they were due in consequence to reap trouble and disaster of all kinds — failure of crops, famine, invasion of enemies, and so on. But Israel repented and came back to God so that He lifted the threatened retribution. Perhaps the English word “relent” would be the best to employ in such cases. God relented, not capriciously in an irresponsible fashion, but because the people had fulfilled the conditions necessary for the lifting of the sentence. “*It repented the Lord because of their groanings*” says Jud. 2. 18. “*If that nation . . . turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them*” (Jer. 18. 8). When the inhabitants of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah “*God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not*” (Jon. 3. 10).

A rather striking usage of the word is found in Ezek. 5. 13. The Lord is talking to Ezekiel about the grave unfaithfulness of Israel and warning of the consequences that must follow. After detailing some of these consequences the Lord says “*Then shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted*”. The word *nacham*, here rendered “comforted”, has the implication that God is both sympathetic towards and solicitous for his erring people coupled with satisfaction that the right thing has been done. They have received the treatment which at the last will effect their final reconciliation with God. The same idea occurs in Isa. 40 1-2 “*Comfort ye, comfort ye*

my people. saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her . . . that her iniquity is pardoned for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins”. The same word, *nacham*, certainly not meaning repentance, for her iniquity is now pardoned, but a message of comfort and hope for the future, because God has turned from his chastening and is now commencing to bless.

It has been said that these references to God “repenting” should be understood as his changing his course of action in view of changed circumstances, but not his ultimate intention. Saint Augustine, commenting of Gen. 6. 6-7, says that the Divine action was “an unchanged ordering of changeable things. For God repents not of anything He does, as man does” (“*City of God*” Bk. 15 chap. 23). The reverse of this idea, a change in the direction, is indicated in such expressions as Hos. 13. 14 “*O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes*”; Psa. 110. 4 “*The Lord hath sworn and will not repent; thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*”; Ezek 24. 14. “*I the Lord have spoken . . . I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent*”. In such instances the fixity of Divine intention is indicated and probably “relent” is the best word to use.

All in all, it seems that the repentance of God defines his concern at a condition of things existing out of harmony with his will, and his determination to change it, allied with feeling of pity or grief for those affected, yet combined with satisfaction or comfort in the knowledge that in the onward progress of his overall plan all things will yet be well.

Serenity

We all know the almost miraculous effect that one strong poised mind can have over a panic-stricken multitude, how a few calm words and clear authoritative directions will produce an immediate result and reduce confusion to something like order. This influence, which is so obvious on marked occasions, is always felt, and leaves its impress everywhere. In quietness and confidence there is always strength. One poised mind has more effect than many restless, uncontrolled ones.

It is well worth while to spend time in cultivating

quietness of spirit. It is not until the peace of God garrisons our hearts and thoughts that the world and all belonging to it can be seen in their right proportions, and energy needed for co-operation with God in the working out of his plans is set free. Many mysteries remain, problems are unsolved. We cannot see how all things will be made to work together for good, but we feel that God sees, and we have faith instilled into us to leave all things restfully with him, and let him unfold his plans little by little, and show us our share in them. We know that “*He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think*”.

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE*Reaching a goal*

It would be a bedraggled travel-stained company which, at length, made its passage along the Appian Way on the last stage of its journey to Rome. It had been a hazardous adventurous journey from Cæsarea across the Levantine, and up the Italian coast. Only by the providential care of God, for Paul's own specific sake, had the journey been accomplished free from serious injury and death. At a time when passengers and crew expected to be entombed in a watery grave the angel of the Lord appeared to Paul to strengthen and comfort him, and to assure him that he would, in very deed and truth, stand before Cæsar to testify, as the Lord had intended from the onset of his ministry. Additionally the angelic comforter assured him that God had granted him the lives of all those who sailed with him. (Acts 27. 24.) Presumably Paul had prayed for his own and his fellow-passengers safe keeping through the stormy darkness, and had been heard. Thus for the Lord's messenger's sake two hundred and seventy-five other lives were spared, and granted safe passage to terra-firma, though apparently with the loss of all they possessed. Even so the Maltese bestowed on them "*unusual kindness*" because it had "*begun to rain and was cold*". (Acts 28. 2).

During this enforced stay among the Maltese people, the Spirit of the Lord, in the heart of Paul, availed itself of the opportunity to repay their generosity by the healing of their sick — the people on the island who had diseases came and were healed, and without doubt would hear the Word of God proclaimed by Paul as he wrought these kindly acts. It is a touching commentary upon the native goodness of these islanders when Luke could say of them, "*they presented many gifts to us and when we sailed they put on board whatever we needed.*" (Acts 28. 10 RSV). From thence another ship brought them at last to Italian soil. A messenger was immediately dispatched to the brethren in Rome, informing them that Paul and his company had landed at Puteoli, and would soon be en-route again for Rome.

Presumably the tidings of his coming had an electrifying effect among the brethren in Rome, for immediately two contingents of them set out at once, one of which, when they met him, had travelled no less than three and thirty miles, while the other also had come twenty-three — both of them on foot! and their attitude towards the prisoner, what of that? Imagination must provide the answer here, for "*on seeing*

them Paul thanked God and took courage. Surely, blest was the tie that bound their hearts in Christian love, to produce such an effect as that! As the prisoner's company came alongside the little waiting group, the eyes of Paul would search the faces of each in turn, and recognition would be prompt and mutual. Paul had many friends then resident in Rome — Priscilla, Aquila, Epænetus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys and quite a host of other names (see Rom. 16), to whom he had sent love and greetings but a little while before. Who, and how many of this well-beloved company had come to meet him on his Romeward way we cannot say; what we can say with complete confidence is that the light of a deep affection would be beaming from every eye. Prisoner though he was, it was as a brother in the Lord that they greeted him.

What a meeting that would be — love welling up from every heart towards this travel-stained and bedraggled prisoner — and he, giant though he was at heart, found new courage from the out-poured love! How had this warmth of attachment and solicitude come about? How was it that this had come to acquire such a grip upon the hearts of those he met? There is but one answer here — his absolutely selfless life, a life spent in imitation of the Master whom he served. "Not I, but Christ" was the magnet of their love.

*Not I but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted,
Not I but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard,
Not I but Christ, in every look and action,
Not I but Christ, in every thought and word.*

Breathes there the desire in any heart to be a rallying centre to the fellowship, a nucleus to the group? Let him emulate the man who found that draught of pure joy on the Appian way! Let him "live" Christ day by day — Christ Jesus will do the rest!

Then on the other hand if we may not be called to occupy Paul's place towards the fellowship, let us not forget that not only Paul was the better for that display of love and encouragement — others, too may thank God and take new courage from it! Seas of trouble may give to others a bedraggled look as we meet them on life's crowded highway, and the light of our eyes and hands may be to them as sweet refreshing wine!

*Play thou a brother's part,
Strength, love and hope impart,
Bid thou the fainting heart
Look up again.*

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

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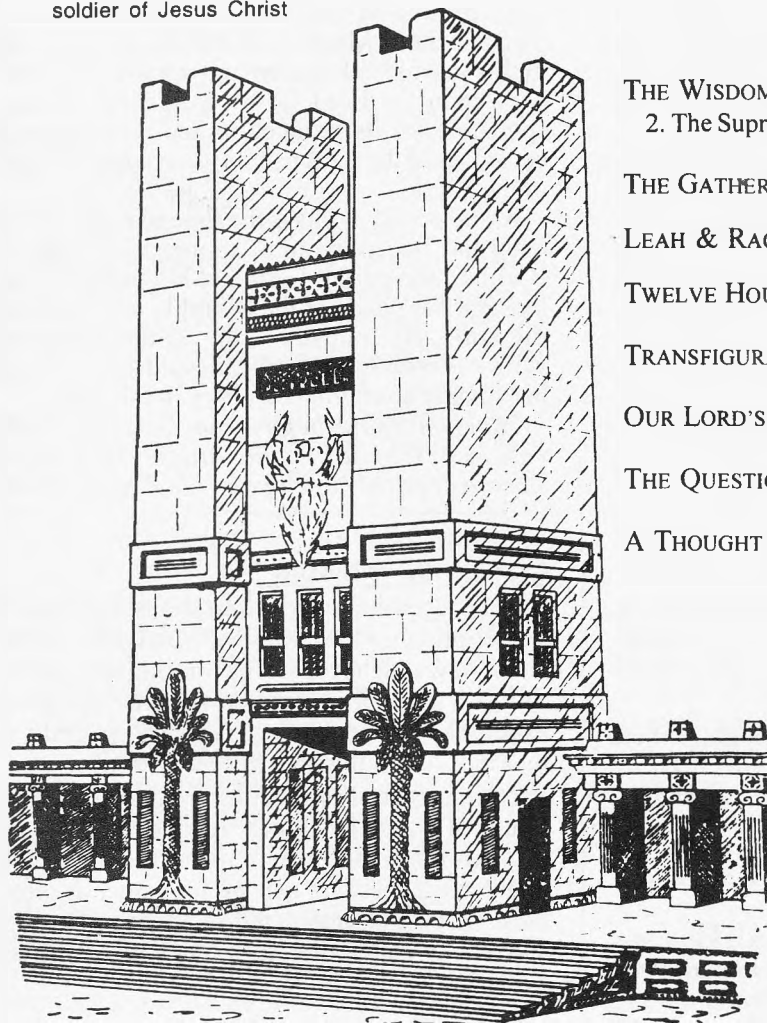
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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genuinely interested, on
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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and the validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understand-

ing. It stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and his reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

Communications and donations to Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL, England.

Editor & Secretary: DERRICK NADAL (*Nottingham*)

Treasurer: JOHN HAINES (*Gloucester*)

The passage of years has dictated the retirement of Albert Hudson from the position of Chairman of the Bible Fellowship Union, occupied since 1945. At ninety-nine years it is time to make room for a successor. Derrick Nadal has been appointed successor; he will at least for the present discharge the duty of Chairman in addition to his present positions of Editor and Secretary. Albert Hudson hopes to continue as a contributor to the pages of the Bible Study Monthly, but the inexorable march of time may limit his contribution in this field compared with former days. It is hoped that the position of the "Monthly" in the realm of progressive advancement of Christian thought will remain unchanged.

As printed in the July/August 1995 issue of the Bible Study Monthly, no rapid or radical change in this journal is foreseen and we will continue to wait upon the Lord for his guidance. Those responsible for its production and distribution are conscious of the responsibility to readers in all parts of the World.

We believe that this is the time to express a very deep and sincere word of appreciation to the one who has served the Lord and his people so long through the pages of the Monthly and associated literature. His ministry in the written and spoken word has been wonderfully blessed; his fellowship has greatly strengthened many in the faith.

"Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Reprinting of Two Booklets from the "Sixties".

"Three Stories of Salvation" – simple reflections on a parable and two incidents from the Gospels. A useful booklet to pass on to a friend. (Available now upon request from Nottingham).

"From a Prison Cell", devotional thoughts taken Paul's letters written from Rome – from Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. (Available shortly).

Christian African Relief Trust (CART)

Those responsible for sending relief materials to Africa wish to convey their warm thanks to all who have contributed so generously to this work particularly any whose gifts may not have been acknowledged.

Cost of the "Monthly"

Readers occasionally enquire about the cost of the subscription for the "Monthly", and others wish to know how much it costs for printing and distribution as a guide for their freewill gift. The present expenses have been kept stable for several years by a helpful printer and other economies.

Current cost of production for one copy for six issues in UK is £6 and for readers outside UK – £8. This information is for enquirers. We emphasise that all costs are met by spontaneous gifts of those wishing to support the circulation of the BSM and its associated literature. They are sent free to all.

Gone from us



Sister Ethel Haslam (*Warrington*)



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

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU**16. The Supremacy of God**A study in
Job 32 – 37

Elihu's first thesis is the inerrancy of Divine Wisdom. Because God is all-wise, nothing to which he sets his hand can possibly go wrong. If to the untutored mind of man it seems that some things are in fact grievously wrong, the explanation is not that God has erred, not that God is unjust, but that man is unable to perceive the full extent of Divine activity, unable to see that end which God has in view and toward which He is working. In this understanding of the matter Elihu is passionately sincere and grounded upon a basis of firm conviction. "My words" he says "shall be of the uprightness of my heart, and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly" (33. 3). "Out of my straightforward heart come my sayings" is how Leeser translates. There is no boasting here, no egotism. These are the words of a man who knows, and who knows that he knows, and is not afraid to speak of what he knows. There is a reflection of this in words of James the half-brother of Jesus "who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew . . . his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3. 13). There is an old saying, said to have been coined by the ancient Chinese, which runs "He who knows not, and knows not that he knows not, is a fool; shun him. He who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a child; teach him. He who knows, and knows not that he knows, is asleep; wake him. He who knows, and knows that he knows; is a wise man; follow him." Elihu knew, and he knew that he knew; that is why his words, preserved to our own time, still constitute a wonderful exposition of that wisdom from above which is the Christian's guide through life.

Now he comes right down to the fundamental basis of all things with which mankind has to do, "The Spirit of God hath made me" he declares "and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life" (33. 4). The entire theological system of Elihu stands upon this basis and he knows no other. If he lived in our day he would have no time at all for the modern theory of evolution from protoplasm; the language he employs shows that he takes his stand on the literal acceptance of the first story in the bible "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). There is a striking exactitude about his choice of terms. "Spirit"

in verse 4 is "*ruach*" which word when used in connection with God defines the dynamic energy of the Holy Spirit, which is the expression of God in the active exertion of his power as in creation ("*the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*") whereas "breath" is "*neshamah*", the life-giving influence which is manifested in the breathing of living creatures. David had the same idea in the 104th Psalm when he said, speaking of the animal creation "*thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth*" (Psa. 104. 29.30). In this text both "breath" and "spirit" are *ruach*, this because the breath is that of the creature, not of the Almighty, and *ruach* is used in its mundane sense of "wind". But in both cases, as so consistently throughout the Scriptures, the breath and life of man are indissolubly linked and both entirely dependent upon God who is at one and the same time the Source and Sustainer of life. All life emanates from him and without him no life can continue. So Solomon says (Eccl. 12. 7) speaking of human death "*then shall the dust return to earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it*". Later on in his discourse Elihu is to show that this is the basis and assurance of life after death; man can only attain that after-life by means of a resurrection from the dead, but the fact that the spirit has returned to God who gave it is an assurance that it is in safe keeping and in the resurrection will be "clothed upon" with a body suited to its exalted resurrection state (see 1 Cor. 15. 35-54 and 2. Cor. 5. 1-4).

The first verse of chapter 33 makes plain that Elihu's words are addressed directly to Job himself — "*Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken unto my words*" (33. 1). Now he requests, politely yet firmly, that Job shall put himself in a position to refute Elihu's philosophy, if he can: "*If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, and stand up*" (33. 5). Lest this attitude should seem in Job's eyes to indicate a claim to superiority, the young man immediately hastens to voice his realisation that he and Job stand together on an equal level before God. "*Behold, I am in the same relation as thyself toward God. I myself also am cut out of the clay*" (33. 6 Leeser). This it the true

expression of what in other connection has been called the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Despite his personal consciousness of the possession of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual enlightenment which comes with that possession, and the magnitude of his mission as a messenger of God, Elihu insists that he is but a man as are other men, created by God to be a co-citizen and joint-heir of the earth and all that is in it. Peter had the same insistence when Cornelius would have worshipped him as a representative of God, preventing him with the words "*Stand up; I myself also am a man*" (Acts 10. 26). And the revealing angel in the Book of Revelation, even though of a higher state of existence than the human, forbade the prostration of the saintly John, saying to him "*See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets . . .*" (Rev. 22. 9). Many a mediæval — and modern — ecclesiastical dignitary could take a lesson from this far-sighted Arab of so many centuries ago, and reflect that the honour and privilege of being a Christian minister is given not for personal aggrandisement or because God would elevate the recipient to a position of lordship over God's heritage, to use St. Peter's expression in 1. Pet. 5. 3, but rather that he might serve his fellows in things pertaining to God. "*I am among you as he that serveth*" said Jesus. So Elihu is at pains to insist that any effect of his words must be credited to the content of his message and to its Divine Author, not to any personal impressiveness or power of his own, for he was only an ordinary man among men. "*My terror*" says he "*shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee*" (33. 7). From the purely natural, everyday point of view, there was nothing in Elihu of which to take notice. Only in his message, he insists, is he to be heeded.

Now comes the first accusation. Job is to be confronted with his own words and by his own words he is to be judged. "*Surely thou hast spoken in my hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words, saying . . .*" (33. 8). The following words are those of Job, culled from his speeches during the long discussions which preceded Elihu's intervention, and which the young man has remembered that he might use them in his refutation. "*I am clean without transgression*" says Job "*I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me. Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy. He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all*

my paths". (33. 9-11). This is a pretty sweeping claim for a man to make, and a rather serious charge of unjust dealing to lay against God. Even the evident sincerity of Job in making such a statement does not excuse it. He really ought to know better than to claim complete innocence and in the same breath charge God with unjust dealing because he has entered into a share of the evils which admittedly afflict all mankind. But Job is not the only one who has been guilty of this lapse. Who amongst us has not at some time or another come across someone who has been faced with some personal disaster and has demanded to know "*why has God done this to me?*" A loved one is stricken with grave illness or the victim of a tragic accident. "*Why did God let it happen?*" She never did anyone any harm? The people down the street are regular blackguards and they get off scot free and everything goes alright for them. It isn't fair." Of course it isn't fair. The incidence of sin and evil comes upon all men indiscriminately; the sins of one have their effects upon another. The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge, as said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel when he was faced with a similar plaint in his own day. And the reason is fundamental; the human race is a unity and in this marvellous terrestrial creation which God has designed for man's happiness and well-being it is and must always be true that no man liveth unto himself. (Rom. 14. 7). That is why the sin of Adam has affected his entire posterity, why it is that in Adam all die. But it is also gloriously true that in Christ all men can be made alive, that by faith in Christ and acceptance of Christ to the extent of complete dedication of life to Christ, the righteousness of Christ can become the basis on which any man and every man, "*whosoever will*" (Rev. 22. 17) can become part of that unity which is brought back into full harmony with God in the Messianic Age and ushered into those never-ending Ages of glory which God has prepared for those who will eschew sin and take their appointed place in God's perfect and sinless creation.

But Job was in no mood to philosophise to this extent. At this moment he was angry and embittered with the anger and bitterness of the self-righteous man who feels that God has let him down. Job knew well enough that the words of his so-called "*comforters*" were empty and hollow; he knew God sufficiently well to realise that nothing they had suggested came as yet anywhere near the root of the problem. He was hardly prepared at this stage to

listen with the necessary patience to the younger man Elihu and in any case he had no basis as yet for any confidence that Elihu could do any better than the others. He knew only that he had served God to the best of his ability throughout a long and honourable life and God had rewarded him with complete and utter disaster, and he was morose and resentful. "*I am pure without transgression, I am quite clean, there is no iniquity in me*" is the eloquent manner in which Lesser translates his plea. Yet God had regarded him as an enemy, putting his feet in the stocks — mediæval English readers would recognise the force of that allusion better than their fellows of today, but is an accurate rendering of the ancient punishment concerned — and watching all his paths so that he could not get away. In the intensity of Job's mental stress and sense of injustice he was hardly prepared to listen to reason.

The younger man's calm yet firm reply sets the standard he will maintain. "*Behold, in this thou art not just*" he says. "*I will answer thee; for God is far greater than a mortal*" (33. 12 Leeser). Here is the first principle to which all must give assent. God, who is the great First Cause and Creator of all things; God, who is the source and sustainer of all life, wherever and in whatever form it appears; God, who exists in eternity, and who was before anything that is made was made, is so self-evidently greater than man and of such infinitely surpassing wisdom and knowledge that no man can ever presume to

criticise or question his actions. Whatever God does, that thing must be right. The wisdom of God may not at any time be questioned. "*Wherefore against him hast thou contended, for with none of his reasons will he respond*" (33. 13 Rotherham). It is true that "*The Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets*" (Amos 3. 7) but that is because the prophets are men dedicated to his service and fit receptacles for his Holy Spirit, men who have completely submerged their own wills into the will of God whom they serve. The Holy Spirit can find no entry into a heart that is trusting in its own reasoning and questions the ways of God when they lead into places not capable of understanding by human knowledge. There must always be a definite place for faith in the life of any man who would serve God, and at this stage in his life Job had found no such place. He did find such a place later on, at the end of the story. So Elihu had to lay down as a preliminary maxim the unpleasant truth that Job could not expect God to come down and state his reasons. Job must first of all concede that whatever God was doing was right and good, and would prove to be such in the end, because it could not possibly be otherwise if it came from God. And to illustrate that principle Elihu proceeds to show how Divine Wisdom is manifested in the operation of his Plan for the redemption of man from the curse of sin and death.

(To be continued)

B. J. Drinkwater

THE GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

Saints are referred to throughout the Old Testament and the New, but there is no simple definition of a saint. One dictionary defines a saint as "one holy, canonised or officially recognised by the Church as having won, by exceptional holiness, a high place in heaven and veneration on earth," but this is too narrow. Another puts it, "a holy person, one eminent in virtue, an Israelite, a Christian, one of the blessed dead, or an angel." Consideration of the use of the word "saint" in the Scriptures reveals the same rather wide range of application. The earliest reference to the saints, in Deut. 33. 2, associates them with the presence of God on earth accompanied by fire. In Daniel 7. 9-10 the Ancient of Days is seen seated upon his throne, which was like the fiery flame and its wheels as burning fire, and a fiery stream came forth before him, thousand thousands ministered with

him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. These are identified as saints or holy ones. In Zech. 14. 4-5 all the saints accompany Jehovah as He stands on the Mount of Olives as a great earthquake divides the mountain. Here they are identified as angels. Saints are referred to in Job. 5.1 and 15. 15, and in other renderings they are holy ones or holy angels, and it is reasonable to suppose that angels are referred to here. In Daniel 7. 18, 22 and 27 reference is made to the saints of the Most High. Other translations use the word "saints" except Rotherham, who describes them as the holy ones of the highest places, so it is a matter of speculation as to who are referred to here.

Saints are referred to in 2 Chron. 6. 41 where Solomon prays "*Let thy priests, O God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness*".

In 1 Sam. 2.9 we read that God will keep the feet of his saints. Other translations describe these variously as worshippers, pious servants, his loving ones, or men of loving kindness. This brings a new element into our consideration, because in these passages we become aware of a word which is described as one of the great words of Old Testament vocabulary. It is the Hebrew *chesed* and means steadfast love, but in many instances it is translated "mercy". So these saints are those who are set apart as steadfast and loyal. This is seen again in Psalm 4. 3 which states that Jehovah has set apart "him that is godly" for himself. Here the word is *chasid*, which is connected with "steadfast love", and is said to mean "one who shows devotion to God". Such are those referred to in Psalms 50. 5 and 116. 15, and in modern translations are also described as pious ones, devoted ones, loving ones, or men of loving kindness.

However, in Psalm 50. 5 a particular section of the saints is referred to, inasmuch as they are described as having made a covenant by sacrifice. This can apply to Israelites because in Exodus 19 it is recorded that when God met Moses on Mount Sinai the message to Jacob and Israel was "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples." And all the people answered together, and said, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." After this things become complicated inasmuch as a multiplicity of sacrifices appear (Numbers 28 and 29), but these sacrifices, enacted under the Mosaic law, deteriorated to such an extent that in Isaiah 1.11 God asks "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? I am full of burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or lambs or he goats." (see also Amos 5. 21-23 and Micah 6. 6-7).

It is pertinent to ask what had gone wrong. God gives the answer in Jeremiah 7. 21-24 (Moffatt) "You can add your burnt offerings to your other sacrifices and eat the flesh yourselves. When I brought your fathers from the land of Egypt I said nothing to them, I gave them no orders about burnt offerings or sacrifices; my orders were 'Listen to my voice and I will be your God, as you shall be my people; live exactly as I order that you may prosper!' But they would not listen, they would not lend an ear; they lived as their own evil, stubborn hearts prompted them, they grew worse

instead of better." Their failure to listen is pin-pointed in the verse following those already noted in Micah 6. 6-7. Verse 8 continues "He hath showed thee, O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice and love mercy (steadfast love) and walk humbly with thy God." To walk humbly means literally to live in quiet fellowship with, or to live secretly with, and this envisages a much deeper relationship than all the mere offering of sacrifices. So God says (Hosea 6. 6) "For I desired mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Here again mercy is rather steadfast love; so Phillips translates it, "It is true love I have wanted, not sacrifice."

Now how does all this apply to the saints of Psalm 50. 5? While the condemnation of Israel, which we have noted, applies to the nation as a whole, there were those who remained faithful to their vows and they will get their reward (Ezekiel 44. 15-16). Now let us turn our attention to the saints of the New Testament. Our Lord does not use the word, but we find references to the saints in the Pauline epistles and Revelation. Here they are variously described in other translations as God's people, God's own people, Christ's men and women, dedicated, consecrated, or set apart ones, faithful Christians. Here again we find the emphasis is on dedication, fidelity or steadfast love, as well as holiness.

However our subject is the GATHERING of the saints, so we have to refer to Matthew 24. 31, which speaks of the gathering of the elect. But the question arises, are the saints and the elect the same beings? Here again we find that the term is applied to more than one class. There seems little doubt that Isaiah 42. 1 applies primarily to our Lord. "Behold mine servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." Isaiah 45. 4 refers to "Jacob my servant and Israel mine elect". Isaiah 65. 9 reads "I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my holy mountain, and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there". These two passages would appear to divide the servants from the elect, but verse 22 says "for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands". Turning again to the New Testament, in 1 Timothy 5. 21 we read of elect angels. In other translations these are chosen messengers, holy angels, or the angels who are chosen, so they may be earthly or heavenly beings. Let us not waste time arguing

whether the elect are exclusively either heavenly or earthly beings, rather let us emphasise the fact that all the saints or elect ones are chosen by God to be in relationship with him on whatever plane He wills.

The characteristics of the elect are outlined in Col. 3. 12 (T.E.V.). *"You are the people of God; he loved you and chose you for his own. Therefore you must put on compassion, gentleness and patience, kindness and humility. Be helpful to one another and forgive one another. You must forgive each other in the same way that the Lord has forgiven you. And to all these add love, which binds all together in perfect unity."* This is but an echo of our Lord's reply to the lawyer who asked "what are we to consider the law's greatest commandment?". (See also Gal. 5. 14, James 2. 8).

But it may be asked, how does this relate to the covenant made by sacrifice? We have already noted this warning in the condemnation of natural Israel, because their sacrifice became meaningless, devoid of true love, and there is another grave warning implicit in the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 13. 2, 3 *"If I speak with the eloquence of men and angels, but have not love, I become no more than blaring brass or crashing cymbal. If I dispose of all that I possess, even if I give my own body to be burned, but have no love, I achieve precisely nothing"*.

So we come to the final gathering of the saints or elect ones. Matt. 24. 31 foretells that at his return the Lord will send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This is not another gathering apart from the one in Psa. 50. 5, for as we noted, the term saints and elect ones do not apply to different beings. This being so the gathering of the saints is a much more comprehensive work than we are wont to think. Turning to Mark 13. 27 we find a most important difference from the prophecy in Matt. 24. 31. Here the angels are said to gather his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost parts of the earth to the uttermost parts of the heavens. This is capable of different interpretations, and it may be asked "what about the myriads

of angels who cannot be said to have made a covenant by sacrifice?" There is nothing in the Scriptures which limits this final gathering exclusively to the saints of this age. Old Testament prophecies foretell, as we have seen, that God will descend with myriads of angels (or saints). Zech. 14. 4 & 5 foretells the descent of God on the mount of Olives with all his saints (holy ones, saints or angels). This is the final gathering, planned before the world began. In Eph. 1. 9-11 Paul tells us that God has made known to us the secret of his plan He had already decided to complete by means of Christ. God's plan, which He will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and earth, with Christ as head (T.E.V.).

The original covenant by sacrifice was made at Sinai, but Hebrews 12. 18-23 draws a remarkable contrast between this and Mount Zion. One writer first describes the scene when God met Moses and appeared before the children of Israel on Mount Sinai, when Moses said "I am trembling and aghast", but he continues, "You have not drawn near to such a mountain, but you stand before Mount Zion, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, before myriads of angels, the full concourse and assembly of the first-born citizens of heaven, and the spirits of good men made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant". What a gathering! All drawn together by and with Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and this wonderful gathering is the prelude to the ultimate gathering of all things both in heaven and upon earth under one Head, even Christ.

What a crescendo of praise will swell over the earth and in the heavens when the great cry goes up "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power and might, be unto our God forever and ever". We long and pray for the gathering of the saints to be completed, so that the blessings of God's kingdom may flow out to this sin-stricken world, when the knowledge of the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

If we are indeed building upon that Rock which is Christ, there can be no disappointment, no disillusionment, no discouragement, for we shall be in very truth continually beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and are being changed into the same image, not because our idols do not have feet of clay,

but because of that very fact. Not because there is nothing in our life that saddens and wearies us, but because by means of these very things we are inspired to lay hold the more tenaciously to that which entereth as an anchor, within the Veil.

A. O. Hudson

LEAH & RACHEL

Character Studies

Two sisters, both married to the same man, both desperately in love with him, each contending for his favour; this is the story of Leah and Rachel, wives of Jacob progenitor of Israel. The story is recounted without passion or sentiment, but passion and sentiment there must have been. The unfortunate Jacob was called a prince with God on account of his place in the Divine purposes, but in domestic life he knew little peace and must sometimes have been hard put to it to hold the balance between the two sisters who became his simultaneous wives.

It was not altogether Jacob's fault. He had been deceived by his father-in-law Laban. He wanted Rachel for his wife and only Rachel. The story makes clear that he had no eyes for the elder sister Leah. But there was an element of poetic justice in the situation, for Jacob's very presence in this land was in consequence of his deception of his father Isaac in the matter of Esau and the birthright. Following that episode he had set out for his uncles' establishment five hundred miles away to get out of Esau's sight, and immediately upon arrival fell passionately in love with his cousin Rachel. She was about seventeen and he was fifty-seven (which, taking into account the longer life-span of men in those days was equivalent to mid-thirties today). Laban, perceiving which way the wind was blowing, proposed that Jacob enter his service on the stock farm for seven years, after which he would consent to the marriage, and this Jacob accepted. So the story runs; "*Jacob served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her*" (Gen. 29. 20).

Came the end of the seven years and time for fulfilment of the contract. Laban, however, had been thinking. Rachel was apparently a very attractive girl, but there was the older sister, Leah, who, if the Hebrew term is correctly translated, was what we today would call dull-eyed. Laban would like to get her off his hands; Jacob had proved a very useful member of his work-force but once he had married Rachel he would want to be off home again with her. With a little astuteness he might bind Jacob to him for another term of years. So he called all the menfolk of his acquaintance to the wedding-feast. When it was over Jacob was conducted to his quarters and his bride brought to him. Not until next morning did he discover, to his consternation, that the woman beside

him was not Rachel, but Leah.

This time it was at least partly Jacob's fault. For this kind of deception to have worked it could only be that Jacob had imbibed much too freely at the feast on the previous evening — Laban had probably seen to that anyway — and was in no condition at its end to differentiate between one and the other. Only when he sobered up in the morning did he realise the truth.

Of course, he expostulated, but Laban was ready with an excuse and a fresh proposal. It was not the custom of his country, he explained, to permit the marriage of the younger daughter first. It seems a bit feeble; he had had seven years already to have acquainted Jacob with the marriage customs of the country and only when it was too late did he think it necessary so to do. But, he went on soothingly, Jacob could have Rachel also if he would consent to remain another seven years in Laban's service. He must give Leah the first seven days, then the second marriage could take place.

One wonders what part the two sisters took in all this. Leah must have been a consenting party. The narrative shows that she also was in love with the handsome stranger who had come into their household and since she could not get him by fair means was not averse to becoming his wife by trickery. Rachel also must have known about it and she certainly would not have consented willingly. A distinct impression is given that both the girls had to do as they were told; Laban is pictured as a rather unscrupulous and domineering personage who intended to have things his own way. Women were of little account in those days and it was very much a man's world; Rachel was probably told she could have Jacob on her father's terms or not at all. The sequel shows that she never forgave Leah. And Laban's dominance over his daughters is highlighted by the alacrity with which they seized the opportunity to get away from him when, much later on, Jacob proposed that they all migrate to Canaan and the home of Isaac his father.

The second seven years passed. Leah had given Jacob three children, Reuben, Simeon, Levi. Rachel was childless. With each child Leah reiterated her belief that her husband would be reconciled to her on their account but it was a vain hope. Jacob was indifferent; he performed his duty as a husband but that was all. Rachel was his one and only love and

he could not forget Laban's deception. But Rachel was getting desperate. In accord with the beliefs of the times, her only hope of retaining Jacob's love was to give him children. So she pleaded with her husband "*Give me children, or else I die*" (Gen. 30. 1). It is possible that the Hebrew term is better rendered "Give me children, whether or not I die" and casts a better reflection on Rachel's character; she was prepared to give her life if need be to experience the happiness of bearing a child to Jacob. His rejoinder sounds harsh and unsympathetic in the A.V. rendering; his "*anger was kindled against her*" — "*am I in God's stead?*" he asked, but this attitude and these words are quite likely the outcome of his own feelings of disappointment and frustration. He was probably quite as bitter at the turn events had taken as was Rachel.

At this point Rachel, evidently fearing that, although still only thirty-one years of age, she would never become a mother, invoked the old Sumerian and Hurrian laws which still prevailed in Syria, and took the same action as Sarai the wife of Abraham, in similar circumstances, more than a century previously. She exerted her legal right and privilege of giving her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob so that any resulting children would be accredited to Rachel as the legal wife. The next few years saw two sons and perhaps a daughter or two result from this union and Rachel was more content. "*God hath heard my voice*" she said "*and given me a son*". Rather less worthily, perhaps, when the second of Bilhah's sons was born, she gloated over her victory over Leah; the old jealousy was still there. Leah was not slow to retaliate. She had a fourth son, Judah, by now and probably a daughter or two also, but then came a halt and in the endeavour to maintain her advantage and not be outdone by Rachel she followed her sister's example and gave her own handmaid Zilpah to Jacob. This brought two more sons into Jacob's growing family so that after about seventeen years of married life he had eight sons and an unspecified number of daughters, together with four wives between whom he had to keep the peace. Quite enough for one man! When his mother Rebekah sent him to her brother's home to find a wife from her own family she could hardly have expected this denouement.

At this time there occurred the incident of the mandrakes (Gen. 30. 14-16). Reuben, the eldest child of Leah, now about sixteen years of age, found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother.

Rachel, seeing them, coveted, and asked Leah for some. Leah struck a bargain; if she could have Jacob's company that night Rachel could have the mandrakes. Rachel assented, and the result was the birth of Leah's fifth son, Isaachar.

No one knows for certain just what plant is represented by the Hebrew *dudaim*, translated mandrake, only that the term means love-plant or love-apple, but there is every probability that the botanical mandrake is the one. Had the writer of the account any idea that thousands of years later his story would still be read he might have given an explanation but as it was everyone in his day knew what the term implied. The mandrake is a tap-rooted plant bearing small flowers and apple-like fruits, native to Middle East countries and carrying a superstition that it is conducive to fruitfulness when eaten by barren women; this might very well be the plant referred to. The association in this particular case is obvious. Apparently the finding of the fruits was something of a rarity and Rachel grasped at this straw of hope that by this means the dearest wish of her heart might be fulfilled.

Another son, Zebulun, was born to Leah, and the one daughter of Jacob whose name is mentioned, Dinah; at forty-nine years of age Leah seems to be content with six sons of her own and two by Zilpah. A comparison of ch. 29. 31-34 with 30. 18-20 appears to indicate that she had by now given up all hope of winning Jacob's love, and had settled down to an acceptance of the position. Her eldest sons were approaching manhood and with Rachel still childless Leah must have been increasingly looked upon by Jacob's servants and retainers as the matriarch of the clan.

Ten years after the incident of the mandrakes, and twenty-seven since the date of Jacob's two marriages, the unexpected happened. Rachel, at last, gave birth to a son.

At fifty-one years of age she must have long since given up all hope. Now her native faith came to the top and she acknowledged the goodness of God; in a flash of prophetic insight she voiced her belief that He would give her a second son. Jacob, at ninety-one, must have felt a sense of overwhelming satisfaction. This was the son he had always wanted and it is clear that he looked upon Joseph as his principal heir and possessor of the birthright. The well-known jealousy of the older brothers at a later date stems directly from this fact. Joseph, the son of

his beloved Rachel, was always the dearest to Jacob's heart.

From this point of time Jacob began to fret to go home. He had got the wife he came for, he had got his heir, but he was still in Laban's service. He had little of his own. Whether his intimation to Laban that he now wanted to return to Canaan was as sincere as appears on the surface or merely a ploy to facilitate some bargaining of his own with Laban is impossible to say but at any rate by the time the two men had fenced around the position and come to terms Jacob had secured an extremely favourable agreement. The details of that agreement form no part of this story; suffice that within the short space of six years the older sons of Jacob, now in their twenties, were managing an increasingly prosperous stock farm on their father's behalf while Jacob, sixty miles distant, continued to supervise Laban's interests. The story says of him that during that six years *"the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses"* (Gen. 30. 93).

Not unnaturally, Laban's own sons began to grumble. They saw their father's and so their own prosperity begin to diminish as that of Jacob increased. *"The countenance of Laban"* was *"not toward Jacob as before."* Although the agreement had looked on the surface as though Laban would reap the greater advantage he now realised that he had been outwitted by a man who knew a great deal more about stockbreeding than he did himself, and this he did not like. Jacob formed the opinion that it was about time to pack up and go. His wives agreed with him. They saw a better future for themselves and their sons five hundred miles away from Laban in Canaan. It remained only to organise a quiet and successful departure.

The opportunity came at the annual sheepshearing which was an occasion of much ceremonial feasting and ritual, when normal work ceased for a week and all the outlying workers came into the headquarters of the establishment to participate. Jacob assembled his people on his own territory which was already sixty miles in the direction of Canaan from Laban, and set out. By the time some local busybody had got to Laban to tell him what had happened Jacob had already something like a hundred miles start. By the time he had cleared another hundred miles Laban and his men had caught up with him and there ensued the acrimonious altercation which is recorded

in Gen. 31. 25-55. Of the many complaints that Laban had, the one which annoyed him most was that Jacob in departing had, so he thought, stolen his "gods" — his *teraphim*, to use the Hebrew word — an accusation which Jacob hotly denied. And this is where Rachel comes back into the story.

Rachel — who like everyone else in her family, seems to have had an eye to the main chance — had packed with her belongings the "images", the *teraphim*, which belonged to her father. Says ch. 31.19 *"Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's"*. She had a purpose in so doing which overshadowed all considerations of morality. These *"teraphim"* were miniature figures of ancestral family gods which were handed down from father to son and esteemed as guardian deities warding off illness and danger to the house and its occupants. The predominant race occupying and ruling the land in which Laban lived was the one known today as the Hurrians, and by Hurrian law physical possession of the family *teraphim* entitled the holder to a share in the father's estate. It would seem that Rachel's object in stealing and concealing them was that upon Laban's death she could claim a share of his estate, perhaps fearing that her young son Joseph might be deprived of any share in that of Jacob by the older sons of Leah. At any rate, when Laban, at Jacob's demand, searched his wives' tents for the missing treasures, Rachel adopted a successful subterfuge by reason of which he went away empty-handed. Not that it did her much good. A little later Jacob had all the *teraphim* and other symbols of idolatrous worship throughout his establishment given up and buried. For him and his people there was to be only one God, the God of Abraham. The incident does reveal that for all their professed worship of God, the religion of Laban and Leah and Rachel was tinged with idolatry.

Now the sands were running out for Rachel. The long five hundred miles journey to Canaan, encumbered as it was with flocks and herds, occupied three years. They must have been three tedious years, and Rachel was no longer young. Added to that, she was to know motherhood again. The climax came when they were almost within sight of their destination. At a little country place which afterwards became Bethlehem, Jacob's twelfth son, Benjamin, was born, and simultaneously Rachel breathed her last. She was sixty-three.

One can only guess at the thoughts of Jacob, as he buried her there by the wayside and erected a pillar

of stone to mark the spot, a spot which is still marked today by a monument. For her, and for him, and for Leah, life had been a long disappointment and frustration. Later history has shown that they were all instruments in the hand of God, but sometimes it is a hard thing to be an instrument in the hand of God. They all were subject to the shortcomings which are common to all men, but at any rate they did their best. Of Leah we hear no more. When Jacob and his family migrated into Egypt thirty years later to escape the famine her name is not mentioned; she probably died quietly in the interim. Her passing sev-

ered the last link binding the family of Abraham to that of Nahor his brother. When Israel returned from Egypt four centuries later the descendants of Laban were enemies. He must have fathered an influential nation, for in the 8th Century B.C. the Assyrians called North Syria the land of Labanu, and in fact his name survives in the name Lebanon applied to part of that land today. Unworthy as his character may have been, the crowning glory of Laban the Syrian was that his two daughters became the mothers of the Divinely chosen nation of Israel.

T. Holmes

TWELVE HOURS IN THE DAY

*A study in
John 11. 9*

As the life of Jesus was drawing to its close the increasingly ferocious hostility of the Jewish authorities caused him to withdraw himself from Jerusalem and its environment on several occasions.

This seems to have been necessary because his utterances became more challengingly emphatic, and his works more startlingly miraculous. By reason of this greater emphasis, Jesus drew the attention of the common people more definitely to himself, but at the same time it fed the flames of anger and malice which for some time had smouldered in the hearts of the rulers.

One of his startling miracles at this time was the bestowment of sight upon the "man born blind." To supplement this gracious act Jesus uttered the parable of the shepherd and his sheep. For daring to defend the character of his benefactor the once blind man was "put out of the synagogue" by the infuriated rulers. They thus cut him off, as they thought, from the hopes of Israel. To show the people the true character of the Pharisees and rulers, Jesus told them, illustratively, of an occurrence which had happened many times in their midst. False hireling shepherds "whose own the sheep are not", had failed to preserve and keep the flock from danger, while a true owner-shepherd would risk his own life rather than that of his flock. Both the people and the Pharisee saw at once the point of Jesus' story.

The Pharisees had cast out of the fold one of the sheep of Israel. They cared not what became of him. Jesus, by kindly act and forceful word, had found the wandering sheep, and gave him sight deeper than fleshly sight. The Pharisees cared more for Sabbath-

day formalism than for the poor man's eyes. Jesus thought more of the stricken man's sufferings than of their Sabbath-day restrictions. It called not for deep insight, therefore, to understand which was hireling and which was shepherd. This was a daring challenge to make against the self-perpetuating rulers in Israel, and so incensed them that "*they took up stones again to stone him*" (John 10. 31).

But inasmuch as his time was not yet to come, the hostile Jews could not take and destroy Jesus, however much they desired so to do. "*He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan to Bethabara*" — the place where John the Baptist began his ministry. There for some time, He abode. (John 10. 39-40).

While dwelling there, a messenger arrived with the tidings that Lazarus (whom Jesus dearly loved) was sick, and that his grief-stricken sisters would greatly appreciate the presence of their beloved Master and Friend. Instead of proceeding immediately to the succour and comfort of the sorrowing household, Jesus remained, for reasons best known to himself, in Bethabara for two whole days. During this period Lazarus died. Towards the end of the second day Jesus came to know, by some means, that Lazarus was dead; but strange to say, not until He knew this did Jesus take steps to go to Bethany. When, however, the knowledge had come, Jesus proposed to his disciples that they should accompany him to the home of the bereaved friends. "Let us go into Judea again" said the Master. "Oh Master" the disciples replied "it is only recently that the Jews sought to stone thee. Wilt thou go to Jerusalem again so soon? Wilt thou

openly put Thy life and person in danger by such a step? Instantly Jesus made reply "*Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not . . .*" How strange an answer to make to their solicitous reply. What did Jesus mean by these words?

To realise their meaning, let the words first be considered carefully in relation to Jesus' experiences before, during, and after this incident, and it will be seen that this strange answer has an application to the Master himself. A slight change of wording may bring out its intended meaning, and show how fearless Jesus was, when the Will of God called Him to service. "Are there not twelve hours in my day? If I walk and work in the day I cannot stumble and fall. Can the Jews deprive me of so little as a single moment from that full day? If my Father bids me go again to Jerusalem to perform another challenging work among that hostile people, can any man interfere with me till my work is done?"

Jesus knew He had a "day" during which He must work the works of his Father, and in that "day" He could not be thwarted; but He also knew that a night would come when He could no longer work and in which He would fall to his enemies wrath (John 9. 4). But till that "day" was fully run, until his work was completely done no power on earth could interfere to put his life in danger. Until his "twelve" full hours were spent his life was sacrosanct, and could not be extinguished. Adopting an unknown writer's forceful phrase, Jesus was "immortal till His work was done". That was the secret ground of Jesus' confidence. He had "work" to do, and no malice of men nor hate of demons could interfere with His safety while engaged on his Father's business.

What lessons can we draw from this scrap of Jesus' history and from this cryptic statement from his lips?

In these troubled days amid the perils of our modern world, it were well for each child of God to ponder these singular but confident words of our beloved Lord, for as Jesus "was" in his eventful day so is each consecrated believer in our tumultuous day. Every follower who is "in Christ" may claim and enjoy the same privileges before God which our dear Lord possessed. Every promise and assurance which God gave to Jesus (compare Isa. 49. 8 with 2. Cor. 6. 2) may be claimed by Jesus' associates as his or her very own. Each child of God has his or her own "day" for his or her own "work" — a full complete

"twelve hours" with which no foe can interfere. In face of peril or danger, be the source thereof what it may, each consecrated follower of the worthy Lamb may say "*Are there not twelve hours to my day?*" It is not God alone who determines what my work shall be and when the span of life shall end?

It will greatly contribute to the peace of heart for every one who loves the Lord to realise that his "times" are in the Lord's hands, and in his hands alone, and that no man nor confederation of men, even with the world's deadliest forces at their command can shorten or interfere with their little "day." This is a part of God's "Care" which He reserves to his very own control. "*He careth for you*" is no empty phrase. God has set "twelve hours" to every believer's "day" according as his "work" shall be, and no one who is "against us" can alter its length, though they marshal all the forces and furies of creation to their aid. The Lord God orders *all* the steps of a good man, from the beginning of his pilgrimage to its end, and there are no steps in a responsive son's life which a loving Father allows other hands to order, so that when each child's "day" comes to its close, it is God's hand alone which rings the knell of closing day.

But due recognition of this tremendous truth should not dispose any child of God to rash or careless procedure at any time, least of all in these perilous days. Although Jesus knew there were "twelve hours" to his day, He did not presume upon His Father's providential care. He withdrew from the place of danger and went into a safer place. He did not unduly hazard His life nor fly into the face of danger. He performed one great work which raised a storm of passion and hatred — then quietly withdrew to allow the storm to subside. But when another challenging "sign" was due to be given He hesitated not to go back to the danger zone, knowing that the doing of his Father's "Work" would ensure to him his Almighty Father's protection and care.

Our lesson is: *God keeps and protects those who have God's work to do.* That is a truth we must keep in mind today, when death may meet us at any street corner. God has never guaranteed his saints unconditionally against calamities and violence, even in ordinary times. Those who lived the life of faith, even back to pre-Christian days, were always subject to the risks of human passion and bigotry, and many, of whom neither the Jewish Age nor the Gospel Age have been worthy, closed their eyes for the last time amid scenes of violence and bloodshed; but

not before their allotted work was done. God kept them all until their little "day" was done. There were "twelve hours to every little day", and so it is today. God will keep his workmen here, and hedge them round with providential care until their work for him is done. No opposing foe can interfere with God's work, and if the doing of God's work requires the presence of God's workmen there, then Omnipotence can challenge every foe and control the fierce fury of both mob and fire.

But when God's work for any Age or occasion is accomplished and there is nothing more of the allotted task still to do, God's workman will go Home. When Jesus' work was done, God took the hedge away, and left him to the dark forces of hate and sin. When his "Day" of work was ended, the night closed round him, and what could not befall him in the "day" befall him when its "twelve hours" were run. *But Gethsemane was the prelude to Easter morn and Olivet, and God's "right hand."* The "day's" work done, the Messianic workman went Home to enjoy his Father's smile.

If, today, God's allotted work for his Church is done,

then the time has come for his workmen to go Home. God is under no promise or obligation to keep them here when the "twelve hours" are run. From the moment of full surrender their only reason for remaining here is to do God's work, in God's own way. That work accomplished, no reason then exists for God to keep them here, his great consideration is the outworking of his Plan, and as each stage arrives at its conclusion the workmen are removed and another stage, with other men, then occupies the scene. If then, the Church's work is done, the time has come for the Church to go 'Home', but if it is not yet done, then it is God's responsibility to keep his workmen here. And though the whole world becomes a howling mob, hurling destruction from the skies like torrential rain, the hand of God can shield his child and keep him safe until the clock of Providence chimes the hour.

Let every child of God take courage then and know within his heart of hearts that till his (or her) clock strikes 'twelve' no weapon that is formed against him can reach its mark - he (or she) "*is immortal till their work is done*".

Gainsborough House

The Bible Fellowship Eventide Trust, a registered charity, runs this Christian Retirement Home at Milborne Port primarily for those sympathetic to this and similar journals. It is situated on the west side of a delightful village on the border of Somerset and Dorset amid lovely west country farmlands. It is about 100 miles from London and 150 miles from Birmingham. It straddles the old A30 road, three miles east of Sherborne. Yeovil is another five miles further on. This Victorian country house has comfortable lounges and guest rooms. It also has pleasant flower and vegetable gardens which supply the house.

Permanent residents live in self contained flats with shower and toilet. A communal mid-day meal is pro-

vided by an excellent cook. Gainsborough welcomes friends for country holidays and short stays, accommodated in the main house in single or double guest rooms. Further details and bookings for these are made through Gwen May, West Moors, Upton, Long Sutton, Langport, Somerset TA10 9NL (Tel: 01458 241346).

Several vacancies are currently available for permanent residents and couples may be considered.

Those thinking about retirement, please write or phone for details to Derrick Nadal, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL; Telephone: 01949 860416

"The gift that meant most to Grannie was a new Bible from six-year-old Kenneth. Kenneth had chosen it himself, and he wanted to write a message inside the front cover. He knew that was the thing to do. His father had recently been given a book by a friend and there on the fly-leaf he found what he was looking for. Though he wasn't at all sure what it

meant, he copied it carefully into Grannie's Bible, showing it to no-one. Grannie was a bit surprised to read: 'With the compliments and best wishes of the Author' — but she's quite sure the message is true, for all that!"

(Source unknown)

A. O. Hudson

THE TRANSFIGURATION

One of the strangest incidents in the Gospels is the Transfiguration. In its nature it seems to belong to the Old Testament rather than the New and to be revelation of the kind we normally associate with the Hebrew prophets rather than Christian apostles. That it was given for a purpose there can be no doubt, and that the happening deeply impressed itself upon the minds of the three witnesses is obvious from the unanimity of the versions in each Gospel. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record it and in much the same words. Memory must have been very clear as to the precise details of what happened on that eventful day.

It was about half way through the ministry of Jesus that his disciples had this strange and thrilling experience. They had already followed him through two journeys in Galilee and the north, beside attending him on one visit to Jerusalem. He was becoming well known by now and the authorities were taking notice of his movements and his message. Jesus himself knew that the sands were running out and He must begin to prepare his disciples for the grim realisation that their immediate hopes were going to be dashed by his death, and the golden promise of the Kingdom recede into an indefinite future. But more than that, He must also commence to instil a consciousness of their lives' mission in their minds, to give them the groundwork upon which after his death they might go forward in confidence to proclaim his message in Jerusalem, and all Judea, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. He must needs implant in their minds a vision that would never fade while life lasted, and the means He chose to achieve that end was a vision of another kind impressed upon their natural eyes.

The Pharisees and Sadducees had already been to him, asking a sign from heaven, a request which He refused (Matt. 16. 1-4). That incident had passed as it were almost unnoticed, but it served to show that the forces of the enemy were beginning to marshal themselves and Jesus knew that the time would not be prolonged. So he tested his disciples, "*Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*" (Matt. 16. 13). There was a variety of answers. Apparently some had thought He was John the Baptist, raised from the dead, others, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or another of the prophets. Still others surmised that He was the mysterious unnamed one of whom Moses had

spoken, "that prophet" who would be raised up like unto Moses, but who, unlike Moses, would be heeded by all the people. But all opinions and reasonings had one basis; the One standing among them was a man and no more than a man, one who may have been a great man of God and a great champion of righteousness in time gone by, but nevertheless a man still, of Adam's race. It was when Jesus turned to the disciples and put his second question "*But whom say ye that I am?*" that a great light dawned on Peter and he spoke out, impulsive as ever, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" "Son of man"; they had been accustomed enough to that title and thought no more of it than when they read in their Scriptures of the same appellation being bestowed upon the prophet Ezekiel. There was in Jewry at that time no real realisation that Messiah himself would be anything more than a man; a great man raised up by God admittedly, but for all that only a man. It was at this point of time that Peter saw in a flash of inspiration that Messiah was more than a man. He was in verity the sent of God, come down from heaven to take human form to execute his Divine mission. He was not only son of man; He was also the Son of God.

That sudden frank declaration was the beginning of the whole spiritual understanding of the Church. All that we, any of us, comprehend or understand of the unseen things within the Vail have their source in Peter's historic reply. Until then the ideals and thoughts, and consequently the hopes and aims, of the disciples and all of Jesus' followers were exclusively earthly. From that time their progress in the understanding of spiritual things began, and that is why Jesus, rejoicing in spirit at the evidence thus afforded him that his work was at last bearing fruit, exclaimed "*Blessed art thou, Simon . . . flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto you, but my Father who is in heaven.*" A new phase of his ministry was entered upon there and then. In a very real sense Jesus began that day to build his Church. Even although Pentecost must come before that Church could be formally inaugurated by the descent and baptism of the Holy Spirit upon those first believers gathered in the Upper Room, it was here that Jesus began the gathering out of the first few. It was here that He found some who manifested the attitude of

heart and beginnings of an understanding mind that was to make them fit recipients of the Holy Spirit when the time should come. It is a very significant thing that this passage contains the first occurrence of the word "*ecclesia*" in the New Testament. "Upon this rock," this rock truth just enunciated by Peter, "I will build my church" (Gk "*ekklesia*") said Jesus. The term properly denotes the entire assembly of Christ's disciples the world over, the whole "Church in the flesh" at any one time. So it is very appropriate and very significant that here for the first time Jesus avows his intention to "build his Church."

Not less significant is the fact that immediately after this revelation of Peter's grasp of this great truth and the indication thus afforded that the minds of the disciples were getting ready for spiritual instruction, Jesus began to speak of the deeper things of his mission. Heretofore He had worked miracles, preached the Gospel of the Kingdom, and discoursed with his disciples on the virtues of his ways of life, the "fruits of the Spirit" as we might call them, the inherent value of love and joy and peace and mercy and humility and so on. Now He embarked upon a totally different style of instruction. "*From that time forth*" says Matthew in verse 21 "*began Jesus to shew unto his disciples . . .*" the things regarding his presentation of himself to the Jews as their Messiah, their rejection of him, his condemnation; his death and his resurrection. They did not comprehend fully what He was endeavouring to teach them, Peter even going so far as to say "*Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee*" but the fact that Jesus deemed it a suitable time to speak of these things is evidence enough that they were at least in a fit condition of mind and heart to appreciate them partially. As the weeks and months passed by they became the more fully receptive to this aspect of our Lord's teaching and although even at his death they had still not sufficiently understood it all to retain complete faith in the face of that supreme tragedy, nevertheless they had imbibed enough to turn the scale when the events immediately following the Resurrection restored their faith and opened to them new vistas of revelation. The work whose beginning is narrated in Matthew 16 achieved its consummation in Acts 2, and the fruit of that which was sown at the Transfiguration was reaped at Pentecost.

One thing yet was necessary to establish their faith in these necessarily unsubstantial and unreal spiritual promises. Although they did not, as did the Pharisees

and Sadducees a little while previously, ask for a sign as evidence of his authority, Jesus knew, none better, just what tremendous value a sign would be to them at that juncture. Some visible manifestation upon which their physical senses could fasten would become a landmark in their memories to be recalled in after days and remembered as an evidence for belief and a foundation for faith that could not be overturned. Because of that necessity they were given the vision of the Transfiguration.

It was vitally necessary that the disciples' hope and understanding of Jesus' teaching be intimately related to the prophecies of the Old Testament. In after days the whole development of Christian doctrine was going to be dependent upon a full and accurate knowledge of the writings of Moses and the words of the prophets. So Jesus proceeded at once to relate his mission and their hopes for the future to the apocalyptic visions of olden times. "*The Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*" (Vs. 27). That is about the earliest New Testament prophecy of the Second Advent that we have — in fact it is remarkable how much of the origins of Christian doctrine is to be found in embryo form in this sixteenth chapter of Matthew and the corresponding accounts in Mark and Luke. The disciples were quite familiar with the old prophetic visions. They knew that Moses had predicted the coming of a greater than himself to whom the people would hearken and by whom they would be saved. They knew that Malachi had prophesied of the same one in different terms, a Son of Righteousness who would arise with healing in his wings; and they knew too that Malachi had also promised that God would send Elijah the prophet to Israel before the great day came, to initiate a preliminary work of turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. They knew all this, and they knew also that God would appear in glory and power to execute judgment on the wicked and bestow rewards upon the righteous, at the Last Day. So many of the prophets had described the events of that Day in symbols more or less lurid and they could not but have been acutely aware of the vision seen by Daniel where the Ancient of Days was manifested in fiery glory and one like a Son of man was brought before him to receive honour and glory and a kingdom that would never pass away. Now Jesus was clearly referring to that

prophecy and telling them in effect that He himself was that Son of man who would eventually come in that glory and receive that Kingdom. They had already realised the fact and Peter had expressed it for them in words. And there was something more. They all knew of the stirring passage in the Book of Enoch where the Lord was depicted as coming with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He was not coming alone; He would be accompanied by his faithful disciples. Daniel too had spoken of the holy ones of the Most High who would possess the kingdom in companionship with their Lord, the Son of Man. It was all very exciting and thrilling and what was needed now to seal their faith was some kind of outward evidence that all these hopes were well founded and would not be disappointed.

And it was just at that point that Jesus said to them — surely He must have said it very quietly, letting the words sink into their minds . . . *“Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”*

There have been endless discussions as to precisely what Jesus meant by those few simple words — for it is manifest that all the disciples have long since tasted of death, but still the Son of Man has not come in the glory of his Kingdom. Some have interpreted the words to mean the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and others the inauguration of the Church on earth, the incipient Kingdom of heaven, whilst its members are as yet still in the flesh. And some, critically, have said that Jesus himself expected to return in power within a few years but that He was mistaken and so the disciples were misled and disappointed, but those who say such a thing are grievously wrong. Jesus had just been talking about his appearance in glory at the day of his “appearing and kingdom” at the commencement of the Millennial Age when his saints would be with him and the world ready to receive him and his words cannot logically be taken to refer to anything else. Without any doubt at all the few men who heard those words uttered must have taken them to mean that within the foreseeable future, while as yet they lived, they would see with their own eyes that which He had just been telling them would surely come.

So there passed, in eager anticipation, six days; then Jesus called three of them, Peter, James, and John, and led them apart, up into a high mountain.

Tabor is the traditional mountain where the incident is said to have taken place, but since Tabor was crowned by a Roman fortress at the time it is unlikely to have been the spot. More likely one of the slopes of Mount Hermon in Galilee was the place where this strange and thrilling scene was enacted.

Before their astonished eyes the Jesus they knew was transformed into a glorious Being whose countenance shone as the sun and whose whole form blazed with a dazzling white radiance. The description is so startlingly akin to that of the vision which Saul of Tarsus saw on the road to Damascus that one is forced to the conclusion that Peter and James and John saw exactly what Paul saw on that occasion. Then, in company with this transfigured and glorious Lord there appeared two other figures, apparently not so glorious yet evidently not of this earth. In some mysterious way not explained in the accounts, the onlookers knew these two to be Moses and Elijah. How did they know? possibly they were not able to explain that even to themselves. They just knew that they were gazing on Moses and Elijah discoursing with the Lord of all glory. They heard enough of the conversation to gather its general drift. It was to do with the “decease” of Jesus. That is an unusual word in the New Testament and it does not mean death. It is the Greek word “*exodos*” which means a going out or an outgoing, the leaving of one place to go to another. “Decease” meaning “to die” is a wholly improper translation. Used only three times in the New Testament, one occurrence is in Heb. 11. 22 referring to the “*departing*” of the children of Israel out of Egypt, where “departing” is “*exodos*”. (From this of course we get the name “Exodus” for the second book of the Bible).

So they discoursed not of Jesus’ death, but of his “outgoing”. The significance of that may become more apparent presently. But in the meantime Peter, quick of mind as ever, grasped, or thought he grasped, the meaning of what he saw. Here surely was the fulfilment of words spoken six days previously. Here at last was the Son of man appearing in the glory of his Kingdom, and Moses and Elijah were attending him as supporters and witnesses. Here was the sign for which Pharisees and Sadducees had asked... a sign none of them would dispute, backed as it was with all the authority of Israel’s two greatest men, Moses and Elijah. What wonder that Peter, with all his usual impetuosity, immediately proposed that “tabernacles,” booths of branches and leaves, be at

once erected to shroud some of the glory which human eye could barely endure doubtless with the further intention of bringing all of Israel who would come to pay homage to the glorified Lord and be among the first to accept his Kingship and his Kingdom.

There is not much doubt that the vision was at the first thus understood by the three disciples. They must have thought that the Kingdom was about to be proclaimed and here was the first appearance in glory. Thoughts must have raced through their minds . . . the spectacle of the three glorious Beings descending the mountain in solemn state, joined perhaps by a retinue of angels such as appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem; the running of many people to see the sight; the gathering of the twelve around their deified Master: the submission and tribute of the scribes and Pharisees and priests, of the Roman legions and of Pilate . . . their quickly-woven fancies abruptly disappeared. A radiance, brighter than before, swiftly approaching and engulfing them, so filled them with awe and perhaps fear that, like Saul in later times, they could do naught else than fall prostrate on their faces. As thus they lay, a Voice came out of that blinding Radiance *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him."* . . .

How long they thus lay, with covered eyes, awe-stricken and reverent before the Presence whose majestic voice they had heard, they could not have known. The moment was too solemn, the happening too tremendous, for any thought or sense of time to intrude. Peter's hasty words were forgotten; their suddenly awakened thoughts of the Kingdom were forgotten; they only knew that they were face to face with the Almighty.

A light touch, a familiar voice; "Arise, be not afraid".

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

It was a thoughtful trio that made its way down the mountainside, with Jesus, as usual, in the lead. There was no glory now, no voices, just Jesus as they had always known him. And He was saying to them *"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."* So the Kingdom had not come in power after all! They were still in this present evil world and the Son of Man must yet be crucified and slain, and rise again the third day. One would have thought that the sudden transition back to everyday matters and the sudden shattering of brief hopes

would have destroyed all faith. Strangely, it did not. We find the disciples in a more thoughtful and serious mood than ever before. They wanted to know more about the promised sending of Elijah. They apparently understood at last the peculiar mission of John the Baptist. All the evidence goes to show that in the weeks immediately following the Transfiguration the disciples went about their duties with at least the faith they had immediately before. The impression we are left with is that the vision achieved just the purpose that it was intended to achieve.

Thirty-five years later Peter looked back to this day as a red-letter day in his life and the one that was to him the most powerful witness he had to the truth of his faith. *"We have not followed cunningly devised fables"* he said, *"but were eye witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."* (2 Pet. 1. 16-18).

"Majesty-honour-glory-excellent glory!" These are attributes of the Second Advent, of the Kingdom in power. Yet Peter says he saw them back there in the First Century. After the development and consideration and experience of thirty-five years he still insisted that he and his companions saw the glory of the Kingdom and heard the voice of God. And that is exactly what Jesus had promised in Matt. 16. 28 he would do before he died.

That verse becomes completely understandable and literally true if we consider that Peter, and James, and John, on that memorable day up there in the mountain, were miraculously given to see an incident in the days of the Kingdom which has yet to take place. Paul was taken up into the "third heaven", the "world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness" and shown in advance scenes in a world which has not yet come into existence. What wonder if to these three men was granted a similar privilege? Is it not to be expected that Moses and Elijah, in their capacity as "princes in all the earth", "Ancient Worthies" as they are often called, will yet in a future day hold converse with the Lord of glory in respect to matters concerning the administration of the Kingdom? And if so, what more likely than that they will talk of the great theme that is the means by which the Kingdom has become possible, the death of our Lord at Jerusalem? But will they think of it and talk of it as

"death"? From our human point of view, looking at the matter from this side of the grave, it is indeed death, for at the Cross He left this earth and vanished from the sight of men. But what of those who themselves are on the other side of the Vail. To the angels, waiting, that which was his death to us, was to them a home-coming, a return to his own abode. *"I leave the world, and go to the Father"* He said himself. Was that strange word *"exodos,"* "outgoing," used deliberately? It is that Moses and Elijah, talking to the Lord in the dawn of the Kingdom Age, speaking of his "outgoing" from the world of men to the world of the spirit, back there at Jerusalem? If so, this would be an incidental corroboration of the thought that what the disciples saw in the mount was not just a kind of tableau or symbolic representation of the Kingdom, but a glimpse in advance of an actual Kingdom scene in which Moses and Elijah will yet definitely figure, two thousand or more years before it happens. And if this be the true thought, then of course the three disciples did actually see the Son of man

coming in the glory of his Kingdom, even though what they saw was a prophetic foreview of an actual incident that has not yet happened, but will definitely happen on a day still future.

The Most High, Who sees the end from the beginning, can assuredly grant such glimpses, or "pre-views", as we might call them. There is nothing difficult of acceptance about that.

It is noteworthy that Peter in his Second Epistle, when referring to this incident, refers to his own "decease" (2 Pet. 1. 15), using the same word "exodos", the only other occasion besides Heb. 11. 22 where the word is used. The recollection of the happening still meant so much to him that he could not use the word "death" in the same breath; he had to say "outgoing" because he also felt so near to the Kingdom.

No wonder that in after days these men had to tell their judges *"We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard."* Who could do else, after such a glorious manifestation of the realities that lie "beyond the Vail"?

Resting in Christ

"Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day, surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be moulded more and more after the life of Christ.

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His

enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell on self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. Christ in His self-denial, Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His purity and holiness, Christ in His matchless love — this is the subject for the soul's contemplation. It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness."

H. Schooley

In the earliest days of Christianity it was revealed there is no power which can do battle with the beast except the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which, in the eyes of a prophet of that time, seemed like a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. If in those first days, when the life of the Church appeared to hang so precariously in the balance, there could be traced clear signs of battle joined between the great beast and the spotless Lamb, surely now, in what may be the final hours of modern civilisation, it is not unreasonable to discern a like tremendous struggle. In the midst of such a conflict it would be rather foolish to

try to make things a little better, bringing in here a little and there a little of the spirit of Christian charity. The struggle between the Lamb and the beast is one in which no quarter is asked and none is given; at such an hour nothing less than a complete surrender to the leadership of Christ can be of the slenderest service. Our halting obedience and our careful policies have undone us at the last and, if the Lord Christ can find it in his heart to make any use of us at all, it can now be only as we are ready to follow him whithersoever He may care to lead.

(Rev. Paul Gliddon, 1946)

T. Holmes

OUR LORD'S PEACE

*Jesus' Legacy to
his Disciples*

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." — John 14. 27.

Thus, with abounding compassion and tenderness, did our Lord, on the last night of His earthly life, bestow upon His beloved disciples His parting blessing, His legacy of peace. It was the richest legacy He had to bequeath, and was one of priceless value. It was the promise of that tranquillity of soul, that rest and ease of mind, which He himself possessed — the peace of God. It was the same peace which the Father himself has always enjoyed, even in the midst of all the commotion which the permission of evil has brought about; but it was not derived from the same source. In Jehovah this peace was self-centred, because He realised in himself the omnipotence of power and wisdom; while the peace of Christ was centred, not in himself, but in God, by faith in his wisdom, power and grace. So also, if we would have "the peace of God," the peace of Christ "my peace" — it must, like his, be centred in God by faith.

The peace of Christ was a priceless legacy; yet how quickly the storm-cloud of trouble, which was even then growing very dark, burst in its fury upon the heads of those disciples to whom the words were directly addressed. It followed almost immediately the gracious bequest, and struck consternation, bewilderment, confusion, to their hearts and shook their faith from centre to circumference. Then, where was the peace? While the Lord was speaking the words the foul betrayer, Judas, was out on his murderous errand, then followed the agony in Gethsemane, and terror and consternation among the disciples as they began to realise the fate of their beloved Lord. Soon their almost breathless suspense deepened into more fearful fore-bodings as He stood alone before his merciless accusers and persecutors in the hall of Pilate and the Court of Herod, while they were powerless to shield him; and then came the tragic end, the horror of the crucifixion.

Where was the promised peace under such circumstances — when overcome with fear and dread, they all forsook him and fled; and when Peter, although anxious to defend him, was so filled with fear that three times he denied his Lord and with cursing declared that he never knew him? Well, the peace had not yet come; for as the Apostle Paul tells us,

"Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament (a bequest) is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Heb. 9. 16. 17). But as soon as the tragic scene was over and the cry, "It is finished," fell upon their ears, strange as it may seem, there is evidence that peace began to steal into their hearts. The darkened heavens, the quaking earth, the rending rocks, the torn veil of the temple, all spoke to them a message of comfort which the world could not receive.

To the world (Jews and Gentiles, both participating in the crime) the language of those events was that of Divine wrath and indignation against them. And as fear fell upon the people and the clamour and excitement of that awful day died away, they smote upon their breasts and returned to their homes, the guilty conspirators, having accomplished their work, slunk away to hide, if possible, from the wrath of God; Judas filled with remorse, went out and hanged himself; and the Roman centurion and they that were with him, fearing greatly, said, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' But to the disciples of the Lord these events spoke in a very different language. The cause of their blessed Master was their cause and it was God's cause, and these super-natural demonstrations were evidences to them that God was not regarding the matter with indifference; and though through the veil of darkness they could not read his bright designs, in these events there was to them a whisper of hope.

Three days later hope was revived by the news of His resurrection, confirmed to them by His appearance in their midst, and again forty days later by his Ascension after his parting counsel and blessing and promised return and the instruction to tarry in Jerusalem for the promised Comforter, the Holy Spirit of adoption, not many days thence (at Pentecost). Then the peace of Christ, the Lord's rich legacy, began to be realised, and the tarrying days of prayer and expectancy were days of abiding peace — peace which flowed as a river. But when, on the day of Pentecost, the promised Comforter came, the river of their peace found a deeper bed and their joy knew no bounds.

But not alone to the early Church was this legacy of peace bequeathed; it is the blessed inheritance of

the entire Church, even to the end of the Age. The Lord showed His thought for us all that very day, when in his prayer He said: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them also that shall believe on me through their word."

The peace promised, observe, was not the short-lived peace of the world, which is sometimes enjoyed for a little season while fortune smiles and friends abound and health endures, but which quickly vanishes when poverty comes in, and friends go out and health fails and death steals away treasures of the heart; but "my peace," the peace of God, which Christ himself by faith enjoyed, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, who lost friend after friend, and in his last hour was forsaken by all of the few that remained — the peace that endured through loss, persecution, scorn and contempt, and even amidst the agonies of the Cross. This peace is something which none of the vicissitudes of the present life can destroy, and which no enemy can wrest from us.

What richer legacy could the Lord have left his beloved people? Suppose He had bent his energies during his earthly life to the accumulation of money, and that in so doing He had amassed an immense fortune to leave in the hands of his disciples wherewith to push forward the great work of the Age when He should be taken from them — money to pay the travelling expenses of the apostles and to defray the numerous expenses incidental to the starting of the work in various places, such as the renting of lecture rooms, the payment of salaries to travelling brethren, etc., etc., how soon would it all have vanished, and how poor would be our inheritance today! Why, "the man of sin" would surely have gotten hold of it in some way and not a vestige of the legacy would have reached this end of the Age. But, blessed be God, his rich legacy of peace still *abounds* to his people.

The peace promised is not such as the world can always recognise and appreciate, for the possessor of it, like the Lord himself, and like the heavenly Father as well, may have a stormy pathway. Indeed, that it must be so to all the faithful until the purposes of God in the permission of evil are accomplished, we are distinctly forewarned, but with the assurance that through all the storms this peace shall abide — "*In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace.*"

If we would know the foundation and security of this abiding peace which is able to survive the heaviest

storms of life, we have only to look to the teaching and example of the Lord and the apostles. What was it that held them so firmly and gave them such rest of mind while they suffered? It was *their faith* — their faith in the love, power and wisdom of God. They *believed* that what God had promised He was able to perform, that His righteous and benevolent plan could know no failure; for by the mouth of His prophets He had declared, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

If we would have the peace of God reign in our hearts, we must never let go our anchor, "nor suffer Satan's deadliest strife to beat our courage down." The language of our hearts should always be, "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him." With this faith the peace of God, the peace which the Master bequeathed to us ever abides. Thus the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus; for it is written again, "*Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.*"

In the midst of the Christian warfare let our hearts be cheered and our minds stayed, not only with such assurances that all the Divine purposes shall be accomplished, but also with such promises of personal favour as these.

"*Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; for He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.*" "*Can a woman forget her suckling child? . . . Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.*" "*The Father Himself loveth you,*" and "*It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" "*Such as are upright in their way are His delight.*" "*Delight thyself in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart*" — the peace of God which passeth all understanding even in the midst of storm and tempest.

What a precious legacy it was our dear Lord left with His disciples when He went away from them. He said: "*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you.*" To the world it may seem that the course of the Christian is far from peaceful, for the Lord's saints often have a stormy voyage. But if our hearts continue to be stayed on Christ by faith, and we do not let go our anchor, we shall be kept through all the tempests of life, however severely we may be tossed, however fiercely the storms may rage.

Faith can exclaim with the Prophet Isaiah, "*For*

the Lord will help me, therefore I shall not be confounded; therefore have I set my face as a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." (Isaiah 50. 7). On the assurances of the Lord we may rest, because our anchor holds fast to the Throne of God. The language of our Master's heart was "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee." He had been with the Father from the beginning and He knew His love and goodness; He had seen the manifestations of His power; He had marked His loving-kindness. So we who have come into a similar relationship to God have come to know and trust His love and faithfulness.

The Lord does not bless His people with peace in an outward sense. The Master's special associates, the Apostles, were buffeted, and so all His followers have been. The Adversary does everything in his power to make their lives anything but peaceful and happy. This is true of all who walk in Jesus' footsteps. We have *fightings* without and *fightings* within, rather than *peace* without and *peace* within. We have *fightings* with our own flesh; and it is part of our victory that we "fight a good fight," a conquering fight. We are to put forth our best efforts in fighting against the world and the Adversary, against all the things that Satan would put into our minds and hearts, and we are to get the better of these things. The Lord blesses His peoples with strength to surmount these difficulties.

We are not to be at peace with the flesh, but always at warfare with it. Yet there is a peace in the Lord that is born of faith in Him and in His promises. He had promised us grace *sufficient*; He has promised that we shall not be overcome through having trials and difficulties that are too great for us. We are assured that we shall have the victory if we trust in His strength. This gives us a rest and peace in all our experiences.

In order to enjoy this perfect peace we must have unswerving trust in our Father's love and abiding faithfulness. As we look out into the starry heavens we

see a manifestation of God's mighty power and majesty, but our hearts and minds would not be stayed and sustained by this; we might receive gifts from Him, but without knowledge of His abiding faithfulness we could not know whether these might be only traps for our injury from the Adversary. But if we have this proper foundation for faith, if we learn to *know* our Father through His Word (the only way we can know Him), we come to have confidence in Him.

If we trusted to our own reasoning, we would be in a very unsatisfactory condition. All would be uncertain; we would have no sure basis for faith or assurance. But when we see that the testimony of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, reveals to us a God of Justice, Wisdom, Love and Power, our minds and hearts have something reasonable and convincing to lay hold upon, and we say: we can trust such a God, because He is trustworthy. This conviction deepens into joy as we step out upon His promises and prove them for ourselves, thus learning their reality and realising their fulfilment. We rejoice that this loving God has called us to redemption through His Son. We rejoice that He has offered us eternal life, and has called us even to a glorious joint-heirship *with* this Son (Romans 8. 17.)

We rejoice, further, to know of the wondrous provision for the whole world in the future. All these things form a firm basis for peace and joy and confidence in the Lord. But our peace is proportionate to our constancy — our staying qualities. No one can retain this peace of God whose mind is not "stayed," fixed, on God. It is not a peace of recklessness nor of sloth, but a peace begotten of God Himself, through His promises, which we have made our own. It is dependent also upon our full obedience to the Lord. It is the peace of Christ — "My peace." This peace and the faith which inspires it, can look up through its tears with joyful expectancy for the glorious fruition of our hopes, which God has promised and of which our present peace and joy are but the foretaste.

The habit of asking questions is one of the most valuable that one can acquire. A person who is always asking "How did this happen?" or "Why did he say that?" will never find life dull, and, what is more important, will be continually adding to his store of knowledge. This desire to get to the bottom of things has led to all the inventions of modern science.

It is studying the Bible that the gift of asking questions is specially valuable. The one who before a Bible study reads through the passage to be considered, and comes prepared to ask about points he or she cannot understand, does as much to make the study profitable as those who "know all the answers".

? THE QUESTION BOX ?

Q. *What is the meaning of the word 'selah' found in various places in some psalms?*

A. 'Selah' occurs 71 times in the Psalms and 3 times in Habakkuk. It appears to be derived from ancient words meaning either to 'lift up' or to 'pause'. Recent scholars tend to regard it as a musical or a liturgical sign. If it is a musical sign then it could tell the musician to play louder (or even softer). If it is a liturgical sign then it may be telling the vocal section in Temple worship to 'pause' while the musical instruments play on. It has also been suggested that it refers to worshippers 'lifting their eyes' or becoming prostrate or even interjecting with 'Amen' or 'Hallelujah'.

In the Septuagint it is always given as a pause. Rotherham's footnote in his translation says it means 'lift up' (voices) or *exalt* and suggests that it came into use in the Persian period where Psalms had musical accompaniment. The same writer in his 'Studies in the Psalms', published later, says that it implies a *pause* though the object of the pause remains obscure. However in the text he marks each use of *selah* with a 'double fist' in sympathy with Bullinger's view that it is a connecting word, bidding us to look back at what has been written and look forward as to what is to come. Bullinger refuses any meaning connected with the music but gives it spiritual truth such as the 'lifting up the heart'. Ellicott's commentator on the other hand says there is no 'ethical significance' in the word but affirms Ewald's interpretation as a 'lifting of the voice'.

Spurgeon in 'The Treasury of David' quotes various authorities and then comes down on the side of the meaning *pause* possibly directing the singers to stop while the music plays on. Strong (5541) appears to agree with this. It is always given as a *pause* in the Septuagint/English/Bagster edition.

Perhaps we might summarise by suggesting that if the Psalms are read slowly enough, *Selah* gives us a quiet moment to raise our minds to God and ponder his precious thoughts.

D. N.

Q. *What is the meaning of our Lord's words in Matt. 10. 23 when, sending the disciples out to preach in the towns and villages of Judea and Galilee, He said "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the son of Man be come?" Did He refer to his Second Coming?*

A. The most reasonable understanding of the text is that He did. In sending out the disciples He told them, among other things, that they would be delivered up and brought before kings and governors, and would be "hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved". Now that, at least, did not happen to the twelve disciples until after the death of Jesus. Verses 17-22 are more truly descriptive of the persecutions and apostasy of the Gospel Age than of the disciples experiences whilst Jesus was with them. It seems evident therefore that Jesus was speaking to the disciples as representing all who would follow in their steps in after years. The commission He had just given the disciples, to go forth and preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (vs. 7) is the same commission that He afterwards expressed in the words "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16. 15). That witness was to continue until his return, as we have it in the well known words of Matt. 24. 14, "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." This 24th Chapter repeats the warning given in Chap. 10 that the true believers would be delivered up and persecuted, and that some would betray their brethren. The expression "Son of man be come" seems clearly to point back to Daniel 7 and the vision of the Second Advent. It seems then that Jesus meant to convey that the mission upon which He was then sending his disciples would continue for the rest of their lives, and throughout the lives of all the believers who would follow them, generation after generation, until He should come again. They thought that He would return in their own lifetime; events proved otherwise, but it is still true that the gospel of the Kingdom must be preached continually until the full revelation of the Lord upon the Throne of his glory.

A.O.H.

Q. What is the import of 2 Pet. 1. 20 "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation"?

A. St. Paul declares that God has "set" various helpers in the Church — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers — for the edification and upbuilding of the assembly. It is only from the Scriptures that such helpers can fulfil their function, and only under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The verse should be read in its entirety: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". "Prophecy" is a word which means the public declaration or exposition of the Faith, particularly under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The word is not confined to the foretelling of future events which is the common English usage today; it can cover any aspect of Scrip-

ture truth or Christian exhortation. "Private" in the Greek means "of one's own self", and "interpretation" is "unloosing". The gist of the verse is that Christian teaching of any kind is not the unaided product of the teacher's own mental equipment but is by the power of the Spirit. It is not possible to explain and interpret Scripture by the processes of natural reasoning; it can be interpreted and understood only by the power of the same Spirit by which it is given. Divine truth is not on the same level as an earthly science; its expounders must be men of God and men of spiritual insight. Christians should take for their guides and teachers, therefore, only those who give evidence of the indwelling Spirit in their lives and who can speak "*not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Spirit teacheth*".

A.O.H.

"When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what gain has their owner but to see them with his eyes?" (Eccl. 5. 11).

That comment seems to be an example of an early "Parkinson's Law" long before professor Parkinson began issuing his series of famous dictums. There is at any rate a very modern ring in these words written down by Solomon many centuries ago. The Western world of today is enjoying a rising standard of living and the benefit of multifarious amenities of life, from fast cars to electrically-driven toothbrushes, the real utility of many of which is questionable but all of which bring handsome profits to the makers and distributors. The owners and users of these things rarely stop to reflect that they are working doubly hard to earn the money necessary to acquire them so that in the end there is little real gain, only the dubious satisfaction of possession. Whilst there is no denying that modern technology has given mankind many things of tremendous value in life, it has also produced much that is trashy and puerile and detracts from rather than adds to the full life which man ought to enjoy and would enjoy if he was more in line with the natural order ordained by God. Solomon's next remark points to the real values — the merits of honest labour and sharing in the world's

work irrespective of relative reward. "*Sweet is the sleep of a labourer, whether he eats little or much, but the surfeit of the rich will not let him sleep.*" There is a New Testament equivalent to this maxim in Paul's words to Timothy "*Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content*". (1 Tim. 6. 6-8). All the labour-saving devices and mechanised entertainment and instruments of pleasurable self-indulgence in the world are useless and worse than useless if contentment and peace of mind are missing and that is so often the case nowadays. There can be little doubt that the Messianic Age which is to supersede this present very unsatisfactory Age of human self-will is going to witness a widespread return to real values in life and a rejection of the shallow and the superficial. Deeper and more serious thinking, and above all a greater consciousness of the place of God in daily life, will spell the end of much that is considered essential in our present civilisation, but contributes little or nothing to the exaltation of the human spirit. The products of the arts and sciences will rise to levels more consonant with the Divine ideal for the dignity of human nature.

A.O.H.

Those who would successfully govern the world must have both an inexhaustable capacity,

and an insatiable appetite, for work. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?"

A THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

" . . . Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church." (Acts 12. 5).

Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great and Mariamne wanted to please the Jews. He had Maccabean blood in his veins. Peter was the leader of this hated sect of the 'Nazarenes' and had already turned Jerusalem upside down by preaching that the resurrected Jesus was Messiah. Peter had gone much further than that, for he had been to Samaria and baptised many people, further still he had gone to Caesarea and begun to baptise Gentiles — a Roman centurion at that. Now the Jews had got him or had they? The church assembled and prayed for Peter. What did they pray? Did they ask that he should be well looked after in prison and not suffer too much from that nasty first century prison? He was guarded particularly well. Perhaps they prayed that Herod would release Peter quickly so that he could get on with the 'preaching of the Gospel'. Was it some vague intercession that was half afraid to take Jesus at his word? Whatever the Church in Mary's house prayed for they were in for a big surprise. They may have been in the habit of using the home of John Mark's mother. There may even have been some hallowed associations with the Lord in this house. Peter knew where to go after he had recovered from his shock of a miraculous release from prison. Rhoda, the girl who went to see who was knocking at the door recognised Peter's voice; and she was not the first young lady to discern that he was a provincial from up north. But she didn't doubt who it was because she was full of joy. The more mature brethren did not believe and called her

mad. As Peter continued to knock they at last came to their senses and let him in.

Prayer was a very important aspect of the witness of the Early Church. It started in the upper room before Pentecost. It continued as persecution grew and we have that tremendous record of prayer in Acts 4 when the prayer meeting ended with the house being shaken. Paul and Silas were sent on that first missionary journey by a praying church at Antioch. Years later while in the prison at Rome, Paul wrote to the church at Colossae requesting them to pray for his ministry that God would open a door of opportunity to him and his companions for them to preach in a way which was right for the Gospel. This was not a young inexperienced convert but Paul the aged, who had spent many years spreading the 'good news of Jesus Christ' but he was still ready to learn and to be led by his Master.

In that 'upper room', just before his final suffering Jesus had told the disciples that whatever they asked for would be done for them. That takes tremendous faith and courage. It also has two qualifications. *"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you . . ."* (John 15. 7 RSV). So before we launch out with our petitions we have to satisfy those two requirements. Are we abiding in him? Do his words abide in our hearts? Is he really the focus of our lives and do others notice it? How real is our relationship with him? This is not an exclusive academic society. This a matter of whom we know rather than what we know. And when we know him, we can take him at his word — and ask anything . . . and then wait for the shock.

Corrections

Corrections to May/June issue where misprints completely altered the meaning of the phrase:

page 51, col. 2, last line on page: ". . . symbols of the Holy Spirit which was **now** taking control . . ."

page 60, col. 1, para. 4, line 9: "Run **not** like one who is merely beating the air, . . ."

page 61, col. 2, verse of hymn: "**His wonders** to perform"

page 63, col. 2, para. 4, line 6: "*He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.*"

page 64, col. 1, para. 4, line 5: "whereas blasphemy against **himself would be forgiven, that against** the Holy Spirit would not, . . ."

page 67, col. 2, para. 2, line 14: "There are none, can be **none**, in this present Age . . ."

page 68, col. 1, para. 4, line 2: "*rose up to flee unto Tarshish . . .*"

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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

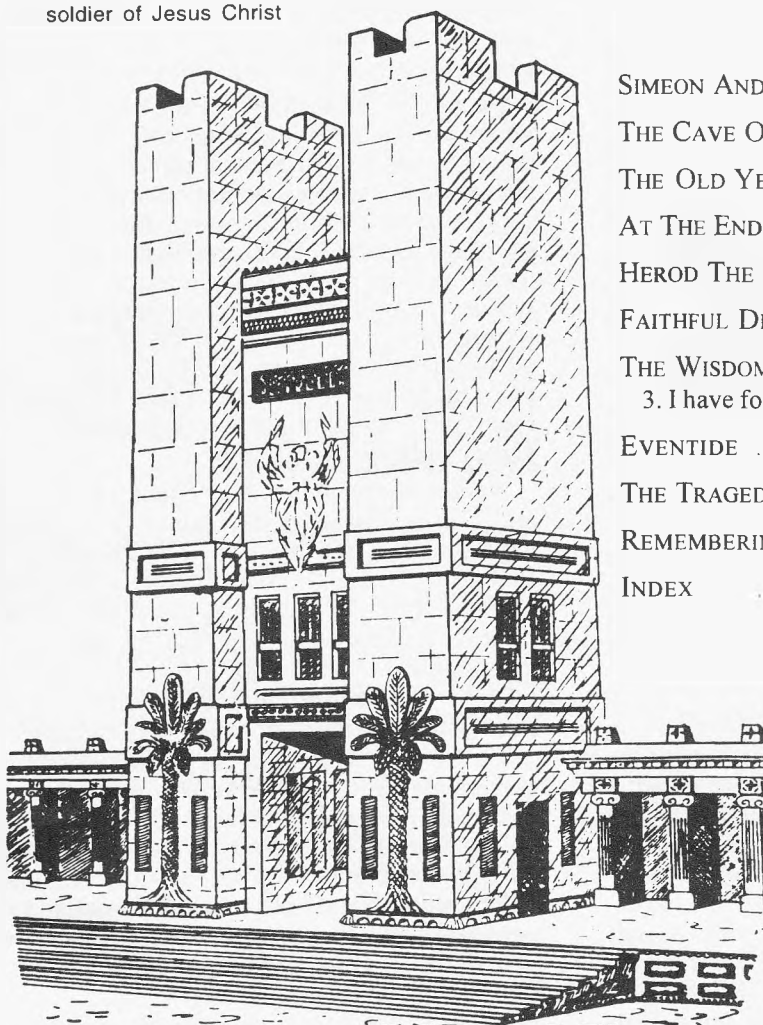
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*Lift up your heads, O ye gates
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors,
And the King of glory shall come in.*

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This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge, maintaining the historical accuracy of the Scriptures and the validity of their miraculous and prophetic content viewed in the light of modern understand-

ing. It stands for the pre-millennial Advent of our Lord and his reign of peace and justice on earth. It is supported entirely by the voluntary gifts of its readers and all such gifts are sincerely appreciated.

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Renewal

With this issue of the *Bible Study Monthly* you should find enclosed a "Renewal Form".

We would be very grateful if you would kindly fill this form in, writing clearly, so that we have a correct record of your name and address, and return it to us. If you send a cheque (check) or postal order please make it payable to **Bible Fellowship Union** otherwise we may have to return it to you. We are very grateful for every gift received but no one should hesitate to request the BSM because they can't send something. All literature, including the magazine is free. We are also concerned about readers who cannot send the Renewal Form back to us. Those whom we have known a long time and have received the magazine for many years need not worry about its continued 'visit'. We do not cancel unless requested. We do not lapse readers who have been with us a long time until we are sure that they no longer wish to have it. Please let us know of anyone who you think should be receiving the Bible Study Monthly and is not.

Magazine and Booklet Content

We desire, in serving the Lord, to make the *Bible Study Monthly* as useful and helpful as possible to all our readers. They live in many countries across the world, they have many different Christian and cultural backgrounds and cover a wide age range. We are pleased to receive any observations about BFU literature. Such comments will not make us change direction overnight in our thinking about the Bible or in the way the BFU is run, but we will 'listen' attentively and do our best to maintain a high standard of production in spiritual values and manner of communication.

In this last respect, we are slightly changing our convention in the use of the letter 'H'. We believe we should consistently use a capital 'H' for His,

Him and He, when referring to our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We hope that this practice will not irritate anyone too much.

Quotations from the Bible are printed in *italic* where a Bible reference is given. Articles do not always show which translation of the Bible has been used because we do not believe one version is predominant or more important than another. We try to use modern language so that it can be easily understood by all. Younger readers in particular will be unfamiliar with archaic language. When reprinting articles from the BSM of long ago, we occasionally make very small changes to bring them up to date in matters of fact and language. Ideas and viewpoint are **never** changed.

Reprinting Booklets

We already have in stock '*From a Prison Cell*' and '*Three Stories of Salvation*'. We expect to have shortly a new stock of '*The Promise of His Presence*'. We also hope to have a new leaflet '*Salvation for All*' available in the New Year.

Please make sure that all requests and communications are addressed to:-

Bible Fellowship Union, 4 Manor Gardens, Barnstone, Nottingham NG13 9JL England.

We are deeply grateful for all the encouraging letters we receive and for your prayers. We try to answer all mail promptly but sometimes we fail to do so. We ask your forgiveness for all things 'wherein we come short'. We wish all readers the rich blessing of the Lord in warm Christian love.

Gone from us



Brother Ted Maddams (*Sheringham*)

Brother G. J. Myers (*Merthyr Tydfil*)

Brother E. B. Parker (*Llanferres*)

Brother John Brice (*Aldershot*)

Sister Gladys Walker (*Australia*)



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

A. O. Hudson

SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS

An old man, ready to depart this life, and a baby newly come to earth. An age in history, waxing old and ready to vanish away, and a new age, flushing into the roseate hues of dawn. These four met on the day that the aged Simeon came into the Temple and saw this young couple bringing their first-born child to be dedicated to the Lord. He had seen many such during his long life of service for his God, but this time there was a difference. That inward voice which had been his guide and mentor so many times in the past spoke again, and now for the last time. God had fulfilled his promise; the Spirit's assurance possessed his mind, and he knew with certainty that at last he was looking upon the Lord's Messiah.

Simeon was evidently one of the few in Israel who were prepared to receive the Messiah in the way He came, as a child, born in humble circumstances, without pomp, ostentation or show. The majority expected him in vastly different guise, as a mighty conqueror, bursting upon the world in all the splendour and power of his Heavenly glory. The many rejected him because of the manner of his Advent; the few, like Simeon, accepted him because by dint of reverent study of the Scriptures and constant waiting upon God they had a more accurate idea what to expect.

The child Jesus was six weeks old. According to the law of Moses, as recorded in Lev. 12. 1-8, a woman was considered unclean after the birth of a child, and — in the case of a boy child — must come to the sanctuary with an offering at the end of forty days. A lamb for burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering was stipulated, and after the offering of these by the priest she was ceremonially clean again. A further stipulation provided that if the woman was unable — through poverty generally — to furnish a lamb, she could bring two turtle doves or pigeons, and the intimation in Luke 2. 24 that Mary did in fact avail herself of this concession is an incidental evidence that Joseph and Mary were in poor circumstances. The Lord of all chose to identify himself with the poor rather than the rich when He laid aside the glory which He enjoyed with the Father "before the world was", and became man for the suffering of death. The expression in Phil. 2. 7 that He "*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant*" was literally true to the extreme. But, despite her poverty, Mary

came also to present her child in dedication to God, to offer back the gift she had received from him to be devoted to his service. That also was a requirement of the Law. Whenever a woman's first-born child was a son, that son was to be presented to the Lord. In ceremonial fashion that child was particularly the Lord's, and although whilst still on the way to the Promised Land the Lord arranged that the tribe of Levi should be exchanged for the first-borns of all tribes, so that the Levites became the dedicated ones to serve the people in the things of God, the people of Israel still retained the custom of presenting their first-born before the Lord in His sanctuary. So it came about that Mary and Joseph were to be found in the Temple on this particular day for the accomplishment both of the cleansing and the presentation.

It was thus that Simeon found them, as, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he came into the Temple Court. We do not know much about Simeon. He never appears again in the Gospel story and is not referred to anywhere else in the New Testament. The memory of the incident itself must have been preserved by Mary and related years later to Luke, for none of the men who afterwards became Jesus' disciples were there; most of them were probably not even born. There are a few distinct clues in the description from which some definite inferences can be drawn. Luke says that Simeon was "*just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death until he had seen the Lord's Christ*". (Luke 2. 25-26). Only Mary could have known these facts and imparted them to Luke; it seems clear that Mary must have been previously acquainted with Simeon or at least knew him by repute. The word "just" could equally well be rendered "upright" or "righteous"; that for "devout" is one that is used to denote the more scrupulous and rigid aspect of religious life. This, added to the fact that Simeon was one who looked for the imminent coming of Messiah, and believed that when He came He would be a light, not only to Israel, but also the Gentiles, to all people, an unorthodox belief among the Jews of his day, makes it strongly probable that Simeon was a member of the little-known body of people called the Zadokites. During the century that immediately preceded the First Advent there had grown up a community

which looked for the coming of Messiah in much the same way as the past two centuries have witnessed a similar expectation of the Second Advent among Christians, and who based their expectations upon the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and certain chronological calculations drawn from the same. With that outlook was associated a strong sense of dedication to God's service and holiness of life which caused many of them to withdraw to a considerable extent from contact with the world around them. The sect known as the Essenes was strongly imbued with these views — the "Dead Sea Scrolls" have thrown new light upon this sect — and although Simeon was a very common name in Israel, and it is impossible to identify the one who is mentioned in Luke's account, it is of interest to note that at the time of the death of Herod there was an aged Essene named Simeon who had gained some fame as an uncompromising critic of the King's misdemeanours. This man may have been the same as Simeon in Luke's account.

"— *waiting for the consolation of Israel*" (vs. 25). This word "consolation" has the meaning of one coming to the side of a person needing succour, comfort or salvation. It is rendered "consolation" or "comfort" on about twenty occasions in the New Testament, such as Acts 4. 36 "*Barnabas, son of consolation*"; Heb. 6. 18 "*We have strong consolation*"; Rom. 15. 4. "*That we by patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*;" 2 Cor. 1. 3. "*The God of all comfort*". "*Parakletos*", the Comforter, in John 14, referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit, is from the same root. In the context of Luke's narrative the expression is used to denote the fulfilment of Israel's national hope, the coming of the Messianic Kingdom which should exalt Israel to the headship of the nations and fulfil the Divine promise to Abraham, "*in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*", although it has to be admitted that Israel at the First Advent had largely forgotten that wider extension of God's purpose. But Simeon was one who did believe, and now, by the inspiration of the Spirit, he knew the time had come.

It is not likely that Simeon was the priest into whose hands Mary's offering was to be entrusted. He is not stated to be a priest, and in fact, the expression "a man in Jerusalem" seems to militate against the idea that he held official position in the Temple. There is also the fact that he was a prophet, and it is not usual for priests to be prophets. It seems more probable that Simeon was in the line of prophets whose last

representative in the Old Testament was Malachi, and the last of the line John the Baptist. Both Malachi, four centuries before, and John the Baptist, thirty years after, spoke of the Light that was to enlighten the world; Simeon held that Light in his arms.

So he gave voice to that wonderful pæon of praise which has become an established part of formal church worship. "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.*" The old man had lived through the time of Israel's greatest glory since the days of David and Solomon, that brief period after the Maccabees had won freedom for the Jews, and Rome had not as yet fastened her grip upon the nation. He had seen the boundaries of the Jewish State pushed as far as ever they had been by Solomon, and Jewish ambassadors represent his country even at Rome, the greatest of Empires. Then he had seen disaster and civil war, and finally Pompey the Roman general ride into Jerusalem to force Judea into servitude again, and all the golden expectations vanish. With his fellows who had regard for the law of God he had writhed at the spectacle of Herod, the hated Edomite, ruling over the people of Israel, and had mourned the scandals and violent deeds which disgraced the once holy priesthood of Aaron. But now all that was forgotten; he held in his own arms the Lord's Messiah, and with that inward conviction which is the inviolate possession of the man who is habitually guided by the Holy Spirit of God he knew that at last the promise had been fulfilled; God had indeed visited his people; the Christ had come.

The word "Salvation" in verse 30 is not the noun of that word, but the neuter form of the adjective, "that which brings salvation". The Septuagint of Isa. 52. 10 "*all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*" uses the same form of the word; the reference in both instances is to the fact that Christ is the one who brings, and effects, the salvation that God has planned for "whosoever will" of the entire human race. Simeon saw that clearly, and hence he was able to describe both that salvation and the Child who was to be the medium of that salvation as "*a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*" (V. 32). The full force of that tremendous expression is only felt when one realises that the word "Gentiles" embraces all of mankind who are not Israelites, and hence is best rendered, as it is in so many modern translations, "nations". "A

light to lighten the nations." *"That was the true light"* cried John *"which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."* (John 1. 9.). God's words cannot fail. Whether we understand the philosophy of the matter or not; whether we appreciate the Scriptural doctrine or not, whether we comprehend the Divine Plan for mankind or find his purpose dark and mysterious, it is true and gloriously true that every human creature that has ever been, or will ever be born, will, at some time before the final decision is taken, be enlightened by that light and be brought to a full realisation of the issue between good and evil. The fact that some may be impenitent and unregenerate to the end and wilfully refuse entry into life does not affect that. Not one single human soul will ever be able to say to God "I never had a fair chance".

It was this vision which Simeon had. He saw the Kingdom of Messiah as Paradise in which the foreview of Isaiah would be fulfilled *"Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm (Christ) shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."* (Isa. 40. 10-11). In this Babe he saw the future King who was to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy, and he rejoiced, knowing that God had now moved to deliver, not only his own people Israel, but all mankind, from the thralldom of sin and death. He was ready now to go to his own rest, confident that like Daniel of old, he would stand in his lot at the end of the days. (Dan. 12. 13).

"And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him." (V. 33). Most of the principal manuscripts have "his father" here but the A.V. follows the Alexandrian with "Joseph".

It is of little consequence. If Luke did use the term "father" it was only because inevitably the common usage favoured this; obviously Joseph was the generally reputed father of Jesus, and only a very few could possibly have known of his virgin birth; Luke was, in any case, fully aware of that for he gives the best account. Joseph and Mary marvelled, not in the sense of astonishment as though they had not previously known of the Child's destiny, but in awe and wonder as they listened to Simeon's words and realised the magnitude of this great thing.

Then Simeon turned to Mary with a personal word for her: *"This child,"* he said, *"is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed . . . and a sword shall pierce thine own soul also."* (vs. 34-35). How much did the saintly old man, so near the end of his earthly course, see into the events of the next forty years, and perceive the figure of Jesus among the people, preaching, exhorting, reproofing; healing the sick, raising the dead, winning the love of the common people and incurring the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees? How much did the Holy Spirit show him of the Crucifixion, the little knot of women at the foot of the Cross, the distraught figure of the mother of Jesus? Did he even see, in shadowy outline, the figures of the Twelve, preaching to the dwellers in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost? How much of the future he did perceive we may not know, but that Simeon the just and devout, the one who waited all his life for the consolation of Israel, was indeed in the line of the Hebrew prophets, speaking and seeing as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit, we do know. Like John the Baptist thirty years later, he could truly say *"I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God."*

A Christian Church ought to be an exhibition of heaven upon earth — a manifestation of Christ below — a witness for God in the midst of the world, so that the world looking at the Church may be able to say: "This is a specimen of that which is called the Gospel can do; this is a model of what the Christian teaching can achieve." And so all with whom we come in to contact in our intercourse in life will say: "That man does not say much about his Christian beliefs when transacting his business, but there prevails in all that he does an integrity, a singleness of

eye, a simplicity of purpose, a faithfulness to his engagements, and a superiority to trial, that proves he must have some fountain of peace and comfort and joy that we have not; we will go and hear what he hears, learn the lessons he has learned, and taste, if it be possible, the happiness which we see in his character." Such a one becomes to mankind either the salt that silently keeps a society from corruption, or the light shining on the hilltop that illuminates the earth with a ray of the glory of heaven.

(Forest Gate Bible Monthly)

B. J. Drinkwater

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

A Story of Leadership

The words of James (2.5) "*Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*" are well illustrated by the life and experiences of David and his men in the cave of Adullam. When David was forced to leave Saul's court he went into the wilderness and found a large cave in which to dwell. He then gathered a company of men who shared his trials and experiences as an outcast, a fugitive; later on they shared with him his glory when he became king. These experiences of David between his rejection by Saul and the time he became king lasted seven years, and well picture this present Age, during which our Lord has been gathering out a little band, not only from the tribes of Israel, but from every kindred, tongue and nation. These are called to follow him through difficult experiences now; later, when He is recognised King over all the world, they are promised a place with him.

Who were the men thus drawn to David, and what were their characteristics? 1 Sam. 22. 1-2 says that his brethren and all his father's house went thither to him, also every one that was discontented, and he became captain over them. Some were drawn by ties of relationship, others by admiration of David himself and his character, but the majority were drawn by personal trouble. Some were in distress, some in debt, coming to David to escape from their oppressors and creditors. Others who had incurred Saul's wrath, as had David himself, came to David by way of escape, while some were discontented on account of the tyranny and oppression of Saul, and so joined David. From some viewpoints they were not at all a desirable band. So it is with the company the Lord is selecting, and reminds us of the Apostle's words: "*Not many wise, not many noble are called. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?*" Some have, indeed, been drawn to him because of their great love for him, others by an appreciation of his sacrifice, but the majority by personal affliction and trouble. Worn out by the trials and troubles of the world, they seek rest; discontented with the oppression and tyranny of the god of this world, we come to the Lord and say: "Jesus has satisfied, Jesus is mine." Perhaps on account of mental difficulties or the loss of loved ones, some seek rest, and are so drawn to him.

When these men came to David they found no very hard conditions laid down before they could enter into the company. Any might come to him; he set no age limit, no standard of fitness. Some were strong, mighty men; others were men of weakness, so weak that on occasion they had to be left behind as unfit to stand the fatigues with the rest of the band. David did not pry into their past lives; some had been noble, fine characters, others ignoble, but David was willing to let bygones be bygones; only two simple conditions were laid down; Do you accept David as your deliverer; do you believe he can deliver you from your oppressors and Saul? Do you accept David as your leader; are you willing to follow just wherever he leads? It will cost you something; you will need to be, as David is, an outcast, a fugitive. You will come under the scorn of Israel. Are you willing to share his outcast experiences? These conditions were accepted by David's followers, as is shown by their exclamation, "*Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse.*"

During this Age those who would follow the Lord find no hard conditions laid down; He places no age limit. Some come and give their entire life to him in their youth, and others come after having spent the larger portion of their life in pursuit of worldly hopes, pleasures and aims; yet the Lord accepts both. He sets no standard of fitness. Some have many talents to bring, while others feel they have nothing whatever. Jesus does not pry into the past life of any who would become his disciple. Some have spent their lives in the service of others, others have been ignoble and selfish, but the Lord only says, "the past is under the blood". There are just two conditions laid down! Do you accept Jesus as your Saviour; do you believe He can deliver you? Do you accept him as your leader; are you willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth? Sit down and count the cost, for it will cost you something. It will mean standing for unpopular truth and going unto him "without the Camp, bearing his reproach".

When these men came to David they entered into entirely new experiences. Old things passed away and all things became new. All did not run smoothly in the caves; they had many trials. They had come to David to escape trials, but they found trials right there in the cave. There were men from every tribe in Israel, varying in habits and temperament. How

apparent to each other their weaknesses would become; how often their ideas would clash. There would certainly be many difficulties in the cave; they would often rub one another up the wrong way. One thing, however, would tend to bind them together, the desire of their leader that they should live together as one family. Gradually that desire began to soften their disagreements.

We have similar experiences, for the Lord has drawn his people from every kingdom, nation and tongue. He knew full well that differences would and will emerge and we will view things from different standpoints. There will be differences of opinion, but the desire of our Leader is that we should keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Remember our Lord's prayer; *"Father, I pray that they whom thou hast given me may be one as we are one"*. We know that our love for the Lord will be measured by our love for the brethren, and we are called to keep the unity of the Spirit. We cannot countenance revolution in the cave. The Lord measures our love for him by our desire to live in peace. When the children of Israel murmured on account of the report brought back by the spies sent to view the land of Canaan, Caleb was able to "still the people before Moses" (Num. 13. 30) and the secret of Caleb's power is given in Num. 14. 24: *"But my servant Caleb, because he has another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully"*. He had the spirit, not of strife, but of peace, and the secret of his great influence lay in the fact that he followed God fully. If we would preserve the spirit of unity we must not have the spirit of strife and agitation, and we must follow God fully.

The experiences of David's followers would not all be trying; they also had blessings. They came under the influence of David's life, and his life was one of devotion. He was a godly man, a man of prayer, very often pouring out his soul in prayer to God; and he was a man of praise. Oft-times he would take up his harp in tuneful song. How this would soften their harshness! David was so skilful on the harp that when, prior to his Adullam experience, he played before Saul, the evil spirits that possessed Saul left him. He delighted to meditate on the law given to Israel through Moses, and probably would often call his followers and read to them from the law (see Psalm 34. 11). His influence must have worked wonders on the hearts of his rough followers, as is shown by the testimony paid them when protecting the shepherds of Nabal's

sheep. The record is: *"The men were very good unto us and we were not hurt, neither missed anything as long as we were conversant with them. They were a wall unto us both by day and by night"* (1 Sam. 25. 15-16). What a splendid tribute to pay to these men, who, before they came under David's influence, robbed and plundered whenever possible.

As with these men, so with the followers of the Lord. We come under entirely new influences, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, under the influence of the mind of the Master. Jesus gathers us to him to instruct us. "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them." The Scripture does not read "Where two or three are come together," but "are gathered together", neither does it read "there will I come". Jesus is already there, and we are gathered unto him. We come together to hold communion with Jesus.

*"Where two or three in sweet accord,
Meet in Thy name, O blessed Lord,
Meet to recount Thine acts of grace,
O how Thy presence fills the place."*

These men entered into a new security. The name "Adullam" means "resting place". The cave was situated six miles south-west of Bethlehem, and to reach it one had to pass along a narrow way along the side of a precipice. On one side was a rocky gorge, and the other high, towering rocks. Then one entered a crevice, leading sheer into the face of the rock, so low that it was impossible to stand in an upright position; one must enter in a crouched attitude. Against David and his men in the cave Saul was powerless, no matter how large an army he brought against them. They had to pass in single file along the narrow path leading along the mountain side, and enter, one at a time, what appeared to be a pitch dark hole in the rock; David and his men had the advantage of looking towards the light and could see each one as he entered. They were quite secure; only in the daytime dare Saul attack them. At night they went down into the neighbouring villages for supplies.

Here is pictured another blessing in our Adullam life. We enter into a new security; "Your life is hid with Christ in God". No power in the universe can hurt the spiritual life of a Christian. None can pluck us out of his hand (1 Pet. 3. 13). If our faith is as strong as our security is good we will never be afraid (Psa. 27. 1.).

Another phase of the life of David and his follow-

ers is given in 1 Chron. 11. 3. David is now anointed king over Israel. No longer an outcast with but six hundred men, thousands flock to his side. It is popular to be one of David's followers (1 Chron. 12. 23 and 40). What now becomes of the faithful six hundred? Are they forgotten now that David has so many? No, the time has come for them to be specially remembered. They shared in David's trials; they are to share in his honour. 1 Chron. 11 from verse 11, and chapter 12, 1-24, tell of his faithful Adullam band. We know that we are about to enter the greatest change the world has ever experienced; soon it is to become popular to be on the Lord's side. All will then want to give themselves in full consecration, but only those who have shared with Jesus in his Adullam experiences will have a place on the honours list of the Kingdom. "No cross, no crown" (Matt. 19. 28-29). The honours list is already partially written, and it is interesting to see the names written there, and the great deeds that have won them distinction. There is Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. When his persecutors came against him he said "*I see Jesus standing on the right hand of God*", and prayed "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*".

Col. 4 records a number of faithful saints who have found a place on the honours list; verse 12 mentions Epaphras, an invalid who laboured "*fervently for you in prayer*". Rom. 16. 3 mentions "*Priscilla and Aquila, who have laid down their own necks for my sake*"; among others mentioned in this chapter is "*Rufus, and his mother and mine*". Rufus' mother had apparently a very warm place in the Apostle's heart, in thus referring to her as his own mother. Afterwards, this honours list will be published to the world. They will learn that "such and such a one is born in Zion, and the Highest himself has established them". Just at the foot of the honours list there are yet some vacant places. Will our names be there? Are we following in his Adullam footsteps? If we are, the Lord will certainly record our names, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom". The matter rests with ourselves. We are exhorted to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, remembering that God hath chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love him.

The Old year is dying, and the New, with all its hidden secrets, is at the doors. Although the festive season which marks the end of each year is generally thought to be three months removed from the true date of our Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, there is yet a singular appropriateness in the fact that the angel's message and the story of the coming of the Light and the hope of the world should dwell specially upon the mind at the ending of the old year, with all that it has seen, and the coming of the new with its problems as yet unsolved, its difficulties as yet unfaced, but also — and let us not forget this — its victories yet to be won.

From time immemorial men have burned the Yule log and set up the fresh young fir tree — the Christmas tree so familiar to us — in commemoration of this perennial renewing of Nature's cycle. What matter that these observances had a pagan origin, that the legendary death and resurrection of old-time idolatrous deities was symbolised by these things? Do not we as Christians hold to the self same belief, stripped of much of its crude materialism? Was it not Christ that died, yea, even that is risen again, and now sitteth on the right hand of God to intercede for us? If Christmas has no other lesson for us, it will

serve us well if it causes us to turn our thoughts more definitely to the essential basis of our faith and the whole purpose of our life in Christ.

In the year now closing we have made mistakes. Let us admit the fact. We have come short of the standard set before us and in many ways we have failed to glorify our Father in Heaven as we ought to have glorified him. The least we can do is be honest about it and admit that we have been unprofitable servants. Yet there have been victories. There has been a sanctifying power operating within us; the Holy Spirit has been at work. In some respects at least we have overcome. The care of the Good Shepherd is still ours and if in the depths of our hearts we sincerely desire to be his disciples then the year about to dawn will assuredly witness continued progress toward the heavenly Kingdom. The Old Year, with its record of failures and victories, is past, like the page of a book that has been turned. The New Year, with its possibilities and potentialities, for good or for ill, for declension earthward or ascension heavenward, is before us. We are a spectacle to men and to angels; all creation is watching us. How can we fail God now?

A.O.H.

A. O. Hudson

AT THE END OF THE YEARS

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O Lord, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psa. 71. 17-18).

There is a ring of mature faith in those stirring words, the mellow confidence of one who gave his heart to the Lord in the golden days of youth and now in the quietude of old age realises that his faith was not misplaced. The One Who gave him work to do in those early days of youthful zeal and enthusiasm has work yet for him to do. Even in old age he may still shew forth the strength of God's righteousness to a new generation that the work of God may continue. Even while the shadows of death close around him he may still, with last expiring breath, tell of God's power and glory to those who are as yet babes in Christ. There is inspiration and encouragement here for those today — and there are many such — who look around on depleted numbers and a diminishing fellowship in which the tale of years is many and the signs of youthfulness almost absent. There is more than inspiration and encouragement, too, there is a call to action and service, a reminder that the labours of the consecrated do not finish short of death, that at all times during our sojourn this side the Vail we are capable of some service for our Lord and King, some means of declaring his strength to this generation and his power to that which is to come.

The Psalmist here admits physical weakness but refuses to admit any ageing of the spirit. As a young man and in the heyday of middle age he rejoiced to declare God's wondrous works. That was to him the breath of life and without the joy of service life would not be worth living. The whole object and end of his existence was to give praise and honour to God in the sight of all people, to witness to the wonder of his Plan and the grandeur of his Promise to all who would listen. It needs physical vitality as well as mental alertness to do that; one cannot endure the heat and burden of Christian witness in the outward sense without a goodly measure of physical strength. Those not so favoured can and do serve in quieter ways, in the ministry of prayer, the ministry of comfort, the ministry of healing, and so on, but the active work of prosecuting the Gospel requires the ability to be active in the physical sense. And that is an attribute of the young; it cannot be expected of those who have

passed the prime of life and whose physical powers are failing. Such a time must come to all of us and it cannot be avoided. But there is no reason why the spirit should fail too.

This word comes reproof and chiding to all who have used advancing age as excuse to lose interest in the work of God in this Age. It is an unhappy spectacle, and one that is all too common, that of one who has laboured mightily, spending and being spent, in the service of his Master, maybe from early youth, through the twenties and thirties and forties and fifties, and then lost heart. The apparent failure of fond expectations, the disappointments and disillusionments that the Christian life is bound to bring, instead of performing their intended work of making mature and mellow the Christian character, have been allowed to make virtual shipwreck of faith. For it is no good claiming that faith is retained if the works of faith have been relinquished. It is no good saying we still look for and expect the Kingdom if we no longer evince any outward sign of concern for its interests. Our consecration is unto death, and although it may be true that our outward man perish, yet it is equally true that our inward man is being renewed day by day, if so be that we are still faithful to our covenant.

There is another and more subtle delusion abroad also. It appeals especially to the elderly. It is the feeling that "the end" is so near and loss of faith in the world so general that the Lord would no longer have his faithful ones preach the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it but rather devote their remaining time and energies exclusively to their own calling and election and that of their consecrated brethren. It is not well to condemn such conclusion too hastily; it is a natural reaction to the rebuffs and failures and apparent lack of success of many long years' active preaching and witnessing. But the attitude must be deprecated nevertheless. It is not a healthy one. It breeds egotism and self-righteousness and tends towards an exclusiveness and narrow-mindedness that is the very reverse of what the mature and mellow Christian should manifest. There was no such thought in the mind of the Psalmist when he wrote these words. He did not say, "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not while I abide in splendid isolation before thee, proclaiming no more thy glory to this generation and utterly ignoring every one that is to come". Far from it. Con the words once more. *"Now also when I am old and*

greyheaded, O God, forsake me not, until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." So far from voicing a plea for a kind of "honourable retirement" from the work of evangelising, the Psalmist passionately beseeches that God will not forsake him in his old age until he has declared the message to yet another generation. He wants to labour to the end; he wants with his last expiring breath to declare the greatness of God to those who still know him not.

There is a certain ring of "up-to-date-ness" in the Psalmist's words. He wants to declare God's strength to "*this generation*". He himself, old and greyheaded, belongs to a generation that is past. In many things the world has grown beyond him and the fashion of the world is strange to him. Customs, conventions, practices, which in his day were unknown or not accepted have now become commonplace. The very language in which the new generation talks is one that is fast becoming incomprehensible to him. The pace of life has quickened and those things on which he and his once set such value are now lightly esteemed. The temptation is ever present to withdraw from this strange new world and dwell in more comfortable seclusion with other greyheads of like mind until the call comes to "go home". The world is no longer the understandable place that it was; it is better that we shut it out from our lives and beseech the Lord to take us away from it quickly.

Not so the Psalmist. It is this new and strange and in many ways uncouth generation to which he wished to declare the glory of God. He knows that the fashion of the world must needs change as the clock of Time ticks on; he knows that restless man, ever exploring and seeking something new, must change with it, as generation follows generation. He knows, too, that faith will ebb lower and lower with each succeeding age so that the one who takes his stand on the words of God will appear to be more and more an outworn relic of a past era. He knows all this, and feels within himself that he is getting older and more out of tune with this modern way of life. He realises how easy it would be to accept what appears to be the inevitable, and give up the conflict, waiting for the end. He might reasonably anticipate the words of St. Paul and apply them to himself. "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.*"

He might do all this; but he does nothing of the kind! "*Now also when I am old and greyheaded,*

O God, forsake me not, until . . ." What though this new generation has a new language? He will speak to them in that language! What though they adopt customs and conventions and practices which seem to him strange and even repellent? He will relate his message to those customs and conventions and show that generation how the truth of God is for them as well as for those of the past! What though their interpretations and ideas, yea, their very practice of the faith he tries to inculcate in them, show features undreamed of in his own youthful days and features that would have been roundly condemned in those days? He will seek to find in all this the evidences of younger hearts giving themselves to the Lord and strive to give them wise guidance in the pathway that they must certainly tread for themselves and in their own way.

Our own position in this day, as life goes on and we find ourselves surrounded by a new generation whose accepted standards differ so much from ours, is to play the part of understanding counsellors and convinced witnesses. No matter what else changes, the truth of God stands the same. No matter how we must change the language in which it is preached, it remains the same message having the same power over all generations new and old. "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever.*" Our earthly powers may be failing and days of active evangelism be over, but there is always something we can do to declare God's strength to this generation and his power to that which is to come. Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses while the battle raged; it was little enough they could do but it made all the difference to the outcome. When Israel went out to fight their enemies it was decreed that he who "tarried by the stuff", and cared for the camp property should share equally with the warriors when it came to dividing the spoils. So it is with us; so many there are who must perforce "tarry by the stuff", but all the time they can be "holding up the hands" and contributing to the success of the Lord's cause. Let those who still can, go forth into active service for the Lord and his Gospel; those who can do so no longer, wait upon him in prayer and supplication, perform the countless little services that mean so much to the warriors in the field, help with words of encouragement and confidence, evincing a ready sympathy with the progress of all that is going on, and in these and many other ways demonstrate their own unity in thought and action with the Church militant all over the world.

D. Nadal

HEROD THE GREAT*A Historical study*

Herod, King of Judea, has gone down in history as something of a monster because of the command to his soldiers to kill all the young children of two years and under, in Bethlehem at the time when Joseph and Mary were there, after Jesus had been born. The word 'great' attached to any name does not always signify that the person or place is great in every respect. So to discover why Herod was called 'the Great' we must look at the kind of person he was through more than seventy years. No one can rightly be judged on one action alone, even if it was one of his last public acts.

He had a very large family, marrying about ten times and producing 14 sons and daughters. It is not difficult to get the many descendants mixed up, especially when they shared names. Herod was an unusually astute political figure who maintained the status quo during Roman rule in a remarkable way. He was certainly great in his building exploits and would very much liked to have won popularity with the Jews by one of his greatest achievements in the building the Temple in Jerusalem. It was still unfinished when he died.

Herod was born about 73BC, son of Antipater, an Idumaeon (Edomite), who married a lady of noble birth from Petra in the Nabatean kingdom. Antipater, like those in the family who were to follow him, was a successful politician. Julius Caesar made him procurator of Judea in 63 BC. From the age of ten Herod was brought up in Petra and was a lifelong friend of Mark Antony. He succeeded his father as governor of Judea and was eventually successful in subduing the Parthians in their invasion of Palestine. Gradually he became ruler of the whole area including parts of Jordan and Lebanon. In spite of his continued support of Antony against Octavius, when the latter became Caesar Augustus, Herod became King of Judea. He was brilliant in manipulating any political situation to his advantage.

Herod did all he could to give the Jews religious freedom. He actually practised the Jewish faith. However, the Jews never forgot his Edomite ancestry and nothing he could do would change their antagonism. He represented the Roman conqueror, the pagan overlord whose presence in their land they bitterly resented. Herod built fine cities like Sebaste (Samaria), the great port of Caesarea Philippi and towns in other parts of the Roman Empire. His tower

at the corner of the Temple was named after his old friend — Antony. He managed the copper mines in Cyprus for Rome. He patronised the Olympic games and prompted the building of pagan temples in the land of Israel, all of which did nothing for his reputation with the Jews.

His second marriage was to Mariamne of the Hasmonaean dynasty whose patriotic exploits gave the post-exilic Jews much freedom. Descendants of the Maccabees were dear to Jewish hearts. This union should have brought Herod some favour with the Jews but family intrigue ruined the partnership. In fear and jealousy, Herod had his Jewish wife and two of her sons slain as well as others in the royal household. As he grew old he lost his mental faculties and his favour with Rome. The awful massacre at Bethlehem was tragically characteristic of a man who is remembered more for the evil which he did than for anything which might have been considered good. He died according to most writers in 4 BC, unmourned and with Palestine 'seething with political discontent' or as Josephus puts it "in myriads of troubles".

Growing up in the royal court of Herod was a young man call Maneon. What shaped his character as a foster brother of the Herods? He was to be a leader of the church at Antioch in the days of Paul and Barnabas. So each plays his part in the plan of the Almighty God of the Universe. The Caesars and the Governors and the Kings; each doing as he pleased; each doing what he believes is right for himself or his family or for those over whom he rules; but in the end all under the sovereign rule of Almighty God. So it was for Herod, this man in whose territory the Saviour of the world was born. To his palace the Magi from the east came to enquire about a new king of the Jews. Such an idea was like the proverbial red rag to an already raging bull. He was bound to react badly. Yet he was like all of us, the product of the environment into which was born. Is there to be no redemption for such? Many political figures have done just as badly but have been placed upon pedestals of fame. There are those, even in these closing days of the twentieth century who would tell us that 'Herod's soul went to hell'. The child he tried to kill was to be his Saviour, Jesus born in Bethlehem, and He died for everyone in the world, including Herod. He will be among those who inherit the promise of Jesus when

he said " . . . all who are in their graves shall hear his voice . . . " The background of the Roman world will have vanished; so too will the ruler of this world. The tendency to sin will be reduced and those who will, shall be educated in love. The daughters of Bethlehem will have an opportunity to forgive. All will have seen the consequences of sin. What of the family which survived Herod the Great. How did they affect Jesus and the Church which continued his work. Which Herod was which?

Useful references:

- | | |
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G. Chilvers

FAITHFUL DISPENSERS

Reflections on
1 Peter 4. 10

"As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (1 Peter 4. 10 RSV.)

God expresses his kindness to us: we express it to others. This thought underlies our text. Different translations illuminate it. For example, a modern paraphrase [The Message] stresses the idea of being 'generous with the different things God gave you'. The GNB draws attention to the 'special gift' each one has received from God, and we should be 'good managers' of these different gifts. The RSV has 'good stewards'. J B Phillips puts the matter, "Serve one another with the particular gifts God has given each of you, as *faithful dispensers* of the wonderfully varied grace of God."

One expression of this grace is in spiritual gifts — 'God's endowments upon believers by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the churches' [Vine]. We are not thinking here of being 'gifted', though a naturally gifted person can also be a gifted Christian. Nor are we equating the 'charisma' or gift being charismatic in the contemporary sense. God's gifts to the church are wide, encompassing helping those in distress, leadership, contributing to need, stimulating faith, teaching, administration, speaking God's message (Rom. 12. 7-8) — gifts used through the centuries — as well as the gifts of 1 Cor. 12. 4-7 which 'charismatic' fellowships particularly value. The point is to use the gift we have, for "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (Rom. 12. 7): "having gifts that differ, let us use them" (1 Cor. 12. 6).

Timothy was told not to neglect the gift he had, but to serve in reading, teaching and preaching. He was told later to rekindle his gift, in a spirit not of timidity,

but of power, love and self control. Thoughts such as "I daren't", "I can't", "I won't" were forbidden to him. Paul might have urged him, in a modern phrase, "Go for it!"

To reach out toward God-given tasks is equally an Old Testament exhortation. The text comes to mind, "What your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl. 9. 10). But the Ecclesiastes context is different — Solomon is saying, "Life is short, so enjoy yourself!" We on the other hand are looking for God's gift of life beyond the grave. Yet there is still an urgency, for Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand." For each person that end may be only a heartbeat away. We had a neighbour who filled each day with helping at a stroke club, visiting the sick, running a choir, encouraging her neighbours and Christian friends, praying with compassion and understanding . . . she seemed indestructible. She died while leading a church service — the theme, 'Entering the promised land'. She had done with all her might the things her hands found to do.

That term 'might' makes a revealing word study, using an AV concordance. The commandment of Deut. 6. 5 is to love God with all your *might*. King David, bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem expressed his worship in *dancing with all his might* (2 Sam. 6. 14). If you feel weak, to those *without might* God increases strength (Is. 40. 29). But God's word to Zerubbabel, rebuilding the temple, was *not by might* . . . but by my spirit. Eph. 3. 16 speaks of being *strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man* . . . might which results in endurance, and patience, with joy (Col. 1. 11). Like Timothy, the Ephesian Christians were urged to be strong, "strong in the Lord and the strength of His

might' (Eph. 6. 10). God expects, but God also provides.

This business of faithfully dispensing God's wonderfully varied grace has interesting sidelights, as can be seen trawling through a bookshelf of Christian writers.

Take, for example, this testimony from Maria in poverty-stricken Chile [The Upper Room, 16 June 1998].

"It was the middle of winter and very cold. I was waiting for the bus to go home when I spotted a Christian brother from my congregation appear out of the fog. He carried a newborn infant in his arms. It was a little girl, his daughter. Distraught, he explained to me that his wife was unable to care for the child because she was seriously ill. His wife had given the child to him so that he could seek help.

'What are you going to do with her?' I asked. He shrugged his shoulders and tears filled his eyes. My heart shuddered upon witnessing his desperation, and I feared for the child's wellbeing. I asked myself what I could do. I had seven children, among them a child only a few months old. If I took the newborn infant with me, my workload would be increased. It was simply not practical. But at that moment I heard the voice of the Lord saying in my heart, 'You have the opportunity to serve me.' After a few moments of intense internal conflict, I took the child in my arms and carried her home with me.

Today that girl is a married adult with a family of her own. When I see her children, I recall the doubts that I had that unforgettable winter afternoon so long ago. What would have happened if I had not obeyed God's voice that day?"

In this instance, the gift being used is doing acts of mercy: but the *opportunity* to use it is also a gift. And how did Maria gain the 'might' to overcome her doubts and anxieties?

Two centuries ago the writer William Cowper became a noted versifier, gifted in a natural way as many word-smiths have been. He was responsible for such verse as the epic/comic tale of Gilpin and his runaway ride to Edmonton; also for that phrase, beloved of our poetry-reading parents, 'the cups that cheer but not inebriate'. He suffered mental illness, depression. But his language skills were used also in such hymns as 'Sometimes a light surprises a Christian when he sings'. It is the Lord, who rises 'with healing in his wings. When comforts are declining He grants the soul again a season of clear shining to cheer it after the rain.' A combination of a natural gift for lan-

guage, an experience of seemingly deep troubles, and the empowering of the Spirit of God have produced this hymn, which expresses the experience of thousands who have sung it. It is not always easy to understand or untangle the ways in which God's varied grace is given: but William Cowper did use that grace, for others.

Special faith is a gift. George Muller of Bristol denied there was anything special about his faith — he thought everybody ought to have just the same degree of faith as him. But he had a businesslike delight in God, and recorded in writing his every prayer and every answer to prayer, in order that others could be encouraged to trust God in material things. He delayed the publishing of his journal until the last penny had been received of a sum (equivalent perhaps to a million pounds today?) which he had prayed to receive, eighteen months previously. This sum was received without telling a human soul about the need, but only God. By this method of fund raising seven orphanage houses were built, and George Muller became a Victorian legend in his own lifetime. Not that he was perfect. He records that one morning he had praised God for giving him his wife, 'such a wife' — and almost immediately he became cross and irritable with her. How many of us would notice, let alone record, our own inconsistencies?

To conscientiously pass on to others the blessings God has given us may make us seem self-righteous. It may also be discouraging to those we are trying to help, who feel guilty they are not up to the required standard of godliness. In such circumstances the gift of encouragement is called for, as Derek Wood urges in his book 'The Barnabas Factor'. Barnabas of course is the great encourager of the New Testament, as Paul or John could testify. But Paul too did his share of encouraging, and Jesus himself encouraged people as He healed them. Encouragement is partly a question of perspective: do we see others as unworthy sinners . . . or potential saints? as 'worms in the service of God' . . . or as 'the apple of God's eye'. Do we see a glass of water as half-empty . . . or half-full? Dispensing God's gifts needs to be done with discernment, and love.

An inevitable side-effect of blessing others is to be blessed oneself. This was the experience of J. B. Phillips in translating the New Testament. He set out to make the epistles come alive to some young people — he found them come alive to himself. As he writes, "*The first effect of my work astonished*

me. The people for whom I had made this translation began to see, and sometimes saw quite suddenly, the relevance of these Letters to life. The removal of the old varnish allowed the truth to reach them in a way it had not reached them before. The second effect was upon me, the translator. I found . . . that once one gets to grips with the actual stuff of the New Testament, its vitality is astonishing. I found myself provoked, challenged, stimulated, comforted and generally convicted of my previous shallow knowledge of Holy Scripture. The centuries seemed to melt away and here I was confronted by eternal truths which my soul, however reluctantly, felt bound to accept. The further I went on with my work of translation the more this conviction of spiritual truth grew within me."

Joyce Huggett has gained a reputation for her books on prayer. A recent one is 'Finding God in the Fast Lane'. On the analogy of driving on a dual carriageway, it might seem that to experience God's love through prayer it would be necessary to stop for a quiet moment in a 'lay-by', where the pressures of life are off. But this may not be practical — life does not stop and its duties disappear, we may have to keep on in the 'fast lane' with its hassles and tensions. Can we find God there? To find an answer, Joyce Huggett draws on the experience of Brother Lawrence, a much hassled kitchen worker in a monastery of three hundred years ago, and noted for his serenity. He wrote, "*The time of busyness does not differ with me from the time of prayer: and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were on my knees.*" To practise God's presence for him meant being *attentive* to the fact that, as Acts 17. 27-8 has it, "*God is never far from any of us. In him we live and move and have our being.*" It is indeed possible to be aware of and in tune with his loving presence.

So Joyce Huggett in her book is being a good manager not only of her own gift of communicating: she dispenses too the gift of a man from a different era and a different culture. For dispensers are part of a team. They did not create the medicines or manufacture them or transport them or prescribe them. They work together to make them available. It is the same with God's wonderfully varied grace. To use Paul's analogy we are collectively Christ's body,

growing by the input of each limb or organ. Individually we may feel as insignificant as a useless little finger, but along with the other fingers we are part of a hand. Of two hands.

When Peter in 1 Peter 4. 10 told us to dispense God's gift, it was part of his wider instructions. He says, "the end of all things is at hand." To this we might respond by living loose of earthly things, since we do not know what tomorrow may bring, either for ourselves or for the world. We know only that God has His objective in view, his 'telos'. But 'living loose' is not Peter's thought — he urges us rather to be ever more firmly *bound in* to the Christian community. First, be properly prayerful: sane and sober for our prayers, self-controlled and alert in prayer; calm, wideawake for prayer [to draw from the different translations]. Second, to have unfailing love for one another: real, deep love; earnest love, intense love. This love draws a curtain over many a sin. Third, to give hospitality without grudging or complaining. Fourth, to be faithful dispensers of all that God has given us. Fifth, if speaking, to speak as from God: or of serving, to serve in God's strength. The result should be that God is praised and Jesus is honoured. After all, God's glory and power will go on for ever, not limited to our transitory lives.

In the light of this teaching, and the experience of fellow-Christians over the centuries, we may feel we want to consider how our own 'dispensary' is doing. Are we faithful to the Doctor's instructions? Are we there when others need us? Do we know the value of what we are passing on? Have we a full store of good things to be distributed? And we are not there just to make a profit for the drug companies, or a living wage for ourselves. In our dispensary we serve people with unselfish love, and faithfully.

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The Barnabas Factor	Wood	IVP
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Finding God in the Fast Lane	Huggett	Eagle

A. O. Hudson

THE WISDOM OF ELIHU*A study in
Job 32 – 37***3. "I have found a Ransom"**

With verse 14 of chapter 33 Elihu plunges into the essence of all Divine revelation, the process by means of which God will restore the willing of all mankind to himself, exact the penalty of sin upon those who will not accept him, and eliminate the power and effects of evil from his creation. That process has as its centre and essential basis the earthly life, the sacrificial death, and the mediatorial work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Such themes could not be plainly defined in concrete terms by Elihu for he lived at far too early a time and the men of his age were by no means ready to understand the story of a suffering Messiah. There was a great deal of history to be enacted before the "fullness of time" could be sufficiently complete to allow God to "send forth his Son". But everything was there in principle in the Spirit filled mind of Elihu. God, who had devised the whole scheme from before the foundation of the world, spoke here by his Spirit, through this man, of the things He intended one day to do. Let the critics scoff as they may, let the "modern scholar" talk learnedly of "primitive ideas of resurrection", the grand truth remains that here in the 33rd chapter of Job we have the first detailed definition of the Divine purpose for the reclamation of man from sin and death, and the fact that this reclamation is to be brought about by God himself providing a redeemer and a teacher to lead men back to him. In the light of Christian knowledge not possible to be understood until the Apostles had left their inspired legacies on record for later generations there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this marvellous passage.

The whole theme of Elihu in this chapter is the Wisdom of God, wisdom which inspired such a wonderful way of dealing with the evil in man and wisdom which is personified in One who would come from God, an earthly manifestation of God, having all the authority of God, to show men what God is and can be. This idea of Divine wisdom personified took firm root in Israel and the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs show just how firmly it did take root. "*Behold, wisdom calleth, and understanding sendeth forth her voice . . . unto you, O men, I call, and my voice goeth forth to the sons of men*" (Prov. 8. 1-4). Wisdom personified developed into the later doctrine of the Logos, the Word of God, the mind, the thoughts, the words, the revelation of God

projected into personality which could become the manifestation of God to men so that at last John could say "*and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten of the Father . . .*" (John 1. 14). That is the final revelation of something it was first given to Elihu dimly to perceive when he spoke of the One whom God had provided to deliver man from death and show him the way back to the light of God.

Elihu is concerned throughout this part of his discourse, occupying the remainder of chapter 33, with a single theme which revolves around four words in two couplets, the soul and the grave; life and death. Five times (verses 18, 20, 24, 28 & 30) is the theme repeated. The soul goes into corruption, the grave, and is lost; the life swallowed up in death. The Divine mediator appears, to undo the work of evil, and behold, for "*whosoever will*" (Rev. 22. 17) — and this is important; the deliverance is only for those who will avail themselves of it on the Divine terms — for "*whosoever will*" the soul comes back again from the grave and death is swallowed up in life. Both the principles underlying deliverance and the process by which deliverance is achieved are already set out here, and it is to these principles and this process that we have now to address ourselves.

"*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth (regardeth) it not, in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instructions, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*" (33. 14-17). Right at the outset Elihu refutes the oft-heard accusation that God does not care, that He is indifferent to the woes and weaknesses of fallen man. God does care, and God is and always has been ready to respond to the slightest opening any of his creatures may offer for the ingress of his words and power. Elihu knew that all too often such overtures are rejected "*God speaketh once, yea twice . . .*" In the Hebrew this is not limited to one repetition and no more. The words literally are "God speaketh, one, two . . ." as though He speaks with a kind of constant repetition, stroke upon stroke, word upon word, "*precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little*"

(Isa. 28. 10). But just as with the people of Israel in Isaiah's day, of whom it was said "yet they would not hear", so now, says Elihu, men do not regard the constant witness of Divine truth. In a remarkably vivid illustration he describes the word of God coming to man in a dream, during the silent watches of the night. Traditionally this was held by the ancients to be the most favourable time for God to gain entrance into the human mind. Psychologically there may perhaps be something to be said for it. Freed from the cares and preoccupations of the daytime, without the distractions of sight and sound, — for the Eastern night is tropically dark and there were no jet planes or late car drivers to make night hideous in those days — there must have been many others like David who could say as he did "*when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches*" (Psa. 63. 6) and realise that in such frame of mind God could talk to them as never during the daytime. So here, He is depicted reaching men at such a time to open their ears, and seal their instruction. It is a forceful illustration, derived in all probability from the method of letter-writing in force in Job's day. The use of clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform (wedge shaped) characters, thought at one time to be confined to the Euphrates valley where it originated, is now known to have been widespread throughout Western Asia; Job and his friends, educated men all, must have been thoroughly familiar with it. The letter or other document was inscribed on a tablet of soft clay measuring, often, not more than two or three inches each way by an eighth of an inch thick. The tablet was baked in an oven, dusted over with fine dry powder and then completely enclosed in an envelope of clay which was sealed down on all sides, and inscribed with the recipient's address or, if a legal document, with some indication of the contents. The whole thing was then baked again to render the outer covering hard. To open, the outer envelope was cracked and removed and the document found safely preserved inside. Just so, says Elihu, is it with God. He puts his message into the ears of man and then seals it in as though with a clay envelope, and all to the end defined in the next verse, that He might withdraw man from his self-willed purpose, taking away man's self-pride, so evidencing his own love for man and his own desire to deliver man from the sorry state in which, because of sin, he finds himself.

Verse 18 is a pithy analysis of the Divine purpose

for man — if man will have it, as later verses make clear; no one is to be forced into a life of righteousness — and it gives in clear and succinct phrase the net result of it all "*He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword*" (33. 18). Here is the first of the five occurrences of "soul" and "pit". "Pit" is "*shachath*" rendered variously in the Old Testament *pit, grave, corruption*; It is derived from the root "to corrupt" and the underlying idea is the corruption and decay of the body in the grave until nothing is left. Be it noted that it is the soul ("*nephesh*") which is here said to go into corruption. The distinction between the soul and the spirit is often slurred over in everyday Christian thought, and the fact that the "soul" is the product of the union between spirit and body; without both there cannot be a "soul". There is a distinction also between the ideas of soul and life. Life as a principle is inherent in God; the life that animates a fleshly creature is given by God. In the case of Adam "*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul*". (Gen. 2. 7). And at death the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 12. 7) so that when Elihu says God keeps back the soul of man from corruption, decay, and the life the spirit, from perishing, he is saying in effect, that notwithstanding the apparent hopelessness of human life as seen outwardly, all is not really lost and God is able to preserve man's life and deliver him from the enemies which would destroy him. But not before he has suffered according to the Divine laws of retribution. Not before he has gone down into the depths of despair in consequence of the follies of his own way. Not until it has been abundantly demonstrated that only by accepting and living God's way can man inherit and enjoy eternal life. And most important of all, not until the Redeemer has come, who will show man the way back to God and lead him along that way.

So Verse 19 begins the downward story, the descent of the doomed soul into death and corruption, a doom which can only be nullified by the power of God in resurrection. "*He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and with continuous struggles*" (as Cook has it) "*so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers*". (33. 19-22). Can there be a more eloquent picture of the man, wasted by disease and weary

with pain, sinking slowly into that which eventually comes to all men. Soul and life together share in this descent and in its end. When the breath leaves the body and the slow processes of Nature begin to resolve that inanimate frame into its constituent atoms, there is nothing left, only in the spirit of life held in the infinite power of God, waiting until it shall be clothed again with its resurrection body in God's own due time. But first of all, says Elihu, before that resurrection can take place, the Redeemer must come and it is to that aspect of the Divine purpose that he next addresses himself.

"If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, (ambassador or mediator) one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness; then he is gracious unto him and sayeth, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (33. 23, 24). The messenger is God's messenger, his representative and spokesman, to declare God's uprightness to man. But more than that, He is also a mediator. This word "*lots*", here translated "interpreter", is one that really refers to the treatment of a foreigner, an alien, an enemy, and can be equally well rendered ambassador, teacher, mediator, according to the sense of the context. (See 2 Chron. 32. 31 where it is rendered "ambassador" and Isa. 43.27 where it is "teacher"). Now in this particular passage the setting is that of man sunken in sin and reconciled to God; the promise is that God will be reconciled and man see His face with joy (verse 26). The obvious sense of the word here is "mediator". The messenger comes to declare the righteousness of God and to be a mediator between God and man in the process of reconciliation. That is exactly what St. Paul declares of Christ. *"There is one . . . mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all"* (1 Tim. 2. 5. 6). That New Testament word is the exact counterpart of this Old Testament vision; Elihu and Paul are in complete harmony, seeing the same thing. In this is the grace of God manifest, when he says that man shall be delivered from going down into the pit because He has found a ransom. "Deliver" here has the meaning of buying a man out of bondage, of redeeming or ransoming for a price. "Ransom" is "*kopher*", primarily a covering, from which the word "atonement" in the Levitical sacrificial ritual comes; in fact Leiser uses "atonement" instead of "ransom" in this very passage. So the Divine decree

goes forth that man is to be bought back from the power of the grave and is not to lie in corruption, because God has found or provided an atonement, a ransom for his condemned life.

Now this matter of being ransomed from the power of the grave is not just merely a figure of speech or an item of academic theology; it is a very real literal thing. Jesus himself said very plainly *"The hour is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live . . . the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth . . ."* (John 5. 25-29). *"Thy brother shall rise again"* He said to the sorrowing Martha *"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"* she replied. Jesus supplied the essential link. *"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."* (John 11. 23-26). Here is basis for confidence that in the outworking of the Divine purpose men will come back from the grave to face the challenge of Christ. They will find that all their ignoring of God and all their flouting of his laws will have availed them nothing; they will be brought face to face with the Mediator and have the issues of life and death placed squarely before them, and there will be no more evading those issues. It is the purpose of Elihu now to lay down the principles which will obtain when men thus face the Mediator who has come to them, the principles and the choice which determine the eternal destiny of every man. For none may escape the crisis of eternal judgment.

This next part of the discourse reminds one irresistibly of the Lord's words to Israel *"I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"* (Ezek. 33. 11). The Divine attitude revealed through Elihu is precisely the same. *"He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profiteth me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light"* (33. 27, 28). Here is the basic principle; the messenger appears with the message, the ransom is provided and given, the Mediator is ready to fulfil the functions of his office, and there and then if the man repents and admits his realisation of the scriptural truth that *"righteousness exalteth a nation, but*

sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14. 34), God will receive him. This is very reminiscent of the parable of the prodigal son. There, too, the erring one came to himself, realising his true position, and arose, and returned to his father, and his father received him. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the old mediæval idea of God as a kind of grim ogre intent only on casting into hell all but a few saintly ones who somehow manage to live lives of sufficient piety to scrape into heaven is utterly and hopelessly wrong. God made men for life, and not for death; for felicity, not for misery; recipients of his benevolence, not objects of his punishment. True, He cannot and will not condone or tolerate sin or permit the perpetration of evil. After all, sin is intrinsically the transgression of those laws and principles which God has established for the orderly and harmonious conduct of his creation. No man can violate those laws without marring some aspect of that creation or causing harm or unhappiness to one or more of its inhabitants. It is obvious that the gift of conscious life, on whatever plane of being, has to be contingent upon willing and active harmony with those laws; it ought to be equally obvious that the logical consequence of wilful and deliberate failure to keep those laws is the withdrawal of that life of which the recipient refuses to make the intended use. So death, that final death which is the ultimate penalty of sin, is simply that withdrawal of life, a return to the condition obtaining before the individual existed. That dark climax can only come after God has, as it were, exhausted all his efforts in the endeavour to win the individual's allegiance to himself, and is actively working all the time so that all men, if only they will, can inherit the glorious destiny He plans for them. But of course the conditions must be maintained. The man must realise, as Elihu says here, that the practice of sin or the violation of the apparently most trivial of God's laws will profit him not. A full and hearty acceptance of the place in creation for which God has made him is the only possible attitude of heart for every man. So on the basis of his repentance the past is blotted out, he is delivered from eternal condemnation, and he enters into eternal life.

That condition of eternal felicity is eloquently summed up in the two preceding verses which Elihu, in his enthusiasm for the final outcome, had to utter before he could settle down more quietly to the basis in verses 27-28 which makes that outcome possible. *"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's, he shall*

return to the days of his youth. He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him; and he will see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness" (33. 25-26). This is obviously a promise of the future. After all the affliction and disease and wasting of physique, culminating in death, the grave, the flesh returning "to dust as it was", the effect of the Redeemer's work and the Teacher's work is a complete restoration to youthful health and vigour, in a new environment. The old background of sin has gone; the man now beholds the face of God, he dwells as it were before Him, and he finds that instead of being the slave of sin he has become a freeman in righteousness. This is the time of which Isaiah speaks when he says that *"the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf be unstopped, the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing,"* for, says he, *"the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy on their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"*. (Isa. 35. 5-10). This is the time when *"the dwelling-place of God is with men, and God shall wipe away all 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"* (Rev. 21. 3. 4). The whole tenor of Scripture, from Elihu to John, is definite on the reality of this coming glorious Age of Christ's Mediatorial reign when, in the words of the old Methodist hymn, repeated from Scripture, *"the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea"*.

"Lo, all these things worketh God often-times with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living" (33. 29, 30). Says Moffatt in his translation *"Now God does this over and over again, twice, thrice, for men, to bring them back from death into the sunshine of life"*. This is the crystallisation of the Divine purpose. God repeatedly brings to bear all the weapons in his armoury with which to break down the pride and hardness of man and show him what is the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It does not do to oversimplify this passage and look upon it as meaning no more than the everyday repetition of mundane disasters which may eventually bring a man to repentance in this life. These two verses are the climax to Elihu's whole argument; they cap and terminate what has gone before. He finishes this particular subject

here. They must have direct connection with what he has been saying and as such they must define the three factors which in this 33rd chapter stand out as the primary elements in God's course of action for man's reconciliation to himself. "*Oftentimes*" says the Authorised version "*Twice, thrice*" is Moffatt's choice. "*Two ways, three, with a man*" is how Rotherham renders it. What Elihu means here is that God deals with any man in a plurality of visitations through visions (vs. 14-17) which in modern aspect means leading and enlightenment by his Holy Spirit and by his chosen pastors and teachers. Some respond to this and become disciples here and now. Next comes the permission of afflictions and chastening, of earthly disasters and disappointments (vs. 19-22). That has its effect with others who in consequence of such are persuaded finally to turn their hearts to God. Finally comes the messenger, the Mediator (vs. 23-26) and this projects us into the coming Age when all men will be brought under his benevolent yet firm rule and be constrained to face the issues of life and death. Without much doubt Elihu here surveys the whole scope of God's redemptive purpose and perceives its onward extension into the far distant future, beyond the ending of the king-

doms of this world and into the light of the Kingdom of God

The young man paused; he had concluded the first discourse of his exposition and he now invited Job to comment, if he would. He wanted to know what Job thought about his reasoning and his revelation. "*Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I will speak. If thou hast anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify thee. If not, hearken unto me; hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom*". (33. 31-33). It is probable that the 31st verse is intended to be understood in the past tense. Job had marked well, had held his peace, while Elihu was speaking. Now Job was invited to make rejoinder. If he had nothing to say, goes on Elihu, let him continue to hold his peace and hearken, for there was yet much to be said. There is no intimation that Job did say anything, for in chapter 34 Elihu resumes his speech, this time introducing a new aspect. Leaving the Wisdom of God, he now seeks to show how the whole of the questions at issue can be explained in the light of Divine Justice, the Justice of God.

(To be continued)

T. Holmes

EVENTIDE

"Will you also
go away?"

How greatly different from that of other men was the attitude of Jesus to popular acclaim! Which of the many leaders of Jewish thought would have opposed or curbed the rapidly rising tide of eager sentiment to make him king, as Jesus did? Had they no good cause for this? Even in mighty Rome he who could bring in the grain — thus ensuring ample food — could always count upon the approval of the multitude for his Imperatorship. But here in Israel was One who, without ships of Egypt's stores at his command, could multiply "the little" into "much", and feed from a mere handful of bread the insistent needs of a hungry multitude. No imperial Cæsar, even in mighty Rome, had attempted at any time to do a thing like that! Surely therefore, more than any occupant of the Roman throne, Jesus seemed to be a man born to be a King! — so the people thought.

Israel had been fed with bread once before — fed in its passage through a wilderness. Messiah, when He came (so the Rabbis said) would do this again,

but on a far surpassing scale. Moses — so they assumed — had for many years provided bread unceasingly; Messiah would do all this and more. When therefore Jesus sought to drive home the deeper meaning of the miraculous supply of food, the eager multitude gave voice to the Rabbinic expectation when they said "Evermore give us this bread". Accepting his correction that God, not Moses, gave the former bread, and the assertion that God would give "bread" yet again "to give life to the world", their immediate response was "*Sir, let the provision begin right now, and let it never cease*". (John 6. 25-34).

How completely earth-bound and immediate was their concern! Bread, in plenty, and at no cost — such was their expectation now! Having once been fed to satisfaction's full content, might this not now go on unceasingly forevermore? Before a Provider-King like that the whole wide world would soon be on its knees, and Judea, not Rome, would rule the

world!

But Jesus could not foster expectations like that. He had not come to be the world's Provider King, as yet — and hence had need to dissuade this expectant following. Lifting his explanations to a higher plane Jesus even went on to say *"I am that bread of life . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any eat of this bread he shall live for ever . . ."* That was a conundrum they could not solve. "How shall this man give us his flesh to eat?" they asked. To intensify their mystification Jesus then said, *" . . . except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you"*. In this early reference to the meaning of the Last Supper Jesus showed how greatly his mission in the earth exceeded their utmost thought.

Thereupon, with no more easy bread forthcoming, many of these followers turned away and forsook him. *"From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him"* (v. 66). Turning now to the twelve Jesus said "Will ye also go away?" "To whom can we go Lord?" was Peter's reply from them all. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." The Baptist was dead; his former disciples could not go back to him; there was no other teacher in Israel to whom they could go; moreover they had believed and were sure that He was the Holy One of God.

There is a pathos and depth in that heartfelt response, a response which has leaped from countless hearts as the centuries have passed! When the great crises of life have fallen over saintly souls, and great decisions have confronted them, the same deep need has shaped the same response. Mighty nations may

rise and fall; gifted men may come and go; times of plenty give place to times of want; amidst it all there has been but One sure retreat, but One unfailing Friend. When the fairer prospects of life have suffered blight, and chilling frosts have nipped earth's fairest blooms, when friends have failed, and even loved ones turned false, the language of the lonely has ever been the same. "To whom else can I turn, O Lord, but thee? Who, like thee, can satisfy life's deepest needs?"

We, too, in the deepening chaos of this turbulent world, have our needs of him intensified every passing day. Thousands walk no more with him, but have turned away for lack of understanding of the heavenly bread. Openly they oft deride him whom we love, blatantly they ask for "pie" not in the "sky" but on the earth; for today, not for another day. What shall I say when the Saviour turns to me? Shall I also go away? Nay, Lord, for

*I need thee every hour, most precious Lord,
No tender voice like thine can peace afford
I need thee every hour, stay thou near by,
Temptations lose their power when thou art nigh.
I need thee every hour, in joy or pain,
With me, dear Lord, abide, or life is vain.
I need thee every hour, Teach me thy Will
And thy rich promises in me fulfil.
I need thee, oh I need thee, every hour I need thee,
O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to thee.*

With every closing day let us turn inwards unto him and say with all our heart.

*Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find.*

Heroes and Saints

The Son of God did not come to earth to increase the number of heroes, but to raise up saints. Heroes are scarce; hardly one in a generation, or even in a century, is to be met with; Jesus Christ purposed to people the world with saints. Heroes dazzle us by the splendour of their astounding deeds; saints edify us by the example of their virtues. The world could do without heroes, they are not absolutely necessary; without saints, this world would not last, could not be preserved. Heroes have no successors, because they have no family to perpetuate them; they are raised up of God every time that He deems it right to give them a part to play in the world; they appear only to disappear, leaving behind them neither heirs nor suc-

cessors. Saints have a numerous posterity, which is propagated from generation to generation, and from age to age. In order that they may act, put forth their power, triumph and shine, heroes require a broad and lofty stage, where all can see them in the humblest careers, in the obscurest positions, everywhere and always, saints can display their devotion and love; sustained by Divine grace they can serve God amidst all surroundings; thanks to the arrangements of Providence, opportunities for spending their strength and doing good are never wanting. Their fidelity is displayed as much, and perhaps even more, in little as in great things.

Author unknown, 1892

B. J. Drinkwater

THE TRAGEDY OF LOT*A study in Genesis
13 and 19*

Lot was not called of God as was his uncle Abraham, but he was a good man and there was a bond of union between the two which was stronger than that of natural affection; and he accompanied Abraham the three hundred miles into Canaan. Weaker characters often lean on stronger ones.

Lot was wealthy. Genesis 13. 5 says he had flocks and herds and the difficulty of finding sufficient pasturage was so great that verse 6 says "*The land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together, for their substance was great.*" Strife began between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle but it is obvious that Lot began to take part with his herdsmen and regard himself as an injured man, for Abraham said, "*Let there be no strife I pray thee between thee and me,*" and suggested that they separate. Abraham was generous and gave Lot the choice. Lot accepted it and instead of feeling that it was due to his uncle's age and rank to yield to him the preference he greedily selected the region that seemed to offer the greatest worldly advantages. He chose the Plain of Jordan which was well watered. In Abraham's day the Jordan poured down a larger volume of water than at present. By the loss of its forests the climate of Palestine has become much more dry and fertile regions have become barren.

"*Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent towards Sodom.*" He had evidently a longing towards Sodom but was not as yet within its walls. His departure was evidently a great grief to Abraham; he had lost a companion, but God consoled him. In his journeying Abraham was to have the tranquil pleasure of feeling that his seed would inherit each beautiful spot that he visited. As Lot was deteriorating Abraham was drawing nearer to God and walking more closely with Him.

When we come to Genesis 19 we find Lot had become a citizen of Sodom and was probably treated with honour as a relative of Abraham. This personal respect had made him close his eyes to the sinfulness of the people. He consented to live there and permitted its citizens to marry his daughters. Meanwhile all intercourse with Abraham had apparently ceased and he had lost all share in the covenant of circumcision.

We find a sharp contrast when we read the atti-

tude of the angels towards the two men Abraham and Lot. When Abraham offered them hospitality they replied "So do as thou hast said," but to Lot they said, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night." Lot's character had deteriorated. 2 Peter 2. 7-8 gives Lot a good character but he was righteous only relatively and though his soul was daily vexed by what he saw it was not vexed enough to make him quit such evil and return to the healthy and virtuous mountain life. The warning of his fall is that men who part with religious privileges for the sake of worldly advantage are in danger of sinking into moral degradation and losing with their faith and hope not only their self respect and happiness but even that earthly profit for the sake of which they sacrificed their religion.

The men of Sodom said of Lot, "This fellow came in to sojourn and he will needs be a judge." It seems that an extraordinary concession had been made in Lot's favour in allowing him to reside in Sodom. In ancient times rights of citizenship were jealously guarded and the position of a sojourner made very bitter. "He will needs be a judge" is in the Hebrew "He is ever acting as a judge" and suggests that Lot had previously reproved the Sodomites.

The angels told Lot of the impending destruction of the city, but verse 16 says, "While he lingered." He still clung to his wealth and could not make up his mind to leave it so that the angels had to take him by the hand and lead him without the city. The instruction was given, "look not behind". God required a total abandonment of the doomed cities in heart and will, but his wife looked back and became a monument of an unbelieving soul.

Zoar was pointed out to him as an asylum, but (verse 30) he left Zoar, giving another instance of his loss of faith. It is recorded that "he feared to dwell in Zoar" although he had been told he would be safe there. Terrified at the sight of the smoking valley, and remembering that he had been originally commanded to go to the mountains, he summoned up courage and went there, and we find him there housed in a miserable cavern — he whose wealth had been so great and who had sacrificed so much for worldly advantage dwelt with his two daughters in a cave.

D. Nadal

'REMEMBERING'*A Thought for
the Season*

"But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Luke 2. 19 RSV). Memory is one of God's most wonderful gifts. Just how wonderful we hardly realise in the early years when the ability of recall at its best. We take the gift for granted using it without thought of how wonderful it is. It is only when decay of our frail human nature begins to show itself, that we realise what we are losing. Yet what a rich blessing it is that we can store the events of life, can recapture the characters we've known and the activities we've enjoyed because of what we have learned.

Mary is generally regarded as having been quite young when Jesus was born. When her firstborn came into the world in Bethlehem she was still in her 'peak learning time', her memory still absorbing facts quickly and her recall would be vivid. Before the angel Gabriel came to tell her that she was to give birth to the Son of God, Mary would have spent long hours through childhood memorising the Jewish Holy Scriptures. Her education would include learning well all the ancient stories of the people of Israel. The memories of Jewish children were well trained and there was no easy dependence upon books and computers for them. They could recite long passages from the Old Testament as many Jews can today and their brains were the better trained to do God's will for focusing upon His word. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, out of the storehouse of memory Mary was able to compose the magnificent poem of Luke 1. 46-55.

As the events of those stirring days passed so the heart and mind already attuned and focused on godly things, was able to '*ponder*' and remember what was happening. Shepherds and angels, prophets and Magi, all added to the wonderful tapestry of Mary's thoughts. Undoubtedly she retained much more than she related to Luke in after years. She saw the growing child, and like any good mother she was excited by each step of her children's growth and development. Perhaps more than any other mother she vigilantly watched her eldest grow strong and healthy in body and blossom into adolescence. She notices the part He played in family and social life. There must have been times when it was not easy to feed and clothe that growing family. She recalled so well the visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was

twelve and became 'lost'. But there is no record that the two were ever at odds with each other in spite of what has been written about Luke 2. 48 and Mark 3. 21-35. The young man had an enquiring mind which was expanding under the power of the Spirit. His mother too had within her the spirit of enquiry and it was inevitable that, like many of God's servants before and after, she could not keep pace with events in her own life. She turned them over and over in her mind, treasuring the things which revealed her place in the purposes of God. But she was a real human mother and must often have laughed and cried about what was happening in her life. Through it all God revealed enough to enable her to understand and come to terms with these wonderful events; and more importantly come to terms with the wonderful person who had been cradled beneath her heart, and whom she had cuddled and nurtured till he was old enough to go forth into the world. Her memory was marked by the birthdays as he grew. What did she make of the events in Nazareth recorded in Luke 4. 16-30? How did she face the gathering storm and recall those words of Simeon in the Temple?

Mary of Nazareth, mother of Jesus, wife of Joseph the carpenter, daughter in the line of King David, is an example to us of how the memory can be used to good effect. It was not the sordid gossip of Galilee that she remembered nor the moments of pain in family life. Her thoughts were fixed upon the God she served so well and she recalled just those things which enable us to catch a glimpse of a real live boy growing up to be the Saviour of the world.

We too, like Mary, must ever keep our thoughts from wandering, for wander they will. It is not always easy to meditate but prayer and discipline will help us in a day when the media has gone mad and is out of control. But if we ponder Him, who Mary must have thought about so often, then at last we will be ready and prepared to share with Him in the work of redemption of all people including those who would so readily have killed Mary's child. We too must remember and recall the great things that God has done for us, for this is, as the Psalmist often reminds us, the grandest reason for having a memory.

The Word of Truth

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.* We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.* For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper

than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord said *"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it; For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry."* They word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. How sweet are thy words unto my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day!

2 Tim. 3. 16-17; Psalms. 19. 7-10; 2 Pet. 1. 19; Heb. 2. 1; Heb. 4. 12; Hab. 2. 2-3; Psalm. 119.

Trees of Righteousness

In their changeful beauty trees possess a peculiar advantage over all other forms of vegetation. Though they are always ornamental, yet, whether viewed alone, or seen in wild sylvan masses, they look the loveliest in Nature's decay. Fair are the woods in spring, when first their leafy boughs unfold the bright and exquisitely tender verdure of a new life. Fairer still they seem in the deep beauty of their summer foliage, with its tints of richest green, extending cool and inviting shades and filling the air with the soft sweet music of their rustling leaves. But fairest by far are the trees in the fall of the year. Well has it been said, "As golden Autumn steals over the forest comes the period of its richest glory; that in which the painter revels, vainly tasking his palette for its imitation; and though these bright hues are the tokens of decay, the foliage has a glory in its approaching dissolution unknown to it in youth and vigour." Then the birch shines one mass of burnished gold. The beech is resplendent with brightest tints of orange. The "ensanguined dogwood" after a purple stage passes into the most intense crimson. Many rich brown hues adorn the oak; the maple family assume a splendid mantle of variegated colour; while, in addition to these

"A thousand tints which Flora, dressed in all her pride of bloom, could scarcely equal, decorates the groves."

Thus is it in the life of a believer. It is brighter and more lovely towards the close.

"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

He may truly take up the language of the Apostle: *"Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."* Bright as he appears in the springtime of conversion, or in the summer beauty of developed Christian character, it is in the autumn hours of approaching decay that the child of God is seen in his fairest colours. His last days are his best, for then his departing spirit seems to receive a hal-
lowing foretaste of the glory it is about to enter.

(Selected)

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