



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 32, No. 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 1955

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested.

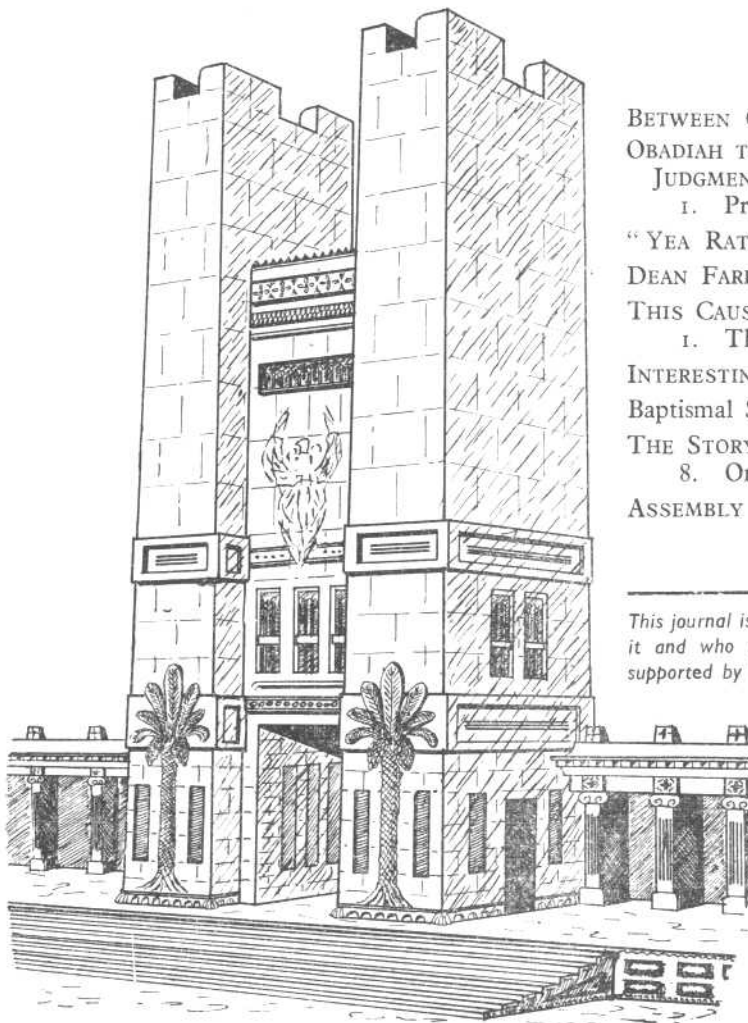
Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew. E.4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

The Future of the "Monthly"

After an existence of thirty years, the "Monthly" has come to the cross-roads. The fixed rate of subscription has never provided more than about half the cost of production and each year the balance has been made up in various ways by the loving zeal and generosity of different brethren. Believing that the hand of the Lord would and will surely guide our affairs it has never been the practice to say much about the financial side of the periodical and it is perfectly true to say that year by year the need has been met.

But some of our best friends in this respect have passed to be with their Lord, and whilst the number of readers remains virtually unchanged and each month seems to add a few new readers to counter-balance those who have answered the "Home Call", the steadily rising cost of production is a factor that has to be faced. A further rise in printing costs a month ago has compelled a re-examination of the position. Most things are costing nearly twice as much as they did in 1946 and the "Monthly" is no exception. Nevertheless it is not felt that a corresponding doubling of the subscription price is the right answer.

After long consideration it has been decided to put the whole future of the "Monthly" in the hands of its readers by abolishing the fixed subscription altogether and relying entirely on gifts to keep it in being. From now on we will send the magazine to every reader and rely on each one's appreciation and zeal for the wherewithal to continue. It will still be necessary to send in a "renewal" form once every year since we do not intend to send the "Monthly" to anyone who does not really want it. Once a year therefore such a form will be slipped inside the current issue when it is posted.

In order that all interested may have the position before them an annual balance sheet will be published.

With this word of explanation the matter is left. So many brethren, especially the isolated and the aged, write so often to express their appreciation of the journal that we will hesitate long before concluding that it is intended it should lapse; that, however, is in the disposition of our Master and whatever He would have, is our desire too.

* * *

New Features

A series on the Book of Obadiah commences in this issue and will run for most of the year. Those who remember the expositions of Jonah, Habakkuk and Joel which have appeared in the past will be interested in this addition to our "Truth" commentaries on the Minor Prophets, and "Obadiah" should have special interest since it will make a very definite application to affairs in our own day. The comments of interested brethren on the exposition at any time during the progress of the series will always be welcome.

Another new series which will appear, not every month, but as seems appropriate, goes under the general title "This Cause we Serve", and is intended to examine the much debated question of our commission at the present time and how that commission should be put into effect. It is hoped that various brethren will contribute to this series and so an opportunity be given to consider all aspects of the subject.

The third instalment of the short series "What New Thing is This?" has been crowded out. It is hoped to continue it a little later on.

* * *

London Convention

The usual London Convention will be held over the August holiday season at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Details will be published when available. Plans are being made for Bro. J. T. Read to address this convention.

(continued on back page)

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

1.—PROPHET OF THE DESOLATION

The Bible mentions eleven men who bore the name "Obadiah", out of at least six tribes, but it is quite certain that the prophet Obadiah whose prophecy is the shortest book of the Old Testament was not any one of them. The prophet Obadiah must have lived at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., and it would appear that he was one of the few who remained in the land after the Babylonian king had carried the greater part of the people into captivity. The account of this disastrous episode in Israel's history tells us that the Babylonians left some of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen, and appointed Gedaliah their governor (2 Kings 25.12 and 22). Very possibly Obadiah remained with this little community of peasants, in which case he must undoubtedly have been in contact with the prophet Jeremiah, who also remained in Judea after the captives had been taken to Babylon. Following the murder of Gedaliah, a few months later, Jeremiah was taken by the panic-stricken people into Egypt. Whether Obadiah went with them or remained by himself in Judea and died there, we have no means of knowing. Jeremiah must, however, have had in his possession a copy of Obadiah's prophecy, when writing his own book, for Jer. 49.7-22 is quite evidently a paraphrase of the greater part of the book of Obadiah.

From this evidence, then, we can say with some certainty that Obadiah lived at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and penned his prophecy at about the same time, so that Jeremiah could have possessed and copied it some years later when writing his own.

The Book of Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of one chapter, of twenty-one verses only. The prophecy is concerned solely with the judgment of God upon the nation and land of Edom for its enmity against Judah at the time of the Captivity. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, and were therefore viewed by the Israelites in a rather different light than they viewed the rest of the nations. Even although there was often unfriendliness and enmity between the two peoples, there was always the injunction of the Law of Moses in Deut. 23.7 "*Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother.*"

It was all the more reprehensible, therefore, that when the Babylonians were ravaging Judea the Edomites should have gone out of their way to assist the plunderers in their work of destruction. The children of Israel regarded their action as a base betrayal of the—admittedly rather flimsy—blood relationship between them, and Obadiah's passionate denunciation, predicting the irretrievable ruin of Edom at the hands of God, is the outcome.

Edom was a little country about the size of Cornwall, lying to the south-east of Judea, on the way to the Red Sea. It is an extremely mountainous country and its one-time capital city, Petra, has been described as a "rose-red city, half as old as Time", alluding to its extreme antiquity and the fact that it was built—and practically carved out from—a well-nigh inaccessible gorge flanked by precipitous red granite cliffs which made the city virtually impregnable against enemies. The original name of the district was Mount Seir, the name being derived from the first settler known to have occupied the mountain gorge, Seir the Horite. It used to be thought that the Horites were merely an insignificant tribe of cave-dwellers, but within the last twenty years it has been discovered that they were, in fact, a wide-spread civilised people which had attained a high degree of culture. The Hurrian civilisation, as it is called to-day, covered a large part of what is now known as Syria and Jordan. By a comparison of genealogies it would seem that Seir lived at about the same time as Terah the father of Abraham, so that when Abraham entered Canaan the Hurrian civilisation was already well established there. One of Esau's wives was Aholibamah the great-granddaughter of Seir. It is easy then to understand why, when Canaan became unable to support the flocks and herds of both Jacob and Esau, the latter moved out and went to Mount Seir to his father-in-law (Gen. 36. 6-8). That in turn is how Mount Seir became known as Edom, for the name Edom (meaning "Red") was but another name for Esau. From that time onward the land was known by either name, Seir or Edom, or as the "Mount of Esau". It is evident from the extended history of Esau given in Gen. 36 that the Horites and the sons of Esau intermarried and eventually became one race, the "Edomites". That race continued in

possession of the land of Edom throughout the periods of Israel in Egypt, the Judges and the Kings, and so were in possession when Obadiah uttered his prophecy of coming judgment.

The prophecy of Obadiah was fulfilled. Not many more years were to pass before another people, the Nabatheans, were to drive the Edomites out of the last recesses into which Nebuchadnezzar had pursued them soon after the fall of Jerusalem, to occupy the whole land themselves until they in turn were overrun by Arab hordes from the desert. The dispossessed Edomites migrated to the desert regions south of Judea and were gradually absorbed in the Jewish nation. It is said that the last true Edomites perished in the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

So the prophecy of Obadiah has proved to be true history. There is no doubt about the time that he lived and no doubt about the events that marked the passage of the years after his death, events which proved him to be a true prophet. The Book of Obadiah would have served a great purpose had it been intended to do no more than that, just to record the coming of Divine judgment upon a nation that by reason of ancestry and associations was intimately connected with the people of God's covenant but chose instead to repudiate their kinship and betray those to whom they should have been as brothers, in order to curry favour with the godless power which at the time was ruling in the world.

But that was not the only purpose of the Book of Obadiah. All these kinships and events fit so marvellously an even greater betrayal of God's people in this Age by those who should have been their spiritual brethren, for the sake of an unholy alliance with the powers of this world, that it is impossible not to see in the preservation of this short book in the canon of Scripture a record of Divine judgment pertaining to our own day and time. Rightly to understand that record it is necessary to go through the book in detail.

In order the more easily to understand Obadiah's rather picturesque and dramatic language, an "arranged" version of the book has been prepared. The wording of the Authorised Version has been taken as the basis and modified by the findings of later translators, and set out in a fashion which brings out the dramatic emphasis of the narrative. The Book of Obadiah represents the Most High as speaking, declaring the nature of Edom's sin and the character of the judgment that is to come. Once, at verse 5, the prophet himself interjects a short word of gratification at the prospect, and after the end of the Divine declaration (verse 18), Obadiah adds his own short comment (vs 20-23). In the arranged version which now follows, the entire text is set out

in paragraphs devised to bring out the sense, and the use of quotation marks (inverted commas) has been resorted to in order to make plain which parts of the text declare the actual pronouncements of the Most High. It is suggested that this "arranged" version be compared with the Book of Obadiah as it appears in the Authorised Version. Succeeding instalments in this series will constantly refer back to this "arranged" version.

THE VISION OF OBADIAH

Thus says the Lord God about Edom

I have received a declaration from the Lord, and He has sent forth a message to the nations, to rise and make war upon her.

(2) "Behold I will make you small among the nations; you will be completely dishonoured. (3) The pride of your hearts has deceived you, living as you do in the fastnesses of the rocks, building your home on high, and saying in your heart 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' (4) Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though you set your nest among the very stars, yet even from there will I pull you down," says God.

(5) What a downfall is yours!

"If thieves and robbers came to you by night, would they have stolen more than they required? If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not have left some gleanings? (6) But now, what a pillaging of Esau there has been, what a rifling of all his treasures! (7) Your very allies have betrayed you and brought you to the ground; your accomplices have deceived you and overcome you, and your most trusted friends have set a trap for you that you had not the sense to perceive."

(8) "In that day," says God, "I will destroy the wise men out of Edom, and the men of understanding out of Mount Esau. (9) The powerful men of Teman will be dismayed, for all the men of Esau will be cut off. (10) Because of the wrongs you have perpetrated upon your brother Jacob you will be cut off for ever."

(11) "On the day that you stood aside when aliens carried off Jacob's possessions and foreigners entered his land, casting lots for the possession of Jerusalem, you allied yourself with them. (12) You should not have exulted over your brother's fate in his day of misfortune, or rejoiced at the ruin of the people of Judah, nor have boasted yourself in the day of their distress, (13) nor taken possession of My people's territory in the day of their calamity, nor robbed them of their goods, (14) nor stood in the road to intercept the fugitives, or delivered the survivors into the hands of their enemies."

(15) "And now the day of the Lord is at hand upon all the nations. As you have done, so it shall be done unto you; your deeds will return upon your own head. (16) As you have drunk the intoxicating cup upon My holy mountain, so shall all the nations round about drink, and stagger, and be as if they no longer exist.

(17) "But on Mount Zion there shall be those who have escaped, and it shall be a sanctuary, and the House of Jacob shall possess it in peace.

(18) "The House of Jacob shall be a fire, the House of Joseph a flame, and the House of Esau shall be as stubble, which they shall ignite and

consume until nothing is left of the House of Esau."

That is what God has decreed !

(19) Then the people of the southern desert shall inherit the Mount of Esau, and the people of the sea-side plain, the land of the Philistines. Ephraim shall inherit Samaria and Benjamin shall inherit Gilead. (20) The Israelite exiles in Halah shall inherit Phoenicia as far as Zarephath, and the Jerusalem exiles in Sepharad shall inherit the cities of the desert.

(21) And those who have escaped shall come from Mount Zion to rule the Mount of Esau, and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's.

(To be continued)

"Yea, Rather . . ."

A discourse on
Rom. 8. 34

It is not always the biggest words of a text, nor even the centrally positioned ones in a paragraph that will carry most weight in the argument. Sometimes words of two letters, by their comparative values, such as "as" and "so", will open wide the door of argument, or close it shut, leaving no doubt in the reader's mind what the writer's meaning was. For instance, "*As in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive*" (I Cor. 15, 22). Whatever may be the full scope of this Scripture its argument turns upon two small words.

The two words of our text also institute a comparison, but throw the balance of importance upon the statement next following. They add emphasis to the assertion that follows them, and increase its importance greatly when compared with the one that precedes them. Paul could have made use of the facts regarding the life and death of Jesus without using these two words. He could have written: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, and it is Christ that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God . . ." He would thus have been stating the two great facts of Jesus' life as unassailable facts, but, stated thus they would be "in parallel" with each other, and of equal value for the purpose of an argument. But that was not his intention here. Apparently he did not desire them to be of equal value in their application to the main point of his discussion. He was not, at this point, basing his claim to freedom from condemnation on a dead Christ—however acceptable that death of Christ may be—but upon a living and exalted Christ, who had passed beyond the reach of death, and was present at God's right hand to represent Paul and all his brethren there.

Already he had shown the vital necessity of the death of Christ as one of the great essential factors in the work of Atonement and Reconciliation (Chap. 3, 25; 5, 6, 12-19; 8, 32), and here (as always, elsewhere) Paul did not underrate or undervalue the worth of that Redemption Sacrifice. Always in presence of either friend or foe he gloried in the Cross of Christ, and declared it the one foundation upon which all future hope must be based. It had done for men what no other work had ever done. Jesus by His death had done what no other man, nor any number of men combined could ever do. Alexander the Great had overrun the world while still more than a youth—a feat almost without parallel in the annals of time, up to Paul's day—yet what had the conquest accomplished for men? Even among his own people there was none to compare with Paul's gracious Lord. Moses had been God's instrument in giving to the fathers the Law. David and Solomon had given of their great wealth to build God a house, and had employed tongue and pen to sing the goodness of the Lord, and while they had given much to benefit those who loved the Holy Name, what had they given that could be compared with that great price that Jesus gave for man's release? Not all the feats of arms; not all the bright gold dug from the earth, nor all the erected temples upon the earth could compare in its effects upon men with the effects of that dark tragedy on Calvary. That, to Paul's persuaded mind, was the one event that transcended every other event throughout the world, throughout all time.

Yet it was only the first chapter of a great story. It was a chapter gloriously true, but it was not the whole story. It was a truth—a pure unadulterated

truth—yet not the whole truth—there was something more! Here, in the argument he was now presenting, it was as the wicket-door leading into a larger auditorium. It was a case of passing through that to this, and it was “this” that really mattered most!

He was writing of God's Elect! He was writing to God's Elect—of those and to those whom God's Love had won over from the ranks of evil and wickedness. They had forsaken the ways of sin and Satan, and turned with all their hearts to God, in order to serve Him, and live in accord with His great purposes toward men. But they found to their great sorrow that the fallen flesh of men (which they still shared with other men—other fallen men) was no fitting instrument through which to serve the living God. Try as they would, and even with the best intent, they could not always do the things they would have loved to do, or say the things they would have preferred to say. They found that even their best attempts came short of the perfect standard, and how often they had cause to groan and pour out their sense of unworthiness in sighs and sobs! Would God condemn them for these deficiencies and ineffective attempts? Would Jesus chide and rebuke them because they so often missed the mark? Would anyone condemn them and point the scornful finger at their vain attempts to measure up to righteousness?

Yes, there were some who could scoff and scorn and ridicule and condemn! One “accuser of the brethren” always stood ready to heap condemnation on their heads. Along with him was a whole host of wickedness in exalted position, ready to hinder and oppose, to dishearten and condemn, when frailty and wickedness marred their best endeavours.

But (and this is what matters most to Paul and his believing friends) these accusers and opponents had no right of entrance to the Divine Court where all these actions—these efforts to please God—were assessed and judged. That Court of assessment was in heaven, at the very Throne of God. Satan and his hosts had no right of entrance there—they were confined to the lower heavens—to the earth's atmosphere. They had no standing as “the-prosecutor-at-the-bar.” They had no power of attorney in that Supreme Court.

Therefore, though they might shriek their condemnation above the raging voice of the gale, it had no relevance to the “case” in hand. “Who is he that condemneth?” asks Paul. None!—there is no prosecutor in the case.

But there is an Advocate at the bar—“counsel for the defence” is there. And that Advocate was the One who had died for men, but who now lived

again! Surely He who had loved men when in their sin, enough to die for them, would not now turn against His followers and display all their guilt before that supreme Bar. No, indeed! He was “Counsel for their defence”—a defence based upon what He Himself had done to satisfy the Heavenly Court on their behalf. His Presence at that Bar was proof enough that what He accomplished on their behalf was acceptable in full and adequate compensation for their blemishes. Yes, Christ Jesus had died for their sins, and made satisfaction complete.

Would Jesus condemn? Nay, He had died for them! But more than that, He was now living for them, and serving their need more than before. Would God from His Throne condemn? Nay, He had already issued His writ of acquittal! He had already declared the decree of His Court, freely justifying the believer from his sins and weaknesses. The verdict of the Court was favourable to the Advocate and His earthly clients and companions, so that in heaven there was none to condemn.

Other accusers mattered not, let them shout their impeachments loud and long! So long, therefore, as their name and credit stood unimpaired in the one place, and at the one “Bar” that really mattered, all was well with them. And that it stood well in that one place was sure beyond all further question because their Advocate was so fully acceptable to the Judge, who alone was qualified to judge and justify, that He was keeping the Advocate as His own right hand—to remain there throughout the Age, till the whole company for whom He had appeared had achieved the object for which they had been justified.

It is no dead Christ that occupies the centre of God's Plan. It is a living Christ—a Christ over whom death has no dominion or power—a Christ, eternal, immortal and all powerful, who ever liveth to help each generation of His struggling followers along and up the heights to heavenly glory. “I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore” are the words of assurance sent down from heaven to earth, to stand as guarantee that no struggling follower can ever pass from the sight of His watchful loving Eye.

Some of the reputed followers of the Lord make their boast in a Christ who died, and carry a crucifix as token of that death. That is something, but it is not enough. It is not enough that a sacrifice should have been made, or that a Cross and a tomb should be the symbol of Divine Redemption. That alone could not have secured the blotting out of sin. The “Bar-of-all-Authority” was not in session on Calvary's hill, or Gethsemane's tomb, but had placed its throne in the highest heaven. Divine Justice

had instituted its own Court, and thither must the "case" of all believers be carried for adjudication.

We may truly rejoice with any or all who rejoice in the great Sacrifice of the Man of Sorrows, but that would be ending the great story in the opening chapter. With Paul we might announce to heaven and earth that all our glory is in the Cross, but we must complete the great account by proclaiming to all our "Yea rather." "Christ died, *yea rather* . . . was raised from the dead" is the vital energising fact at the heart of God's purpose.

Much is made to-day over the radio of "the historic Christ", and men are asked to make their decisions concerning righteousness on the basis of the teachings of a good man who lived nineteen centuries ago and taught a new way of life. No wonder the world looks coldly on while only one here and there responds to the Great Voice from the past. It needs more than the historic Christ to energeise a cold world into life. The rating of Jesus as "the historic Christ" places Him but little in advance of the founders of any other religion or "way of life". The "historic" advocates make the plea that "the Christ" was "God", and from that assumed fact argue that His words should be

heard, heeded and followed. Still the world looks coldly on. It cannot understand even that assertion, for it lacks the living power to grip the vital strings of the heart of men in these tumultuous days. Not a "dead Christ," nor yet a "historic Christ," but a Living Christ, who has learned compassion for the suffering generations of men, is the one theme, the only theme, that can strike home, arrest and rivet the attention and expectation of the perplexed and doubting hosts of men, bewildered and lost in the mazes of modern thought. But who shall tell them of that Living Christ? And the answer surely comes, only they who can say: "Yea rather, Christ has risen from the dead." Our two little words then contain volumes of sacrificial and dispensational fact, and stand as an expression of conviction that great and vital as the death of Christ most surely was, His resurrection is more vital still, to those who now follow in His steps.

Lives there one child of God to-day, who, knowing and experiencing the tender care of the great Shepherd of the flock, whose heart will not rise up in gratitude and appreciation before God for the great facts covered by our little text—"yea rather"?

DEAN FARRAR'S DESCRIPTION OF NAZARETH

"Almost in the centre of this chain of hills there is a singular cleft in the limestone, forming the entrance to a little valley. As the traveller leaves the plain he will ride up a steep and narrow pathway, bordered with grass and flowers, through scenery which is neither colossal nor overwhelming, but infinitely beautiful and picturesque. Beneath him, on the right-hand side, the vale will gradually widen, until it becomes about a quarter of a mile in breadth. The basin of the valley is divided by hedges of cactus into little fields and gardens, which, about the fall of the spring rains, wear an aspect of indescribable calm, and glow with a tint of the richest green. Beside the narrow pathway, at no great distance apart from each other, are two wells, and the women who draw water there are more beautiful, and the ruddy, bright-eyed shepherd boys who sit or play by the well-sides, in their gay-coloured Oriental costume, are a happier, bolder, brighter-looking race than the traveller will have seen elsewhere. Gradually the valley opens into a little natural amphitheatre of hills, supposed by some to be the crater of an extinct volcano; and there, clinging to the hollows of a hill, which rises to the height of some five hundred feet above it, lie, "like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald," the flat roofs and narrow streets of a little Eastern

town. There is a small church; the massive buildings of a convent; the tall minaret of a mosque; a clear, abundant fountain; houses built of white stone, and gardens scattered among them, umbrageous with figs and olives, and rich with the white and scarlet blossoms of orange and pomegranate. In spring, at least, everything about the place looks indescribably bright and soft; doves murmur in the trees; the hoopoe flits about in ceaseless activity; the bright blue roller-bird, the commonest and loveliest bird of Palestine, flashes like a living sapphire over fields which are enamelled with innumerable flowers. And that little town is *En Nâzirah*, Nazareth, where the Son of God, the Saviour of mankind, spent nearly thirty years of His mortal life. It was, in fact, His native village, His home for all but three or four years of His life on earth; the village which lent its then ignominious name to the scornful title written upon His cross; the village from which He did not disdain to draw His appellation when He spake in vision to the persecuting Saul. And along the narrow mountain-path which I have described, His feet must have often trod, for it is the only approach by which, in returning northwards from Jerusalem, He could have reached the home of His infancy, youth, and manhood."

THIS CAUSE WE SERVE

An essay on the Church's
commission in the world

1. The message we preach.

"And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin". "And as ye go, preach, saying, *The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*". (John 16, 8; Matt. 10, 7.)

"The voice said, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry?" The ancient plaint of Isaiah has come to us in these latter days. What is to be the burden of our message? Is it a pointing forward to the glories to come, in the days of the Messianic Kingdom on earth, a sort of "pie in the sky" promise that takes no account of men's inward needs now? Is it to be the dark foreboding of judgment soon to come, an announcement of Divinely sent doom to destroy all the works of men because of human sin? Or is it to be an impassioned plea for conviction of sin and repentance, a coming in penitence to the foot of the Cross in the best traditions of nineteenth century evangelical appeal? Each of these alternatives is espoused and advocated by one or another amongst us, and because, in common with most Christian people to-day, we find little or no response to our preaching, whatever alternative we adopt, the question is becoming more frequently asked amongst us "What is the message that we should preach?"

Some of us attempt to settle the matter by declaring that the Church in the flesh is no longer called to preach the Gospel. The work of sowing, it is said, is ended; the present is the time of reaping. We have come to that point in the development of the Divine purposes where God is gathering to their heavenly home the last remaining ones of a very choice and select body of people who will constitute the future rulers of earth. All the emphasis is upon the final "finishing touches" to the characters of these, that they might be very pleasing to the Most High, the remainder of mankind, whatever their needs or their longings, being ignored. Whilst there is no doubt that all those who hold that view and fashion their lives' activities accordingly will eventually find out for themselves to what extent they have correctly interpreted the Divine Will in this matter, it does remain true that a great many disciples who hold equally positive views about the Divine Plan of redemption in the present and future Ages, and trust just as sincerely to find eventually that they have won the Master's "Well done",

find it quite irreconcilable with their understanding of the Christian call not to give outward expression to the faith that is within them. The frustration of so many efforts sincerely put forth inspires the question which this short note seeks to consider.

Many of us have been familiar for a great number of years with the theme which certainly did ring through Christendom in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth. Proclamation of the Millennial hope and future probation for all mankind at the coming of Christ and His Kingdom was the main plank in the platform. The imminence of Divine judgment on the evil forces of this present world and the end of the power of man was a secondary theme. The call to repentance and conversion, following realisation and conviction of sin, was not sounded at all. There was a reason for that. The message was addressed, not to all men generally, but to people who were already Christians and had already passed those initial steps. There was no secret about it. The impulse was to reach out with a message exceeding in its plane of theological understanding anything which Christendom had hitherto offered. "... in the interest of His consecrated saints, waiting for the adoption, and of all that in every place call upon the Lord, the household of faith..." That was the formula, familiar to so many of us. The "groaning creation", by the same outlook, was still "travailing and waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," and that was not to be until the future Age had dawned in all its fulness. So quite understandingly there was really no place for conviction of sin and repentance or anything else of an evangelical nature. And the message then was not evangelical; it was theological and intellectual. It was not intended to appeal to the heart so much as to the head and it reached the heart only when individual and personal appreciation of the inherent justice and wisdom of the Divine Plan thus outlined led one to come to God in unreserved dedication of heart and life to serve the interest of such a Plan. There was not—or rarely was there—the broken heart of a repentant sinner in that surrender; rather the measured accents of one who had counted the cost and having done so, deliberately came to God saying "Here am I, send me."

It is easy now to look back and disparage the work that then was done and the basis upon which it was done. Not so often is it realised that without that work and that message, conceived and carried on in just the manner that it was, we would not possess much of what we hold dear to-day. The world of Queen Victoria was a very different world from that of Queen Elizabeth II. The late nineteenth century produced a number of famous revivalists and their labours brought many to Christ in repentance, and without any doubt at all those same labours gave much joy to the angels in heaven. But none of those revivalists gave the lie to the blasphemous God-dishonouring doctrines of the Dark Ages as did this message. None of them took up the newly unfolding vista of scientific understanding and related it to the old Bible presentation, challenging the specious theories of evolution and materialism on their own level. None of them gave a philosophic and reasoned answer to the fundamental questions which thinking men in an age of dawning enlightenment were beginning to ask. They were not qualified so to do, and they were not called so to do. Their achievement lay in a different field. And the fact that for forty years the more intellectual type of message, having as its chief object the justification of the Divine character by revealing God's plan for man's future, drew its audiences, and good audiences at that; had its circle of readers, a circle of daily and weekly newspaper readers such as no religious body has had since; and a circulation of books which at that time was rightly regarded as phenomenal, is evidence that this message met a need and did a work. It, too, occupied an essential place in the Divine Plan for the present Age. We who have inherited the tradition should be the first to recognise its true worth, and the last to disparage and criticise.

But that does not imply that we must follow the same pattern in our activity and witness to-day. We are already nearly a century away from the beginning of those things. The world has changed; it speaks a different language and thinks in a different way. Moreover, its needs are different. The calm, measured stateliness of Victorian exposition finds no responsive chord in the hearts of young Elizabethans who crowd as much into one day of their lives as their forebears did into a month, and who moreover do not know but that at any instant even that hurried existence may be summarily terminated by the detonation of some fearful creation of man's destructive ingenuity. Such words as "atonement", "covenant" "mediator" had meaning to a very large proportion of men and women then; they convey no meaning whatever to any but a very few to-day. Unless our message is spoken in terms that are under-

stood, and unless we speak of things that find some response in heart or mind of the hearer, something that is relevant to the problems of the day and the questions that are being asked to-day, we might just as well hold our peace. "*I had rather*" said St. Paul "*... speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.*" It is with that thought in mind we need to examine this problem before us and in that recognition to find its answer.

Jesus taught, not as the scribes, in a superior, pedantic and vacillating fashion, but as one having authority. He spoke with an air of quiet assurance which commanded attention and won the confidence of the hearers. He spoke of what He evidently knew, and He was at least respected for that knowledge. The common people heard Him gladly; that can only be because they understood the words He used and felt that He was speaking to them on their own level and was familiar with the problems of their own generation. There is the example for us. We must drop any pretence of being some superior class of being amongst others and realise that we are men of like passions with them. We must discard the habits of thought and the traits of speech of a generation that has gone for ever and acclimatise ourselves to those of this generation. That does not mean a foolish aping of present-day mannerisms and tricks of speech, nor a discarding of the natural dignity of the Gospel message in the vain hope that by such means the sympathy of the masses will be gained. It does mean that we must be ready to discontinue old methods which have proved no longer so effective as they were in the past and adopt new methods which give some promise of greater reward. The spirit which inspired the development and presentation of the "Drama of Creation" at a time when moving pictures were looked at askance by ecclesiastical leaders and had certainly not been visualised as a fitting medium for Christian education, is the spirit we need now. Whatever modern means of the impartation of knowledge may lie within our reach, and to whatever extent all such means do lie within our reach, we do well to use in our endeavour to spread the glad tidings.

That does not answer the primary question: What message ought we to preach? Perhaps the best answer is given by the declaration of John the Baptist; "*Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" That was the theme of Jesus' message too, and of all the Apostles. "*God . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent . . . because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath*

ordained". "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . . and he shall send Jesus Christ . . . whom the heaven must retain until the times of restitution of all things". There is no separating the two themes in the New Testament. The call to repentance and the message of the Kingdom go hand in hand together, and we who live in a day when the masses of the people need, more than ever they have done, both these things, repentance and the Kingdom, are called to proclaim them both.

We have an advantage over most of our Christian brethren in other communions here. The majority can only preach repentance for they know nothing of the Kingdom. We know of both, and if we should content ourselves merely with preaching repentance we are depriving ourselves of half the glory that we can, if we will, bear to the sons of men. The story of

the Kingdom gives point and reason to the call to repentance.

This then is the thinking point. Is our preaching to be nothing more than a repetition of what the great Churches and noted revivalists are already doing, and doing much more effectively than we with our limited resources can ever hope to do it, or are we to reap full advantage of the deeper understanding that we have of the whole Plan of God and give to those who will listen a message that is unique because no one else has one just like it, one that if presented in the language of to-day ought to stand out above every other Gospel message just because it shows up so much more vividly the wondrous wisdom and justice and love and power of God? Let the problem be thought over from that point of view, and may God bless us all in our conclusions therefrom.

INTERESTING TEXTS CONSIDERED

And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion. (Micah 4. 8.)

This has always been taken to be a Messianic prophecy, speaking of the time when Christ shall take His power and reign, proving Himself the true "tower of the flock", the true "stronghold of the daughter of Zion". The theme is associated with Chapter 5 "Thou, Bethlehem-Ephratah . . . out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel . . ." Bethlehem, in olden time the royal city of David, is pictured as the place from which the Messiah comes forth to His people—as indeed in the days of His flesh He actually did.

The reference to the "tower of the flock" is to a tower having that name which stood near Bethlehem in ancient times. Mention is made of it in Gen. 35. 21 in the story of Jacob. Immediately after Rachel's death and burial "on the way to Bethlehem" it is said "and Israel journeyed and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar." That name in Hebrew is *Migdal Edar*, "the tower of the flock". It was probably a tower from which the shepherd could look afar and watch the interests of his scattered flock. It must have stood all through the fourteen or fifteen centuries which elapsed between Jacob and Micah, a silent witness to the purpose of God that royalty, the leading of the flock, should one day come forth from Bethlehem. Who first built the tower and what was his purpose in so doing we do

not know. All we do know is that Jacob pitched his tent there, that it stood through the centuries, that Micah addressed it in a kind of poetic way and prophesied that the promised dominion would one day come to the true "tower of the flock", our Lord Jesus Christ.

Is not this the carpenter?" Mark 6. 3.

Those four words enshrine all that the Scriptures say concerning eighteen years of our Lord's life, from the age of twelve when He was presented at the Temple by his parents, to thirty, when He came to Jordan for baptism. He worked and was known as a carpenter; He had four brothers—James, Josés, Jude and Simeon—and at least two sisters. Mary's family, judged by present day standards, was a large one. Joseph disappears from the story after the incident at the Temple; it is often suggested that he must have died whilst Jesus was a youth, but two references to his name in the Gospels might be held to indicate otherwise. "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (John 6. 42.) "And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4. 22.) These texts are not conclusive for such expressions could conceivably be used of a deceased person, but to say "whose father and mother we know" does almost seem to indicate living persons. On the other hand, the many references to Mary and her family without the inclusion of Joseph in any instance favours the view

that he was dead by the time Jesus entered upon His ministry.

So Jesus worked as a carpenter at Nazareth for eighteen years. At first He helped his father; later on, maybe, after Joseph's death, He took charge of the work and his brothers helped him. After his crucifixion his brothers James and Jude both became converts and in the course of time wrote the New Testament epistles which bear their names. James became leader of the Church at Jerusalem and his name is recorded in Church history as the first

Bishop of Jerusalem. Grand-children of Jude are known to have been living in the time of the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 103) but apart from this one well-authenticated fact the world has no record of any descendants of Mary's family. So the curtain which veils the details of our Lord's life before his ministry began is drawn only just enough to make us realise that our interest is intended to be fixed upon his mission and his message, the pouring out of his life to death on mankind's behalf, and not at all upon the days when He was but as a youth and a young man amongst men.

BAPTISMAL SERVICE AT WARRINGTON

Seven brethren from the Warrington, Bury and Accrington districts symbolised their baptism into Christ, on Saturday, 30th October, at Warrington. Bro. Quennell had the privilege of immersing these brethren and Bro. Chrimes gave the address, which was particularly appropriate for the occasion. It was a very impressive service and all who were present, some who have been in the Christian way for many years, were strengthened and renewed in their union with the Lord and His consecrated people.

DISCIPLINE

The hammer of Thy discipline, O Lord,
Strikes fast and hard. Life's anvil rings again
To Thy strong strokes. And yet we know 'tis then
That from the heart's hot iron all abroad
The rich glow spreads. Great Fashioner Divine,
Who spareth not, in Thy far-seeing plan,
The blows that shape the character of man,
Or fire that makes him yield to touch of Thine,
Strike on, then, if Thou wilt! For thou alone
Canst rightly test the temper of our will,
Or tell how these base metals may fulfill
Thy purpose—making all our life Thine own.
Only we do beseech Thee, let the pain
Of fiery ordeals through which we go
Shed all around us such a warmth and glow,
Such cheerful showers of sparks in golden rain,
That hard hearts may be melted, cold hearts fired,
And callous hearts be taught to feel and see
That discipline is more to be desired
Than all the ease that keeps us back from Thee.

FORGETTING THE THINGS BEHIND

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

None of these things should be taken as though some strange thing happened unto us. This is but another stage in that spiritual development which demands continuous progress until "that which is perfect is come." It may be that the Good Shepherd has called His child out of one environment because there is nothing more there for that child to learn; fresh experiences and surroundings are necessary to the onward progress of the soul which is seeking oneness with Christ. Like Abraham, let us go out, not knowing whither we go.

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

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 9—On the Mountains of Ararat.

"And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." (Gen. 8. 4.)

It was at the end of the hundred and fifty days, at the time when it is said in verse 3 that the waters began to abate, that the Ark stranded. It had been afloat for eight months and twenty days, and if Noah had in fact been a dweller in the land near the head of the Persian Gulf as the traditions declare—and it seems reasonable to think that he was—then the Ark came to rest at least five hundred miles north of its starting point. During those eight months it might have drifted aimlessly three or four times that much. Noah found himself now in a country that he probably had never seen before. The Ark had quite evidently got entangled somewhere in the confused mass of mountain ranges which bound the plains of Mesopotamia on the north and west. It is improbable that the vessel grounded at the top of the mountain, despite popular impressions. More likely it was left high and dry by the receding waters on some lower slopes, so that although Noah could see the mountain peaks around him there was still a good deal of water to drain away before he could set foot upon land fit for the immediate cultivation which would be necessary.

The Bible account appears to bear this out. A further period of seven months and ten days elapsed before the family left the Ark. During the whole of that time they lived inside the now stationary vessel. This slow decrease of the waters could be accounted for in a variety of ways, but if the Flood had actually spread over the land from the Indian Ocean in the south, carrying the Ark with it to the mountains of Ararat, then the slow draining away back into the Persian Gulf would take a long time. Even at the present day the same land is periodically visited by floods which cover practically the whole of the country to a depth of several feet, and several weeks elapse before the floodwaters find their way into the Gulf and the land is open to view again. The Bible story is therefore perfectly credible and just what should be expected in the circumstances.

The modern Mount Ararat is at the north-eastern corner of Lake Van, in Turkish Armenia, but it is most unlikely that this is the mountain referred to in the Genesis story. The ancient land of Urartu (Hebrew "*Ararat*") covered that part of Armenia which is occupied by what are called the Gordyeen and the Zagros mountains, the country that in

current usage is called Kurdistan. The tradition associating "Mount Ararat" with the Ark is of comparatively recent date, certainly not more than four hundred years old. Since the Bible gives no closer identification than "the mountains of Ararat" or Urartu, it is unnecessary to be dogmatic on the point but it is of interest to note what can be gleaned from other sources as to the Ark's landing place.

The oldest records—apart from the Bible—now in existence are the various Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian accounts of the Flood, written on baked clay tablets which are now in one or another of the world's museums or in the hands of private collectors. The most recent of these tablets date from the eighth century B.C., about the time of the prophet Isaiah, and the earliest yet discovered were written long before the time of Abraham. All these accounts are unanimous in fixing the end of the Ark's voyage at Mount Nizir. Now Mount Nizir was the sacred mountain of the Sumerians and the Babylonians and was called by them the "Mountain of the World" and the "Mountain of the sides of the North". They pictured it as the place where the gods dwelt and from which their own ancestors had at first come. (An allusion to this belief, which was widespread throughout the Semitic countries, is found in Isa. 14, where Lucifer is described as declaring his intention to sit upon "the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north"; the reference is really to this same Mount Nizir.) The position of the mountain and the fact that it was situated in the land of Urartu are both indicated in the clay tablet records, whence it is known that Mount Nizir was the peak now known as Algurd, on the frontier between Iraq and Persia, fifteen miles east of Rowanduz and about eighty from Mosul, the ancient Nineveh. It is at the head of one of the most magnificent river gorges, that of the Great Zab and Rowanduz Rivers, in the world, not more than about thirty miles from the plain, and just the place where the Ark, drifting northward, might enter and become entangled in mountainous country.

This is the mountain which held pride of place in Old Testament days as the mountain of the Ark's landing. Rivals for the honour appeared during Christian times, Mount Judi, north of Mosul, Mount Ararat, and even Mount Demavend, south of the Caspian Sea, and the claims of these will be noted presently. In passing, through, it is worth

recording how suitable, from the natural standpoint, was the district around Algurd for the commencement of the new life Noah and his family must needs live when they emerged from the Ark. Until this present century the district was wild and inaccessible, and largely unexplored by Europeans, but about twenty years ago an Englishman named Hamilton superintended the construction of a motor road linking the Syrian road system with that of Persia, traversing this very gorge and passing the base of Algurd itself. He later wrote a book describing the work and the country ("*Road through Kurdistan*" published 1937) which affords a wonderfully illuminating picture of the territory, although Mr. Hamilton was apparently quite unaware of the possible connection of this mountain and the countryside with the story of the Flood. One or two extracts are given here; the book itself is well worth reading.

"Kurdistan is a country of high mountain ranges lying parallel to each other, approximately north-west to south-east. Beginning with the foothills near the Tigris, each range rises higher than the last till finally the elevated Persian plateau is reached with its fringe of towering peaks.

"Between the ranges lie long valleys, down which run rivers and streams, but the really unique feature of these ranges is the number of mighty gorges that the rivers cut in their endeavours to escape from this mountain system to join the Tigris. Often enough these ravines are not straight valleys; they wind in the most curious fashion and have endless ramifications. The Rowanduz is the best known and perhaps the grandest of them all. It constitutes one of the grandest formations of Nature in the world. The Assyrians put the headwaters of the Great Zab as the site of Eden . . .

"Then at last we came out on high country where glaciers of a past age had left huge boulders. At the head of a wide valley, not many miles away, rose the king of the mountains of Kurdistan, the Algurd, 12,249 feet in height, already deep in its winter mantle of snows . . .

"Flowers of every colour burst forth amid the grass. Each day some new hue is predominant. An inaccessible ledge high up on the side of the gorge becomes brilliant with scarlet tulips, the roadside blue with irises. There are great lilies to be found in the darker crannies, and small orchids and beds of violets. On the hillside near Kani Uthman are acres of narcissus that show pure white in the distance like melted snow. On the Dasht-i-Harir beside the River Zab are huge red poppies and tall white daisies, for on the plains the flowers are quite different from those in the gorges . . . One walks on a carpet of myriads of small flowers . . . The crops of barley, wheat and

rye rise as thick and big as any I have seen anywhere in the world . . .

"Shaqlawah is perhaps the most highly endowed village in Kurdistan, for from the base of the towering Safin Mountains burst forth springs of ice-cold water in such profusion that they irrigate a sloping hillside several square miles in area, where forests of poplar and walnut trees grow, and where gardens produce pears, apples, plums, apricots and grapes of the largest size and the most delicious flavour. Above the springs on the higher slopes of the valley are extensive vineyards of the low-growing black grapes which seem to be one of the hardiest of plants, for they lie buried under the deep snow in winter and are exposed to the hot dry summer without any watering whatever; yet they bear masses of fruit." (From "*Road through Kurdistan*")

One can well picture the little family, fresh from their twelve months in the Ark, making their home in so delightful a land and commencing to sow and reap their first crops. The mention of the "low-growing black grapes" is interesting when one recalls the story of Noah and his vineyard in Gen. 9.

Algurd is at the eastern end of the Gordyeen mountains and derives its modern name, which means "the mountain of Gordye", from that fact. "Nizir" as a name disappeared with the fall of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires in the days of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. Four hundred years later, Berosus the Chaldean historian, writing his history of the Babylonians in Greek, said that the Ark stranded in the Gordyeen mountains in Armenia and stated moreover that it still existed in his own time (250 B.C.) and that people went to see it. The impression that the Ark still exists has persisted even to this twentieth century but of that more anon. Josephus the Jewish historian, soon after the days of our Lord's First Advent, repeated Berosus' statement and other later writers copied Josephus. But Algurd was in a wild and inhospitable district and with the coming of Christian missionaries into the settled lands along the Euphrates and Tigris it is perhaps not surprising that a new site was found for the story.

However it happened, we find that in the early years of the Christian era both Jews and Christians in Mesopotamia had fixed the tradition on Mount Judi, a few miles east of the modern town of Jeziret ibn Omar, on the River Tigris some distance north of Mosul. As with Algurd, Mount Judi is just within the mountainous district and just as likely a place to which the Ark could drift as its older rival. The earliest definite mention of Mount Judi is by Epiphanius, Bishop of Salamis in A.D. 367, who

said that the Ark was still there in his own time. It is also recorded that the Roman Emperor Heraclius round about the year 620 A.D. ascended Mount Judi and viewed the remains of the Ark. At that time the Nestorian Christians were very numerous in Mesopotamia and it seems to have been largely due to the Nestorian Church that the tradition was kept alive. Shortly after the time of Heraclius came the rise of Mahomet the prophet of Islam and before long the Moslem faith became predominant. The legend of Mount Judi was taken over by the Mohammedans as it stood and in the Koran it is definitely said (Koran chap. 11) "*The water abated, and the decree was fulfilled, and the Ark rested on the mountain Al-judi.*" To this day Christians, Jews and Moslems of Western Asia hold that this is the mountain on which the Ark stranded.

A Nestorian monastery was built on the lower slopes of Al Judi at some very early time in the Christian era. The date of its founding is not known. But in A.D. 776 the monastery and a church attached to it was destroyed, it is said by lightning. The subsequent history of the place is narrated by Benjamin of Tudela, a Spanish Jew from Tudela in Spain, who travelled throughout the known world in the middle of the Twelfth Century and wrote a voluminous account of his travels (English translation, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, by Adler, published 1907.) Of the district in question, Benjamin says, "... Thence it is two days to Geziret Ibn Omar, which is surrounded by the River Hiddekel (*Tigris*) at the foot of the mountains of Ararat. It is a distance of four miles to the place where Noah's Ark rested, but Omar ben al Khutaab took the Ark from the two mountains and made it into a mosque for the Mohammedans. Near the Ark is the Synagogue of Ezra to this day, and on the ninth of Ab the Jews come hither from the city to pray. In the city of Geziret Omar are four thousand Jews, at their head being Rabbi Mubchar, Rabbi Joseph and Rabbi Chiua. Thence it is two days to Mosul ..."

Twenty years later, another Jew, Rabbi Pethakiah, visited the mountain and confirmed Benjamin's statement.

It will be noted from this extract that in Benjamin's day, the Twelfth Century, the term "mountains of Ararat" referred to the district in which Mount Judi is situated, and not to the present Mount Ararat in Armenia.

The reason for the shifting of the tradition to Mount Ararat in Armenia will be considered presently. In the meantime evidence that Mount Judi is to this day looked on by people of the land as the true resting place of the Ark is afforded by a British clergyman, Rev. Wigram, who resided in

Kurdistan for many years during the early part of the present century. In his book, "*The Cradle of Mankind*" the Rev. Wigram says:—

"Of all survivals from early ages in this land, whether monumental, superstitious or religious, none is more remarkable than the "Sacrifice of Noah". It must be understood that no people here, save the Armenians, look on the great cone which we call Ararat, but which is locally known as Aghri Dag, as the spot where the Ark rested. The Biblical term is "mountains of Ararat" or Urartu, and the term includes the whole of the Hakkiari range. A relatively insignificant ridge, known as Judi Dag, is regarded as the authentic spot by all the folk in this land: and it must be owned that the identification has something to say for itself. It is one of the first ranges that rise over the level of the great plain; and if all Mesopotamia (which to its inhabitants was the world) were submerged by some great cataclysm, it is just the spot where a drifting vessel might strand.

"Whatever the facts, the tradition goes back to the year A.D. 300 at least. That date is, of course, a thing of yesterday in this country, but the tale was unknown antiquity then, and is firmly rooted in the social consciousness now. In consequence, Noah's sacrifice is still commemorated year by year on the spot where tradition says the Ark rested—a *ziaret* which is not the actual summit of the mountain but a spot on its ridge. On that day (which, strange to say, is the first day of Ilul, or September 14 of our calendar, and not May 27 mentioned in the account in Genesis) all faiths and all nations come together, letting all feuds sleep on that occasion, to commemorate an event which is older than any of their divisions.

"Christians of all nations and confessions, Mussulmans of both *Shiah* and *Sunni* type, Sabians, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yezidis are there, each group bringing a sheep or kid for sacrifice; and for one day there is a "truce of God", even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar. Lower down on the hillside, and hard by the Nestorian village of Hasana, men still point out Noah's tomb and Noah's vineyard, though this last, strange to say, produces no wine now. The grapes from it are used exclusively for *nipukhia* or grape treacle, possibly in memory of the disaster that once befell the Patriarch." (From "*Cradle of Mankind*")

A number of other mountains, such as Demavend in Persia and the White Mountain in Afghanistan, have had the honour claimed for them but upon grounds so flimsy that consideration to such need not be given here. There remains the extinct volcano near Lake Van in Turkey which is marked on

European maps "Mount Ararat" and by Western Europeans and Americans is usually regarded as the mountain of the Genesis story. How did the

tradition come to be fastened on this particular mountain?

(To be continued)

ASSEMBLY OF WITNESS AT PENDLETON (LANCS.)

The annual "Assembly of Witness" promoted by the Bible Students' Council (of the North West) was held at Pendleton on Saturday and Sunday, 2nd and 3rd of October. As usual this was a short season of happy and profitable fellowship.

The Chairman of the Assembly, Bro. Quennell, opened the proceedings with suitable words of welcome to the brethren and exhorted them to have fervent love for each other.

The Saturday evening session was devoted to a Public Lecture on "THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS IS AT HAND". 15,000 handbills, inviting people of the district to the lecture and carrying a timely brief message, had been given out during the previous week. The speaker, Bro. French, spoke plainly of the present world condition, its cause and the Divine remedy. He invited any who had not yet made Jesus Christ their personal Saviour to do so. Giving evidence from the Scriptures he showed that "the desire of all nations"—the return of Christ and His reign—is at hand. It was a fine lecture and made a deep impression on the brethren as well as the rather small number of other persons present.

The first address was entitled "Looking Ahead". The speaker (Bro. Musk) said that because we know God and believe His Word we know what is ahead and whilst others fear we can lift up our heads and rejoice. Men of faith have always looked ahead—embracing the promises of God even though the fulfilment of them was "afar off". Whilst doing this they have walked with God, been separate from the world and ordered their lives according to His Word. They all have faithfully served Him and borne witness to His purpose. With the vision that we have of things soon to come to pass and with our glorious hope soon to be realised at the Lord's Return, we too should be separate from the world and bear witness to our Father's purpose in judgment and blessing. We must be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

On the Sunday morning a good number of brethren gathered for the Question Meeting. This was led by Bro. Lodge, who had no easy task. It proved to be a lively session, the allotted time passing before all the questions printed on the programme were considered.

On Sunday afternoon Bro. Panteny spoke on "THE BIBLE'S MESSAGE FOR TODAY". He

reminded us of our blessed position as God's people and of our responsibility to give forth His Word. Further, he said, the Bible is a living book. It is dynamic. If we are nourished by God's Word we shall possess a power and vitality that makes us alive—alive by God's spirit. The Bible has a message for every age but deals particularly with crisis periods. Now more light is being opened up; there is a new vision for our day. After tracing God's dealings with Israel and the call of the Gentiles, Brother reminded us that the Gentiles have apostatised as completely as the Jews. There must be a "day of visitation". We have a part to play. We can give the warning. We must declare the judgments of God and we must save souls. Our testimony must be individual and collective even though we may have different views on some things.

The final address "WHAT SHALL I CRY" was given by Bro. Brockis. We are sometimes asked "should we witness?" and "what should our witness be?". Our witness should be concerning "THE KING THAT COMETH IN THE NAME OF THE LORD". We must bear testimony as Noah did in the old world. More and more we shall need the whole armour of God to stand in the evil day. We are getting past the day of missionary appeal. We are now in the day of the prophet's warning and direction as to the means of escape. Only in Christ can the "meek of the earth" find protection. We have seen enough to remind us of the need to witness. We have a "sure word of prophecy"—our lamp. This is the torch which God has given us in the present blackout. Our message must now invade the political realm. It must tell of God's purpose for Israel and the nations. The time is at hand for Jesus of Nazareth, *King of the Jews*, to establish His Kingdom. Jerusalem will be the seat of government. Hebrews 11 shows what happens to God's messengers. We have given our all. The disciple is not above His Master. Let us be sure that we keep the banner in our hands.

The catering arrangements were in the hands of Bro. Quennell and the provisions for our temporal needs were excellent.

Once again the Lord's abundant blessing was poured out upon the Assembly and all were encouraged to be steadfast and ready to follow His leading in these "last days".

BETWEEN OURSELVES (continued from page 2)

The Tune Hymnal

The Midlands brethren have been working very hard for a considerable time on the production of the new Tune Book, and now announce that it is ready. The book contains nearly 500 hymns, (words and music) including all those in the present "Bible Students Hymnal" together with those in the Christmas Supplement and a number of additional hymns such as "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and "Face to Face". The book contains 640 pages and is bound in blue cloth.

In consequence of the generosity of many brethren who have contributed over half the cost of production in gifts, the price is much lower than was at one time expected. The cost is fixed at 15/- each plus 1/6 for packing and postage, making 16/6 in all. Since this is a non-profit-making production a deficit will exist until all the books have been sold, and it will be appreciated therefore if brethren who intend to order but have not already done so will send in their orders with remittance as soon as possible. Likewise will brethren who have already ordered books but have not yet paid for same, kindly send their remittance, stating clearly that this is for books already on order.

All orders and remittances MUST be addressed to Bro. G. E. Chilvers, The Haven, Oldbury Road, Hartshill, Nuneaton, cheques and money orders being made payable to Mr. G. E. Chilvers. In no circumstances may orders or remittances be sent to Welling.

Bro. J. T. Read

It is a pleasure to announce that Bro. J. T. Read, who last visited this country in 1948, is by the loving zeal of the Pastoral Bible Institute to make another visit to this country this year. Brother Read will arrive in the spring and stay until the autumn, and any class or group desiring a visit will be included in the itinerary if application is made as below. The British brethren will be responsible for our brother's expenses while in this country, and a committee to handle the arrangements has been formed. Applications for visits and gifts toward the expenses involved should all be sent to Bro. W. R. Walton, 2, Highland Road, Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwicks.

Second-hand Books

A large number of second hand books is available and lists will be sent to anyone who will apply for same.

From a Provincial Hospital

"Very many thanks for the Christmas Carol books, together with the enlightening booklets.

These booklets have been distributed amongst the Staff and on the wards, and I am sure that they will be of spiritual uplift to those who read them.

Our thanks again. Yours sincerely,—Matron".

Enough Carol books for all the patients, and a large parcel of our various booklets, went to this hospital in consequence of correspondence resulting from just a few of our publications being sent there in the first place. "Cast thy bread upon the waters . . ."

* * *

Free Books

There are a number of second-hand books on hand which will be gladly sent free of charge to anyone interested while they last, if the recipients will kindly pay the postage. Send at the rate of 6d. per book. Should anyone's application be received too late their sixpences will be put in the Tract Fund.

Revelation of Jesus Christ (Streeter, Vol. 1 only)
3 copies.

Desolations of the Sanctuary (Sadlack)

Seven Times Seven Postulates (Lorrett)

Finished Mystery

Harp of God

New Creation (Karatol, Fair, 3 copies)

Thy Kingdom Come (Karatol, Fair)

Battle of Armageddon (Karatol, Fair)

New Creation (Large size, Fair)

The Atonement (Large size, Fair)

Plan of the Ages (Large size, Fair)

* * *

Free Tract Fund

Donations to the Free Tract Fund are used as judiciously as possible in providing and dispensing suitable leaflets and booklets dealing with various aspects of our message. Our stock of tracts is at present very low, but we can supply at present "World Conversion—When?" "The Bible the Book for Today" and sets of "Two-minute Tracts" which cover sixteen separate Scriptural doctrines.

Gone from us

Sis. M. A. Bell (Brigg)

Bro. H. C. Thackway (London)

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



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

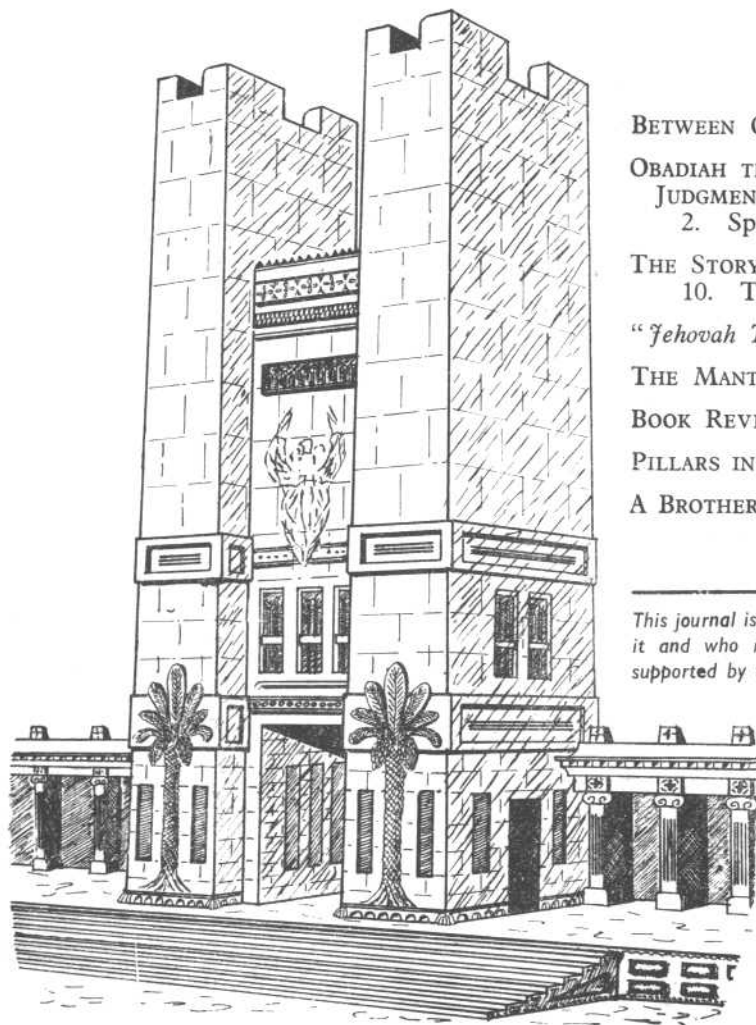
Vol. 32, No. 2

MARCH, 1955

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested.



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

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia.

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

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The Midlands brethren have been working very hard for a considerable time on the production of the new Tune Book, and now announce that it is ready. The book contains nearly 500 hymns, (words and music) including all those in the present "*Bible Students Hymnal*" together with those in the Christmas Supplement and a number of additional hymns such as "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and "Face to Face". The book contains 640 pages and is bound in blue cloth.

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* * *

London Convention

Arrangements are in hand for the 1955 London Convention, to be held as usual at Conway Hall during the August Bank holiday season, Saturday to Monday, July 30 to August 1. A very warm welcome is extended to all brethren to join in this season of fellowship and upbuilding. It is expected that Brother J. T. Read will address some of the sessions.

Programmes will be available in due course. In the meantime any information apart from accommodation matters may be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Applications for accommodation should be sent to the Accommodation Secretary, Brother V. Scott, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

It is very important that reservations for accommodation are made early in view of the heavy demand for hotel accommodation in London at that time. Will brethren please advise their requirements to Brother Scott as early as possible, and make every effort to do so at any rate before the end of June.

The hall will be florally decorated with such flowers as are given by the brethren.

Gone from us

Sis. Mead (*Leicester*)

Bro. Carl Luttichau (*Denmark*)

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

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

2.—SPIRITUAL EDMITES

What is the meaning of the Book of Obadiah to Christians in this Age, and particularly to those living in the end of the Age? The primary object of the prophecy was to declare Divine judgment on Edom for their enmity to, and betrayal of, their brother nation, Israel. The prophecy was fulfilled, so far as that object was concerned, during the century following the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. By the year 135 B.C., when John Hyrcanus, priest-king of the temporarily independent Jewish state, compelled the remaining Edomites to become proselytes to Judaism and crushed their last claims to separate nationhood, the last words of Obadiah had been literally fulfilled to the letter. Those who had escaped from Babylonian captivity ruled again from Mount Zion, and ruled what was left of the Mount of Esau. It is true that the kingdom was not the Lord's in the sense that we expect it to be when He has taken to Himself His great power to reign, but within the limited scope of the prophecy it was true enough. Judea was free from the foreign yoke, the Temple worship went on unmolested, and every true Jew looked with heightened expectation for the coming of Messiah. It requires only a moderate knowledge of the history of the years between Nehemiah and John the Baptist to realise that Obadiah's prophecy enjoyed an outward fulfilment during that period.

What then of its preservation into Christian times? Every word of God is given for admonition and instruction, that the man of God may be thoroughly instructed unto every good work. There is surely something more in this dramatic denunciation than a mere recapitulation of the doom which came upon an ungodly people, a doom which we can read about in secular history books anyway. There must be some instruction appropriate to we who live in this latter day of Divine judgment, whose conditions match so closely those of Israel in the days of Obadiah.

Strangely enough, it is the Rabbinical school of interpretation which gives us the clue. The Edomites, said the Rabbis of the First Century, prefigured all Christians everywhere. Edom prefigured Rome. The doom described in such bitter terms in the Book of Obadiah was to be fulfilled upon the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and Rome was to fall before Judaism, never to rise again.

The Rabbis spoke, of course, of all who named

the name of Christ, whether true or nominal professors. In that they were not quite right. Nothing of the denunciations in the Book of Obadiah could fittingly be applied to anyone who is in covenant relationship with God. None of those sweeping condemnations can relate to any true-hearted Christian any more than in Obadiah's own time they could be applied to any true son of Israel. But just as the Edomites were guilty of allying themselves with the nations of the world against their own blood-brothers the Jews, so have the "nominal" professors of Christianity, the ecclesiastical powers which have taken the name of Christ without partaking of His spirit, allied themselves with the nations of the world against their own blood-brothers the true disciples of Christ, the true members of the Church in the flesh. And these nominal professors, these apostate, worldly-minded ones, are the spiritual Edomites against whom the secondary fulfilment of this prophecy is directed.

During the greater part of this Age the true disciples of Christ have been in a condition which could properly be called a "Babylonian captivity." The powers of this world have persecuted, oppressed and martyred, or have ignored, slighted and humiliated, the Christians in their midst as they have from time to time seen fit. During all that time, except for the early centuries when Paganism was in the saddle, there has always been a so-called Christian power which was allied with the world and took sides with the world against the true Church. They are the Edomites upon whom the spiritual counterparts of Obadiah's judgments have descended and will yet descend.

Viewed in this light the whole book becomes charged with new meaning. It is the record of God's judgment upon "nominal Christendom," expressed in terms directly applicable to those who in an earlier age behaved in exactly the same way. And in order that there shall be no misunderstanding it is necessary at this point clearly to define terms and explain exactly what is intended to be conveyed by the expression "nominal Christendom".

It is not a name to be applied to the organisations and sects which constitute what is known as the Christian world. It is not any one or other of the great denominational groups. Nominal Christendom is the aggregate of nominal Christians everywhere, just as the true Church on earth is the aggregate of

all true disciples of Jesus wherever they may be found.

It is an admitted fact that no single sect contains all the members of the true Church. Their "names are written in Heaven" and only the Master knows just where they are to be found on earth, but we do know that they are likely to be in every sect and group and sometimes outside of all sects and groups. In like manner "nominal" Christians are also to be found in every sect and group, even in those which enjoy the clearest light on the Divine Plan. But just as it is true that the smallest and most insignificant of Christian groups usually contain the highest proportion of true disciples of Christ, chiefly because such groups have nothing of material advantage to offer the "nominal" professors, so it is equally true that the largest and most powerful sects usually contain the highest proportion of nominal Christians, because it is only in such circles that there can be obtained the worldly advantages which they seek.

These two classes, true Christians and nominal Christians, have existed side by side throughout the Age, just as the wheat and the tares in the parable of Matt. 13 grew together until the harvest. It is not difficult to pick out the respective individuals. "By their fruits ye shall know them". The Christianity of a true Christian is usually fairly obvious to his neighbours and companions. It is certainly obvious to his fellow-believers. The worldliness of a nominal Christian is more or less equally obvious—at least to one whose own life is devoted to Christ. Because the darkness hateth the light, because it is reproved by it, because its deeds are evil, the mass of nominal Christians usually display a thinly-concealed resentment, or on occasion open enmity, against true Christians. That resentment often leads such to take sides with the powers of this world against the disciples of Christ when conditions are such that conflict of some sort is inevitable. In that attitude they become spiritual Edomites.

Every ecclesiastic who places the glory and power of his position above his duties as a pastor, and uses it to obtain material advantage, is an Edomite. There were many such in past ages and there are still many to-day. Worthless shepherds, who leave the flock, they are called by the prophet Zechariah. Every man who takes the name of Christ upon his lips but in his heart is far from Him, is an Edomite. The unfaithful steward of Matt. 24, who beats his fellow-servants, and eats and drinks with the drunken, is an Edomite. The false teachers and seducers of the Pauline epistles are Edomites. Those amongst us who malign and vilify their fellow-brethren for supposed errors of doctrine or practice, and manifest anything but the spirit of Christ in their dealings with their fellows whom God has also received.

these too are Edomites, for this thing goes very deep. Like Paul, who knew that even if he understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, if he was without love, he was nothing, so we must keep very near to the spirit and teaching of our Master if we too are not to fall under this condemnation.

So the Book of Obadiah has a strong but very necessary message for us. It reveals to us the Divine attitude toward all who have taken His name upon their lips unworthily. It shows how He will vindicate His own people in due time and bring retribution upon their oppressors. It declares in no uncertain terms that God is guiding His people's destiny and that in His own due time deliverance will be their portion and destruction that of their enemies.

That does not mean eternal damnation for the nominal Christians. More than one sect to-day proclaims a message of no hope for all who do not accept the peculiar tenets of the particular sect. That is quite in line with the Spirit of the old creeds. "*This is the Catholick faith, which unless a man believe, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly*" says one of them. That is not God's design. The vindication of true Christian discipleship at the end of this Age ("*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their father*", Matt. 13. 43) is to be followed by the Millennial reign of Christ in which all who have never heard of Him or have never had His claims properly presented or have ignored Him or, like the Edomites, have fought against Him, will be subjected to the full force of the persuasive power of Divine love, and only then, as Paterson Smyth says in his "*Gospel of the Here-after*" will God, after having put his arms around the sinner and looked into the other's eyes with His own eyes of unutterable love, and been rejected, will He turn sorrowfully away and leave the sinner to the consequences of his sin.

It is in this light that we must read the prophecy. The doom of the Edomites is complete and final; but the House of Israel is at the last to rule over the House of Esau. The Edomites die as subjects of Esau but they reappear as subjects of Jacob. Edom shall be no more but its citizens shall know another and better rule. "*The kingdom shall be the Lord's*". In that there is promise for all, for in that kingdom there are to be Sodom, Gomorrah, Nineveh, all restored to their former estate and having part in the universal opportunity for salvation. That lies outside the scope of Obadiah's prophecy; he is concerned only with the immediate picture of judgment, and it is with that picture we are concerned also. And now we will look at Obadiah's message in detail.

(To be continued)

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 9—On the Mountains of Ararat.

Following the visits of the two pious Jews, Benjamin of Tudela and Rabbi Pethakiah, in the middle of the 12th century, and their description of Mount Judi, near the Tigris, as the place of the Ark's landing, less than a century elapsed before the next traveller put pen to paper and added his word of testimony. In the year 1253 William of Rubuquis, a Franciscan friar attached to the court of Louis IX of France, was despatched on a mission to the Mongolian potentates, Sartak and Mangu Khan. On his return from Asiatic Mongolia he passed through Western Asia and set sail from Tripoli on the Syrian coast for home. In his book—all travellers in those days wrote voluminous records of their journeys with little chance of any deviation from the truth being found out—he said that he passed by a great mountain called Massis, near the River Araxes, on which the Ark had rested. He added that this mountain was incapable of ascent by man, but that the fervent prayers of a pious monk who earnestly desired to behold the Ark with his own eyes were answered by an angel who, in refusing his request, brought him a piece of the wood of which the Ark had been built by way of consolation. William Rubuquis called this mountain "the mother of the world" which is reminiscent of the Babylonian name for Mount Nizir, "the mountain of the world", from which their ancestors were reputed to have come.

Travellers' ideas of geography in the Middle Ages were exceedingly vague, a perfectly understandable thing at a time when such maps as existed were crudely drawn and grossly inaccurate. The wonder is that men managed to find their way about the world at all. There are, however, two clues in the good monk's story—Massis, the name of the mountain, and Araxes, the name of the river at its foot. There is also the obvious fact that he would naturally travel by way of the "trade routes"—incipient roads used by traders' caravans and marching armies, the highways of the ancient world—as much as possible.

That is how he came to be passing through Syria and sailing from Tripoli. The great trade route of Asia, which existed from extremely early historic times, came through Asia from China, thence south of the Caspian Sea, to Tabriz in Persia, thence into Kurdistan under the flank of Mount Algurd—the Nizir of the Babylonians—along the valley of the Great Zab river to the Tigris, thence through Nineveh, the modern Mosul, up the Tigris to Geziret-ibn-Omar and then forty miles westward to Nisibis (modern Nisibin), on to Haran (where Abraham

lived until his father died) thence to the modern Aleppo in Syria, whence branches ran, one to Laiassus (now non-existent but near the present part of Alexandretta) and the other to Damascus, finally to the sea at Tripoli and Beirut. Following this route, the worthy friar, after leaving Mosul and approaching Nisibin, would be very near Mount Al Judi, which in his day still remained the reputed place of the Ark's landing. The classical name for the whole range of peaks between the town of Nisibis and Mount Al Judi was Masius, sufficiently like the friar's "Massis" to warrant conclusion that this was the locality he spoke about. The River Araxes (modern Khabur) flows from Masius to join the Euphrates. The identification is clear and offers evidence that William Rubuquis confirmed his predecessors' statements of a century previously.

Twenty years later Marco Polo, the famous Venetian traveller, passed over the same road but in the reverse direction. Landing at Laiassus he went through Aleppo, Nisibis and round the south side of the Caspian Sea on his way to China. Marco Polo is considered a careful and truthful writer, although his "*Book of Travels*" contains a good many inaccuracies which were probably quite unavoidable. His words are "*In the central part of Armenia stands an exceedingly large and high mountain, upon which, it is said, the Ark of Noah rested, and for this reason it is termed the mountain of the Ark. The circuit of its base cannot be compassed in less than two days. The ascent is impracticable on account of the snow towards the summit, which never melts, but goes on increasing by each successive fall*". It is most likely that Marco described the same mountain seen by his predecessor twenty years earlier; his route took him by the Masius range and near Al Judi, but certainly nowhere near the modern Mount Ararat.

That this range was called Masius from earliest times is evidenced by the statement of Strabo, the Greek geographer who lived at the same time as our Lord and who is the greatest authority of antiquity on the geography of the ancient world. He says (Strabo's "*Geography*" 20.12.8) "*The southern mountains on the other side of the Euphrates extending towards the east from Cappadocia and Commagene, at their commencement have the name of Taurus, which separates Armenia from Mesopotamia, but some writers call them the Gordyeon mountains. Among these is Mount Masius which is situated above Nisibis*". St. Jerome, the translator of the Bible into Latin—the Vulgate—says in his

commentary that "*Ararat is the plain of the middle Araxes which lies at the foot of the mountain Taurus*". Thus at all times up to the Middle Ages there is no hint that the mountain now known as Ararat was ever associated with the Ark.

It would seem that the spread of Christianity into Armenia proper gave the present Mount Ararat its opportunity. The native name of the mountain was Aghri Dag, meaning "the great mountain" and this is its official Turkish name to this day. The early Armenians called it "Macis" which is a name very similar to the "Masius" of the more southerly mountain. Near the Armenian Macis there is the Russian river Aras, flowing to its outlet at the Caspian Sea. The lower reaches of this river, near the sea, are called "Araxes" and were so called in ancient times. It is very possible that this coincidence and similarity of names first suggested to the Armenian Christians the idea—quite honestly held, perhaps—that this could be the mountain of the Ark. At any rate, some time in the Middle Ages a monastery made its appearance on the lower slopes of the mountain and the legend of St. Jacob made its debut upon the world.

St. Jacob was a monk who became the patriarch, an Armenian church bishop, of Nisibis about the year 320. He was a relative of the more famous St. Gregory who was the virtual founder of the Armenian church and its chief prelate between A.D. 302 and 331. This St. Jacob is the "pious monk" to whom William Rubuquis referred in A.D. 1253 when he recorded the account of his visit to Mount Masius and Nisibis. The entire legend is in the Armenian church chronicles, and it is to the effect that the worthy St. Jacob, being greatly desirous of beholding the Ark with his own eyes, essayed to climb the mountain several times. Each time he fell into a mysterious sleep when halfway up, and always awoke to find himself at the bottom again. At last an angel appeared to tell him that no mortal man might ever ascend the mountain to see the Ark, but as reward for his piety, the angel brought him a piece of wood from the Ark, which relic became the most treasured possession of the Armenian Church and was preserved in their principal cathedral, at least until quite recent times.

The fact that St. Jacob was patriarch of Nisibis connects him quite definitely with the district of Mounts Masius and Judi, but with the retreat of the Armenian Christians into Armenia proper before the advancing Mohammedans from Arabia it is perhaps not surprising that the tradition went with them and fastened itself upon a more convenient mountain in their new home—the present Mount Ararat. And here, about a century after Marco Polo's travels, the new claimant to the honour received an unexpected

advocate in no less a celebrity than the famous Sir John Maundeville.

"*The Voyages and Travels of Sir John Maundeville*" was published in French toward the end of the 14th century. The noble lord had travelled in every part of the known and unknown world and had seen many places and things which no other man had seen at that time, and quite a few which have never been seen at all, then or since. The book made a profound impression and is still regarded as one of the finest pieces of literature the Middle Ages produced. It has also, however, earned the generally agreed description of the "most wonderful literary forgery in the world". In short, the entire work was a fake. "Sir John Maundeville" never existed. The author of the "*Travels*" is now known to have been a French physician and naturalist named Jean d'Outremeuse and he conducted all his travels in an armchair at his Liege home, with the aid of a large library of books. Many of the famous legends of the Middle Ages owe their origin to "Sir John Maundeville's" mythical adventures.

Naturally, so renowned a traveller must perforce have something to say about so famous a spot as the landing place of the Ark, and therefore with his copious stock of legends and hazy ideas about geography to assist him, he evolved the following on the subject.

"From Trebizond men go to Armenia the great unto a city that is called Erzerum, that was wont to be a good city and a plenteous, but the Turks have greatly wasted it. From Erzerum men go to a hill that is called Sabiscolle, and there beside it is another hill that men call Ararat, but the Jews call it Tanis, where Noah's ship rested. And it is upon that mountain; and men may see it afar off in clear weather; and that mountain is above seven miles high. And some men say that they have seen and touched the ship, and put their fingers in the place where the Fiend went out when Noah said 'Benedicite'. But they that say such words say not the truth, for a man may not go up the mountain for great plenty of snow that is always on that mountain, neither summer nor winter, since the time of Noah, save a monk that by the grace of God brought one of the planks down that is in the monastery at the foot of the mountain. . . . And upon this mountain to go up that monk had great desire, and so upon a day he went up and when he was upward the third part of the mountain he was so weary that he might go no further. And so he rested him and went to sleep. And when he awoke he found himself lying at the foot of the mountain. And then he prayed devoutly to God that he would vouchsafe to suffer him to go up. And an angel came to him and said that he should go up, and so he did. And

since that time never one. Wherefore men should not believe such words”.

The final comment appears the most apt.

Erzertum is 170 miles from Mount Ararat and 190 miles from Mount Judi or Mount Masius, so that the mythical Sir John Maunderville could equally well have referred to either. By the 14th century, however, the original Christian monastery at the foot of Mount Judi was no longer there—it was destroyed in A.D. 776—and the area was under Moslem rule anyway, whilst the monastery of St. Jacob at the foot of Mount Ararat was now in existence and flourishing in the middle of a Christian land. Hence for the first time the Western world became really acquainted with the claims of Mount Ararat.

The monastery of St. Jacob remained until the year 1840 when it was destroyed with all its inmates by the great Ararat earthquake of that year. During its long existence of more than five hundred years it kept the claim alive. The precious relic allegedly given to St. Jacob by the angel a thousand years earlier was safely housed in the Armenian cathedral of Etschmiadzen, near Erivan, forty miles from Ararat, where it was seen by Dr. Parrott in 1829 when he visited Armenia to search for the Ark. At least the authorities assured Dr. Parrott that it was the original piece, but perhaps Sir John Maunderville's closing remark above quoted ought still to be borne in mind.

As evidence that as late as the end of the 17th

century the claims of Mount Ararat had not taken serious root in Western minds the words of William Whiston may be quoted. In his learned book published in 1696 dealing with the problems of Creation and the Flood and their connection with science he says “*The Ark rested on one of the Gordyeen mountains, which separate Armenia from Mesopotamia and Assyria. This is the commonly received opinion, from which at present I see no reason to recede.*” (Whiston, “*New Theory of the Earth*”, 1696.) Whiston was a leading scientist of his day and his statement is sufficient assurance that the district around Masius and Judi, or eastward to Algurd, which together constitute the Gordyeen mountains, was at that time accepted as the Biblical Ararat by people in general. That confines general acceptance of Armenian Ararat to within the last two hundred years.

Be that as it may, since the 14th century Mount Ararat in Armenia has slowly built up its claims in Western European minds—and consequently in those of America also—as the place where the Ark rested. The Eastern world still supports the claims of Mount Judi. But since Mount Judi has been under Moslem political control for the past thousand years and still so remains, there has been no urge to explore it. Christian interest has fastened itself upon Mount Ararat and since the 18th century there have been repeated attempts to find out whether there “really is anything up there”. A brief sketch of those attempts will be given next month.

“JEHOVAH TSIDKENU”

I once was a stranger to grace and to God,
I knew not my danger, and felt not my load,
Though friends spoke in rapture of Christ on the tree,

“Jehovah Tsidkenu” was nothing to me.

I oft read with pleasure, to soothe or engage,
Isaiah's wild measure, and John's simple page,
But e'en when they pictured the blood-sprinkled tree,
“Jehovah Tsidkenu” seemed nothing to me.

Like tears from the daughters of Zion that roll,
I wept when the waters went over His soul,
Yet thought not that my sins had nailed to the tree,
“Jehovah Tsidkenu”—’twas nothing to me!

When free grace awoke me, with light from on high,
Then legal fears shook me, I trembled to die,
No refuge, no safety, in self could I see,
“Jehovah Tsidkenu” my Saviour must be.

My terrors all vanished before the sweet Name,
My guilty fears banished, with boldness I came
To drink at the fountain, life-giving and free,
“Jehovah Tsidkenu” was all things to me.

Jehovah Tsidkenu ! my treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu ! I ne'er can be lost ;
In Thee I shall conquer, by flood and by field,
My cable, my anchor, my breastplate and shield.

(Robert Murray McCheyne, 1834.)

The “Way of the Cross,” beloved, lies through the doors of your own dwelling place and makes the space within its walls, a suburb of Heaven itself. The mighty courts of Heaven and your own little cot are linked together in the greatest work of all time, if so be His Will is done in your heart.

THE MANTLE OF SAMUEL

*Reflections for
to-day*

He was the last of the Judges and one of the greatest law-givers and administrators God raised up for Israel. He came to the nation at a time of crisis and the nation took him to its heart. He served his people well and faithfully but at the end they rejected him in favour of a king who oppressed and betrayed them. During Samuel's span of power he brought his people back to God and lifted them to the heights of faith; before he died he saw them in grievous apostasy and once more under the sovereignty of their enemies. In his life he ruled the nation but at the end he was gathered to his fathers in obscurity. Yet he lit a torch that was never put out; he spent his last years teaching a handful of youngsters who continued in the spirit of his life after that life was spent. He passed on the torch; and in after years the work of Samuel blossomed and bloomed afresh.

We do well to heed the story of this man's life. We too hold a Torch, a torch of Truth which it is our duty to hold aloft while we live, and when our failing hands can carry it no longer, to pass it on to younger and eager hands outstretched to receive it. This Truth we hold as a stewardship is not ours alone; it was passed to us from those of old time as a heritage to be guarded and amplified and passed on to our successors. The work of God goes on in generation after generation, and nothing that we have is ours selfishly to enjoy and cast to the ground when the time comes that we can possess it no longer.

There is a strong parallel in our own time to the early days of Samuel. Once again the lamp has burned low in the Temple of God, and Eli has gone to sleep. Once again the people are sorely in need of instruction and guidance. Once again the word of the Lord has come to some who have been ready to give up all worldly interests and aims in order to serve God in His Temple and await His word, and once again such have gone forth into the world with the message of salvation and have done a work such as the world had not seen for many generations. Temporarily, it may be, but none the less definitely, the enemies of righteousness have been checked and the Truth made known to the people.

But Samuel in his turn has become old and the glories of past days are slipping away. Who is to take the torch? Upon whom is the mantle of

Samuel to descend, and continue the proclamation of this glorious Truth in the world of men? For there is still a message to proclaim. Those who are disappointed or, maybe, perplexed, because the ending of the Age and the establishment of the Kingdom have not come at so early a date as they may have expected must not lose faith. The Plan of God is still being wrought out on time. The fact that we are not able correctly to discern the time makes no difference to that. And in times of uncertainty we do well to study the lives of those ancient stalwarts who, with so much more limited knowledge, must have found the purposes of God an even greater enigma than we do ourselves, and yet triumphed in faith and completed their course with joy.

Samuel was a leader and a prophet, a man of action and vision, utterly and completely consecrated and surrendered to the service of God. That was the secret of his success and that is the secret we have to know if we also would remain steadfast to the end. He went about his work with the serene confidence of a man who habitually walked with God and knew without a shadow of doubt that the work he was doing was God's work. In that confidence was the driving force behind the work he did.

There are many examples in the Old Testament of such men who gained "a good report through faith". Daniel, Isaiah, Nehemiah, John the Baptist, were all men of action, vigorous, positive action, but they were all visionaries. While their hands were set to the plough their eyes were fixed on the heavens, and there they saw visions of God. It is a noteworthy fact that so many of these men pledged their lives to God in their early youth and were almost immediately called to serve Him. That should be a pointer to us, not to despise the aspirations of our younger brethren after effective service for their Lord, but rather to realise the immense potentialities in a young life fully surrendered at so early a stage, and to do all in our power to assist it. There is more than a passing fitness in our Lord's reference to new wine and old wineskins in this connection. It is quite possible that some among the younger generation can receive and assimilate some elements of unfolding Truth peculiar to this generation which most of the older ones could never accept and are not expected by our understanding, all-wise Lord to accept. In such a case it is clearly

the bounden duty of the older ones to view with tolerant understanding the endeavours of those who must perforce tread a somewhat different path because they live in a somewhat different world.

The life of Samuel was a hard life; his victories were not easily won. That he was able at the end to turn his back upon all that his prowess had won him and live contentedly teaching his handful of students in a quiet country retreat says much for his strength of character. But then, Samuel knew something of the end from the beginning. He knew that all his mighty works, wrought in the heyday of his physical maturity, must be as nothing compared to the spiritual legacy he must leave behind him if he was to be truly faithful. And with nearly all of Israel apostate from the faith and most of his life's work already in ruins he knew full well that in the hearts and minds of those few "sons of the prophets" reposed the real hope of the future. So he taught them in the same serenity of mind in which he had once led Israel against the Philistine hosts, and conquered, without any weapons save his faith, and his people's faith in God.

The story of Israel's varied fortunes in their many wars with the Philistines in Samuel's day is an object lesson in itself. It was when Samuel was quite young and still attendant on the High Priest Eli that the great disaster came. Israel lost her greatest glory, the Ark of the Covenant. The word of Samuel had already begun to go out to Israel, but quite evidently as yet there was no real heed being given, and when the fortunes of war began to go against Israel they gave way to superstitious beliefs and took the Ark into battle with them in the hope that God would not suffer the indignity of losing the symbol of His presence into the hands of the unbelievers. But God did; can there be a more telling example of the utter disregard the Most High has for form and ceremony? If Israel no longer had faith in Him, the sacred Ark was no longer a symbol of any value, and its capture by the Philistines a matter of indifference to Him. So the first Philistine war ended in disaster for Israel, the death of Eli, last High Priest of the line of Ithamar, and twenty years of utter hopelessness and dejection on the part of the people of the Lord.

It was during that twenty years that Samuel came into his own. With the death of Eli he stepped into the place of authority, and although he could not be invested with the dignity of High Priest, he was in practice both sacred and secular ruler of the people.

One wonders why the Ark of the Covenant was not restored to its place after its recovery from the Philistines. According to I Sam. 6 and 7 it was in the Philistines' land only seven months but after

its recovery it remained in the house of Abinadab of Kirjath-jearim until the reign of King David. It is probable that the Philistines destroyed Shiloh, where the Tabernacle stood in the days of Eli, after the capture of the Ark, and with there being no officiating High Priest and Israel as often as not under the heel of alien powers, it seems that the Tabernacle service, together with the Day of Atonement sacrifices, fell into disuse for a considerable number of years. That was the price the people paid for their presumption in taking the Ark of God into battle before them as though it itself had power to deliver.

The "twenty years" of I Sam. 7. 2 cannot be the time the Ark was at Kirjath-jearim for that is altogether too short a period to extend to David's reign. It seems more reasonable that it betokens the period during which the people languished under Divine disfavour and gradually, under Samuel's leadership, awakened to a sense of their apostasy and undone condition. So at the end they returned to the Lord and I Sam. 7 is the account of their return. That provoked the second Philistine war. And the change in the hearts of the children of Israel was remarkable. The same enemy; the same invasion; the same threat; but this time there was no suggestion of taking the Ark before them into battle. They had learned their lesson. This time they said to Samuel (vs. 8) "*Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines*".

And, of course, God heard. The Philistines were routed without Israel having to lift a finger in their own defence. Samuel offered a burnt offering, and Samuel cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him. That was all. It was on this occasion that Samuel set a great stone and called it "*Eben-ezer*", signifying "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*", and gave us thereby a word and a theme that we have used constantly for each other's comfort and encouragement in these later years.

Samuel was now an old man. The time had come for his mantle to fall on other shoulders. The people loved and respected Samuel, but they wanted a king. "They have not rejected thee" said the Most High to his faithful servant "but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them." So Samuel anointed the young man Saul, and saw his own authority pass to the man of Israel's choice. He saw the man prove unworthy of the anointing and heard the Divine sentence of rejection. Therefore in the fulness of time he anointed another young man, one after God's own heart, the youth David. He was not destined to see David king. Samuel finished his days at length with his own life-work completed but God's work in the nation still unfinished. But he

passed on his mantle to those young hearts who surrounded his death bed.

Perhaps that is one great lesson we all have to learn. Though we live a hundred years twice told, we can do no more than finish our own life's work. The work of God in the world will still remain unfinished and will still be going on. We may, each of us, make our individual contribution toward that work and the contribution we have made, be it great or small, will have made some difference to God's

great work. We shall have been co-workers together with Him. But after our own little time of activity is ended and we take our own place among the "great cloud of witnesses" there will be others to continue the work and play their part too in the accomplishment of the Divine Plan. God grant that we individually may be faithful to our calling and before our own end comes pass the flaming torch to one younger and newer in the race who is waiting to pick it up and follow in the path which we have trod.

BOOK REVIEWS

"Creation's Amazing Architect" (Beasley) Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 157 pp., 8/6d. Postage 6d. extra.

This is a most unique book on the subject of Genesis and Creation. It is written by a qualified man, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and President of the Australian Institute of Archeology, but it is not a learned book; it is not couched in scientific language; it does not use long and unusual words, and it needs no previous education in science to understand it. The book has evidently been written to make these things plain to every type of reader, and it deserves to succeed.

The author takes the first chapter of Genesis—the six creative days—and in a series of concisely written chapters compares it with the successive epochs of the earth's development, from the time when the "earth was without form, and void" to the creation of man. Time after time he refers to conclusions and pronouncements of scientists of all ages, and shows how the Bible has anticipated many of the latest discoveries of learned men in this field. He takes text after text from various parts of the Scriptures to show how the Holy Spirit leaves casual allusions here and there to give evidence of a more than human knowledge in the compilation of the Bible. The language employed throughout the book is simple and straightforward, and as an additional aid to understanding almost every page has little diagrams and pictures to illustrate what is said.

Hence, the book is equally understandable by young and old. It is not a scholarly treatise; it is not a work of reference; it is an everyday account of the marvels that are so briefly summed up in the story of creation in the Bible and it should be most useful put in the hands of anyone who finds it difficult to reconcile the physical evidences as to the earth's past history with the idea of a definite creative process carried on by an all-wise and all-powerful Creator.

"The Book of the Acts" (Bruce) Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 555 pp. Index. 25/-, Postage 2/- extra.

This volume is one in the series collectively known as the New London Commentary on the New Testament, and the author is Head of the Department of Biblical History and Literature in the University of Sheffield, and Editor of the "*Evangelical Quarterly*". The book is a remarkably complete, informative and well documented commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. It is essentially a book for students—every page has a wealth of footnotes and there are three indices at the end, an index of chief persons, places and subjects, corresponding to an ordinary book index; an index of authors quoted throughout the work; and an index of Scripture references. There is a refreshing freedom from "sermonising" and although the exposition runs to more than 500 pages, interest is well maintained throughout.

PUBLICATIONS—Post free.

BOOKLETS

The Golden Future Tells of the setting up of Christ's kingdom on earth.

40 pp. 6 for 2/- (30c.); 100 for 25/- (\$4.00).

The Millennial Gospel of Jesus New Testament teaching concerning the Millennium.

40 pp. 6 for 3/- (50c.); 100 for 40/- (\$6.00).

A Material Paradise. Outline of Divine purpose for the earth. 24 pp. 12 for 3/- (50c.); 100 for 20/- (\$3.00).

A Glimpse of God's Plans. Brief summary of the Divine Plan. 16 pp. 12 for 1/6 (25c.); 100 for 11/- (\$1.50).

God's Fulfilling Purpose. A 20-page quarto size magazine tracing the progress of the Divine Plan from Creation to Restitution, taking as its central theme the Abrahamic Promise. 6 for 3/- (50c.), 100 for 40/- (\$6.00).

BOOKS FOR STUDENTS

Standard Revised Version. Rexine, 8½" x 6½" x 1½". 39/- (\$5.50).

Weymouth. New Testament, modern English, 7½" x 5". 9/6 (\$1.50).

Ferrar Fenton. Complete Bible in modern English. 31/- (\$4.50).

Septuagint. Greek and English. 32/- (\$4.75).

PILLARS IN THE TEMPLE

*A call to stability
and maturity*

There is a wealth of natural illustration in the Scriptures, using objects familiar to the natural eye to convey to the new mind an understanding of spiritual things.

Among these is the Temple, used in both the Old and the New Testaments to portray the dwelling place of God in the future, when He will dwell with men, when He Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

In Rev. 3. 12 the promise is that the overcomers shall be pillars in that Temple, and in considering just this one detail of the larger picture we find much that is calculated to assist the overcomer in this day of preparation.

The first essential quality of a pillar is strength, for, although pillars are ornamental, their real purpose is to support some important part of the structure in which they are used. Before going on to consider this quality of strength we must first take note that the strongest pillar would be of little use unless erected on an even stronger foundation. There is no need for us to dwell upon the foundation upon which we, as overcomers, are being founded, for in Matt. 16. 18 our Lord Himself tells us what it is. It is upon the great truth that Jesus is the Christ that we have any standing at all. Paul's statement in Eph. 2. 20 that we are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets is quite in harmony with our Lord's statement, as is his further declaration in 2 Tim. 2. 19: "*The foundation of God standeth, having this seal, 'The Lord hath acknowledged them who are his'.*" (Roth.)

Having been placed upon this sure foundation, and being thus "acknowledged" by God, how are we to gain that strength which is required in pillars?

Moses, in his triumph song, proclaimed that the Lord was his strength and song, and this theme is echoed and re-echoed throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Yes, the Lord is the source of all spiritual strength, but how does He impart this strength to His people? It is not conveyed through some mystic channel to those who merely ask for it; rather is it developed as a living, vital force in all those, who, having heard the call to become sons of God, are being dealt with as spiritual children of a loving Father.

The means used to develop this quality of strength are the lessons and experiences which God permits to come to those whom He is preparing to be pillars in His holy habitation. In the natural world materials possess various kinds of strength, e.g., tensile

strength, or the ability to sustain stretching or straining; compressive strength, or the ability to sustain pressure or crushing; shear strength, or the ability to resist a cutting action; and impact strength, or the ability to withstand a sudden blow. It requires but little thought to realise that we may need some or even all of these qualities if we are to be overcomers. The straining of earthly ties or relationships, crushing loads of anguish or distress, temptations to cut ourselves off from fellowships (so essential in these last days, Heb. 10. 25), or sudden blows, shattering to our faith, may be our portion. Fiery trials, and the wearing influence of constant contact with the world, all combine to destroy our faith and must be resisted.

The illustration of the mason, at work with hammer and chisel upon the stones, is familiar to us all, and applied to the pillars is well summed up in the words we sometimes sing:—

"The temple stones God now prepares, oft cry 'you hurt me sore'.

The Sculptor seeks their perfectness, and trims them more and more—

Until by dint of strokes and blows the shapeless mass appears,

Symmetric, polished, beautiful, to stand the eternal years."

In modern times this method of making pillars has been largely superseded by a different method, which, we feel, more aptly illustrates the development of that strength so necessary in the pillars of the Temple. In this process, steel and concrete, two entirely dissimilar materials, are used to form the exceedingly strong pillars, or piers, as they are more commonly known, which are used in the buildings of to-day. Without going into details we should just like to point out that each material has quite a different form of strength, and that they are so arranged that the particular strength of each material is used to the best advantage, eliminating weaknesses which would exist if either were used alone. Bearing this brief outline in mind, let us turn to Isa. 30. 15, where the Holy One of Israel, God Himself, says "*In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength*". Here we have two qualities of character, each in themselves strong, and of an entirely different type, but which COMBINED do give great strength of character to those in whom they are developed.

For instance, Peter was very confident when he said he would die rather than deny the Lord, and he had confidence of a sort when he walked upon the

water to meet the Lord, but in each case confidence was born of impetuosity, but in later years, after many hardly-learned lessons, Peter manifested a QUIET confidence vastly different from that which previously revealed his weakness. Quietness is defined as stillness, repose, silence. These all suggest immobility or stability, and remind us of Paul's exhortation in 1 Cor. 15. 54: "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable".

But conditions are not always conducive to stillness and repose. Sometimes the affairs of life are very tumultuous, even frightening. In spite of the many promises in the Word, we may sometimes feel as did David when he cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from saving me, and from the words of my loud complaint? O my God, I call in the daytime, but thou answerest not, and in the night I find no rest" (Psa. 22. 1 and 2 *Leeser*). But the very experience which wrings such a cry from us is sent that we might develop that quietness which gives strength; under such conditions we must wait (be silent) before the Lord, and thus learn, BY EXPERIENCE, that they that wait upon the Lord shall "acquire new strength" (*Leeser*). Whilst thus waiting before the Lord, we may hear Him, in the stillness, asking:—

*"When I to thy pleadings seem no heed to pay,
And thy foes grow bolder—claim thee as their prey;
Tho' towards thee I'm silent, wilt thou stand the test?
"On my word of promise lay thee down and
REST?"*

If we can answer "yes", we shall again say with David, "It is lovely to me that the Lord heareth my voice, my supplications. For he hath inclined his ear unto me; therefore throughout all my days will I call on him . . . Return, O my soul, unto thy rest, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psa. 116; 1, 2 and 7 *Leeser*).

Even so, we may find it difficult, in affliction of body or of mind, to wait patiently before the Lord; if so, we should do well to consider Lamentations, Chapter 3. For the first 20 verses Jeremiah dwells upon all the calamities that may befall the faithful, but in verses 21 to 23 a complete change takes place. He continues: "This will I bring back to my heart, therefore will I hope. The loving kindnesses of YAHWEH, verily, THEY ARE NOT EXHAUSTED. Verily; not at an end are His COMPASSIONS: New things for the mornings! Abundant is THY faithfulness" (*Rotherham*). Many, indeed, are the afflictions of the righteous, but, as Jeremiah continues (verse 33): "For He (God) doth not afflict His children willingly" (from His heart, of His own will). So we may ask, why does God

afflict us at all? The answer is found in Heb. 12. 10.

"For they, indeed, for a few days chastised us as seemed good to them; but He FOR OUR PROFIT, that we might be PARTAKERS OF HIS HOLINESS".

Quietness is also defined as "peace of mind, seclusion, freedom from disturbance, or alarm". Only those who are hidden in the seclusion of the shadow of the Almighty can find complete peace of mind. And only those who are trusting in all the promises of the Word can be free from disturbance or alarm.

*O, blessed peace of a perfect trust
That looks away from all;
That sees Thy hand in everything,
In great events or small;
That hears Thy voice—a Father's voice—
Directing for the best;
O blessed peace of a perfect trust,
A heart with Thee at REST!*

If under all the varying circumstances of life we have that quietness which comes with such a perfect trust we are blessed indeed, but even as in the natural picture the concrete is not sufficient of itself, so this quietness needs to be coupled with and supported by confidence.

To be confident is to be positive—bold. How are we to attain this quality? Once again we look to the Lord, this time as the source of our confidence. The wise man says (Prov. 3. 26): "For the Lord will be thy confidence", and in Prov. 14. 26 he shows us how, for he says: "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence". What is fear? Again the wise man says: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil" (Prov. 8. 13). David says (Psa. 5. 7): "In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple". So "fear" may be summed up as that attitude towards God which urges us to a life of sanctification and holiness (II Cor. 7. 1). But how does reverence bring confidence? Reverence engenders faith, and faith brings confidence. Abram and Job are outstanding examples of this, but we have only the space to dwell but for a moment upon these two stalwarts of faith; but to demonstrate how reverence engenders faith we have only to consider one incident in the life of Abram.

In Gen. 22 is recorded the familiar story of Abram offering Isaac on the altar. As Abram was about to slay the son of promise, the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven and said: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad . . . for now I know that thou FEAREST God." Did reverence bring confidence? It is recorded of Abram that "in utterly hopeless circumstances he hopefully believed" (Rom. 4. 18, *Weymouth*).

Job is described as a man who feared God and eschewed evil. But Satan said to God: "Doth God fear thee for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? . . . But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Did reverence for God bring confidence to Job? After all the bitterness and sorrow which he suffered he said: "Though He slay me, yet will I TRUST Him," and "He knoweth the way that I take, when He hath tried me, I SHALL come forth as gold".

Many are the promises to those who reverence God; let us note just one or two in passing. Psalms 25. 14: "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*". Psalm 33. 18: "*The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him*". Psalm 34. 7: "*The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him*". These, and many others, do, if accepted by faith, become a real basis for confidence, and are well summed up in Ecclesiastes 8. 12: "It shall be well with them that fear God".

The writer to the Hebrews says (3. 6 and 14, *Moffatt*): "Now are we this house of God (Temple) if we only keep confident and proud of our hope. For we only participate in Christ provided we keep firm to the very end the CONFIDENCE WITH WHICH WE STARTED". Looking back to the time when we started out on our pilgrimage, we may recall the enthusiasm and the confidence with which we started; but, we ask, is that confidence maintained? Even as in the natural picture each material needs the support of the other, so we, if we are going to maintain our confidence to the very end, shall need to combine with it that quietness which is developed by completely trusting in our Father in every experience. In these last days, however, it is most essential that our confidence is rightly placed, for the Scriptures warn us that if it were possible even the very elect would be deceived.

In Isaiah 30, preceding the verse we are considering, the Israelites are censured because they have just put their trust in the horses of Egypt, and in the next chapter (13. 1) the prophet says "Woe unto them that go down to Egypt and stay on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many; and in horsemen because they are very strong". Then in verse 3 he continues: "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit". We believe that horses are symbols of doctrine, and in these last days we discern many strange horses, being driven by strong riders (teachers) in fine chariots. There are those who seem to be putting their trust in these horses and their riders, but we know of only one rider (teacher) in whom we should, and do, have complete confidence. In Psalm 104. 3 and 4 we read

that the Lord maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind: He maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flaming fire. Bearing this in mind, we turn to Matt. 24. 30 and 31: "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, when they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and he shall send his angels (spirits) . . . and they shall gather together his elect from one extremity of the world to the other".

We believe that the clouds of trouble over the earth to-day are indeed the very chariot in which our Lord is returning in triumph, and that He is indeed walking on the wings of the wind of adversity—that wind which is causing "the earth to be removed, and the mountains to be carried into the midst of the sea" (Psalms 46).

So we look up and rejoice, knowing that, while all the tribes of the earth mourn, our Lord is gathering to Himself all those who have made a covenant by sacrifice, that He might make them pillars in the Temple.

But, someone may say, I believe all this, and am quietly waiting before the Lord and have confidence in Him, yet I am still conscious of my own weakness. Hebrews 11. 34 (*Moffatt*) speaks of those who "from weakness won strength". Likewise, Paul said: "When I am weak then am I strong", yet he asked the Lord to remove his weakness (thorn in the flesh), but God's reply was: "My grace suffices for you, for POWER MATURES IN WEAKNESS" (*Weymouth*). Power (strength) did mature in Paul, but not before he came to the full realisation of his own weakness, and learned, from experience, that he could put his whole confidence and trust in God. So with us, it is well that we feel our own weakness, providing always that we have learned that confidence in God, through Christ, and quiet waiting before Him will enable us to become pillars of strength.

We may have to wait long and patiently, but even as in the natural picture the pillar cannot take its load until it has matured, so we must, even after we have attained a high standard of strength, stand in this evil day, and, having done all, to continue to stand, so that in the final test we may prove worthy to take our place as a pillar in God's eternal habitation.

But strength is not the only quality to be found in the Temple pillars: beauty, too, will surely be seen in every saint who is elevated to this greatest of all honours.

Beauty and strength are not always combined. So often, in the natural world, strength goes hand in hand with tyranny and brutality, but in Jesus, our example, beauty and strength were combined to such

a degree that as He stood before His accusers Pilate marvelled, and was constrained to exclaim: "Behold—the man". It was the power of the Holy Spirit, with which our Lord was filled, that was made manifest in the beauty of holiness which crowned His earthly ministry; so we, as we are filled with the same spirit, must develop the fruits thereof as we

become stronger and stronger, so that, as power is matured in us, we may attain that growth in holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

Then, when all the straining, the testing and the waiting shall be over, we shall be fitted for service above as pillars in God's Holy Habitation.

A BROTHER IN ADVERSITY *An incident in the life of St. Paul*

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

And though Paul calls them all light afflictions, lasting but a moment, one soon comes to realise that only a man built of moral granite and steel could have endured them. He endured sufferings and privations which would have chilled the ardour and extinguished the love of probably ninety-nine out of every hundred men. We have only to read the scrap of his own autobiography as recorded in 2 Cor. 11. 22-33, to realise how full his life was, at all times of threatening danger and menacing death. All this extensive catalogue of suffering is omitted from the account of his life in the Acts, and much of it had been experienced before he appeared on the scene as the general evangelist to the nations. It is an amazing record, and would make a heartening study to take this catalogue clause by clause and seek to bring out some aspects of the hardships which the narrative records. Five whippings by the Jewish lash, three beatings by the Roman rod, three times wrecked at sea and at the mercy of the waves (this, remember, does not include the story told in Acts 27), added to which were perils from both stranger and his own kin; limping footsore over wilderness track or fording with danger some river in spate; travelling from place to place, ill-clothed, cold, hungry and athirst; chased by open foes or betrayed by false friends—these are the things that fell to him every day and at every turn of the road. Something of the fiery ardour of soul, which carried him through all this suffering is shown by his reactions and responses to the frequent warnings on his way up to Jerusalem for the last time. "... behold I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem not knowing the things that shall befall me there; save that the Holy Spirit testifieth unto me in every city, saying that bonds

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

At a later stage of his journey a man with a gift of prophecy apprised Paul of the dangers awaiting in Jerusalem, illustrating with Paul's own girdle, how he would be bound hand and foot, "So shall the Jews of Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21. 10-12). Sorrowing friends besought him not to proceed further on his way, but to tarry at Caesarea, or turn aside to some other less dangerous field of service. "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus". And when he would not be persuaded we ceased, saying, "The Will of the Lord be done".

Here is an example of unwavering resolution akin to that which dominated the heart of Jesus as He too went up to Jerusalem for the last time (Mark 10. 32-34). Knowing what awaited Him, some of the disciples were afraid, inasmuch that they marvelled at Him stepping resolutely ahead of them. Jesus knew the supreme hour of his earthly life was near, and fortified by the approval of His Father, He went unflinching along to meet it, and . . . His doom!

It requires the courage of complete conviction to do this. There must be the unwavering assurance within the heart and mind that the intended step is

according to the Will of God, and that God will be with His servant right through to the end of the Way. Only thus assured and fortified will men step calmly and quietly into the arms of death. This is the martyr's courage and not the worked-up courage of the battlefield, and comes only from the presence of God in the soul.

That calmly heroic attitude is only one aspect of Paul's many-sided make-up. He could face danger better than suspense and uncertainty. He could stand before false brethren or hostile foe better than the unknown reception. This shows us that this 'Great-heart' was a man, much as we are ourselves.

Our text shows him arrived in Italy and on the last stage of the journey to Rome. For two years he had been under arrest at Caesarea, subject to the whims and caprice of the Roman governors there.

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

For many years he had looked forward to seeing Rome, but he had not then thought of entering it bound by a chain. In the prosecution of his commission Paul had thought of entering Rome, perhaps as the last stronghold of the enemies of the Lord. Years ago he had sent to them the announcement of his intention "I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1. 16).

Now, however, when the ordering of his circumstances actually found him nearing Rome, and as he thought of the abject condition in which he was making his approach—an old weather-beaten, grey-haired broken man; a chained prisoner recently escaped from the sea, his heart was heavy within him, and though he had found some friends by the way, he wondered what the brethren of Rome would think and say and do!

As he approached the waiting groups his quick sensitive eye searched their faces, if haply he might read thereby the attitude of their hearts. Strong and self-reliant as he was at other times and in other places, yet he was also exceedingly sensitive to human sympathy, and in these little groups of brethren he found what he sought. Their greetings and welcome were such, that, despite his chain, and the fatiguing nature of his journey thus far, his spirit rose out of its slough of despond and he thanked God and took fresh courage. This welcome restored him to his wonted confidence and helped him to regain the optimism of which he wrote to them years before. His heart began to swell again with hope of achievement in Rome despite the chain, for he knew that he carried in his heart and mind the force and power that could win human hearts even in that proud imperial city.

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

Do we not often find ourselves there, beloved in the Lord? Nothing on earth would make us deny or prove faithless to the Lord, but oh! how we tremble at what the brethren will say!

Well, a great-heart giant in the Lord trod that self-same way, and found new heart of grace for the bigger thing in life, because he found the look and touch of sympathy in his brethren's eye and hand.

This little episode affords a source of comfort to those who are little in their own eyes and who know with considerable frequency, what it is to feel discouraged by the way. If a man of Paul's stature in Christ—a man in constant communion with his Lord—could feel the bitter effects of adversity, and sink down to zero (or below) there is no need for shame or blame if a more immature follower of the Lord

finds himself or herself sinking beneath the load of care. It is not the fact that we sink at times that matter most, but that, like Paul, we can rise again at a touch of Providence and take new courage and press on again.

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

It is possible for any one of us to be like Paul—a prisoner of circumstance. The bonds that bind us may not be forged of cold steel, nor is it necessary for us to be undertaking a journey, like Paul, under compulsion. Some peculiar phase of life, linking us to an uncongenial environment may be our chain, some dominating circumstance beyond our control may have us captive in its train as we move forward to some crisis in our life, and for the time, circumstance proves too much for us, and the spirit sinks and courage fails. A depressed heart magnifies the burden out of its proportion, till it seems to fill both heaven and earth, with no way out to escape its crushing weight. Again, we say it might be any one of us, you, good Brother; you, dear Sister. No one is immune from such circumstance while living in this evil world.

We may not say these things are exactly orderings of Providence in every case, but always, when not Heaven-sent, they are the permissions of that Supervising power. There are secondary as well as first causes in operation in and around us, and unrighteous forces as well as the heavenly messengers may be serving the purpose of Divine Wisdom in the distressing and over-bearing circumstance. But God, the All-merciful and All-wise is watching, and when we have sunk deep into what may seem a bottomless pit, we come to our "Three Taverns" and "Appii Forums".

The smiling welcome from the brethren from Rome was a providence of God for Paul. The smile and welcome were the product of the spirit of God, long active in their lives. It was none the less a Providence because the love of the brethren is a fruit of that indwelling Spirit.

That brings in the other side—the brethren's side of this little episode. The news that Paul was nearing Rome could have left the brethren unconcerned. "What is that to us?" they could have said, "he should have been more careful and discreet in word and act, and not have brought this trouble on himself". Reasons in abundance for withholding help or comfort could have been found, and Paul could have been left to enter Rome a dejected prisoner, unwelcome and unesteemed.

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

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

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

"The Sin-Offering and the Covenants"

This is the title of a well-produced booklet which, by the loving zeal of our brethren in Jersey City, U.S.A., the "Bible Harmony Truth Associates", we are able to offer free of charge to anyone in this country who is interested and will ask for same. The foreword states that the contents of the book are taken entirely from the report of a "Question Meeting" on the subject conducted by C. T. Russell in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. The subject is one that interests a good many and oft-times provokes discussion. It will be a pleasure to forward a copy on request.

The Warrington friends announce that the usual Easter Convention is being arranged. Details can be obtained from Bro. F. B. Quennell, The Glen, Knutsford Old Road, Grappenhall, Warrington. A warm welcome is extended to all.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 32, No. 3

APRIL—MAY, 1955

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested.

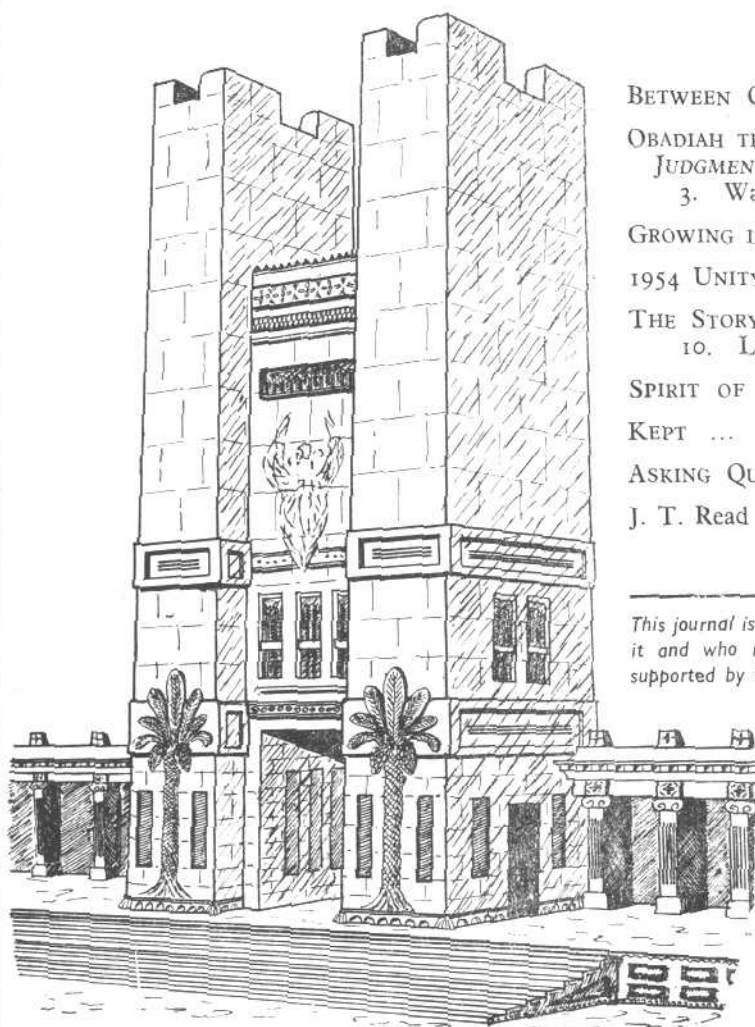
Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

London Convention

Arrangements are in hand for the 1955 London Convention, to be held as usual at Conway Hall during the August Bank holiday season, Saturday to Monday, July 30 to August 1. A very warm welcome is extended to all brethren to join in this season of fellowship and upbuilding. It is expected that Brother J. T. Read will address some of the sessions.

Programmes will be available in due course. In the meantime any information apart from accommodation matters may be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Applications for accommodation should be sent to the Accommodation Secretary, Brother V. Scott, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

It is very important that reservations for accommodation are made early in view of the heavy demand for hotel accommodation in London at that time. Will brethren please advise their requirements to Brother Scott as early as possible, and make every effort to do so at any rate before the end of June.

The hall will be florally decorated with such flowers as are given by the brethren.

* * *

Bro. J. T. Read

It is a pleasure to announce that Bro. J. T. Read, who last visited this country in 1948, is by the loving zeal of the Pastoral Bible Institute to make another visit to this country this year. Brother Read will arrive in the spring and stay until the autumn, and any class or group desiring a visit will be included in the itinerary if application is made as below. The British brethren will be responsible for our brother's expenses while in this country, and a committee to handle the arrangements has been formed. Applications for visits and gifts toward the expenses involved should all be sent to Bro. W. R. Walton, 2, Highland Road, Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwick.

Swansea Home-Gathering

The friends at Swansea announce a gathering to be held on Friday and Saturday evenings and all day Sunday, 22nd to 24th July next, upon the occasion of the visit to Swansea of Bro. J. T. Read. Further details will be available later, from Bro. L. W. Shephard, Flat B, 1, Walter Road, Swansea, Glam.

* * *

Stockport

The small group of Bible Students at Stockport, Cheshire, would like it to be known that they meet (D.V.) each Sunday at 6.30 p.m. in Unity Hall, Greek Street, Stockport, and any friends who may be in the vicinity at any time are welcome to join in fellowship. Information can be had from the Secretary, Sister M. Halton, 66, Great Norbury St., Hyde, Cheshire, or Bro. E. G. Roberts, 25, Parsonage Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport, Cheshire.

* * *

North-West Council of Activity

Details are to hand for the 1955 programme, which includes meetings at Warrington, Ramsbottom, Walkden, Bolton and Stockport. The Annual Assembly of Witness is to be held on 1st, 2nd and 8th October at Bolton. Some of these arrangements are in the hands of the local classes concerned but full details of each can be obtained from Bro. F. Musk, 14, South Street, Newchurch, Rosendale, Lancs.

(Continued on page 48)

Gone from us

Sis. Fennings (Anerley)

Sis. R. Jobbins (Carlisle)

Bro. W. Knight (Tewkesbury)

Bro. H. Mallard (Stockport)

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

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

3.—WAR UPON EDMOM

"The Vision of Obadiah"

It is a simple and unpretentious beginning. Appearing as it does in our Bibles, as the opening sentence of the first verse, much of its force is lost. It is really the heading of the prophecy, the title of the book. Were the writings of Obadiah to be printed by themselves as a separate publication, these four words would stand upon the front cover, limned in letters of gold. There is no attempt at anonymity but at the same time no self laudation nor obtrusion of the man's own personality. Obadiah has the courage of his convictions and is not afraid to attach his name to the message he proclaims and for which he stands. It is not his own message and he does not pretend that it is. It is a vision, something that he has seen and which he wants others to see also. So, simply, he pinpoints the whole of what he has to say and stands in the background, the servant who saw the vision and played the part, first of the scribe who wrote it down and then the herald who proclaimed it abroad.

Good it were for us if we could capture this same simplicity. Sometimes we make our own names and personalities too prominent in the work we are privileged to do for the Lord; sometimes we tend to retire into too much obscurity and leave the work altogether nameless. There was a well-known and well-loved disciple of the Master, long since finished his course—Benjamin Barton—who used to say "Humility is not *thinking too much of oneself*; humility is not *thinking too little of oneself*; humility is not *thinking of oneself at all*." There is a word of truth in that simple observation. Obadiah came to his commission with mind and heart so full of the revelation that had been made to him that he had no thought for himself at all; he just announced in quiet sincerity and warm-hearted zeal "the vision of Obadiah" and proceeded to say what had been laid upon his heart.

"Thus says the Lord God about Edom."

Another simple yet forthright statement. The message is from God and it concerns Edom. The native reverence of the prophet is revealed in his use of the term "the Lord God." To him, God is supreme and there can be no other object of his worship and adoration. Obadiah himself is but a voice, to declare what the Lord has said. The

message is not man-made, it is from God. It is not born of the prophet's own wisdom or intellectual acumen, nor yet of any insight he may have into the affairs of the nations. It is a message from the Most High God, the one who ruleth among the children of men, and giveth the kingdom to whomsoever He pleases, and as such it must be respected.

We must not leave this simple and reverent use of the expression "the Lord God" without recalling the striking example Israel has set us in this connection. The sacred Name was never pronounced by them; they used a substitute. Christians generally have followed that example and use the expressions "the Lord" or "God" when referring to the Deity. A still more reverent because more truly expressive term is "the Father", and this is one that is in the highest degree appropriate on the lips of those who by reason of full consecration to His service have become "sons of God". A crude and unintelligent fanaticism in the case of one Christian group has led to the widespread use of the Anglicised form of the Name—Jehovah—as an appellation for the Deity to be used on every possible occasion; the very frequency of its use begets a familiarity which is the very antithesis of that reverence which we should seek to preserve when speaking or even thinking of the Most High. The translators of the Authorised Version were rightly guided when they decided to translate the Hebrew YHWH—the Hebrew symbol for the sacred Name—by "LORD" in practically all cases, and we in our day do well to follow some such example as that of Dr. Moffatt who renders it "the Eternal". We cannot be too careful when we take upon ourselves to speak and write of the great Creator and Father of all. It is the height of irreverence to address Him as one would address an immediate superior upon earth with whom one is on terms of easy familiarity. Obadiah possessed an intense consciousness of the overwhelming might and majesty of the One who had spoken to him, and it must have been in tones that we can be sure were hushed with awe beside being confident with assurance that he declared his message "Thus says the Lord God".

The message is about Edom. In Obadiah's own day such reference to Israel's brother-nation, the children of Esau, would be quite enough to arouse interest and command attention. We today must

associate Edom with all in this world who together form the worldly-minded kinsmen of the true disciples of Jesus, all who claim a degree of kinship with Christ but have no share in His Spirit. This Gospel Age has produced many spiritual Edomites and they have been and are scattered among all the denominations of Christendom. This word of the Lord God is for them too and it is a word of judgment. In this end of the Age the fact that spiritual Israelites are to be gathered together into the "general assembly of the Church of the First-born" implies that also the spiritual Edomites are to suffer the judgment that puts an end to their pretensions for ever. In the new Age there will be no Edomites.

"I have received a declaration from the Lord, and He has sent forth a message to the nations, to rise and make war upon her."

There are two most important factors in this opening announcement. One concerns the Church in the flesh and the other concerns the world in general. Obadiah is the Lord's servant and he has received intimation of the Lord's command and intention. To no one else but His own servants does the Father reveal His will, at this or any time. "The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets and them that trust Him." In every age has God had His witnesses, who, because of whole-hearted consecration and complete dedication of life are able to interpret, by reason of the indwelling Spirit, that which He will tell them. So when judgment is to come upon the world or any part of it in consequence of sin, the servants of God are the ones to whom is entrusted the knowledge of what is impending and the duty of proclaiming it.

But not of executing it! Christians are not empowered to act as executors of judgment, not whilst they are still in the flesh. Some there were in past years who exultantly chanted together "let the saints be joyful in glory . . . to bind their kings with chains, their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgments written. This honour have all his saints." (Psa. 149). They claimed the right by virtue of that text to arrogate to themselves powers that belong of right only to the Lord the Head, and in thus exceeding the commission given to the disciples of Christ at the first they strayed into grievous error to their own spiritual hurt. There is more than a suspicion of the desire to exact revenge for past indifference or opposition when Christians conceive it their solemn duty to inflict Divinely approved chastisement upon those whom they esteem fitting subjects for judgment.

Here in this verse the implication is plain. The other nations, not Israel, are to rise and make war upon Edom. Obadiah's mission was to proclaim the inevitability of judgment but the execution of that judgment was to be left to the nations round about. So it was in fact. Although in later days Israel did absorb the Edomites into themselves and extinguish Edom as a nation, the fulfilment of the prophecy really belongs to the Babylonians who forced the Edomites out of their mountain fortress not long after Obadiah's day, and after them the Nabatheans, another Arab people, who completed the work and occupied the Edomites' land until in the early centuries of the Christian era they in turn were dispossessed by the Saracens. The nations did indeed rise and make war upon Edom, and fulfilled every word of Obadiah to the letter.

So too in the second fulfilment. Spiritual Edom is destroyed by the very nations of the world whose favours she solicited and for whose sake she denied and ignored, and oft-times persecuted, spiritual Israel. Hear the Divine sentence expressed in words directly applicable to the Edom of this Age, "The ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." (Rev. 17. 16.) That is not an isolated instance of the Divine revelation as to God's intentions; John gave but a brief word but what he saw took its inspiration from a far more detailed prophecy spoken by the prophet Ezekiel and recorded in his 16th chapter. The picture there is that of apostate Jerusalem, meeting at last the penalty of her unfaithfulness to her God. Referring to those whom she had preferred to God, He says "I will give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places . . . they shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords, and they shall burn thine house with fire, and execute judgments upon thee . . ." (Ezek. 16. 39-41.) There is a Divine law of retribution which we might call, in the language of men, "poetic justice", which decrees that those who are apostates from God, unfaithful to their profession, for the sake of worldly honour and interests or the approval of men, shall receive judgment at the very hands of those for whose sake they rejected God. The nations of this world will, at the last, in Obadiah's language, "rise and make war upon" spiritual Edom, and at their hands will the Edom of this Age suffer, and fall, and be no more.

To be continued.

GROWING IN GRACE

An exhortation
to progress

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.—2 Pet. 3. 17, 18.

There is a touching tenderness in the epistles of the aged Apostle Peter to the household of faith, showing that, while he realised that the time of his departure was drawing nigh (2 Pet. 1. 14; John 21. 18, 19), his solicitude for the growth and development of the church was increasing. Accordingly, he writes two general epistles, not so much to advance new truth, as to call to remembrance truths already learned and fully received (2 Pet. 1. 12-15), and to counsel all to faithfulness and to growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In the preceding verses he has been calling to mind some of these truths, and he recognises the fact that those addressed are already established in them, but, in view of his knowledge that false teachers would arise to pervert the truth, he counsels special watchfulness against being led away from their present steadfastness by the error of the wicked. That this counsel of the Apostle has a special fitness to the church in the last days, our days, and was evidently so designed by the Spirit of God, is clear from verse 3—"There shall come in the last days scoffers," etc.

Lest us observe the manner in which the Apostle would have us guard against being led away by the error of the wicked. Is it by a careful investigation of all the claims which every new false prophet that arises may intrude upon our attention, thus giving heed to every seducing spirit (1 Tim. 4. 1)? No: that would be quite contrary to the teaching of "our beloved brother Paul", to whom Peter so affectionately refers, and whom he so fully endorses; for Paul had given no uncertain counsel on this subject; saying "*Shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a canker;*" and "*I entreat you, brethren, to mark those who are making factions and laying snares contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them; for they that are such are not in subjection to our anointed Lord, but to their own appetite*" (for

honour and praise among men, as great teachers—1 Tim. 1. 6, 7); "*and by kind and complimentary words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting . . . I wish you to be wise with respect to that which is good, and harmless with respect to that which is evil.*"—2 Tim. 2. 16, 17. Rom. 16. 17-19.

Peter felt the force of Paul's wise and earnest counsel, and with emphasis re-echoed the same sentiments. To give heed to such seducing doctrines, contrary to the doctrine which we have already received from the Lord and the apostles, argues a lack of faith in those doctrines. Such a one is not established in the faith. And indeed there are those—and such is the general sentiment among the teachers of false doctrine—who think that it is not either necessary or advisable to be established in the faith. To be established is to be a bigot, is the idea they advance. And so it is, if one is so unfair in mind as to accept and tenaciously hold that which he has never proved either by sound logic or Bible authority. But he is not an unreasoning bigot who, in simple faith, on the authority of God, accepts the Word of God. And such, and only such, as do so are established in the truth. The difference between the strong and the steadfast Christian and a bigot is that the one is established in the truth, while the other is established in error. The former knows the truth, and the truth has made him free from all doubts and misgivings, and from all desire to delve into the muddy pool of human speculations. To all such Paul says, "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught (by us, the apostles), abounding therein with thanksgiving.*"—But, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*"—(Col. 2. 6-8.)

With these sentiments of "our beloved brother Paul", Peter's counsel is in fullest harmony, his advice being, not to waste valuable time in investigating "the errors of the wicked"; but, on the contrary to endeavour the more earnestly to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ", Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The more thorough our knowledge of the Lord and the more intimate our acquaintance with him, the more secure we are in our own steadfastness.

But what is it to grow in grace? It is to grow in favour with the Lord through an intimate personal acquaintance and fellowship of spirit with Him. It implies, first, a knowledge and recognition on our part of our redemption through His precious blood and a personal faith in and dependence upon all the promises of the Father made to us through Him, and then an intimate communion with Him in our daily life of prayer, and of observation of his will and obedience to it. If such be our constant attitude of mind and heart, there must be a constant ripening of the fruits of the Spirit, rendering us more and more pleasing and acceptable to our Lord. A sense of the Divine acceptance and favour is given to us from day to day in increasing measure, in fulfilment of that blessed promise of our Lord, "*If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come into him and make our abode with him.*"—(John 14. 23.)

This, as nearly as words can express it, is what it is to grow in grace; but the full and blessed understanding of it is best appreciated by those who from day to day walk with God in faith and obedience and love.

To grow thus in grace and not grow in knowledge is impossible; for the very object of such communion is to build us up in a more perfect knowledge and acquaintance with the Lord—to bring us into closer fellowship with the Divine Plan, and to give us the privilege of being "workers together with him" in executing that plan. If, therefore, we love and obey the Lord and desire to grow in his favour, his written Word is our daily meditation and study! and thus we grow in knowledge: not, however, by finding out each year that what we learned last year was false, but by adding to what we learned last year, by putting on more and more of the armour of God until we realise its glorious completeness in the full discernment of the Divine plan of the ages. We are then ready to do valiant service for the cause of truth in withstanding the encroachment of error (Eph. 6. 10-13), being established, strengthened and settled in the faith (1 Pet. 5. 10). But even to those thus established in the faith there is abundant opportunity to grow in knowledge; for while they will see nothing new or different in outline or design, they will be continually charmed and cheered with newly discovered lines of harmony and beauty in the Divine drawings of the wonderful plan of the ages. As pupils we may ever study the master workmanship of the Divine Architect.

Our beloved brother Peter, zealous for our growth in knowledge, endeavours to inspire us thereto, by calling our attention to the wonderful events and the close proximity of the day of the Lord; saying—

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" in the strife and friction caused by increasing knowledge combined with selfishness. This will not be a literal fire, but, as described by the prophets, the fire of Divine jealousy—(Zeph. 1. 18; 3: 8. 2 Pet. 3. 10). Already the noise and tumult, which shall thus eventuate in world-wide anarchy, are distinctly heard in every nation; for the day of the Lord has indeed begun, and the heat of human passion is growing more and more intense daily, and the great time of trouble is very near.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" Let us indeed lay to heart this solemn question, for we stand in the very presence of the Judge of all the earth. These words, while addressed to God's people eighteen centuries ago, and serving a purpose for good all along down this Gospel age, are especially meant by the Spirit for us, who are living in this very day of God.

"Nevertheless, we (we who have come into covenant relationship with the Lord—we, unlike the rest of the world, know of the Divine plan and), according to his promise, look for new heavens (the kingdom of God—to be established in power and great glory) and a new earth (a new organisation of society under the rulership of Christ and his glorified Bride, the Church) wherein dwelleth righteousness." Blessed assurance! how favoured are we above the people of the world who have not this knowledge!

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Pet. 3. 11-14) And Jude (24) reminds us that the Lord, in whose grace and knowledge Peter desires us to grow, "is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Amen.

1954 UNITY CONVENTION AT GREENCASTLE

The following report of the 1954 "Unity" Convention has reached us and is reproduced here for the benefit of the many British brethren who follow with interest the endeavours of the brethren, particularly those of Cicero, who are responsible for this annual endeavour to keep up the standards of Christian love and liberty.

* * *

Truly, indeed, did the Lord's people realise the meaning of the Psalmist's words: "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in UNITY!*" as they fellowshipped together for one week in CHRIST ALONE upon the campus of the DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana, from August 1 through August 7. This Bible Students Unity Convention, the fifth one held since 1950, is now a treasured memory in the minds of the many that attended that week of fellowship and spiritual feasting. As usual, the committee arranging the convention is sending out its annual convention report.

Altogether, some 250 Bible Students attended this gathering, coming from twenty-two states of the union and from four provinces of Canada. We regret that we were unable to have a brother from Britain serve us in 1954 as we had in the past. This we hope and pray will be made possible in 1955.

The discourses delivered during the course of the convention were spiritually edifying, dealing with a variety of topics and Scripture passages.

The Bible studies, as in past years, continued to be popular with the brethren, and the committee feels that they were not only edifying but informative as well. Bible studies are so welcome because they afford an opportunity to the assembly to participate in the discussions and to voice their opinions.

The forums and panel discussions were a blessing to the friends, but it seems that the testimony meetings (of which we regret to say, there were too few) proved again the high-lights of the convention, with many of the brethren testifying to the testings, blessings, and the satisfaction in Christ that they had experienced in the narrow way.

A very fine Christian film, produced by the Moody Institute of Science, entitled, "*Hidden Treasures*" was shown as part of the "public programme" followed by a short discourse to a well-attended "outside" audience.

A vesper service was held Friday night, which the brethren told us was the best evening devotional programme presented at any Bible Student Convention.

That the young people, especially teen-agers, were not forgotten, was attested by the nine meetings held for them, dealing not only with doctrine, but also with problems peculiar to Christian youth. The little tots were not forgotten either, for daily classes

were held for them under the supervision of capable Christian teachers. These little ones will long remember the Biblical scenes depicted with their own "hand-made" puppets under the guidance of two sisters from Chicago. The committee extends its thanks to these and the others who gave up their privileges of attending the auditorium services in order to conduct these classes for the young people and for the little tots.

A brother and sister in Christ, Joseph Klimek of Pennsylvania, and Irene Talarek of Chicago, Illinois, demonstrated in symbol their consecration to do God's will, early Thursday morning, in the university's pool. Our prayers are with these two dear ones, that they may press onward to attain to the prize of the High Calling in Christ Jesus.

This past year, as before, the many free afternoons and evenings afforded opportunities to the friends to hold many of the "informal" meetings and studies for which this convention is well-known. These meetings were held in large rooms above the auditorium which the committee retained for this purpose. Other informal meetings were held in the dormitory foyers and halls.

The Convention Business Meeting was held Friday afternoon. The Cicero Class asked for permission to arrange the 1955 Convention as it would see fitting and best. After some discussion this request was granted by the assembly, with the Cicero committee being put completely in charge of the 1955 programme, and therefore, assuming all responsibilities for the convention. What surprised many brethren was the fact that the Cicero committee was instructed by all the previous assemblies to consider the suggestions and plans presented to it by all interested Bible Students. It was only in the preparing of the first convention in 1950, held at Hotel Yellowbanks, Lake Webster, Indiana, that the Cicero committee had an entirely free hand in arranging the programme. The committee accepts this sole responsibility for the success of the 1955 Bible Students' Unity Convention solemnly and prayerfully. With God's help it shall be the "best convention ever held."

Again, as in previous years, there were faces missing from our midst, faces which we would not see again "till we meet at Jesus' feet." Especially sorrowful was the news of the tragic death of Brother John Butler of St. John's, Newfoundland, who was killed in a sea-plane accident.

We are happy to announce that the 1955 Convention will again be held on the campus of the DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. The date is July 31st to August 6th.

Your brethren in Christ,
Bible Students' Unity Convention Committee,
P.O. Box 125, Cicero 50, Illinois.

THE STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 10—Looking for the Ark.

Every day Russian trains puff their way along the railway which skirts the lower slopes of Mount Ararat just across the frontier in Turkish territory. The engine-drivers are probably very familiar with the gaunt mass lifting its head into the clouds which their Turkish neighbours have named "Aghri Dag", "The Great Mountain", but they are likely to be quite ignorant of the interest taken in that same mountain during the hundred years before their railway was built. Mount Ararat to-day is in the midst of a fairly well known district. The Russian holiday resort of Erivan, to which Soviet citizens from all parts come for rest and relaxation, is only thirty miles distant, and the Turkish town of Bayazid only nineteen miles. During the nineteenth century the story was different. Ararat lay in a wild and undeveloped territory, far from law and order, and the would-be explorer, in his quest, faced many hazards which do not exist to-day.

Nevertheless there was, during that century, no lack of intrepid men bent on exploring the mountain in the hope that some evidence could be found to confirm the many early and mediæval reports of the continued existence of the Ark. The fact that they were in all probability investigating the wrong mountain was one of which they were all unaware; the claims of Mount Judi and Algurd in Mesopotamia had long since faded from the minds of men and although Armenia was still under Mohammedan rule the proximity of Ararat to the frontier with Russia—in which country Western Europeans could at that time move freely—made Ararat more easily accessible than places farther into the interior.

The first modern ascent on record was effected on the 27th September, 1829, by a German, Dr. Frederick Parrott, accompanied by three Armenians and two Russians. Starting from the Armenian village of Arghuri, four thousand feet above sea level, they followed a circular route round the lower slopes, making the final ascent up the south-western flank and finally reaching the top, seventeen thousand feet, just about three miles high. They found the top to consist of a circular platform about two hundred feet across, but they found no sign of the Ark.

That of itself is not surprising. It would have required prolonged exploration definitely to prove that the Ark was not up there. The great extinct volcano which is "Mount Ararat" spreads its long

range of peaks and rocks over a territory something like seventeen miles long by nine wide. Within that area are the two peaks of the mountain, seven miles apart, the lesser one, known as Little Ararat, thirteen thousand feet high, presenting the appearance of an almost perfect cone, and the higher peak, Great Ararat, seventeen thousand feet, a confused mass of volcanic rock, of precipitous cliffs and sheer pinnacles, and on its northern face a vast chasm leading straight down to the plain below. Known as the "Chasm of St. Jacob", this tremendous cleft, which can be discerned many miles away, has its upper reaches filled by a glacier a mile long and three hundred yards wide, fed by the perpetual snows of the summit, giving birth at its lower extremity to a stream which eventually finds its way into the River Aras and so to the Caspian Sea.

Five years later another party explored the mountain with no better result, and then in 1840 occurred the great Ararat earthquake. Masses of rock were precipitated down the sides of the mountain and the village of Arghuri was wiped out. The monastery of St. Jacob, not far from the village, and which had stood for at least five hundred years, was destroyed and never rebuilt. But the search for the Ark continued. In 1845 a Dr. Abich explored, unsuccessfully, and then in the middle of 1850 a party of Russian scientists led by General Chodzko spent nearly two months on the mountain in connection with the surveying and mapping of Southern Caucasia. Although these men were on an official mission and not directly interested in finding the Ark it is noteworthy that their extensive stay on the mountain yielded nothing of interest in this direction. Six years later a British party ascended, following much the same route as previous explorers. Result—negative.

Twenty years elapsed before the next recorded attempt. In 1876 a British explorer, Lord James Bryce, on a journey through southern Russia and the Caucasus decided to see for himself whether any trace of the Ark remained. The results of his search are embodied in his book "*Transcaucasia and Ararat*" which still constitutes the most detailed description of the mountain available in the English language. Making his way first to the high saddle of land connecting Great and Little Ararats, he established his headquarters at the Kurdish village

of Sardarbulakh, midway between the two peaks. With one Russian and one Kurd he reached the summit, and although he did not discover the Ark, he did find a piece of wood that had been fashioned by some tool and was more than half inclined to believe that this fragment was a relic of the ancient vessel. Let him tell this part of the story in his own words.

"The summit of Little Ararat, which had for the last two hours provokingly kept at the same apparent height above us, began to sink, and before ten o'clock I could look down upon its small flat top, studded with lumps of rock, but bearing no trace of a crater. Mounting steadily along the same ridge, I saw at a height of over 13,000 feet, lying on the loose blocks, a piece of wood about four feet long and five inches thick, evidently cut by some tool, and so far above the limit of trees that it could by no possibility be a natural fragment of one. Darting on it with a glee that astonished the Cossack and the Kurd, I held it up to them, made them look at it, and repeated several times the word "Noah." The Cossack grinned, but he was such a cheery, genial fellow that I think he would have grinned whatever I had said, and I cannot be sure that he took my meaning, and recognised the wood as a fragment of the true Ark. Whether it was really gopher, of which material the Ark was built, I will not undertake to say, but am willing to submit to the inspection of the curious the bit which I cut off with my ice-axe and brought away. Anyhow, it will be hard to prove that it is not gopher wood. And if there be any remains of the Ark on Ararat at all—a point as to which the natives are perfectly clear—here rather than the top is the place where one might expect to find them, since in the course of ages they would get carried down by the onward movement of the snowbeds along the declivities. This wood, therefore, suits all the requirements of the case. In fact the argument is, for the case of a relic, exceptionally strong."

Seven years later the London newspapers reported the alleged discovery of the Ark. It was said that a Turkish party investigating climatic phenomena on the mountain came suddenly upon an enormous wooden structure protruding from a glacier. Local villagers declared they had seen it for the preceding six years. Upon forcing an entrance into the structure, the explorers found the inside divided into rooms fifteen feet high. Most of the interior was filled with ice; they could penetrate into only three of the rooms.

The trustworthiness of this account is open to considerable doubt. The apparent implication of

the story is that the Ark had been imprisoned in the glacier since the days of the Flood and only became visible at the "melting" end in the 19th century. It is fairly well known that all glaciers are rivers of ice moving at a slow rate down mountain sides and continually melting at the point where they reach sufficiently warm air; thus the bodies of mountaineers who have fallen into the snow at the tops of high mountains have at times been carried, embedded in glaciers, to be revealed at last when the ice in which they were imprisoned has reached the valley below and melted. Glaciers move at a definite rate, anything from nine inches to two feet a day, and no glacier moving down a mountain side the size of Ararat could possibly take more than a century to carry any imprisoned object from top to bottom. If the Ark ever were so carried it would have appeared and decayed to nothingness long before the days of Abraham, let alone those of modern explorers.

A much more detailed story came into the news nine years later. In 1892 an Eastern ecclesiastical dignitary, the Rev. John Nouri, patriarch of the Nestorian Church in India, travelled through Mesopotamia and Armenia on his way to America, whither he went for the purpose of attending the celebrated "Parliament of Religions" held in Chicago in 1893. Arrived in America, he declared that whilst in Armenia he had ascended Mount Ararat and discovered the Ark. His description of the mountain seemed accurate enough to justify belief that he actually made the climb. Starting from the ridge between the two peaks he seems to have followed roughly the same route as Lord James Bryce sixteen years earlier, finally emerging on the same flat plateau at the summit described by the earlier climber. Here, says the Rev. Nouri, he saw the Ark, both its ends in view and the centre buried in ice and snow. It stood one hundred feet high and was nine hundred feet long. The story attracted great interest in America and a party was organised to visit Armenia and confirm the claimant's assertions. It would appear that at the critical moment the Rev. Nouri became temporarily mentally deranged and the projected visit was abandoned. Some years later he was still maintaining the truth of his story, but there has never been any corroboration. The last years of his life—he died about 1905—were spent in India as Bishop of the church which had originally sent him on his travels.

The twentieth century has fared no better than the nineteenth. In 1929 the Noah's Ark Expedition Association of Chicago was formed to explore Mount Ararat, locate the Ark, transport it to America and put it on exhibition. An appeal for funds was

launched and application to the Turkish Government for permission to explore the mountain was made, but nothing came of the project.

In the year 1942 there appeared in many Christian periodicals and tracts—who appear mostly to have copied from one another—what purported to be the story of Vladimar Roskovitsky, a Russian airman in the service of the Czar, alleged to have flown a plane over Mount Ararat in 1917 and seen the Ark lying partially submerged in a lake half-way up the south side of the mountain. The story goes on to say that on a report being sent to the Russian Government, a party of soldiers was despatched to climb the mountain to the scene, take measurements and photographs, and send a full report to the Czar. Soon afterwards the Revolution occurred and all the records disappeared. The story was quite well written up and attracted a considerable degree of attention in Christian circles. But it is too full of anachronisms to be taken seriously. The incident is said to have taken place six or seven weeks before “godless Bolshevism took over”. In fact, the Bolsheviks took power in November 1917, whereas the Czar abdicated the previous March. The writer of the story either forgot or never knew of the intervening Kerensky regime. Secondly, the flight was said to have been undertaken in order to test the plane’s new superchargers. Superchargers were fitted to planes for the first time only in the early 1920’s, about 1922. Thirdly, the narrator describes himself and his companions as “White Russians of the Air Fleet”, whereas the term “White Russian” was not invented until 1919 and referred then solely to the military force which fought the Red Army until pushed out of Russia. Fourthly, the story describes a force of a hundred and fifty men taking an entire month to “chop a trail” up the mountain, whereas reputable explorers have made the ascent without difficulty and without “chopping trails” in one or two days. Fifthly, Ararat is, and was in 1917, in Turkish territory, and although Turkey was at the time technically at war with Russia, there is very little likelihood that the Czar would spare soldiers to spend time in enemy territory looking for Noah’s Ark. It is more than likely that the story was first written as a kind of “religious fiction” not intended to be taken seriously, and eventually got out of hand.

Finally, in 1949, two expeditions, one British and one American, were projected to climb the mountain and settle the question once and for all. The Turkish authorities at first refused permission but afterwards relented, and the American expedition set out. (The British one never started.) There was a certain amount of publicity given to the

attempt, in British newspapers, and Moscow declared the whole thing was a “blind”; the Americans were really going up Mount Ararat to spy on the Soviet Union. Probably most people—in the west—dismissed that as a typically Russian reaction and waited during the latter part of August and early September 1949 to hear that the Ark had at last been found. It would seem, however, that these zealots for the establishment of Bible truth returned home disappointed, for after a short time notices appeared in the papers to the effect that the explorers had covered every part of the mountain without finding the Ark, and had abandoned the quest.

There the matter may have rested had not the daily press, a month later, featured an account of British and American collaboration in establishing listening-posts to detect the detonation of Russian atomic bombs in Siberia. Part of the article ran: “On July 10 (1949) there was another big bang; epi-centre in Central Asia. That was the ‘tip-off.’ The intelligence men took over. A party of Americans sought permission from Turkey to search Mount Ararat for the remains of Noah’s Ark. America was preparing to set up a listening-post near Central Asia—the Caucasus.”

One wonders if those men, busy with their scientific apparatus and technical calculations, all thought of the declared object which had ostensibly brought them to Mount Ararat forgotten, remembered—or had ever known—the words spoken to the one who first came out of the Ark into a new and unblemished world: “At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man.” The mountains of Ararat figured prominently in the story of the world’s cleansing by a great flood of waters; it may not be altogether inappropriate that Mount Ararat figures again when the world is once more about to be cleansed, not this time by water, but by fire, when “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

They failed to find the Ark. Their minds were concerned about other things, about the powers and affairs of this world. They had no idea of trusting God for deliverance from whatever dangers appeared to threaten them. The people of the ante-diluvian world also failed to find the Ark; they too trusted in themselves and their own prowess—and the Flood came and took them all away. So will it be in the ending of this world, and then, when the cataclysm is over, and men, restored from the dead, are ready to listen to the voice that

speakeeth from heaven, then God will turn to the people a pure language that they may call upon the Lord to serve him with one consent.

Whether the Ark actually grounded on Mount Ararat, Mount Judi, or Mount Algurd, or at some other place quite unsuspected and unknown, is of no real consequence. What does matter is the fact that the name "Mount Ararat" does mean something. It stands as a symbol of God's unshakable determination to preserve that which is righteous in the time when He rises up to destroy evil, and to bring that righteousness forth into a new world where

it may flourish and blossom and fruit. That is the greatest lesson of the story of the Flood. The Divine covenant with man, with the beasts and birds, with the earth itself, is a "covenant between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations." And on that fact lies the basis of our belief that "the earth abideth forever." God has promised that the world shall not again be so devastated as to destroy all flesh, and that promise is our confidence in this day of uncertainty and terror.

To be concluded.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUE REFORM

There is nothing more essential to the success of any work of reform than that it be conducted in a manner which will recommend it to those whom it is seeking to influence. In other words, those who engage in such a work must do so with a proper spirit, in order to reap the result which is desired. This consideration is an important one, and especially so to us, engaged as we are in a great reform work which so vitally concerns the welfare of the human race.

What should be the spirit which should accompany the efforts of those engaged in the promulgation of the truths of the Plan of the Ages? From the nature of things, this work involves one in perpetual controversy with the ideas and forms of the theological world around him. It requires some discrimination and forbearance to confine the controversy to the ideas, and prevent its involving persons who hold them. There is a strong tendency to forget that we are not combating persons but the false beliefs which they teach. How easy under such circumstances to be led by the natural promptings of human nature, and fall into the error of the two disciples who wished to call down fire upon the ungrateful Samaritans, and to whom Christ rebukingly said, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of".

The true reform spirit is never anything but a Christian spirit, leading its possessor ever to take an inoffensive attitude towards those whose erroneous opinions he feels called upon to oppose. It does not lead him to make use of ridicule and contempt, or to indulge in sharp drives at an opponent for the mere sake of showing his acuteness. It never leads him to show a lack of respect for those in positions of authority, albeit their characters may not be of the best, nor to forget that degree of deference which is due to those in every position of eminence; but with all men to

render "honour to whom honour is due". Firm and uncompromising in its zeal for the truth, it combines with this a proper humility of self, and charity toward all. It is, in short, that spirit the possession of which will lead one to manifest "the fruits of the Spirit," among which are, long-suffering, gentleness, . . . meekness".

It is a mistake to suppose, as many people evidently do, that absence of moral principle in an individual, however conspicuous and fraught with evil results, renders him a proper subject of hatred, ridicule and contempt. There is a certain respect which is due to all in positions of earthly eminence, regardless even of character. Just as "Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed concerning the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'The Lord rebuke thee,'" so with us. It cannot be proper to bring any railing accusation against an earthly opponent, whose motives we cannot judge, and with whom we cannot stand upon a level as the recipients of God's unmerited favour. Such a course is not in keeping with Christian dignity and integrity of character, and the cause of truth has no need of such doubtful aids to its advancement.

The study of the spirit and methods of the Lord and the Apostles is profitable to those who are actively engaged in an important work of reform at the present time. In their forbearance under great provocations and persecution, the moderate and respectful language in which they addressed those in positions of authority, their strict regard for the truth, and their carefulness against giving needless offence, they have left an example worthy of our imitation. With an uncompromising zeal for the truth they combined that Christian charity which led them to abstain from judging the characters and motives even of their bitterest opponents. It is by such a spirit and by such methods that the truth can be best commended to thinking minds.

KEPT!

"I have kept them in Thy Name"
(Jno. 17: 12)

The surrendering up of a stewardship is always a searching time. It is not every steward who can do this with honour, and look back upon the period of stewardship with satisfaction and delight. Conscience himself of his lapses and failings, the retiring steward could find his mind disturbed by thinking that his successor may bring the lapses to light, or himself do so much better, that, by contrast, his late master may conclude that the retiring servant had not done as well as he might have done. Happy, indeed, the man who can carry into retirement the conviction that he has not consciously been derelict in duty, and need have no fear even though heaven and earth search into his record.

In that incomparable prayer in John 17, our Lord was rendering up, as a man, His stewardship. He had been entrusted with the highly responsible position of teaching and protecting the little band of apostles, plus a wider circle of believers, numbering in all about five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15, 6).

These all were of the class that had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and had readily followed the Lord throughout the most part of His ministry. And these all (but the Apostles in particular) were the choicest souls in Israel, of whom the Lord Jesus said: "*Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me.*" Now He had come to the final night of His human life, and in their hearing, so that they might know how close their relationship to God had been, and also how responsible before God His own relationship to them had been, He addressed the most moving and impressive prayer within the records of Holy Writ to the great God of Israel, who had set His love upon the members of this little band. What a sight for them it must have been, and how deeply it must have stirred their hearts to see and hear their Lord and Master engaged in this most intimate prayer—a scene and prayer without parallel in the annals of time.

Surely the occasion carried deep into their hearts, spite of the immediate lapse of some, a conviction that Abraham's God and Jesus' God—and now their own God—accounted them the dearest treasure, not only of their whole nation, but of all the nations of the earth.

To hear Jesus say: "*For their sakes I sanctify myself (set myself apart) that they also might be sanctified through the truth,*" could not do other than impress on them that they were the subjects of Heaven's highest care. This matchless untainted life had been devoted to their protection and in-

struction—this they already knew—but here in the subdued solemnity of that secluded room, it is their privilege to listen to the Shepherd of their souls, because His death was near, surrender up His charge to God Himself. "*While I was with them . . . I kept them in Thy Name*"; now, "*Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those that Thou hast given Me,*" are the impressive words which light on their ears as the Man of Sorrows commits them to His Father's care. That some of those words winged themselves to the target of their hearts is sure, for one who, in that supreme hour, heard them fall, himself wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus . . . who . . . hath begotten us . . . who are KEPT by the power of God through faith." (1 Pet. 3, 5.)

Thus, spite of Peter's temporary fall, the words of the dear Shepherd had fixed themselves in such wise that they emboldened him to tell all other spirit-begotten children of God that Divine Power was active as a garrisoning force in their lives, to throw a cordon around God's elect, and to be as an energising influence to help them in their resistance to the Adversary of their souls.

The truth that God was a "Keeper" of His people goes back a long way in Israel's history. At the very forefront of the Priestly blessing where-with the High Priest was empowered to bless, stood the words: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee . . ." Thus the sense of a Divine Protector was early impressed upon Israel. In later days the Psalmist caught up the theme, and sang: "Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy Keeper . . . the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil . . . from this time forth and even for evermore" (Psa. 121, 4-8).

Again, in a very special promise to a very particular Servant, God said: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa. 42, 6). Again, in a variation of the same promise to the same honoured Servant, God says: "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel . . . to him whom man despiseth . . . In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee, and I will preserve thee and give thee for a covenant of the people . . ." (Isa. 49, 7-8).

Thus, in various ways, by many tongues, the Lord impressed upon the faithful souls in Israel that the angel of the Lord encamped about them, and that the heavenly messengers were given a

charge concerning them to keep them in all their ways, lest they should trip at a stone and fall.

Comparing these promises with Israel's actual national experience, it becomes at once apparent that these promises were not mere blank cheques to be filled in by all and sundry under any sort of condition or circumstance. The Lord did not unconditionally promise to keep Israel, either as a people or as individuals. Israel's chequered history is proof that the Lord did not at all times exert His power for her preservation. Israel was not a blank-minded automaton which could be wound up by a promise and sent undeviatingly upon her way. She was a stubborn, hard-necked, self-willed people, which used the endowment of free-will to choose her course, and set herself to follow out her own path. And most frequently her course was found to be at variance with the Will of God.

Obviously, therefore, conditions lay behind these promises, and only by complying with the conditions imposed, could the Promise itself be claimed. In what sense, then, had God promised to keep the heedful and faithful in Israel? Did He promise to preserve them from injury or death, and give them a long span of life? Let the records of those worthy names inscribed on Israel's honoured scroll (see Heb. 11) be answer to that. Individual faithfulness amid mass unfaithfulness made suffering inevitable. Royal anger and mob passion wrought their fury upon the valiant souls which dared to obey God rather than bow to the dictates of men.

Thus, even the faithful in Israel fell in death, but in their fall the Divine Promise was verified. God kept them faithful to the end, when faithful testimony meant sure death, or sure confinement with stripes. That which was precious in God's sight was not the bulk of flesh and bones, but that heart of steel, that uncorrupted character, that outlook of well-guided faith. Into such faithful hearts God sent a flow of power—an insurgence of His own mighty Spirit—an influence from His sovereign Throne. It charged and super-charged the batteries of stern resolve with heavenly dynamism, and made even the strongest men become stronger still. It made the weak more puissant than the loftiest kings, and showed that heaven's finger was powerful beyond even the loins of mighty men.

The Promise of Divine keeping required the opened sluices and unchoked channels of the human heart, so that its dynamic fulness could flow in and through the heart's every thought and word and act.

Thus and then, in either life or death, the Divine protection is an incontrovertible fact, an incontestable truth, and an invincible reality, and Israel's stalwarts always found it so, as fiery furnace-floors, lion's dens, violence of fire, mother-hearts bereaved,

decapitating sword, and other unnumbered deaths bear testimony.

This little "great-word" comes down from the ages past, then, freighted with the victories of both God and men. Men had dared, and God had given the power of conquest over self, and circumstance. It tells of great responsibilities nobly borne, of great issues faithfully met; of the shaping of men's lives and the direction of a nation's destiny. When others had fallen faithlessly, God had kept them faithful unto death; when others had been set aside—discarded and disowned, God had "kept" these as His own—His own heart's treasure and delight.

"I kept them in Thy Name," said the beloved Lord—yes! when impetuous impulse rushed Peter off his feet, and discouraging doubts laid Thomas low, and uprush of indignation made James and John desire fire from heaven, and sharp contentions of would-be greatness gave bitterness its chance. These and many other pitfalls had beset their feet, but past them all His gentle words had safely guided them. Words of approval now and then to stimulate; words sharp with rebuke to afford restraint, words pregnant with instruction to enthuse their minds with Kingdom expectations—all these and many things beside had been fraught with keeping power. When success over demon-power threatened to intoxicate, He showed them that this was but the smallest thing in Kingdom work.

Thus, in happy season and sad, He had spoken the word which killed jealousy, checked resentment, smothered contention, provoked love and inspired hope. But, above all else which had tended to keep them safe was the story of the Father's love. "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me"—God's Name, God's character, God's Love, God's Holiness, God's Omnipotence—set forth in winsome little parables, which shot right home and gripped their interested hearts.

And then, "they have known surely that I came out from Thee; and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." Belief of this cardinal point helped them to stand; disbelief caused the nations to fall.

With the closing of the prayer they went forth into the night—the Master to His Gethsemane, and they to disappointment and flight. Peter fell, Thomas sank into the slough of doubt, others retired crestfallen, with memories disturbed, because He had not redeemed Israel. But into Peter's heart something had been instilled, which, when impulse has been again restrained, gave vent to penitential tears, and kept him from a Judas' fall. Something had been infused into the doubter's mind, and constrained him to venture again into the upper room, where the doubt was immediately overcome. Something had been sown into hearts that

in sadness said "We trusted that it had been He," which sprang to renewed vigour as they watched Him breaking bread.

And thus, after one dark hour, while the Shepherd lay entombed, the keeping power began again, and brought to rich fruitage the words sown in pre-resurrection days. Timid and retiring men were made strong, and neither prison cells nor lictor's rods could stop their witnessing. Many of them fell in death—proving again that it was not mass of flesh and bone which God had promised to help and keep. But, again, the Divine Power wrought dynamic energy in the heart, and fitted to stand and withstand every strain. In weakness Divine Power matured, and made them more than conquerors.

Of the little band in the upper room, only one was lost. He had never been amenable to "keeping" power. A cultured man, yet withal a thief, and carping critic all the way. Cold, calculating, desirous to lead, not to be led, a conspirator and traitor to the end!—when came the evil hour he fell finally to his doom! It was not the Master's fault that he thus fell. He had seen and he had heard all that the others saw and heard, which to them had been the "keeping power" but he had not, like them, been "keep-able" or "salvable."

Sight of eye, and hearing of ear had produced no good effect. He was thus unprepared for the evil hour, and died, as he had lived, with Mammon for his God. Son of Abraham though he was by birth, in moral things he was the child of the Evil One.

Setting the traitor, Judas, and the denier, Peter, side by side, we will be better able to determine what the "keeping power" may do. Peter had his many faults—impulsiveness, impetuosity, too great a readiness to speak—but he was amenable to restraint. If he roamed a little from the path, the Shepherd's crook could draw him back. When others went away and Jesus challenged them, it was Peter's ready tongue which said: "But where else can we go—only Thou hast the words of life!" Despite all his faults, he became one of the "inner" three—a sure token of a sincere man, with honest goodness in his heart.

For him, the Master prayed when the evil hour drew nigh. He knew Peter was "salvable" at heart. He knew the cyclonic rush of circumstance would sweep Peter off his feet, but He also knew he would rise again, and, after his turning about, become a tower of strength to his brethren. For Judas, Jesus uttered not a word. He knew him for the devil's child he was, and made no effort to deter him from his course.

Peter was one of whom God said: "He is Mine." Judas was one of whom Satan could have said:

"He is mine." Peter was a true sheep of the Divine pasture. Judas was a wolf wearing a woollen fleece.

The Good Shepherd could keep God's sheep and bring him back when wandering. He was not authorised by God to protect the wolf, but rather to encompass its overthrow and destruction. The same influences were exerted in both cases, but one was saved, while the other was lost.

Brethren in the Lord, there is a determining power in God's truth, which, because of what is inherent in the heart, becomes a savour of life unto life for some, but a savour of death unto death for others! Why is this? The difference springs from the human heart—from the motives which lead to response towards the truth. Some are severely simple and sincere through and through; others are wayward, daring, and inclined to take liberties with the word and with Providence, while others are malicious, ravenous, greedy of place and power, caring not who may suffer, if only they can gain their ends.

The Shepherd of the Flock is not commissioned to keep and protect the destructive wolf. He is not authorised to check the wayward goat, but He is deputed to use Almighty pastoral power to keep and guard and feed the sheep of God in every circumstance. The true sheep hears His voice. The goat, too, may hear His voice. Even the wolf may hear His voice. But the true sheep immediately obeys. The goat will wander on. The wolf will slouch around waiting for his "kill."

Immediate response to the leading influence of the Lord manifested in the daily Providence is the keynote of the "keepable" state; hesitation to obey, or refusal to obey makes the "keeping" work impossible.

Sheep do not change into goats. Neither do they become wolves. If a seeming brother falls it is scarcely likely that he ever was a sheep. The congregation may have accounted him a sheep, just as "the eleven" took Judas for a sheep, but the Lord had known the truth of the situation all the time. Only the right time and circumstance was needed to reveal the fact, and because there was no Shepherd's power at hand to "keep", the pretender fell. To enjoy the Shepherd's care as a true sheep is a blessed thing, but to have crept into the fold, yet not know the Shepherd's care is a state of dire peril indeed. Such may for a time range themselves around the study of the Word, but, lacking the sweet binding influence of the Holy Spirit—the caressing touches in communion of the Shepherd of the sheep—it is perhaps only a matter of time before their studious ardour cools, and their interest is dead. But on His own word, a true sheep He cannot lose, but keeps them to the end.

ASKING QUESTIONS

A thinking point

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. Probably the first man who invented the wheel saw some stones rolling down a slope, and asked himself some such questions as "Why does that particular stone keep on rolling when these others have stopped?" Such questions are at the back of all our knowledge.

We all know how children are always asking questions, awkward ones sometimes, like the pick-pocket's son who piped up loud and clear "Why did you put your hand into that gentleman's pocket, Father?" Children want to know: Jesus was no exception, for at the age of twelve he was found in the temple asking questions of the priests. What questions we ask will depend on where our interests lie. Yet even in the things dearest to us, there is a danger when we stop asking questions. There is the risk of taking things for granted. Familiarity, it is said, breeds contempt, and this can apply to the words of Scripture, which may become so well known to us that we fail to get the best out of them. It is here that the art of asking questions can be of real value.

Questions are of help to others besides those who ask them. Consider how much of Jesus' teaching we should have lost if his disciples had not always been saying "Master, explain this parable to us" "When will this be?" "Then who can be saved?" The great thing about the disciples was that they were humble. They were not afraid to admit their ignorance, and as a result they became less ignorant. Those who were puzzled at Jesus' miracles and teaching, and said "What does this mean? (Mk. 1: 37), were far more likely to profit from his ministry than those who had a ready-made explanation—"He has a devil!"—and were ready out of their wisdom to pass judgment on him and his works. We have no need to be ashamed or afraid of asking questions, for we do not yet know fully as we are fully known. The time has not yet come when with the first disciples we need ask no questions (Jn. 16: 23).

Not all questions are asked by those who seek knowledge: questions can also be used to pass it

on to others. Often we are well aware of certain facts but have not realised what they imply, and then a question may help us. For example, in the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand, the disciples had helped distribute the food, and were astonished at the number it had fed. But the next moment they were worrying because they had forgotten to bring any bread with them, and Jesus used questions to remind them of the miracle he had just performed. "Don't you understand?" he asked. They had failed to realise that what he could do for others, he could do for them, and they had no cause for worrying about so small a matter. And then again, they had seen his miracles, had heard his teaching, and yet they had not fully grasped who he was and what he was doing. So he asked them pointedly, "Who do you say that I am?" It was Peter who came out with the answer, but they were all strengthened by answering in their own minds. It was to Peter also that Jesus when he was risen put the question "Simon . . . do you love me?" It gave Peter the opportunity humbly to affirm his love: but Jesus' thrice repeated question was followed each time by the reminder that loving him means serving his flock. Jesus certainly knew that he was dear to Peter, yet he asked the question for Peter's sake.

There were others besides his disciples who asked Jesus questions. Questions such as "Is it lawful to pay taxes?", "What is the greatest commandment?", and the old chestnut concerning the wife of the seven brothers in the resurrection, were put in a very different spirit from that of the simple disciples. These questioners desired to catch this new teacher out, yet though their desire was to discredit Jesus, their questions did elicit answers of real value, and he came successfully through their examination, so that they asked him no more questions. In a way their conduct was very proper. Jesus set himself up as a teacher, and before accepting him they were justified in trying his worth with teasing problems. So with us; if we ever take it upon ourselves to examine a preacher or his doctrine, we should do so humbly: but there is nothing wrong with making the test.

It is in 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". For a study is something in which all should share, and often the simplest points open up a whole field of discussion. On the other hand, the elders in a class might do well on occasion not to expound a passage at length, but to imitate their Master and ask such simple questions as will gently draw their brethren to a fuller understanding.

But it is not always easy to ask the right questions. There is a limit to our knowledge, and to some questions we cannot know the answers. But yet many questions can often be answered by reference to other passages of Scriptures or to commentaries, or simply by reference to what is said in the next verse or the next chapter. The Bible was not written in a vacuum, it was written by and for men in a particular time and place. Neither is it a collection of texts, for much of it is connected argument or narrative. Knowledge of customs, of history, of botany even, will help us first to understand what was written before we start looking for a lesson for ourselves.

It can be helpful both for public and for private study to ask certain questions methodically concerning any passage. First one might consider who wrote it and to whom, and what was the particular need which it met. Next it is often profitable to read through the passage as a whole, noting the divisions of thought, how it falls into paragraphs. Verse by verse study is good in its place, but it is probably better to pay attention to detail only after such questions as "What is the writer's message?", "How does this thought lead on to the next?", or "What inspired this remark, or this parable?" have been considered. Then is the time to pick through the passage, getting the meaning of difficult words and verses. Concordance references have two values, firstly in leading to other scriptures where the same topic occurs, and secondly because they help in the understanding of particular words. Finally, when the meaning and context of a scripture is grasped, one begins to wonder "Is there a lesson here for me? or for our class? What is the reason for this exhortation—do we really need to follow this course?", or "What place did this event have in God's purposes?", or "Surely in another scripture it says exactly the opposite?" These are but a few of the questions that one can ask. Of course, this is far from being the only method of study. Yet questions, whether asked in a simple desire for enlightenment or judiciously pointed to bring out a particular thought, can be of real help in bringing a passage to life.

Questions are the sign of a lively mind, of mental watchfulness. But it is not enough for our minds to be awake—our hearts too must be open, our

consciences alive. At times we may be sleepy, or even perhaps lazy, in our attitude to life and the study of the Bible. This should not be, and asking questions is one way in which we may provoke one another to good works. But above all, through prayer we can draw upon God's spiritual storehouse: and if Bible study does not come easily, or if any man lacks wisdom, "let him ask God for it, who gives with open hand to all men without upbraiding; and it will be given him."

BRO. J. T. READ

Bro. Read will (D.V.) make the following visits. For fuller details apply to Bro. W. R. Walton, 2, Highland Road, Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwicks.

May	15	Welling
	17	Maidstone
	18-19	Slough
	20	Aylesbury
	24	Oxford
	27	Atherstone
	28-29	Leicester (Convention)
	30-31	Atherstone
June	1-3	Melton Mowbray
	5-6	Nottingham
	7-8	Lincoln
	9	Sheffield
	10	Dewsbury
	11-13	Ossett
	14-15	Newcastle
	16-17	Dundee
	18-21	Glasgow
	22-23	Belfast
	24-25	Londonderry
	26	Belfast
	27	Enniskillen
	28	Dublin
	29	Belfast
	30	Warrington

BETWEEN OURSELVES

(continued from page 34)

Nearly Home

"Dearly beloved brethren,

"I write to thank you for sending to me for so many years the 'Bible Study Monthly.'

"I am now near the end of my journey, being nearly 4 months into my 92nd year, and think I should ask you while I am still here to cease sending it. I have enjoyed reading it always with gratitude.

"Yours in the glorious hope, R. A. McEwen.

Up to a few months ago our brother was still a regular applicant for literature and tracts wherewith to spread the good tidings.



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 32, No. 4

JUNE, 1955

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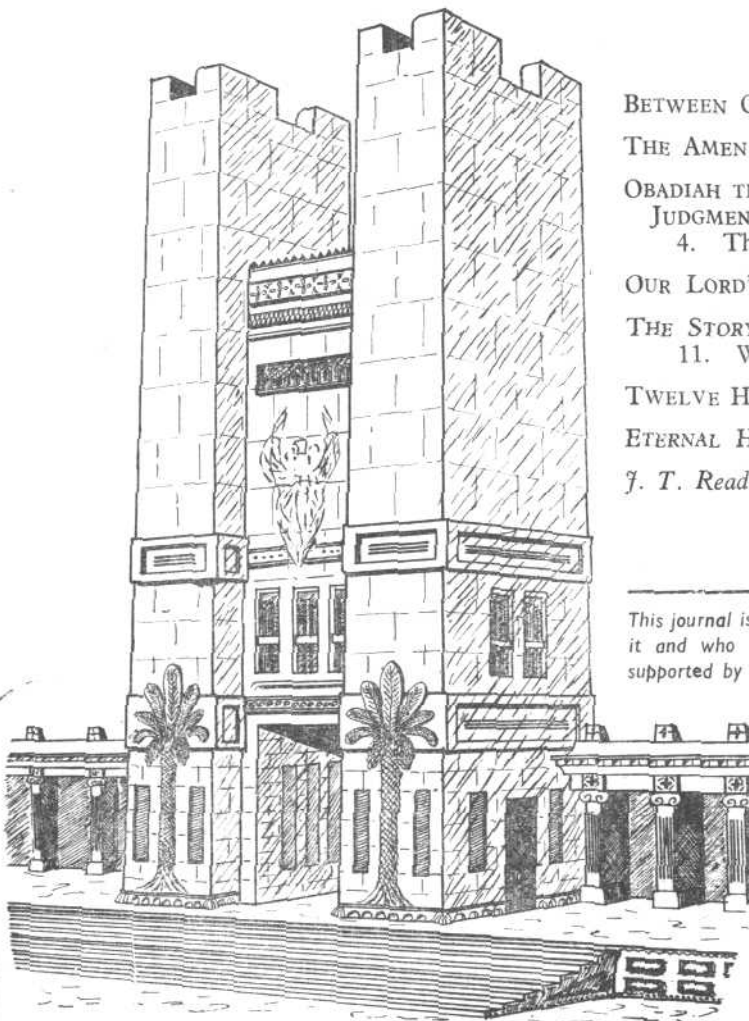
This journal is sent free of charge to all who request
it and who renew their request annually, and is
supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested.

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or
Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E-4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Anonymous

We would acknowledge with sincere appreciation the anonymous receipt of five pounds marked "Towards the good work". This was received here in early March but owing to the time lag between setting-up and publishing, and the fact that we only had one issue for April-May, this is the first opportunity we have had to print the acknowledgment.

* * *

London Convention

Arrangements are in hand for the 1955 London Convention, to be held as usual at Conway Hall during the August Bank holiday season, Saturday to Monday, July 30 to August 1. A very warm welcome is extended to all brethren to join in this season of fellowship and upbuilding. It is expected that Brother J. T. Read will address some of the sessions.

Programmes will be available in due course. In the meantime any information apart from accommodation matters may be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Applications for accommodation should be sent to the Accommodation Secretary, Brother V. Scott, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

It is very important that reservations for accommodation are made early in view of the heavy demand for hotel accommodation in London at that time. Will brethren please advise their requirements to Brother Scott as early as possible, and make every effort to do so at any rate before the end of June.

The hall will be florally decorated with such flowers as are given by the brethren.

* * *

Swansea Home-Gathering

The friends at Swansea announce a gathering to be held on Friday and Saturday evenings and all day Sunday, 22nd to 24th July next, upon the occasion of the visit to Swansea of Bro. J. T. Read.

Further details can be obtained from Bro. L. W. Shephard, Flat B, 1, Walter Road, Swansea, Glam.

* * *

Literature

Bro. W. F. Reader, of 286, Ongar Road, Brentwood, Essex, has a set of the "Herald of Christ's Kingdom" for the six years 1918-1926, mounted in spring-back binders and well used, which he will gladly send to anyone who would like to have them. Please write to Bro. Reader direct with your request.

* * *

Some of the older brethren will remember the book "*Doctrines and Disciplines*" by our late Bro. H. J. Shearn. A small stock of this book remains and is in the hands of Bro. G. A. Ford, 57, Icknield Way, Streatley, Luton, Beds. The book deals generally with the salient features of our faith as it was understood by Brother Shearn and the brethren who laboured with him twenty years and more ago. Brother Ford will gladly send copies to anyone who will request same, enclosing a few stamps for postage, while the supply lasts.

* * *

Bro. F. Lardent announces that the well-known L-cards, which have been kept at a consistent price of 1/6 per dozen for many years, have now had to be increased to 2/- per dozen (plus postage when sent by post). For the convenience of our readers we keep a stock of these cards at this address and can supply direct when desired. The new prices are 2/3 per dozen or 6/- for three dozen, post free, assorted.

* * *

Brethren in Cupertino, California, have published a 284 page book, bound in limp cloth, entitled "*The Hope of the World*", offering an outline of the Divine Plan based upon the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation, and intended primarily for interesting newcomers to our fellowship. They have offered to supply us with up to one hundred copies for the British brethren, to be used for

(Continued on page 64)

THE AMEN

A consideration of a great spiritual theme

In most Christian communities it is usually the custom, at the close of some fervent prayer, or at the end of some impassioned exhortation, for the congregation (or at least the greater part of it) to give expression to their appreciation and approval thereof by the exclamation of a deeply-emphasised "Amen". There may be differences in the volume of the vocal sound expressing this approval and endorsement, according to the nature of the occasion, or to the canonical laws governing the character of Divine Worship, but, almost everywhere, we may safely say, in louder or more subdued measure, the close of the fervent prayer or the intense appeal will call forth the pent-up responsive utterance of the devout "Amen" from all whose hearts are warm towards the Most High and His beloved Son.

This fervent word, in and around which such sacred associations are woven, is not a native English word, nor is it even a modern word. It dates from a distant antiquity. It is almost as old as the human race itself. It is derived from an ancient root which was common to several of the primitive Semitic languages, the original meaning of which was "to prop" or "to support".

As time elapsed it took on new and wider meanings. It came to carry, also, the thought of verbal support—"assent" or "endorsement" of some spoken word, as for instance, in the people's response to the Levitical adjuration recorded in Deut. 27. 15-26. Here it bears the thought "so let it be". Again, when Nehemiah made appeal to Israel to discontinue taking usury from a poorer brother in Israel, the whole people gave assent to his appeal by a mutual and national "Amen." Here it would carry the thought "so will we do". (Neh. 5. 13.) And on the occasion of the homing of the Ark, when the sons of Asaph had sung the anthem of thanksgiving, composed by David for the great event, the people responded by a great Amen! Here it would express the thought "So say we all".

Thus, in seasons of devoted worship, or times of national crisis, the fervent Amen of the whole nation (or of the whole congregation) was the response to the like fervent appeal made by the appointed servant of the Lord, to "do" what the Lord would have them do or "be" what He would have them be.

When the centralised form of worship, located at the Temple, gave place to the widely distributed worship of the synagogue, every appeal by the synagogue authorities was answered by the local congregation's "Amen". In this way every responsible citizen of Israel admitted and acknowledged

his responsibility before the Lord, and re-affirmed his desire to live at peace with God. Having been reminded of Israel's unique prerogatives, and of her special standing before the Most High God, every acclamation of the "Amen" was tantamount to a solemn vow, re-affirmed and renewed, by every member of the congregation. It carried with it the prayer—"so let it be", "so will we do", "so say we all".

From the Jewish synagogue this conception passed over into the Christian Ecclesia.

"It was a custom which passed over from the Synagogue into the Christian assemblies that when he who had read or discoursed had offered up a solemn prayer to God, the others in attendance responded 'Amen', and thus made the substance of what was uttered their own." (*Thayer's Lexicon*, p. 32 under word *Amen*.)

In this way, the Jewish ceremonial practice, epitomised by a word far older than themselves, found an entrance into the Christian communities everywhere. It is thus an ancient word heavily encrusted with reverential thought that finds expression on our modern lips when even we, ourselves, respond to the spirit of the fervent prayer or to the ardent exhortation.

In the days of the early Church the place of the "Amen" in the act of worship was a most important one. It was no mere trifling part of the ceremony to be performed or neglected at will. Even Paul himself—opposer of ceremonialism and formalism though he was—calls it "The Amen" (1 Cor. 14. 16). The mutual response, at the right moment, of every heart and voice, in unison, was accounted to be of far greater importance than the exercise of some Spirit-bestowed "gift of tongues", if that exercise, for the time being, was in an unknown tongue. Better far to have the whole audience answer with its great "Amen" because it understood—so Paul said—than have its ear regaled with incomprehensible oratory.

"How shall he that filleth the place of the unlearned say 'The Amen' at thy giving of thanks, seeing he knoweth not what thou sayest?" asks Paul (1 Cor. 14. 16).

According to the testimony of some early Fathers in the Church, the expression of the congregational "Amen" was not by any means a weak or feebly-whispered response, but a mighty shout that made the rafters ring—a tide of sound that echoed and re-echoed, back and forth, till the very building shook. Gratitude for what the Lord had done for each and all, released the pent-up feelings of the whole per-

sonality in a great shout of such lusty magnitude, that it might well be called a "Grand Amen". If these records present a true picture of the scene, no wonder Paul, in words both simple and profound, depicts it as "saying the Amen".

Early in the second century Elders and Bishops in the Church began to claim the right exclusively to expound the Word. Her ablest scholars—so they said—must be thus authorised to enable the Church universal to parry and withstand the assaults of her pagan foes. But, while conceding this, for the common good, there was one thing the congregation would not concede. It would not relinquish the privilege of voicing its great "Amen". Call this vocal climax of the worship "formalism", if we will, but, we must not forget that the "Amen" seemed to mean much more to the early Church than it means to us to-day. To us, to-day, the force and meaning of the word "Amen" has been greatly whittled down and almost lost. It has come to mean, with passing years, little more than "so be it", or "so let it be". It expresses the assent of the audience to the spoken word—the hearer's response to the prayer, the benediction, the doxology, or the personal appeal.

This definition has not the ancient force of that which inspired the early Church, nor even the Jewish Synagogue. To them the sharing of the great "Amen" was tantamount to the making of a vow, or the submission of an oath to the Lord. He "who says Amen", writes one commentator, regarding both the Synagogue and the early Church, thereby asserts that his statement is *binding*."

Perhaps we may better understand what the "Amen" meant to the early Church, if we consider this forceful word as it fell from the Master's lips. Jesus used it as no other man had used it before His day. With Him, it never came as a climax to a statement or to a prayer; always, it preceded some solemn utterance. With Him, it was not used responsively to what another said, but only to emphasise what He Himself was about to say. "Amen, Amen, I say unto you" was His usual mode of stressing some great truth. To Him it meant, This is the Truth, this alone is Truth, and this is the whole Truth.

Among men, the teacher reasons his way from the shadows of the circumference towards the light at the centre of things—Jesus went through to the centre at one step and spake there in the full blaze of the Light. He had no "ifs" nor "buts" nor qualifying phrases to introduce. He could use the imperative, and say "it is thus and so". He spake as the Voice of Authority, infallibly, which knew the "Truth Absolute", and stated what it knew with emphasis. To Nicodemus He said "Amen, Amen,

I say unto thee, we speak what we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen" (John 3. 11).

How authoritative and awe-inspiring, therefore, were those themes to which Jesus linked this solemn affirmation. Let us recall a few. "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, the hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live" (John 5. 25). "Amen, Amen, I say unto you. I am the door of the sheep" (John 10: 7-16). "Amen, Amen, I say unto you, He that believeth hath Eternal life" (John 6. 47-51). Always it is Truth Absolute, spoken by the voice of Absolute Authority.

How poor and feeble, against this weight of emphasis is the word "verily", or our own phrase "so be it", or a more recent "indeed and indeed." Truly we have lost much of the force and meaning of the Master's Amen.

The Early Church, at least in Apostolic days, was not permitted to forget this emphasis. Of this, we have an instance in 2 Cor. 1. 15-22. Paul had been charged with prevarication; with saying one thing and meaning something else. He had intimated that he might call at Corinth on his journey into Macedonia (1 Cor. 4. 19), then, when his visit there was accomplished, return again to Corinth and probably winter there. (1 Cor. xvi. 5-6). Circumstances had made the two visits impossible—and thus the cause of the accusation arose! In self-defence Paul says "Do I purpose according to the flesh—that is, to please myself—that with me there should be (the duplicity of the double tongue) the yea-yea, and the nay-nay?" For Paul the course of life was mapped out by the Lord ("if the Lord will", 1 Cor. 4. 19; "if the Lord permit" 1 Cor. 16. 7), and he knew it was not for him, without the Lord's approval or ordering, to take one step here or there, or bind himself to take this course or that. He may form a preference, or even express a fond desire (Acts 19. 21), but it was not within his province to bind himself by emphatic promise, or excuse himself by definite refusal to do this thing or that. All the supervision of his life was in the Lord's prerogative, and subject to His oversight.

The Corinthian complaints had not learned this truth sufficiently to bow to the Lord's control, and were blaming Paul for "running off" his word. It did not seem to have occurred to them to charge the blame up to the Lord, or up to God, who had supervised Paul's course. Taking cover under this omission of theirs he would have them know that like as they accounted God to be faithful (actuated by a singleness of purpose) so, in like manner, "our word to you is not yea and nay", and that he was not one whit more unmindful of his promise, than God was, of the promises He had made.

Then carrying their minds to higher ground he cites the facts of the Saviour's life to prove that the Christian life is not based on irresolution or inconstancy. "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, . . . was not yea and nay, but in Him is (only) yea". Indeed, had Jesus of Nazareth, at any stage of His exacting career, been of an irresolute or inconstant disposition (the yea-yea and nay-nay attitude) He could never have won through to attain the high dignity of "Son of God". Had there not been firm determination to do the Will of God, at all cost, and against all who would oppose, it could not have been said of Him that He had been "declared to be the Son of God . . . by His Resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1. 4). With Him, in full degree, had been the "yea"—the positive—disposition, throughout His earthly life.

And surely, not less positive is the exalted Son of God than was the Man of Nazareth! There was, therefore, no ground for asserting vacillation or prevarication concerning the Supervisor of the Church, and since the oversight of Paul's little life was in that Supervisor's hands, there could be no charge of inconstancy or inconsistency laid against His "orderings". Paul wanted these meticulous brethren to understand that every promise or proposal made by one to another should be made subject to God's control, and accepted without recrimination, even if they could not be fulfilled, provided always, that such non-fulfilment were in full accord with the Will of God.

Paul then moves to still higher ground, and brings to the accusing brethren's attention a universal aspect of the Word of God made certain by the unchanging constancy of the Son of God. "How many soever be the promises of God", he says, "in Him is the 'yea'." God has made many promises at various stages of His Plan. First, came the hopeful promise to Mother Eve, that her seed should bruise the serpent's head. Then, in due course, came the Oath-bound Promise to Abraham, repeated and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob that in their seed all the nations should be blessed. After that the promise came to David, that, of his seed, should come forth Israel's Royal King. Meantime to Israel itself, the Voice of God had made many promises, assuring them that they should yet attain their rightful place among the nations of the earth. And to the Church of Christ, exceeding great and precious promises have been made. Yes! God has made many promises—but over against them all there stood for ages one effective embargo—all men were under the curse! The condemnation for Adamic sin stood in the way, and few indeed of these promises could be realised and inherited till that condemnation was taken out of the way.

By His Sacrifice, consummated at Calvary, and presented at the Throne of God, that embargo was removed, and the whole wide range of promises was confirmed and made unfailingly sure. (Rom. 15. 8). Jesus Christ, the Risen Son of God, now stands for ever forth as the "Confirming Yea" to every promise of the Most High God, to whomsoever made. His glorious exalted life, following his vicarious death, is the sure pledge that all God's purposes will stand, for the same constancy still prevails in Heaven as prevailed between Jordan and Calvary.

Then by a few well-chosen words Paul shows the great sequel to all this constancy. "Wherefore *also*, through Him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us." To-day the "Amen" rises from small upper rooms, from small, insignificant companies, but its volume will swell to the ends of the earth, as, first, the Seed of Abraham (in both its parts) enters into its inheritance, and through them, the nations of the earth find their way into the City of God. All the wide world will make the rafters of the universe echo and echo again as they volley forth the "Grand Amen".

There is one further aspect of this ancient theme in which a universal fact becomes also an incomparable Name! Jesus illustrated this extension of a fact into a Name when He said "I am . . . the Truth . . ." (John 14. 6). Jesus had stood forth as a Teacher of Truth, presenting to all who could hear the facts and verities of the truth; but, in reality, He was more than a teacher of truth. All the facts and verities of truth met and centred in His person. All the many-sided facts of man's alienated life pointed to their need for Him. All the many-sided facts of His spotless nature and sinless sacrifice pointed to His ability to meet man's need. All man's need, and all God's provision met in Him. In Himself He was the consummation of every fact. He was indeed the Living Truth.

Through Him shall yet be the Universal Amen, to the praise of Almighty God, but He also, in Himself, is the Great "Amen". "These things saith The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness . . ." (Rev. 3. 14.) Exactly as the Name given to Him at His birth (Jesus) was an indication of what He was come down to earth to do ("call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" Matt. 1: 21), so also, the Name given Him in His exaltation is an indication of what He has done. It has a sense of finality and completeness about it. It tells of a task completed in the interests of a purpose that for ever "IS"—a purpose that knows no change or variation, worlds without end, of which every segment is certain and sure, because of what He did.

God only is competent to confer such a Name, for none but He can fully understand the greatness of the task that has been done. By the conferment of that Name, God has set forth His estimation and approval of the universal work that was achieved, and of the certainty that exists.

It is as though the Eternal One, to sustain our faltering faith, has said, through the bestowment of that Name "Yea, it is so! it is sure! it cannot fail; in Him is the final word!"

Here, because our view is limited, we still unburden our pent-up souls by our weak "Amen,—so be it", or "so may it be"; but God does not need to speak "expectantly" as we poor mortals do. Even now the "realisation" to Him is sure. He knows His worthy Son is constant and true, and so He speaks accordingly.

To the Most High that worthy Son is the "Amen", the climax of every hope and good intent.

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

"Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you will be completely dishonoured. The pride of your hearts has deceived you, living as you do in the fastnesses of the rocks, building your home on high, and saying in your heart 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though you set your nest among the very stars, yet even from there will I pull you down, says God."

"What a downfall is yours!" (vs. 2-5).

Small among the nations! That is a very apt description of the true Church in the flesh, the disciples of Jesus. It is also an apt description of "spiritual Edom", the nominal professors of Christianity, but for a different reason. True Christianity is at a discount because the nations of the world "will not have this man to reign over us". They do not want Christ and they are not prepared to pay the price that consecration to His service demands. So they treat the appeal of the Gospel with indifference. The Edomites know that and they have endeavoured to compromise with the world by rejecting all there is in Christianity that runs counter to the world. For a time, in past ages, that course of action brought results. The fear instilled by the doctrine of hell-fire, and the power wielded by the priesthood, made organised Christianity a very useful ally to kings with turbulent subjects. State and Church found many common interests and between them they ruled the common people with a rod of iron. To-day all is different. Men and women are no longer driven by fear; the State has found other and more effective means of keeping the masses in check, or at least, in these days when the masses themselves wield much power, of making those same masses serve the interests of the State. The assistance of the Church nominal is no longer needed in secular matters and that Church has in consequence become "small among the nations"; completely dishonoured.

4.—THE PRIDE OF THE EAGLES

"The pride of your hearts has deceived you, living as you do in the fastnesses of the rocks, building your home on high, and saying in your heart 'Who will bring me down to the ground?'" (vs. 3).

How like is this expression to the word in Rev. 18. 7 "She saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow". The pride of the Edomites was in their lofty dwellings high up among the pinnacles and crags of their mountain city. They were supremely confident that no enemy would ever be able to dislodge them, and they sat there in arrogant pride. So with all in this Age who have had any part or lot in that which is symbolised in the Book of Revelation by this woman seated upon the scarlet beast, arrogant also in her pride and proud in the power she wields over the kings of the earth, never dreaming that the end of that power is shortly to come. Jeremiah the prophet saw something of this when in his splendid vision of the fall of great Babylon he was shown by the Holy Spirit something of God's judgment upon all who partake of the pride of Edom. "Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord of Hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up; and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him." (Jer. 50. 31-32.) Babylon was the proudest and greatest city of antiquity; with her massive walls and mighty Tower it must have seemed as if she could never be overthrown, but overthrown she was, and she lies to-day a waste of broken brickwork inhabited only by jackals and lizards.

"Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though you set your nest among the very stars, yet even from there will I pull you down," says God. What a downfall is yours! (vs. 4-5). The supreme example of this over-weening ambition is that of Lucifer, the Morning Star, related in the fourteenth chapter

of Isaiah. The coming down-fall of the king of Babylon is made the symbol, in that chapter, of the splendid vision of Lucifer's doom. One who aspired to share the throne of God is cast down to the lowermost hell, the only possible end for such an one. "I will ascend into heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will be like the Most High." That was Lucifer's aim and intent. But he knew not, or at least refused to believe, that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he pleaseth." The One who was eventually exalted above all and made to sit at the right hand of God was One who humbled Himself, became of no reputation, and was obedient to the Father's Will, even unto death. Here is a mighty contrast which the Edomites of this Gospel Age have utterly failed to grasp. They have followed the way of Lucifer rather than the way of Christ. Like the builders of the Tower of Babel of old time, they have sought to build their own edifice and storm the gates of heaven, entering the very presence of God in the might of their own power, knowing not that against the restraining hand of God the whole of their puny efforts are as nothing. There is only one way into the celestial realm and only one avenue of approach to the throne of God; it is by the strait gate, and narrow way, that leadeth unto life. Jesus said "Few there be that find it". He knew men, and He knew that so many would attempt the way of Lucifer; few would understand the depths of His own teaching and come to Him in humble surrender, finding in that true discipleship the way to the heavenly Kingdom.

One is led to wonder if our Lord's foreview of the powers of the heavens being shaken, (Matt. 24. 29) has not something to do with this threatened "pulling down" of Obadiah 4. During the whole of this Gospel Age the "powers of the heavens", the principalities and authorities of Christendom so-called, those who have controlled the merely nominally Christian institutions and systems, have had matters very much their own way. One of their number, one of the most infamous of Popes, is reported to have said on one occasion "*This Christianity, how profitable a farce it has been to*

us." That is the type of man from which these "powers of heavens" have been built up. The ecclesiastical leader whose faith has been truly in Christ, who has endeavoured, however imperfectly, to lead his flock in the way of the Lord, and has honoured his Master above himself, has never been part of these "powers of the heavens." There have been many such throughout the Age and they have exercised a spiritually beneficent influence and in many cases left their mark on history. But they have never been part of the powers of spiritual control. The majority of men in high positions have sooner or later yielded to the seductive influences of the world around them and forsaken the narrow way for one that offered greater ease and more of the plaudits of men. And in so doing they have incurred the Divine sentence "From there will I pull thee down", says God.

It is a most noticeable thing in this present time, when the powers of the heavens are being shaken, that the pronouncements of ecclesiastical leaders on world affairs are given less and less attention by both the secular leaders, politicians, and the masses whom they lead. If a dignitary of the Church does venture to express an opinion on a political or social matter he is as often as not told, by the Press or otherwise, to confine his remarks to religion and leave other matters to people who understand them. Such treatment would have been unthinkable in earlier generations. Nothing can be more obvious than that the day of earthly power by "princes of the Church" is past.

Though they attempted to exalt themselves as the stars—the stars have fallen from heaven. "What a downfall is yours!" says the prophet, wondering as well as exultantly as he contemplates the ruin of what was once a mighty power. So it is in this Age when the great ones of the earth cry out "Alas, alas, that great city . . . for in one hour so great riches is come to naught." (Rev. 18. 17.) In John's vision a mighty angel takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. (Rev. 18. 21.)

(To be continued)

OUR LORD'S PEACE An exhortation

"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 very 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 the 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 forebodings 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 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 to-day! 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 will I 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 thus 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 people 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 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 STORY OF THE FLOOD

Chapter 11—While the Earth Remaineth.

"While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Gen. 8. 22.)

After judgment comes blessing. That is one of the Divine principles which men have been slow to learn. God does not chastise for the sake of chastisement, but that men might turn from their evil ways, and live. "The Lord hath chastened me sore" declared the Psalmist "but he hath not given me over to death." In that lies our hope and assurance for the future of mankind. None will be eternally lost save those who are quite irreclaimable. None will be denied an opportunity for repentance and we shall find in the last analysis that the only ones who do not eventually repent are those who have destroyed within themselves their own capacity for repentance, those who have so steeled themselves against every influence for good that they have nothing left on which the Spirit of God can work.

The people of the world before the Flood were not like that; they were ignorant in the main and it is probable that their greatest sin was unbelief. They entered into judgment, but after that judgment will come blessing, in the day that they rise again to hear afresh the call to repentance which they rejected so long time ago. And this time they will listen, for there will be no scope for unbelief. The knowledge of the Lord shall be abroad in the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The first act of Noah upon emerging from the Ark was to bring an offering to God. How much the antediluvians knew of offerings and sacrifice and to what extent they worshipped, if they worshipped at all, we have no idea. It is more than possible that there were no "false gods" and no mythologies before the Flood. All the evidence we have from pagan and idolatrous religions points to their origin on this side of the Flood, and it may

well be that men before the Flood either worshipped God or else did not worship at all. The only references we have to worship in that long age are in connection with Cain and Abel, Enos, and Enoch, and all these were men who acknowledged and revered God—Cain at any rate until his sin and after that he continued at least to acknowledge the supremacy of God. So we may well regard Noah's offering as marking the continuance of an old tradition whereby men acknowledged God's overlordship of their lives and their own dependence upon Him. In offering clean beasts of all that he had taken into the Ark Noah testified to the fact that all he possessed he owed to God, Who had instructed him in the means of escape from the Flood, had brought him and his safely through the catastrophe, and set him in the new world with all that he needed to start life anew. And so he rendered God a share of all in token of his own allegiance to Him.

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savour." The offering was acceptable and accepted. The first offering in human history to which God had respect was that of Abel; but Abel died. He was acceptable personally to God because of his faith but he was not privileged to execute any of God's plans or play any part in God's redemptive purpose. With Noah it was different. He became the head of a new order of society, the acknowledged ruler of a new world, a world which was to see the entire sacrificial content of the Divine Plan of redemption enacted and worked out. The offering of Noah was only the first of many human approaches to God, many tokens of faith and hope. Succeeding generations would see many and increasing attempts on the part of man to come back to God. The world before the Flood was marked by a steady increase in human degeneracy and forsaking of God. Each succeeding generation was more godless than its predecessor, until in the days of Noah it was as if all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth, and Noah with his family the only true worshippers of God left in all the world. The light had all but gone out and left the world in utter and hopeless darkness, with no one ever to light the torch once more and proclaim the name of God.

It was not like that after the Flood. True, it was still a world of sin and death, "this present evil world". It was still a world where evil flourished and went apparently unpunished. But there was a difference. From Noah's day onward the light was increasing instead of decreasing. Slowly, but nevertheless surely, men entered more and more into the knowledge of God and His Plan, and the cause of His truth be-

came steadily established in the earth. Never again, said God in His infinite wisdom, need the human race be virtually completely blotted out from the earth because of almost total degeneracy. There would always be at the least a remnant, to be as the salt of the earth, saving it from utter corruption. From Noah to Shem, and from Shem to his sons, and through the generations to Abram the knowledge of God and a hope for the future was preserved. Throughout those long centuries during which the peoples of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt and lands farther afield built their splendid civilisations, times concerning which the Old Testament is silent, there must have been many godly men in the earth. We know that was so for when at last Abram left Ur of the Chaldees and travelled into Canaan he found Melchisedek, a descendant of Shem like himself, serving God and ruling a people who knew God, in his royal city of Salem, afterward to become Jerusalem. He found Abimelech king of Gerar, also of the line of Shem, serving God and ruling a people who knew God. He found Pharaoh of Egypt, a descendant of Ham, serving God and ruling a people who knew God. The centuries which elapsed between Noah and Abraham certainly did see the rise of false religions and the spread of godlessness as men increased on the earth, but they also saw the slow increase, generation by generation, of men who knew God and played some small part in the outworking of His Plan. So it was with full confidence that God gave the promise "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, though the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done." (Ch. 8. 21.)

In the strength of that promise Noah embarked on the rebuilding of the world. He had the Divine blessing pronounced over him and his sons; he had the solemnity of being brought into covenant relationship with God—the first mention in the Bible of a covenant—and he had the visible sign, the rainbow, always to remind him of God's faithfulness. He and his had lived through an experience such as no other men have ever been called upon to undergo. He had believed God, and translated his belief into action, and reaped the reward of faith. For a short time the whole of the Divine purpose depended upon him and his integrity. If Noah had failed, the whole of the Plan of redemption, centred in the Person of One Who was to trace lineal descent from Mother Eve, would have been incapable of execution. There would have been no Seed of the Woman. But God chooses His men aright. Noah did not fail, and the earth was replenished anew.

THE END

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 Pharisees 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 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 realize 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?*" Is it 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 to-day, 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 to-day. 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" befell 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, to-day, 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."

ETERNAL HOPE

An interesting
voice from the past

One of the vital differences between our faith and that of the majority of Christian communions is our insistence—an insistence founded upon the sure basis of Scriptural teaching—that this present life does not end human probation. We hold, and must continue to hold very tenaciously to the fundamental truth that the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Second Advent is for the express purpose of affording all men a full and final opportunity for repentance and reconciliation with God. We tend sometimes to think that we as a fellowship are alone in this belief, and so far as the "official" belief of any of the denominations is concerned that is true. But from time to time Christian ministers have shared this understanding and have looked for some kind of future probation for man beyond the grave. A striking example was Dr. Samuel Holmes, D.D., an American Presbyterian minister, who in 1907 delivered a remarkable sermon on the subject. For clear, cogent reasoning it is a sermon which deserves to be preserved and for the benefit of those who have not read it before. Dr. Holmes' words are reproduced herewith. It will be observed that the limitations of orthodox Christian belief as to the state of the "soul" after death precluded him from seeing the subject in all its clarity as we understand it to-day; but that a definite appreciation of the main principle could be held and publicly expounded to a congregation of orthodox Christians at that time is surely worthy of notice.

* * *

"In concluding our course of studies in Life's Last Realities, we come to a problem which, difficult as it is, must not be shirked. It is a problem to which allusion has heretofore been made, but which I have purposely postponed for discussion until the end: What is to be the final destiny of those who die in their sins?

"You will remember that, in our study of judgment after death, we reached the two-fold conviction that retribution in the life to come is

inevitable because grounded in a general moral necessity, and that such retribution must necessarily entail moral separation from goodness and from God. Now, in the face of these facts, is there any hope of better things for sinful men hereafter? Or are we shut up to the belief that such men must spend an eternity in pain and punishment and without hope of moral and spiritual recovery? And this problem has an importance and interest far greater than any general speculative concern as to human destiny. I told you the other afternoon, in our discussion of heaven, that one of its most blessed realities would be the reunion with those whom we have loved and lost. And I am sure that, in almost every heart, there is love and longing for some one who has passed out of this life, caring little or nothing for Christ or the things of the Spirit, and whose last days, it may be, were clouded by sin and shame. What, then, of such? Must we give up all hope of seeing them again, of meeting them by and by, knowing, as we do, that inevitable desolation separates the good and the evil when the secrets of all hearts are disclosed?

"Of course, you know what the teaching of the Church on this question has been for centuries, and what it continues to be in certain quarters to-day. But one must be blind indeed to movements in the modern religious world who is not aware that a great change has come over the minds of thinking people in regard to this matter. For a mighty and ever-growing doubt has arisen within a generation as to the irrevocability of destiny at death. The conviction has come to be very common to-day among educated men that there is every possibility of moral change for a human soul in the future life; and this conviction, too, is based, not on mere human speculation, but on the unmistakable implications of the Master's own teachings.

"Personally, I do not believe that Jesus taught the doctrine that human destiny is fixed at death, that after the dissolution of the body the chance

of moral change is withheld from men, and that those who die in their sins are condemned to everlasting torment. I believed it once, but I thank God that I believe it no longer; and the implied threat in that doctrine is no more to multitudes of men to-day than the 'rattling of a medicine man's gourd.' Instead, the world of thought is rapidly coming to believe that, for every man who survives the death of the body, there is opportunity given to be united to God in Christ, and for so long as there is the slightest survival of individual spiritual life. Moreover, this belief rests upon solid foundations.

"In the first place, it is a purely arbitrary assumption to affirm that moral finality is reached at death. Such a doctrine is not taught explicitly anywhere in the Scriptures, and the several passages sometimes cited in its support are capable of very different interpretations—interpretations more completely in harmony with Jesus' teachings elsewhere. No more is there anything in the nature of death itself to put an end to the possibility of change. Apart from the awe and mystery attaching to death, there is no reason for assuming that at its crisis man's destiny is irrevocably fixed. The entire position of the Augustinian theology at this point is pure and gratuitous assumption.

"On the other hand, a wider observation of this life and a deeper knowledge of men have conspired to reveal the incomplete and undeveloped state in which a vast majority of souls leave the world at death. They do not make sufficient moral progress here to settle the moral issue involved for all time. Most of those who die have by no means reached that stage of character where moral change is impossible. They are only on the threshold of development. They have just begun to recognize the importance of moral choices. And, as one of our modern theologians has well put it, 'It would be very strange if so solemn an experience as death were withdrawn from among the experiences that might influence the final decision of the soul.'

"Moreover, as I tried to point out in a previous address in this series, no conceivable life in the future can possibly deprive men of moral and spiritual accountability. The doctrine that 'moral strain' is only for this life, that in heaven man is free from moral activity and that in hell his moral responsibility is ended and he is compelled to suffer only for the sins committed in the flesh—this doctrine is intolerable and impossible. The moment a man ceases to be an active moral agent, he becomes less than a man, he sinks to the level of an automaton. And if, as is clear, the future life is as morally active and responsible and as full of solemn ethical meaning as the present, then a free moral agent will be capable of choosing good even if he is in hell.

Wherever living spirits are, the law of growth and progress, with all the corresponding possibilities of degeneration and death, must be carried with them and must hold for eternity.

"Now, if all that has thus far been said is true, if the final destiny of man is not fixed at death, and if moral and spiritual choices are open to him in the future life, then is it conceivable that God can fail of winning gracious victories of love over countless souls whom the world has reckoned lost? Over against the dogma of a hard and unrelenting theology at this point, I prefer to place the teaching of my Master in the parable of the lost sheep, wherein he tells us that the Good Shepherd will not cease to search for the one that is strayed and is lost 'until he find it.' For God will surely never falter in his quest for the sinning and unrepentant, so long as opportunity is left to recover them. Just because God is good and loving and sovereign, just because of that wondrous Divine compassion which we witness on Calvary, we may have confidence that multitudes of souls without number shall finally be restored to holiness and happiness and heaven.

"Only let it be remembered that such a restoration will come about, not through any forensic process or legal fiction, but through the only salvation that can ever really avail here or hereafter—the salvation wherein God helps man to make an end of sin in his own soul, and wherein he imparts to him the life of the Spirit. No man will ever be saved hereafter in any way, other than that in which he is saved here. No redemption is ever possible that does not involve a departure from sin and a humble, resolute quest after holiness. Therefore, let no man think that this is an easy doctrine, that he can keep on sinning and living in selfishness until by and by an indulgent God will rescue him from punishment by judicial fiat. This universe of ours is a universe of inexorable moral laws, and the hope of a final restoration does not mean that a single one of those laws will ever be broken. So long as men continue in wilful sin, no salvation could possibly be accomplished. Moreover, delay only renders redemption the more difficult. Hence it is well that here and now we turn to the Christ, and begin to find life in him, and through him likewise to know God; for the Master has told us that this is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

"And now a single and solemn question remains to be answered. What if there be any who shall persistently refuse to be recovered, who, in a future life as in this, shall spurn the love Divine and sink deeper and deeper in selfishness and sin? What is to be said of their final destiny? It is certain,

as has been seen, that persistence in sin makes heaven impossible, so long as that persistence endures. But, on the other hand, to posit an endless hell for wickedness is to posit an endless dualism, continuing through the endless reign of sin in certain hearts. Such dualism would spell defeat for a sovereign God.

"There is, however, a simple alternative, and one that I believe is implicit in the teachings of both Jesus and Paul—that when a soul, through its persistence in sin, comes to the point where it is morally irrecoverable, it comes also to its final death. Paul distinctly tells us that immortality is an achievement, and the inference is plain that some souls may finally fail of immortality. Moreover, throughout the New Testament, immortality is correlated with goodness, 'possible where goodness is, impossible where goodness is not.' With Jesus the issues of the future are presented, not in terms of pleasure and pain, but in terms of life and death.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have æonian life.' 'For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his psychical life?' These and other utterances of Jesus seem to indicate that eternal life is a possibility only, and is the alternative of death and extinction. The only really indestructible elements of personality seem to be the moral and the spiritual. In the processes of organic evolution, 'the living creature at any stage remains alive so long, and only so long, as it conforms to the conditions of living.' Shall we think otherwise of the human soul? When a soul has reached the stage of moral and spiritual development which Paul describes in the phrase 'being in Christ Jesus,' it is the possessor of eternal life. But when a man has continued in sin, has gone on dwarfing his moral and spiritual nature until every appeal of God is in vain, is it not in accordance with the analogies of life that extinction is the certain outcome?"

BRO. J. T. READ

Bro. Read will (D.V.) make the following visits. For fuller details apply to Bro. W. R. Walton, 2, Highland Road, Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwicks.

June	July
1-3 Melton Mowbray.	12 Latchford.
5-6 Nottingham.	13 Warrington.
7-8 Lincoln.	14-15 Stroud.
9 Sheffield.	16-18 Bristol.
10 Dewsbury.	19-21 Cardiff.
11-13 Ossett.	22-26 Swansea
14-15 Newcastle.	(Convention).
16-17 Dundee.	30-31 London Convention.
18-21 Glasgow.	August.
22 Belfast.	3-8 Rugby.
23-24 Londonderry.	9 Birmingham.
25-26 Enniskillen.	10-11 Yeovil.
27-28 Dublin.	14-15 Aldersbrook.
29 Belfast.	16 Central London.
30 Warrington.	17 Anerley.
July	18 Kettering.
1 Shotton.	19 Peterborough.
2 Lymn.	20-27 Atherstone & Blaby.
3-4 Manchester.	28-29 Forest Gate.
5 Southport.	30 Greenford.
6 Accrington.	31 West Wickham.
7 Bury.	September.
8 Leigh (Lancs.).	1-2 Welling.
10 Coventry (Y.B.S.C.).	3-6 Coventry.
11 Warrington.	7 London (Farewell).

BETWEEN OURSELVES

(Continued from page 50)

loaning purposes to the interested, the idea being that the book be used on the library principle, loaned in succession to people who "will agree to prayerfully read and return. Keep track of each book and when it is returned send it out again and again until it is worn out." There are bound to be some in this country who will appreciate our brethren's generosity and we will therefore be pleased to send a copy of the book to anyone who will request same on the understanding that it is to be used for the purpose outlined above. Classes wanting to use the book in their organised public work may have several copies, but since the book is an expensive one to produce we do ask that no one applies for a copy unless they can use it in the manner intended, for introducing the Truth to others.

* * *

A well-produced booklet entitled "*The Sin-Offering and the Covenants*", by the loving zeal of our brethren in Jersey City, U.S.A., the "Bible Harmony Truth Associates", we are able to offer free of charge to anyone in this country who is interested and will ask for same. The foreword states that the contents of the book are taken entirely from the report of a "Question Meeting" on the subject conducted by C. T. Russell in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1907. The subject is one that interests a good many and oft-times provokes discussion. It will be a pleasure to forward a copy on request.



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 32, No. 5

JULY-AUGUST, 1955

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested

Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

*Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—*

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Cardiff Convention

The friends at Cardiff wish to announce their gathering, to be held on Saturday and Sunday, 10th and 11th September. Programmes will be available in due course but in the meantime anyone desiring more information may obtain same from Brother W. D. Grey-Rees, 108 Lewis Road, Neath, Glam. Needless to say, the brethren at Cardiff extend a very warm welcome to all who can make it possible to attend the gathering.

* * *

"The Beauty of Holiness"

Brethren who were readers of the "Monthly" in 1939 will remember this series, which was afterwards reprinted in booklet form and enjoyed quite a wide circulation for some years thereafter. There have been, from time to time, enquiries for the booklet and brethren have expressed their desire that the series should be again made available, and since reprint of the booklet is not now practicable it has been decided to feature the entire series again in the "Monthly". We have many readers now who were not readers in 1939 and it is thought that all of us will enjoy reading the treatise, whether for the first or second time. Written by a mature brother of wide experience, it was received at the time as a rare study in the disciple's approach to God, and it is sincerely believed that its appearance again at this time will be an encouragement and stimulus to many.

The first instalment appears in this issue and the series will be complete in six instalments, entitled in turn, "The Holy One of Israel", "The Kindergarten lesson set", "Shadows of better things", "Holiness comes to a people", "Reformation begun", "Be Ye Holy".

* * *

Bro. Casimir Lanowick

Bro. Casimir Lanowick, Editor of "Jews in the News", is to arrive in this country from Israel about the middle of July and will be showing his well-known film pictures of Israel in various places in this

country, during the last week of July and first two weeks in August. Arrangements have already been made for the towns listed below. Anyone interested, who would like to be present at any of these gatherings, may obtain full information as to time, place, etc., from Bro. A. James, "Rehoboth", Woodford Bridge Road, Ilford, Essex.

July 23—East London.	Aug. 5—Ludlow.
" 27—Cent. London.	" 8—Warrington.
" 28—S. Norwood.	" 10—Bury St.
Aug. 4—Cardiff.	Edmunds.

* * *

London Convention

Arrangements are in hand for the 1955 London Convention, to be held as usual at Conway Hall during the August Bank holiday season, Saturday to Monday, July 30 to August 1. A very warm welcome is extended to all brethren to join in this season of fellowship and upbuilding. It is expected that Brother J. T. Read will address some of the sessions.

Programmes will be available in due course. In the meantime any information apart from accommodation matters may be obtained from the Convention Secretary, Bro. A. O. Hudson, 24 Darwin Road, Welling, Kent. Applications for accommodation should be sent to the Accommodation Secretary, Brother V. Scott, 68 Devonshire Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

It is very important that reservations for accommodation are made early in view of the heavy demand for hotel accommodation in London at that time. Will brethren please advise their requirements to Brother Scott as early as possible, and make every effort to do so at any rate before the end of June.

The hall will be florally decorated with such flowers as are given by the brethren.

continued on page 80

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

I.—The Holy One of Israel

The highest accomplishment of all religious life and experience is to become intensely aware of the holiness of God. This great fact—God's absolute holiness—is the very essence of all revealed Truth, in that it takes us behind all that God does in order to show us what He "is". Behind the whole structure of the Divine Plan of Redemption is the character of that God who framed it. If, in our Gospel day, we have been permitted to see that redemptive Plan as a manifestation of unfathomable love, it is because that love existed before the plan was made. If we to-day can talk of Bethlehem, and Calvary, and Olivet, and realize that the coming of a Babe, the dying of a Man, the resurrection and the ascension of the Son of God have made salvation possible for all, then back of all that preparation we must see the yearning heart of One who, for a time, had lost possession of His earthly sons. If, looking onward, down the years we see a righteous world, where no ill deed is done, and man is free from sin, then behind the whole design we must allow for One who hated sin before that sin began. Behind all precious doctrine, behind all redemptive work, behind each type and shadow, behind the whole Gospel story, there stands the identity of One who in Himself is greater than His works. From His own great heart the love-stream flowed; from His white-hot soul the sin-hatred sprang; and from His unfaltering Will, the drive and power of accomplishment came forth. Effects spring only from adequate causes—Redemption and Restoration must have Redeemer and Restorer, and though others may be chosen to help reach those effects, He only is the First Great Cause.

Behind all Truth, behind all development of this or that to serve His ends, stands God Most High; a God of Love and Pity, compassionate, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, yet not overlooking sin. If love of man is found in men, it is because it first was found in Him. If love of truth is found in man, again it first was found in Him. Out from His unsullied fulness sprang all that He has done. He "does" because of what He "is". Because He "is" to-day all that He ever "was", His purposes remain unchanged. Because eternal years to come will find Him still as He "now is", the utmost bounds of time will find no variation in His ways. To-day, as yesterday, and throughout everlasting years, His integrity will remain the same

because His native Holiness can know no change. His glorious plans, made sure by promise, and precious blood, and "Oath" upon His own Great Name, assure both Heaven and Earth that He will uproot sin, and uplift man, till naught of Adamic or Satanic taint remain; till man and angel too, shall savour of that holy state so like His own.

No student of God's word can feel surprise that He who dwelt with the Eternal God before the round of time began should here on earth, in time, teach mortal man as the first burden of his prayer to say "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name . . ." Through ages too profound to calculate the worthy Son, as Logos of His worthy Sire, had held in reverent esteem that Holy Name, and times unnumbered He had led the undefiled in heaven to sing its worthy praise, and echo forth the "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord"—a song which in due time will rise from every tongue.

Come down to this sad earth, the sweetest hours which blessed his lonely life were those in which memory sped back to those far days before the world was made, when, dwelling in the presence of the Eternal God, He was always God's delight. The memory of that Holiness in this His hour of need, what time He walked 'mid sin and death, kept Him, as needle to the pole, at rest and peace, and faithful unto death. When humble earthly fishermen, desiring to know God, requested to be taught, the theme that rose from His own soul was given as pattern for their prayers. "Our Father . . . hallowed be Thy Name."

In His touching farewell prayer, though heavy sorrow filled His soul, the same great theme engrossed His mind. When placing His little band for their safe-keeping within His Father's care, He prayed "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name, those whom Thou hast given me" (John 17: 11.) No thought of nearing death could banish from His mind the "Holy Father" and the "Holy Name". By precept and example then, before His chosen few, the Son of Man who came from Heaven held up on earth that Holy Name as worthy of all praise and adoration, because it was the Name of Him who in Himself was holy beyond compare.

How extremely poor are illustrations and words to show to us mere men the incalculable heights of worthiness and excellence which natively reside in God. High as the highest heaven, above the lowest spheres of earth, so stands God's moral worth above

the worth of worthiest man. No single thought, no single word, no single act, from the far depths of everlasting years gone by, to the far distances of everlasting years to come has ever yet, or ever can know taint or flaw. No tongue of man or angel will ever need to utter accusation against the Holy Name, when once He deigns to show Himself such as He truly is. No truce with sin, nor irresolution to root it out will ever come to be preferred against the Holy One of Israel. The sacred writers say that "God is Light". How wonderful, and yet how inadequate is light to illustrate that greater "Light"! Far oack along the stream of time chaos and unending darkness reigned, and light "was not"; but the "Eternal Light" dwelt in His abode and sent forth from thence His brooding power, and drew the beams of light out of the womb of black eternal night. Greater far that "Holy Light" than our majestic king of day, at summer's noonday hour!

The Scriptures say He is "of purer eyes" than to behold approvingly the sins of men. But how insufficient are those mere words to tell of that undefilable purity which neither friend nor foe can taint. If whiteness be the token of inward purity then God's native Holiness shall out-white the winter's virgin snow. If the white-hot glow is needed to consume the dross in order that the pure red gold may be set free, then God's fiery jealousy against sin is a flame intenser far. Brighter than the equatorial noon-day sun, purer than the polar virgin snow, hotter than the mercury or oxygen-fed flame is Divine jealousy for the right, the good, the true, and its zeal against sin and wrong and evil in every form.

But there it must be left. Our world contains no parallel to the exceeding intensity of the Holiness of God. Our language has no words—not even Shakespeare's facile pen nor Milton's glowing tongue—to paint the Holy Fire which dwells eternal in the heart of God; and here our quandary begins.

All students of the Holy Book admit the Holiness of God. But none admit the holiness of man. How then can we contemplate our text? If God is Holy beyond compare, how can we attain to holiness like Him? What do these words of Peter mean? Let us note again that they are prefaced by an "it is written", "Because it is written". "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Back somewhere then in an earlier day the inspired penman had recorded these few words, and Peter takes them up to sharpen his appeal to win his brethren to a purer life. But can disciples live a holy life? Is it not presumptuous to speak of holiness and saintliness while here on earth? Are we not of sinful stock, and tainted by the fall? Do we not oft do things we ought not, and leave undone

those we should do? Can we claim, even in our best moments, to be free from sin? Nay indeed! Before the query arises the answer comes! Yet Scripture describes brethren as holy (Rom. 12. 1, Heb. 3. 1.) and often calls them saints (Rom. 1. 7, 1 Cor. 1. 2, Eph. 1. 1. etc.)! In what way then can sin and holiness accord? Another distinction here needs to be made. Paul says "There is none righteous" (Rom. 3. 10.) Is holiness and righteousness the same quality of heart? Holiness is generally understood to mean freedom from sin, "an absolute purity of heart". But so is righteousness; that is, when speaking other than of righteousness by faith. Wherein comes the difference then?

Righteousness is a forensic term—that is, it indicates a state or condition in harmonious conformity with a law. It is a "law" term, and as such applies to the equitable action, the righteous balance or the just measure, in men's inter-dealings with each other. A transaction is accounted righteous or unrighteous according to its conformity or non-conformity to a code of laws which has been accepted and constituted the standard of rectitude in any given community. These standards vary in different communities, hence an action may be lawful (legally correct) among one people, but unlawful in another. An action may be considered right (righteous) in one community but condemned in all the rest. Herein lies much of the basic cause for the world's present distress.

Connected with the things of God and God's dealings with men, it is the Divine code of laws which determine what is right and what is wrong. Here the standard of righteousness is absolute, and is the same for every land and every man. It applies to angels too; it embraces both heaven and earth. Not even God Himself is exempted from its claims (John 17. 25.) Righteousness (in the absolute) is a state in which full compliance with Divine Law exists. Such compliance denotes a state of legal sinlessness. Sin is accounted to be equivalent to unrighteousness—"a missing of the mark"—a non-compliance with the Law's demands. Sin and unrighteousness are thus synonymous. Righteousness is the legal opposite condition to both sin and unrighteousness.

Holiness applies to the moral aspect of an act. It describes the moral quality of a man whose action when completed is determined as righteous. Lack of holiness, before an act, predisposes to the performance of an act which when completed is determined as an unrighteous act. Holiness is thus the moral opposite of sin. Lack of holiness implies taint in the man, just as unrighteousness implies taint in the act. Holiness implies that man is wholesome in himself, exactly as righteousness implies that the

action is wholesome in itself. Holiness is thus the basic moral quality within the man whether in action or at rest. Righteousness is the outworking of that inner quality when its activity conforms to the accepted standard of law. Holiness applies to what one is ("the *Holy One* of Israel.") Righteousness to what one does ("Thy righteous *acts* are made manifest"; Rev. 15. 4.)

In God we have Holiness *in what it is*—in other words subjective Holiness—the holiness of the subject whether active or at rest; but in God we see it also applied to an end, to rid the world of sin. Here we see it as objective Holiness as well, applied to an objective or purpose. The holiness of God's inner Self desires the holiness of His whole environment. In God's Divine Plan we have God's intrinsic Holiness expressing itself in such activities as will eventually reproduce a similar intrinsic holiness (the same in kind though in less degree) in a race of men who had been once defiled by sin. God sets Himself before this race of men as the pattern for them to imitate. He desires to see produced in them the same high qualities of heart which dwell so richly in Himself—to see men love their fellows, and dwell at peace, each with his kin, and all with God.

God longs for man to reach up to an untainted state within, in order that he may perform untainted

works without. Thus, to renew righteousness in the earth God will act upon the human heart, enabling man to create a new environment. From the inner to the outer; from the centre to the circumference, from the heart to the hand; such is God's order in the uplift out of sin. To make man's life sound without, God will first make it sound within.

If then God's Holiness is such, where do we stand to-day? In this mad world of sin and sorrow how can we become like Him? It is not Nature's gift to any man to be a saint, it is the work of Grace. We needs must learn, patient and slow, how best to copy God, and then, to stand the strain, God must give Grace to help, and eyes to see, and meanwhile hold us in His Hand; and then by slow degress the lesson will be learned, and we shall come to see our God more lovely than all the sons of men. The dark forbidding cloud that hides Him from men's view will open up its folds and we shall pass within the veil of mysteries and see things there which human eye has never seen, nor mortal ear has heard, nor heart of man conceived. In there, like Moses on the mountain's crest, God's glory falling upon our hearts will change them day by day, until the holy supercedes the vile, and we become like Him.

(to be continued)

Be Ye Conformed

An exhortation
to spiritual progress

"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.

The Scriptures were indispensable to our Lord through all His life and pilgrimage; from the beginning to the end His life was the fulfilment of what had been written of Him in the Volume of the Book.

It is scarcely necessary to adduce proofs of this. Under Satan's attack in the wilderness we find Him saying repeatedly, "It is written," and thus He conquered the Adversary. In His conflicts with the Pharisees He continually appealed to the word "What saith the Scriptures?" "Have ye not read?" "Is it not written?" In His intercourse with His disciples it was always from the Scriptures that He proved the certainty and necessity of His sufferings and resurrection, and in His intercourse with the Father during his last sufferings, it is in the words of the Scriptures that He expressed His feelings in His darkest hour. Again, when commending His Spirit

into the Father's hands it is the same thing. All this has a very deep significance. He was Himself the living Word, and was given the spirit of understanding without measure. If anyone could have done without the written Word surely it was He, and yet we see that it meant everything to Him. Jesus could not have been what He was, could not have done what He did, had He not yielded Himself step by step to be led and sustained by the Word of God.

The Words of the Father were to the Son the life of His soul. What He stated in the wilderness was spoken from His inmost personal experiences: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" His whole life was a life of faith—a depending on the Word of the Father. The Word was to Him not instead of the Father, but a vehicle for living fellowship with the living God. He had His whole heart and mind so filled with the written Word that He could at any moment find the right word to use just as He needed it.

Would you become an overcomer like Jesus? Be strong in faith, full of blessing, rich in fruit to the glory of God? Then be filled with the Word of God. Like Christ, make the Word your bread. Feed on it. Have your heart full of it. Believe it. Obey it. It is only by believing and obeying that the Word can enter into our inward parts, into our very being. Take it day by day as the Word that proceedeth, and is proceeding, out of the mouth of God, as the Word of the living God who, by it, holds living fellowship with His children and speaks to them in living power.

Jesus, by studying the things written aforetime, saw inscribed there His own image and likeness, and He gave himself up to the fulfilment of what was written. It was this knowledge which encouraged Him amidst the bitterest sufferings, and strengthened Him for the most difficult work. Everywhere He saw, traced by God's own hand, the Divine waymark—through suffering to glory. He had but one thought—to be what the Father foretold of Him as He found it written in the Word of God.

In Him as portrayed in the Bible is to be found a picture of what the Father desires each one of us to be. Seek therefore to have a deep and clear impression of the example and the instruction God has set before us in His Word. If this is once fully understood and appreciated, it is hardly conceivable what courage it will give to overcome every difficult experience: to know that it is all ordained of God, and in His Word for our personal guidance. We can all say—I have seen in Jesus the image of what I am called in God's council to become: this thought inspires the soul with a faith that will conquer the world.

The Lord Jesus then is the pattern for believers in the Gospel Age. It is especially in Him and His example that we must find our desired image set forth in the Scriptures. *"To be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord."* We must in the scripture-glass gaze upon that image as our own. In order to accomplish His work in us the Spirit teaches us to take Christ as in very deed our example, and to gaze upon His every feature as illustrating what we can become. Blessed indeed the one who is truly doing this; who has not only found Jesus in the Scriptures, but also sees in Him the image of what he may hope to become.

It was according to the Scriptures that Jesus Christ lived and died; it was according to the Scriptures that He was raised again. All that the Scriptures said He must do or suffer He was able to accomplish, because He knew and obeyed them. All that the Scriptures had promised that the Father would do

for Him, the Father did. What a lesson for us upon whom the ends of the ages have come! Let us with an undivided heart seek earnestly to learn from the Scriptures what God desires for us. Let the Scriptures in which Jesus found every day the food of His life, be our daily food and meditation: let us go to God's Word each day with the joyful and confident expectation that, through the Holy Spirit which God has promised, the Word will indeed accomplish God's will in us. Every word of God is full of Divine power. And we can rest assured that when we seek to use the Scriptures as Christ used them they will do for us what they did for Him. Nothing can make each one of us more strong and courageous than the happy assurance that we are daily living out the will of God.

If like our perfect Pattern we do but fully surrender ourselves to God's will as seen in Jesus and the Word, and make this the highest object of our lives, we shall thus become conformed to His image eventually.

It is a law of Nature that the eye exercises a mighty influence upon the mind and character. The education of a child is carried on greatly through the eye: he is moulded very much in the manners and habits of those he sees continually. To form and mould our characters aright the Heavenly Father shows us His Divine glory in the face of Jesus. He does it in the expectation that it will give us great joy to gaze upon it; and because He knows that gazing upon it, we shall in due time be conformed to the same image. Let every one of us earnestly strive to be like Jesus, and note how we can attain to His glorious image.

Here is one appointed way: gaze on the glory of God in Him. Look into His face as that of a loving friend in whom we see the express image of the Father's person: look to Him in adoration: bow before Him in deep reverence and in silent contemplation. His glorious character has the almighty power to impart itself to us, to pass over into us, and to fill us. Look to Him in faith; exercise the blessed trust that He is ours, He has given Himself to us. It is His purpose to work out His image in us. We have a claim to all that is in Him.

Look to Him with strong desire. Do not yield to the slothfulness of the flesh, which is satisfied with less than the full blessing of conformity to the Lord. By prayer and supplication let us ask God to free us from all weaknesses of the flesh and to fill us with that deep unquenchable longing for His glory. Pray most fervently the prayer of Moses: "Show us Thy glory." Let nothing discourage us, not even the apparently slow progress we make, but let us press onward and upward with ever growing desire after

the blessed prospect that God's Word holds out to us.

We are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. And as we behold Him, above all, let the look of love not be wanting: tell Him continually how He has won your heart, how you do love Him, how entirely you belong to Him. Tell Him that to please Him, the beloved One, is your highest, your only joy.

"Like Christ" we can become, we shall become, each in our own measure. God's Word has said that we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the pledge that it shall be.

In the art of photography we see two things which help to illustrate our point: the understanding and realisation of the power and effects of light; and the wise adjustment of everything in obedience to its laws. With what care the sensitive plate is prepared to receive the impression: and with what precision its relative position to the object to be portrayed is adjusted: how carefully it is then held face to face with that object! Having arranged all this, the photographer leaves the light to do its wonderful work. May we learn the precious lesson. Let us believe in the light, in the power of the light of God, to transcribe Christ's image upon our heart.

We are changed into the same image as by the Spirit of the Lord. Let us not seek to do the work which the Spirit must do, but trust its power. Our duty is, to submit the prepared heart, waiting, longing, praying for the likeness; to take our place face to face with Jesus, studying, gazing, loving and believing that the wonderful vision of that crucified One is the sure promise of what we may become; and then, putting aside all distracting thought, in stillness of soul, silent before God, allow the Holy Spirit, as the light of God, to do the necessary work.

Seeking to become like Christ we must not forget the necessity for, and the power of, earnest prayer. Jesus says: "*Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*"

Moses gave neither command nor regulation with regard to prayer: even the prophets say little directly of the duty of prayer; it is Christ who teaches us to pray. And amongst the first things which the Lord shows to His disciples is the importance of having a secret place for prayer; every one should have some solitary spot where he can be alone with God. Every teacher requires a place set apart for giving instruction, and we have learnt to know and accept Jesus as our only teacher in the school of prayer. He has shown us in His

conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, that worship is no longer confined to times and places; that worship, true spiritual worship, is a thing of the spirit and the life; and yet He wants each one to choose for himself the fixed spot where He can daily meet him. That inner chamber, that solitary place, is Jesus' school-room. It may be anywhere, its location may change from day to day if we have occasion to change our place of abode, but that secret place there should be, and a quiet time daily during which the pupil may find himself in the Master's presence, there to worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and there to present our petitions and our thanks in private solitude.

In His words on prayer in the sermon on the mount, Jesus seeks to set the inner chamber before us in its most attractive light. Three times He uses the name of the Father: "Pray to thy Father," "Thy Father shall recompense thee." "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of." So then the first longing in private prayer is to meet my Father: the light that shines in the secret of His presence is the light of the Father's countenance. Each thought or petition we breathe will express a simple, hearty, childlike trust in the Father, for this is how the Master teaches us to pray. He brings us into the Father's very presence and what we pray for there must at all times prevail. "Pray to thy Father which is in secret." God is a God who hides Himself from the carnal eye; if during our worship of God we are chiefly occupied with sordid or selfish thoughts we shall not meet Him who is spirit, the unseen One: but to the one who withdraws himself from all that is of the world and of man, prepared to wait upon God alone, the Father will reveal himself.

"The Father which seeth in secret." In these words Jesus shows us where God is always to be found. Some complain that private prayer is not always what it should be to them; they feel weak and sinful, the heart is cold and dark; they feel they have so little to pray about, and in that little no faith or joy: they are discouraged, and kept from prayer by the thought that they cannot come to the Father as they ought or as they wish. Child of God—listen to your Teacher, He tells you that when you go to private prayer your first thought must be, the Father. Just because your heart is cold and prayerless, get you into the presence of the living Father, for as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth you. Do not be thinking of how little you have to bring to God, but of how much He wants to give to you, just place yourself before Him, and look up into His face; think of His love, His wonderful tender,

pitiful love, tell Him all your troubles and failings and the Father's loving heart will give *light and warmth to yours*. Do what Jesus says, shut the door, and pray to the Father which is in secret. Is it not wonderful—to be able to be alone with God, the infinite God to look up and say—"My Father!"

Jesus says: "And thy Father, which seeth in secret will recompense thee." Here He assures us that acceptable prayer cannot be fruitless, its blessing will shew itself in our life sooner or later. On our part there should be childlike simplicity of faith, the confidence that our prayer will bring us a blessing. Are we not told that "he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Not upon our words or thoughts does the blessing of the closet depend, but upon the love and the power of the Father to whom we entrust our needs. Remember your Father sees and hears in secret: go thus to Him frequently and retire in the confidence that He will provide. He will recompense, trust Him for it; depend upon Him; acceptable prayer to the Father cannot be in vain: He will reward openly. Jesus speaks a further word: "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." At first sight it might appear as if this thought made prayer less needful, but does it? God knows far better than we what is for our good, but as we get a deeper insight

into the subject of prayer it will help much to strengthen faith. It will shew us that we do not need, as the heathen, to pray with the multitude and urgency of our words, and thus to compel an unwilling God to listen to us. It will lead to a holy thoughtfulness and silence in prayer as it suggests the question to us—does my Father really *know* that I need this? Then when the Spirit reveals to us the certainty that our request is really for something that, *according to the Word*, we need for God's glory it will give us wonderful confidence to say: "My Father knows." If there be any delay in the answer, it will teach us to hold on in faith and patience waiting His good time.

And now, beloved brethren who have entered into the school of Christ to be taught to pray, take these lessons to heart, practise them, and trust Him to fulfil them in each one of us. Dwell much in the inner chamber, with the door shut—shut away from men, shut up with God, waiting upon God in full assurance of faith, just as did our great Example: laying bare the heart before Him that it may become a *fitting abode for the Holy Spirit in ever increasing measure*. Thus shall we "be changed." "We shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord," and in God's due time be forever with the Lord.

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Let me remind you all, ye faithful believers in Christ, that ye are compared to trees—trees of the Lord's right-hand planting. Seek to grow as the tree grows. Pray that this year ye may grow downward; that ye may know more of your own nothingness; and so be rooted to humility. Pray that your roots may penetrate below the mere topsoil of truth, into the great rocks which underlie the uppermost stratum; that ye may get a good hold of the doctrines of eternal love, of immutable faithfulness, of complete satisfaction, of union to Christ, of the eternal purpose of God, which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. This will be a growth which will not add to your fame, which will not minister to your vanity, but it will be invaluable in the hour of storm; a growth, the value of which no heart can conceive when the hurricane is tearing up the hypocrite. As ye root downward, seek to grow upward. Send out the *topshoot of your love towards heaven*. As the trees send out their spring shoot and their midsummer shoot, and as you see upon the top of the fir that new green child of spring, the fresh shoot

which lifts its hand towards the sun, so plan to have *more love and greater desires after God*, a nearer approach towards Him in prayer, a sweeter spirit of adoption, a more intense and intimate fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. This mounting upward will add to your beauty and to your delight. Then pray to grow on either side. Stretch out your branches; let the shadow of your holy influence extend as far as God has given you opportunities. But see to it also that ye grow in faithfulness, for to increase the bough without adding to the fruit is to diminish the beauty of the tree. Labour this year by God's grace to bring forth more fruit unto Him than ye have ever done. We would not be as the gleanings of the vintage when there is only here and there a cluster upon the uppermost bough, we would be as the Valley of Eschol, whose presses burst with new wine.

This is to grow in grace; to root downward, to shoot upward, to extend your influences like far-reaching branches, and to bring forth unto the Lord's glory.

C. H. Spurgeon.

THIS CAUSE WE SERVE

2.—What of Billy Graham?

The advent of Dr. Graham and his two evangelistic campaigns in this country has profoundly stirred the membership of nearly all churches. Within our own fellowship the lack of ready response to our message in recent years, compared with the considerably greater interest of forty years ago, has long been a matter of concern and discussion. But we have not been alone. Almost every Christian group or denomination that has any interest at all in evangelism has for years been deploring the general apathy toward religious things; in many a Christian periodical there has been appearing frequent appeals for the spirit of revival, and prayers for the Holy Ghost to come down and bring revival to this land. Some of these sentiments are of a nature we would not endorse, but the desire which prompts them is one that we all—save the few who are convinced that the Church's work on earth is finished—can wholeheartedly share. Even though we have an advantage over most Christians in that we do not view death as the end of all probation, we do have the same desire, because we are Christians, too, to bring men and women to the feet of the Master, and to what we call the "knowledge of the Truth".

Now the long-awaited revival has come. Not since the days of Moody and Spurgeon have such crowds gathered to listen to the Gospel message. Because of the liberal employment of modern methods, even greater numbers have heard the voice of this twentieth century evangelist than was ever possible in the nineteenth. Moody's largest British audience numbered twenty-five thousand, and that was considered phenomenal. Dr. Graham has spoken to unseen audiences by means of radio and television to listeners that may well have run into millions. Perhaps never before in the history of Christianity has Christ been preached to so many human beings in so short a time.

Small wonder that as one picks up the Christian periodicals of this country, week after week, one is regaled—in almost every case—with what could easily amount to a surfeit of Billy Graham. Enthusiastic reports of big campaigns, of mighty crowds, of wholesale conversions to Christ, of high and low, rich and poor, lord and peasant, coming forward in their hundreds to confess their undone condition and accept Christ the Saviour, fill the pages. The features of this handsome young American are more familiar, to the faithful, through the medium of their favourite religious papers, than

those of any film star to the most ardent of "fans". And even that unpredictable quantity, the British public, must by now be getting accustomed to the direct glance of those piercing eyes, looking down from the street hoardings and up from the posters in Underground stations.

But now it is time to take stock. The second campaign in this country is over. The tumult and the shouting dies; the captains and the kings depart. How much of all that has been done has lasting value? More important still, to us, is the more searching question: how much of all this has eternal value in connection with the outworking of the Divine Plan, and for us who are the present custodians and exponents of that Plan? For we must not forget one thing; the message which has been preached up and down this country amid such scenes of almost wild enthusiasm is a message which to us is already a century out of date. It embodies principles which we know do not present anything like a true picture of the Father to sin-sick humanity. True, the message calls men and women to Christ, to repent of their sin and give themselves in humble submission to the Saviour. We cannot do other than say Amen to that and pray that many answer the call. On that ground alone quite a few of our own brethren have actively participated in these campaigns. But the message goes on to say that if any who hear this appeal refuse to repent, to accept Christ while the invitation is before them, there is no hope for them after death. If the eloquence of Dr. Graham, and the melodious songs of Beverley Shea, and the mass emotion which is always present in any large crowd, is insufficient to convince the unbeliever, whether hardened reprobate or sincere sceptic, then God will turn away in anger and the gates of Hell will open wide before the unrepentant one. The message preaches the love of God, but it is a love which has a limit, and that limit is reached when any of the vicissitudes of earthly life bring sentient existence on this earth to a close, whether that close be early or late. And it is a love which does not even provide that all men and women have a full and fair opportunity to hear of Christ and accept Him. The responsibility for that is laid upon the few Christians there may be in the world in any one generation, and those whom they may fail to reach and convince are doomed to eternal exclusion from the courts of Heaven.

Now we believe all that to be wholly and grievously wrong, and a blasphemy against the

Divine character. We believe that God will not relax His efforts to win every one of His erring children to Himself until it is abundantly clear that, having exhausted all the means at His disposal, the obdurate one remains inflexible in his resolve to continue forever in sin. As Paterson Smyth wrote many years ago, no human soul will be eternally lost until the Father has as it were put His arms around him and looked into his eyes with His own eyes of unutterable love, and been rejected. And the interposition of human death, coming as it does perhaps at threescore years and ten or in the first careless flush of early youth; the accident of being born a Christianised European or a heathen Chinese, a twentieth century intellectual atheist or an early Babylonian polytheist, an educated man who honestly cannot bring himself to believe anything that his five senses do not reveal to him or the unfortunate imbecile who has no brain to believe with anyway, is not going to interfere with God's fixed purpose. "In thee and in thy seed" said the Most High to Abraham "shall all families of the earth be blessed". The Son of Man, said St. Paul, gave himself "A Ransom for All". We have used that text with those capitals for many years now but the text is still true. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. The arm of God shall rule for Him and His work is before Him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd and gather the lambs in his arms. That is our faith, and unless we hold it and believe it—yea, and preach it also,—we are renegades to our own brethren and apostate from the fellowship which for seventy years past has stood almost alone in Christendom preaching this very thing. And no amount of argument that "Billy Graham is doing a good thing in bringing people to Christ and therefore we should support him" is going to alter that fact. Of course he is doing a good thing; and praise be to God for every soul which by his ministry has been turned from the power of sin to serve the living God. He has his place in the Divine purpose as had Spurgeon and Moody and St. Francis of Assisi; but we also have our place and a place characterised by a very definite responsibility. If it was woe unto Paul if he preach not the Gospel committed to him it is certainly woe unto us if we discharge not the particular message which is given to us. And if we fail, it will not be the first time that the Kingdom of Heaven has been taken away from a people who knew not the time of their visitation and given to a people bringing forth the proper fruits.

"But look at the success he has had!" says one. "Is that not an evidence of Divine approval?" If success in the conversion of men to Christ is to be measured by the counting of heads, then the servant is indeed greater than his Master, for after three

and a half years of ministry Jesus appeared to have gained something like five hundred disciples—and in one short campaign Dr. Graham multiplied that many times over. One has to remember in this connection, too, that the majority of the attendants at the meetings were already Christians anyway. Said one weekly, of the last Wembley meeting, "*... the happy laugh that ringed Wembley round must have warmed his heart, so typical was it of a Christian crowd enthralled by the Gospel ...*" The famous evangelist has become acceptable to the great men of the land; he has been invited to meet ecclesiastical leaders and political leaders and trade union leaders; he has had an interview with our former Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, and he has lunched with Her Gracious Majesty the Queen of England. This country has no further token of its interest and esteem that it can bestow upon him. But none of this is evidence of Divine approval, only of man's approval, and although that carries weight in many quarters it can be permitted to carry no weight with us. The approbation of the great and influential of this world is not an atmosphere in which true Christianity flourishes and the plaudits of men are never to be put on the credit side when assessing the acceptableness to our Lord of any work that is done in His Name.

There is a manifest tendency among some of us nowadays to confine our public witness message to the simple call to repentance and conversion, a message indistinguishable from that of any other evangelist. There is more than a suspicion that this sudden passion for elemental truth is due to the apparent results achieved by the dynamic figure who has taken our country by storm. It is said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. It certainly gives food for thought to hear some who a few years back would have shunned with something akin to horror the slightest contact with "Babylon" now declaring that we are too narrow and that there are Christians in other systems beside our own and that we should abandon our exclusive position and support them in their work. But it is saddening also because so obviously the change of thought has in many cases been brought about, not by a heart appreciation of the principles involved, but by the glamour of this nation-wide revival. It is the old snare laid wide open before us again—world conversion now, before the Lord sets up His Kingdom, and we must resist it with all that we have.

What then is our course? Certainly not to decry the stupendous efforts to proclaim their faith being put forth by evangelical Christians. Rather it is to be no less zealous and active ourselves, to preach the faith we have and the glorious hope for the world which has coloured our own lives and given

us a serenity and confidence that cannot be shaken, though the earth be removed and the mountains carried into the midst of the sea. Preach repentance and conversion, yes, by all means, but explain in the same breath *why* God calls to repentance and conversion and what is so intimately connected with it. Paul was in no doubt: "*God . . . now calleth all men everywhere to repent BECAUSE he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness . . .*" Peter was in no doubt: "*Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out WHEN the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*" John the Baptist was in no doubt: "*Repent, FOR the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*". And we should be in no doubt either.

We have spent a lot of time in fruitless argument over non-essentials and interminable discussions on variant views of doctrinal matters and it has produced precious little but the waxing cold of the love of many. As a fellowship we are at least united on matters connected with the purpose of the Second Coming of our Lord and the principles that are to govern God's dealings with mankind in the next Age. We are united in the conviction that all who are in their graves are to hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth to have the word of the Gospel preached to them, and the eternal issues of life and death placed before them, that they may choose. We are united in the sure knowledge that no single one will lose the Divine gift of life until every possible influence has been brought to bear to turn the sinner from the error of his way. These things, then, form the backbone of a message which

we could give unitedly and with emphasis. We shall not get the support of anyone outside our fellowship and we do not expect it. We shall not fill Wembley Stadium—not this side of the Millennial Age anyway—and none of us is likely to be invited to No. 10 Downing Street. But we can reasonably expect to bring comfort and hope to a few hearts. We can reasonably expect to make the character and Plan of our Father a little more understandable to a handful. We can be sure that we are thereby fulfilling the commission which is ours above all people, to "*preach good tidings unto the meek . . . to bind up the broken-hearted . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord . . .*"

We need not all do it the same way. Some are enthusiastic about open-air meetings—the message of Isa. 61 is singularly appropriate to the open air. Some prefer the more sober dignity of a lecture hall. The message of Isa. 61 is admirably adapted to the atmosphere of a lecture hall. Some prefer tracts and leaflets. The message of Isa. 61 looks well in print. Some feel that all they can do is to have a quiet word with friend or neighbour—there is something in Isa. 61 to suit all conversations and all types of people. We have all the material ready to our hands; we need but the zeal and the opportunity. If Billy Graham has shown us that both the zeal and the opportunity can be ours if we but have determination enough, we can thank God for at least that fruit of his ministry and get on with our own work in the Master's vineyard with rejoicing heart.

A THOUGHT ON THEOLOGY

A writer recently suggested that it is quite within the power of an individual devoted to evil for its own sake to *destroy his own capacity for repentance*. Food for thought here! On the one hand, we hold firmly to the principle that whilst there is the least hope of the sinner turning from the error of his way, whilst there is anything at all left upon which Divine Love can work, God will not let go His hold of the erring one. Upon the other hand, Scripture is clear that there are circumstances in which it is impossible to renew a man to repentance, that for some there is reserved the "blackness of darkness for ever". There is hope of a tree, says Job, if it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud and become green again; that is because the life principle has not become altogether extinct in the stump and roots. A plant may wither and dry up in the scorching heat, and while life remains in it, rain will bring it renewed vigour, but if the life has gone, nothing can ever restore it.

May we then conclude that there is something in man, a capacity for appreciating the things of righteousness and goodness and purity, implanted there by God at the beginning, which can be smothered over, but need not be entirely obliterated in even the most degraded of men; but that continued and obstinate hardening of the heart against every good influence in the favourable environment of the Millennial Age can utterly destroy that capacity and leave nothing of the man but an empty physical frame possessing the spirit of life but no preserving influence of good; and that the workings of sin in that physical body will eventually encompass its destruction without hope of recovery? Thus seen, the Second Death is the inevitable result of a man's deliberate stifling of the powers of righteousness which God implanted within him. "*It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet shall be cut off from among the people.*"

Knowledge of God's Word Necessary

"The angel of the Lord said to Cornelius: Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Acts 11: 13, 14.

These words were necessary to his saving—to the bringing of Cornelius into Covenant relationship with God. Cornelius being obedient, sent for Simon Peter, who gave him the necessary instruction for drawing nigh unto God through Jesus.

Unless we come to the Father through Christ, our prayers alone will not be sufficient to bring us into the fullness of relationship with God.

Being obedient, like Cornelius, we get in touch with those who have the necessary instruction for drawing nigh unto God through Jesus. This instruction is contained in the Word of God.

Believing the "words" as did Cornelius and taking steps in harmony with those "words," the Bible Message, as Cornelius did, makes possible God's drawing nigh unto us through Jesus Christ.

What St. Peter told Cornelius was to the effect that God had provided a great Sin-offering. That Jesus had tasted death for every man; that now, in advance of the blessing of all the families of the earth, mentioned in God's promise to Abraham, God is taking out a "Little Flock," to be used as His instruments, with Christ, in the blessing of "whosoever will." (Revelation 22. 17.)

When Cornelius heard the good message, he believed with all his heart; and likewise those who were with him. Doubtless he had heard of Jesus before, but now, after hearing the "words," he understood the matter. So it is with those who have heard of Jesus and then come in contact with the Bible teaching, the "words," whether through the Bible itself or through someone who knows and who imparts these "words"; these truly understand the matter; these truly see Jesus as the one spoken of in prophecy as being "cut off out of the land of the living," (Isaiah 53. 8), yet "not for Himself," not under condemnation for any personal wrong, but willing to bear the condemnation that rested upon others because of their transgression against the Divine Law of "Thou shalt not." "For the transgression of My people was He stricken." (Isaiah 53. 8.)

Cornelius had been in the right condition of heart all along; he had been praying and fasting; but even so he could not be accepted of God except through Jesus; he must have Christ as his Advocate. So our

right condition of heart is pleasing to the Lord and our prayers and everything else we might do in the way of righteousness are all in the right direction, leading toward Justification; nevertheless the "words" of the Gospel Message of the Bible, telling of the fact that God has accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as instead of the ones condemned is necessary. God is thus in the attitude to accept into His favour, all who approach Him in the spirit of reverence and obedience and gratitude, because of His grace through Jesus, whose just sacrifice was accepted on behalf of the unjust and condemned human family.

These "words" must be believed with all the heart as did Cornelius and those who were with him. Thus full acceptance can be had with the Father through the Advocate, Jesus Christ, provided by the Father for those who obey the "words" or the Bible Message of these good tidings concerning the privilege of returning to God's favour.

HOW JESUS BECOMES OUR ADVOCATE

To have Jesus as our advocate means first—we must accept Him as our Ransom from sin and death. Next—we are instructed, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16. 24.)

To "deny himself" means to deny his own will and to acknowledge God's will and Christ's will from henceforth and forever. The Lord's will is to control to such an extent that the disciple enters into a covenant or contract to henceforth be—

*"All for Jesus ! All for Jesus !
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours."*

Everything under the control of the disciple is therefore considered as NOT belonging to the disciple, but as belonging to the Lord and to be given an account of as a faithful steward. Time, talents, strength, means, the entire being, yea life itself are to be used, spent, yea **POURED OUT**, given freely, as Christ poured out His life as a sweet savour unto God.

The Advocate is specially provided so that unwilling and unavoidable weaknesses and shortcomings will not be held *against* the disciple who has perfectly endeavoured to do the Lord's will. If such shortcomings are recognised and confessed and forgiveness asked through Christ, then, inter-

cession is made and the disciple or consecrated Christian is not under condemnation. *"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not, (the thought is that no wilfulness is manifest and that perfect effort is put forth to try not to come short, but rather to do only that which is perfect.) And if any man sin (that is come short of perfection, not wilfully but by reason of human imperfection and heredity), we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."* (1 John 2. 1, 2.)

BEARING THE CROSS

To "take up his cross" signifies that in the Lord's dealings with us, after becoming his disciples, He sometimes places responsibility upon us as we carry into action the attitude of our heart in denying our own self will. This responsibility is to be taken up or assumed with gladness and not with murmuring. It is to be a willing service, and we are to consider it a "reasonable service." (Romans 12. 1). The most reasonable thing for the disciple to do is to bear whatever the Lord permits in the cause of God and of Christ, who showed their love *first* in sacrifice and in loving service. It will be found also that God will not ask any unreasonable service of His disciple. The *will* must be thoroughly subject to the Divine will; the perfect desire and effort to perform must be present; and then the Lord's grace and forgiveness through the merit of the Advocate, will count the desire and effort as though perfectly performed. The consecrated Christian who thus starts and continues unto the end, will, as a reward, receive the honourable position as an associate with Christ in the blessed work of giving to all, "whosoever will," the benefits which Christ's willing sacrifice secured and which His resurrection from the dead *guaranteed*.

We join with the Apostle Paul in beseeching all who have appreciated the grace or favour of God, through Christ, unreservedly to dedicate their wills and lives to God by entering into a covenant or contract to do His will to the extent of their ability, and by His assisting grace, even unto the end of their life, as long as the Lord permits them their being. The Apostle says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* (Romans 12. 1, 2.)

FOLLOWING CHRIST

To "follow" Christ means more than to read about Christ and follow Him in knowing about Him and His teachings. To "follow" Christ means to take the steps of faith and obedience as Jesus took those steps. To believe in Jesus as our Saviour is necessary to bring us where we can then follow in His steps. As Jesus took the step of full consecration, saying, "I delight to do Thy will," so we "follow" His steps by making a covenant of sacrifice. Then follows a gradual bending heavenward of that which by nature bends earthward. This is the transforming by the renewing of the mind, by this process the *good and acceptable and perfect* will of God is attained. This following of Christ leads into death with Christ, not only opposition to inherited weaknesses. This death to any will of our own is counted as our entering into death with Christ in doing God's will. (Romans 6. 3-5.)

The Steps of Christ led to His death in sacrifice, but they also led to His resurrection and exaltation as the "seed of Abraham" which is to bless all the families of the earth. (Galatians 3. 16). If we "follow" His steps we will also die to self will and will eventually end our sacrifice in death. But such a course will prove us worthy of a resurrection with Christ and an exaltation to share with Him as that "seed of Abraham" in the blessing of "whosoever will" of all the families of the earth. *"And if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* (Galatians 3. 29).

What an opportunity! What an invitation to "follow" in His steps. What an inspiration is in the promise, through the "words," the Message of the Bible, that the death of Christ and His experience and sufferings, and the sufferings of those who follow His steps are all a part of the great design of our Heavenly Father who *first* loved us and sacrificed that we might be restored to His favour.

*"Oh for such love I would make some return,
My humble offering I'm sure He'll not spurn."*

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD NECESSARY

By reading the Word of God, we come to an understanding of that which is pleasing or displeasing to the Lord.

The Word of God thus becomes the instrument for discerning and manifesting every word, work or sentiment.

"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." (Hebrews 4. 12.)

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

5.—THE VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN

"If thieves and robbers came to you by night, would they have stolen more than they required? If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not have left some gleanings? But now what a pillaging of Esau there has been, what a rifling of all his treasures! Your very allies have betrayed and brought you to the ground; your accomplices have deceived you and overcome you, and your most trusted friends have set a trap for you that you had not the sense to perceive." (vs. 5-7.)

In these words Obadiah is showing the futility of the trust which Edom has placed in her worldly allies. Notwithstanding her many services rendered to the kings of this world and her allegiance to them in opposition to God and the true people of God, they have no hesitation whatever in discarding her completely when she has served their purposes and can be of no further use. Not only so, but the powers of this world have no scruples about taking from her such possessions and treasures as she holds, leaving her poor and naked. If ordinary thieves enter a house by night, says Obadiah, they take what they want and leave the rest. The hapless householder does not waken in the morning to find himself bereft of all his possessions; he still has something left. When the vineyard labourers gather in the grape harvest, they do not strip the vines completely bare; they leave some of the grapes for the gleaners. But not so with Edom's erstwhile friends when they become her enemies. They rifle as they will and pillage all her treasures. Sorry indeed is the condition of those who have forsaken God and trusted to Mammon, whilst retaining the name of God on their lips. They finish up by being miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Rev. 3. 17.) "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help" said the Lord through the prophet Isaiah. All through the Gospel Age there have been those, professed followers of the Master, who have gone down to Egypt for help, putting their trust in the arm of flesh instead of the power of God, and although for a time they have appeared to prosper in the things of this material world, it has been at the expense of their standing before God. When it has been a so-called Christian institution that has so allied itself with the world, then sooner or later the word is fulfilled "your very allies have betrayed you and brought you to the ground."

"In that day" says God "I will destroy the wise men out of Edom, and the men of understanding out of Mount Esau. The power-

ful men of Teman will be dismayed, for all the men of Esau will be cut off. Because of the wrongs you have perpetrated upon your brother Jacob you will be cut off for ever." (vs. 8-10.) For some reason or other the men of Teman were renowned for their wisdom. It is not clear from the Scriptures just why; there is a cryptic note in Jer. 49. 7 in which the Lord asks "Is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished?" and the prophet goes on very evidently to quote from Obadiah's prophecy. This alleged wisdom of Teman is that which is to be destroyed when the Lord executes judgment against Edom, for Teman and Edom were intimately connected and from the prophetic point of view are to be taken as one. Teman was the grandson of Esau, and even in his natural descent affords a picture of the worldly wisdom which is thus to perish, for the father and mother of Teman were respectively Eliphaz the son of Esau, descended thus from Abraham the faithful, and Timna the daughter of Seir the aboriginal inhabitant of the land and the one who gave his name to "Mount Seir." Thus Teman was the fruit of an alliance between the favoured line of Abraham which held the promise and the truth of God, and the earthly line of Seir having nothing in common with the promise and no share in the purposes of God. What more apt picture could we have of the alliance between the apostate ones described in this prophecy under the general title of "Edom" and the powers of this world with which they have allied themselves? Very truly Teman can be taken as a symbol of the worldly wisdom which is foolishness with God and which will be revealed at the end to be without firm foundation and doomed to be swept away as God arises to put the last great phase of His Plan into effect. *"I will destroy the wise men out of Edom and the men of understanding out of Mount Esau. The powerful men of Teman will be dismayed, for all the men of Esau will be cut off."*

It is in this verse that we are brought back to the great vision of Isaiah where he saw a mighty conqueror coming from afar, bearing the signs of a great conflict upon His person. "Who is this that cometh from Edom" asks the prophet wonderingly "with dyed garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" Swift and confident comes the answer "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Wherefore art

thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" Again the strong reply "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed has come." (Isa. 63. 1-4.) The glowing passage goes on to describe how the victorious Lord in His own power and by the might of His own right hand overcomes all His enemies and crushes all opposition to His incoming Kingdom. That is a prophecy of the end of the Age, the time when all that is opposed to the Kingdom of light and peace is to be ruthlessly crushed, scattered as the vision of Daniel shows it to be, like the chaff upon the summer threshing floors. This passage alone is sufficient to assure us how completely and thoroughly the Lord will banish false religion from the earth at the time of His Kingdom, how the men of hypocrisy and deceit will find themselves like their prototypes in the days of the First Advent, thrust out of the Kingdom in which Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets and the faithful of Gospel Age times too, will have entered. Isaiah shows the work as an accomplished thing. Obadiah takes an earlier view and depicts the Lord as viewing the iniquitous land of Edom and decreeing its eventual and early destruction.

If we want further assurance of the intensity of God's determination to make an end of false worship and set the true faith of Jesus supreme in the earth we have it in Isaiah's 21st chapter, where we have additional indication that the end of the Age, when the faithful are watching with ardour for their returning Lord, is the time when these things take place. In that vision the prophet is bidden to set a watchman and tell him to declare what he sees. The watchman has his eyes fixed on the great desert which lies between Judah and Babylonia, and in the vision he sees, crossing that desert and advancing in the direction of Judah, and therefore coming away from Babylon, a strange procession. He sees, first, a horse-drawn chariot, followed by one drawn by asses and finally one drawn by camels. That is symbolic. The horse-drawn chariot is indicative of the military conqueror returning in triumph from the scene of his conquest; the chariot drawn by asses contains the captives who have been taken prisoner and are being transported to their new home in a strange land, and the chariot or waggon drawn by camels contains the spoil and booty that has been plundered from the defeated city. The whole tableau, for that it what it is, tells of a great and

overwhelming defeat inflicted upon the city of Babylon by the victorious forces of Judah, and how the watchman sees the triumphant soldiery returning with their captives and booty.

Needless to say no such thing ever occurred in history. At no time did Judah ever overthrow Babylon. So the watchman's triumphant shout must refer to something of which these things are but figures. It is the downfall of symbolic Babylon at the hands of the returned Christ that is pictured in Isaiah 21, and the watchman who discerns these things pictures the Church in the flesh, living at the time they are imminent and fully aware of their significance. To the watchman's cry comes an answer from heaven "Babylon is fallen, and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground." That is a cry which has already gone out but has yet to be justified to the full; the fall of great Babylon is not completed and will not be until the final cataclysm of this present Time of the End in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements melt with fervent heat. But in the meantime the message has been given to a people able to understand it. There has been a harvest of the Age and those who have been subjects of that Harvest realise these things. "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor" cries the watchman "that which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you." In this end of the Age those who can rightfully be described as the watchman's "threshing," the "corn of his floor" have had this message given to them in no uncertain terms and are in consequence "not in darkness" that the day should overtake them as a thief.

There is in this passage a charming picture of the earnest watcher for the Lord's coming and His kingdom, imprisoned still among the Edomites, but longing for enlightenment and the means of escape. "The burden (message) of Dumah" (Idumea, Edom) cries the prophet (vs. 11) "Unto me is one crying out of Seir (Edom) 'Watchman! how far gone is the night? Watchman! how far gone is the night?'" That is Rotherham's rendering and it is most eloquent in its appeal. Here is one, imprisoned in the darkness and worldliness of modern Edom, longing for the morning when the Kingdom of light and love shall take control and the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, calling to the Watchman for enlightenment and comfort. "Said the watchman 'There cometh a morning, but also a night. If ye will enquire, enquire ye—come again.'" Truly, says the watchman, the Millennial morning is at hand but there must first be the dark night of trouble which closes this Age. But if you will know more, says the Watchman, keep on en-

quiring. Come again and learn of the gracious Plan of God which is to bring blessing to all families of the earth. Come out of Edom and rejoice in the light of the Truth. Separate yourself from the worldliness and hypocrisy and Christlessness of the Edomites and be joined to those who are truly one in Christ Jesus.

This is a theme on which we ourselves can speedily find ourselves grievously in error. It is all too customary to assume that the "coming out" is the separating from one body of Christians where the Divine light has burned low and joining another body where at the moment it burns more brightly. So very many thus placed have later found that in the fellowship of their choice the light has in its turn burned low again and they have had to make another move, and the Christian lives of some have been characterised by a succession of such changes, each one less enduring and less satisfactory than the preceding. In point of fact the call to come out of Edom is one to relinquish the last vestiges of the spirit of Edom and to live in that maturity of Christian character which recognises the true servants of Christ wherever they may be found and serves Christ happily and faithfully in just that sphere to which He may guide. Many have joined themselves to our own fellowship, for example, without

relinquishing the spirit of Edom, and their influence has tended toward disunity and the degrading of spiritual experience rather than the opposite. What we need to do above all other things is to see to it that we do not, as did those Edomites of old, come under that dread condemnation in this tenth verse of Obadiah "*Because of the wrongs you have perpetrated upon your brother Jacob you will be cut off for ever.*"

That is what it means. If we have failed to partake of the spirit of Christ and treat His brethren as He treated them; if we, like the unfaithful steward in the parable, begin to smite our fellow-servants, then we shall be cut off from all future participation in the glories of the glorified New Creation, and that without remedy. That "cutting off for ever" does not mean eternal death or anything like that—such thought is absurd—but it does mean that, having failed to attain the high degree of character-likeness to our Lord which is necessary before we can be afforded the "abundant entrance", we shall be like the unworthy of so many parables, outside the closed door, cast into outer darkness, thrust out of the Kingdom.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall".

(to be continued)

BETWEEN OURSELVES

continued from page 66

The "Monthly"

It is very encouraging to report that the change, in January of this year, from a fixed subscription to the system of voluntary gifts for the support of the "Monthly" seems to have received the warm-hearted approval of many brethren, and in consequence our work appears destined to continue. Brethren have contributed in sums large and small, and for all these expressions of loving interest we feel sincere appreciation. As promised in January, when the change was made, it is the intention to publish a balance sheet at the end of the year. Meanwhile it may be said that the six-weekly appearances of the "Monthly" during this year have been dictated not only by financial necessity but also by reason of other handicaps having their basis in the many other demands made on the time of those responsible for the labours involved. It is hoped that monthly appearance will be resumed in the autumn. In the meantime we do wish to acknowledge the many expressions of goodwill and good wishes which various brethren have voiced in their letters. Although time does not permit of extended replies to them all, and usually a stereotyped postcard is all

that is possible, yet every such letter is a source of encouragement, and for them all we say here and now "thank you".

It has for many years been the aim of the "Monthly" to present a fair and balanced view of our faith, in the light of the basic truths which gave our fellowship birth, without becoming hide-bound or bigoted, and by the Lord's grace we shall endeavour to maintain that standard for as long as He in His Wisdom sees fit to allow the little effort to continue.

Bro. J. T. Read

Bro. Read will (D.V.) make the following visits. For fuller details apply to Bro. W. R. Walton, 2 Highland Road, Common Lane, Kenilworth, Warwicks.

July	August
14-15 Stroud.	17 Anerley.
16-18 Bristol.	18 Kettering.
19-21 Cardiff.	19 Peterborough.
22-26 Swansea	20-27 Atherstone & Blaby.
(Convention).	28-29 Forest Gate.
30-31 London Convention.	30 Greenford.
August.	31 West Wickham.
3-8 Rugby.	September.
9 Birmingham.	1-2 Welling.
10-11 Yeovil.	3-6 Coventry.
14-15 Aldersbrook.	7 London (Farewell).
16 Central London.	



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 32, No. 6

SEPTEMBER, 1955

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This journal is sent free of charge to all who request it and who renew their request annually, and is supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested

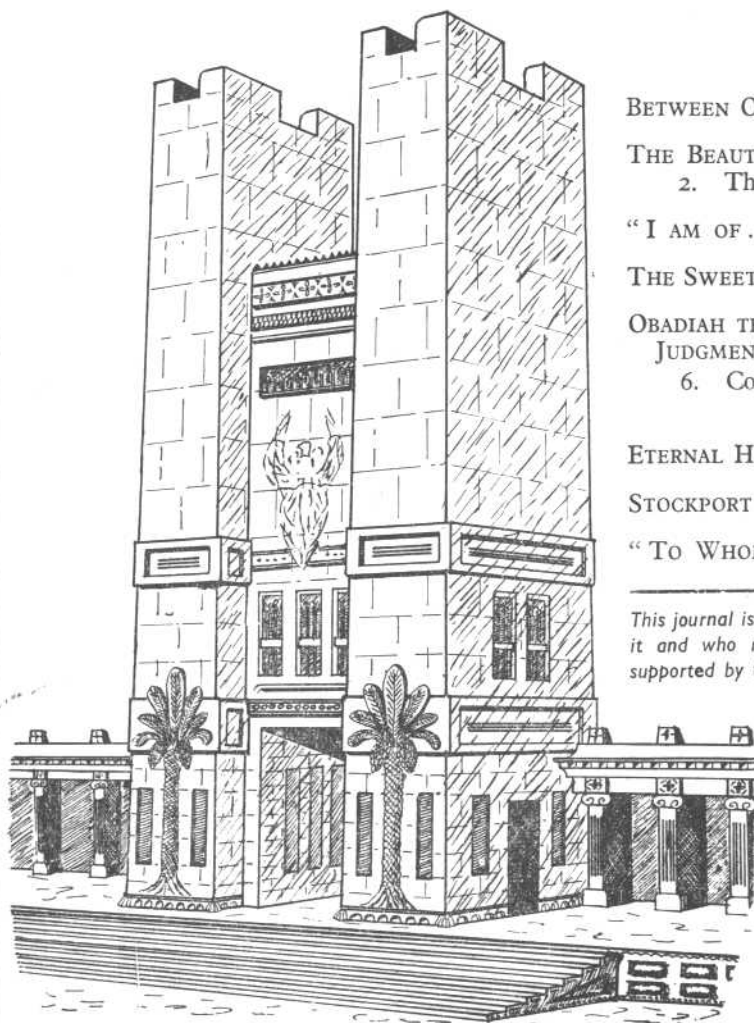
Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38,
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

Cardiff

Brethren are reminded of the Cardiff Convention fixed for Saturday and Sunday, 10th and 11th September. Programmes were circulated in the last issue of the "Monthly," but further copies and all information may be obtained from Bro. W. D. Grey-Rees, 108, Lewis Road, Neath, Glam. The gathering is at the Institute for the Blind, Newport Road, Cardiff, opening at 3 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. on Sunday. Needless to say, a very warm welcome awaits all who can come.

Communion

What is communion? Communion is simply sharing; to have communion therefore, we must have something to share; and to have communion with a Holy God, we must have something which we can share with Him. We cannot share nothing, and He will not share with us in the unclean. Our attainments, therefore, cannot yield communion, nor our works, for the best have sin in them. But, thank God, there is a perfect offering, the offering of our blessed Lord, and if we would have communion with God, the only way is to share that offering.

And this at once gives us the key to the cause of our lack of communion. Of intercourse we have enough, perhaps too much. Of communion, how very little. So little of Christ's offering is comprehended, that when believers meet they have scarcely anything of Him to share. And the same is true of our approaches to God, for there may be intercourse with God without communion. How often when we approach God do we speak to Him only about our feelings, our experiences, our sins, our trials. All this is right; we cannot be without these, and we are right to tell them to our Father. But after all this is not of itself communion, nor will speaking of all these things ever yield it to us. Let us come before God to be filled with Christ, to be taken up with Him, His life, His ways, His sweetness; let the confession of our failure and nothingness in ourselves be made the plea that we may be filled with Him; and our intercourse will be soon changed to communion, for in Him we shall have something to share. May the Lord lead us more into His presence, there to be taught what we possess in Jesus: and then, when we meet our brethren or our Father, we shall feast together on what there is in Him.

(Andrew Jukes.)

A Farewell Meeting

TO

Bro. JOHN T. READ

ON THE EVE OF HIS DEPARTURE FOR
THE UNITED STATES

Wednesday, 7th September, 1955
at 7 p.m.

(friends may assemble 6 p.m. onward)

LIVINGSTONE HALL
Broadway, Westminster
opposite St. James' Park Station

Please tell as many friends as possible

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

2.—The Kindergarten Lesson Set

It is not possible for us to say how far God revealed His holiness to our first father in Eden's sinless days. That God forewarned him about the fatal consequences of a rebellious act, we know quite well. How far he understood its deadly moral nature, we may not easily say. Enough to know he dared to risk the sinful act with open eyes, knowing quite well that he would die. On that point his knowledge was complete; but how far he had come to understand the attitude of his Creator—God towards the principle of sin (as distinct from an act of sin) is another point we may not know. It could not be, in the short time he had lived that he had comprehended everything about his God. He knew that he was God's handiwork; he knew his consort, Eve, was God's gift; he knew that God had made his lovely home and filled it with all desirable things. Hence he would know God as a Creator, mighty and bountiful, Who would have the right to expect obedience in the use of all His gifts.

But did God tell him of that vehement detestation of sin which burned, fiercer than any flame, within the Creator's heart? Did God make him to know how zealously He would uphold the Universal Law against every infraction of its terms? In short, did God reveal to Adam that He was a "Holy" God—as distinct from a Creative God—the sworn enemy of sin; and that, cost Him what it may, He would fight it with all His power till the last trace of it was gone? We may not know for sure, for Adam's Eden days were few. Doubtless God would have told him more as time went by, so that he would know that every act falls into line with this or that of the two basic principles of holiness or sin. Had he remained at peace with God he would have learned those deeper things which angel visitants could tell about their God and his.

In their own estate, where sin did not then abound, these heavenly messengers can understand the awful Majesty of the Eternal God; for they have seen and known the terrible effects of sin. There was a time when an angel Prince led revolt against the Heavenly Throne, and brought abasement to himself and those he led astray. Divine power had arisen to the task imposed and thrown around the fallen host bands of darkness and restraint. Thrust down from heaven and chained in the dark depths

of this earth's atmosphere, they had been made to feel the scorching fire of Divine zeal against sin.

Those holy messengers who maintained their first estate could have caused God's human son to learn and deeply realise that God could never countenance sin, nor permit the sinner to abide one instant before His Holy face. By observation and by contact they had learned how unchangeably holy was their God, and how with omnipotent and omniscient power He stood pledged eternally to uphold the Truth and defend the Right. All this Adam might, in time, have learned. The angelic visitant could have made known how when sin raised its ugly head the peace within the heart of God remained undisturbed, yet there brake forth with more than volcanic force a holy displeasure which revealed, to all who saw, how unfathomably deep was the Divine repugnance to haughty pride, rash act, or insubordinate word. Moreover, the earthly son also might have learned how these heavenly sons, possessed of holiest desires, were able to find and appreciate hallowed fellowship with God, He as Creator and Sovereign over all; they as created and subject Spirits obeying His behests. No need of any kind existed for God to hide away from them, nor they to be forbidden access to His face, but subject only to such decorum well-suited to that august Court, they went unfearful into the Presence, and enjoyed unscathed "the burning bliss" of that great Eternal Light; the fervent response of each angel heart meeting with ready accord the holier desires of the Heavenly Throne. All this Adam might have come to know; and knowing and comprehending it, this knowledge might have anchored him also to the Heavenly Throne with chains stronger than steel.

How greatly otherwise must it be where sin comes in! God's pity for the sinner may be great, but God cannot parley with the sin. No provision for excuse had been made in the Divine Code of Law, and He who had to maintain that Law could show no toleration of the sin. Of necessity God must separate Himself from the sin, and in so doing, the sinner too. No greater welcome to His Presence could be offered to rebellious men than to the sin itself; for to such rebellious men the Holy God could be no other than a consuming fire. When therefore, for some wiser end, Omniscience Divine

determined that the state of sin should be allowed to stand, the very intensity of Holiness Divine could only mean that God must withdraw Himself—He must draw apart and stay apart from men. This Adam found out to his cost.

How quickly amid those Eden bowers the sense of guilt and shame disclosed itself. The shrinking sinner fled away, coming not at evening hour with ready heart into the presence of his God. Since morning sun arose a fearful change had taken place, for sin had won the day and spread its empire over man. The unhallowed influence of Lucifer had triumphed, for the time, over the hallowed influence of God. Sin had stormed the heart of man and sin-consciousness had been born. Sin-consciousness dared not seek the face of God but shrank into the shade to hide. Called from his hiding place to meet the "Judge" the shame-faced sinner came forth to hear his doom. "Sin," naked and ashamed, stood face to face with Holiness and hung its head while putting up its lame defence; then Holiness withdrew and man was driven forth to die. The gift of life and happiness mis-used, the Giver took back the gift, and left the sinner to his fate. Sent forth outside the gates of Paradise, God came no more to meet with man, and man, in contact daily with his sin lost his fine sense of righteousness, and, as time passed on, prostrated himself to stocks and stones and creeping things. The Holy One withdrawn, the inner heart-need being unmet, man must needs bow himself to some meaner thing, and sink himself to lower depths in the defiling slime of sin.

Throughout the corrupted years until Abram came from Ur, in answer to God's call, but little added light was given. Enoch spake of recompense for ungodly men (Jude 15.) Noah warned a wicked world, but little heed was given! The light which nature gave bore witness to Eternal Power and Deity (Rom. 1. 20.) but rebellious men gave it no ear. They preferred the ways of sin, and man, made subject to demoniac power, sank down into corruption's deeper depths. Yet though the whole world was thus steeped in sin, increasing every day, vile cities arising on every side, God told the faithful pilgrim (who, leaving Chaldea's idol-serving land, came to sojourn with Canaan's polluted hosts, that), spite of all the sinful filth, He purposed yet to bless and win the hearts of men. God told that Pilgrim Father that all that He desired to do, He surely could perform, "I am the Almighty God . . . I will . . . I will . . . I WILL . . ." (Gen. 17. 1-8.) So spake the Most High God to that worthy man. His theme was "power"—Almighty Power to carry out His Sovereign Will. Two thousand years had

passed; throughout them all God had maintained the severity of His law. No tender message came from God until He told this chosen man He had a plan to bless the world and power to see it through; and let us note God did not point out and stress the fact or heinousness of sin to that good man.

Apart from one grim day when Almighty God came down to burn the cities of the plain, He made no reference to sin in any of His talks with Abraham. At no time throughout his life did Abraham learn from God's own lips that He was a holy God! Of beneficence and ability he truly heard, but not one note of that deeper chord which vibrated in the heart of God. God told him what He proposed "to do," but spake no word concerning what He truly "was." God told him of the "outflow," but did not describe the "spring" from whence the beneficent stream should flow. The part which holiness must play in purifying the world from sin was left unrevealed. That God would Himself provide a sacrifice was shadowed forth when that worthy sire, with uplifted hand, stood near to slay His son; but the weighty reason WHY God should provide that Lamb went undisclosed.

More centuries still then passed away before much further revelation came. A shepherd was tending desert flocks when mysteriously a bush began to burn. The bush remaining unconsumed, the man drew himself aside to see the sight. "Take off thy shoes . . . the ground . . . is holy ground." sounds forth a voice (Exod. 3. 1-6.) Here a new theme breaks forth, a theme unheard before in Holy Writ since Eden days (so far as records go). No man since Adam sinned had heard that word from God until this momentous day; but from that day and through that man this word, with an increasing range of thought, was always to the fore. The idea of holiness was set forth anew, that man might again begin to learn how high and lofty are the heights of virtue and purity which have their source in God. It was a great lesson to be set before fallen men, and so, in many ways, by various means, God took such as had desire to learn into His newly-formed school.

How strange (and yet not strange) to find the lesson has not changed from those far pre-human days, when erring spirits were cast forth from the presence of the Eternal Light! Nor has it changed from Eden days when man was forced by cherub sword to quit his paradise. The holy God and the unholy participant in sin must separate from each other, must draw apart and dwell apart. But now it comes about in order to accomplish His great design that God would separate unworthy men from

their unworthier kind, and fit them to become the means whereby the Holiest of all could reach right down to grasp the unworthiest of all. The lesson for the scholar in God's school was this—"Come ye apart from them and walk with Me, and let Me make of you the channel of my Love. Come, let Me teach you the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and when you have looked into those black depths beneath, then let me teach you to look up to Me, and see in Me the radiant heights of unchanging holiness

But not for all in that far day was this far-reaching lesson set. To none but Abraham's lineal seed was the offer made. To other peoples the Holy God still dwelt in darkness and afar. Though those vile "cities of the plain" would have repented of their sin had opportunity knocked, the "Most High" passed them by. They were not of the chosen seed. Nor yet to Egypt's people came the call, for they also were outside the pale. Sin's utter darkness bid Him from their sight.

To none save Abraham's seed, and for their faithful father's sake (Deut. 6. 8. Deut. 10. 15.) God sent the call to come apart and dwell with

Him. God came not fully from the dark, it was too soon for that. He came into a twilight world of shadow and type. God came to meet this chosen seed to make known to them the A.B.C. of Holiness Divine. He came—shall we say—part-way to meet them, to call them to His feet, but in their turn they too must make effort to "draw-near" to the Holy One who came to dwell in Israel. This then is the great fact we have to learn, that the Most Holy God, Who perforce had separated Himself from sin, and had separated sinners from Himself, now sought to bridge the gulf between the exalted heights of Holiness and the depraved depths of sin by separating unworthy men from their unworthier kin, and helping them to learn His Laws. that thus, through this favoured Seed, the whole company of the nations might be blessed.

Separation! separation!! separation!!! that and that alone is the A.B.C. of the lesson even we must learn, if we would know, and walk with Him whose voice has said

"Be ye holy . . . for I am holy."

To be continued.

"I am of . . ."

*A serious discourse
on Christian unity*

One of the deepest and most elusive aspects of the believer's standing in Christ is the fact that all such believers are members of one Body—a Body over which the Lord Jesus has been constituted the Head. The statement of the Lord Jesus that He is the true Vine of which every Sprit-joined believer is a branch has stood (together with Paul's illustration quoted foregoing) before the Christian Church since its earliest days, yet in all the years of the Church's pilgrimage, it may not be too much to say, the truth of that blessed fact has never yet been fully realised. From those early days the tongues and pens of her ablest sons have tried repeatedly to explain what that sacred "One-ness" means, but never yet have they made the outward organisation of the Church agree with the deductions drawn from the Holy Word. It has been (and still is) one thing to hold this doctrine as an article of faith; it is quite another thing to realise it as a matter of experience. Even in those purer days when the disciples had all things in common, the early company of believers, with the Apostles in their midst, failed to realise that full degree of Christian unity. An Ananias was found

among them—a token that other interests had crept in. Again, the widows of the homeland Jews were getting more attention than the widows of the Grecian Jews and dissatisfaction and murmuring arose. While these symptoms were of no great severity and were promptly put right, yet they were as the small occasional bubble rising to the water's rim which showed that there was fermentation down below.

Nor has that idealistic One-ness been more than a mirage throughout the Age. Ever as the pilgrimage came to the spot where hope would seem to materialise, the vision disappeared and only desert sands remained.

The Roman Church long claimed to hold the bond of unity. Men had only to betake themselves to the repose of her cloistered community and accept as their credo what she was pleased to define, and all was well. There could thus be one fold, one flock and one Shepherd and Vicar of Souls. But no sooner had she pushed her claims to the ultimate, then restless and non-consenting men spoiled the

serenity of her fold—clear proof that they were not at one.

Reform followed reform, and many creeds displaced the one. All of them read the same Master's words—"that they may be one, even as we are one", but how to fulfil them was beyond their power. Every new advance of truth made former differences more acute, and made more subtle modes of defining "one-ness" necessary. To join the broken fragments into one whole stick was seen to be impossible, but, if they could not be "one stick", at least they could be one "bundle" in which every separate chip could lie alongside its fellow-chips and thus lose its identity in the aggregate of one greater whole. "We are not divided, all one body we," they sang, as they surveyed the bundle of chips, but consistories here and synods there ruled and governed each its part separately. They were not "One", either in form or purpose, and as things are, they cannot be "One" in the Christian sense. "I am of Rome," said one, "I am of Luther," said another; "I am of Calvin," said yet another, and so *ad libitum*, the whole professing Christian Church had, and still has, its varying party-cries.

We find the microscopic pattern of the whole Christian Church within the walls of the Corinthian ecclesia. It had not reached the unity of Christ. "It hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren . . . that there are contentions among you, Now this I mean, that each of you saith, 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ'" (1 Cor. 1, 11-12) (Rev.) Who and what these divisions were may be gathered from careful scrutiny of Paul's epistles to his Corinthian friends. Phrases here and whole paragraphs there describe the peculiarities and differences of this party and that, so that it is possible to construct an outline of these hostile elements pretending to fellowship as one whole.

The churches resulting from Paul's earliest missionary labours were composed of two hostile and incompatible elements—that is, they contained both Jews and Gentiles. Long-standing hereditary animosities had to be overcome in the converts from either side, and, so long as outside adverse elements did not introduce themselves, these animosities were greatly curbed, if not suppressed, by the exalted thrill of belonging to the same Lord, and by the mutual participation in salvation through His blood.

The first disturbing influence to break into these happy scenes proceeded from the mother Church at Jerusalem. In that then unholy city many thousands who, in some measure had believed (Acts 21. 20) still

remained zealous of the Law, and strove hard against Paul to maintain the rites and practices inherent in the Law. Learning of the large influx of Gentiles into some of the distant churches, they sought to compel them to submit to circumcision—telling them "Unless ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15. 1). Certain emissaries from James and the mother-Church followed in the wake of Paul, and crept into the little companies he had gathered, and in his absence sowed these seeds of disturbing thought. This had happened everywhere where Paul's intensive labour had gathered a little nucleus of believing souls, and rent the perplexed companies in twain.

The baneful influence of Jerusalem had been felt in the Corinthian Church. At least two sections of this divided Church had been created by this influence. These were the parties professing to follow Peter and Christ. These parties held themselves aloof from the uncircumcised Gentile converts, and, where the influence from Jerusalem was strong (as at Antioch, see Gal. 2. 11-13) would not deign to eat with their Gentile brethren. This separation of the Jewish element had its reaction on the Gentile element also. Greece had long been notorious for its speculative philosophies—its communities, as at Athens (Acts 17. 21) always seeking to learn some new thing. As at Jerusalem, where over-zealous souls sought to blend the Gospel into the Law, so at Corinth enthusiastic tutors sought to amalgamate the Gospel with native philosophy and teach things which the Jewish section could not accept. These were the men who lined themselves behind the name of Apollos, who himself was a native of Alexandria, where Oriental philosophy had established its principal school. It was from this section that denial of the resurrection of the dead arose (1 Cor. 15). Then there were some who misinterpreted Christian liberty. Taking as their warranty Paul's teaching that the true believer in Christ was set free from the Law, they stretched this teaching to mean that they were not under any law or any restraints of any kind, and that no act was to be accounted sinful or censurable. All kinds of gross immorality were tolerated and excused—such immorality as was not sanctioned even in the unbelieving Gentile world (1 Cor. 5).

In addition to these were others who understood Paul aright and sought, like their dear father-in-God, to live holy and upright lives—some, who from among the Jews, had found the burden of the Law intolerable; some also from the Gentiles who rejoiced in the salvation brought into their lives through Jesus' sacrifice. What a strange admixture

of outlook and teaching was gathered together in this one ecclesia at Corinth! Truly it seems as if that Church was the dumping-ground for all the theological and philosophical garbage of the earth!

Together with the proclamation of the pure Gospel of Grace and the Cross of Christ, there was the enunciation of Mosaic claims, and the propagation of Oriental mysteries, interspersed by the impudent clamour of those brazen enough to excuse the blackest sin. With diversities such as these is it to be expected that anything but division could ensue? Had it been possible to blend the Gospel and the Law, Christianity would have degenerated into a mere Jewish sect; the association of the Gospel with Oriental philosophy did succeed (at a later time) and produced—PAPACY!

Without doubt every section could offer (at least satisfactorily to itself) some justification for its attitude, and for its separateness and throw on some other group the blame for the disunited state of the Church. Seeing that neither Paul nor Peter, nor even Apollos, were resident elders in the Corinthian Church it stands obvious that every group must have had some leading man or men at its head, around whose dominating personalities the members of each party were ranged. Apostles and evangelists paid no more than flying visits, then went on their way. Resident elders remained to carry on from where Apostles left off.

This was where the trouble usually began. Division was not engineered nor sanctioned by the Apostolic visitor, but no sooner had he left than comparisons were drawn and preferences expressed concerning the nature of their several ministries. And they who became the most readily articulate were just those who should have deprecated such comparisons and rebuked such preferences. Thus, as the forefront brethren expressed their preference for this or that style of utterance and for this or that view of the outworking of the Divine Plan, the rank and file ranged themselves in alignment with this or that leading elder in his approval and support of this Apostle or evangelist, and his attack upon the rest of the visiting ministers. The rank and file were not much to be blamed for this—they only followed where they were led. The fault was in the supposed shepherds of the flock who, forgetful of the sacred task laid upon them by the Lord, turned away from the ministry of holy things to discuss personalities with their merits and relative demerits. Of course, each group could justify its attitude and make out a good case for the position it assumed.

"If only Paul would be content to be like Peter, and not open the door widely to the Gentile dogs, there would be far more of our own kith and kin embrace Gospel truth." "Paul does not seem to realise that what he gains from Gentile lands he more than repels from among his own people." "If only he was content to be like Peter and James—men who really saw the Lord, and heard the Gospel from His mouth, there would be thousands more who, though still remaining zealous of the law, would accept Jesus as the Messiah of Israel." Thus spake the supporter of Peter's claims.

More violent and dangerous than these were the "holier-than-thou" "go-to-the-fountain head" zealot who said he was "of Christ". Is it assumed that here, at last, was one party beyond reproach, and which knew where its allegiance should be placed? Not a bit of it! Headed, presumably, by some venerable patriarch who had visited Jerusalem in the Master's earthly days, and who, hearing the discourse of Him who spake with such authority, had accepted and believed His testimony direct, then carried it away to this foreign soil, there to forget much and mistake more of what the Blessed One had spoken, so that now it was but a travesty of what it should have been.

It is to this group Paul refers when he writes again (2 Cor. 10. 7). "*If any man trusteth in himself that he is Christ's (of Christ) let him consider this again with himself, that, even as he is Christ's, so also are we.*" Of Paul, this section had not one good word to say. They challenged his Apostleship, first, because he never saw the Lord in the flesh, and next because he did not presume to live upon the brethren, but laboured with his own hands. Though admitting that his letters were weighty and strong, they held in ridicule both his personal presence and his speech. He was "strait-laced" "not-as-these-other-men" Phariseism masquerading in a supposed Christian garb, and justifying it all in the name of Him who accepted all.

What was here amiss? Why did all this fleshliness of outlook prevail? Exactly because they had not understood the purport of the Gospel call. It was a new thing in the world. Judaism had been divided into rival schools, Heathenism had had its myriad cults, and they could not just conceive that the Gospel call was of a different nature altogether. Every leader lived for and fostered the interests of his own following. Each one was partisan and sectarian. No single one could labour for the good of all. Not one amongst them could or would say "We are all of Christ" or

viewing the broken ranks, say, "Let us all together strive to be of Christ", That was their fault—they were myopic, hard-hearted, suspicious, and uncharitable. They scrupled not to interdict, to slander and defame those for whom Christ had died, and who had been sent forth in His Name.

There was a little truth, or some semblance of a truth, in the teachings of each group. What they would not see was the truth held by the rival groups. They did not realise that they saw only "in part" and not the whole truth. They did not see that truth must be progressive and grow from bud to bloom. Each section thought it had "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", and would not for a moment allow that any rival section subscribed to truth. Each rival leader thought he had all the truth and ministered what he had for his own following alone. To one group and its leaders Cephas possessed the hallmark of the truth—to another group Apollos was the criterion, to still another Paul, and to the straitest group of all, an earthly Christ. And—as at Corinth, so has it been throughout the Age. So truly has the glorious ideal of Christian Unity been at once both mirage and morass—a mirage to draw onward, and a morass to engulf.

There may have been some true saints in every section of the Corinthian Church, but no single elder or leader therein was able to minister to all such saints, because the deeper and profounder things of the Christian faith had been overlaid and obscured by lesser and shallower things. Nor, so long as the dividing boundaries were observed could saint reach out to saint over the barriers. But—and this is the great fact outstanding in true Christian relationship—while their sense of one-ness was dulled and impaired, it made no difference to the actual One-ness in the heavenly Courts. That actual One-ness is an other-worldly spiritual thing, registered in heaven above. It is a mystic union of kindred souls, joined to the Lord, who died with Him in His death, and were raised with Him in His Resurrection, and are accounted alive because He lives, yet running their earthly course, centuries apart, perhaps, with whole continents or oceans lying between their habitats—and found one here, and another there; one then, another now,—but spite of all earthly handicaps, linked, and joined up to their Lord and Head. The Shepherd of the flock knows all His sheep and no man plucks them from His hand, no matter how that man despoils the pasture, or fouls the flowing streams of truth.

It is not easy to maintain the sense of unity, even to-day. While the real interests of every sheep is in

the great Shepherd's hands, the sense that we are of one calling can be blurred and dulled by an elder's unhelpful ministry. Too much insistence upon secondary things can upset the balance of the mind concerning more important things and tend to divert attention from the all-essential relationships. Such over-insistence may suit a "following", but it does not minister to the needs of the whole flock. It tends to apply itself to only a "part"—and that is Corinth over again!

Mistakes in theology may indeed need to be corrected, and a stand may have to be made for Truth, but the Christian cannot live on negatives or on denials of another man's theology. He must have the positive affirmations of the Word as his provender. And more than that, while "truth" must be, at times, defended and proclaimed, "Truth" is not the greatest thing in the Christian economy. The proclamation of Truth is but a means to an end, and the end is greater than the means. God revealed His Truth to win for Himself a family—and every son and daughter to-day is greater in God's sight than any spoken means that led them into that relationship. The child is more precious in the Father's sight than even the most correct definition of a truth. Let us never forget that fact.

This conclusion remains. There are some aspects of Truth which separate the flock and divide its interests. There are some other aspects that unite, and deepen the present sense of unity. Insistence on secondary things can work present injury to sensitive souls, and draw barriers down the ranks, keeping saint from kindred saint. Only when minds have been dulled by deprivation of essential truth do they reach the point where they begin to say "I am of . . ."

Is it not the duty then of every pen and voice to seek the interests of all the flock—of all the brethren known and unknown, both inside and outside our present fellowship and seek to feed the wearied sheep with such provender that will make the sense of one-ness keen and sharp? Then, as any modern Paul may plant or some present-day Apollos water, God can use both to produce increase to the flock.

Gone from us

Sis. Ackerley (*London*)

Bro. W. Trippler (*Germany*)

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

THE SWEET INFLUENCES OF PLEIADES

"Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens" (Psa. 89.2)

A rich inheritance has been bequeathed to us by reason of the ancient peoples' intense interest in the starry heavens. From the very beginning of history men have studied the stars, their arrangement and their movements, and woven into the glittering glory above their heads a wealth of imaginative romance and fable. Some of the oldest and most widely told stories known to mankind have been thus immortalised upon the face of the sky. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the Scriptures themselves contain various references to the "story of the stars" and make use of them to illustrate some of God's dealings with men.

The well-known passage in the 38th chapter of Job commencing "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" is one of the finest of such passages. The opening expression is well known, and is often quoted; the remainder of the passage not so often read, and much of the interest attaching to the Divine words to Job is thereby lost. It was when, at last, both Job and his three friends had nothing further to say, that the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and demanded of him (Job 38. 31-32): "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

There can be no doubt that Job himself understood the import of the questions perfectly, or the Lord would not have asked them of him. That Job drew correct conclusions from the conversation is evident by his frank confession afterwards: "I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee . . . wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42. 2 and 6). We do well, therefore, to try to see these things as Job saw them, and draw from them the lesson for ourselves that he drew for himself. It means exploring somewhat unfamiliar ground, and delving a little into the ancient myths and stories associated with the constellations, but if we can discern behind these things something of that glory light which shone into Job's heart and gave him compensation for all his sufferings, our search will have been worth while.

It is necessary to keep in mind throughout our study that the purpose of the Lord's questions

to Job was to demonstrate that the ultimate truth respecting the great mystery of the permission of evil remains with God Himself; and that He has the power to achieve the triumph of righteousness and will accomplish that triumph, in due time. As Job's attention was directed to these various constellations in turn, the ideas associated with them came into his mind, and from those ideas he discerned the lesson God was desirous of teaching him.

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" The more popular name of this constellation is the "seven stars", although the majority of people can discern only six. In ancient times they were thought to have an influence especially beneficent to mariners; this legend being due to the fact that they first appear in May when the favourable season for voyages, in the early days of the world, was due to begin. Pliny, who lived at about the time of the First Advent, says (*Natural History*, Book 2) that the rising of the Pleiades on May 10th brings Summer, and their setting on November 11th marks the beginning of Winter. This idea, that some mystic benign influence radiates out to earth from the Pleiades, is also expressed by various Arab poets, one of whom (Hafiz) alludes to them as the seal or earnest of immortality. The word translated "sweet influences" is "*maadannoth*," one which has given the translators a great deal of trouble. It is considered by some authorities to have been misspelt, and they read it "*maanaddoth*," which comes from a root, "*anad*," meaning "to bind on." On this basis Margolis, Leeser and Ferrar Fenton translate "chains," and Rotherham "fetters," and it is then suggested that the appearance of the Pleiades in a cluster, like a delicate necklace, is referred to. On the other hand, the Authorised Version, standing by "*maadannoth*," has the advantage that this word comes from a root meaning "pleasures", "delight", "delicacy", and can be construed to indicate the operation of an influence radiating happiness and pleasure, and making for prosperity. This view well accords with the ancient tradition regarding the Pleiades, and gives point to the Divine question which made it plain that Job himself was powerless to "bind" those same "sweet influences".

What is the moral? It surely is that the sweet influences of the Love of God, shed abroad upon mankind, taking root in the hearts and lives of believers, and bringing forth rich fruit unto God,

can never be "bound" by man. The sad time of sin and death stands between humanity and the Kingdom, for a while, but, like mariners on the hazardous deep, men can look up to the heavens and reflect that the sweet influences of the Divine care are constantly streaming down from above, and that they guarantee mankind's safe arrival at length at their "desired haven" (Psalm 107. 30). Job, probably familiar with the seafaring tradition of those influences, and certainly well acquainted with Arabic thought—for Job was an educated Arab—must surely have read this lesson into the question which came to him from above, and drawn no little comfort from the thought.

"*Canst thou . . . loose the bands of Orion?*" From reverently thankful thoughts of the loving Watch-care of God, Job's mind swung instantly to a vision of rebellion and sin—and sin's penalty. The constellation Orion is the most notable one in the heavens, and almost everyone has had Orion's head and arms, feet, girdle and sword, pointed out at some time or other. Orion, said the ancients, was a giant, and a mighty hunter, who once lived upon earth. He was greatly renowned because of his prowess in the chase, and eventually became a personal attendant to the goddess Diana. Having committed a great offence, he was bound to the heavens by means of strong chains, there to remain for ever as a warning to others of the consequences of sin. (The student will readily recognise the likeness between this story of Orion and the Biblical story of Nimrod, the "mighty hunter before the Lord" of Gen. 10. 8-9. Nimrod's death is not mentioned in Scripture, but ancient traditions are that Nimrod met his death in consequence of some great sin, and that he was bound to the heavens for his impiety.) Looking up into the night sky, then, the peoples of old would gaze upon the mythical giant, arms and legs outstretched, suffering his perpetual sentence, and reflect upon the power of God Who ordains an inescapable penalty for sin.

To Job, then, came the question: "*Canst thou loose the bands which I have placed upon evil?*" No less certain than the love of God is the retribution that must follow upon deliberate, wilful sin, and no man can loose the chains which God has forged for the restraint of sin in the "Second Death".

"*Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?*" The A.V. translators, not knowing how to render the Hebrew word "*mazzaroth*," left it untranslated. There seems little doubt that it refers to the twelve signs of the zodiac. The zodiac is that broad path across the heavens which is apparently

traversed by the sun in its daily journey. Month by month, as the earth travels around the sun, the latter is set against a background of groups of stars which vary according to the relative position of sun and earth. To an observer upon earth it is as if the sun enters into one constellation after another in order, and the ancients separated these constellations into twelve "signs," into each one of which the sun enters at a certain season of the year.

The force of the question of Job, then, was this: "Canst thou bring forth, and present to the sun, each successive one of the twelve signs in its due time in the sun's onward journey?" The evident answer is "No". No man has power to retard or advance the majestic course of the procession of heaven which has been ordained of old by God. So *with the ages and dispensations of the Divine Plan*. Just as the twelve signs follow each other in ordered succession, likewise do those epochs which God has designed for the accomplishment of His purposes for mankind, and no man can either alter their order nor stay their course. "The days are *prolonged*, and every vision faileth", wailed the unbelieving captives in the days of Ezekiel. Resonant with faith came the prophet's rejoinder: "The days are *at hand*, and the effect of every vision" (Ezek. 12. 22-23). "The vision" came the word of the Lord to Habakkuk (Hab. 2. 3), "is yet for an appointed time. . . . Though it tarry, wait for it, for it will surely come, it will not tarry." Can we bring in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth by our own efforts, *in advance of God's due time*? Can we "bring out Mazzaroth in his season"? By no means; God alone can, and He will, at the time prefixed.

"*Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?*"

With their usual charming inconsistency, the A.V. translators have given us here the Greek name of the constellation which was known to the Hebrews as "*Aysh*", and, in England, variously as the Plough, the Wain, or the Great Bear. The later Greeks pictured it as a wagon drawn by horses, which gave rise to the English idea of the Wain (Old English for wagon), and of the Plough. The ancient Greeks called it the Bear, because, as they said, this constellation was none other than a nymph named Callisto, who, to escape the attentions of her suitors, was changed into a bear and placed in the heavens. The Arabs, however, had a very different name for this group. They called it the Bier, and pictured the four main stars as forming a bier upon which a deceased person was being taken to burial, and the three stars behind as the mourners who follow, "daughters" or "sons" of the bier. It is much more probable that Job would be accustomed

to the Arabic idea in preference to those of foreign lands, and this is confirmed by the fact that the Hebrew "*Aysh*" is derived from the Arabic word for "bier."

Unfortunately, nearly every translator of note has adopted the Western European name—the Bear—for this constellation, and whilst this is a perfectly correct thing to do in a translation meant for English readers (the expression "bier" would leave most readers wondering what constellation is meant), it does have the effect of obscuring the real meaning of the question. Perhaps Young's translation best brings out the thought, in rendering "and *Aysh* for her sons dost thou comfort?" Coming at the climax of this fourfold inquisition, surely this brings a wonderful picture before our minds. The bier, symbol of death and the grave; the mourners, sons or daughters of the bier, symbol of all the heart-ache and sorrow that death brings in its train; can Job, *can any man, guide these things into the glories of that day when death shall be no more?* Once again, the answer comes, sadly and sorrowfully, "No". Only God can guide the bier and its mourners into the glorious day of life and joy. Only God can "bring to pass the saying that is written 'Death shall be swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. 15. 54). Only by His power shall it ever be that the 'ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads'" (Isa. 35. 10). As Job looked up and saw the symbol of death engraved upon the heavens, beheld it night after night moving on its slow course around the sky, he must surely have reflected on the inexorable law, "death leads all to Sheol," but remembered then that one day the great God of all men will break the power of death and restore to man the dew of his youth. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait," said Job, "until my change come" (Job 14. 14).

Thus, then, we have in this short passage of two verses an epitome of four fundamental features of the Divine Plan. The loving watchcare of God is over all His creation, His Holy Spirit ceaselessly active in pursuance of His wonderful designs for human happiness, "sweet influences of Pleiades" which no man can hope to bind or restrain. His manifest judgment against sin, and the certainty of retribution upon the one who sets himself deliberately against the goodness of God, cannot be frustrated or defied by any, in this world or the next: none can ever hope to "loose the bands of Orion." Then the fixity of the Divine purpose: "By myself have I sworn, saith God" (Gen. 22. 16)—and the certainty of every feature of His Plan coming to pass in His

own due time; every age and dispensation succeeding its predecessor in orderly sequence, no man having the power to haste these things or to accomplish the work of any Age in his own strength: no man can "bring forth Mazzaroth in his season." Lastly, the enthralling theme of Resurrection and Restitution. Only God can do that, only He Who has promised that He would in the fulness of times "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things" (Acts 3. 20-21). God, too, watches that Bier with its three mourners, wending its way across the dark night sky of earth's present evil world; but God is guiding it with a sure hand, and that Bier will one day come forth into a fair pleasant land where the dead will be raised up and life enter into them; and the mourners will rejoice, for "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21. 4).

These are the words God spake to Job on that memorable occasion. To him, as to us, they conveyed a message of hope, a confirmation of the Lord's great promise made to Moses in an hour when it almost seemed as if His great Plan *was* in danger of frustration, "*As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah.*"

For no man, **NO MAN**, shall ever be able to "bind the sweet influences of Pleiades."

Consider your calling, brethren, for ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood to offer sacrifices acceptable to God; a holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. The very object of our being called into this light is that we may let it shine.

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going back, and others are being drawn to the Lord more closely than ever, by the "present truth" which He is supplying as "meat in due season." Let us each, therefore, more and more be on our guard against the wiles of the Adversary: and let the perfect love of God rule in our hearts, driving out self-love and world-love, and their pride and ambition and folly; and let this devotion to God bring into our hearts the promised fulness of joy and rest and peace; and let us abide in Him, the Vine, and be fruitful branches, responding to all the prunings of the great husbandman with more abundant fruitage; and if the beguilements come to us, let us view the matter as did the apostles and say, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

6.—Confederate with Israel's Enemies

"On the day that you stood aside when aliens carried off Jacob's possessions and foreigners entered his land, casting lots for the possession of Jerusalem, you allied yourself with them. You should not have exulted over your brother's fate in the day of misfortune, or rejoiced at the ruin of the people of Judah, nor have boasted yourself in the day of their distress, nor taken possession of My people's territory in the day of their calamity, nor robbed them of their goods, nor stood in the road to intercept the fugitives, or delivered the survivors into the hands of their enemies" (Vss. 11-14).

"He that is not with me is against me" said Jesus (Matt. 12. 30). Here is an example of that truth. The sin of Edom at the first was not that they manifested open and active hostility to the children of Israel but that they stood aside when their brethren were attacked by the alien and did nothing to help. Not the active doing of wrong, but the abstaining from doing right. That in itself is sin in God's sight. The Edomites could have rendered assistance to Israel at the time of the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar; instead they preferred to stand aside and witness the agony of Jacob, waiting until the tragedy was over so that they might have some share in the spoils.

This, perhaps, is the explanation of the apparent contradiction between the words of Jesus above quoted and that other saying of His, *"He that is not against us is for us"* (Luke 9. 50). In this latter case He was talking about those who were found casting out demons in His Name yet not outwardly or professedly following Him. They were actively doing good works in the name of the Author of all good works, and Jesus gave them credit for their sincerity and good intentions. So that in the sight of God it is better to do good without acknowledging God than it is to stand aside from doing good works whilst professing a shew of righteousness. Jesus gave a parable of two sons, each of whom received an instruction from their father. One said "I go", but went not; the other, "I will not go", but he went. Which one did the will of the father? We all know the answer. So the Edomites, no doubt smug in their own self-righteousness, and reflecting, with good reason, that the Israelites had brought all their troubles upon themselves by their apostasy and unbelief, were condemned in the sight of God because they had failed to remember one very important point; Israel and Edom were brothers.

Much the same has been true with spiritual Edom

in this Gospel Age. There has never been a century since the death of the Apostles when some, professed followers of the Master, have not stood by and seen their more earnest and Christ-like brethren hounded and persecuted by the civil powers and done nothing to help them. *"Perils from false brethren"* said Paul; yea, and false brethren there have been ever since. The "spoils" that could be gained by standing aloof and in the end becoming allied with the ravening wolves who have despoiled the true Church has so often tempted the cupidity of spiritual Edom and led them to betray their brethren.

All these verses, up to verse 14, together comprise a vivid picture of base betrayal. *"The brother shall deliver the brother to death"* said Jesus, speaking precisely of those same things in this Age. And it can be brought very near home to us. Not all the spiritual Edomites are to be found in what some are pleased to call "the systems". How many of us find cause to dissent from our brother or brethren on some matter of doctrine, of activity or of conduct, and allow that dissent to lead us into a condition of active or passive hostility? How many of us exult over our brother's fate in his day of misfortune, or rejoice in his ruin, or boast ourselves and our superior position in his day of distress, or take possession of that which is rightly his when he is in no position to defend himself? or even hindered and obstructed him in his efforts to deliver himself from his calamities? If in any way we have been guilty of such things, whether materially, or much more likely, spiritually, then the condemnation of these verses is upon us and this is how God views us.

This gives a new viewpoint on the searching question "Who shall be able to stand in the evil day?" Obadiah's prophecy goes straight on from this point to announce the advent of the day of the Lord upon all the nations. The Edomites are to receive retribution in that day for all the wrongs they have committed. In the literal history that day came when Nebuchadnezzar, having completed his ravaging of Judea, turned his attention to the other nations round about and made them tributary also. That was the beginning of the end for Edom as a nation. In this Gospel Age it comes when at the end the great Time of Trouble breaks upon the nations, *"and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble"* (Mal. 4. 1). It is in this final destruction of the powers of this world that spiritual Edom suffers. If then any who in the past have been

blesSED with the light of Truth have allowed themselves to become spiritual Edomites then they will share in this judgment, and fall, and lose the great reward. Who will stand in the evil day? Only those who with clean hands and a pure heart have

maintained their consciousness of kinship and affinity with those who in sincerity and truth have maintained their consecration to God and their standing as true sons in His sight.

To be continued.

ETERNAL HOPE

An interesting voice from the past

In our June issue there appeared a reprint of a sermon delivered in 1907 by Dr. Holmes, an American Presbyterian minister, on the subject of man's future probation. At almost the same time a sermon on the same subject was given by a British Methodist minister, Dr. R. P. Downs, at Stoke-on-Trent Wesleyan Church. The importance of the subject seems to justify our placing on current record the following synopsis of this sermon as it appeared at the time in the British Press.

* * *

Dr. R. P. Downs preached a sermon at the Wesleyan Church at Stoke-on-Trent on Sunday night which has occasioned much controversy in the town. Taking for his text, "God is love," the preacher declared his firm belief that human destiny is not fixed at death. He told his congregation that this was a view which for some time he had held secretly, and he knew others similarly situated, but the time had come when men must speak out. The popular doctrine of Christianity at this point was being strongly assailed by the sceptic, who demanded to know whether the God that was preached by the Christian Church, who could damn to eternal perdition the overwhelming majority of the human race, millions of whom had not had sufficient light or probation or privilege on which to base the stupendousness of an eternal destiny, could be the God of Love so often preached. He himself had heard this view expressed by Charles Bradlaugh twenty-five years ago at Rochdale, and such irrefutable logic could not be escaped from.

"If (said Dr. Downs) I were to withhold the great revelation which has come to my soul, I should be

like the man in the lighthouse who gave to the cottagers round the place the oil which was intended for the mighty lanterns of the sea. God is Love, which means that no man will be damned eternally without a chance, no man will be lost until he has had the revelation of Christ's body and of Christ's atonement. . . . 'He knew that the general idea had been, and he himself had thought it for many years, that man's destiny was fixed at death, and that if a man died in a slum area, polluted and unworthy, having sinned, he was condemned guilty, damned for ever, and had no chance—his destiny was fixed. It was not true.

"In John Wesley's fifty-first sermon there was a passage which read, 'Some have imagined that human destiny is fixed at death. There is no passage in the Scriptures that confirms any such thing.' Passing from John Wesley to Dr. W. E. Pope, the greatest, he said, of all Methodist theologians and one of the greatest theologians the world had ever known, he found Dr. Pope saying, 'The fixed and unalterable state of man is always associated with the day of judgment and its issues, and not with the day of death. We must not antedate these issues or interfere with the full work of probation.' 'Exactly,' said the preacher, 'the absoluteness of Christianity, the only way of salvation, demands that no human being should be adjudged until Christ should be made accessible and brought home to him, whether that took place in this life or the life after death. This is my view, and I mean before I die to drag it before the Methodist Church.'"

STOCKPORT WITNESS

In the picturesque Cheshire village of Poynton, which lies midway between Stockport and Macclesfield, two Public Witness meetings were held on successive Saturdays—June 25th and July 2nd under the auspices of the Stockport and Hyde groups of Bible Students. The first lecture, entitled "God's Hand in World Affairs—should we look for Divine intervention?" was given by Bro. F. Linter, and the second, "The Divine Purpose," by Bro. E. G. Roberts, and both meetings were attended by some thirty to forty people including a number of strangers who evinced great interest in the message of Truth.

The work of making the meetings known by the distribution of handbills was enthusiastically undertaken by friends from Stockport, Hyde, Macclesfield, Bury and Warrington, and the fellowship enjoyed on the work as well as at the actual meetings was a source of help and encouragement to all concerned. It did the hearts of the brethren good to have among them our dear Bro. Halton of Hyde, who, at 93 years of age, participated in the work of distributing handbills and attended both lectures. Bro. J. T. Read of U.S.A., also attended the second meeting and enriched the proceedings with his singing.

"To whom shall we go?"

A question for
to-day

"Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6. 68.

There are numerous voices in the world, calling mankind to follow in the pursuit of pleasure, of riches, of wisdom, and various are the inducements presented, and to the young and inexperienced the bewilderment of so many attractions is great.

Our Lord speaks of these various voices calling mankind and leading astray, and contrasts them with His own call of His own, "sheep" who hear and obey it, saying, "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me; strangers will they not follow, because they recognise not the voices of strangers."

But the opening of our ears to hear the good tidings, of which Christ is the centre, does not close them to the various voices of selfishness, ambition, pride, avarice, and vain-glory, and the other voices proceeding from the world, the flesh and the devil: it would seem indeed that, after accepting us to be His sheep, and after giving us some opportunity to learn the sound of the Shepherd's voice, the voice of Truth, we are intentionally exposed to the various voices which would call us away from our Shepherd, and from following in His footsteps. And oh, how many stray away! "Walking after their own desires." How many thus become side-tracked on the way to the heavenly city! How many are ultimately entirely switched off into another direction! How many have thus gone "back and walked no more with Him"! How few, what a "little flock," they are that follow on, day by day, to know the Shepherd more fully, to walk in His paths, and ultimately with Him to reach the heavenly Kingdom!

It will be remembered that the words of our text were called forth by a certain *sifting* of the discipleship. Our Lord's ministry had progressed considerably: at first, the people hung upon His words and said, "Never man spake like this Man," and "great multitudes followed Him." But towards the close of His ministry, as the jealousy and animosity of the Pharisees began to manifest itself, He became less popular, and in our context we find that many of His hearers were leaving Him, and He said, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered and said unto Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast

the words of eternal life." Such siftings and testings of the Lord's disciples have been in progress throughout the Gospel age, and still continue. Many have directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, repudiated the great Shepherd, His leading and His instruction. Some, because the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees said, "He hath a devil and is mad, Why hear ye Him?" Some, because they did not understand His teachings, and they said, "This is a hard saying: who can believe it?" Others, because His teaching drew the line too sharply between righteousness and sin, between God and Mammon; and we may understand as literal our Lord's statement that eventually only "a little flock" will be found worthy of the Kingdom.

It may sound harsh to some, because of their misconception of the subject, when we say that the Lord's message and leading were as much intended to shake off and repel one class, as to attract and to hold another class. The attraction and the drawing was to the Kingdom, and the repulsion was from the Kingdom, and the sifting and separating of our Lord's day, and since and at the present time, is to the intent that the Lord may gather out and separate from those who nominally profess to be His followers, and to be seeking heirship with Him in His Kingdom, all who are unworthy of those blessings. As is written, concerning the end of the Gospel age, and the final glorification of the "little flock," "He shall gather out of His Kingdom [class] all things that offend and them that do iniquity. . . . Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." We may rest assured that none who are fit for the Kingdom will be sifted out. Of such it is written, "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

How all-important then it is, that we have our minds thoroughly made up respecting the voice that we will obey and the footsteps that we will follow—for "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." We "cannot serve God and Mammon," however much we try. We cannot hear and obey the voice of Satan and Sin and the World and Self and the Flesh, and at the same time hear and obey the voice of the Good Shepherd, the voice of Truth, the voice of Love. Let this be settled and fixed in our minds, that it may keep us from all wavering after we have once taken our place amongst the Lord's sheep.

In order that the decision may be the proper one, and in order that it may be the final decision, from which we will not think to turn, it is well that we should note the different voices calling us, and to what they lead. We will not notice these voices as they appeal to the world in general, but merely as they appeal to those who have already heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. They assume that they will not antagonise our faithfulness to the Shepherd, but that they will heartily co-operate. The Shepherd, however, declares that this will not be the case; that the selfish voices of the world are calling, influencing, drawing away from Him and the path in which He leads His sheep.

Wealth calls to us, holding out its golden charms, and promising great things; suggesting meanwhile that our religious zeal is right enough, but overwrought, fanatical, and that in this measure only it is in opposition to wealth; and that even if obliged to leave the Lord for the sake of wealth it need only be temporarily, and that soon, having acquired wealth, we could pursue after Him with redoubled energy and thus gain the Kingdom. How delusive! and yet how many are attracted by this call and presentation! Well does the Apostle say that "The love of money is a root of all evil, which some coveting after have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Then, too, how false are these hopes, how few amongst the many who pursue wealth ever attain it! Indeed, it is not the wealth that is the evil, for God is rich above all; it is the love of earthly wealth and the manner in which it absorbs the heart affections, away from the truth and its service and heavenly things, that constitutes the evil and the snare of wealth which remarkably few ever resist, overcome and bring into subjection to the divine will.

Many hear the voice of Fame, and pursue it, if peradventure they will become famous, highly esteemed among men. The impelling motive here is, in part at least, pride and approbation—ambition for self—not for God, nor for righteousness. And how few who turn aside from the Lord's way, in whole or in part, to gain fame, worldly renown, honour of men, ever attain to fame in any considerable measure! It is a false voice leading on to false hopes, soon shattered in death, if not before; it would induce us to turn aside from the humble path of obedience and self-abasement in the Divine service whose reward is "Glory, honour and immortality" at God's right hand of favour.

Others hear the voice of worldly pleasure, and see the millions of earth seeking it in the gratification of the flesh; and there is a great drawing to go with the multitude, seeking pleasure through the

gratification of our perverted natural tastes. How long it takes us to learn assuredly that worldly pleasures are fleeting, and that they have a bitter which counterbalances every sweet, and that the tendencies of Vanity Fair are quite contrary to the new ambitions, new hopes, new desires of our new natures! How many efforts all of the Lord's people have made, to blend or mix the pleasure of the world with the heavenly joys, only to find that they will not blend, and that true happiness for those who would abide in Christ and follow in His footsteps, means the rejection of all pleasures which have a sinful combination or tendency! How long it takes us to learn that the only pleasures which the new creature can truly enjoy are those in which our Lord can be our companion, those which we can discuss with Him and in which we can enjoy His fellowship.

All of these besetments, be it noticed, have their roots in selfishness—they are all in some form inclinations to self-gratification: on the other hand the voice of the good Shepherd is calling us away from our debased selfish conditions, moods and desires, to a higher plane of sentiment, a plane of benevolence, love of God and righteousness and fellow men, which seeks to "do good and to communicate." We see, too, that having set before us the new conditions, our Lord, our Teacher, is permitting the selfish tendencies of our natural hearts and of the world in general to call us in other directions; so that by learning to resist these, we may more and more establish for ourselves strong characters, rooted, grounded, fixed, in righteousness and love, strong and able to resist the weaknesses of our own flesh as well as the influence of friends and of the world in general.

Only such as thus develop character can possibly be "overcomers" of the world, and only such will be accepted of the Lord as His joint heirs in the Kingdom. It will thus be seen that the Lord is not merely seeking for those who will make a covenant with Him, but by lessons of trial and discipline and testings by the way He is seeking to prove his people—to test them, to find and to separate to His own service not those who are strong in selfwill, strong according to the flesh, but those who, abandoning the will of the flesh, give themselves so completely to the Lord that they become transformed by the renewing of their minds—"strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

In harmony with this thought are the words of the Lord to fleshly Israel, the typical people—"The Lord your God *proveth you* to know whether ye love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with

all your soul." This explains the object and intent of the Divine course with us, the true Israel, throughout the Gospel age: He has been proving His people, testing them, to ascertain the degree and the strength of their love for Him. He tells us that "Not everyone that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom": that many who make the covenant of full consecration will fail to keep it, fail to obey its requirements, and that their failure will indicate a deficiency of love for Him, and that self-will reigns in their hearts, giving God only the secondary place. And the Kingdom is only intended for those who by God's grace shall at heart become like to the Lord Jesus, in that they will love the Lord with *all* their hearts, with *all* their souls, and be able to say, "Not my will, but Thy will, O Lord, be done." No other condition than this condition of full submission to the Lord can make us acceptable for the Kingdom; for no other condition represents full self-submission and full love to God. And let us not forget that all the heavenly things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man," God hath reserved for them that love Him supremely.

Thus we are assured that those who love the Lord, and who in consequence will receive the Kingdom, will be those whose love will have been tested by trials and temptations on the way to it. Those who do not love the Lord with *all* their hearts, in whom self or some other idol has first place, will be seduced by the world, the flesh or the devil into some form of rebellion against the Divine Word or Divine Providence: they will have schemes and theories which they will prefer to the Lord's plan, and their own theories and plans when analysed will usually be found to be based either upon selfishness or ambition or upon an evil spirit of envy, hatred, jealousy.

The Lord's leading and the Lord's words lose their attraction to such, and they lose their interest correspondingly, and like those who turned away from the Lord at the First Advent, saying, "This is a hard saying" they walk no more with Him. But some will continue to walk with the Lord; some will not be driven from Him by any of the arts and wiles of the Evil One. They are such as are at heart fully the Lord's, not their own; they will follow wherever the Lord may lead, because they have no will except His will. These will follow the Lord in the narrow way of trial, discipline and testings during the present life, and by and by, as He has declared, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Nor will this company

lack in numbers by reason of the falling away of some. It will be full, complete, the predestinated number which God foreordained He would select to be joint heirs with His Son, our Lord Jesus. His foreknowledge permitted Him to make full allowance for all who would turn back, as well as to fore-know that the requisite number would go on.

Those who go on will all have the general character of Christ—faithfulness to the Lord and to His word of promise: and when various voices call in various directions, away from the narrow way of consecration and sacrifice, humiliation and self-denial, they, in answer to the Lord's query, "Will ye also go away?" will answer as did the apostles of old, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." They know nowhere else to go. Having heard the calls of the world, the flesh and the Devil, they have seen also the emptiness of all their false promises, and how none of them can give a satisfying portion. But in our Lord's call they have recognised not only righteousness, justice, but have recognised, also, the promised reward of righteousness through Christ, which He has promised to them that love Him—namely, eternal life.

Nowhere else is there such a promise; from no other quarter comes such a hope; in no other service, therefore, could they think of engaging but in this service. With the hope of obtaining this prize of eternal life, they could rejoice even in laying down this present life. Truly, this is that "blessed hope." With such hopes before them, clearly understood, and with the Narrow Way distinctly marked out, and with an understanding of why it is so narrow and why so few find it (because it leads to the great exaltation of the Kingdom and its joint-heirship with Christ), who could think for a moment of turning aside, or even listening, to the voices calling to wealth, honour, fame, pleasures of this life, seeing that even hearkening to them would interrupt our progress in the way to the Kingdom, and thus frustrate our hopes and make the exceeding great and precious promises of none effect to us. Then rather, therefore, will we lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us in the Gospel.

As the faithful disciples realised a meaning in the Master's teachings at the first harvest which the majority could not realise, so now at the Second Advent His words have a preciousness and a meaning and a force to those who are in heart-harmony with Him, which they do not have to others; hence now, as at the First Advent, some are stumbling and

continued on page 91

Myckman



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

BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

Vol. 32, No. 7

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, 1955

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*This journal is sent free of charge to all who request
it and who renew their request annually, and is
supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested*

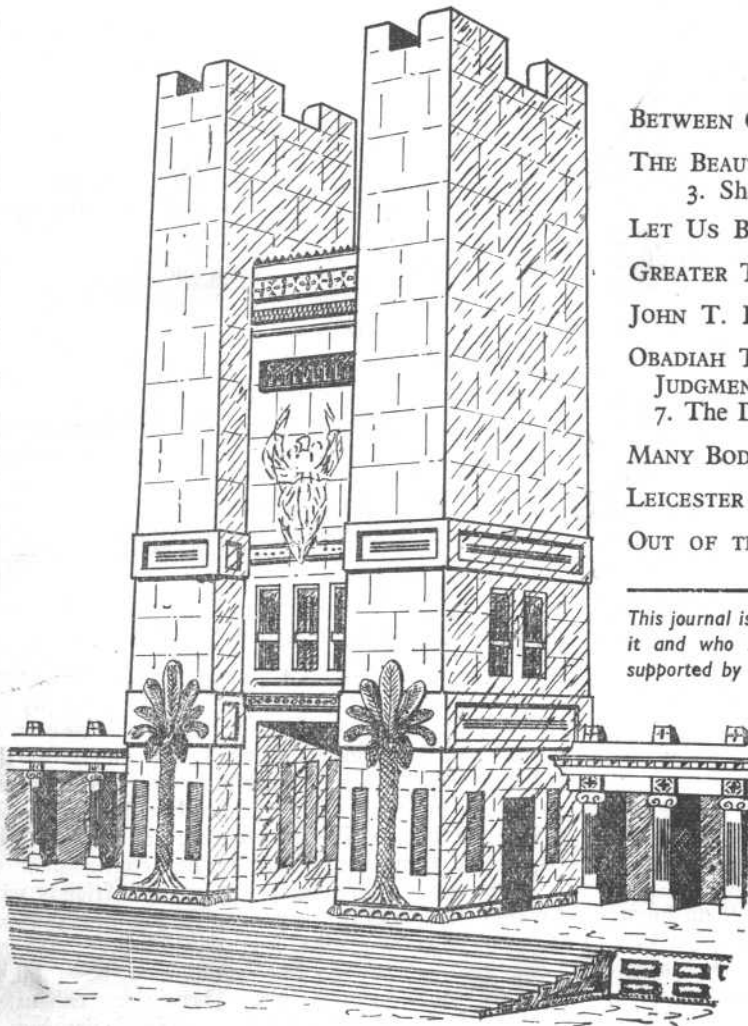
Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew, E.4
Melbourne, Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

1956 Calendars

Brother Lardent announces that the 1956 calendar is now ready. There will be a change this year in that the scenes will not be pictures of English scenery as has been the case of late, but Bible scenes in colour, and it is thought that this will be much more acceptable to the friends. There is the usual daily text and the price will be 2/9 per copy, or 6/- for three copies sent to one address, post free. Please order direct from Bro. F. Lardent, 174 Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23, and NOT from Welling.

* * *

Greek Testaments

A brother, turning out his library, has given to us three old Greek Testaments, dated 1824, 1836 and 1847 respectively, and one old Hebrew Bible, dated 1878. They are all in poor condition, but we will be pleased to send any of them to anyone who could make use of them, without charge, if a request is sent us to that effect. A few stamps to cover postage would be appreciated. Would-be students of the original languages might like to have these books.

* * *

The Bookroom

In consequence of decreasing use of this aspect of our activities it has been decided to close down the bookroom altogether. Booklets published by ourselves will still be available but we shall no longer stock students' helps and other books by other publishers. In consequence of this we have just a few books left in stock which we will now dispose of at the prices shown below; after these have gone we shall no longer keep such books in stock. We will be very pleased to send any of these promptly upon request.

Revised Standard Version, *rexine bound* (six copies left). Normal price 37/6. Offered at 25/- post free (\$3.00).

Ferrar Fenton complete Bible (two copies) 31/6 post free (each \$4.00).

Letters of Saint Paul (Arthur Way's modern translation of St. Paul's Epistles and Hebrews. (One copy) 11/- post free (\$1.50).

Septuagint translation in Greek and English, parallel columns. (One copy) 33/- post free (\$5.00).

Apocrypha. (One copy) 6/- post free (\$1.00).

Little Life of Jesus. (Children's book. One copy) 6/- post free (\$1.00).

American and Canadian friends are requested not to send the payment until they have received the books since in the event of books being sold before their applications are received it is not permissible under present regulations to return their remittances.

* * *

"The Hope of the World"

Some months ago we announced the offer made by a brother in U.S.A. for the free supply of copies of this book to those who could use it as a loaning medium to interest newcomers to the Truth. Since then Brother Reynolds has answered the call to be "with the Lord"; but his wife, Sister Reynolds, is endeavouring to carry on the work he commenced. A further consignment of the books has just arrived here and friends who would like one or more copies for this purpose may have them gladly on application here. Several brethren whose requests could not be fulfilled earlier due to our stock becoming exhausted should by now have received their copies but if by accident any such have been missed will they please make fresh application and we will send their copies immediately.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

*A series of studies
on Sanctification*

3.—Shadows of Better Things

Among the many questions on which Christians of an earlier day made great mistakes was that of the Israelitish system of religion. By many it was accounted to be merely a pattern for the Christian Church, the priesthood being the model for the Christian ministry, the congregation of the tribes being representative of the Christian laity. A warranty was thus produced for the particular privileges which the ministry claimed as their special prerogative.

Others, looking at the frequent effusions of sacrificial blood, considered this part of the system barbaric and revolting, and utterly unworthy of the Christian's God. In consequence, the Hebrew's God, Jehovah, was accounted to be a mere tribal God—akin to Baal (the Assyrian God) and Dagon (the Philistines' God)—a God delighting in blood sacrifice and oft-repeated rite. The real reason for the institution of the Israelitish system was *not* to provide a pattern for the clerical and lay division of the Church in this present dispensation, nor were the constantly repeated sacrificings intended to teach that Jehovah was a mere tribal God. The object behind these things was to shadow forth the cleansing and adoption of that people—but in a later day—as the channel of Divine Love and Redemption for all the peoples of the earth. In thus becoming the adopted channel of the Lord, they would be the means of manifesting God's Holiness to man. In order to prepare them for that Millennial task, God began to teach them, in kindergarten form, the deeper values of life and liberty, of holiness and sin.

God had no pleasure in the blood of bulls and goats, but for a time they served as patterns of some greater thing. Israel had need to learn that vicarious sacrifice was an essential requirement in their life, if they were to become and remain reconciled with God. The constant application of animal blood on their behalf was the means used to drive that lesson home. Whatever else they failed to learn, they could not fail to see that such animal blood was shed to make reconciliation for *their* sin. "Its blood was shed for me" was the outstanding fact every Israelite would be obliged to confess. But even should the reflective Israelite appreciate that fact, a lesson of such magnitude, touching the deep foundations of moral things,

could not be learned in one brief year. A life-time's lessons would be all too short to teach men the strict equity of the highest law. It was not meant to teach man that he might sin and then cause an animal to suffer in his stead. That would be a wrong idea for him to learn. Another principle of the law laid down the equation of "Like for like". "An eye for an eye—a tooth for a tooth" was the exaction laid upon the wilful transgressor. Carried to its highest point, that principle would require "a man for a man." Thus as the pious Israelite contemplated the dying beast, it was intended that he should see it as an emblem of "a dying man". Since man had sinned, and thereby become unclean, the highest law required a sinless man to die—like for like—and by his death conduce vicariously to the sinner's cleansing from sin. But quite obviously the sacrifice of human blood (or human life) though required by the highest law, could not be shed from year to year, as sacrifice for sin, in order to afford the data for the lesson to be learned; hence if this lesson must be taught, sacrificial blood from some other source must be procured. Thus, year by year, the blood of bulls and goats was shed to provide the means for the lesson to be re-set, and if need be, re-learned.

To teach them the elementary aspect of redemption truth, God took them apart from the rest of men, and instituted, with great care and detail, the system of the Priesthood and the Law. They needed to be taught the true nature of sin, and of its power over men. They needed also to learn that God was holy—a God who could not approve sin. Other peoples associated vile practices with the worship of their gods, and entertained no consciousness of sin therein. With Israel it was intended to be otherwise. Their God desired to erect the standard of purity and holiness in their midst, and to create within them an intense abhorrence for their sin.

In the wicked state of that ancient world, that was indeed a great and exalted lesson to be learned. In order to show them something of the vast difference between holiness and sin, God instituted a series of separations among men, each stage of which was intended to depict an increased degree of holiness, until, by the emblem of His own

Presence in their midst, the absolute degree was shadowed forth.

First of all, the entire nation was separated from the rest of men. When God's due time for deliverance had drawn near, God sent Moses to lead them out of Egyptian bondage. "*Israel is my son, even my firstborn . . . let my son go*" so said Moses to Egypt's king (Exod. 4, 22-23). Among the whole concourse of the nations of the earth to be regathered to the Creator-Father Israel was intended to be the first. He brake the Egyptian yoke, and set His people free. He led them through the sea, and separated them into a place apart. After this He separated one whole tribe (taking them in place of the first-borns of every tribe) from among this separated people; then a separated family from among a separated tribe; and then a separated man from among the separated family. This man alone of the whole nation—nay of the whole world—was permitted to appear before that Holy and mysterious Light wherein God had made His presence known.

In order to begin His great design of blessing all the nations of the earth, and winning back their hearts from sin the Holy God, who because of Eden's sin withdrew into the distance and the dark, now began His approach to men. In keeping with the Promise made to Abraham God made this first approach to Abraham's seed, in order to teach them how He hated sin. Accordingly He came and pitched His Tent within the circle of their camp. He came to dwell in that mysterious Light; to be the central feature of their life—to be their God, and take them to be His people. Yet though He came so comparatively near to his chosen people, how far away He really was! Around His Tent, a Holy-Court was marked. A holy fence prevented Israel's unceremonious ingress to the Sacred Court, save when presenting oblation before their God. None save the chosen tribe had daily access (of right and duty) to enter within that white-curtained space. But not all these, those Levi's sons, were privileged to tread the Holy Place within the Sacred Tent. None save the anointed Priest had right of access there. But deeper still, within the Most Holy Place (the *Sanctum Sanctorum* of Israel)—dwelt Israel's God, so near, and yet so far away. The separations among the people were thus augmented by the separations of these respective "places."

Again, the chosen tribe must show distinction in its dress. In robes of linen, pure and white, they trod the holy ground. No other men could wear this dress. Above all this, he upon whom fell the highest choice must dress in robes of even

greater distinctiveness, to all else everywhere denied. A golden crown adorned his head—fit emblem of his Holiness to the Lord. Anointed with an holy oil, for other use forbidden, this special man stood forth as the Anointed of the Lord.

Yet even he, the final choice of all these stages of selection, was not permitted at any time, or at his own will or pleasure to enter before the Holy Light. Not more than once each year, and even then not without the holy blood to make recompense for sin, this chosen Priest was admitted before the Holiness within to leave upon the Mercy Seat the "*Kaphar*" for himself and all the tribes of Israel. There was thus a way between Israel's need and God's abode, but how very narrow and circumscribed it was!

How far from the dark distance into which He had withdrawn the Holy God had come, that He might dwell with Abraham's Seed, and yet how far away His Dwelling-place was pitched! Too far for unaided, uninvited man to reach! That Holy Light, untended and unfed, enthroned aloft amid cherubic wings, was emblem of that Eternal Light in heaven above, the source and fount of Holiness Divine. This was the standard of the Absolute, the Sinless, the Incomparable. Here was All-Holiness, underived. No holy oil sustained the Light. Here was no consuming, nor diminishing, nor replenishing. Here was Fulness (Col. 2. 9). Exhaustlessness—Eternal Plenitude.

Here was no enthronement of a tribal God. No festal days of Isis or Osiris, of Bel or Dagon could compare with this.

In His own good time the Eternal Custodian of Virtue and Truth began herein anew to grapple with the heinousness and sinfulness of sin. For full two thousand years since Adam fell, God made no effort to hold sin in check, except on rare occasions when vengeance fell on vile unholy men. Death reigned everywhere unchecked before Moses came, but God had sent no further enunciation of His Law (Rom. 5. 14). No sin-sacrifice was offered or accepted throughout those years, for without proclamation of Law, no charge of sin was laid. God gave no law adapted to man's fallen estate when Adam fell. Thus, without Law defined, no transgression could occur. Man was condemned already, in the first father's condemnation. Adam broke the Law, and the broken Law had spoken. Its Judge had issued His decree; its Executive Power had acted, and both the sinner and his seed were under penal claim. No man of Adam's seed could break the grip and power of sin within, nor lessen its contaminating effects without. Still, notwithstanding that man was vile,

and wallowed pleasurably in his filth, God had taken no occasion to re-assert His Law, nor to adapt it to the needs of fallen man, until His own due time arrived. When Abraham's Seed had multiplied, and had smarted beneath the tyrant's whip, God's due time had come.

The due time come, the Holiness of God began again to grapple with the sinfulness of sin. To show how far it separated God from men (and men from God) He drew around Himself the children of His faithful Friend (Jas. 2. 24. Isa. 41. 8). Though fallen like all other men yet God devised a way to use this seed to serve His ends. By bringing them apart from other men; by clothing some of them in special robes; by teaching them a code of adapted Laws; by accepting animal blood as atonement for their sins, God clothed and invested this people, priest and laity alike, with ceremonial saintliness. If they would obey His voice, He promised to accept them as a holy nation, and as a community of Priests, and to place within their Camp His own Holy Habitation. This procedure did not free their hearts from sin. It did not cleanse them, once for all, from sin's effects. Their taints remained within, and oft they fell. Yet spite of this, if they would follow certain prescribed rites, God promised to account them clean, so that they might continue to serve His ends. How like a father, teaching his son to build! The "nursery" bricks—just tiny blocks of wood—are placed in this or that design, as doting sire thus teaches his little son to learn how it should be done. More than all else, the father seeks to cultivate his off-spring's "building sense."

Building it surely is,—but oh, how crude and immature, yet it is exactly the right thing for the untrained infant mind. In course of time the wooden blocks may be superseded by brick or stone and some imposing edifice, artistically constructed, may come forth from brain and hand, as consequence of that kindergarten cultivation of the "building sense." We speak of building sense illustratively here—now let us speak of "holiness sense," as God takes His family of pupil sons in hand. That it was nursery work and kindergarten instruction, all will admit. But in that far time, in no place else the wide world through, could anything to compare be found.

God was commencing a great design—of this Abraham had been told—but no effective instrument was ready to His hand. God must needs make that instrument in His own way. Hence, He gave them statutes and instructions to expand their minds, so that they could order their lives thereby. The exact value of this instruction is found in its

results upon the lives of those rare souls who rose to heights of trust and faith—as Joshua, Samuel, David, Daniel, and others too, who shone like stars in a dark sky. Faithful men, of whom the world was not worthy; of whom God bare record that they had pleased Him, yet all in very truth, the product of Sinai's Law and Covenant.

This faithful few and not the sinful mass, are token of the task God undertook when He began to "make" a people for His Name. That all the rest in Israel, the ox-like stubborn mass, were not pure in heart is only too painfully sure, yet spite of all their sins and stubbornness, it still remained that they were accepted as the first-fruits (the first-born) among all the people of the earth. Intrinsically no better than the rest, God accounted them as separate from their fellows, and invested them with an external holiness to make possible their participation with Him in His plans. "I am the Lord your God which have separated you from other people . . . And ye shall be holy unto Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine" (Lev. 20. 24-26). "Sanctify yourselves therefore and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God . . . I am the Lord which sanctify you" (Lev. 20. 6-8). "I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves and ye shall be holy, for I am holy . . . ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11. 44.)

These words, spoken to the whole nation, describe the whole nation's standing before God, and the lesson we must learn in connection with their calling is that their lapses into sin and idolatry did not cancel out their position before God, nor destroy their holy standing as His people, and intended co-workers in the accomplishment of His plans. To enable them to maintain their national holy standing before their Holy God, the whole Levitical system was then set up. Though they were chosen to be a nation of priests, yet God appointed for them a chosen tribe to render priestly service, and a priestly family with its specially chosen priest to slay the sacrifice and offer the blood which ceremonially cleansed them from their sin. Themselves a nation of intended priests, yet God provided for them a family of priests. Israel was at school—its teacher was the Most High God—the Almighty God who had called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—its lesson, first, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; second, its converse postulate, the Absolute Holiness of God. To that end God surrounded them with holy things. He gave them holy days and holy years to keep, He gave them ordinances of service and ablutions to keep them clean, or to restore cleanliness when lost,

He gave them holy fire to consume upon an holy altar the oblations which they brought. He gave them holy water wherein to wash after contact with the dead.

Looking back from our own fuller day, how hopelessly trivial and inadequate these carnal ordinances may seem. The constant round of sacrifice with its repeated effusion of blood — the slaughtering of bulls and goats, the repeated washing of hands and robes, the trimming and feeding of golden lamps: the swinging censer while incense burned; the regular eating of permitted foods—oh, how humdrum and monotonous it might seem; a constant round of tawdry ritual and fleshly ceremonial; but let us not forget even in this our "better" day, that this is the most advanced lesson in righteousness and holiness which the whole world of that distant day affords. In no place else than Israel did God condescend to set before the minds of men the first principles of that holier estate where man might live at peace with man, and in subjection to a Holy God. Count it elementary if we will; esteem it kindergarten as we please, but let it not be overlooked that here historic fact attests that in this way the chosen race first began within the bounds of post-Edenic times to lisp its alphabet in the deepest things of life. A people was set apart to God, to serve His deeper purposes; to throw upon the screen of life a picture of the present tragedy of sin and of its ultimate finale in righteousness, when once the "better things" have brought to pass the redemptive blessings for all the nations of the earth.

Faulty and frail they were, so often falling as other men to worship idol gods, yet notwithstanding all, they were accounted holy unto God. Not holy in themselves, not undefiled in heart, but for the programme's sake, God took them as His own. Not from within, but from without that holiness derived. It came from God; and from His presence in their midst and from His expressed desire to have them co-operate with Him to out-work His great designs.

A great objective was set before them—and even in those early days the credit-worthiness of the scheme was attributed to them for the scheme's sake. It was intended in future times to produce holiness in man—to conquer sin and make man whole and wholesome within. This holy "end" made holy the "means" thereto. And thus in those far-off primitive days, by means of elementary rites and sacrifices God set on record for such to read as can, the basic lesson concerning His own inner Self, and of His unfaltering intention to set man free from sin and death. Intrinsically unholy men were accorded extrinsic holiness, so that they might co-

operate with God. Gathered round the emblem of His presence, within the hidden depths of the Holiest place, and set by God each in his own respective relation thereto, High-Priest, under-Priest, Levite, and tribesman, each and all, from centre to circumference afford a picture of holy means dedicated to a holy end. The lesson we must learn to-day is this, that those whom God calls to be associated with Himself in carrying forward His great design, are made Holy by that association, for the sake of the design.

To be continued

Q.—After the death of Abel, Cain was afraid that "everyone that findeth me shall slay me." How can this be if Cain was the only surviving son: for Seth had not yet been born?

A.—The error of supposing the story to imply that there were no other human beings alive at the time the crime has been made even by the Higher Critics, who, in their standard work (the International Critical Commentary) say that the story is unreliable since it implies the existence of other men when there were no others. A little thought will show that there must have been quite a fair-sized community at the time. We have two definite facts from which to reason. First, Cain was the first son of Adam and Eve. Second, Seth was the next son to be born after the death of Abel. These two points are clear from Eve's words in Gen. 4; 1 and 25. According to the Hebrew chronology, Seth was born when Adam had lived 130 years. The death of Abel must be placed just before this, say, at 120 years from the Creation of man. The birth of Cain would be soon after the expulsion from Eden, say not more than twenty years after the creation. He would thus be 100 years old at the time of his crime, and Abel anything up to ninety. There is no evidence to show that men in that day, despite their longevity, took any longer to attain maturity than they do now. If we assume that marriage took place at an average age of thirty, and that births occurred to each pair once in five years, a simple calculation suffices to show that at the time of Abel's death there could be 176 persons in the human community, reaching to the fourth generation from Adam, 54 of these being descendants of Cain and his wife. Such a number is small enough for Cain to be personally known to them all, which explains his fear that "everyone" that findeth me shall slay me."

Let us be Awake

An exhortation to
activity

In the very early days of the Church there existed a sound and healthy fellowship. To those early disciples, knowing and following the Master was the all absorbing theme of life. Doctrine and prayer played a prominent part in their fellowship. *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts 2. 42.)*

In those days a mighty witness was given to the purposes of God in Christ. The Lord Jesus said to the disciples who witnessed His ascension from the earth *"Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."* (Acts 1. 8) At Pentecost "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24. 29) Peter began the great witness to, or concerning, Jesus. Addressing the "men of Israel" he spoke boldly of Jesus of Nazareth, the One whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised up out of death. *"This Jesus,"* said Peter, *"hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."* *"God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ."* (Acts 2. 22-36.) It was the crucified, RISEN, Lord Jesus Christ that Peter so earnestly spoke about. Salvation in His Name was the good news that Peter proclaimed.

Thus it was that "repentance and remission of sins" began to be preached at Jerusalem, the message of salvation which was destined to reach all nations. (Luke 24. 46-48.) Peter and John were brought before the Jewish Council and forbidden to preach, to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. Their answer showed that they were determined to continue their witness, doing so in obedience to the Word of God. Being further threatened, they were released and joined their company of brethren, to whom they repeated their experience. This caused the whole company to lift up their voice to God with one accord. They recognised Him as the great Creator, Whose Word was fulfilled in their experience. They prayed, not from protection from those who had threatened the Apostles, but that it may be granted unto His servants to speak the Word with boldness. *"And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."* (Acts 4. 13-33.) The earnest, sincere determination to be faithful to the Lord, and prayer—united prayer—(a lifting up of their voices to-

gether) was the secret of their powerful witness. The Lord indeed gave them "power from on high, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. But it was not only the Apostles who gave this witness. Remember the testimony of Stephen, concerning the "Just One."

When great persecution scattered the brethren (except the Apostles) who were at Jerusalem, they "went everywhere preaching the word." Philip went to the city of Samaria and "preached Christ unto them." He preached "the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." (Acts 8. 1-12.)

Thus the early brethren were established in the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship and prayers and gave a mighty witness to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through this witness—this preaching of the Gospel, the Lord gathered or added to the Church such as He chose. (Acts 2. 47.) So it has gone on all down this Age; the preaching of the Gospel has been the Divinely appointed means of gathering the Church. God "hath called you by our Gospel" said the Apostle Paul (2. Thess. 2. 14.) When before Agrippa Paul said *"Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead and show light unto the people and to the Gentiles."* (Acts 26. 22, 23.) It was Paul who said "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation." (Rom. 1. 16.) The preaching—the witnessing concerning God's purpose in Christ, has been his means of fulfilling this purpose in this Age.

Those early disciples preached the message due for their day—"repentance and remission of sins" in the Name of Jesus—salvation through His Name. They also embraced the "Hope" of His coming again as the consummation of their experience. As others were added to the Church they too embraced the promise of the Master "I will come again and receive you unto myself." (John 14. 1-3.) Now we live in the closing days of this Age when the Lord will gather His faithful and usher in His reign on earth. Our message to-day should be not only that Jesus "by the determinate counsel and fore-

knowledge of God" was crucified for sinners, has been raised out of death, and ascended to the Father in heaven and has opened up the way to life, but also that His return and Kingdom is upon us. Our message should be that He who was crucified for all returns as Judge of all (living and dead.) This message involves a call to repentance (Acts 17. 30, 31, 2 Tim. 4. 1). Our message should be the one due for this day—The reign of Christ is at hand—the order, political and religious has had its day—the one sure place of refuge is in Christ.

Shall we who have hope in Christ sit back, waiting to be "taken home?" Many people of various religious bodies are declaring the near return of Christ and many and varied are their expectations for mankind. So many, not established in true doctrine, but rooted in the errors of "immortality of the soul", "Trinity", "Hell Fire" (or other teaching akin to it), etc., are busy proclaiming what they believe, but because of error in doctrine are unable to see and preach the living purpose of God concerning every child of Adam. What a limited Gospel they preach. Some individuals see and proclaim much of the Christian's hope and something concerning the reign of Christ—"the Millennium" but wrong doctrine must ever becloud the real issue.

The Lord has graciously given to us (not because of any merit on our part) the truth concerning Himself, His Son, the Holy Spirit, the nature of man, sin, ransom, the call of the Church, the hope of Israel, the Kingdom. He has given us great light upon the dispensations of the Divine Purpose. If we love the Lord these things are vital to us and rejoice our hearts. The knowledge of these precious things brings responsibility. They are not given to us to keep to ourselves and dream about (or fight about.) They are given to us to use in our Christian walk and witness. If others who are not so favoured are busy in "Advent and Kingdom Witness" what should we be doing? Are we satisfied that to talk to each other is all we should do? Do we feel that we are the people and soon He will take us "home to glory" and that all we have to do is to "love the brethren" and develop character? Do we feel that if we do those things we are "making ourselves ready?" If so it is time we roused ourselves. It is high time for us to awake and seek to have more of the Spirit and outlook of the early Church. They were established in doctrine; they manifested true love for the Lord and the brethren; they encouraged each other to "be ready." To them those important things were "part and parcel" of their Christian life. But also in perfect harmony with, and as a result of,

these things, they with "great boldness" preached the message due. To bear witness to the truth was a vital part of their calling. They did not ask for "results", nor should we. The Word of God faithfully proclaimed, brings its results—in harmony with the Divine Purpose. The message due to be preached to-day will not be popular with great ones of this or any other land. It is not popular with any class of people but will find the hungry souls who long to know the way of the Lord in the earth in these days.

It is sometimes said that our business in these days is to minister to "the household of faith." This is often said as a reason or excuse for refraining from witness to the purpose of God in Christ. Let us ask "Where is the household of faith?" Is it confined to the comparatively small number of our own fellowship? All who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and have received Him as their personal Saviour are of the household of faith, regardless of knowledge on other matters. One vital feature of our witness — our preaching — must be to strengthen their hope in their Saviour's return and show them its meaning and purpose concerning believers, the nations and mankind. In other words we must proclaim truths concerning the Lord's return which so many believers do not know about. In this way we may minister to the household of faith—to give them the meat now due. We cannot all stand on platforms to speak but we can, like the early brethren in the Church, co-operate. We can lift up our voices together for Divine grace and guidance. We can all support and "lift up the hands" of those who speak publicly. We can all as opportunity permits, speak a word in season or pass on literature carrying the message.

Great and stupendous events are at hand, revealed in the Word of God. Let us help and encourage each other to understand. Let us seek more of the Spirit of the Lord that we may have the vision of the ways of the Lord. How can we be silent in these days when such wonderful things are at hand. We have a message of judgment. We have a message of Good News. Let us be as ready and willing as were our brethren in the early Church to preach the message now due and leave "results" with the Lord. With our own glorious hope before us concerning our Lord's Return, let us be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that *your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" (1 Cor. 15. 58.)

Let us be Awake—waiting, watching, working.

Greater things than these

A meditation on Christ's earthly ministry

In the last talk with His disciples, recorded in St. John's gospel, Jesus said: "*Greater things than these ye shall do because I go to the Father*". He had done "such miracles as no one else ever did". He asked them to believe on Him for the very works' sake. Yet now He promised they would do greater things. He was comparing their existing weakness with the powers they would possess as a result of His "going to the Father". It should have caused no surprise when He told them where He was going to. He had already said "*Where I go ye know and the way ye know*".

Their law was an invitation to all Israel to go to the Father—back to the source of all life and blessing—and its ceremonies shewed them the way. In his summary of the law Moses said: "*I set before you this day life and death, blessing and cursing; choose life (obedience to the law) that you may live*". For fifteen hundred years a picture had been set before them of the only way to God. The tabernacle (or temple) in their midst symbolised the dwelling-place of God to which they directed all their prayers and praises and brought their offerings and sacrifices. By these they admitted their sinfulness and need of atonement. But what they brought were only tokens of themselves and represented their desires. As sinful men God's justice precluded access to His presence so their offerings had to be taken by one typically cleansed for the purpose. The writer of "Hebrews" commenting on this said (Chap. 10, 1/4.): "*For, since the Law exhibits only an outline of the blessings to come and not a perfect representation of the things themselves, the priests can never, by repeating the same sacrifices which they continually offer year after year, give complete freedom from sin to those who draw near (to God). For then would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, because the consciences of the worshippers—who in that case would now have been cleansed once for all—would no longer be burdened with sins? But in those sacrifices sins are recalled to memory year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*". Israel knew not what they promised when they said: "All the Lord hath said will we do and be obedient" for the Law was a spiritual thing—a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Our Lord's analysis in His sermon on the mount shewed how penetrating were the commands of the Law.

The severance of man from his Maker, through the disobedience of Adam, has made him in many respects inferior to "lower" creatures. Experiment

and observation reveal that he is now aware of but a tiny fraction of the forces and influences around him which other creatures "sense" and to which they respond. It is called "instinct" but in reality they feel and react to the will of God. They live in harmony with Him and praise Him by obedience (Psa. 148). Man has lost these finer faculties and knows not that he is blind and deaf and insensitive to God. There are indications in the Gospels, beside His miracles, that Jesus Christ possessed them to the full as Adam must have done.

Adam was a wonderful being physically, mentally and morally. Six thousand years of degeneration have reduced his descendants to but a shadow of his greatness. His supply of life was such that he lived for about nine hundred years after being cut off from its source. His intelligence was such that he understood the mind of God and could "talk" with Him. His moral character permitted him to walk with (in the ways of) God. He was made in the image of God and associated with Him. He was far superior to the lower animals over which he had dominion. The sacred record says that he named them—called them by name—implying that they responded to his will. Summarising the position St. Paul says: "For from the very creation of the world His (God's) invisible perfections—namely His eternal power and divine nature—have been rendered intelligible and clearly visible by His works". (Rom. 1. 20.)

When Adam realised the enormity of his sin and its dreadful results, he did all he could to appease the wrath of God in order to return to Him. Instinctively he knew the principle of justice and the need for sacrifice as the means of redemption and atonement. The best he could offer were the docile creatures under his control, which humbly obeyed the will of their Maker, as though he acknowledged their superiority. It must have been a great sacrifice to part with these companions but they were no substitute for his superior nature. He clothed himself with their skins as a sign of humility and repentance but alas! too late. He and all mankind in him were compelled to taste the results of transgression to the full. Therein lies the need for the extreme suffering of the Redeemer.

By the same means and in the same spirit (sacrifice and repentance) Israel, individually and nationally, were afterwards commanded to go to the Father clothed, as it were, in the righteousness of animals. Time had obscured much of its significance, but the Law and its ceremonies were designed to teach

them what they were not and could not do in order to "lead them to Christ". When He came, with His perfect ability and knowledge of the Father, He undertook to carry out the provisions of the Law, not to offer the blood of animals but to offer Himself. "That is why when He comes into the world, He says '*Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, but a body Thou hast prepared for me* (not a ceremonial sacrifice). *In whole burnt-offerings Thou has taken no pleasure.*' Then I said, *I have come—in the roll of the book it is written of me—to do thy will O God*'" (Hebrews 10, 8-9). It is not recorded that Jesus ever quoted these words but the Psalmist, with spiritual insight, saw the only kind of sacrifice acceptable to God, the coming of which was the true hope of Israel, and our Lord's life fully expressed them. It was not needful for Him to offer anything for Himself. He was the perfect Son of God and had access to the Father. His self-sacrifice was made in order to procure all the benefits promised to Israel for keeping the Law.

Consider the nature of His humility and sacrifice. It was the Father's will that He should be born into a world of sinful men and yet carry out the righteousness of the Law. It was God's way of testing His faithfulness. All the circumstances of His life were ordained by God and any resistance thereto would have constituted sin. He said: "The cup which my Father has poured out shall I not drink it?" It left no room for the exercise of His own will. Therein lay the completeness of His sacrifice. All the potential powers of His sonship were suppressed. He deliberately set aside the suggestions of the Adversary and refrained from using them for His own preservation. Unlike the offerings of Israel, His were done in the heart—in the spirit—and could be seen only with the eye of faith. Nor did He enter the visible tabernacle but into the one the Lord pitched"—the Divine purpose (Heb. 9, 11-12). Many think He was going to the Father in the Heavens but, as the Son of God, there was no need for He lived in the presence of the Father. His "going to the Father" began with the consecration of His will at Jordan and ended on the Cross when He said: "It is finished." "He humbled Himself even to death on the Cross". The Father "who seeth in secret" understood and approved. It ascended to Him as a sweet-smelling savor and His approval was demonstrated by raising Him from the dead. Thus by His sacrificial life He went to the Father and "asked" for the redemption of His people. He broke down the barrier of sin so that thereafter they could go to the Father clothed in His righteousness. God's justice was satisfied and there was no further need to offer tokens. The strict justice of God, clearly defined by the Law, required an exact corresponding price

for Adam. More than that would have been an unjust demand.

The promise of doing "greater things" was made to His immediate followers and those who, throughout the age, believe on Him through their teaching. They form the Church of the Firstborns, whose names are recorded in Heaven, and are the true seed of Abraham who will exercise all the power necessary to bless and restore the world to life and righteousness. Jesus said to them: "I go that ye might have life in abundance". Raised to fullness of life and invested with the glory and power, which Adam forfeited and Jesus sacrificed, they will become Sons of God, re-made in His image, with one will and purpose. Our Lord made that request for them: "*That they may be one, even as Thou art in me, O Father, and I am in Thee; that they also may be one in us*". "*That they may be one, just as we are one; I in them and Thou in me*". The great works He wrought on earth were temporary and limited. Theirs, together with His, will then be greater in extent and effect, because worldwide and eternal, as a result of His going to the Father in sacrifice.

"*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*"

BRO. JOHN T. READ

Bro. John T. Read sailed for the United States on Friday, 9th September, at the conclusion of his four months' tour of the British Isles. There have been many expressions of appreciation and gratitude for his ministry and now we can all join in raising to the Giver of all good our "Hallelujah" for the sustaining power which has enabled our brother during this time to give of his best. The final meetings were held on Sunday, 4th September at Coventry, at which brethren from the North and Midlands gathered to say "Good-bye," and at London on Wednesday, 7th September, when those in the London area came together similarly. At the London meeting our brother gave a short resume of his tour with a few reflections, and inter-leaved his statements with words of exhortation to all of us to continue in the way. The evening concluded with several sacred songs by Brother Read and words of testimony from brethren present, in an atmosphere of mutual encouragement and Christian union. A small party of London brethren gathered at Waterloo Station on Friday morning to see our brother board the boat train for Southampton, and so we bade him good-bye, knowing that wherever he may be, and in whatever circumstances, the work of the Lord remains nearest his heart.

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

7.—The Day of the Lord

"And now the Day of the Lord is at hand upon all the nations. As you have done, so shall it be done unto you; your deeds will return upon your own head. As you have drunk the intoxicating cup upon my holy mountain, so shall all the nations round about drink and stagger, and be as if they no longer exist." (vs. 15-16.)

This is the grand climax to the book of Obadiah. All the pretensions and all the schemings of the Edomites have availed them nothing. The day of retribution comes at length when Divine judgment sweeps away all that is out of accord with God's holiness and leaves only His own true people standing approved. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Long, weary centuries have had to run their course before this final vindication could be, but now it has come and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God.

There is a tendency, at times, to think of this Divine judgment in the Day of the Lord as an arbitrary infliction of punishment upon the world for all their sins, as though God had at length lost patience and summarily cut short the reign of evil by a series of catastrophic visitations emanating directly and solely from His own Almighty power. "The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity" is the kind of text that would form the theme of such a sermon. But we have to look deeper into the nature of things before we can accurately understand the underlying causes of this Day of judgment. "*Your deeds shall return upon your own head.*" There is a law of creation at work here which is at the same time, as are all the laws of creation, the Law of God. Natural retribution, or what men now call "poetic justice", overtakes the world at the last. The judgments of the Last Day are nothing more or less than the inevitable consequences and harvest of mankind's course in history through the ages. As men have sown, so shall they reap, and there is no escape from that destiny. It is not that God *would* not relent. It is that God *could* not relent. The coming of the Day of the Lord, with all its attendant judgments, was made inevitable on the day that Adam sinned, and as the gates of Eden closed behind the guilty pair it became only a question of time before that Day should dawn.

So all the vivid language describing the impact of this Day of the Lord upon the nations is but the poetic expression of God's own attitude toward

the sin and evil which the Day of the Lord will bring to an end. The catastrophic ending of the power of man in a Time of Trouble such as was not since there was a nation is an outward and visible witness to God's abhorrence of sin and the determination that it shall be banished forever from His creation. So we have the vivid metaphor in Isa. 34. "*The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment . . . for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea . . . For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.*" (Isa. 34. 2-8.) The final and absolute character of this last judgment upon "this present evil world" can hardly be described more eloquently than in this picture of the Divine sword sweeping the heavens as it flashes over and down upon the guilty earth waiting to receive the death-stroke. But although it is thus described, the world has brought its trouble upon itself, and no other end is possible.

"*As you have drunk the intoxicating cup upon my holy mountain.*" The idea behind this phrase is that after the children of Israel had been taken into captivity and Jerusalem itself left ruined and desolate, the Edomites took possession of the land, entered into the city—the "holy mountain"—and gave themselves over to all kinds of excesses on the site where Israel had formerly worshipped God. In the larger fulfilment this pictures the false worshippers of this Gospel Age usurping the place which ought to have been occupied by the true Church in the sight of the nations, and indulging in a riot of false doctrines and blasphemous representations of the Divine character. "*He, as God, sitteth in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God*" is St. Paul's definition of one such aspect of this usurpation. "*Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that made all the earth drunken.*" (Jer. 51. 7.) How true it is that most men who have any idea of religion at all hold a miserably distorted conception of the Christian faith and the character of God. How true it is that the golden cup of stupefying liquor with which Babylon has intoxicated not only herself but all round her is responsible for that conception. Men are stupefied, bemused, unable properly to compre-

hend what God is saying to them at the hand of His ambassadors, and it is all because of the stupefying cup. So it is very true, as God says by the mouth of Obadiah, that all the nations round about "drink, and stagger, and be as if they no longer exist"—not "be as though they had not been" as in the Authorised Version. This verse does not teach, as some would make it teach, that those therein spoken of are condemned in the moment of drinking the cup to eternal annihilation, the Second Death. The verse is not talking about the ultimate penalty for sin at all. It is talking about the condition of the world, both professing Christendom and everyday paganism, at the Time of the End. The expression "they shall be as if they no longer exist" is merely the definition of extreme intoxication. They drink, they stagger, and they lose

consciousness altogether—a drunken sleep. Thank God it is a sleep from which they are to be awakened in God's good time, when they will be introduced to a world in which no golden cup of intoxicant is found any more, when Babylon has fallen and vanished away, when the Edomites are no longer in possession of God's holy mountain. They will come forth to a world in which saviours have come up upon Mount Zion and the Kingdom has become the Lord's. That is the final sunlit scene of Obadiah's prophecy, a scene which is illumined by the Sun of righteousness shining down upon a vast concourse of liberated captives returning to take possession of their rightful heritage. After judgment comes conversion, reconciliation to God, and the establishment of everlasting righteousness.

To be continued.

"Many bodies of the saints arose"

A note on
Matthew 27.53

"The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Thus runs Matthew's account, and since no other Evangelist records the incident, it stands as a somewhat strange statement, difficult of comprehension. For long it was suspected that the passage was an interpolation on the part of some ancient copyist, but it has been traced back to the earliest manuscripts known and there seems to be no valid reason for doubting its authenticity. The phrase "and the graves were opened" is not found in the Sinaitic, and both Sinaitic and Vatican MSS omit "and went." It seems that Matthew has indeed recorded an actual happening and it is worth while to seek the true significance of the account.

The apparent sense of the passage is that at the time of the crucifixion many of the "holy ones" — saintly men — of Israel rose from their graves and were seen walking about Jerusalem. The unusual nature of such an occurrence has led some to offer alternative explanations. ^① One suggestion is that the earthquake opened up many of the tombs—which were for the main part cut in the rocky sides of the Mount of Olives—and that the bodies were exposed and some thrown into the city precincts. The suggestion hardly meets the sense of the account and appears to be little more than an attempt to offer an alternative. ^② Another explanation is that the followers of Christ, at the time of His arrest, fled for hiding to the tombs

and only ventured forth after His resurrection. The known antipathy of every God-fearing Jew to the ceremonial uncleanness resulting from contact with tombs—especially at the time of the Passover—would make this supposition extremely improbable, and this hypothesis also does not fulfil the plain meaning of the words. Amazing as the statement may be, it seems as if there were in very fact certain ^③ ones raised from the dead at that time as one of the "signs" attendant upon the culmination of our Lord's life at Calvary.

Because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was to be the first one to be raised from the dead in the true "resurrection" sense ("Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept") it is clear that these who were thus brought back to the world of men were raised only for a short time and must ultimately have gone back into the grave, in like manner to Lazarus and others whom Jesus restored to earthly life during His ministry. This is borne out by the word used for "arose"—*egeiro*—meaning to wake up or rise up, and is the word used in Matt. 24. 14, "There shall arise false Christs", John 7. 52, "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" and for the raising of Jairus' daughter and the widow of Nain's son. The word for "resurrection"—*anastasis*—is not used in such cases.

Another difficulty is the statement that these awakened ones did not come into the holy city until "after his resurrection" as though they lingered among the tombs for three days before showing themselves. Again it is noted that

"anastasis" is not the word used in verse 53. A word employed nowhere else in the New Testament is employed—*egersis*—and the meaning of this word is that of a rising up or being set up. The Septuagint uses the same word in Psa. 139. 2, "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine *uprising*" while a further instance of its use in our Lord's day is found in the Apocrypha, I Esdras 5. 62, "Singing songs of thanksgiving unto the Lord for the *rearing up* of the house of the Lord," speaking of the building of the Temple after the return from the Captivity. It is possible therefore that the reference in verse 53 is not to our Lord's resurrection at all but to His being "raised up" or "set up" on the cross, on Calvary. Certain it is that there is no indication in any of the New Testament stories of the Resurrection that dead men recently restored to life were appearing in Jerusalem. The whole tenor of the Resurrection story centres around the disciples' ignorance that anything unusual was transpiring until our Lord Himself appeared to them in various guises.

There is nothing said as to what these awakened ones did after appearing in the streets, and no indication that they were seen again, or even that the rulers and Pharisees knew anything about them at all. We have but a single statement of an isolated incident the more mysterious because of its brevity. The darkness lasting three hours, from noon until three o'clock; then the earthquake, of itself not an uncommon thing in Jerusalem; then this mysterious appearance of saintly ones of old, risen as if in protest against the tragic deed then being consummated on Golgotha. The expression "seen of many" would at least indicate that there were sufficient witnesses to attest the reliability of the record, according to Jewish ideas, and these three words ought to be taken as sufficient authority for believing that the incident took place exactly as related.

Then it was all over. The earth ceased to tremble, the sun came out again, and those visitants from the past were seen no more. Perhaps their brief span of waking life lasted only between the time of the earthquake and that hour when Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate and besought the body of Jesus. It may have been that they were after all not the ancient dead, but very recently deceased righteous men who came back into the city with their grave clothes and all the signs of death upon them, rendering the city itself ceremonially unclean by their presence at the very time of its most solemn feast, and so symbolising in the most expressive fashion possible the position of that city in the sight of God. If this be the true purpose of the occurrence, with what fearful foreboding must the witnesses have gazed upon—and perhaps recognised—

these death-like messengers and maybe sensed something of the doom which even then was gathering around the city which had rejected and crucified the Prince of Life.

* * *

The apocryphal work known as the "*Acts of Pilate*" or "*Gospel of Nicodemus*", written neither by Pilate nor Nicodemus, but dating, it is thought, from about the Fourth Century, has a lot to say about this incident. According to this book, two men named Carinus and Lenthius, sons of the aged Simeon who held the babe Jesus in his arms in the Temple, and themselves already dead at the time of the Crucifixion, were recalled from Hades after witnessing Christ's descent into that region, to bear witness to the priests and scribes of the reality of Christ's triumph over death. Their mission ended, they returned to the realms of Death. The only value of the story is the testimony it bears to the acceptance of Matthew's account of the incident in Church tradition; evidently the early Church accepted the fact that some such thing had happened at the time of the Crucifixion and by the Fourth Century the story had become elaborated and invested with embellishments born of the doctrinal errors which by then had invaded the Church.

* * *

A suggestion of a different nature, aimed at elucidating this admittedly strange text, has been put forward by another brother, and is given hereunder. (4)

The terms used strongly suggest that the description is that of a vision. This will be clear if the account is compared with that of the "vision on the mount." (Matt. 17. 1-9). In both instances the event is recorded as *seen by the witnesses*. In both cases *nothing more is witnessed after the occurrence*.

Jesus told Peter, James and John not to tell the vision to anyone, the vision (like that of Daniel) to be kept a secret until a later time.

The vision of the awakened saints was not again seen after it had been recorded on the minds of the witnesses.

It is significant that the raising (whether of the saints or the Lord) is *into the holy city*. If the saints walked the streets of Jerusalem, why is that not stated? The term "holy city" directs our attention to the "holy city," "New Jerusalem." Rev. 21. 2.

The word from which "appeared" is translated is *emphanizo* which is never used to describe an ocular demonstration.

Emphanizo is translated "declare plainly," once, "inform," three times; "manifest," twice; "show," once; "signify," once; and "appear," twice. The passages in which *emphanizo* is used are:—

1. For they that say such things *declare plainly* that they seek a country (Heb. 11. 14).
2. A certain orator, Tertullus, who *informed* the governor against Paul (Acts 24, 1).
3. The Jews *informed* against Paul. (Acts 25. 12).
4. The chief priests and elders *informed* me (Acts 25. 15).
5. I will love him and *manifest* myself to him (John 14. 21).
6. Judas said . . . Lord, how is it that thou wilt *manifest* thyself unto us, and not to the world (John 14. 22).
7. So the chief captain let the young man depart and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast *showed* me these things (Acts 23. 22). (The things "shown" were the things told to the chief captain.)
8. Now therefore . . . *signify* to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow (Acts 23. 15).

9. Now to *appear* in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9. 24). (To "appear" in this case is to *officiate* as advocate.)

The vision of the rising saints (holy ones) is descriptive of the First Resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." (Rev. 20. 6).

Notice also the promise to the Church in Philadelphia: "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem."

The events of our Lord's time on earth have their counterpart or fulfilment when He comes again, and we should look for the fulfilment of those things He taught by parables, sign and vision. Our Lord, when he spake, was often misunderstood because His words were obscure. He purposely spoke in parables to *hide* His meaning, but He did not speak needlessly, because He said the word which men rejected would judge them in the last day. (John 12. 48).

Leicester Convention 1955

The setting of this year's general convention in the Midlands was different from previous years in this city, the venue being St. Nicholas Foundation in Great Central Street. This nineteenth century school building was transformed for the Whitsun week-end into a sanctuary, where many brethren from all parts of the land met for peace, fellowship and instruction in righteousness. The thoughts of this happy gathering will bring joy to many hearts for a long time to come. The fine display of brightly coloured texts together with the warm spring sunshine changed the main school hall into a suitable auditorium which was filled to capacity throughout all the meetings. In spite of the railway strike, numbers were increased from previous years.

The chairman of the convention, Bro. H. W. Burge (*Coventry*) opened proceedings on Saturday afternoon with a few words of warm welcome. He said that no preceding Midland convention had been prayed for as this one, and he went on to summarize the purpose and ideals which inspired the gathering. The assembly was essentially one for fellowship and worship, and we had met together to hear the voice of God.

The first discourse from Brother Sharman (*Forest*

Gate) took the form of a Bible study under the title of "*The joy of spiritual understanding*." Selecting a number of verses from Psalm 119 he emphasised and illustrated the value of a clear understanding of the Word of God. The purpose of Divine revelation to God's people was shown from the Old and New Testament and we were reminded of the need not only to study the Scriptures but to become intimately acquainted with the Divine Author.

On Saturday evening, Brother John T. Read (*U.S.A.*) sang the beautiful solo which became so familiar to us on his previous pilgrim tours, "*Great is thy faithfulness*". Later he addressed the convention on the subject of "*The purpose of God through the permission of evil*". He very impressively showed the great love of our Heavenly Father as revealed in this doctrine and then discussed the purpose of allowing men to sin for so many centuries. Special reference was made to the development of the Christian character amid adverse circumstances.

Many brethren enjoyed fellowship during the evening at local hotels and in each other's homes, and all came early for the first session on Sunday morning, commencing with Praise at 10.30. Messages of greeting were received from various

classes and passages of specially helpful Scripture were read as part of our morning devotions.

In an address entitled "*The ministry of Divine revelation*", Brother Fox (*Yeovil*) spoke on a theme similar to that of the discourses on the previous day. He showed from Old Testament prophecy, notably Isaiah 28, how God had revealed to His people Israel, centuries in advance, some aspects of the ministry of the Messiah. Foreshadowings of Jewish apostasy and the collapse of Jerusalem were deduced from Isaiah 29 with the final return to favour.

The customary session given over to the young brethren was this year taken by Brother Eric Cowling (*Leeds*). His subject "*Dynamic Days*," proved to be an outline of the purpose of God through the ages, and how His power had been brought to bear upon mankind to achieve the desired end. He graphically depicted the falling into sin of the first man and restoration of all things through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A short session of praise and prayer intervened between the addresses, and about this time the children filed out in an orderly manner to enjoy a Sunday School. This mainly comprised a display of interesting pictures illustrating scenes and stories of the life of Jesus.

During the latter part of the afternoon, the subject of our thoughts was "*Power from on High*". Into a very fine sermon on the life of the disciples around the time of Pentecost, Brother E. Allbon (*Ilford*) wove some searching questions. After describing the days which followed our Lord's ascension, and pointing to the continuance in prayer of the Early Church he indicated the obedience of the first followers of Jesus to their Master's command. How different and how sad was the position in the church to-day! How few praying Christians! How very much we need to observe and to emulate the Church at Pentecost who, having received the Holy Spirit went forth to witness so mightily to their risen Saviour.

As an introduction to the public lecture, Brother Read rendered the hymn "*There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold*." The Gospel message was given by Brother H. L. E. Panteny (*Romford*) who spoke on "*God and our Generation*". We were reminded of some of the conditions which surround us to-day in a post-war era. These were the fruits of rationalism and scientific humanism during the past century. Leaders in public life and thought had scorned the Word of God and now we were facing the awful consequences. As he listed the dreadful effects of sin in the world, the speaker repeatedly turned the

minds of his audience to the Bible as the only solution to personal and international problems. Only by coming to God in humble repentance and in a teachable spirit could we regain true peace of heart and mind. Two local press advertisements, eight thousand leaflets and some personal invitation cards comprised the publicity for this meeting, which resulted in five people signing enquiry cards. What are our conclusions about this effort to witness to our faith? A meeting convened specially for prayer had for many months been pleading with God to guide and bless the issues of the preaching of the Gospel. Admittedly it is worthwhile to unite for the common purpose of witnessing and it has strengthened our fellowship. It was rewarding to contact but a few enquiring hearts. But can we rest there? If we are not satisfied with the result, what are we going to do about it?

It was a good convention and a really profitable time of fellowship. Everyone seemed thoroughly happy. Some recalled the great days of their service for the Lord, in the past, while others looked forward to the future for zealous activity. There were those engaged in serious discussion concerning the Word while others exchanged stories of their Christian experience. There were our brethren who laboured so hard with the catering and other material comforts, while the bookstall again provided a fine display of literature. There are a thousand little incidents we could recall but we trust that this brief resumé will bestir others to join us next year, if the Lord permits such another Holy Convocation. Meanwhile let us give thanks that He has so bountifully blessed us and answered our prayers. Let us continue to wait upon Him frequently and earnestly in prayer.

PRESENT TRUTH BOOKLETS

The undernoted booklets, most of which are too well known to need description, are still available and may be obtained by anyone who has use for them, while stocks last. Whether any of them will ever be reprinted after present stocks have gone will depend entirely on the apparent need that exists as may be evidenced by the present and future demand. It is a fact that there is not a fraction of the demand for any such booklets that there was ten or fifteen years ago; nevertheless while the need continues we hope by the Lord's grace to remain in a position to meet it.

"*The Golden Future*"; "*The Millennial Gospel of Jesus*"; "*A Material Paradise*"; "*God's Fulfilling Purpose*"; "*Sixteen Scripture Truths*"; "*The Land of Beginning Again*".

OUT OF THE STOREHOUSE

A collection of
interesting items

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews says that Abraham offered Isaac, accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead. How did the writer know this? The account in Genesis 22 gives no clue as to the state of Abraham's mind on this occasion; it only reveals his implicit obedience. There is one clue. When leaving the servants with the ass which had carried their goods he said (Gen. 22. 5) "Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." If Abraham meant those words seriously—and we have no right to suggest that he did not—then it could well be that Abraham, knowing that the promise centred in Isaac, went up the mountain-side fully confident that after the sacrifice of his son, God would raise him to life again. If that be indeed the case, the faith which won the emphatic approval of God was not merely that God could still find some way of fulfilling His promise concerning the Seed despite the loss of Isaac, but that the power of God was superior even to death itself, and Isaac himself would live again and yet become the heir of promise. It would almost seem that Abraham did not only believe that God *could* raise Isaac from the dead, but that he assuredly *would* do so, and in that confidence went forth in full faith. But even so, what a faith it was that would slay the only son and still trust God to restore the life thus lost by one's own deliberate act!

* * *

Never was a character at the same time so commanding, and natural, so resplendent and pleasing, so amiable and venerable, as that of Christ. There is a peculiar contrast in it between an awful dignity and majesty, and the most engaging loveliness, tenderness, and softness. He now converses with prophets, lawgivers, and angels; and the next instant he meekly endures the dulness of his disciples and the blasphemies and rage of the multitude. He now calls himself greater than Solomon; one who can command legions of angels; the giver of life to whomsoever he will; the Son of God, who shall sit on his glorious throne to judge the world. At other times we see him embracing young children; not lifting up his voice in the streets; not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax; calling his disciples not servants, but friends and brethren, and comforting them with an exuberant and parental affection.

During the Ecuador earthquake of August, 1949, the village of Libertad, with its hundred inhabitants and its surrounding fields, sank fifteen hundred feet into the earth in a few minutes. That is a modern parallel to the story of Korah and his multitude who rebelled against Moses, and the earth opened at their feet and swallowed them up. It also illustrates the possibility of the territory inhabited by the antediluvians becoming the subject of some vast earth movement which had the effect of lowering the whole land by some thousands of feet and allowing the waters to sweep over the countryside, thus producing the effect of a vast flood of waters which covered the mountains.

* * *

One of the football pools firms looking for new clients addressed a set of trial coupons to Mr. John Bunyan, Elstow, Bedfordshire. The firm concerned evidently did not get this particular name out of the telephone directory, neither, apparently, were they aware that John Bunyan died three hundred years ago. But there is no doubt of the reception which the tinker of Elstow would have accorded the plausible missives which find their way through so many of our letter-boxes nowadays. "*Here is a silver mine*" said Demas, "*and some digging in it for treasure. If you will come, with a little pains you may richly provide for yourselves.*" "*Let us go and see*" said Hopeful. "*Not I*" said Christian; "*I have heard of this place before now, and how many have there been slain; and besides, that treasure is a snare to those that seek it, for it hindereth them in their pilgrimage.*"

* * *

"Blessed be God that hath set up so many clear lamps in his church. Now none but the wilfully blind can plead darkness; and blessed be the memory of those his faithful servants that have left their spirits, their lives, in these precious papers, and have willingly wasted themselves into these during monuments, to give light unto others."—*Bishop Hall*.

Gone from us

Sis. N. Essam (*Kettering*)

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



BIBLE STUDY MONTHLY

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

Vol. 32, No. 8

DECEMBER, 1955

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*This journal is sent free of charge to all who request
it and who renew their request annually, and is
supported by the voluntary gifts of those interested*

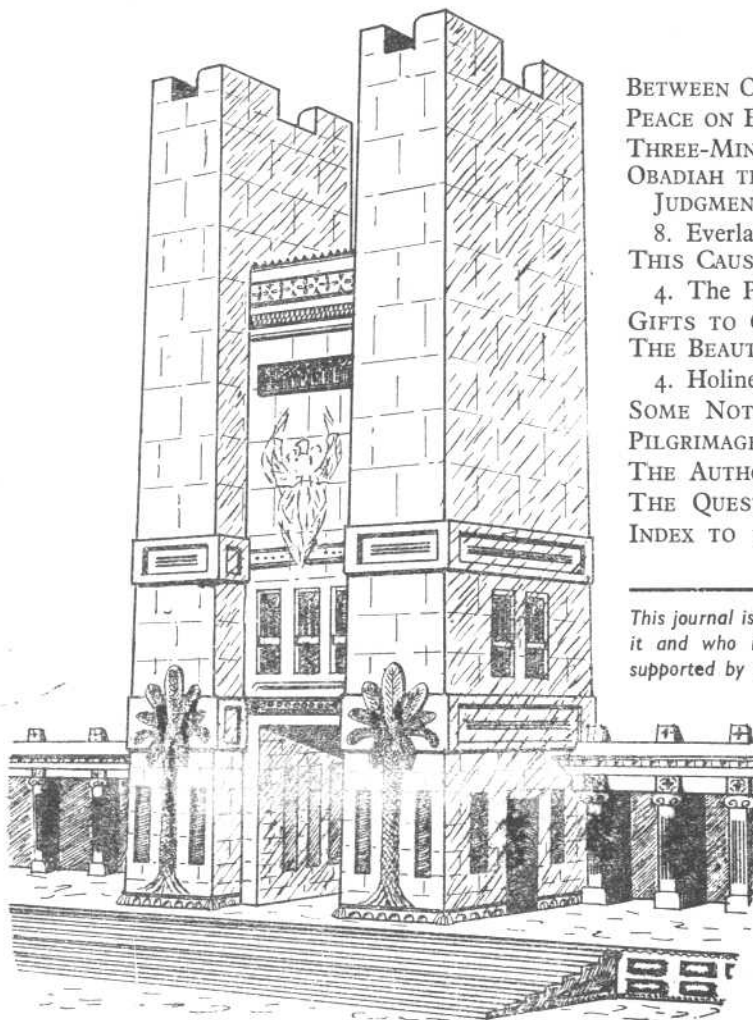
Published by
Bible Fellowship Union,
24, Darwin Road, Welling, Kent.

*Overseas readers may remit direct,
or if preferred, to:—*

Pastoral Bible Institute,
177, Prospect Place, Brooklyn 38
N.Y., U.S.A.

or

Berean Bible Institute
19 Ermington Place, Kew E.4
Melbourne. Australia.



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

Bible Study Monthly

(FOUNDED 1924)

This journal is published for the promotion of Bible knowledge and the furtherance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

The circulation is largely among independent Bible fellowships and study circles which share in varying degree the viewpoint of the Divine Plan herein set forth.

It is supported entirely by the gifts of well-wishers.

Enquiries from all interested are invited, and literature dealing with the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL people" will be sent on request.

BETWEEN OURSELVES

1956 Calendars

We regret that an error appeared in our announcement in last issue concerning the calendars available from Bro. Lardent. The price for three calendars sent to one address post free should have been 8/- and not 6/- as stated. Will friends please take note of this. The calendar has Bible scenes in colour with the usual daily text, 2/9d. per copy or 8/- for three, post free. Orders to be sent to Bro. F. Lardent, 174, Forest Hill Road, London, S.E.23.

* * *

Benevolent Fund

The work of the Benevolent Committee is already well known to most of our readers. Oft-times it has proved a timely means of aid to those in need, and those entrusted with its administration value very highly their privilege of service. Gifts and recommendations of cases of known need should all be sent to Bro. E. Allbon, 20, Sunnymede Drive, Ilford, Essex.

* * *

The Bookroom

In consequence of decreasing use of this aspect of our activities it has been decided to close down the bookroom altogether. Booklets published by ourselves will still be available but we shall no longer stock students' helps and other books by other publishers.

* * *

Witness Booklets

The undernoted booklets, most of which are too well known to need description, are still available and may be obtained by anyone who has use for them, while stocks last. Whether any of them will ever be reprinted after present stocks have gone will depend entirely on the apparent need that

exists as may be evidenced by the present and future demand. It is a fact that there is not a fraction of the demand for any such booklets that there was ten or fifteen years ago; nevertheless while the need continues we hope by the Lord's grace to remain in a position to meet it.

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* * *

A Personal Word

At the close of the year we want to express a word of appreciation for the forbearance and patience of many brethren in waiting for replies to their letters, often much delayed. It is inevitable that with all the work associated with the "Monthly" being done at the end of the day, after the ordinary business of earning a living has been done, the incoming correspondence at times far exceeds the available capacity to deal with it, and sometimes friends have had to wait a week or more for replies. For the same reason our letters tend to be brief almost, it is feared, to the point of apparent curttness, but it being physically impossible to do more, we do ask brethren to take the will for the deed and accept our brief, somewhat stereotyped communications as bearing with them at least a sincere expression of Christian regard which is none the less genuine in its brevity.

* * *

Gone from us

Sis. Thirkettle (Romford)

Sis. Cawker (Forest Gate)

Sis. Roberts (Walthamstow)

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

PEACE ON EARTH

A Christmas
message

"Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men'" (Luke 2. 14).

That was the song of the celestial choir at the time of the Nativity. It came to the wondering shepherds in its fresh simplicity and they accepted it with child-like faith. Perhaps they thought that the promise was to be fulfilled almost at once, or at least in their own lifetime; it must have been a source of perplexity to them all during the next thirty years that nothing of the glorious word seemed to come to pass.

So the purpose of God in Christ is still a mystery to all except those who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit in consequence of their acceptance into the High Calling, and their walk in the way of consecration. Only to such is it given at this present time to enter into a knowledge of the "deep things of God." And in order to understand how and when it will be true that there is peace on earth and goodwill amongst men, it is essential to understand our Lord's relation to the continuing reign of evil, and the place in all this that is occupied by the "Church which is His Body," a Body which consists, not of one, but of many members.

These shepherds must have listened to the message with an especial intensity because their land had not known true peace for many years. The background of the people of Judea was one of warfare, captivity, rebellion and severe suffering. Six hundred years earlier they had endured the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the national disintegration which followed that calamitous event. Even although, seventy years later, they found themselves restored to their own land, it was only as a tributary nation, first under the Persians, later the Greeks, and finally Rome. The attempts of the Greeks to Hellenise them led to revolt after revolt, interspersed with dreadful persecutions. Their temporary success during the Maccabean period, while due largely to the prowess of Judas Maccabeus, was also contributed to by the decay of the Greek power before the growing influence of Rome, and the brief period of Jewish independence ended abruptly in the year 63 B.C. when the Roman, Pompey, marched his legions into Jerusalem. From then until the year A.D. 70 there was almost continual rebellion against the invaders. It is little

wonder that, despairingly seeking some relief from their sufferings, "all men were in expectation" of the long-promised Messianic deliverer. The terrible consequences of the struggle for independence led by Judas of Galilee, during the childhood of Jesus, culminating in the death of Judas and the crucifixion of four thousand of his followers by the Romans, was only one of those dark happenings which made men long for true peace.

In the midst of these conditions Jesus grew to manhood's estate. By reason of His inherent perfection, standing head and shoulders above His fellows, men at the first must naturally have looked to Him for leadership, in confidence that He would be able to deliver them from the Roman yoke. They expected, as do so many to-day, that "peace on earth, goodwill to men" could only come by the use of armed force by means of which their enemies would be crushed in the same way as they themselves had been subjugated. Great must have been their disappointment when at length the One in whom they had pinned their hopes came back from the wilderness to preach an entirely different message than that they had expected. Trained as they were in the Mosaic Law, which called for "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth", and encouraged Israel to go forth to slay the enemies of the Lord, they utterly failed to understand this new gospel of non-resistance, of love for enemies, of turning the other cheek, of doing good to the ones who were inflicting evil. And in their disappointment and chagrin they turned away and rejected the only One who ever will be able to bring them the peace they so much desired.

So many there are to-day, professing to follow Christ, who understand no more clearly. The majority of people forming the membership of the Churches still uphold the principle of fighting the forces of evil with the weapons of evil. There is no real comprehension of the true purpose and power of God except in the hearts of the very few. Not many appreciate the meaning of Jesus' words "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me". And yet in no other way could the Heavenly Father pave the way for the Son to take up His destined work as the anointed Priest-King, made "higher than the heavens". Christ defeated the sin of the world by accepting it into His love, and at the same time, says the writer to the Hebrews, "learned obedience

through the things that he suffered". So He became, again as Hebrews declares, a merciful and compassionate High Priest, able to "have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way" and, praise God, thus to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.

Men and women at the time of the First Advent could not understand how such a method could be of any avail. Even Jesus' closest associates, the twelve disciples, failed to follow this "more excellent way". There was a strife amongst them, which should be the greatest in the Kingdom. They wanted to call down fire from heaven in the fashion of Elijah of old to destroy the inhospitable Samaritans. Peter, defending his Master, drew his sword and struck off the ear of the High Priest's servant. The old training and beliefs died hard; it was not until after Pentecost that they began to see the why and the wherefore of the pattern Jesus set for them. Here it was that the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus was first discerned and first made known. It could not have been so proclaimed earlier, for it was here that atonement had been made by Christ Jesus entering into the presence of God and the Holy Spirit sent to the waiting disciples with creative power to transform them into His likeness. That is why their writings afterward gave such clear instruction concerning the meeting of evil and the overcoming of evil by the force of love alone. That was henceforth to be the guiding principle in the lives of true Christians, as a necessary preparation for their future work in the next Age, when the work of conversion and reconciliation will depend upon the power of the love of God and on that alone. So in this Age that same principle is to be adopted by the Sons of God, both collectively and as individuals.

Collectively—yes, for the members of the true Church in the flesh are to be the salt of the earth; they are to be as lights in the world. It is a grievous thing that no matter how much we may succeed in measuring up to this ideal individually, in our personal lives before God, we so often utterly fail to do it collectively, as a community or as a group. And it is as a community that the world sees us, and as a community that we are judged by them. No small part of our failure to give an effective witness in the world and to win men and women for Christ must be put down to our lamentable failure to manifest among ourselves the standards we preach.

The Apostle Paul was one who well learned the way of Christ. His object lesson at the first was the non-violent resistance of the first Christian martyr,

Stephen. He was falsely accused, but he refused to meet evil with the weapons of his persecutors. "*All that sat in the council, gazing steadfastly upon him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*". How could it have been otherwise, lighted as it was with the indwelling radiance of the Holy Spirit? At his stoning he retained the same disposition and died praying the Lord that He would not lay their great sin to their charge. From the point of view of those around at the time it could be argued that Stephen's death was pointless, un-availing, powerless to accomplish any good. From the standpoint of history that argument is futile and valueless. The power and effect of Stephen's death was seen a few years later when a bright light blinded with its glare a traveller on the Damascus road, and a voice broke through that proud man's reserve with the fearful question "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Had Saul not stood by and witnessed the death of the man whom he helped to condemn he may never have come to that later experience and become a man utterly broken and humbled, moulded into a chosen vessel to do and suffer great things in and for the Name of Jesus. It may well be that we owe the superb power of the Pauline Epistles, and the tremendous legacy Paul left to the Church of after ages, to the faithfulness of the first martyr Stephen.

Little wonder, then, is it that we find St. Paul clearly defining Christ's terms in the words "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12. 21). These are the terms of the One who "loved righteousness and hated iniquity", realising that it was not yet God's time to restrain evil in the world at large. This Gospel Age is a time in which Christ the Head, and the Church which is His Body, are called to resist evil by non-violent methods, and so receive their training for the work of that coming Day when all evil everywhere is to be removed and banished.

It is a costly way when measured by human standards. It entails sacrificial death, as it did in the case of Jesus, but if we are faithful unto death we shall be raised in the power of the First Resurrection into the glory of the Kingdom. Then, and then only, will it be possible to bring about what so many well-intentioned men are striving by their own efforts to accomplish now—peace on earth, goodwill towards men. The ordinary man, desiring to help his fellows, feels it little less than criminal to stand idle in the present chaos; he is impelled to do all that lies in his power to crush collective evil, whatever the means he employs. That is because he does not understand God's plan of the ages. The

Kingdom of peace and righteousness will never and can never come by man's efforts, but only by the power of God in the person of Christ, the great Mediator, the One who has resisted evil by non-violence. Men will never cause wars to cease; it is only God who can and will do this in His own time and way, making "*wars to cease to the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder. He burneth the chariot in the fire*".

The ministry of affliction plays a very important part in the development of the Church. The example is set before us in 1 Pet. 2. 23 "*When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he was threatened, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously*". It is no use asserting, as some do, that the case of Jesus was different, and that we are called upon to fight evil with weapons He did not and would not use, for the

Apostle Paul also says "*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer, being defamed, we intreat; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day*" (1 Cor. 4. 12-13). This line of conduct is no sign of weakness; it savours not of compromise and its practical out-working savours both strength and beauty of character.

So peace will come at last, but in the meantime it is for us to continue along the narrow pathway, faithful to the increasing light of truth as we endeavour to make our calling and election sure. Let us always remember that "*there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor. 10-13).

Three Minute Parable

In Greek tradition Odysseus was a famous warrior, King of Ithaca, and Orpheus a great musician. Somewhere in the ocean, a long way from Greece, there lay an island on which dwelt three maidens, known as the Sirens. Their singing was so sweet and compelling that any sailors upon whose ears the strains of their songs fell were driven to turn their ships to shore, where the Sirens met them and after making them intoxicated with wine, slew them and devoured their flesh. No sea-farer, said the story-tellers, had ever heard the Sirens' song and escaped with his life. So Odysseus determined that he would be the first to hear the song and yet live to tell the tale. A time came when his ship came within sight of the enchanted island. Odysseus commanded his men to bind him firmly to the mainmast with leather cords, stop their own ears with wax and row swiftly past. As they came near, the three maidens could be seen making gestures to the travellers to come closer. The sweetness of their voices seemed to draw the very soul of Odysseus out of his body. He struggled and strained to break his bonds which encircled him; he alternately implored and commanded his men to set him free; he groaned and cried in agony as they refused to heed him, until, bending to their oars, they had carried their ship out of earshot and their commander was himself again.

Later on, Orpheus, the sweet musician at whose playing, it was said, the birds hushed their songs and wild beasts became docile and gentle, passed

the Island of the Sirens. But there were no bands and no straining in agony this time. Orpheus played his lyre so skilfully and sang so sweetly that neither he nor his shipmates heard so much as a note of the Sirens' song, and they passed swiftly by the fateful place into safety.

So it is with the Christian. If we try to enlist mechanical aids to resist temptation, or endeavour to withstand the Devil by the strength of our own will, we may possibly get by, for God will surely honour our good intentions, but it will prove to be a hard way. Much easier will it be if we fix our eyes upon Jesus and let His voice ring in our ears; the temptations then will not obtrude themselves so easily upon our notice and we shall withstand them with greater ease.

God does not ask us to give up anything that this world has to offer without putting something else in its place. Perhaps that is why Jesus gave the parable of the man who was cleansed of a demon but put nothing else in his mind and life to replace the obsession. The demon looked back and saw his old home empty, swept and garnished. So he took seven other demons more evil than himself and they all entered in and dwelt there, and the last state of that man was worse than the first. And there was no need for it. The man could have filled his emptied mind with Christ. So should we, "bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ," so being transformed at the last into His own image.

Obadiah the Messenger of Judgment

An Exposition of the Book of Obadiah

8.—Everlasting Righteousness

"But on Mount Zion there shall be those who have escaped, and it shall be a sanctuary, and the House of Jacob shall possess it in peace," (vs. 17.)

The Authorised Version renders this verse "Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance" but the thought behind both renderings is the same. After all the tribulations and trouble that has been brought upon the people of the Lord by the evil machinations of the Edomites, the Lord has opened a way of escape and delivered His people into the calm and security of the Holy City. Despite all the assaults of the enemy and the vicissitudes which befall Jerusalem, the time comes at length when God ushers into "an afterward of peace" all those who have demonstrated their sterling faith and stood firm. They have escaped the designs of the Evil One and have won the heavenly crown. Mount Zion is exalted in the top of the mountains and all nations are ready to flow into it. Edom has been finally overthrown and destroyed, and Jerusalem "is inhabited again in her own place, in Jerusalem."

Just for a moment, at this point, it might be desirable to take a backward glance to the literal fulfilment of the prophecy. We have been talking of spiritual Israel and her treatment at the hands of those we have called spiritual Edomites, and set all this against the background of the Gospel Age. Now all this, although a legitimate and true application, and moreover the interpretation that is of the deepest significance to us to-day, is not the only interpretation. The prophecy is equally applicable in a more literal sense to Obadiah's own time and people, and their own ultimate triumph when at last literal Edom is laid in ruins. But the important thing to notice is that although the two interpretations have their commencement at different points of time—the literal fleshly Israel one, in Obadiah's own time, six hundred years before Christ, and the spiritual Israel one at Pentecost and onward into this Gospel Age, yet they both reach their culmination at the same time, the Time of Trouble which ends "this present evil world." So in considering this seventeenth verse we may well see two classes of people pictured, each entering upon its reward after tribulation, but in different spheres or aspects of God's plan, and both at the same time, the end of this Age.

"Those who have escaped," therefore, in this verse may well refer, first to the Church, who at the end of this Age enter upon the eternity of

fellowship and service with our Lord which is the goal of all our hopes, and, second, to the earthly representatives of the New Kingdom, the Ancient Worthies and their fellows, raised from the dead to take up the administration of the new Millennial order of things. These, too, have been "perfected through suffering" even although it has perforce been that, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us at the end of his eleventh chapter, they without us could not be made perfect. And following these, regathered and purified Israel takes up its position in the Divine scheme of things. "The house of Jacob shall possess their possessions."

At this point, therefore, we are carried into the opening scenes of the Millennial Age. The Time of Trouble is over, the powers of evil have been restrained, the people will no longer be deceived by the pretensions and false doctrines of oppressive State and apostate Church. "Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." That is the ideal combination of secular and sacred control which is to be so characteristic of that glorious Age; a time when the Ruler will be a Royal Priest—a priest upon his throne. Just as Melchisedek of old ruled his people in both the things of man and the things of God, so will it be in that great day when the saviours have ascended Mount Zion and the House of Jacob has taken control of its rightful possession.

"The House of Jacob shall be a fire, the House of Joseph a flame, and the House of Esau shall be as stubble, which they shall ignite and consume until nothing is left of the House of Esau."

That is what God has decreed!" (vs. 18.)

There are two Scriptural themes which have a direct bearing on that verse and serve to illuminate and explain it. Logically enough, one has to do with those spiritual rulers, the Church, and the other with the earthly rulers, the Ancient Worthies. The one is found in Matt. 13 and is enshrined in the well-known parable of the wheat and tares. When the end of the Age comes, those who are represented by the wheat, the true and faithful Church, are taken away to "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father" but the tares are consumed in a great furnace of fire. Those tares are precisely the same as the ones we have in this series of studies been likening to spiritual Edom, which, in this verse 18, are to be as stubble, which is ignited and consumed until nothing is left. So

here we have a vivid picture of the final warfare when the Lord Jesus "shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." The Revelation picture of a Rider upon a white horse, followed by the armies of heaven, descending to earth to wage victorious battle with the kings of the earth and their armies, allied with the Beast and the False Prophet, is but another presentation of the same thing. This intervention of spiritual forces at the culmination of the Age to overthrow man's final resistance to the incoming Kingdom is a very real thing and the prophetic pictures are not one bit too extravagant in their portrayal.

The other theme, having to do, not with the spiritual rulers of the new earth, but the earthly rulers, is expressed best in Zech. 12. 6 "In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf, and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." It is impossible not to perceive the resemblance between these words and those of Obadiah's eighteenth verse. Here again the enemies of Israel are to be consumed as by fire, a fire which emanates from those "governors of Judah" which are the "saviours" or "those that escaped" of Obadiah's prophecy. In some way analogous to the descent of the Rider on the White Horse—perhaps in some way as part of the same process—the resurrected Ancient Worthies will play their part in consuming, as by an all-devouring fire, every trace of resistance to the new Kingdom, every shred of antagonism to the people who have put their trust in God, and eventually, every relic of evil itself. "As truly as I live, the whole earth shall be filled with My glory."

It may well be that in verse 18 the dual reference to the "House of Jacob" and the "House of Joseph" may be an oblique hint that there are two victorious peoples here involved, the natural rulers (Jacob) and the spiritual rulers (Joseph) working together in harmonious unity. The Church is sprung from natural Israel just as Joseph was sprung from Jacob, but the Church becomes the life-preserver of Israel just as in history Joseph was to Jacob.

"Then the people of the southern desert shall inherit the Mount of Esau, and the people of the sea-side plain, the land of the Philistines. Ephraim shall inherit Samaria and Benjamin shall inherit Gilead. The Israelite exiles in Halah shall inherit

Phoenicia as far as Zarephath, and the Jerusalem exiles in Sepharad shall inherit the cities of the desert." (vs. 19-29.)

All this reads much like a geographical medley and really it is necessary to put geography and history together to make much out of it. The whole passage is evidently intended to convey the absolute nature of God's victory over His enemies and restoration of peace and righteousness. The various place-names and allusions are intended to suggest ideas. Thus those who lived barren, desert lives because of the oppressions of their Edomite enemies will now come into their own—they will inherit their enemies' land. Those who had been oppressed by the people of the world, the Philistines, who had felt the persecution of men fall heavily upon them, will move into the places of prosperity formerly appropriated by the world. "Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, sit down in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves thrust out." Ephraim, for long unable to move into her rightful possession in Samaria because of the resistance of "the people of the land," will at length achieve her desire, and so will Benjamin in Gilead. The Israelites taken captive by the Assyrian hosts and removed far away to Halah will come back to a greatly enlarged and extended home-land in northern Israel, even embracing Phoenicia, and likewise the Jerusalem exiles taken away by Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon will return to the wide open spaces of Judah where they can settle in peace and flourish. The passage can well bear a natural and a spiritual application and in either case teaches the "gathering home" and abiding prosperity of those faithful souls who, "hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting in them, cried unto the Lord, and he heard them, and delivered them out of their distresses, and led them by a right way, and brought them into a city of habitation." That is the great lesson of the Book of Obadiah, one that should bring us confidence as well as cheer in this day when it seems as though the power of evil is being prolonged so much beyond its appointed time.

"And those who have escaped shall come from Mount Zion to rule the Mount of Esau, and the Kingdom shall be the Lord's." (vs. 21.)

The victory is complete! What more is there to say? The way of the righteous has been triumphantly vindicated, the judgment of God has done its work, and henceforward there is only glory—a glory that is eventually to enshroud all the world of men in its radiance.

THE END

THIS CAUSE WE SERVE

4.—The Preaching of the Cross

This presentation takes a rather different standpoint from that assumed in the earlier articles in this series. It is for each reader to form his own judgment after considering both sides of the question.

* * *

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. 1. 18.)

At the outset of his public ministry Jesus made it clear that His mission was to preach the good news of salvation. (Luke 4. 18-21). He also taught his disciples that they were the light of the world. (Matt. 5. 14.) His parting words were an explicit instruction that they would be His witnesses to the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1. 7, 8.) Could they ever forget his earlier injunction; "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16. 15.) Could there have been any doubt in their minds as to the great responsibility which arises from this commission? Dare we disobey our Master?

That certain sections of the Church of to-day should question the validity of "preaching the Gospel" can only arise from its lack of spiritual understanding and power. Yet that problem faces us and we are bound to turn again to the Scriptures for their inspiration of our message. In doing so we must divest ourselves of all preconceived notions on this subject. The spirit of truth will prevent us from defending or excusing the outlook and activity of our own movement in the past.

What was the Gospel which Jesus preached? Our Lord's ministry was concerned with the conquest of sin and the reconciliation of sinners to their Creator. The parables of the "Lost Sheep" and the "Prodigal Son" epitomise His great work, which began in Galilee and has continued ever since through His church. Why then do Christ's followers in this twentieth century find it so difficult to agree about preaching to unbelievers about their faith? Each school of thought in this matter attaches the word "gospel" to its message because each considers that it has "good news" for the world. There are the social gospels, the prophetic gospels, the millennial gospels and the modernist

gospels. Each takes Scripture as its basis and claims to be the voice of God in the World. Yet have they gone to the centre of God's purposes to discover the mainspring of His plan of redemption? Have they not rather taken some special aspect of God's work among men and magnified it out of proper importance until He, the Lord Jesus, by whom God's purposes are to be fulfilled, is obscured by the mass of human theory and speculation. Such a message may bring a certain amount of social readjustment, it may provide a certain amount of comforting hope for the future, but it will not give healing and peace to a sin stricken heart. Such preaching may be a palliative to the symptoms of the disease but it can never root out the cause and bring reconciliation between God and man.

The failure of the Christian Church to win converts for Christ is due in no small measure to the fact that the message and fellowship of the early church has been lost sight of. Our only means of discovering our commission to the world is by an attentive observation to the life and teaching of the earthly disciples. We cannot preach a social gospel merely because it is fashionable in some sections of the church. We cannot preach the hope of the coming Kingdom as we understand it, merely because it is different from the rest of the Christian Church. Our message must be based solely and simply upon the Word of God. There has been no radical change in the condition of men's need since Christ's first advent, nor even since men first lost their fellowship with the Creator as recorded in Genesis 2. The first step of coming to a knowledge of the truth of God is "getting right with Him."

There seem to be two main lines of approach within our fellowship to the problem of witnessing, and they are the message of the Kingdom, introducing our belief that all men are yet to be placed on trial for life in the age to come; and the message of repentance from sin. It is possible that the two could be so emphasised as to make them stand in opposition to each other, and therefore one of them, if not both, would be wrong. There are elements of truth in both schools of thought though neither

can be said to be the central theme of the early Church.

Were the message of repentance to be given undue prominence we might very soon find ourselves in the position of "certain disciples" whom Paul met at Ephesus rejoicing in the baptism of repentance which came through John. There are many Christians to-day who, having found the saving grace of Calvary, never discover the power of Pentecost.

Turning to the message of the Kingdom, we find that, in part at least, this view is based upon Jesus' instruction to His disciples to preach that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." But this reference to the "kingdom" by Jesus was surely not pointing toward the time when God will "build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; . . . that the residue of men might seek after the Lord." Our Lord's proclamation that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand could not refer to the world-wide establishment of righteousness. In His discourse upon the "End of the World" He had made it clear that He knew not the "day nor the hour" and just prior to His ascension he purposely diverted the attention of the disciples from the "times and seasons" to the preaching of the Gospel. It must have reference therefore to the initial stage of His Kingdom which took place at Pentecost when the plan of redemption began to take effect. Hence Jesus was able to tell the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God comes not with observation but was among them. (Luke 17. 20, 21.) He then went on to state how the Kingdom would come with outward manifestation at the second advent.

Without qualification the theme of the witness of the early church was "Christ." The subject of Peter's two wonderful sermons to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem at Pentecost was "Jesus of Nazareth." When Philip went down to Samaria he "preached Christ unto them," and later at the conversion of the official from the Ethiopian court he "preached unto him Jesus." After Paul's conversion he entered the synagogue at Antioch and "straightway he preached Christ." In his second letter to the Corinthian Church Paul wrote, "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord." These are the words of the early Christian believers—the great founders of the Church. They stand in marked contrast to some of the "Lectures" of more recent years wherein we have sought to initiate our

audience into an intellectual conception of the Christian faith. Only as we bring Jesus our Saviour to a sin-blighted world shall we be able effectively to preach the Gospel.

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.

Finally there is no witness of the Christian Church like its own unity. Jesus, knowing this, and realising how divided His followers were, prayed earnestly to His Father "*That they may be one; as thou father art in me, and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*" (John 17. 21.)

If our fellowship is torn and divided over this very question, no matter how accurate our interpretation of Scripture or brilliant our oratory, we shall not win men for Christ because our message is not prompted by the Spirit of Christ. Stripped of ambition and personal glory, divested of our own clever ideas and lofty motives, let us stand shoulder to shoulder owning our brethren in Christ as co-workers together with God, then, and only then shall our service be acceptable to Him.

Then shall we be able to say with Paul, "*For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.*"

GIFTS TO OUR KING

A Christmas
Meditation

"My son, give me thine heart."—Prov. 23. 26.

The wise men of the East came seeking the newborn Jesus, the King of the Jews, with presents of myrrh, frankincense and gold. Doubtless we shall be able to gather from this incident some valuable suggestions respecting our obligations to the great Messiah, and the propriety of renewing these and increasing them now at the closing of another year.

The wise men—according to tradition, three in number—arrived in Jerusalem and began making inquiries respecting the newly-born Jewish King. The news soon spread, and the holy city was in commotion because, according to the prophets, Messiah, promised for centuries, was due to appear about that time; and, "*All men were in expectation of Him.*" This expectancy naturally would be heightened by the coming of the wise men or Magi from a far country—supposedly Persia, to show homage to Messiah. The news finally reached the royal palace and King Herod himself. The latter, doubtless on his own account, felt a kind of jealousy toward any being who would be likely to share in any measure the royal honours and dignities and thus detract from his own importance. But additionally, no doubt, he felt that as the representative of Caesar's government, the protégé of the Roman Empire, it was his duty to see to it that no king should arise in the land under his jurisdiction, whose title or claims would in any measure conflict with those of the Caesars.

Without attempting to determine how much or how little truth attaches to astrology, we have the assurance that there was a truth connected with the manifestation of a special, peculiar star which guided the wise men of the east to know of Messiah's birth and to know to which country He belonged, so that they came to the capital city of that country. Moreover the Lord may have given them some additional explanation of the matter, even as He subsequently warned them in a dream. Herod cunningly affected to be deeply interested in the wise men in their search for the Messiah. He called the wise men of Judea to assist. These were not astrologers, but men learned in the Law and in the prophets—chief priests and scribes. Thus he put the wise men of Israel into conjunction with the wise men of the east, inquiring where the prophets had foretold that the Messiah should be born. They promptly answered "Bethlehem of Judea," and for that city, only six miles distant, the eastern

Magi set out, with the promise that they would return again and identify to him particularly the Babe King and where He might be found, ostensibly that the king might also go to worship at His feet, but really that he might improve the opportunity and use such knowledge for the destruction of the Babe Jesus.

En route for Bethlehem the miraculous star which they had seen in the far east appeared to them again, apparently as a ball of light or of fire travelling near the earth, and serving as a guide until they had rejoicingly reached the very house and found the Babe and His mother.

We are informed by Tacitus, by Suetonius and by Josephus that there prevailed throughout the entire east, at this time, an intense conviction, derived from ancient prophecies, that 'ere long a powerful monarch would arise in Judea and gain dominion over the world.

Virgil, who lived a little before this, says that a child from heaven was looked for, Who should restore the Golden age and take away sin.

Confucius had prophesied the appearance of such a deliverer; and a deputation of his followers going forth in search of Him were the means of introducing Buddhism into China.

But the clearest of all these prophecies was one by Zoroaster. The Nestorians say that Zoroaster was a disciple of Jeremiah, from whom he learned about the Messiah and talked concerning Him to his disciples.

In this connection we should remember that Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were at this time princes of Persia and intimate with the wise men of that country, which was at that time the principal nation of the world. It is easy to see how traditions would be handed down through that channel, and especially may we suppose that Daniel's prophecy respecting the time of Messiah's birth would be well known to the disciples of Zoroaster, Persia's wise men. Furthermore, there were Jews scattered abroad throughout that country who still more or less kept alive the thought of Israel's hope for the great Messiah so long promised of God, prophesied of as the bringer of blessings not only to Israel but through them to all families of the earth.

God chose as messengers of His good tidings not only wise men but reverential men, men of faith; and His choice of these messengers from the east

to arouse the people of Judea and Jerusalem and to be heralds of the great King was not an exception to the rule. Although not of the nation with which God had thus far dealt and to whom He had thus far confirmed His gracious promises, they were, nevertheless, good men, reverential men, who delighted to know of the coming blessings of peace on earth and goodwill amongst men through whatever channel or nationality the Lord should be pleased to find His representative and messenger.

In one respect many of Christendom could learn numerous important lessons from these wise Gentiles. No false patriotism stood in their way to hinder their appreciation of any manifestation of Divine favour to the children of men. And when they found the Saviour they were nothing daunted by the fact that His home surroundings were of the humbler sort. They worshipped Him in three senses of the word: (1) They fell before Him, prostrated themselves, thus physically expressing their reverence. (2) They worshipped Him in their hearts, and with the tongue gave expression to their rejoicing and confidence. (3) They opened their treasure-box and presented to Him three gifts appropriate to royalty, the myrrh representing submission, frankincense representing praise, gold representing obedience.

The reverent spirit of these noble heathen men who had so little light, so little knowledge respecting the great Messiah and His work, will bring to our cheeks the blush of shame as we reflect that, favoured with still brighter light to guide us to the Lamb of God, having seen His star in a still better and truer sense, having been guided to Him by the prophecies, having found Him not only a babe, but One that in prospect would bear our sorrows and carry our griefs and make His soul an offering for sin, that we by His stripes might be healed, what manner of oblation should we pour at the feet of Him Who loved us and bought us with His precious blood? With what deep reverence have we bowed the knee, prostrated ourselves, given outward evidence through our bodies of full submission to our great King, of Whom we not only know but of Whose gracious provision for us and for the world of mankind we have heard, not uncertainly, but with the voice of Him Who speaketh from heaven? Have we offered our myrrh? Have we shown a willingness for service even to the extent of bitterness, a joy to honour the King to the extent of suffering with Him? Have we worshipped Him in heart, not with an outward form of godliness without the power—in other words, have we offered Him the frankincense of heart adoration, appreciation, and gratitude?

Have we laid at His feet our earthly substance

—our gold? Have we realised that all that we have and all that we are are offerings far too small to be worthy of acceptance by the great King Emmanuel? Is this our present attitude? and will it be our attitude through coming days even until the end of the present pilgrimage?

The Apostle's words, "*Present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, your reasonable service,*" apply not only to the primary consecration of our hearts to the Lord, but are, as the Scriptures express it, a covenant of sacrifice, an agreement to die daily to self and to be alive daily more and more in the Lord's service, to glorify Him in our bodies and spirits which are His. If this has not been our attitude in the past shall it not be our future course? Shall we not in any event continue to grow in knowledge, to grow in love, in service, in worship and in the privilege of laying our little all at the feet of Him Who is our gracious Heavenly King, Whose Kingdom is so soon to be established and Who has invited us to sit with Him in His throne, to share His glory, to be participants as spiritual Israel in the great work of pouring out blessings upon the world of mankind, every kindred, people, nation and tongue?

Our headline text is well worthy of our remembrance here. It is not applicable to sinners who are not sons in any sense of the word. There is a message to sinners, namely, a call to repentance, to the forsaking of sin and to the acceptance of the justification secured by the precious blood. But it is only to those who have repented of sin and who are seeking to live a repentant life and so far as possible to make restitution for wrongs of the past, and who are trusting to the precious blood of Christ—reconciled to God through the death of His Son—it is to these that this Golden Text is applicable, "My Son, give me Thine heart."

When we give our hearts it includes all that we have and are in the highest and noblest and fullest sense. That which was illustrated by the three gifts of the wise men is all represented in this brief statement, "Give me Thine heart." Whoever gives his heart to the Lord fully and unreservedly, gives his body, gives his worship and reverence and praise, and gives his earthly treasure, time, talents, influence, money—all—to be used in joyful service for the glory of the King.

To those who have never taken this step we urge a prompt acceptance, irrespective of the gracious hopes we have of a transcendent reward of glory, honour, immortality. As the Apostle declares, it is our reasonable service. Reasonable people ought to be glad of the knowledge that God is willing to accept our service, and of the opportunity to

present themselves under the covering of the Redeemer's righteousness.

To those who have already accepted the Lord, who have already presented their bodies living sacrifices, who have already given the Lord their hearts, we urge a remembrance of the fact that the sacrifice once put upon that altar must remain there, and that the longer it remains the more joyful should be the service, the more appreciated every

opportunity for sacrifice, the more thankful should be the heart and the more rich should be the experience in the peace of God which passeth all understanding, ruling in our hearts and preparing us more and more through the graces of the Spirit for the glorious things which God hath in reservation for them that so love Him and so reverence His Son.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

A series of studies
on Sanctification

4.—Holiness comes to a people

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, and came to dwell with them in the wilderness, an illustration was set before us of a two-fold aspect of the attribute of holiness. In the Shechinah Light which dwelt in the "Most Holy" we have the emblem of inherent holiness. Another term for that would be "subjective" holiness—or holiness of the "Subject" or "Being" to whom the attribute referred. To this aspect of Divine holiness God's coming to dwell with Israel made no difference, for even in those remote times when God had withdrawn Himself, and was putting forth no active power to arrest the increasing prevalence of sin, within Himself God's essential holiness remained unchanged and undiminished.

Its existence as an attribute to God did not depend upon His activities against the course of sin. At rest or at work that essential intrinsic holiness persisted and continued because of Him being Who and what He was. That unchangeable attribute of God was represented by that mysterious Light within the Most Holy of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. There was nothing in the whole Tabernacle structure to be compared with that peculiar Light. It hung between the Cherubim, unsustained and unchanged—ever and always a mysterious glow of light emitting its rays without Priestly care or other earthly derived attention. No human labours could improve it, no human effort could quench it. It came from God, and was maintained by God. It was the token of the Presence of God. It was the emblem of the holiness of God. It was of this Light God spake when He said to Moses "... *I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the Mercy Seat, from between the Cherubim* ..." (Ex. 25. 22.) From above the Mercy Seat! From between the Cherubim! Exactly the location of that Holy Light. From that location God said "I will meet

with thee." That Holy Light positioned there between the Cherubim was the nearest approach to a revelation of the exalted and holy Personality of the Lord God of Heaven and earth which could be disclosed to mortal man—fit emblem of One who had an inexhaustible fount of life within Himself, and who in Himself and by Himself upheld the absolute standards of virtue and purity.

The arrival and presence of that Holy Light in the dark depths of Israel's Tabernacle represented that the Holy God had come down to earth to begin the preliminary stages of His plan for cleansing it from sin. To that far-distant project of purifying the world from sin God called Abraham's seed to be His servants and associates. By coming down to earth in this emblematic sense, and by drawing Israel's hosts around His dwelling-place, the native inherent holiness of God began to be active against sin. It set before itself an objective, and applied itself to that end. To accomplish that objective it gathered around itself and absorbed within itself the whole nation of Israel.

The nation complete and entire, the tabernacle in all its parts and the mysterious self-supporting Light were all essential parts of the one Divine instrument for eliminating sin. The holy Light in its relation to Israel was as the centre to the circumference, as the hub to the wheel. "It" and they were one, each in their respective place, each with its respective part to play in the great task of sanctifying the earth. That Holy Light was directive and advisory in its relation to the entire Camp. It gave guidance when need arose. That Holy Light was as the Watchman against holiness; it smote the sons of Aaron when using strange fire, unholy fire. It was—shall we say not irreverently—as the highest directive officer of the co-partnership concern. Inasmuch, however, as here on earth both manager and messenger are parts together of one firm, so

God and His chosen people Israel were associated together in God's scheme to rid the world of sin.

This association of the Eternal God with the seed of His friend (Jas. 2. 20) is beautifully shown in Rev. 4 and 5. The personality of God is represented by the jasper and sardine stone, seated on the centrally positioned throne. The throne supports are of such a form as to correspond to Israel's banners—a lion, a calf, a human face, a flying eagle. This combination shows Israel associated with the throne of the Living God. Around that central throne, but of smaller size, are four and twenty other thrones, occupied by the same number of elders, crowned with golden crowns. These represent the priestly and kingly attributes joined in one—kings and priests—and stand out from the elect nation as their very elect and choicest members. It is a picture of a priesthood which has superseded the Levitical order—the great original, of which Aaron's was a type.

The jewel-pictured occupant of that central throne, the throne itself, and the circle of priestly-royal elders are joined together in solemn session, awaiting the coming of Judah's Lion—a Lamb as it had been slain, for the release of a temporarily lost inheritance. This was the grand design with which the Ancient of Days set out. This was the master-draught of His plan, of which the events at Sinai, and in wilderness days constituted only a kindergarten copy. God and Abraham's chosen seed were to be as "one", to accomplish the grand redemption of the world, set out in symbolic language as a Holy City, lying foursquare (Camp-like) with ever-open gates into which all the earthly kings should bring their glory. God's purpose stands unchanged. Christ supersedes Moses, but all else remains unchanged.

When God thus set forth this scheme as His objective, the holiness which required the earth to be made free from sin—which holy intention was the basic cause for the plan being formed—became objective too. The intrinsic indwelling holiness within the heart of God began working in an extrinsic—external—manner to make His environment (which means all creation) clean. When God took Israel into co-partnership with Himself (represented by placing His Holy Light in their midst) His own objective holiness came down to rest on Israel as well.

Thus the sublime subjective holiness (represented by the Holy Light) became manifest and active, as an objective holiness too, what time it began to act and work with Israel and through Israel for the elimination of sin. God's holiness was thus revealed in its two-fold aspect (a) *subjective* (an indication

of what He is—the Holy One of Israel) but it became (b) *objective* too (indicated by what He was about to do).

It is very necessary for us to make this distinction clear between these two phases of holiness, for Israel shared in one phase, but not in the other. Israel, by her association with her God, was made objectively holy—holy for a purpose—but most obviously she was not made holy subjectively, i.e. she was not holy in herself—she had no real holiness of heart. It is on this basis of a two-phased holiness that we can approach New Testament days. These things and experiences in Israel were the pattern of the "better things" of our later days.

To teach men of this earth (in the only way that man could learn) that the Most High God claims in Himself to be the be-all and end-all (or as Paul puts it "that God may be all in all") of their being, God commanded men and utensils (altar, censers, tables, etc.) to be exclusively set apart to His service. So long as these men used these utensils in the prescribed way, that is, in His exclusive service, God accounted both men and utensils holy. This holy standard did not lapse because, at times, these men failed to follow precisely all the prescribed details of their instructions. God had made provision for the unintentional lapses, both on a national and individual scale, by means of vicarious sacrifices (sin-offerings, both personal and national—see Leviticus, chapters 4 to 7, and Leviticus 16.)

When the more faithful in Israel, those who had higher vision and keener hearts than their fellows (see Heb. 11) had become thoroughly and appreciatively familiar with this kindergarten idea of holiness (separateness unto God) God advanced His purpose to a higher stage. By reason of the sacrificial death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, God was able to carry the theme of revelation (that is, redemption by blood) up from the lowly, limited, literal level of fleshly Israel, to the higher, unconfined spiritual level of spiritual Israel, in this way carrying the thoughts and understanding of the responsive among His people up to the great realities of His plan. In learning these higher things His faithful ones were still at school, still learning the one great lesson concerning holiness and sin, but were advanced upwards from the kindergarten to the qualifying grade. The little square wooden blocks of the nursery were no longer necessary for these pupils to continue developing the "building sense"—that is, the sense of holiness. This sense—the awareness of God—had already considerably developed, and now the time had come to put realities in place of typical and shadowy

things; but in so doing God used the various objects of the Mosaic ceremony and ritual to illustrate the verities of the Christian faith.

The Holy Spirit used those sacrifices and ablutions and Tabernacle arrangements generally as patterns to lead Christian thought to see that the believer in Christ—each separate believer—was himself a Temple of the Living God (1 Cor. 3. 16). At the same time, but from another point of view, each believer was a “royal priest” (1 Pet. 2. 5 and 9), and from yet another point of view each believer was “a living sacrifice” (Rom. 12. 1. Rom. 6. 13 and 19). On this higher level of Christian tuition it was learned, (as in Egypt on the Passover night), that a “first-born” class stood in special relationship to the plan of redemption—called to supersede the natural first-born, priestly class, just as “Christ our Pass-over” (Lamb) superseded the Lamb whose blood be-sprinkled the door-posts of Israel.

A better and greater Priest with better sacrifices had superseded Aaron's line with its bulls and goats. A better Mediator, too, had been appointed to take the place of Moses. A better, larger, longer Sabbath had been designed to displace the typical seventh day. Thus, those lowlier, carnal conceptions, so long current in Israel, became the embodiment of better, fuller, nobler conceptions when carried up into the Christian's thought and life and experience. The form of the expression was changed, yet notwithstanding that, its germ and theme remained the same, just as the bud, fully developed into the flower, is changed in form, yet withal remains the same.

From first to last, on lowlier typical level, or on higher spiritual plane, the purpose of the Most High God remains the same. The twin-theme to-day, as it was in ancient time, is “holiness” and “sin.” These major chords are made up of many accordant sounds. We speak of atonement, redemption and precious blood, we tell of baptism into His death, and companionship of Christ, and grace to help in time of need, but back of all these kindred themes stands God Most High. He it was who caused them all. Sacrifice and favour are all of His devising. It was God Himself who so loved the world as to give His Son (John 3. 16). It is His own Love which is commended by the death of Christ (Rom. 5. 8), and thus, when we rejoice together over redemption's wondrous story, each note of the harmonious chord harks back to the Most High God, who, before time began, arranged His plans to provide for every such emergency. Back of all these plans, deep in the heart of God, we reach the basic theme of all—that unchanging intensity of desire for the absolutely

good, the altogether pure, the unchangeably true. That was the first spark that fired the whole train, and from which all subsequent energy derives.

Again, we speak of evil and its long permission; of the reign of death; of the ravages of sin; of unholy men, and unrighteous rule. We speak of Gentile supremacy and of Israel's fall; we tell of Armageddon and all its fury, of a crushing time of trouble such as never was before and then we look forward to the rounding up and chaining down of all these things, of Satan's imprisonment and final destruction. Back of all this permission and suppression stands God Most High. He it is Who has determined that though evil shall be triumphant for a time, it will be completely overthrown in the end. He it is Whose mighty power will bring it to its end. No one else is equal to the task.

Therefore behind the scenes of right and wrong there is One whose abhorrence of sin is so intense that He will not rest content until it is destroyed both root and branch. Again we reach the lesson's point, that Divine holiness will not permit its universal environment to be polluted forevermore. Again we reach the conclusion that the mainspring of all Divine energy and all Divine intention for uprooting all evil, and establishing forevermore the good and pure, is that supreme intense moral force which burns in the heart of God. Behind and beneath the attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power, is the unfathomably deep moral platform on which they all are built—the holiness of God.

The glorious Gospel truth in which we all rejoice is but the same theme continued, but in higher grade, that was taught to Israel in the wilderness. Moses, under God, was the teacher then. Christ, under God, is our teacher now. Things which “might be touched” and seen were the illustrations Moses used. We learn of things unseen; but through it all the lesson theme is just the same. Behind it all is God Most High, glorious in His holiness, pure beyond compare, working out His great designs to free the world from sin. Holiness must triumph over sin, and God is holiness sublime!

(To be continued)

For the production of one single ear of corn we should need the same sun, the same sky, the same earth, and the same conditions as is needed for all the harvests of the world. If only one soul were to be reduced, the same propitiation would be needed as is demanded by the entire population of a lost world. The sacrifice of Christ removes from the mind of God every hindrance of the pardon, the restoration, and the justification of every sinner.

Some Notes on Zechariah 12-14

Question. Has there been a siege, or have there been sieges, in the past, which would fulfil the prophecy of Zech. 14?

It can be suggested that the siege prophesied might be that by Nebuchadnezzar in B.C. 606 (circ.). But that siege, though very severe and dreadful in its results for Israel, was not by "all nations," nor was it followed by the dramatic deliverance prophesied in the succeeding verses.

The same objections hold good in reference to the still more terrible siege by Titus in A.D. 70; it, too, was by one nation only, and it also was not followed by deliverance in any way whatever, but just the very opposite—a still greater dispersal of Israel, with severe sufferings for nearly nineteen centuries.

On reading the annals of Jerusalem in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, a very notable fact emerges, viz., that the history of the city shows an amazing number of sieges, from the days of Joshua (Josh. 15. 63) down to modern times. That the city was not an easy one to take, even in its early history, would seem to be shown by the fact that David reigned seven years in Hebron before being able to take Jerusalem, and also by the mockery of the Jebusites when he attempted to do so. (2. Sam. 5. 4-8 and 1 Chron. 11. 4-6.)

From the time of Nebuchadnezzar onwards the account shows a list of about twenty-two sieges (or, to be perhaps more accurate, twenty-two takings of the city, most of them by means of a siege.) In these events, the city was "razed to the ground" twice, "pillaged and burnt" once, "demolished" once, and its walls destroyed four of five times. And, of course, the various takings of the city were usually accompanied by slaughter and cruelty, sometimes very severe, fulfilling all the statements of Ch 14. 2.

Another fact that emerges from this record of Jerusalem is that the sieges have been made by a variety of nations by *Babylon, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Rome, Parthia* (a country of West Asia), *Persia, the Arabs, and Christians* (the Crusaders); even the Jews themselves had to retake the city in B.C. 177, to re-enter it B.C. 165, and to besiege a part of it (the Acra) in B.C. 145.

Would not this account suggest that the prophetic picture of the siege of Jerusalem by all nations given here in Zech. 12 and 14 is a *collective one*—one which includes *all the sieges of the city* which

have taken place *during twenty-five centuries of the Gentile Times?*

A similar instance in which the events of a long span of time are described in a verse, or half a verse, of Scripture is found in Luke 21. 24—"*Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" How much history is compressed into that one sentence!

Such an interpretation of the siege would thus explain satisfactorily (1) the "by all nations": by which expression would be meant "all the *chief, or ruling, or representative nations.*" (2) the great deliverance which follows the siege, and which is to occur at the end of the period covered—at the end of the Gentile Times (and which is even now being worked out).

In view, then, of what has been said above, concerning (a) the absence of any one siege in the past that would fulfill the conditions of the prophecy;

(b) the extreme improbability of there being a future siege that would fulfill the picture.

(c) the fact that a collective view of the prophecy as covering a *span of time filled with sieges*, does fulfill the conditions, the conclusion may properly be drawn that the last-named view is the correct way of interpreting the prophecy.

Verses 2, 3. It is fairly obvious that if the siege by all nations is collective, covering a period of time, so also are the other parts of these verses: they too will represent a series of experiences covering the same period, the Gentile Times. It would seem but reasonable that Jerusalem should be a "cup of trembling" and a "burdensome stone" to *all* the nations who have besieged her, and that this should be so *to each one in turn* at some time *during* the period covered by the prophecy, as well as at its end.

That all the nations should pay some penalty for their ill treatment of the city which occupies a special place in the heart and mind and purpose of God is but an outworking of Gen. 12. 3 "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee."

Verses 6. The statement that Jerusalem should still remain in its own site (see Moffatt) is worthy of note, in view of the number of times the city and its walls have been destroyed. It may well be spoken of as "the eternal city."

Verses 4-8. Like the fulfillments of verses 2, 3,

the fulfilments of the details given in these five verses would require much knowledge of Israel's history in order to be stated. In the absence of that knowledge, the task will not be attempted.

Verses 10-14. Following, or perhaps accompanying, the national deliverance comes the third great feature of these final chapters of Zechariah—a *national repentance*. This part of the prophecy is well known, and need not be gone into in detail. Its main features are two:—(1) The opening of the eyes of the Jewish people as a whole concerning their Messiah. They will realise that Jesus was their Messiah, and that they, His own people, rejected Him, and were in that way the cause of His great sufferings and of His terrible death on Calvary's cross. (2) That realisation will cause them to be in much bitterness and sorrow of heart, and to undergo a period of deep affliction and mourning. The mourning will affect every family in Israel, every house in Israel, and every individual in each family.

How thoroughly that sorrow will be deserved! And what a time it will be when this prophecy is fulfilled! What a change it will work in Israel: how abased they will feel when they realise not only the disgraceful and awful nature of their act in the rejection of Jesus, but also that the chief part and place in Abraham's seed has, in consequence of that act, been taken from themselves and given to the despised Gentiles!

CHAPTER 13 brings us to the fourth great event to come to Israel "in that day"—in the momentous period at the end of her long trouble during the Gentile Times: a *national cleansing*.

Verse 1. And the first cleansing will be of the heart and mind, from sin and all its stains. This is where cleansing should begin, if it is to be a true and effective one.

A fountain opened: the only true fountain for cleansing from sin—the blood of Christ. The great truth, or truths set forth so clearly in Hebrews 9 will be appreciated by all Israel in that day!

The time of this: from the beginning of the Kingdom Age, and continuing throughout it. One would expect that the resurrection of the Ancient Worthies would be the great event which would cause the opening of Israel's eyes, and thus bring about the national repentance and the national cleansing. A new covenant is to be made with Israel (Jer. 31. 31-33) but, the repentance and cleansing must come before such a covenant can be made.

Verse 2. The land—by which is really meant the people who live in the land—is cleansed from idols. The land was measurably cleansed from certain evils after the Babylonian captivity, as shown by the visions of Chap. 5. But although Israel has not

worshipped the false Gods of the heathen, since then she has worshipped other idols, especially that of business (financial idols); and these, and all other similar idols, will have to be removed "in that day." Israel, and all mankind as well will have to learn the real truth of the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

CHAPTER 14. *Verse 1.* "*Behold the day of the LORD cometh*": more correctly, a day of the LORD (R.V., RSV, and Moffatt): in this case, as reasoned out in considering the siege, a period of time covering many centuries—the whole period of the Gentile Times—a period or "Day" of Divine displeasure upon Israel, during which her kingdom is non-existent. (Ezek. 21. 27)

"*Thy spoil shall be divided*," etc. This is not a repetition of the events of 2. Kings 7, where Israel divided spoil which she had taken; the context (ver. 2) clearly disproves such a thought. The spoil here is taken from Israel (see RSV), and is divided while she looks on. This describes Israel's experience throughout the Gentile Times, during which she has been repeatedly despoiled and robbed by her enemies, the Gentiles.

Verse 2. This verse, as we have already seen describes the experience of Jerusalem during the Gentile Times.

Verse 3. At the end of the latter, there comes (a) a Day of Wrath upon the Gentile nations, described vividly in Jer. 25. 30-33; and (b) a great deliverance for Israel. The latter is the outcome of the former.

Verse 4. Then follows the establishment of the Kingdom, the remaining part of the chapter being a Kingdom vision: brief, in comparison with those of Ezekiel and John, but equally symbolic in its descriptive features—a point to be kept well in mind.

"*His feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives.*" Some think that this will be fulfilled literally, by Christ as the representative of Jehovah; but see note just made, above. Represents, in symbol, the controlling power of Christ at the time of the setting up of the Kingdom; compare the vision of Rev. 10. 1, 2. The Mount of Olives, in this small vision, would represent the Kingdom. Its dividing into parts, the one going north and the other going south would correspond to the making of a clear distinction and division between the heavenly (north) and the earthly (south) powers of the Age to come—something which neither Jews nor Gentiles recognise at present, but which will be made known to all in the future, in some definite and positive way.

Verse 5. The interpretation of this verse is not clear partly (or chiefly) because of variations of translation in the modern versions.

"*Ye shall flee.*" This is very uncertain—the

LXX is quite different; Roth, has a footnote corresponding to the LXX, and Moffatt puts the words in double brackets, indicating that he regards them as spurious. One cannot but ask, further, Why should Israel flee at all, in the day of their deliverance? There seems *no* reason for such flight; and in view of this, and of the difference in translation, one cannot attach importance to this feature of the vision. It is open to serious doubt.

"*And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee*": a reference, one would think, to the return of Christ (the great agent and representative of the Lord, in all these prophecies.)

The words "with thee" are clearly doubtful. The RSV and the LXX both read "with him", see p. 106); and Moffatt and Fenton both read "with his saints, or angels." All are more sensible than the A.V.

Verses 6, 7. Variation in translation is again very marked, and makes the meaning of the verses uncertain. Even the short verse 6 is rendered so differently that no one could be sure of its meaning. In verse 7, a long or continued day is spoken of, which could well represent the thousand year day of the Kingdom. Its light is of course symbolic, representing knowledge of God, universal in that time—(Is. 11. 9, Jer. 31. 34.) And the last sentence could well represent the truth that when the Millennial day is over, it will not be followed by a "night" time; there will never again be a period of darkness, or mental ignorance of God, such as has characterised the "present evil world".

Verse 8. Very much could be written upon this verse, which contains one of the most beautiful symbols of Scripture—the "living waters" of Truth. But there is no need for this here, and one contents oneself with remembering the vision of Ezek. (47.1-10) and that of John (Rev. 22. 1.)—both of them Kingdom visions, and the words of Jesus in John 4. 10-14. Also the kingdom of vision of Isaiah (2. 2-4)

The two streams, one going east to the Dead Sea and the other going west to the Mediterranean, might well represent the Truth going to the dead and to the living, giving new life to both.

Verses 10, 11. These verses tell us of the permanence and exaltation of Jerusalem in the Kingdom time, and of the figurative abasement of those around her. *She* is to be the governing power in the future; the land around is to be governed. The Ancient Worthies will certainly have their headquarters at Jerusalem—not at London, New York, Moscow, or anywhere else.

The levelling of the surrounding land would serve to emphasise the exaltation of the city. A

symbolic levelling of a slightly different kind is depicted in Isa. 40. 4.

The remaining of Jerusalem on its site has already been spoken of, in Chap. 12. 6; and its being inhabited, in Chap. 8. 3-5.

"No more curse of destruction." (Moffatt). The curse had rested on the city throughout the Gentile Times.

Verse 12. The Kingdom Vision is interrupted here by a small inset picture (verses 12-15), which goes back in time to the Day of wrath upon the nations, referred to in connection with Ver. 3. It shows the special degree of Divine displeasure incurred by the many attacks upon Jerusalem during the Gentile Times, and is a final outworking of the prophecy already in Chap. 12. 2-8.

The language of this verse is forceful; it *could* be taken somewhat literally, as describing the effects on people physically during the anarchy of the final phase of trouble, but it might be better to regard it as applying to the wasting of the political, financial, and military strength of the nations at that time.

Verse 13. This verse certainly is descriptive of anarchy: national and international.

Verse 14. Moffatt regards the words about Judah fighting against Jerusalem as an interpolation, putting them in double brackets. Why *should* Judah fight against Jerusalem in the time of Israel's deliverance.?

Compare also the flight of Israel in Verse 5.

The gathering together (RSV. "collecting") of the wealth of the nations, apparently for Israel's benefit, reminds of a like happening at the time of the Exodus (Ex. 12. 35. 36). It would seem to be a recompense to Israel for the continual despoiling of her during the long period of her oppression by the Gentiles; see ver. 1.

Ver. 15. The Divine judgment was to affect other phases of national life than those mentioned above, e.g. transport and food. And so it will most assuredly, in the final time of trouble.

Verse 16. Returning to the Kingdom Vision, the prophet foretells the universal worship of the true God in that day; the going up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of booths or tabernacles (Lev. 23. 34-43), each year, being symbolic of such worship. (The worship of God for one week only in the year would be foolish and useless.) And obviously, not all the nations could go up to Jerusalem for the occasion; each nation would send a certain number of representatives.

Verse 17. If any nation would not join in the general worship and rejoicing before God, it will lack the Divine blessing and will cease to be fruitful

in the knowledge of God, and will make no further progress along the highway to Life.

Verses 18, 19. Why is the family, or nation, of Egypt singled out for mention in this way? Probably because of its special association with Israel in the early days of her history—at the time of the Exodus, when the Pharaoh of that time formed a type of Satan. At the present time (1955) Egypt is still at enmity with Israel. How humbling for Egypt to have to put away her own false gods, to recognise Israel's God as the true One, and to have to join that despised and hated nation in the worship of Israel's Messiah!

Verses 20, 21. Finally, the whole of Israel and the whole of mankind are to be brought into harmony with the law of righteousness and with the holiness of God Himself.

This will be *essential* for any and all who are, at the end of the Kingdom age, to attain to everlasting life and happiness.

The mention of the seething in pots is a final evidence of the symbolism of the whole prophecy; for in the Kingdom age there will not be literal sacrifices, and certainly not sacrifices of flesh. "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.*" (Isa. 11. 9.) Praise ye the Lord!

PILGRIMAGE IN GERMANY

A call to visit Germany was received through the invitation from brethren in that country in the Spring of 1954. After prayerful consideration, four young brethren felt led to prepare for the tour. We gratefully acknowledge the devoted services of the two sisters in Germany who translated our talks. Meanwhile we attended to those things which would facilitate easier travelling and better fellowship including acquainting ourselves with their language.

We had a calm and pleasant crossing from Dover to Ostende on the night of August 4th. During the seventeen days on foreign roads we were never in any danger and our four-seater English car soon accustomed itself to the opposite side of the road. Our safe and comfortable travelling was surely due to the guidance and care of our Heavenly Father. The people we met and many little incidents in our travels unmistakably indicated to us the Lord's provision for a very happy mission in His service.

During our first day we crossed Belgium and entered the German industrial district of the Ruhr. At Essen we were most warmly welcomed by about sixty brethren who had gathered in a school. They spoke no English and conversation was very slow to begin with, but we discovered various methods of fellowship and enjoyed some profitable interchange of thoughts on the Scriptures.

The first week-end of the tour was spent at Kirchlingern, a small town near Herford and Bielefeld. In this district the brethren have built their own fine church, which normally accommodated the local class of about a hundred and fifty, but on special occasions the congregation swells

to several hundred. We joined with them on the Sunday for a very happy time of worship and fellowship. Their choir rendered some lovely sacred songs and the hymn-singing generally was very inspiring, especially the several which we knew. One meeting was of particular interest because its form was new to us. A brother led the thoughts of the assembly by a short talk and followed it by a series of penetrating questions which stimulated a lively and evidently fruitful discussion. We were entertained in two fine Christian homes and were given every attention. The deep spiritual fellowship was most refreshing and we were among a fine body of real students of the Bible.

It is appropriate to mention here the great loss to the brethren in this area and indeed to the German brethren generally by the recent death of Brother Wilhelm Trippler. He had been a spiritual father to many of the friends and they felt his loss most keenly. He was a brother who could not only very effectively expound the Word of God, but also took a remarkable interest in the welfare of the brethren.

Our next call was at Marburg, a town which nestles among the wooded hills of central Germany and which is famous for its connections with the Reformation. The brethren with whom we stayed mainly consisted of one large happy family, and again we were most hospitably received. Here too we enjoyed a "sing-up" of some of our favourite hymns, and by this time we were learning to sing in a foreign tongue with appreciation. As with nearly every other community which we visited, we were given the privilege of ministering the Lord's Word which they received and discussed most gladly.

At Salmunster we were due for a rest from discoursing, but we had a long conversation on the "End of the Age" and the establishment of the Kingdom. The little family which greeted us in this village near Frankfurt had suffered many trials through the years and had been mellowed into sober but rejoicing Christians.

Heading still further south we eventually reached Stuttgart, that beautiful city of Bavaria, set along the River Neckar and flanked by high hills. In the quietness of a peaceful home we were able to reflect upon all the goodness of our Heavenly Father during the past week and bask in the warm southern sunshine. Our meeting with the class was warm and friendly and we were very glad to have the opportunity of meeting several young people.

Driving eastward, we spent the second week-end in Traunstein amid the lovely Alpine scenery of the Berchtesgaden district. We were able to spend a little while among the mountains and lakes, and our appreciation of God's handiwork was greatly increased. The people and their villages are of Tyrolian character here, and our brethren were no exception. Dressed in native costume they gathered on the Sunday for the normal worship, coming from far and wide to enjoy a season of fellowship. The brethren did not readily tell of their difficult lives, isolated from the busy towns, but we learned something of their fiery experiences in their stand for the Lord.

The route between Stuttgart and Traunstein lay through Munich and it was with considerable regret that we twice passed through that city without the joy of meeting the local brethren. Indeed our opportunities with meeting the Lord's people made us desire the more to see the faces of many others for which time did not permit.

Near Stuttgart lies the highly industrial town of Heilbron where a class of twenty or so brethren meet regularly for worship and the study of the Word. Once more we were grateful for their warm welcome and they heard the Lord's message with much gladness. Wherever we went we received much generosity, and it seemed that wherever brethren felt the difficulty of conversing with us, they made up for it by material gifts through which to express their love.

We also had the privilege of visiting several other Christian communities just outside Stuttgart and these proved to be most interesting and profitable. We learned something of their worship and way of life, and were given the opportunity to preach the Word to two enthusiastically spiritual assemblies.

Sadly we turned homeward to make our last call upon a small group of brethren in Trier, very near to the German border. They were specially helpful, realising how tired we were from the travelling, and doing all they could to prepare us for the long journey, through Luxemburg and Belgium during the last day of our continental tour.

We would like to acknowledge the value of the British passport, which is respected everywhere, and the bearer receives very courteous treatment. We found the German people were hard-working, friendly and generous people. Many of the differences of outlook and custom between the medieval provinces persist to the extent of rivalry. But our brethren are one with us and with all God's people in Christ Jesus. They welcomed us as brothers and sisters in the same family, and could never do enough to make us happy. They readily discussed the Word of God and were always eager to learn of the welfare of the British brethren. Wherever we went "Many hearty greetings" were pressed upon us for the brethren in England, and for ourselves they would say, "God be with you on the journey" or "God go before you." Like us they have their differences and difficulties within their fellowship, but we learned much from them. Unity and co-operation seem with them to be the fruit of persecution and suffering. Some still suffer as a result of their former experiences through ill-health. Although there is plenty of material blessings available now, life is still very hard for the poorer folk.

Throughout the twenty-five hundred miles we were aware of the gracious hand of God with us. Prayer formed an important part of our lives while abroad and its value on such a pilgrimage cannot be over emphasised. We were glad to be used by the Lord in forging a few more links in the fellowship of brethren on both sides of the North Sea and we trust that this brief account will make all of us more conscious of the ties which exist between the members of God's family everywhere.

The overshadowing and oversight of a surrendered human life, by the Almighty God is one of the most amazing things in all Creation. It is the latest phase of Creation—for therein the Omnipotent Architect of the Universe, is engaged upon the absolute Masterpiece of all His varied work.

The "Way of the Cross," beloved, lies through the doors of your own dwelling place and makes the space within its walls, a suburb of Heaven itself. The mighty courts of Heaven and your own little cot are linked together in the greatest work of all time, if His Will is done in your heart.

The Authority of Divine Truth

Divine truth comes to us with all the authority of its Divine Author. With a gentle dignity consistent with its noble character it urges its claims upon the reason, judgment and the conscience of men, and then leaves them as free moral agents, to accept or reject its claims. Its true messengers also come with the same moral force of inherent worth, rather than with noisy demonstrations or "lying wonders," such as are used by the powers of darkness to attract idle curiosity into the snares of Satan. They come imbued with the spirit of the authoritative message they bear—the spirit of holiness and truth.

Thus our Lord Jesus, the great chief Messenger of the Divine covenant, was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; the prophets were holy men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit and the apostles were holy men chosen of God and charged with the Divine testimony. So also all of those called of God to preach the good tidings have this anointing of the Holy Spirit of God (Isa. 61. 1-3; Luke 4. 16-21) as their necessary preparation for this service; and without this anointing they are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, having no commission from God to declare His Truth. To any who, without the Divine anointing, presumptuously take upon themselves to handle the testimonies of God, attempting to expound them to others: "*God saith, 'What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee!'*" (Psa. 50. 16, 17.) Only those who have the anointing of the Spirit of Truth have any commission from God to preach the truth to others. And indeed only such can do it; for others, not being willing to admit its full sway and authority in their own hearts, yet anxious to justify themselves before men, will pervert the truth, deceiving and being deceived, wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction.

Divine truth, flowing from the pure fountain of truth, God himself, Who is all light, and in Whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1. 5); coming to us through the appointed channel of God's Word and declared by his faithful servants imbued with his spirit, comes with a moral and logical power proving its authority and enforcing it with an emphasis which carries warning with it and which plainly says, "Take heed how ye hear."—Luke 8. 18.

The message of Divine truth conveyed to us through our Lord Jesus and his holy apostles and prophets, and from time to time, as meat in due season, called to our attention by such members of the anointed body as God hath set in the Church to be pastors, teachers and even by the feeble members of the body, are not therefore subjects for mere idle consideration and human speculation and dispute; they are not common themes for reckless handling with irreverent hands—they are the eternal principles of truth and righteousness. They are the oracles of God and the principles of his holy law by which every man must be judged as worthy or unworthy of eternal life. They come, with a quiet insistence, demanding our candid, serious, careful consideration of their claims upon us in view of the fact of a coming judgment in which these principles of truth and righteousness shall surely triumph and prove a savour of life unto life or of death unto death to men, according as they are obedient or disobedient to their authority.

It was to establish these principles of judgment and to acquaint men with them, as well as to redeem them from the sentence of the first judgment of the race in Eden, that Jesus came into this world. (John 5. 24; 20. 30, 31.) Yet this judgment, while it begins in a measure with every man as soon as he begins to comprehend the Divine testimony, is not, in the case of the world in general, to reach its final decision until the time appointed for the world's judgment, the Millennial Age; for at his first advent Jesus said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him *in the last day*," the day of final reckoning, the Millennial or Judgment day. (John 12. 46-48.)

In view of these considerations what folly it is for any man blindly to ignore or foolishly tamper with and pervert or reject the authority of Divine truth! On the other hand how grateful to God we should be for His goodness in making known to us the principles of His law, the testimonies of His Word, by which we are to be judged. And how anxious we should be that our understanding of those principles of judgment should be clear and free from any bias of human prejudice which might blind our eyes to truths of such solemn import. As the Psalmist says, "*The judgments of*

the Lord (expressed by His holy apostles and prophets) are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." (Psa. 19. 9-11.)

The above statement of our Lord was called out by the contrast presented in the conduct of the Pharisees and of the blind man to whom sight had been given. The miracle gave unmistakable evidence of Divine power manifested through Christ, and was a testimony to the truth of his claim to the Messiahship. The Pharisees, perceiving the logical deduction from the admission of the fact and unwilling to admit the authority of a teacher greater than themselves, rejected even this undeniable testimony, and cast the man out of the synagogue because he confessed the truth.

In this miracle our Lord has clearly taught the great truth that God was with him, and that he was indeed all that he claimed to be—the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, the long promised Messiah. These Pharisees, though feeling the force of this testimony, nevertheless harboured so much envy and hatred in their hearts that it blinded them to the truth. But not so was it with the young man upon whose sightless eyes the miracle had been wrought. Envy, hatred and the spirit of rivalry were absent from his mind, and wonder and gratitude prompted him to reason out the logical deductions from this marvellous fact. In this course we observe the steps of obedient and increasing faith and the results so blessed and so different from those to which the course of the Pharisees led. The act of hopeful obedience (based doubtless upon what he had heard of Jesus previously), in following the simple directions to go and wash his clay-anointed eyes in the pool of Siloam, was rewarded by immediate sight, although the man had been born blind; this blessing, gratefully realised, increased faith; the testimony of obedient, grateful faith, in the face of opposition, brought the reward of persecution; and persecution, accepted in preference to the approval of men upon terms of unrighteousness—of stifled conviction and ingratitude—brought the reward of the clearer revelation of Him who was the hope of Israel and the world. And not only so, but this realisation that Jesus was indeed the very Christ promised of God, expected for four thousand years, came to the formerly blind man with this additional element of joy, that he had been specially favoured and blessed by Him.

Here we see in strong contrast the spirit of obedience on the part of the young man who received sight, and the spirit of disobedience and rebellion on the part of the Pharisees. In the one case the authority of truth was despised and its light rejected, the darkness being preferred because their deeds were evil; while in the other its authority was received and appreciated and from its blessed testimony were drawn the precious lessons of faith, obedience, gratitude, humility, fortitude and loving reverence. Thus, the same truth which blinded one enlightened and blessed the other. And so truth is always, as Paul tells us, a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. It is only those who receive the truth into good and honest hearts who are rewarded with its blessed fruitage. (2 Cor. 2. 14-16.)

Let every man, therefore, take heed how he hears the testimony of God; let him not be of those who receive it into a heart filled with selfishness or a spirit of vain glory or pride or irreverence or ingratitude; so that it may not have the blinding effect that it had upon the Pharisees, or the hardening effect it had upon them and upon Pharaoh, who thereby ten times precipitated upon himself and his people the plagues of Divine wrath, finally culminating in the destruction in the Red Sea. But with a pure heart, a good and honest heart, let us receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls. (James 1. 21, 22.)

It is well for all the Lord's people ever to bear in mind that the present age, the present life, is our judgment day. Let us see to it that we conduct ourselves with that prudence and godly sincerity so befitting so solemn and momentous a time, and also that we come to the consideration of the Divine testimony with that reverence and humility which ensure the enlightening and guard against the blinding effects. Well indeed would it be for the world if they, too, would consider that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" and that "God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" and that "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known." (Prov. 15. 3; Eccl. 12. 14; Luke 12. 2, 3.)

This judgment in the case of the Lord's consecrated people culminates with the present life, and in the case of the world it will culminate in the age to come. There is, however, a judgment of the world as nations (not as individuals) which culminates in the present age. Thus, for instance, there was the national judgment of Israel which con-

demned them to blindness and to an overthrow, as unworthy of the continued favour of God. So also upon the nations of Christendom, the judg-

ment of God is also to blindness and to an overthrow in a great time of trouble. "Take heed how ye hear" the teachings of God's Word!

THE QUESTION BOX

Q. *When John the Baptist declared that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" and Jesus went about "preaching the gospel of the Kingdom," is it a spiritual kingship in the hearts of men and women NOW, or the yet future Divine kingdom on earth, to which reference is made?*

A. Both. The Kingdom of Heaven commenced its sovereignty among mankind of Pentecost, and continues extending its sway until "all that hath breath shall praise the Lord" at the end of the Millennium. But lest any reader should conclude that this is an unwarranted capitulation to the theology of St. Augustine let it be said at once that the development of the Kingdom in history is in two main phases; one, the formation and completion of the Church, which occupies the present Gospel Age, and two, the calling and reconciliation of mankind in general to God, a work which is to have its greatest scope and reach its climax in the still future Millennial Age.

There has been a tendency in the past to separate the work of these two Ages into virtually watertight compartments and to speak as if there is no sense in which the Kingdom is in operation until the Second Advent of Christ when the visible Kingdom amongst men on earth is established. This is wrong. St. Paul plainly tells us (Col. 1. 13) that God has (already) translated us into the Kingdom of His Son. This means an actual and factual transfer from the Kingdom of darkness and is a present fact in the experience of every consecrated Christian who has "come into" Christ. The lawyer who "answered discreetly," was "not far" from the Kingdom of God (Mark 12. 34) which means clearly that in his perception of Jesus' message he was almost at the point of entry. And yet to-day, two thousand years later, none but the smallest fraction of earth's millions have even so much as heard of the Kingdom of Heaven, much less had opportunity to enter in. Moreover, not one of those few who have been translated into the Kingdom in the sense of St. Paul's words in

Col. 1. 13 have received the promised honour and exaltation promised to the "overcomers." It is not until the Second Advent that the "righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13. 43.)

The key to all this is found in St. Paul's words to the Athenians, recorded in Acts 17. Prior to Pentecost, God had not moved actively to the world's redemption, but on and after that historic scene in the upper room in Jerusalem, He "commandeth all men everywhere to repent." From that time and forward, throughout all the Gospel Age and all the Millennial Age, the call to repentance has been going out and will go out. And there is a corollary to the call. "Because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17. 31) men are called to repent *now* because there is to be a final judgment before this three-thousand year day of repentance and conversion is ended, and the sooner any man who at present is unreconciled to God comes into the state of reconciliation with Him the better it is for that man.

Nevertheless it must not be assumed that Jesus and the Apostles had no other idea in mind, when they talked about the "gospel of the Kingdom," than this process of coming "into Christ" which is peculiar to this Age and concludes with its termination. It must be remembered that Jesus came as the promised Messiah, and a Messiah without a Messianic Kingdom, an earthly dominion of righteousness, is unthinkable. *That* was the only kind of kingdom the Jews of the First Advent knew about or anticipated, and when John and Jesus announced that the Kingdom was at hand *that* was the kind of kingdom they expected. Nor were they mistaken; it was after Pentecost that those who profited most by Jesus' message realised that there was a spiritual counterpart to the earthly Kingdom of their dreams, and that spiritual counterpart must be developed first, and hence the earthly Kingdom was still some distance away

in the future. The preaching of Jesus was intended to combine the hope of both aspects of the kingdom; He knew, none better, how that only a few of those who listened would embrace the spiritual call; the many would come along later in response to the earthly call. Nevertheless it was one call and one invitation, on one basis, and that remains unchanged until the end of the Millennium. "Repent, and be converted; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What God does with the repentant and converted one depends on what in His Wisdom He sees He can do with him; it depends on whether the man comes to God in this Age or the next; whether he is of the clay that can be shaped and fired into a vessel of greater honour or lesser honour (2 Tim. 2. 19-21) and so on.

We must therefore keep clear of the orthodox view propounded by St. Augustine fifteen hundred years ago in his attempt to refute the Scriptural doctrine of the Millennium, viz., that the Kingdom of God is here now in power, and that the conversion of the nations now proceeding is the evidence of this. The Kingdom of God is not here in power; the reign of Christ over the nations has not begun; the Church has not yet received any kind of power over the world. But the Kingdom is here, and has been since Pentecost, in the hearts of believers, although nowhere else.

Jesus and the Apostles had all these aspects of the Kingdom in mind as they taught and wrote. There are approximately 124 occurrences in the New Testament of the expression "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God." A reasonable analysis of these occurrences shows them distributed thus:—

Twenty-six refer to the spiritual kingdom in men's hearts now.

Forty-two refer to the spiritual destiny of the Church, beyond the Vail, after the Second Advent.

Twenty-five refer to the visible kingdom to be set up on earth during the Millennium.

Thirty-one are indeterminate and could not dogmatically be placed in any one of the above categories; in a good many cases these examples refer to the entire conception of the Kingdom embracing all three aspects.

* * *

Q.—In the light of Luke 1; 78 ("Sunrising," Variorum), Luke 1; 17 and Matt. 17; 10-12 is the prophecy of Mal. 4 to be considered as fulfilled at the First Advent, or are we to look for a greater and wider manifestation at this Age end?

A.—The promise that "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" is one that links the First and Second Advents with each other and with the visions of Isaiah. Moses and Elijah were the two great prophets of Israel; one made them a nation and led them to the Promised Land, the other converted them from Baal worship to serve the living God. Both prophets died "super-naturally," one upon a mountain top, alone, and "no man knoweth his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34; 6) the other carried into heaven by a whirlwind. Jesus said of John the Baptist, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 11; 4), but John said of himself that he was a voice crying in the wilderness as spoken by Isaiah the prophet (Jno. 1; 23). Isaiah in turn links the "voice in the wilderness" with his grand theme of the "suffering servant" who is destined to lead mankind to reconciliation with God. Can we see in all this a further illumination on the two-fold nature of that "servant"—a heavenly part, the Church, "sent" before the great Day of Trouble to witness before men and convert some, to be caught up to the spiritual realm and completed during the troublous days of the End; and an earthly part destined to become the nucleus of the Kingdom on earth, to organise mankind into one great holy nation and lead them into the greater Promised Land? Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Head over both the heavenly and earthly phases of the "Servant," and is Himself the fullest expression of that same "Servant." If this be so there may be a pointer here for our own future work—for how will the earthly part of the Servant Nation receive the knowledge of their opportunity and high destiny if not from those who are already, in this Gospel Age, the custodians of the oracles of God?

* * *

Q.—Who or what is the "voice crying in the wilderness" of Isa. 40. 3?

A.—In the first place, the "voice" is Isaiah himself. The second part of the Book of Isaiah, commencing with the 40th chapter, is a treatise outlining the principles upon which God will reconcile the world to Himself, by means of the service, devotion and suffering of a consecrated people, the "suffering servant" of the prophecy.

Isaiah was the means used to introduce this theme into the records of the revealed Plan of God, and, knowing as he did that his people were far from understanding the part to be played by sacrifice and suffering in the reconciliation, their minds being full of visions of the glory of Israel's coming reign over the nations, he realised that in his day he would never be more than a voice crying in the wilderness. Nevertheless, he delivered his message to such good effect that his book became the finest and most detailed exposition of the "sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," in the whole of the Old Testament.

The second fulfilment of these words is found in the person and work of John the Baptist, as he himself claimed. He also was a herald of the Messiah, and of the Messianic Kingdom, and although his message reached a wider circle and attracted more general attention than did that of Isaiah, it did not result in the conversion of the nation. It merely prepared a "remnant." He was a burning and a shining light and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light," said Jesus.

Nevertheless, he remained long enough to point out the Lamb of God, manifested amongst men, and then his work is finished.

The third fulfilment is manifest in the work of the Church during the Gospel Age, and particularly at its end. Once more the "herald" declares the coming of the King ("There standeth one among you whom ye know not") and the imminence of His Kingdom. Once more the voice is one which cries in the wilderness yet gathers together a nucleus which shall be the "people for a purpose" for the incoming Age. Once again the message goes out continuously until the greater John Baptist is able to turn and declare: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Although the Church will be glorified before the revelation of Christ to the world takes place, the "voice in the wilderness" message will be taken up and continued by the earthly "people for a purpose," regathered in the Holy Land, and their message will find its glorious climax in the proclamation of the Law from Zion when Isaiah's prophecy will be literally fulfilled.

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